

Homestay Host Family Orientation Booklet



Introduction

International Student Care Australia (ISCA) would like to express our genuine appreciation to you for opening your hearts and your home to an international student. This is a unique opportunity for a young international student to be part of an Australian family and enjoy the Australian way of life. We hope you will encourage your student to become a member of your family in every way. This booklet is designed to give you some practical guidelines to help you prepare for, adjust to, learn from and enjoy your international student. Your kindness and generosity will help build wonderful memories that will last a lifetime for both you and your student. It will enable you to have a greater understanding and appreciation of international cultures and values. So, relax and enjoy!

If there is anything our staff can do, at any time, to assist you in preparing for, or caring for one of our students, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are available to help you!

Mission Statement

It is the goal of ISCA to create safe environments for Homestay Students and an environment in which they can successfully pursue their academic careers and personal development.

Statement of Commitment

ISCA believes all Homestay Students have the right to feel safe from harm, be listened to, be involved in decisions that affect them, have their cultural values respected, not be unjustly discriminated against on the basis of their status, activities, expressed opinions or beliefs of their parents or carers, and have their best interests considered.

Code of Conduct

All our homestay host families must comply with ISCA's Code of Conduct. If you wish to have a copy of this document, you can ring the office to request a copy to be mailed to you.

Risk Management (Child Protection) Plan

To ensure compliance with Queensland State Government legislation, ISCA has developed a Risk Management (Child Protection) Plan that applies to all our families and partners. To read this document, you can request a hard copy to be mailed to you by telephoning the office.

Contact details

ISCA Office 24 Reginald Ave, Arana Hills Qld 4054
Telephone: 3851 0704; Facsimile: 3851 4047

Postal Address

E-mail: isca@isca.net.au
P O Box 134, Arana Hills Qld 4054

Director

John Coade
Email: isca@isca.net.au

Homestay Accommodation Manager

Robyn Phillips
Email: robyn@isca.net.au

Emergency Contact

3851 00704 (9.00 am – 5.00 pm Monday to Friday)
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John: 0427 269 360

FIRST THINGS FIRST ...

Remember, there is no set formula to follow to make your student feel happy and welcome in your home. However, you may want to try some of the following ideas to make you and your student feel at home with each other:

- A welcome sign at your door or in his or her bedroom will set the stage and let your student know you are glad he or she is there.
- Find out what your student's preferred name or nickname is – and have everyone practise pronouncing it.
- Help your student talk. Keep talking – slowly (but not loudly!) – they don't need to understand every word to get the idea.
- Point out vocabulary words around the house – “your bed”, “towel”, “bathroom”, “dog”, “tree”, “garage”, etc.
- Take a walk around your neighbourhood to help your student locate the house and feel comfortable in the area. Draw a map showing your home, school, friends, shops, bus stops etc.
- Help your student pronounce your street name, address and family name. Write them down so that your student can keep it in his or her wallet at all times. Recommend he or she memorises your telephone number and understands how a pay phone works. If your student has a mobile phone ensure that you both exchange numbers.
- Encourage your student to go to bed early, especially in the first week to adjust to their new environment. It takes a lot of energy to concentrate on speaking English all the time in their new surroundings so encourage your student to have plenty of rest.

Anticipate their needs! There will be many things about your home and community that are unfamiliar to your student. If you can get into the habit of trying to put yourself in the student's shoes, you will be more helpful to your student in making the transition, and less frustrated over any



ON TO OTHER THINGS ...

Passport and International Ticket

Please encourage the student to keep these in a safe place in your home. ISCA is happy to keep these under lock & key on your behalf.

OVERSEAS Student Health Cover (OSHC)

Medicare is not available to an international student on a student or visitor visa. Instead, cover for students is called Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC). This is compulsory and organised by the student's school through Medibank Private. The school will pay the premium direct to Medibank Private and pass the membership card on to the student. If you need to take your student to visit a medical practitioner or doctor, the student should pay the account at the time of the visit and then claim a refund from Medibank Private using the membership card supplied to your student by their Australian school.

