



UNIVERSITY
of Prince Edward
ISLAND

**UPEI Homestay Service
Information Booklet**

**For International Students, and Students in the
UPEI English Language Studies Program**



Dear Students,

Welcome to the Homestay Program!

We are delighted that you have decided to become a member of the international family at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The enclosed information aims to address some questions you may have, and to provide you with some guidance in certain aspects of the Homestay program.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss your Homestay placement, or if you have any further questions.

I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

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Table of Contents

<u>HOMESTAY STUDENT'S CHECKLIST</u>	4
<u>HOMESTAY WITH A CANADIAN FAMILY</u>	5
<u>GENERAL INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS</u>	6
MEALS	6
EATING OUT	7
RECYCLING	8
LAUNDRY	8
USE OF THE FAMILY BATHROOM	8
PRIVACY	9
USE OF THE TELEPHONE	9
VISITING AWAY FROM THE HOST FAMILY'S HOME	10
SMOKING	10
LOCAL LAWS	10
PERFUME AND AFTERSHAVE LOTION	10
ENTERTAINING FRIENDS	11
HOUSE KEY	11
TEMPERATURE	11
CLOTHING	11
SPEAKING ENGLISH	12
<u>CULTURE SHOCK</u>	12
SYMPTOMS OF CULTURE SHOCK:	12
HOW TO ADJUST TO A NEW CULTURE:	13
TIPS FOR COPING WITH CULTURE SHOCK:	13

HOMESTAY STUDENT'S CHECKLIST

- Signed, dated, and submitted the Student Homestay Agreement, or the Minor Student Agreement to the University of Prince Edward Island.
- If I am under 18 years of age, I have had the Citizenship and Immigration Canada Custodianship Declaration form signed and notarized.
- Signed, dated, and submitted the Student Homestay Application to the University of Prince Edward Island.
- Submitted the Homestay application fee and the first and last month's Homestay fee to UPEI.
- Have provided my Homestay family with an emergency contact name and number.
- Have received information about my Homestay family from the UPEI Homestay Coordinator.
- Have reviewed the information on Canadian bank accounts, and have made all necessary preparations to have my money sent to Canada.
- Have provided my Homestay family and the Homestay Coordinator with my flight information (reconfirm one -week prior to leaving).
- Have reviewed the information about PEI weather and have packed accordingly, or have allocated funds to purchase clothes upon my arrival.

Homestay with a Canadian Family

Most students find that Homestay provides a unique opportunity to experience Canadian culture and to practice their English language skills. Families enjoy the chance to welcome students and to help them enjoy their stay on PEI.

There is no such thing as a “typical” Canadian family. The statistical average for a Canadian family is two parents with 1.7 children, but a family may also be a couple without children, or a single person, with or without children. Our host families are all really different. In many families both parents work outside of the home. We have families with pets such as cats or dogs, middle-aged families with grown-up children who have left home, retired individuals who enjoy having students stay in their home, and Homestay parents who have immigrated to Canada themselves and understand the difficulties of adjusting to a new culture. Canada is proud of its multicultural character.

Homestay is a cultural and linguistic experience and more than renting a room. It is also a business agreement involving a signed contract that outlines the roles and responsibilities of each party. You would have signed this agreement when you submitted your application. Copies of the Student Homestay Agreement form can be found on the International Relations Office webpage.

Students are expected to be independent and willing to adapt to the new culture and are encouraged to take part in family activities. With mutual respect and an open mind towards cultural differences, Homestay families and students often form long-lasting and deep friendships.

Enjoy your Homestay experience!

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Meals

The host family will provide 3 meals per day. Many students prepare their own breakfast, and pack their own lunch. Dinner is usually eaten together as a family. Healthy snacks should also be provided. Often the person home from school or work first is the one who begins preparation of the evening meal, but students should not be expected to cook entire meals unless he/she asks for the opportunity. Cooking equipment and methods are usually quite different than at home, so students should not use or be expected to use this equipment without being taught how. If you feel comfortable, you could offer to treat your host family to a meal from your native country.

