



UNIVERSITY
of Prince Edward
ISLAND

**UPEI Homestay Program
Information Booklet for Hosts**



Dear Hosts,

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.

We hope that the experience for both you and the students you host will be extremely rewarding, and that sharing each other's culture and traditions will enrich your household.

The enclosed information aims to address some questions or concerns 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 any issues that might arise, or simply to share details about your hosting experience along the way.

I look forward to getting to know you.

Sincerely,

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HOMESTAY FAMILY'S CHECKLIST

- Signed, dated, and submitted the Host Homestay Application to the University of Prince Edward Island.
- Have submitted a Criminal Record Check for all adult family members over 18 years.
- Signed, dated, and submitted the Host Homestay Agreement to the University of Prince Edward Island.
- Have received information about my student placement: age, name, gender, personality etc.
- Have received confirmation from the Homestay Coordinator that the first month's fee has been received from the student.
- Have received flight information from my student and/or the Homestay Coordinator.
- Have made arrangements to greet my student at the airport.
- Have assisted my student in opening a Canadian bank account, if not done prior to arriving in Canada (this does not apply for short-term students).
- Have provided the student a list of emergency numbers.
- Have familiarized my student with the neighbourhood, and where the bus stop is, if applicable.
- Have provided my student with a key to the house.
- Have made my student familiar with my Homestay family expectations.
- Have organized transportation to and from UPEI, unless the student is within a 15-minute walk, or your home is located on or close to the Charlottetown transit line.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Meals

Host families are responsible for providing the student with 3 meals per day. It is acceptable to ask students to prepare their own breakfast, or 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 they ask 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.

Breakfast: A typical breakfast may consist of juice, fruit, yogurt, cereal, toast or bagel, coffee, tea, or milk. On weekends, families often have “brunch” which is a combination of breakfast and lunch. For brunch, families may have bacon and eggs, pancakes, waffles, fruit salads and beverages. Rice, boiled eggs, and miso (broth) offer an easy alternative appreciated by Asian students. Show your student what choices are available to them.

Lunch: Students should be shown where the food is so they 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 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 is served between 5 o’clock and 7 o’clock depending on the work schedules of the host parent(s). It is a good idea to ask your student to let you know if they are going to be late for dinner so that it can be saved for them. Likewise, if you are not going to be home for dinner, let the student know and make sure that there is food

for the student(s) to eat.

Eating Out

Students may be unfamiliar with Canadian “eating-out” etiquette. They may not understand the often unstated rules surrounding who pays when you are eating at a restaurant. Students have been advised that when friends go out, each person often pays for their own meal. It is only when someone has invited you out to dinner, as their guest, is it customary for the host to pay. If you feel that your student may be unsure about what to expect in terms of payment, it is best to clearly tell them if they are being invited as a guest.

Some Tips About Meals

Life in Canada may be more informal than your student is used to. After the first few days, many families may try to make students feel comfortable and welcome by saying something like, “make yourself at home,” or “just help yourself.” If you notice that the student is still reluctant to get something out of the fridge, just remind them that they are allowed to prepare themselves a snack.

In Canada it is not considered impolite to accept a second helping, but sometimes students may feel uncomfortable asking their hosts for more food. It is a good idea to ask students if they are still hungry, and remind them that it is acceptable in your house to have seconds.

One of the biggest differences in a new culture is food. Here are some things we’ve learned:

- The high fat content in our diet may be difficult for international students to digest and may even make them feel unwell. Also, because it is extremely important for females in some cultures to be very thin, some students will eat very little, even though they are very hungry. Others will over-indulge and gain weight! Low fat cooking methods are appreciated.

- Having healthy snacks, such as fruit, available will help with the transition to a new eating style.
- The consistency and texture of some North American foods such as potato salad and casseroles is unfamiliar. Although many students begin to enjoy new foods, it is best to serve foods that are simply prepared in the beginning: steamed vegetables and rice, salad, poached or baked fish and chicken.
- Try asking your student what they would like to eat from back home (if it can be purchased here) and have them go shopping with you for groceries (your first of many trips together speaking English).
- The international section of the Superstore has many items that students can buy to add spices or flavours they enjoy, but they may not recognize the products in English. If so, asking a student who has been here a while to write down the names in English will help.
- If you can give them a “piece of home,” however small it may be, at least once a week, they will only become more settled and happy in their new environment.