Illness

If the student becomes unwell, you may give them medication that is safe to take, provided they do not have known allergies; otherwise make an appointment and take them to see a doctor who may prescribe medication. If the student needs any emergency procedure, please contact ISCA immediately who will contact the student's agent and/or their natural parents.

HYGIENE

Every culture has different standards of cleanliness. For example, bathing once a week may be socially acceptable in some countries, however, you need to tell the student that in Australia, we normally bathe daily.

Let your student know that Australia is a very dry country and water is scarce and it is expected that people will not spend a lot of time in the shower. You should also stress that Australia is currently experiencing a drought and everyone needs to conserve water, such as by turning off the tap while cleaning teeth and taking short showers. Let them know what length of time is acceptable in the shower.

Manners

Remind your homestay student to use 'please' and say 'thank you' when appropriate. In general, manners are important to Australians, but something that is not considered rude in some countries may sound rude or abrupt to us.

Communication

Speak slowly and clearly and try not to use broken English. Avoid falling into the trap of talking louder when addressing the international student. Be prepared to rephrase your questions or statements to make it easier for them to understand. Having a dictionary around may be handy.



Your student is a child in a foreign country and will require your assistance to visit a medical centre or doctor



If you don't understand something, please ask!

Interaction with the family

It is important for you to encourage the student to become part of your family and a great way of doing this is by getting them involved in your daily activities. For example shopping, visiting relatives or trips away. You may ask the student to pay for activities such as excursions, movies and other forms of entertainment. Generally, ISCA advises that the international student should become part of the Australian family. In this way, the host family and the student will have a happy time and the student will return to their homeland after a most enjoyable cultural experience.

Handling Problems and Issues

For various reasons or at certain times (anniversaries, birthdays, Christmas etc), the homestay student may be missing home. ISCA personnel are available 24 hours-a-day to assist both the international student and the Australian homestay family during these times. Here are some suggestions that may help:

- explain your daily routine to the homestay student in detail; and
- help the student to assimilate into your family life, not to isolate himself/herself from other people during difficult times. Make yourself available for them.

HOUSE RULES

If you're like most of us, you probably don't think about your house rules. They're so familiar to you that they're just part of your life. You will need to think about them and it's important to make clear what you expect from your student from the beginning. The more predictable you can make the student's environment, the less stressful his or her adjustment will be. The clearer you are in your own mind about what behaviour is important to you and why, the easier it will be to get your student to accept your (foreign to your student) patterns. You will also find it more comfortable for you to compromise on things that matter less.

Chores

The student is expected to help with housework just like other members of the family. Give the student a roster or set of chores to help you with, like taking a turn in setting the table at night for the evening meal, washing and drying dishes and feeding the family pets. If other family members prepare their own lunch and breakfast, soon after your student arrives, encourage and show them how to also make their own. Speak with your homestay student to explain your household routine.



Laundry

Discuss your washing/laundry routine, eg the days of the week you do laundry. If your student prefers to wash their own clothes, show them how, when and where to do so. We have found it is good for a student to do their own ironing.

Saving Electricity

Point out to the student that Australians are very energy-conscious and considerate of the environment. Ideas to assist your student to help save electricity are:

- Turning off the light in their room when they leave the room.
- Turning off a heater, fan or air conditioner when they leave the room. You may need to explain the use of these electrical items to the student.
- Turning off the television or stereo if they are the last one to leave the room.

Mobile Phone

Please ask your student to keep the phone turned on at all times when out of the house, after school hours. Keeping the phone charged is important and ensure there is “credit” on the phone.

Using the Internet

Please let them know your house rules for Internet usage. Encourage the student to seek permission from you and obey house rules regarding Internet use. Here are some helpful guidelines you may give your student:

- use only at the time that is appropriate and under the conditions allowed
- exercise caution with internet sites accessed by the student as accessing insecure sites,.
- avoid visiting sites which maybe considered inappropriate by the household.
- do not download any amounts of information, video streaming, music and flashcards on their laptop.

