

HOMESTAY MANUAL

Homestay Accommodation Services (HAS)

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The Homestay Host Role

Welcome to the Homestay Accommodation Services (HAS) Program.

This manual is designed to assist homestay hosts to accommodate homestay students studying at Monash University. We want to assist hosts to resolve any difficulties associated with their homestay student that can arise from time to time.

A warm, friendly and flexible approach to your homestay student will ensure an enjoyable experience. Of course, in a program that involves so many people HAS cannot guarantee everybody's happiness. However, HAS ensures that both hosts and students are attended to when difficulties arise. HAS cannot always solve problems but will assist wherever possible.

This manual is updated regularly, incorporating new information based on feedback HAS receives from hosts, homestay students and institutions.

In general terms, our expectations of the homestay host family are simply that they should:

- a) provide a warm, friendly environment
- b) ensure your homestay student's safety and well being
- c) encourage homestay students to speak English at all times
- d) be flexible
- e) be sensitive to the cultural differences between Australia and your homestay student's country of origin
- f) only make small changes to their daily routine greatly (eg in the area of transport assistance) to accommodate a homestay student; for example, you do not have to cook Asian food
- g) communicate any concerns or problems that arise so as to help solve problems or misunderstandings. Remember, if you don't communicate these difficulties then HAS cannot assist you and the homestay student.

Setting Guidelines

The following questions have been supplied to help you to settle your student into an Australian household. These will also help set the ground rules and familiarise the student with their host family and local environment.

Some questions you may like to ask your Homestay student:

1. What time do you usually get up?
2. What time do you usually have a bath or shower (morning or night)?
3. Do you want to wash your own laundry?
4. What time do you usually eat breakfast?
5. What time do you usually go to bed?
6. What foods do you prefer not to eat?
7. Is there any special information that I should know about? (eg allergies, medication, etc.)

Some questions your homestay student may wish to ask you:

1. May I use the phone? What is the latest time I can receive phone calls?
2. How should I pay for the phone calls?
3. When and how late can my music be played?
4. When and for how long may I watch TV?
5. Are there any dangerous areas near here?
6. May I invite friends over to stay the night?
7. What time should I be home if I go out at night?
8. What time should I call by if I am not coming home for dinner?
9. Are there any special house rules that I should know about?

Finance

- Homestay hosts are paid by direct deposit into their bank account each Thursday for the period Monday to Sunday.
- HAS deposits funds each Thursday and processing can take up to 48 hours depending on your bank. Generally, you should receive funds in your nominated account by close of banking on Friday each week.
- You should not communicate with the office of HAS earlier than Friday afternoon regarding payments for that week.
- It is your responsibility to provide the correct bank details to enable timely payment.
- Payments are made only by automatic transfer into a nominated bank account.
- Apart from phone calls and internet usage homestay hosts should not charge or accept money from their students for any other services.

Who Pays?

- a) Telephone - all non-local phone calls (international, STD, mobile) are to be paid by the student. They usually either reverse the charge or use a pre-paid phone card. It is up to the homestay host whether they wish to charge the student for local calls.
- b) Public Transport - homestay students will cover their own public transport costs. *International students are **NOT** eligible for concession rate fares on public transport.*
- c) Outings/Excursions - Hosts are not expected to pay for homestay students on family outings etc. Students are advised at orientation to offer to pay for themselves. Hosts are asked to use their discretion in this matter as the weekly cost of homestay includes all meals.

Homestay Students Going Away on Holiday

If a student wishes to return to the same host, they are expected to pay the normal nightly homestay fee in order to ensure that his/her place will still be available on his/her return.

For absences less than seven nights, there is no refund

Insurance/Medical Procedures - Study Group Students

For those students who are properly insured the procedure is:

1. During office hours: student can attend the Medical facility based at each Monash campus.
2. After hours: Homestay hosts should take their student to their local GP
3. The student should pay for the consultation (if they are unable to pay, the homestay host should pay on their behalf and will be reimbursed by the student at a later date)
4. Obtain a receipt and ask the doctor to complete a declaration for insurance purposes. This allows the student to make an insurance claim on return to their home country.

