

# HOST FAMILY HANDBOOK



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## INTRODUCTION

Becoming a host family for an international student may be one of the most impactful undertakings your family will ever experience. Indeed, welcoming another person into your home for an extended period of time is an extraordinary commitment to make—emotionally, culturally and physically. Likewise, it is a big step for an international student to leave their home country for an educational and social immersion experience abroad. There are a lot of unknowns on both sides of the equation. One thing we do know, however, is that hosting an international student is a valuable cultural and social experience which will enrich not just your family, but also change your student’s life forever.

The goal of this Host Family Handbook is to provide you guidelines and helpful tips as you welcome your international student into your home. We call these “guidelines” because one size never fits all. However, please remember that your formal obligations as a Host Family are set out in your Host Family Contract with Global Bridge Associates.





## HOST FAMILY EXPECTATIONS

All host families are expected to provide a warm, secure and healthy environment for their students. They require extra care since they are adapting to a new country, language and customs with which they are unfamiliar. As a host family, it is important that you be enthusiastic about cultural diversity and embrace the efforts of your student. You are a surrogate for their natural family.

Regardless of the culture of your student, it is important to remember that you will be housing a teenager who is unlikely to meet the same expectations as those you have for your own children currently in the home. First and foremost, it is important to recognize the commitment you make when welcoming your student into your life. Through your student, you are committing to understanding a culture outside of your own. This requires a mutual exchange of teachings, experiences and backgrounds. An important part of this process is setting expectations as your family and student adjust to one another.



## CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Your student will likely arrive with a very different set of cultural assumptions from your own. Those assumptions may seem strange or make you uncomfortable. Please remember that your student was raised in an environment very different from the one in which you live. This is your chance to exchange perspectives with them so that you can learn from one another. Your student may also have a very specific idea of what constitutes an “authentic Canadian family”—either from movies or books or the internet. They may be surprised when they learn that Canada is actually a melting pot of many different ethnic groups, cultures, and lifestyles. This melting pot includes non-traditional models of a nuclear family, such as single parents, same sex parents, and foster parents. If your student is from a conservative country, they may react negatively to nontraditional family units. One of the powers of cultural exchange is the opportunity to dispel negative myths and stereotypes, and your appreciation of diversity might help expand their understanding of what constitutes a family.

***Please note that if you are hosting more than one student, your students will be of the same gender. We do make an exception to this rule for siblings.***

## “CULTURE SHOCK”

The initial idea of cultural shock was theorized in the 1950s by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg. The state of culture shock is described as a feeling of uncertainty or anxiety that affects people immersed in new or different cultures. Oberg asserted that culture shock occurs in four stages: excitement (sometimes referred to as the “honeymoon phase”), discontentment, adjustment, and acceptance. Culture shock is common for those who have studied abroad or spent an extended period of time in another country. Your student may very well experience some symptoms of culture shock. A general awareness of the four states of culture shock is important so that you can help your student mitigate any struggles they may have.



## THE EXCITEMENT (HONEYMOON) PHASE

In this phase, everything seems new and exciting, and your student may be filled with a sense of euphoria. This euphoria is caused by the anticipation and preparation leading up to their arrival, as well as the novelty of their new environment. They may be filled with curiosity and excitement, making observations about their environment, and discovering new things. Like most honeymoon periods however, this stage eventually ends.

## THE DISCONTENTMENT PHASE

In this phase, the initial excitement and euphoria of the Excitement Phase subsides, and your student may start to realize and compare the differences between their own culture and their new life—both in your home and at school. This can lead to feelings of being an outsider or feeling out of place. During this phase, your student may exhibit symptoms such as unstable temperament. They may also become oversensitive and overreact to minor difficulties. It is important to be compassionate and patient with them during this period, as they are at a critical juncture in their acculturation.