Curfew times

During the school week, your student should travel home directly from school (perhaps a quick trip to the shops, if necessary) but basically, students should not be at a shopping centre for any length of time wearing their school uniform. From Sunday to Saturday nights, students should always be home by dark (remembering this differs from Summer with the longer days to Winter with the shorter daylight hours);

If a special social activity is planned and approved by the school in advance (eg a birthday party with school friends), 10pm is the curfew time, and a student should be picked up rather than catch public transport from the venue. Prior to the activity, the host family should make contact with the person arranging the activity to ensure there will be suitable and adequate supervision, and obtain name/address and contact phone numbers;

Getting a lift from P plate driver

Because of safety issues, an international student may not drive as the passenger in a vehicle driven by any ‘P’ plate driver (including a member of your homestay family);

Going out with friends

When planning to go out with their friends, the student must always discuss and ask permission from the host family first. You may be asked to assist with transportation somewhere, so ask the student to ensure this is organised in advance if possible. Advise the student to call you if their arrangement changes at all.

As a rule of thumb, the same rules applicable to members of your household of similar age group are applicable to the Homestay student unless specified otherwise by the student's school or college.

Remember, after all, the student is still a child and someone else's child. You are the person responsible for them, their protector and primary care giver, and must exercise all precautions and safety standards as you would with members of your own family.

Students should be home no later than 6pm on Sunday to Thursday nights; and no later than 10pm on Friday and Saturday nights. Please encourage your student to keep in contact with you when they are out; travelling home etc. When appropriate please pick up your student in the evening.

TRAVEL – OVERNIGHT OR MORE

The homestay family **MUST** notify ISCA if the correct procedure has been followed and approval given by school to sleep away from the homestay family - even if it is just an overnight stay or if you are travelling with your host family. Under current legislation, ISCA needs to keep track of your whereabouts at all times.

Irrespective of age (high school students who are under or over 18 years of age), sleepovers with friends is not encouraged. Unless prior arrangements have been made, forms signed and permission granted, students are not permitted to travel and stay overnight away from their homestay family home. ISCA also requires notification that a student will be away from their homestay family after the correct procedure has been followed and permission granted. The host family must be involved in the arrangements regarding transport, pick up etc. A day trip (eg to the Gold Coast) arriving home before dark is permitted. It is essential that you know where your student is at ALL times; If students wish to undertake any holiday travel during their program, they must notify, and provide details to, the staff at their school at least two weeks before they travel. If the school does not approve the travel for safety reasons, because it affects attendance, or creates a visa problem, permission will not be given, even if the natural parents have agreed in writing.

Students should ask the school for an "International Student Travel Request Form." This form needs to be signed by the student's parents, education agent (ie, ISCA), and the homestay family for all travelling requiring an overnight stay. This form should be lodged with the school's International Student Co-Ordinator at least two weeks before travelling. Students must provide contact details and a proposed itinerary as part of their travel request. The travel must then be approved by the school principal. Students must ensure that they return to school on time to start the new term.



When in doubt, ask yourself
"if I had a daughter of this age,
would I allow her to be out
this late?"

Failure to comply with this procedure may result in the student's enrolment in school AND their student visa being cancelled.

Examples of travel proposals that may be approved include travel:

- in supervised groups arranged by the student's educational agent, ISCA, the school or a commercial/volunteer organisation (e.g. church organisation)
- with their parents or a close relative approved by their parents
- with their host parents
- to stay with other approved ISCA / School host families

Examples of travel that will not be approved include travel:

- by hitchhiking
- **in a car driven by a person under the age of 18 years or any "P Plate" driver**
- solely in the company of under 21 years of age
- attending unsuitable events

Family holidays

If you plan to take the homestay student away on a family holiday, please let ISCA know where you are going and how we can contact you should an emergency arise.

Visit by the student's natural parents

The student is expected to advise you in advance if and when their natural parents are planning to visit them. Please make an effort to meet with them if your busy routine permits.

Safety and security

- Hitch-hiking – tell them it is NEVER safe to accept a lift from a stranger
- Mobile Phones – make sure you exchange phone numbers with your student in case of an emergency. Remind your student to always keep credit on their phone; and to make sure the battery is charged to ensure contact can always be made.