Insurance/Medical Procedures - Individual Students

All students on a study visa are required to purchase Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC). OSHC covers out of hospital medical services for doctors, pathology and radiology; in-hospital medical services and ambulance services. Monash's preferred provider is Worldcare Assist which offers additional benefits to students such as access to a 24/7 Helpline.

If your student is unwell, HAS recommends you take your student to your local GP. Your student should pay for the consultation and they will be reimbursed by their OSHC provider on production of their receipt. If your student is unwell during class time, they can visit the medical facility at their campus.

Homestay Hosts Nearby

Homestay hosts who are on group programs will be given the details of other hosts on the same program. This enables:

- Homestay students to travel home together.
- Hosts to contact someone nearby who could take over their student if a host has to deal with a family crisis
- Homestay students to visit other students/families close by

Please note all homestay students are advised at orientation that they must seek their homestay host's permission in relation to:

- Inviting friends over
- Staying at another homestay host's home
- Visiting new friends
- Making alternative arrangements

Confidentiality

On programs involving many hosts of different backgrounds and experience, comparison between different families/lifestyles may be a topic of conversation. This is understandable. However, when it comes to difficulties/problems with a homestay host, students are requested not to speak of their problems to their friends or to other hosts, but rather to inform HAS staff.

Communication Process

A recent survey of homestay hosts revealed that when difficulties occurred most hosts were able to deal with them or in time the problems would sort themselves out.

If you have a problem, you should make every effort to resolve the difficulty directly with your student. If the matter cannot be resolved, you or your student should contact the HAS office on 9905 8326.

If you are unhappy with any part of the program, email a Homestay Coordinator on has@mcpl.monash.edu.au. Please note: at the end of every program, both homestay hosts and students are given the opportunity to fill in an evaluation form.

The most common difficulties experienced by homestay hosts are:

- Too quiet, too shy, wouldn't talk to us
- Too demanding (asked so many questions all the time)
- Rude/sulky
- Homesickness
- Shower problems
- Unsure how much freedom to give (applicable to over age students)
- Immaturity
- Too studious/Not studious at all, too social
- Our homestay student was always tired

Freedom to Come and Go (Dangers of Living in a Foreign Country)

Of prime importance are the safety and well being of our homestay students. Other countries may be safer than Australia and students may expect the same here or they may be naive to dangers.

Some young people are relatively free and safe to move anywhere in their country by themselves. Unfortunately, this is not entirely the case here and HAS warns homestay students to avoid travelling after dark on public transport. If students are out and about after dark then they must have assistance from the host family or use taxis.

You should treat your student as though he/she is a member of the family/ household. You should apply the same standards as you would to a natural member of the family.

Be suitably strict with your homestay student when giving permission for outings, taking into consideration their age, maturity and reliability. It is quite acceptable for students to visit other students on their program and as long as both hosts agree, it is possible for a student to sleep over at another homestay family's home.

On some occasions a student or small group may decide to travel interstate or elsewhere for the weekend. The student should contact HAS so that details can be discussed with the host. If the homestay student is under the age of 18, **permission must be obtained from the student's care-giver or guardian**. The homestay host is not expected to provide any assistance by way of transport, etc. but they may offer to help.

