

What is a Homestay Family

A Homestay family is an integral part of the life of an international student. The family provides more than just room and board, they become friends and guides in a new culture, building lifelong connections with students from around the world. As well, caring supervision and parenting on the part of the homestay family are an essential part of the international student's growth and development.

By becoming a host family, you provide more than just a place to stay – you offer a home away from home, supportive environment and the chance to share your culture while learning about another making a world of difference – right from your living room!



The Stages of Homestay

Stage 1 - Getting Ready

Your attention to a few details in anticipation of your student's arrival will help his/her transition to a new life:

- **Write a letter or email to your student**
 - Describe your family, pets, lifestyle, and neighborhood
 - Include photos of your home and the Oceanside area
 - A short video would be a great addition
- **Learn about your student's culture**
 - Read about their country's history and traditions
 - Some differences are obvious ("surface culture"), others are subtle
 - Show interest to build rapport and create discussion topics
 - Use Google Translate or similar tools for communication
- **Prepare the student's room**
 - Make it functional, comfortable and welcoming
 - Avoid placing valuable or sentimental items in the student's room, as damage is possible.
 - Completely clear out the room, including closets, dressers, and drawers.
 - Ensure the space is ready for the student to personalize.
 - The School District does not hold a damage deposit—accidents may happen.
- **Bus Pass**
 - If your student needs a bus pass go to this website <https://www.sd69.bc.ca/About/Transportation/Pages/default.aspx#/> and click on the Bus Rider application form. Bus passes are free for ISP students. When you start filling out the form, there will be a box to check for ISP students which will then show no charge for the pass.
- **Be aware of an Adjustment Period**
 - Students may need extensive guidance at first, often requiring repetition.
 - Expect possible communication difficulties and cultural misunderstandings.
 - Families may need to support students through homesickness and loneliness
- **Support and Resources**
 - Other homestay families can provide reassurance and ideas.
 - Homestay Coordinator, ISP staff, and school personnel are available for guidance

Stage 2 – Arrival



Newly arrived students often experience an emotional high after months of preparation and travel.

- Excitement peaks upon meeting their homestay family.
- Arrival fatigue sets in due to jet lag, stress from unfamiliar surroundings, and communication barriers.
- Students need time and space to recover.
- Some adjust within a day or two, but others, especially those starting school immediately, may take weeks.
- A selection of snacks and beverages placed in the room will be important as students may wake up hungry in the night. Their internal clock will take time to adjust

Arrival and School Preparation

- Homestay Coordinator will provide arrival details; notify the ISP office if the student contacts you directly.
- Meet the student at Nanaimo or Comox Airport.
- Once you know the arrival date, email the school ISP Counsellor and schedule a school visit.
 - Ensure the student brings their Passport and Study Permit.
 - Complete school registration and obtain a school calendar.

First Week: Helping the Student Adjust

- Explain daily routines, schedules, and expectations—do not assume they'll figure it out.
- Discuss key household guidelines early to prevent misunderstandings:
 - Meal times and absences
 - Show how the shower works, pulling curtain etc and create shower schedule
 - Be aware of cultural differences and toilet paper/bidet use
 - Curfews and visitors
 - Family chores and responsibilities
 - Teach how to use the washing machine, loads, colours
 - Television, phone, internet usage
 - Smoking policies and privacy
- Provide a written copy of house rules for reference. (students will be overwhelmed with information overload, new country, new language, new culture and may have a hard time remembering everything)
- Help the student set up a cell phone plan for emergency contact.



Adjustment Period

- Be patient—initial weeks require extra attention.
- Assist with independence in transportation, phone use, and daily routines.
- Recognize the student is trying to regain confidence and social competence.
 - (Learning the ropes of Canadian living)

Supporting the Student

- Treat the student as a family member, not a guest.
- Ensure they can pronounce all family names and you can pronounce theirs.
- Give them a card with your contact information for safety, add to phone as well.
- Show them how to use public transportation.
- Explain emergency procedures (911, ISP contacts).
- Encourage communication—verify understanding rather than accepting polite responses.
- Engage the student socially with games, TV, and family activities.
- Support academic success by monitoring homework and school progress.

If you see that after the first few weeks the student is withdrawn and spending all his/her time in the bedroom, sit down with the student and make sure that everything is alright. You will find the Homestay Coordinator's assistance and counsel invaluable at this time.