House key	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give student a key to the house and explain any security system or measures • Give student a slip of paper for the wallet with your name, address and phone number
Town map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your student on a walking and driving tour of your community • Bus/public transportation • Shopping • School and Library • Post Office • Friends' homes • If the student will be using a bike, go over the rules of riding • Help your student understand what to do if he or she gets lost • Make an informal map locating key places
House tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common areas for all to use • Private areas which need permission • The bathroom (explain how things work) • The laundry room and dirty laundry (who does it and when?)
Kitchen and meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What time are meals? What are your expectations about promptness? • Who fixes which meals? • Does everyone make his or her own breakfast? • Who cleans up after meals? • What is okay to eat from the refrigerator? • Where in the house may food be eaten?
Personal safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss thoroughly anything the student should be careful about, such as walking home, carrying money, areas /times to avoid, etc • Keep ISCA's and host family's contact details in student's wallet and mobile • Remind student to keep credit on mobile phone • Remind student to always keep battery charged on mobile phone • Your neighbourhood will be different from your student's, so be explicit. • Explain the road rules, particularly crossing the road. Remember, your student probably comes from a country where drivers drive on the opposite side so tell them to look to the right, look to the left, then look to the right again!
Personal hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baths and changing clothes need not be embarrassing topics if they are approached early and in terms of your family's customs • In Australia it is normal for people to bathe daily Important note: please explain to your student that Australia is currently experiencing a severe drought and they are to conserve water at all times. Tell them to take short showers and turn off the tap while cleaning their teeth. Advise them of the Council's current water restrictions.
Chores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your student know what you expect regarding his or her room

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it's important to you, make clear that belongings are to be picked up and the bed made daily • It is reasonable to expect that your student help with household chores. You may need to remind them!
Family schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go over your family routine carefully, in simple English, during the first few days and then again after a week. You may need to remind your student about various things as they occur. • Write a sample typical daily schedule so that he or she knows when you usually go to bed, get up and eat meals • Does your weekend routine differ from weekdays? Do you attend church or other place of worship? Do you sleep late? • Think about how you expect your student to fit into your schedule so you have enough hot water and bathrooms to accommodate early schedules.
Money management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help your student open a bank account and explain where the nearest ATMs are located • Each student is expected to have spending money • Help your student to make decisions on how to spend money and what to buy
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out what your student wants to do about religious observance. If he or she does not want to attend church, this must be his or her choice • An interesting alternative could be for your student to visit a variety of churches or places of worship, not necessarily as a religious experience, but as an intellectual or cultural one. If he or she is interested, you may be able to make arrangements through friends of other faiths or by inquiring at different local churches • It may prove enjoyable and educational for your student to participate in youth groups or social activities in a church or place of worship.
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist your student to get school uniforms and books when he or she first arrives. Advise them to buy second-hand uniforms if possible. • Show your student the route to school or accompany them for the first couple of days until they are familiar with the route • Be available to attend special school functions, parent teacher interviews, musical evenings, etc.
Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book an appointment with a local doctor and take your student to the doctor's surgery if they require medical assistance. Please do not expect the student to get there on his or her own. • Take appropriate action when a student is not recovering from what may appear to be even mild symptoms of illness – it could be more serious than you think.

Travel and visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone ISCA when your student is planning an overnight visit to a friend's home • Follow the procedure for travel if your student wishes to stay away from your home • Provide assistance with travel if your student needs to come back home late after an approved outing, school function or extra-curricular activity
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Keys to a successful stay

COMMUNICATION and openness are both big keys to a successful relationship with your homestay student. Treat them as a member of your own family and expect them to treat your home as their own. Courtesy both ways helps too!

Help your student to enjoy their time in Australia and encourage them to become your friend and we promise you that the rewards will be equally great on both sides.



Have lots of fun
with your student!

Remember, ISCA personnel are available 24/7 to assist you with any issues you may have. We are happy to mediate and try to resolve any misunderstandings. But let's hope for the best and may your student's visit be trouble free!

**24 hour contact number
0427 269 360 / 0438 424 988**