



HOMESTAY GUIDELINES

Host Family

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Homestay Family Guide

For homestay students, the bond they share with their homestay family is one of the most important and memorable aspects of their study experience.

Shared experiences, regular conversation and discovering common interests always take a little extra time and patience but will be well worth the effort!

Regardless of the background or age of your homestay student, each will appreciate a welcoming and warm environment that feels like home.

While some students may be shy or more or less social than others, don't be afraid to include them in your family discussions, outings and daily life. The more you can put into welcoming your homestay student as part of the family, the more you will gain from the homestay experience.

This Homestay Family Guide is to help you understand what your responsibilities are as a homestay family and give you some guidelines that will help foster a great relationship. This includes ensuring that your homestay student feels safe and secure throughout their homestay experience.

This guide is designed to give you the resources you need to:

- prepare for the arrival of your homestay student
- help you feel comfortable acting as a homestay family
- connect you with the tools and guidance to access the support you may need along the way
- get the most out of the experience of hosting an international student.

BROWNS Accommodation Services Contacts

Ph: + 61 7 3221 7871 Email: accommodation@browns.edu.au

If you have any concerns, or require any assistance, please contact us.

After Hours Emergency Phone

Ph: +61 (0) 431 032 276

BlueCard

All persons aged 18 years or over residing in your home, must hold a valid BlueCard including your own children aged 18 years or over. New household members aged 18 years or over, and residents who turn 18 while you remain a homestay family will require a valid BlueCard.

If your Blue Card is invalid for any reason BROWNS will need to re-allocate the student immediately, and the family profile will be inactivated until the Blue Card Service confirms a

positive status. It is the host family's responsibility to keep the Blue Card updated for all members. Easily apply for a valid BlueCard here <https://my.bluecard.qld.gov.au/login>

Getting To Know Your Homestay Student Before They Arrive

As a homestay family you are there to provide support and a comfortable home for your homestay student during their stay.

You will be allocated a homestay student prior to their arrival. Basic details about your home and family – including who resides at your property and photographs of your home – will be forwarded to your homestay student.

Before your homestay student arrives, it is possible to contact them and begin getting to know them.

This contact may be initiated by your homestay student, or you may choose to initiate this process yourself.

Homestay Family Responsibilities

It is exciting to have a new member joining your family and we hope that your experience of being a homestay provider is culturally enriching and positive for all members of your household!

What you are expected to provide your homestay student

Homestay families are expected to provide:

- a safe, secure, welcoming place to live that is conducive to the students' emotional, social, physical and educational wellbeing
- a separate single room for the student's use
- facilities – a bed, wardrobe, towels and linen
- cleaning services of common living areas
- study facilities – a desk, study light and bookcase
- two - three (dependent on half or full board) meals a day, seven days a week, including snacks
- utilities – gas, electricity, heating and water costs, internet
- use of living areas within the residence
- take on the role of a carer for under 18 students.

Some students may choose to purchase their own snacks and personal items based on their individual preferences. If possible, please provide a space in a kitchen cupboard and/or fridge for the student to store their snacks etc.

Suggested Homestay Pre-Arrival Checklist

Before your homestay student arrives, it's important that you ensure:

- your homestay student's room is clean, tidy and welcoming.
- fresh towels and linen are provided
- snacks are available and you have a suitable meal ready for your homestay student, who will likely be tired and hungry on arrival after a long flight
- your house rules have been considered and agreed upon by current household members.

When Your Homestay Student Arrives

Pick up and drop off

BROWNS is responsible for collecting your Under 18 homestay students from the airport and dropping them back at the end of their stay. Over 18s may make their own way to and from your residence.

Meeting your homestay student

You are required to greet and welcome your homestay student when they arrive at your home for the first time.

Remember, this may be an overwhelming moment for your homestay student! They are in a completely new home in a new country, and often have a new language to master and adapt to. It may take them a little time to warm up to their new circumstances, new family and new environment.