## THE ADJUSTMENT PHASE

After a period of months, your student will hopefully enter into the Adjustment Phase. In this phase, their self-esteem improves, and they develop a more positive outlook on life. They gain a more balanced perspective on their experience abroad and begin to integrate more into their community. This phase is often accompanied by an improvement in language proficiency. During this phase your student will settle into a “normal” lifestyle and develop a better understanding of their surroundings. This phase marks a turning point in their experience as they start to feel more comfortable and adjusted in their new environment.

## THE ACCEPTANCE PHASE

Achieving this phase is the ultimate goal for your student. They will exhibit increased flexibility, motivation and self-confidence. This phase signifies that your student has successfully integrated into their new environment and has overcome the challenges faced in the preceding phases. At this point, they may be ready to fully participate in Canadian culture and embrace their newfound identity.



## THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF HOST FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

### PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

As with your own family members, it is crucial to establish clear expectations and boundaries with your student and their parents before arrival. This can be done virtually through platforms such as Zoom, Skype or FaceTime. Remember to consider their time zone when setting up these get-togethers. Topics of discussion might include your house rules, daily routines, and any cultural or dietary considerations. It is important to listen to and address, as best you can, the concerns your student and their family might have. If you do not feel qualified to address these concerns, please contact us for support.



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## PRE-ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

- Prepare a single private bedroom with a comfortable bed, a dresser and/or closet, bed linens, lamp and desk. The bedroom must have a window and a door for privacy.
- Assemble a folder containing all important student documentation, including your student's medical and insurance information.
- Be sure to review your student's medical history, meal requests and potential allergies or food restrictions.
- Download WeChat, Kakao or similar phone applications to communicate with your student and their family.
- Confirm your student's arrival information. You may also want to send them a welcome email.
- Make sure your student has your mobile phone number and home address, and both of Global Bridge Associates's contact numbers +1 (833) INFO GBA and +1 (833) 463-6422.

## ARRIVAL

Personally welcoming your student at the airport lends stability to the arrival experience and relieves some stress for both your student and their family back home. Once you are with your student at the airport, take an arrival photo and have your student send it to their family. It's a great way to let them know their child has arrived safely. We would love to see a picture too!

***If for some reason a member of your family cannot greet your student at the airport, please contact us so that we can make alternative arrangements.***





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## GETTING TO KNOW YOUR HOME CHECKLIST

- Review safety procedures and emergency contact information (alarm systems, 9-1-1 calls to police, fire and ambulance, phone numbers of family members, phone number of Global Bridge Associates, etc.). Post the emergency contact information somewhere easily visible in the home and have your student add these numbers to their contacts on their mobile phone.
- Review fire escape information and carbon monoxide and smoke detector sounds, which should be demonstrated and explained.
- Review your HOUSE RULES with your student in detail and give them a copy for their future reference. A sample copy of HOUSE RULES can be found at the end of this Handbook.
- Give your student a tour of your house, explaining how things work and where they are kept.



## FOOD & MEALS

It is your responsibility to provide all needed meals to your student. Any food allergies disclosed by your student prior to the commencement of the homestay must be accommodated to ensure the safety of your student. A written record of any such accommodation must be provided to Global Bridge Associates at least 10 days prior to the beginning of the homestay.

**Breakfast:** Breakfast should be available to your student every day. Either prepared or self-made breakfasts on school days are permissible. Since your student may not be accustomed to cereal or cold breakfast, you should explain the characteristics of Canadian style breakfasts.

**Lunch:** You will prepare a sack lunch for your student on days when needed. If lunch is provided at school for free, or if your student wishes to purchase lunch at school, you are not obligated to provide lunch.

**Dinner:** Dinner should be prepared nightly. When your family is not home to prepare dinner, there should be food available for your student if they are not participating in your plans.

**Restaurants:** From time to time, you may want to invite your student out for meals. It is appropriate for you to cover the cost of your student's meal. If for some reason your student is going to be responsible for the cost of their meal, they should be given plenty of notice in advance and the ability to comfortably opt out of the excursion.



