



Sydney College of English

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HOMESTAY PROGRAM - TERMS & CONDITIONS

The homestay experience is in many ways the most important part of our students visit to Australia, and should be an enriching experience that they will always remember.

Sydney College of English provides Intensive English Language courses for overseas students from a variety of countries. Students usually study 25 hours per week (full time) and we call this type of language learning "formal" learning. Naturally there is a great deal more to language than formal learning. The homestay experience is invaluable in providing this. For this reason, English must be the only language spoken in the home when the student is present.

Our students come to Australia with a strong desire to learn about us and our culture. Homestay is felt to be the best way to do this and our homestay families have a real opportunity to become wonderful ambassadors for Australia. Our students eventually go back to their own countries and I am sure you would like them to go back with positive memories of us and how friendly, helpful and welcoming we are. If they had not come here they would have gone to the USA, the UK, Canada or New Zealand. Some of them have already been to those places and were not satisfied. This is a very good opportunity to help them become good ambassadors for our country and for them to have a "total experience" here.

Most of our students are nervous about coming to a foreign country. They are not confident in their language skills, they do not know quite how to relate to us initially, they do not have any friends yet or they might only be able to come for a short period. In such a situation, they could not possibly fend for themselves and would be extremely lonely in a hostel or a flat. They need the support, friendship and encouragement that a good homestay family can provide. Any special efforts you can make linguistically are also greatly appreciated by the student. They need to feel good about coming home after school and to be able to relax in the knowledge that they will be treated as members of your family. They are not boarders or lodgers and should not be treated as such. For this reason, Sydney College of English allows no more than three students per homestay family.

THE STUDENT'S ROOM

Most of our students ask for a single room and this has to be a separate room. It cannot be a room that doubles as a TV or rumpus room and it should have an outside facing window. The room has to be clean and tidy and contain:

a bed with adequate blankets or doona for the winter months (a surprisingly large number of

students mention that they are cold in their rooms). Beds must have a base. A bedside lamp should also be provided;
a wardrobe and drawer space; a rack is not acceptable.
a desk suitable for homework and private study with appropriate lighting.

In a twin-share room, each student should have his/her own bed, desk, wardrobe and drawer space.

MEALS

Homestay families provide breakfast and dinner from Monday to Friday and breakfast, LUNCH and dinner at weekends.

BREAKFAST

We understand that families are busy but the student still requires an adequate breakfast. It is requested that at least one member of the family joins the student for breakfast, and there should be cereal, toast, milk, juice, tea/coffee provided and sometimes students enjoy yoghurt.

LUNCH (WEEKENDS)

If the student is home, the family is expected to provide lunch for them, a light meal is sufficient, If the student is going out over lunch time, please ask them if they would like their lunch kept for their return. Alternatively, the student may like to take a packed lunch with them. If the student is required to make their own lunch, please ensure that they are aware of what is available and where to find it.

DINNER

The evening meal is a family affair in most cultures and so it should be in this case. It is the chance for the student to sit with you and your family, enjoy the same food and be able to join in the evening chat of the house. The meal should consist of at least two dishes and there should be an interesting variety during the week. If the student will be late home for dinner and they have notified you, please keep their meal for them.

WEEKENDS

Students should be given the opportunity to join in with all family activities. If you are going to do the weekly grocery shopping, ask the student if he/she would like to come along. A day at the beach? The cinema? A game of touch footy? A picnic in the Blue Mountains? The cricket on TV? These are the sort of things we do in our free time and, with some enthusiasm on your part, I am sure that you can get even the most reserved student to take part in an activity that they might remember for a long time.

LAUNDRY, USE OF THE TELEPHONE, THE BATHROOM, ETC.

These areas produce the most frequent problems and we think that it is important that you, as a family, know what we tell the students they can and cannot expect. Please take the time to explain your rules regarding these areas to the student. A little explanation at the beginning will lead to fewer problems later.

LAUNDRY

We tell the students that the rules governing the use of the laundry are up to the homestay family and that there are two possibilities. The first is that the family prefers to do the student's washing and the second is that they let the student use the washing machine for him/herself. Some students are sensitive about their laundry, so please allow the student to do their own if this is the case.

THE TELEPHONE

This is an area that provokes a lot of misunderstanding and it is one that can be quite a sensitive issue. The best way for students to call overseas is to use a phone card so no cost at all is incurred to the family. If the students do need to use your phone, they can call 1234 (Telstra) and ask for a "call back" at the end of the call providing them with the cost of the call. This is a little more expensive, but it ensures the cost of the call is known immediately.

Obviously, they will also make local calls and our suggestion is that there is a money-box next to the phone for students to put in 40 cents after each call. Calls to mobiles should be limited. Students should also be able to receive incoming calls at reasonable times, and all phone calls should be kept short.

SHOWERS AND BATHS

A lot of our students come from places where there is no water shortage problem and no such thing as a drought. They might be used to having long showers or long baths every day. It is important that they are made aware of the importance of water in our lives and how necessary it is for us to conserve this important resource. Students should not be restricted to only am showers or only pm showers.

HELPING AROUND THE HOUSE

Students are responsible for keeping their own room clean and tidy, and for leaving other areas of the house as they were when they found them. They are not, however, expected to do Housework as such. Please feel free to ask them to help with the dishes and setting the table as you would your own children, of course this should be shared equally among family members.

OTHER MATTERS

Please make your rules about smoking clear to the students. Even though this is explained in the "Family Profile" that we send to them, it does not hurt to reinforce this gently.

Please ask the students if there is any food they cannot eat. Some of our students are good cooks and would enjoy having the opportunity to cook some of their country's food for you.

Bed linen should be changed weekly.

Students should have free access to your house and this will mean their having a key. We understand some families are reluctant to do this for security reasons but the commitment to accept students includes them having free access to your home.