GuardMe – Student Support Program: 24/7 dedicated mental health and wellness support 1-844-451-9700 www.guard.me

Stage 3 - Culture Shock

Culture Shock in International Students

- Students often experience a "honeymoon stage" of excitement before culture shock sets in (usually after 2–3 months).
- Common symptoms include:
 - **Mourning:** Homesickness, withdrawal, stereotyping, or disdain for Canadian culture.
 - **Physiological:** Insomnia, excessive sleep, compulsive eating, loss of concentration.
 - **Emotional:** Irritability, weeping, school avoidance, boredom.
- Culture shock may cause mental fatigue but is a normal part of adjustment.
- Families should offer patience and communication to help students adapt.
- If extreme depression or suicidal behavior occurs, contact the Homestay Coordinator immediately.

Quasi-Culture Shock in Host Families

- Host families may also experience adjustment struggles.
- Signs include frustration with student behavior, questioning the decision to host.
- This phase can last 2–3 months but improves with understanding and adaptability.

Stage 4 – Cultural Sharing

This stage tends to be the best period for the student and the family. The student has adjusted to the new environment, and the family has begun to understand and appreciate the many cultural differences of their foreign visitor. Many misunderstandings have been resolved and the relationship has grown stronger as a result.

Stage 5 – Departure

Saying good-bye is always difficult for both the family and the student. The student further faces re-entry shock upon his/her return home. The initial euphoria of being reunited with family and friends slumps as s/he begins to notice that much has changed—perhaps the returnee most of all. Reverse culture shock sets in while the student must determine who s/he is and where s/he fits in. There can even be a mourning period, as the student mourns for the homestay family, friends made in Canada, and Canadian culture left behind. Eventually this too passes, and s/he will look back with pleasure on the rich emotional and intellectual experiences of the sojourn.



Practical Tips for the Homestay Family

Alcohol and Drugs

- International students cannot purchase or consume alcohol or cannabis, even if 19+.
- Drug use is only allowed if prescribed by a doctor—violations result in disciplinary action.

Banking

- Assist students in opening a bank account if needed.
- Encourage use of debit or Interac cards instead of carrying large amounts of cash.

Bathroom

- Students may need guidance on western bathroom facilities—explain thoroughly.
- Discuss shower schedules; provide soap, toilet paper, and towels.
- Personal toiletries are the student's responsibility.

Bikes, Boards, and Helmets

- Helmets are legally required for biking, boarding, or skating—fines apply for non-compliance.
- If lending a bike, ensure it is replaceable in case of loss.

Cell Phones

- Most students have unlocked phones that can use a Canadian SIM card or an electronic sim card (e-sim) capability.
- Avoid monthly contract plans—recommend pay-as-you-go options for emergency texting.
- Do not sign any phone contracts on behalf of students.

Cultural Norms

- Customs vary—students may need guidance on etiquette and household expectations.
- Open discussions help bridge cultural gaps.

Curfew

- Students should be home most school nights.
- Suggested curfew:
 - **Weekdays:** 9:00–9:30 pm
 - **Weekends:** 11:00–11:30 pm (may vary from host family to host family)
- Students must notify hosts if arriving home later than planned.

Custodianship

- All minor students must have a legal custodian.
- District Principal usually serves as custodian—program rules take precedence.

Driving and Owning a Car

- International Students are not allowed to drive and must follow all requirements if they are a passenger in a car with an “L” or “N” driver.
 - Students can ride with an New driver, provided they are within the District and the host family and natural family allow it. As per BC Law: there is a limit of one passenger who is not immediate family unless there is a supervisor age 25+ with a valid Class 1,2,3,4 or 5 license
 - Students are not allowed to drive with an Learner driver

End-of-Semester Departures

- **Semester One:** Final homestay payment covers January; students must leave after classes end.
- **Semester Two:** Students must leave by June 30—medical coverage ends on this date.



Family Absences

- Hosts must arrange alternate accommodations if away—students cannot be alone overnight.
- Any temporary guardians must be 25+ and have a criminal records check completed

Home and Automobile Insurance

- Confirm adequate liability coverage with insurance providers.
- Student-caused damages may not be covered.
- Student's belongings may not be insured as they are not relatives.

Laundry

- Clearly communicate laundry expectations—some students may need guidance.
- Arrange a schedule for washing towels and sheets weekly or biweekly.
- Teach how to use the washing machine and dryer



Meals

- **Variety:** Serve multiple dishes initially to help students adjust to new foods.
- **Etiquette:** Be aware of cultural dining differences, such as denying second helpings.
- **Breakfast & Lunch:** Students can prepare their own meals—provide clear guidelines.
- **Family Dinners:** Encourage students to join evening meals and notify hosts if absent.
- **Snacks:** Provide simple snacks like fruit or cookies for between meals.
- **Reserved Food:** Mark items in the fridge that should not be taken.
- **Restaurant Meals:** Hosts should cover costs of outings they initiate.