What you should expect when your homestay student arrives

For many homestay students it is a long flight to Australia, so while they will be very excited to meet you, they may also feel disoriented, tired, hungry and in need of a shower.

It is a great idea to have some snacks, a drink or even a light meal on hand. It is also helpful to encourage your homestay student to get in touch with their family back home to let them know that they have arrived safely.

Once you have welcomed your homestay student and shown them around their new home, it can be a good idea to give them some alone time and space to rest. Remember though, that too much time alone in a bedroom is not a positive strategy for settling in.

If you can, take your homestay student on a tour of the local area within 24 hours of their arrival. They will appreciate being shown the local shops, transport, pharmacy, local landmarks and so on.

Important information you need to tell your homestay student when they arrive

It is a great idea to make sure that your homestay student has some key items and details on hand before they venture out of the house alone. Some essentials include:

- a house key
- an Australian SIM card set up and ready to go
- your mobile phone number saved to their phone
- public transport travel cards e.g. GoCards – what they are and how to get one

It is also good to make sure they have some useful apps and travel information saved on their phone, including:

- Google Maps (or similar)
- MyTranslink app (note that in order to download local apps the student may need to reset their app store to Australia (i.e. Apple App Store or Google Play Store)
- Uber (note that to use Uber, a visa or mastercard debit card is required)
- your home address and nearest public transport stops saved somewhere on their phone.

Top tip: It's a good idea to write down the home Wifi network name and password and leave this in the student's room, so they can connect each of their devices in their own time.

Bonding with your homestay student

A homestay experience is a fantastic way for international students to truly understand and enjoy Australia. We aim for every homestay to be a positive, memorable, and rewarding experience for all involved.

Introducing your local area

Consider making the most of the first few days with your homestay student by planning a few bonding activities. International students love seeing and learning about their new home city!

Bonding through everyday activities and events

You will be more likely to develop a positive relationship with your homestay student if you involve them in family life. Eating meals together and including your homestay student in family outings and even simple things like shopping trips are good ways to build connections.

Also try to encourage your homestay student to attend BROWNS organized events. These are great opportunities to get to know other students and importantly to make friends.

Communication And Cultural Differences

For nearly all homestay students, English will not be their first language and they will have varying degrees of English language capability. For example, some students who are undertaking Intensive English language classes may not understand much English, yet other students who already have English language skills may not be talkative at first as they may be a little shy.

Here are a few tried and tested tips to overcome the language barrier and keep lines of communication open.

- Frame conversation in a simple manner: try not to overcomplicate sentences, avoid complex questions, avoid double negatives and use simple language to convey your message.
- Download translation apps: technology is your friend! Download a translation app such as Google Translate for when things get tricky.
- Hold regular household meetings: organise regular household discussions (these can even be held over dinner) to check in and ensure everyone is feeling comfortable.

Tips on cultural differences

All cultures, upbringings and family circumstances are different. There may be a short period of adjustment at the start of your homestay student's experience. This is to be expected, and fortunately most issues can be quickly resolved. Behaviour and social norms (i.e. manners and etiquette) are potential sticking points, simply because of the differences that exist between countries, cultures and individual families. Be sensitive and remember that settling in takes time. If an issue does arise, try to encourage positive discussion, and look to find a solution that works for all members of your household.

Remember, your homestay student may be a teenager. Not all teenagers are self-sufficient and some may need more support adapting to new expectations and ways of doing things than others.

TIP: if your family makes their own breakfast or lunch, help your homestay student learn to prepare these on their own.

Keeping your Under 18 homestay student's natural parents in the loop

There are many different ways to keep your homestay student's family up-to-date with everything that is going on in their life. If you prefer a formal style of communication perhaps exchange email addresses. If you prefer more casual communication tools, you may wish to use apps such as WhatsApp, WeChat or Skype so that you can text and make phone calls.

Many homestay families send regular photos and updates to their student's natural parents.

We encourage homestay families to establish communication channels and contact frequencies that suit all parties.

Settling In: Introducing Your Homestay Student to Their New Home

Here are a few general guidelines that may help you introduce your homestay student to their new home.