We hope that if you join the program you will be able to do airport pick ups, details of which will be explained when the student has been confirmed with you

UNDER 18s

If a student is under 18 years old, they may require guardianship. A guardian is a responsible adult who acts on behalf of the student's parents while the student is in Australia, or until they turn 18 years old (whichever comes first). The most ideal situation for these students is that their guardian lives with them in the same house. Therefore, there will be times when guardianship may be requested from a homestay parent. If a homestay parent takes on the role of guardian, they are expected to undertake greater responsibilities than normally expected in standard homestay. These responsibilities are further outlined in a document which will be passed onto you upon agreement to be guardian. Please be advised that if you undertake the role of guardian, you will be paid a guardianship fee in addition to the homestay fee.

In addition, all adults in homestay families who host under 18s will be required to undergo the "Working with Children Check" which is a general screening for any child-related offences.

LENGTH OF STAY

Students usually book homestay in multiples of four weeks. Where students have booked and paid for more than four weeks' homestay we will assume that they are happy to stay in homestay for the period booked unless they inform Sydney College of English in advance.

Problems do arise - problems which cannot be foreseen - that need some careful attention from the Student Services Officer. These problems are usually personality clashes or misunderstandings of some kind. If we do hear of some problem, we will call you asking for your version of events. Basically, we try to find solutions. The situation would need to be very bad for us to move a student in the first weeks. In extreme cases, we will ask for your understanding if Sydney College of English deems it necessary to move a student.

An exception is made, where, after consultation with the family and the student concerned, Sydney College of English deems that the requirements of the program as laid out in this document have not been met. In this case, Sydney College of English would be required to move the student without notice, and the family is only entitled to keep payment for the number of days the student has stayed. Consequently, the family would be required to refund the remaining homestay money to Sydney College of English.

Sydney College of English aims to place students in homestay four weeks before their course starts although this is not always possible. Once you have agreed to take a student we then confirm this with our representative overseas, and we expect you to keep this commitment (except of course in the case of extenuating circumstances). Sydney College of English rigorously enforces the policy that a homestay must not have more than one student from the same country or native tongue unless specifically requested by the student. We also rigorously enforce our policy of a maximum of three students in total per homestay.

Sydney College of English has a certain responsibility to the students during their stay, so we ask that all arrangements for students be made through this school. That is, NO private accommodation arrangements are to be made between homestay families and students. If students would like to extend their stay with you, they will need to inform Sydney College of English four weeks in advance if possible and pay the fees to Sydney College of English.

HOLIDAY POLICY

Homestay placements are normally organised and confirmed four weeks before the student's arrival. If you are planning to take a holiday or want to request a break from having students, please advise the homestay coordinator at least four weeks in advance if possible. If many families are unavailable during the same period, the homestay coordinator may need to recruit new homestay families via advertising, etc. The more notice you give to Sydney College of English regarding your unavailability, the more time there is to ensure we are able to meet our homestay demand from students.

If your student is going on holiday for a period of one week or more, they need to inform Sydney College of English at least two weeks before they take the holiday. They must leave the room exactly as it is and a holiday rate (subject to change) would be paid to you for the time they are away.

If the homestay family goes on holiday and it is not appropriate for you to take your student/s with you on holiday, or if they are unable to go because of school or other commitments, one of the following arrangements needs to be made:

1. A relative, family friend or temporary housekeeper comes in to look after the students at home, and normal rates will apply. This person must stay at the house overnight, as you would.

2. More mature students who feel comfortable on their own at home may be left in the homestay and will be charged holiday rate or may not be charged at all if they agree to water the garden or feed the pets and watch the home. This is known as “house sitting.” Students would need to buy their own food during this time.

3. Students who are under guardianship or students who would not feel comfortable on their own, will be found another homestay and return home when their own host family returns from holiday if feasible. This is the least desirable solution as it often involves finding temporary homestay for a very short period.

Please note: If you are going away for any length of time, Sydney College of English must be informed. If you are going away for one week or more, you must inform Sydney College of English in writing of the dates you will be away and the arrangements you have made for the student. This applies even if it is only one family member going away, as a change in gender balance may affect which students can be placed with your family.

PAYMENT

Payment is made by bank transfer on the Friday of the first week of the student’s course at Sydney College of English regardless of when students arrive and then on a two- weekly basis. If students take holidays and you have received the full four weeks’ fees, an adjustment will be made in the following payment period.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Families are entitled to at least two weeks’ notice if the student is intending to leave before the confirmed date of departure. If less than two weeks’ notice is given, a cancellation fee will be paid by Sydney College of English to the family. This does not apply when a student will leave homestay due to a breach of any condition/s contained herein. This cancellation fee does not apply if the student’s visa has been refused. If a student cancels prior to the homestay starting date, the two weeks’ notice cancellation condition does not apply. Families are required to give updated information to Sydney College of English regarding any change to their circumstances eg. pets, smoking, family members moving, marital status, contact details, job changes, change of contact details etc. Students who have been given incorrect information have the right to leave the homestay without giving notice or paying a cancellation fee

If you agree to the terms above, please sign below and return to Sydney College of English. We look forward to a long and rewarding working relationship with you.

I.....of.....do
(name) (address)

hereby agree with the terms and conditions set out above and understand that any breach of these could result in my exclusion from the program.

.....
(signature) (date)

Sydney College of English reserves the right to review the relationship with you on an annual basis or whenever necessary.

Sydney College of English is committed to handling your personal information in accordance with the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000. Any personal information that we request from you in this document will be used by Sydney College of English staff and/or our chosen representatives to assist us in our provision of education, accommodation, pastoral and counselling services and will not be passed on to any agency or person/s not directly involved with Sydney College of English for these purposes