Breakfast: A typical breakfast may consist of juice, fruit, yogurt, cereal, toast or bagel, coffee, tea, or milk. On weekends families often have “brunch” a combination of breakfast and lunch. For brunch, families may have bacon and eggs, pancakes, waffles, fruit salads and beverages.

Lunch: Students should be shown where the food is so he/she can pack a lunch and how to do so. Lunch is usually a sandwich, cookies, fruit and a beverage. Some students like to bring leftovers to heat up in a microwave at school. There are microwaves available on campus for students to use. They can be found in student lounges or in “the pit” in the Robertson Library building.

Dinner: Usually, dinner or supper is served between 5 o'clock and 7 o'clock depending on the work schedules of the host parent(s). Dinner is usually the largest meal of the day. Many families like to eat this meal together and talk about their day. Common dinner choices would be pasta dishes, meat and potatoes, rice and fish, stir-fry, or pizza. Students should let the host family know if he/she is going to be late for dinner so that it can be saved for him/her.

Life in Canada may be more informal than you are used to. After the first few days, many families may try to make you feel comfortable and welcome by saying something like, “make yourself at home,” or “just help yourself.” That means you are to consider yourself a member of the family and not wait to be invited to make yourself a snack or get a drink from the refrigerator.

Family members are expected to prepare some meals for themselves and to help with meal preparation and chores. The mother and father do not wait on the children. Everyone is expected to clean up after himself or herself.

It is not considered impolite to accept a second helping. Therefore, if you are still hungry and want some more to eat, then it's okay to accept a second helping. If you are full, then it's okay to say, “No thank you, I am full!” Students are expected to adapt, as much as possible, to a Canadian diet, since many of the foods you are used to eating are not available here. If there is something you do not like, simply say “no, thank you very much.” Another expression that is sometimes used when refusing food is “I’m fine thanks” - which also means “no thank you.”

If there is an expensive food that you want to eat like seafood or steak then your host family is not expected to buy this. You will have to buy this yourself. If you have any food allergies, you should make sure that you let your host family know. Likewise, if there is food that you really dislike, or do not eat for religious reasons, please let your family know. You might say something like this:

“I do not eat pork. Would it be possible for me to have something different?”

Eating out

It is customary in Canada for each person to pay for his or her own meal when eating out at a restaurant. People will often say something like this:

“Do you want to eat-out tonight?” or “Do you feel like grabbing a bite to eat?”

However, if someone has invited you out to dinner, as their guest, than it is customary for them to pay for your meal. In Canada, people try to be mindful of how

much their meal will cost the host. So, unless they say, “order anything you want” you should try and order something that is not too expensive. When someone is inviting you out as their guest they may say something like this:

“May I take you out for dinner?” or “I would like you to be my guest this evening”

Recycling

Recycling of waste products is an everyday task in PEI households. Families sort their compostable food items, glass and metal containers, and non-recyclable waste. You should ask your host family for a demonstration of how to do this. If you forget how to do it, don't worry; just ask for a guide or handwritten explanation.

Laundry

Access to laundry facilities, is part of your Homestay fee. Some families prefer to include the student's laundry with the rest of the family's. If you prefer to do your own laundry make sure that you have been shown how. Do not do your laundry everyday. Wait until you have a big pile of laundry to do. Hot water is very expensive, so doing a small laundry load is wasteful. It is suggested that you do your laundry once a week. The host family and student should decide together what is best. Since most host parents work outside the home, it is often the responsibility of the student to change his/her own bed sheets.

Use of the Family Bathroom

Most families stick to a schedule in the mornings so that everyone can use the bathroom, have breakfast, and get out of the house on time for school or work. As a result, mornings can be quite fast-paced. Make sure that you have discussed the morning schedule with your host family.

Students are advised to try to keep showers brief (10 minutes or so), as hot water is expensive in Canada and the family's hot water tank may be small. Remember that the shower curtain remains inside the tub to keep the water off the floor. In Canada, many people decorate their bathroom as they would any other room in the house. The bathroom may have expensive carpets and other accessories that should not get wet. So, when washing or bathing, care must be taken not to splash water on the

floors or walls, and to leave the bathroom clean.