Remember that you are not required to cook exotic meals to suit the student, but a few basic items would help you in easing the culture shock that the students might experience. When everything else is new, having some familiar foods can be a great comfort.

Recycling

Please remember that your student may be unfamiliar with recycling and how to sort their garbage. It is a good idea to show your student how to separate their waste, and to leave a guide close to the bins for quick reference.

Laundry

Students in Homestay must have access to laundry facilities. Some students prefer to do their own laundry once they have been shown how. Some families prefer to include the student’s laundry with the rest of the family’s. The host family and student should decide together what is best. Students should also be advised about changing the bed-sheets.

Since most host parents work outside the home, it is often the responsibility of the student to change their 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. Students should be advised when the shower or bath is available to fit in with the schedule of other members of the family. Students are advised to keep showers brief (10 minutes).

Students are expected to provide their own toiletries such as toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, etc. You may need to help your student purchase these items when they arrive. The products may look different than what they are used to, and/or they may be unfamiliar with the names of the items in English.

Use of the Telephone

If you have preferred times for incoming calls, let your student know (time differences can be difficult). Students are informed that they should ask their host family if they have a long-distance phone plan on their home phone. Students are informed that they may need to use their own phones or a calling card to place long-distance calls. We recommend that you do not allow students to bill you for long-distance calls. UPEI is not responsible for any outstanding phone bills.

Visiting Away from the Host Family's Home

If your student plans to visit a friend for a meal or overnight, or to go on a short holiday, remember to ask them to inform you and leave a number where they can be reached in an emergency. Minor students that are staying with you are not allowed to be away from your home overnight. Students are aware of this, and they signed an agreement saying they would not do so. If you are away and your return is delayed remember that it is also a good idea to inform your student, so that they do not worry about you.

Temperature

The temperature in your home may be different than what the student is used to. Be

sure to ask your student if the temperature in their room is too warm or cool, and be ready to provide extra blankets or a fan.

Clothing

International students often find Canada cold and need to buy warmer clothes after they arrive. You should advise your student where they can buy suitable clothes for winter.

Speaking English

The host family is a main source of English conversation for the international student. Families, please take the time each day to talk, to listen and to encourage speaking English. If you hear your student speaking their native language, gently remind them of the “English only” advice UPEI gives its students.

Transportation

If you live on or close to the Charlottetown transit line, you need to show your student how to use the bus, where the bus stops and where to buy bus passes. You should also familiarize the student with your neighbourhood, and the location of any banks and convenience stores etc. You may want to supply them with a local map just in case. If your student will be staying with you over the winter months, it would be helpful to discuss with them the importance of watching out for snow removal equipment when they are walking.

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 four stages:

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

How to adjust successfully to a new culture (you may need to remind your student of some of these tips)

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. 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. Reach out to your

student(s), and encourage them to speak to someone if you think that they are not adjusting, or seem unusually depressed or distraught.

Important Contacts

Homestay Questions:

Tyson Nicholson
Homestay Coordinator
UPEI English Language Centre
Kelley Memorial Building, Level 1
550 University Ave.
Charlottetown, PE C1A 4P3
902-894-2850
homestay@upei.ca

Immigration Questions:

Richelle Greathouse
International Student Advisor
UPEI International Student Office
Dalton Hall, Level 4
550 University Ave.
Charlottetown, PE C1A 4P3
902-566-0443
rgreathouse@upei.ca

Admission Questions:

Catherine Allin
International Admissions Coordinator
UPEI International Student Office
Dalton Hall, Level 4
550 University Ave.

Charlottetown, PE C1A 4P3

902-894-2880

caallin@upei.ca

UPEI Counselling Services:

The UPEI Student Affairs Office offers counseling to students in need

UPEI Student Affairs

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English Academic Preparation Program Questions:

Christina Perry

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