Drinking water

In many countries the tap water is undrinkable. This means your student may expect filtered or bottled water. You may need to explain that the tap water is completely safe to drink, particularly if filtered or bottled drinking water is not available in your home.

Food

The quality and availability of food makes a big difference to the homestay experience!

Always take a moment to check if your homestay student has any dietary requirements or allergies.

It is a nice idea (and can be an ice breaker!) to introduce them to common local foods, for example:

- chicken parma
- meat pie
- fish and chips
- Vegemite
- Tim Tams
- BBQ shapes.

Food and meal tips

Provide healthy meals according to the package the student has booked as follows:

For a half board package this should be two meals on weekdays (breakfast and dinner) plus three meals on weekends (breakfast, lunch and dinner).

For a full board package this should be three meals everyday (breakfast, lunch (sandwiches during the week) and dinner).

If your family gets their own breakfast/lunch and you would like the student to do the same, please make sure you explain this and show them the available options. Please don't assume that they know what to do automatically. If the student is not at home for a meal, it should be prepared and kept in the fridge.

Show your homestay student where in the pantry they can find snack foods and let them know which foods they can help themselves to. Within reason, your homestay student should feel comfortable helping themselves to snacks when they feel hungry.

Home-cooked meals

As a homestay family you are required to provide nourishing meals each day, home cooked where possible/practical. These meals don't have to be 'gourmet'. Leftovers are acceptable, particularly for lunches the next day.

Meals should be healthy and nutritious. For example, instant noodles are not considered a meal on their own – these would be considered a snack.

Dietary Requirements

If a student has requested a special diet and you have agreed to be able to provide one, please spend some time understanding the requirements.

For example:

If you are hosting a Halal (Special Dietary) student, they have paid extra for certain services which include:

- No pork or pork products used in the cooking or serving of meals
- All meat served should be bought from a Halal butcher
- The student should not be served any alcohol
- A quiet place for them to pray five times a day.

Household appliances

Encourage open lines of communication regarding the use of household appliances. Don't forget that everything from the washing machine to the kettle to the oven might operate a little differently. It is a good idea to show your homestay student how to operate each appliance correctly before they get started. Discuss with your homestay student which appliances you prefer they not use unsupervised.

Bed linen

At a minimum, please ensure your homestay student receives:

- pillowcases
- bottom and top sheets
- quilt/duona and covers
- fresh towels (bath and hand towel).

Since Australia can be cold during the winter and hot over summer always let your homestay student know where to find extra blankets when they feel cold and inform them on how to operate the air conditioning unit, if available. Linen should be changed regularly.

Household cleanliness

Students are expected to keep their room tidy and pick up after themselves. You could also ask them to help with basic household chores such as setting the table before meals and washing the dishes or loading/unpacking the dishwasher. You may need to show students how to complete these tasks first as this is likely to be the first time that they have lived away from their natural parents/independently.

If household cleanliness starts to become an area of concern, please contact us, and we can suggest positive ways to manage this day-to-day aspect of sharing your home.

Bathroom etiquette

International students may not pay the same consideration to water usage that many Australian families do as they have often lived in countries without water restrictions.

It is a good idea to explain at the start of their stay that water is regarded as a scarce resource in Australia, with many households taking extra measures to conserve it, particularly using bathroom facilities.

You may like to suggest the following as best practice:

- avoid showers longer than 10 minutes. A 5 minute shower is best, noting that students with longer hair may require more time
- always turn off taps properly after use
- only flush toilet paper down the toilet as other items (e.g. sanitary items) will block the toilet.
- You may also want to remind students of the importance of regular hand washing.

Laundry

It is a good idea to discuss laundry with your homestay student. You can provide a special bag for their dirty laundry if you are happy to do your student's washing with yours. If they are more comfortable doing their own laundry, this is fine. You may want to show them where the washing detergent is kept, how much to use and how to use the machine.