## TRANSPORTATION

You are responsible for transporting your student to and from school and school-related activities, such as after school clubs or community service. If necessary, you may arrange carpooling, as needed, for student transport to school and extracurricular activities. Transportation options that exceed more than one hour one-way may be considered excessive and need to be modified.

Your student may only use Rideshare Providers if their parent or guardian has executed the Global Bridge Associates Student Rideshare Waiver Form. Rideshare Providers include Lyft, Uber, taxis and/or private carpool arrangements.

You are under no obligation to allow your student to drive. However, if your student's school permits students to drive to and from school and school-related activities, and your student wants to obtain a driver's license, they must first have permission from their parents before you can assist them in obtaining a driver's license. Your student would be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the car they use, as well as secure their own automobile insurance policy. You are also not required to provide a parking space on your property.

## MEDICAL

Your student will arrive at the homestay having purchased health insurance coverage for the duration of their program. You are responsible for knowing the terms of their plan.

You should take your student to all medical-related appointments and, of course, Urgent Care or the Emergency Room if the need arises. Be sure to have their insurance card on hand, as well as your copy of the Global Bridge Associates Delegation of Authority Form.

You should be aware of all the medications your student has brought with them from their home country. They will be responsible for self-administering their prescription medication. If you find your student is sharing, selling, or trading prescription medications, or abusing or misusing their own medication, you should immediately contact us. Such behavior could result in immediate expulsion from our program and/or school.

## RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

You should feel comfortable inviting your student to attend your worship services. It is okay to share your faith so long as your student expresses an interest and wants to go. It is inappropriate to push your religion on them. Please respect their personal beliefs and culture.

## BANK ACCOUNTS

The minimum age at which a student can open a bank account varies by state. If your student wants to open a bank account, you should confirm they have parental approval to do so. If they are too young to open their own bank account, you will need to coordinate with us and your student's parents to find an appropriate solution.

You should not open a joint bank account with your student, nor should you commingle your money with theirs in any way. Additionally, money can be an uncomfortable subject for a young person to raise in an unfamiliar environment, so you should periodically check in with your student to make sure they have sufficient personal funds on hand for their needs.



## ILLEGAL & IMPERMISSIBLE ACTIVITIES

Any of the following activities may result in the immediate expulsion of your student from their Global Bridge Associates program:

- Possession of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Possession of drug paraphernalia
- Possession of alcohol container
- Possession or use of tobacco products (including vaping products)

