



Homestay Questions and Answers

Q: How are homestays selected?

A: We believe that homestay is the most important part of your stay in Canada. The Homestay Manager, who is responsible for the homestay program, will work hard to find you a suitable host family. We have many excellent host families to choose from and our Homestay Manager will try to find the family that best suits your requirements.

Q: How do I ensure that I get the type of family that I am looking for?

A: We do our best to match each student with the “right” family. To help us do this, we ask you to provide us with as much information as possible about yourself and what you are expecting from a host family. Are you looking for a big family with many children who will give you lots of attention or are you looking for a more private experience? Do you like to play sports? Do you like pets? What are your hobbies? Answering these questions can really help us find the best possible family for you. When applying for the school and our homestay program please feel free to tell us as much as possible about yourself!

Q: I am afraid of dogs. What if my family has a dog?

A: If we know in advance that you do not like dogs – you will not be placed in a home with dogs. Also, before you arrive you will be told of any pets that are in the home; you can notify us then and we will find you another home.

Q: Are any checks conducted to ensure my safety?

A: Yes. The Homestay Manager meets with the families before they are accepted. A criminal record check by the RCMP is a requirement as well as a home inspection. The Homestay Manager also meets with the student during the year to make sure they are happy and feeling safe and comfortable in their home. Salt Spring is also a community in which we all look out for one another—every student should feel safe here.

Q: Do I pay my homestay family?

A: You pay the program and we pay the homestay for you.

Q: Will I have my own room?

A: Yes. You will have a private bedroom.

Q: What does my monthly homestay fee include?

A: Your monthly homestay fee pays for room and board. You will be given a private bedroom with a door. You will be also given three meals daily. The homestay also provides or arranges transportation to school and activities as well as help with the student's arrival and departure.

Q: What should I expect to have in my room?

A: The bedroom will contain a bed, dresser, closet space, desk and lamp. Again each house is different, but you can expect to have a room in which you feel comfortable to sleep and study. That means your room will be clean, private and have a bed and small study area.

Q: Will I be expected to do chores?

A: To feel as though you are part of the family, it is suggested that you help out with minor chores. You would only do what other children in the family may do and it should never interfere with your studies. This is different with every homestay and is something that will be discussed upon your arrival. The families only want you to feel comfortable and so would never ask you to do something that you would not want to do. Keeping your room tidy, cleaning your share of the bathroom and washing up after you use the dishes are examples of what is commonly expected of students.

Q: What is Canadian food like?

A: Canada is a multicultural country and that is reflected in the food choices of many of our homes. The food you eat in Canada will most likely be quite different from what you eat in your home country. Every host family is different but you can probably expect the following:

Breakfast – cereal with milk, toast, juice and coffee or tea are standard. On the weekends, breakfast may be bigger and include eggs, waffles, pancakes, or bacon.

Lunch – most students pack their own lunch for school. Lunch usually includes a sandwich, a drink, some fruit and snacks like cookies.

Dinner — A family will often serve Italian one night, then Mexican, German, British, East Indian or Asian foods on the other nights. British Columbia is on the coast and so fish and seafood are always fresh. Beef and chicken are also common and all types of produce are available year round.

Q: What do I do if I don't like the food?

A: Talk to the family or if you are uncomfortable with that suggestion then talk with the homestay manager. She is there to help you and will find a way to explain to your homestay that you do not like the food in a way that will not hurt anyone's feelings.

Q: Will the host family drive me to school, to school events, or to visit friends?

A: The host family is required to drive you to school and school events or to help you catch the school bus. They will drive you to places you need to go — such as friend's homes and sporting events. Please understand that your homestay is not a taxi service though and you need to make sure it is convenient for them to drive you — if you give them enough notice it should never be a problem.

Q: If my host family invites me to go with them on a family outing will I be expected to pay for myself?

A: No, if it is a family outing then you are to be included. If it is to travel somewhere where there are large travel costs involved (such as a trip to Hawaii) then you are to help pay OR you can stay with a friend or a temporary homestay for no added cost. This would be your choice and you would never be required to pay for a trip unless you wanted to go.

Q: What happens if I need to see a doctor or dentist?

A: We have a doctor who will see you immediately and either your homestay or the homestay manager can set up an appointment for you or take you to the hospital if it is an emergency. Your medical fees cover this cost. If you need to see a dentist – the same applies except that your medical fees do not always cover this cost — you may have to pay for any dental work. It is suggested that you should go for a dental visit before coming to Canada.

Q: Do I need to have the British Columbia medical coverage?

A: All students, especially those in a graduation program, are required to have B.C. medical coverage. By law, any one who resides in British Columbia for six months or more must have provincial medical coverage.

Q: What services are covered by the British Columbia Medical Services Plan (MSP)?

A: Please see <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/msp/bc-residents/benefits> for complete details.

Q: According to the Health Services website site, an international student is expected to have interim medical insurance until they qualify for the British Columbia Medical Services Plan. Does the Gulf Islands International Program provide this interim medical coverage and what does it cover?

A: Yes, we provide interim coverage until the qualifying period is over. For complete details of the interim coverage, go to www.guard.me for more information.

Q. Can I expect to have a phone line, internet connection or television connection in my room?

A. Your homestay will provide basic internet access, but not a phone line or television. The costs for these items and a higher speed internet connection are beyond the fee you pay for homestay and if you request them you may have to pay towards it.

Q: I think I will be quite nervous about living with a new family. What can I expect to experience as I adjust to the family?

A. The first few weeks of living in a new country with a new family, will at times, be difficult for some. You may feel homesick and frustrated with your new environment and language. This is natural. Give yourself time to adjust to your new surroundings. You may go through what is called “culture shock”. If this happens it is best if you participate with the host family as much as possible. Also - feel free to talk with the Homestay Manager or the school’s counseling staff or peer counselors about what you are going through — they are there to help you.

Q: What tips can you give me to help me make the most of my homestay experience?

A: Communication, consideration and tolerance are the three most important things for a successful homestay experience. After all, cultural differences are just that – differences. Try to interact as much as possible with the family. Show them pictures of your home and family so they can get to know you better and ask them lots of questions. Homestays are always happy to help and they know they are vital in helping you understand our Canadian culture.

Q: Who are Homestay families?

A: Canada is a multicultural country made up of people from all over the world. There is wide variety among Canadian families, with different jobs, interests and ethnic backgrounds. Some Canadian families consist of a mother, father and children. There are also single parents with or without children, couples with no children, families with pets, and older, retired people who enjoy the company of international students.

Q: Is my host family responsible for all my meals or will I be expected to make my own meals?

A: This is something that you and your host family can discuss at the beginning of your stay as some students do like to do some cooking. The homestays are ready to prepare your breakfasts and dinners for you and to help you make up your lunch for school. Most students do put their own lunches together and often make their own breakfasts in the mornings as well. It is up to the individual and what they are comfortable with.

Q: What do I do if I am unhappy in my homestay?

A: The first step is to discuss the problem with your family and then the Homestay Manager, who is school based. We strongly believe that our students need to feel secure in their homestays if we expect them to succeed in school. The Homestay Manager will help mediate the process. Sometimes it is nothing more than a simple misunderstanding or a personality conflict. Every effort is made to match you with a Canadian family that is suited to your personality and lifestyle. Both students and families must realize that they are dealing with a new culture and both may need to make some compromises. Even if you are matched with a family that is different from what you expected, the homestay experience can be great. In unusual circumstances it may be necessary to move you to a new homestay.