Towels and face cloths will be provided which should be hung to dry where the host family indicates (usually in your room). Wet towels or dirty laundry are not to be left on the floor of the bathroom. As a courtesy to others, it is common to take a moment to wipe down the sink and tub area and tidy up the bathroom after use. The toilet should be flushed after every time it is used. Garbage or sanitary napkins are not to be put in the toilet, as they will plug it. Most families have a wastebasket in the bathroom or will tell you what to do with waste.

Leaving the bathroom door slightly open when you leave the bathroom shows that the bathroom is available for someone else to use. Ask your host family if you do not know how to lock the bathroom door or if you do not know how to use the bathroom fixtures like the shower or water taps.

Please provide your own toiletries such as toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, etc. You can purchase these very inexpensively in grocery stores and drug stores. Ask your host family where the best place is to buy these items.

Privacy

When you arrive at the home of your Host family, the door to your room may be open. However, please feel free to close your door if you would like some privacy. Sometimes students may want some quiet time for studying. In this case, just tell your Host family that you are closing your door, but if they need you for anything that it is okay to knock on the door. If a door in the house is closed, you should always knock and inquire if anyone is in the room, before you open the door.

Use of the Telephone

Local calls are free of charge. Long distance calls are quite expensive, but there are certain hours of the day when they can be made more cheaply. Long distance calls should be made with a calling card or placed "collect". Calling cards are available for purchase in many shops and in drugstores. Alternately, if you have your own cell

phone you may use it to make long distance calls. Soon after you arrive, call your parents or guardians at home and make sure they have your contact information in Prince Edward Island and they know that you have arrived safely.

Visiting Away from the Host Family's Home

If you plan to visit a friend for a meal or overnight, or to go on a short holiday, remember to inform your host family and leave a number where you can be reached in an emergency. If you are away and your return is delayed remember that it is better to phone the host family late at night than to not phone at all. You are an honorary member of the family while you are here and they will worry about you.

Smoking

Smoking is not allowed in any public buildings in PEI and most people do not permit smoking in their homes. Many people have problems with allergies or are concerned about family members breathing in second-hand-smoke. When host families applied to be a Homestay family they indicated what their smoking preferences were. Please respect the family's rules for smoking. Remember in PEI tobacco products cannot be sold to anyone under the age of 19 years.

Local Laws

The legal age for the consumption of alcohol in Prince Edward Island is 19 years of age. At any age, you must not consume alcoholic beverages on unlicensed public property. Driving while under the influence of alcohol is a serious criminal offence in Canada.

It is also important to understand the "age of consent" in Canada. We advise you to read the important pamphlet from CLIA "Are you old enough". This will be in your welcome package.

Perfume and Aftershave Lotion

Many Canadians are allergic or sensitive to scented hygiene products. If Canadians do wear scent they will generally wear very little. Some homes and public places in Canada are "scent-free". UPEI has a scent-free policy in place. If you are placed in a home, which is scent-free, please do not wear perfumes, aftershave or other scented products. Discuss this with your host family so that you clearly understand what is

acceptable and what is not.

Entertaining Friends

Canadian entertaining customs may differ from those in your country. As a general rule, do not bring guests home without first asking your host family if this is okay. If your host family suggests that you invite a friend for an evening, or for a meal, you should feel free to do so. Since each family will have its own approach to entertaining, it is a good idea to discuss these issues.

House Key

Most Canadian families keep their homes locked. If this is the case with your host family, they will provide you with a key to the house. Do not lend or share the key, and be sure to follow your hosts' wishes about locking the house. Please take care not to lose the key.

Temperature

All Canadian homes have central heating, which means the indoor temperature and atmosphere may be different than what you are used to. Be sure to let your host family know if the temperature of your room is too warm or cool as they may be able to adjust the heat in your room, provide extra blankets or a fan. For example, you could say:

“The temperature in my room is colder than what I am used to. Could you give me an extra blanket?”