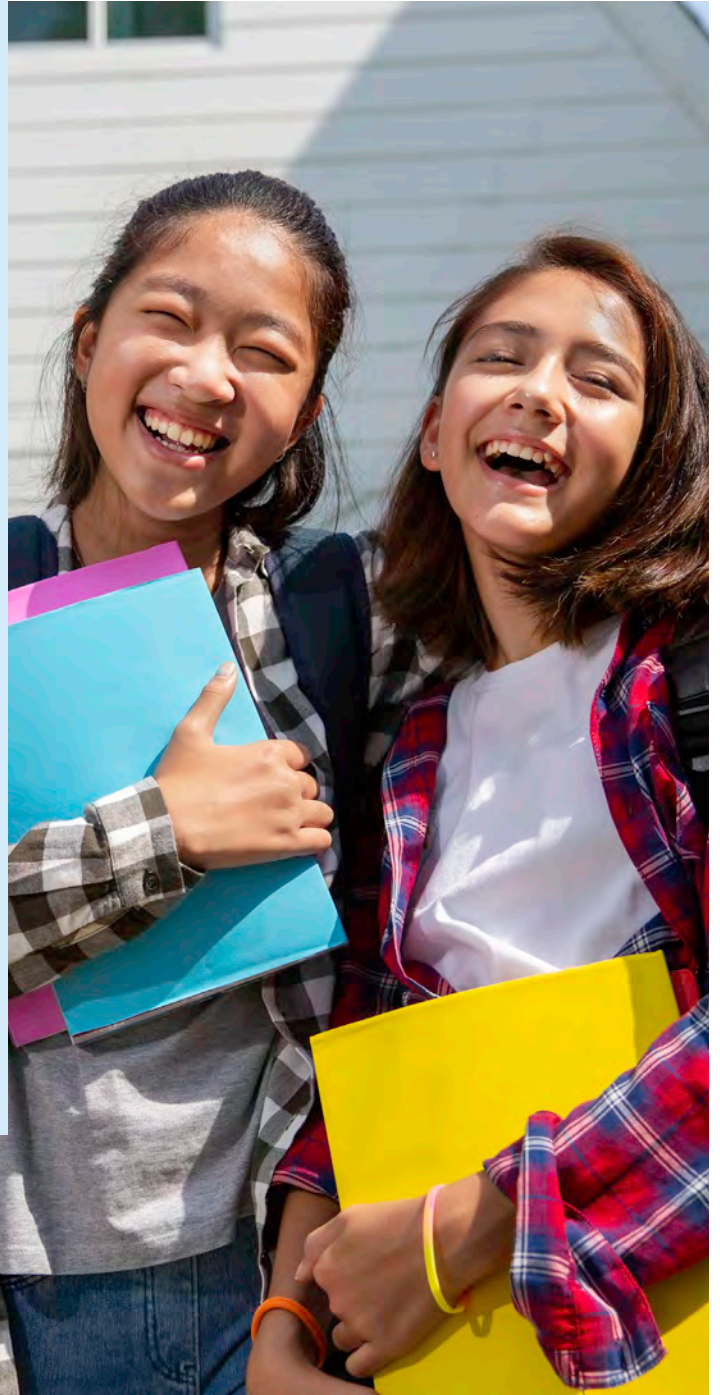


## ACTIVITIES & INTERACTION

The primary goals in placing an international student within a host family environment are to teach that student the homestay country's culture and language. Therefore, it is important to include your student in family activities and encourage them to participate in family conversations.

You must also:

- Offer at least one family activity per month and provide photos to Global Bridge Associates.
- Invite your student to share in your Canadian holiday celebrations.
- Encourage your student to participate in events and interact with English-speaking friends.
- Spend at least 30 minutes each day in social conversation with your student to help them improve their English proficiency and pronunciation.



## RULES & GUIDELINES

- **House Rules:** Write out a list of important house rules based on the sample HOUSE RULES template found at the end of this Handbook. These are rules that apply to all members of your family. Review the rules with your student upon their arrival, and please provide Global Bridge Associates with a copy of your family's House Rules signed by your student.
- **Utilities:** Your student must be provided with reasonable usage of utilities (electricity, heat, and water) at no additional charge.
- **Internet:** You must provide your student with high-speed internet access sufficient for schoolwork and personal use (including contacting relatives).
- **Home Safety:** You must instruct your student on where to go and who to contact in the event of an emergency, and show them how to operate any door locks or security systems in the home. Additionally, please test and make sure all fire and carbon monoxide detectors are in good working order prior to the commencement of the homestay.
- **Bathroom:** Please explain to your student how to use the shower or bath in your home. You should also explain the appropriate length of time for showers or baths, and provide basic toiletries such as soap, towels, and toilet paper. Your student will be responsible for other personal hygiene products.



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- **Bedroom:** Please demonstrate for your student how to make a bed with covers to sleep under (sheets, not comforter), how often sheets are to be washed, and by whom.
- **Laundry:** You should explain who does the laundry in the household, how often, and make sure laundry detergent is available.
- **Kitchen:** You should explain how to use the microwave, stove, oven and refrigerator. A small storage space in the kitchen should be made available for some of your student's foods. Do not allow your student to cook alone until it is clear they are very capable. Clear instructions should be posted on how to use your kitchen appliances.
- **Shopping:** You should provide an opportunity for replenishing toiletries, snacks, and other shopping needs your student may have (including prescription medications).
- **Schedules:** Please explain to your student the expected schedule for meals, bedtime, and school. You should also explain general expectations you have for bathing.
- **Cleaning:** You should allow your student to use the family vacuum cleaner and cleaning products to clean their bedroom and bathroom at any time.