House rules: a general outline of typical homestay family rules

We understand that all families are different and have a unique set of expectations and 'house rules'. BROWNS also communicates a basic set of house rules to each homestay student. These general house rules cover expectations including:

- Family information, house rules and contact details including the best contact phone numbers
- Appropriate behaviour
- Cleaning/chores
- Use of common facilities'
- Curfews
- Noise levels
- Internet use
- Approval of any overnight stays
- Going out with friends
- Overseas guests.

Respectful behaviour

Politeness is expected of homestay students throughout their time and that they will respect all members of their homestay household. This extends to areas such as:

- socialising – it is expected that homestay students will positively engage with their homestay family
- alone time – try to encourage your homestay student not to spend too much time on their own in their bedroom (Tip: you may wish to encourage your student to study in communal areas in addition to their room)
- utility usage – be clear about any boundaries around TV, and internet, water and power usage to minimise misunderstandings
- It is a good idea to discuss with your homestay student what they consider to be respectful behaviour from their cultural perspective. For example, they may like you to knock on the door before entering their room.

Attendance at School

You should support and encourage the student to attend School every day and on time, and has safe and appropriate transport to and from School.

Please notify BROWNS of any concerns you may have about the student's School attendance, and of any absences of the student from School.

You are not responsible for the student's course progress. The School will monitor this. Should you wish to voluntarily assist the student by providing learning support, you are welcome to do so.

Student behaviour management

You must notify BROWNS if you encounter a behaviour management issue that is unable to be resolved informally with the student. No student is to be subject to physical punishment, or verbal, psychological or emotional abuse (including neglect) under any circumstances.

Supervision and care

Personal Safety

It is vital that your under 18 homestay student always keeps you informed of their schedule and any changes to their whereabouts, particularly if they won't make it home on time or plan to go out with friends.

Remind your homestay student that they should always feel comfortable to get in touch. If they get lost while they are out or feel unsafe, they should contact you or BROWNS Emergency number immediately. Make sure you have these contact details on your phone as well.

Please notify BROWNS immediately if you become aware that the student intends to participate in a high-risk activity and/or non-routine travel without approval. Also please contact BROWNS if you have any questions or concerns about your student's part time work

arrangements or any other issues which may arise, about which you feel unsure.

Swimming

It is important that you are mindful of the student's swimming ability and familiarity with water. Please exercise caution and ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that your student (particularly under 18) is supervised around swimming pools, beaches and other bodies of water.

Travel, Overnight Stays and Visiting Family Members

The student should not invite friends over to the Homestay without your prior permission. If your homestay student's family/friend would like to visit, it is important that they notify you before their arrival. You are not required to accommodate any additional persons in your home, unless you would like to.

Students should not be allowed to supervise younger children in your home, or elsewhere.

If your under 18 homestay student would like to spend the night away from your home, they must obtain permission from you and BROWNS. Please notify BROWNS if the student stays overnight elsewhere without permission.

Changes to arrangements

If a student wishes to move out of homestay, they must give BROWNS two weeks' notice. Please contact BROWNS if you are aware of the student's plans. They must inform School Reception directly about their plans, the student will receive a "Homestay Cancellation Form". This form will ensure that the family, student and School are all aware of the student's plans and specific dates of vacancy.

If the student wishes to extend their homestay, this must be done through BROWNS at least 2 weeks prior to the end of their current homestay period.

Please note: if the BROWNS homestay rules are breached in any respect, BROWNS reserves the right to move the student at any time without notice.

Privacy of information

The Homestay Provider's access to the student's personal information may be subject to privacy law. A student's personal information must not be recorded or stored or used (including on social media) unless required to communicate with BROWNS, or with the express consent of the student.

The School may record, use or disclose the Homestay provider's personal information only for the purpose of administration and to comply with Australian Laws. Records are retained and disposed of in accordance with applicable laws.

Taking Care of Homestay Student Health

While homestay students are away from home, it is important that they take care of their physical health and mental wellbeing.

Seeing a doctor. When guiding international students through the process of booking a doctor's appointment it is important to remember they will need their Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) card. Remind students that they can request to see their preferred doctor, a doctor of a particular gender and / or a doctor who speaks their native language.