What Homestay Students are told (re living with a Homestay Host)

Homestay students are encouraged to approach their homestay host if they have a concern or problem and to work it through with their host. They are told:

- a) not to consume alcohol or tobacco, if underage, or drugs at any stage
- b) to abide by Australian law at all times
- c) to adhere to schedules and time tables - especially to wait at the agreed time and place when being picked up by their homestay family. If there are any schedule changes, they are to inform the homestay family of them.
- d) that they must obey homestay family directions - yes means yes, no means no, and maybe means yes, if certain conditions are met. In the Japanese language the word yes does not always necessarily mean yes, similarly no and maybe are not always as they seem. This should always be made clear between the homestay host and student.
- e) that their host will have their well being and safety in mind at all times
- f) homestay hosts are not running a hotel service and they should assist with the washing of dishes, keeping their room tidy, assisting with laundry etc.
- g) how to use the shower and bath in Australia. Short showers are mandatory.
- h) they should speak English at all times
- i) to try their best at speaking English and participating as a family member.

- j) they must offer to pay for themselves on excursions/dining out etc.
- k) that homestay hosts are often busy and tired after work and hence to respect their homestay family's situation in this regard.
- l) that all household rules apply to them as they do to other members of the host family.
- m) that their own country may be safer than Australia, and they should be wary about being approached by people they don't know. Homestay hosts should reinforce this point to the students without making it sound as though Australia is a dangerous country.

Guidelines for Appropriate Behaviour by Homestay Hosts

The best way of ensuring appropriate behaviour is to abide by Australian law, comply with the points agreed to in the HAS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and exercise common sense and caution with regard to the homestay student in your care.

In exercising "common sense and caution" hosts should take into account the significant cultural differences between their own ideas of appropriate behaviour and those of their students.

Hosts are reminded that, for the purposes of Victorian laws prohibiting sexual harassment in relation to accommodation, the behaviour of family members towards the homestay student is judged by the student's reasonable perception and interpretation of that behaviour, and not by the intention of the family member.

These issues can be managed by considering the following questions:

- ◆ Is the behaviour likely to be unwelcome? Or is it encouraged or accepted by the student?
- ◆ Is it possible that the student finds the conduct humiliating, embarrassing or intimidating?

Examples of behaviour that may be deemed to be discriminatory or constitute sexual harassment are:

- ◆ acting towards, or speaking to a person in a manner which threatens or vilifies that person;
- ◆ making jokes, suggestive comments or offensive gestures related to a person's race, colour, ethnic origin, disability, gender or sexual characteristics;
- ◆ distribution or display of material (including through e-mail) which may be offensive, such as sexually explicit posters or pictures, racist or sexist jokes or cartoons;
- ◆ persistent questions about a person's private life;
- ◆ personal comments about appearance, size, clothing;
- ◆ demands for sexual favours, either directly or by implication;
- ◆ unwanted and deliberate physical contact;
- ◆ indecent assault or other criminal offences.

While it is not our intention to stifle the warm and friendly relationship between families and students, you should be aware that problems in this area do arise from time to time, that there may be a liability, and you should exercise all appropriate care and consideration towards your students. Should an incident be alleged to occur during a Homestay placement, the Police will be notified.

Do not take anything for granted

The following are points that have arisen in past programs that highlight the cultural differences between Japan and Australia and may be of some aid for other nationalities.