Medical Emergencies & Illness

- Use **Guard.Me** for online medical consultations when possible.
- For doctor visits, use a walk-in clinic if possible or Urgent Care
- Ensure students have **Guard.Me** card and study permit.
- Hosts should accompany their student as they may be scared and you are their closest person. You may need to also help them to explain their symptoms.
- Inform the ISP office of medical incidents and emergencies—submit a report.
- If hospitalization is needed, it is the responsibility of the homestay family to ensure that the student receives medical attention and to contact the Homestay Coordinator.

Medical Insurance

- ISP Program provides medical coverage through **Guard.Me**:
[Guard.Me Insurance](#)
- Some medical providers bill **Guard.Me** directly; if not, students must pay and file a reimbursement claim.
- Ensure the student keeps all receipts for any medical or pharmaceutical purchases.

Money Matters

- Homestay families and students **must not** borrow money from each other or from other students.

Names

- Review names of all family members and pets with the student.
- Help them practice pronunciation—uncertainty may cause hesitation in using names.
- Write names down to assist with memorization.
- Respect and correctly pronounce the student's name.



Parties

- **Permission required** before attending a party.
- Homestay family must have **address and phone number** of the party location.
- Confirm a **responsible parent** will be in attendance throughout the party.
- No adult supervision = no party attendance.
- **Alcohol and drugs are strictly forbidden**—violations lead to disciplinary action.
- **Overnight stays at parties or after-parties are prohibited.**
- Students must return home immediately after **Prom/Graduation—no after-parties, camping or sleepovers allowed.**

Privacy and Security

- Define off-limit areas (e.g., family bedrooms, home office, workshop).
- Respect the student's privacy— please consult with students before entering room.
- Cleaning arrangements should be discussed in advance.
- Borrowing the student's belongings requires explicit permission each time.
- Clarify which household items the student may use.
- Explain home security measures (locking windows/doors, entrance usage).
- Be mindful that physical contact may be uncomfortable for students from certain cultures.

Public Transit Information

- Public transit helps students gain independence and make friends.
- Teach students bus routes, schedules, and basic etiquette (e.g., not sitting in reserved seats, signaling stops).
- Provide **written instructions** for destinations, bus names, and transfers.
- Consider preparing **cards** for students to show bus drivers.
- Ride the bus with them initially to ensure they understand the system.
- Arrange pickups for late activities—don't expect students to rely on public transit after late ISP events.

Receipts

- Provide receipts for any reimbursements collected from students.
- Remind students to **save receipts** for their records.

Religion

- Respect the student's religious beliefs—**no attempts** to change them.
- Assist students in arranging church visits if requested.

School Bus

- If your student needs a bus pass go to this website <https://www.sd69.bc.ca/About/Transportation/Pages/default.aspx#/> and click on the Bus Rider application form. Bus passes are free for ISP students. When you start filling out the form, there will be a box to check for ISP students which will then show no charge for the pass.

School Holidays

- Students may **stay in homestay** during Winter and Spring Break—families should include them in celebrations.
- If returning home for holidays, students **must** submit an online travel form to avoid immigration issues.
- **Summer Break:** Students usually return home by **June 30th**—contact the Homestay Coordinator for details.

Sleeping Patterns and Arrangements

- Explain sleeping arrangements, including bed setup and where to find extra blankets.
- Show the student how to make the bed and set expectations for bedtime and quiet hours.
- Help them adjust their sleep routine to match the family's schedule.
- Ensure the student doesn't stay up all night online—turn off the modem at 11 pm on school nights if needed.

Sleepovers

- Encourage students to bring friends home so families can get to know them.
- Hosts must actively oversee students' social interactions.
- Before approving sleepovers:
 - Contact the hosting parents to verify plans and supervision.
 - Ensure there is a parent present throughout the night.
 - Require students to provide host family's contact details.

Student Discipline

- ISP Program supports academic success and cultural integration.
- Students must follow **Program rules**, including attending all classes and cooperating with homestay families.
- All students sign an **agreement** to follow ISP rules before arrival.
- Discipline may involve counseling or more serious consequences depending on the issue.
- The **District Principal—International Education** oversees the discipline process with school and Program staff.

Student Resources

- Be sure to reinforce the following resource with your students so that they know where they can go for extra help: GuardMe Student Support Program – 24/7 offering confidential counselling
1-844-451-9700

Telephone and Internet

- Ensure the student memorizes your phone number and work number—write it on a card and have them take a photo.
- Teach the student how to use **911** in emergencies.
- Set clear rules for phone and internet use—monitor usage as you would with your own children.
- Encourage English communication over excessive calls in other languages.
- Contact the **Homestay Coordinator** if phone use becomes problematic.
- Long calls with parents are acceptable but discourage excessive or late-night calls (before 7 a.m. or after 10 p.m.).