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## COMMUNICATION

Communication is key to a successful homestay experience, and you need to communicate with Global Bridge Associates in a timely manner. You also need to ensure your student is available for contact by us at all times (either through you or on their mobile phone).

Due to issues of legal liability, direct communication between you (the host family) and your student's family members, relatives and/or agents during the homestay is strictly forbidden. Please immediately direct all communication received from your student's family, relatives, or agents to us.

If your student has a mobile phone during their homestay, they must notify both Global Bridge Associates and you of their phone number. You and your student should reach mutually agreeable rules related to their phone and its use.

## CONFLICTS

Conflicts naturally occur within households. As you are the authority in your own home, it is important for you to work out any problems which arise directly with your student. If you are unable to make sufficient progress, please reach out to us in a timely manner so we can assist you.

## HOLIDAY AND SHORT-TERM TRAVEL

Unless you offer to pay for your student's travel, they are responsible for their own travel costs. If they want to travel within Canada or internationally, you need to contact us for the appropriate approvals. Specifically, your student must complete and submit to us a Travel Permission Form 14 days prior to any travel outside of your state, and 30 days prior for any travel outside Canada. Such travel is not authorized unless you have written approval from us.

Remember to think of your student as your own child, and use that same care and discretion in approving shorter, local overnight stays.

If you choose to travel without your student, you should notify us at least 30 days in advance to ensure the availability of an appropriate temporary homestay arrangement.





## HOST FAMILY REQUIREMENTS

- You must inform us of any material changes in status of your student or your family, including but not limited to a change in address, adults over the age of 18 moving into the home, finances, employment, environmental dangers, natural disasters, accidents, and/or criminal arrests.
- You have an exclusive relationship with Global Bridge Associates if you are hosting one of our students. You may not host a student from any other agency while hosting a Global Bridge Associates student.
- You must ensure that your student does not take friends into their bedroom without your permission.
- Your student may not stay home alone overnight. If you plan to travel without your student you must contact GBA prior to your departure.
- If your student requests to spend the night at a friend's house you must contact GBA for approval.
- You may not allow your student's direct family members, relatives and/or agents to stay overnight in your home.
- You must ensure that your student safely maintains possession of all government issued documents (i.e., passports, visa, etc.).



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- You may not permit your student to leave their belongings in your home after they vacate the premises over the summer, or permanently, without written permission from us. Otherwise, you may be held responsible for loss or damages to your student's belongings.
- Any individual residing in your home over the age of 17 must submit to complete background checks by us.
- You are required to allow monthly in-home visits by us.
- Everyone residing in the home over the age of 17 must complete the mandated reporter training and submit their completion of training certificates to [admin@gba-us.com](mailto:admin@gba-us.com)
- You and your family may be required to complete additional training during the homestay to comply with changing program standards.
- ***You shall NOT disclose the stipend amount paid to you by us to your student or their direct family members, relatives and/or agents, or other Global Bridge Associates host families. Violation of this provision will result in immediate termination and future permanent suspension from all Global Bridge Associates programs.***
- You cannot make any financial commitment on behalf of your student (e.g., mobile phone, bank account, medical payment, contract), and you cannot loan to or borrow money from your student.
- You cannot charge any fee to your student for any reason without prior approval by us. However, your student should pay for all school-related items such as uniforms, books, supplies and field trips. You may need to remind them of these responsibilities at the beginning of their homestay so that expectations are clearly set up front.
- You must inform your student's school by 9:00am on any day that your student is ill and unable to attend class or participate in any extracurricular activities.
- You must immediately notify us of any damage to your home, including photos and written estimates for repairs. Students carry third-party liability insurance and will be responsible for any damage they may cause. If your student leaves damage to your home at move out, such damage must be documented during the check-out inspection.
- ***You may not, under any circumstances, supply alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs to any students or minors, or permit students or minors in your care to consume alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs.***