Clothing

International students often find Canada cold and need to buy warmer clothes after they arrive. In cold weather, students are advised to wear long-sleeved clothing and to dress in several layers. For example, wear a cotton turtle-neck under a shirt or sweater with a fleece or wool sweater on top; tights or long underwear under jeans; heavy boots and socks; hat, mitts/gloves and a proper winter jacket. Your host family can advise you where to buy suitable clothes for winter.

Speaking English

Staying with a host family is a wonderful way to practice your English. Make sure that you take some time everyday to improve your conversational skills. People from PEI may speak quickly, or have an accent that you are not used to. If you don't understand what someone has said to you, don't worry, just ask them to repeat what they said. It is also okay to ask people to explain what they are saying, or to speak more slowly.

CULTURE SHOCK

People within a culture are not usually very aware of their culture. It is only through contact with others who see the world differently that people become aware that culture is not universally shared.

Culture shock describes the psychological disorientation experienced by people living in a new environment. Everyone experiences culture shock to some degree. It can range from mild irritation to deep-seated psychological panic and depression.

Symptoms of Culture Shock:

- Feeling isolated or alone
- Feeling bored, anxious or depressed
- Sleeping too much and tiring easily
- Finding it difficult to sleep
- Suffering body pains, especially in the head, neck, back and stomach
- Wanting to return home; not caring about anything
- Feeling irritable or anger toward local people
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Loss of ability to work/study effectively
- Unexplainable weeping

Despite the word SHOCK, culture shock does not occur quickly nor is it the result of a single event, it usually occurs in three stages:

- A. The Honeymoon Stage
- B. Irritation and Hostility
- C. Gradual Adjustment
- D. Biculturalism

How to Adjust to a New Culture:

1. Understand that there are and will continue to be uncertainties and confusion. This is natural and everyone experiences it. Imagine how a Canadian might react to living in your country.
2. Observe how people act in situations that are confusing to understand why people are behaving as they do. Avoid judging things as right or wrong; regard them as being merely different. Ask questions about what you do not understand.
3. Remember the ways you have been able to reduce stress in difficult situations in the past.
4. Recognize that the problem is not within you but is as a result of interacting with a new environment. Have realistic expectations.
5. Recognize that learning a new culture (whether a new job or a new country) is a process that takes time and set reasonable goals.
6. Recognize the advantages of having lived in two cultures. Spending time with people whose background is not the same as yours will enrich your life. Avoid having friends only from your home country but maintain personal ties to your culture. Share your time with many different people and think about how you can help them learn about how people from your country think and act.
7. Acknowledge your progress. Think of all you have learned since the day you arrived and realize that you can and will make a successful adjustment.

Tips for Coping with Culture Shock:

- Spend time with friends and host family; don't isolate yourself
- See the International Student Advisor (or any counsellor in Student Services)

- to talk about what you are experiencing
- Keep a journal to reflect upon what you are feeling
 - Exercise, exercise, exercise!!!
 - Stay busy and get involved in activities you enjoy; take up a hobby; plan special treats and make comfort foods; volunteer to help others
 - Set realistic goals; don't expect to be fluent in English in a month. Be gentle with yourself
 - Practice relaxation and meditation
 - Allow yourself to feel sad about the things you have left behind but focus your power on getting through the transition
 - Remember that this is a stage that will pass. Try to keep a good sense of humour and laugh at your mistakes
 - Be tolerant and open-minded. There are many ways to accomplish a goal. Because things are different, it does not make them bad or inferior

Remember that everyone feels culture shock in a new situation. People understand what you are going through and want to help. Reach out to them.

The UPEI Student Affairs Office offers counseling to students in need.

Email:

studentserv@upei.ca

Phone:

(902) 566-0488

The UPEI Student Union runs a "Buddy Program", in which new international students are paired with an upper-year UPEI student.

For more information Email:

buddy@upeisu.ca

Homestay Questions:

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