It is important to consider that doctors can also help with mental health. **Should you have any concerns about your homestay student's health, mental health and wellbeing, you have a responsibility to raise this with BROWNS immediately.**

Changes to lifestyle, food and general environment can sometimes lead to feeling under the weather. For some students, living away from close family and friends, adapting to a new culture and keeping up with studies, can be stressful.

It is a good idea to explain to your homestay student they can always talk to you, BROWNS or a doctor if they have any physical or mental health concerns. Depending on how confident the student is, they may choose to organise this themselves, or they may need advice and support from you to do so.

Critical Incidents and Emergencies

Critical incidents and emergencies are rare, but it's still important to be prepared. Below are a few general guidelines to follow if you are faced with a critical incident or an emergency that involves your homestay student.

Critical incidents or emergency situations include:

- a missing student or student that unexpectedly does not come home one evening.
- losing contact with your homestay student for an extended period, e.g. anything over 2 to 4 hours outside of your curfew
- extreme weather conditions and natural disasters
- medical emergencies.

What to do in case of a critical incident or an emergency

If you or your homestay student are involved in a critical incident or an emergency, you must always notify BROWNS as soon as possible.

In the event of a Critical Incident, the Homestay Provider must:

- ensure the immediate safety of the student.
- provide any necessary support (for example, accompanying the student to the hospital); and

- if required, allow the Homestay to be inspected immediately by BROWNS.

Please review the Health and Safety appendix attached below.

Please note: if there are any changes to your household members during your student's homestay period, it is important to get in touch. Images of new pets and any physical changes to the residence (e.g. a renovation) are also required to be provided for inclusion in your homestay profile.

THANK YOU!

We hope you enjoy the experience of being a homestay parent!

Thank you for being part of this highly rewarding experience, and for helping to provide an international student with the experience of a lifetime!

You are not alone, the accommodation team at BROWNS is there to support you.

Health and Safety Appendix

As a Homestay provider you will need to assist your student in an emergency. If necessary please contact also BROWNS.

BROWNS After Hours Emergency Phone

Ph: +61 (0) 431 032 276

What you should do in an emergency

For all emergencies, life-threatening situations or serious injuries:

- Dial: 000
- Dial: 112 (from mobile, even if you have no signal or network connection)
- Dial: 106 (from TDD text phones. Do not text or SMS the number – you must dial the number)

What happens when you dial 000

The 000 operator will ask if you need police, fire or ambulance. You must say which of these services you need. You can ask for an interpreter should your student wishes to talk to someone. Do not hang up the phone until the operator tells you to do so. In most instances, the operator will stay on the line to give you instructions and help you.

Hospital emergency departments

To go to a hospital emergency department, you need to either:

Call 000 in an emergency for an ambulance or accompany your student to the Outpatients' Department of a hospital.

The student should take their Overseas Student Healthcare Cover (OSHC) card with them.

Other emergency services

Poisons information centre

Dial: 13 11 26

The poisons information centre help line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the helpline if you or someone near you has been poisoned, has overdosed, has made a mistake with medicines. You should also call the helpline for help if someone has been bitten or stung by marine animals (such as jellyfish), snakes, spiders or insects (such as bees or wasps).

Mental health emergencies

Dial: 131 114

The [Lifeline](#) mental health phone help line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you or someone you know needs mental health support, lifeline will provide you with someone who will listen and give you help at any time.

Nurse-on-Call phone service

Dial: 1300 606 024

Nurse-On-Call puts you directly in touch with a registered nurse for caring, professional health advice around the clock. You can contact Nurse-on-Call if:

- the student is feeling unwell
- you are not sure if you should seek medical help
- you want advice or information about health services in your area.

Your local pharmacy

Dial: Your local pharmacy

You can also contact your local pharmacy or chemist. Some pharmacies are open 24 hours a day and most are open until about 7pm or 9pm at night. The pharmacist will be able to help you with many health concerns.