## SAMPLE HOUSE RULES

### YOUR BEDROOM

- You are expected to keep your room neat and clean. We will provide cleaning supplies.
- Please vacuum and dust your room weekly.
- Please empty the trash can in your room when it is full.
- Please do not keep any food or dishes in your room. Dishes used in your room should be returned to the kitchen immediately after use.
- Please make your bed daily.
- Please ask for permission from us before purchasing additional items or furniture for your bedroom.

### HOST FAMILY BEDROOMS

- Please respect the bedrooms and belongings of other family members.
- Please ask permission to use or remove any personal items belonging to others.
- Please respect the privacy of a closed bedroom door.

### SHARED LIVING AREAS

- Please keep shared living areas tidy and pick up all personal items such as books, backpacks, clothing, etc.
- Please turn off all lights after leaving a room.
- Please ask for permission before changing the thermostat.



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## KITCHEN

- You may use the microwave, stove and oven once you have been shown how to do so.
- We will show you how to load the dishwasher and how to run it.
- You may not cook unless an adult is home with you.
- You may snack in the kitchen, but please clean up counters and dishes after use.
- Please take out the kitchen trash if you find it full.

## MEALS & SNACKS

- Please wash your hands with soap and water before each meal or handling food.
- Please follow our morning breakfast routine before school, for example:
  - *Each morning you can help yourself to cereal, yogurt and berries, or toast with cheese.*
  - *In the morning we will make you a hot breakfast choice of either eggs with toast or oatmeal.*
- Please follow our daily dinner routine before school, for example:
  - *We eat our dinner together as a family.*
  - *The kids eat together earlier in the evening. Due to the parents' work schedule, the adults eat separately later in the evening.*
  - *Please do not snack before dinner.*
  - *Please do not come to the dinner table without shoes.*
- Our weekend eating routine will vary depending on the family schedule.
- Please clear your own plate after eating meals.
- Please help out with kitchen chores, such as setting the table before a meal and loading the dishwasher after a meal.
- If you don't recognize an item in the refrigerator, please ask for permission before eating it.
- If our household snacks are not sufficient, please let us know what you would like or need.
- If school serves lunch, we expect you to eat at school. If not, we will prepare a lunch for you to bring to school.
- It is our responsibility to make sure that you have a healthy balanced diet, so we will encourage you to eat accordingly.



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## PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Please shower or bathe regularly using your own personal toiletries.
- All of your personal hygiene items should be kept either in your room or on the bathroom shelf assigned to you. Please do not leave these items scattered around the bathroom.
- Please wash your hands with soap and water after each toilet use.
- Please use deodorant and brush your teeth daily.
- (For female students) Feminine supplies are your responsibility, and we will explain to you the proper disposal of such items.
- Please maintain a tidy appearance, including your hair.

## BATHROOM USE

- Please be considerate of others and limit yourself to [insert number] minutes in the bathroom at a time.
- Please clean up after each bathroom use.
- Please hang up your towel after use, or put in the laundry hamper if completely dry.
- Please tidy the sink and dry the floor area (as needed) after you use the bathroom.
- Always flush the toilet after each use and place the seat cover down.
- The shower will be available for your use daily after [insert time] a.m. and before [insert time] p.m.
- Please remember other family members' needs if there is a limited amount of hot water available.

## LAUNDRY

- You will be responsible for doing your own laundry.
- We will show you how to use the clothes washer and dryer and provide detergent to you.
- Please place your dirty clothes and dry dirty towels into your hamper in between washings.
- It is your responsibility to fold and put away your clean clothes after they are washed.
- You will have two sets of sheets, so a clean set will always be in reserve. You are in charge of changing your sheets weekly.