- a) You may need to explain to your homestay student how to use the sheets on the bed.
- b) You may need to explain to your homestay student where the wet towels go, or they may turn up in some very peculiar spots.
- c) Japanese people tend to fall asleep anywhere and especially when travelling by bus or car. They are not bored, just napping.
- d) Noise levels in Japanese homes tend to be lower than in Australian homes. The homestay student at first will have to adjust to what at times may seem to be rather 'confrontational' noise levels in Australian homes.
- e) Some homestay students may be very shy about having their underwear washed so they may never bring it out.
- f) In Japan most households have a lock or snib on bathroom and toilet doors. Many homestay students feel uncomfortable without it.
- g) Japanese rinse and wash outside the bath before soaking in the bath.
- h) It is the nature of Japanese people to apologise lightheartedly if they make a mistake.
- i) Be careful how you wash the dishes. Many Japanese students have mentioned their concern at how some families wash their dishes. In Japan dishes are rinsed thoroughly as the Japanese believe their detergents to be quite toxic and hence must always be rinsed. Many students are alarmed if dishes are not rinsed thoroughly.
- j) The Japanese bathroom rarely includes a shower, the central feature being a deep, square bath. The bath is very hot and mainly used for relaxation. Japanese do not wash themselves in the bath, but wash themselves before entering. Thus the water is always clean and can be used many times; often over a period of several days.
- k) Since a considerable amount of water goes down the drain of a bathroom floor, Japanese drains have been built to handle a large quantity of water. Japanese students can quite innocently flood the bathroom causing extensive damage to carpets and fittings¹.
- l) The Japanese answer positive questions the same way as we do in English, but they answer negative questions quite differently. A Japanese will answer the negative question, "You won't have more beer?" with "Yes" if they don't want more beer. "No" if they do. The Japanese agree or disagree literally with the question being asked. For ease of communication, it is always safest to avoid negative questions when conversing with a Japanese person².
- m) Although they may warm to the task later, visiting Japanese students at first will feel a little awkward about hugging or any other kind of physical affection expressed between family members.
- n) From about the age of 11-12 all such contact ceases in Japanese families and is replaced by bowing or simple acknowledgements and so Japanese students generally will not expect physical contact of any nature from homestay parents. Host fathers, in particular, should exercise discretion and be aware that students often remain confused or uncomfortable with any degree of physical contact. (Please also refer also to section 11 of this manual).

- o) Despite all this, many homestay students (more so the girls) will often start to feel quite emotional about their imminent departure a few days before they are due to leave.
- p) Your homestay student will be struck by the amount of time and the range of household activities that Australian fathers engage in with their families, even after coming home from work. Fathers helping with household chores get a particular mention (and a nod of approval) in post course questionnaires. Homestay students often comment on how good communication with homestay fathers can be, and have even said that, after a 3-4 week course, they feel they know their homestay fathers better than they do their own natural fathers after a lifetime of living together.
- q) Whereas Westerners are encouraged to express their opinions readily Japanese people are generally more modest and reserved about this, preferring not to stand out or appear 'confrontational'. Remember that in the beginning they will not always feel confident enough to ask for food, drink, etc, so offer it to them. The girls can also feel quite sensitive about having the homestay mother do their laundry so indicate that a separate bag is available for her to put dirty laundry in and that the washing will be collected for washing on certain days.
- r) If time permits, make contact with your homestay student before they arrive. This may make the initial meeting feel less awkward.

Note: ¹and ² are directly taken from The Northern Metropolitan College of TAFE, Certificate in Tour Guiding, Japanese Culture and Customs

Grievance Procedures

If homestay hosts have any issues in relation to their student, they should first speak to a HAS staff member. Hosts will be encouraged to discuss the issue with their student if appropriate. If the issue is not resolved, HAS staff will speak to both parties to try and reach a resolution. If there is still no resolution, HAS staff will take any further action required.

If the problem does not relate to the homestay student, HAS staff will discuss the issue with the homestay host and endeavour to reach a resolution.

If a homestay host has an issue with a HAS staff member, they can contact the Grievance Officer, Monash College Pty Ltd, either in writing or by telephone: Building 73, Monash University, Wellington Road, Clayton 3800 or email greg.cusack@mcpl.monash.edu.au

Emergency only

If your student:

- needs hospitalisation, is in a life-threatening situation or been the victim of an assault, you can call the Monash University Security number to advise them of the situation. For Caulfield students, call 990 32211; for Clayton, call 990 53333; for Peninsula, call 990 44318. If it is an emergency situation and you need a **Japanese speaker**, call 0411 475 232. This number is **only** to be used for emergency situations.
- has either lost a personal item or had something stolen, you should take them to the police station to report the incident. Please call the Homestay office on 9905 5557 to leave a message or email us at has@mcpl.monash.edu.au
- is late returning home, you should wait until the next morning before contacting the Homestay office as the police will not file a missing persons report until 24 hours after the person was last seen.