Visiting Parents

- Homestay families are not required to entertain visiting parents but should share some meals.
- Visiting parents must arrange hotel accommodations.

Visitors

- Students should discuss plans for inviting friends in advance.
- Set guidelines for visit timing, snacks, and suitable rooms.
- **Friends of the student who are of the opposite, or preferred gender, should not be entertained in bedrooms.**

Withdrawal/Graduation/Program Completion

- Ensure students pack belongings in advance to avoid airport issues.
- Overweight luggage should not become the homestay family's responsibility.
- Verify that all **textbooks are returned** before the student leaves.



Details Regarding Homestay Agreement

Limited Number of Students per Family Policy

- Homestay families may host a maximum of two international students at a time.
- Students cannot be placed with families hosting students from other programs or those speaking the same language unless approved by the District Principal—International Education.
- Current guidelines: [Homestay Guidelines](#).

Homestay Fees

- Homestay fees cover room, food, parental guidance, and family courtesies, including some transportation.
- Fees are collected from students upon arrival and held in trust.
- The School Board issues direct deposit payments to homestay families by the 15th of each month.
- If a student leaves before month-end, the host family refunds the remaining balance (pro-rated).

Homestay Damage

- No Homestay Deposit is held by the ISP Program for student-incurred damages.
- Students are responsible for damages they cause, excluding normal wear and tear.
- ISP may assist in minor damage claims through GuardMe, but cannot ensure payment.
- Regular room checks are recommended.

Student Moves

- The Homestay Coordinator ensures a suitable match and maintains regular contact.
- If incompatibility arises, a new homestay is arranged after discussions with both parties.
- Moves should focus on lessons learned rather than blame.
- Further misconduct leads to program withdrawal and possible return to the student's home country.
- If a homestay family does provide for a student's emotional and physical needs, the student is moved immediately.
 - *In the event that a student should leave the home prior to the completion of the calendar month, the host family will refund the school district the balance of the homestay fee paid for that month.*

Changes Within the Homestay Family

The homestay parent must inform the Homestay Coordinator of the arrangements that have been made for the student in case of emergency contact from the natural parents. Homestays must also inform the ISP department of any family changes that may occur. This includes:

- Divorce, or Separation
- Marriage or Relationship where the partner is staying overnight (criminal record check is required)
- New Family Member
- A family member leaving the home
- Other persons moving into the home (criminal record check is required)

Student and Host Family Travel

Local Day Trips Without the Homestay Family

- Students may travel to Nanaimo by bus, with friends, or ski at Mount Washington on weekends with permission.
- Homestay families only need to approve plans; students must have a working cell phone.
- Overnight stays (sleepovers) require homestay parent approval and confirmation with the friend's parents.

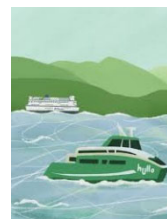
Out-of-District Day Trips Without the Homestay Family

- Includes travel outside Parksville, Qualicum, and Nanaimo.
- Students must have a cell phone with a Canadian phone number, and must not travel alone
- Homestay parents, not ISP Program personnel, approve student day trips.

Guidelines for Travel

Homestay parents should ensure students:

- Obtain permission from both natural and homestay parents.
- Provide full travel plans, including transportation details.
- Confirm travel companions and avoid traveling alone.
- Have a functional cell phone with minutes for emergency communication.
- Are proficient in English to seek assistance if needed.



Vancouver Travel

- Students must take the second-to-last ferry back to Nanaimo.
- Travel is prohibited if high winds are predicted.
- Students should limit Vancouver trips to once per month unless exceptional circumstances apply.

For other student travel policies, visit www.schoolincanada.ca.



Activities

Student Activities & Community Involvement

- Homestays should encourage students to stay active and engage in the community for integration and language development.
- Assist students in finding options for out-of-school activities if they show interest.
- Students are responsible for activity fees.

Activity Sign-Ups & Notifications

- Students must sign up for all activities and events themselves.
- ISP-sponsored activities are optional; some are free, others have a cost.
- New activity links are emailed and sent via the Remind app—homestay families receive copies.
- Homestay families should inform students promptly to prevent missed opportunities.

Availability & Participation

- Activities have limited spots and operate on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Free activities also require sign-up.

Students and Host families can find out about activities, trips and other local active information on our website at www.schoolincanada.ca.

On the Current Students page, students and host families will find:

- Pre-Arrival / Arrival Information
- Information – Preparing for School / Grading / Etc
- Trips and Activities
- Student Travel
- Guard Me Insurance
- Student Handbook

If you have a student who you think may need financial help for activities, or if you need help finding a local activity, please contact Jenny at jatkinson@sd69.bc.ca