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## TYPICAL SCHOOL-DAY SCHEDULE

- Breakfast should be completed by 7:00 a.m.
- We leave for school at 7:30 a.m.
- Confirm the afternoon schedule with us prior to departing for school.
- After school activities are from 3:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Begin homework during this period if there is time.
- Dinner begins between 6:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., followed by homework as needed.
- Lights out by 11:00 p.m. at the latest.

## COMPUTER AND PRINTER USE

- Do not use anyone else's computer without their permission.
- Computer and internet use is only allowed from [insert time] a.m. to [insert time] p.m. We will make exceptions if needed for homework or contacting your family back home.
- You may not download any new or updated programs on our computers without asking permission first.
- You may not access ANY adult content or pornography on any computer in our house.
- Please use our printer sparingly. We may ask you to help purchase printer ink if your use is excessive.

## HOMEWORK

- Homework is a very important part of your weekday routine.
- Get a jump start on homework right after school if a later activity is scheduled.
- Watching TV, playing video games and non-homework computer use is only allowed AFTER all of your homework is completed.
- We are happy to help you with your homework, but please do not wait until the end of the evening to ask for help.

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## PHONE USAGE

- All long-distance calls must be made using your own calling card, mobile phone or the internet.
- Please do not use your mobile phone for talking or texting after 11:00 p.m.
- Please keep your mobile phone charged and on at all times (subject to your school's rules). Your safety is our responsibility, and we need to be able to reach you when necessary.
- We will set up a location tracker on your mobile phone when you arrive so that we can locate you in case of emergency. Please do not disable this capability during your homestay.

## TV/VIDEO GAMES

- You may not watch TV or play video games until your homework is completed. This includes such activities on your phone.
- School is your first priority. Therefore, the time you spend watching TV or playing video games should be limited. The more time you spend in front of a screen, the less time you are spending learning our culture and integrating with our family and community.

## YOUR MONEY

- Please manage your money with care. If you are struggling to manage your money, please reach out to us so that we can give you guidance.
- You may not borrow money from anyone.
- You should not allow anyone to use your credit card or debit/ATM card. Please make sure to keep these cards safe and secure at all times.
- Using cash apps can be convenient, but they also carry some risks. Be careful and follow best practices to help you use these apps safely and securely.

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## SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

- Any special school activities need to be coordinated with us in advance. We will do our best to accommodate you, but please understand that there are other members of our family who may have conflicting plans.
- We would appreciate as much notice as possible for plans that do not include our family, such as going over to someone's house for dinner or going to a movie with a friend.
- If you need transportation from us, please try to give us at least 24 hours notice in advance.

## FREE TIME AND WEEKENDS

- We want you to enjoy your free time, and encourage you to identify places you would like to go and things you would like to do while staying with us. We will do our best to make those activities happen.
- Except on special occasions, on Friday and Saturday nights you should be in your room ready for bed by [insert time] p.m.
- [Optional] We attend church on most Sundays. You are welcome to join us. If you prefer not to participate, just let us know 24 hours in advance.

## END OF SCHOOL DEPARTURE

- At the end of the school year, please clean your room and return it to its original condition.
- Please pack up all of your belongings in your luggage and take them with you on your trip back home.
- You may not leave any luggage or belongings with us.
- If you would like to store luggage or belongings during the Summer, we can discuss storage options. We do not assume responsibility for any items left after your departure from our home. You are solely responsible for the security and contents of your stored items.



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## REMINDERS

- Please ask for permission before you invite friends to visit our home. We prefer to be home when you have visitors.
- Your friends will also be expected to follow our house rules.
- You will be asked to help out with household chores.
- Please do not make plans, including travel plans, without first checking with us.
- Please ask for permission before you leave our house. Your safety is our responsibility and we need to know where you are at all times.
- You may never bring alcohol, drugs, or tobacco into our house.
- Please respect the privacy of others in our house.
- Always ask for permission if you want to use someone else's property.
- We ask that you always speak English when in our home. This will help you improve your language proficiency.

## OTHER FAMILY RULES

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