

Host Family Issues: A Discussion Guide

Sam and Betty Anne Schlegel

This guide will help you have a good stay with your host family this summer. Soon after your arrival in the home of the family with whom you will be staying, to discuss each of the issues listed below. Do not assume that you will know how your host family wants to handle either daily household routines or the special concerns related to having a new person in the home.

1. Schedule:

What are the host family's normal hours? What will your schedule be? When and how will you communicate to each other any changes in daily or weekly schedules?

2. Meals and kitchen:

Who will prepare meals? What meals can the host family offer and when? What meals do you need to plan to eat out? Can you prepare sack lunches for take out? What food is available for snacks? Where can you keep food you may buy for your own use? In which rooms is eating allowed? What about dirty dishes, the sink, the dishwasher, and so on.

3. Bedroom and bath:

Which rooms will be used exclusively by you? Which will be shared? By whom?

4. Laundry:

When can you do laundry and ironing? What do you do with dirty clothes? With wet clothes and towels? How often should bed linens and towels be washed? How do the machines and iron operate? What detergents are okay?

5. Garbage and other chores:

When is the trash and garbage picked up? How should you keep your room cleaned? Using what cleaning items? What about the bathroom? What other normal responsibilities does the host family want to ask of you?

6. Transportation:

The host family is not usually responsible for your transportation. However, if you need to catch a ride into town or back home, by when and how would this need to be communicated? If you are driving a vehicle, where should you park it?

7. TV, VCR, stereo, magazines, books, and so forth:

What equipment and items can be used by you? During what hours can it be used? How is it operated? What equipment should not be used? Are there rules related to choice of television programs, movies, or music in the host family's home?

8. Keys:

What keys are available for you to use? Is there a remote control for the garage door? Is there a security system on the house? How do they work?

9. Family trips/vacation:

When does the host family plan to be away? When might you be away overnight? What special plans or details about care of the house need to be made? Should you plan to stay in the house when the host family is away or will you stay with someone else during that time?

10. Telephone:

Who should answer the phone? How should you take messages for the family? How should the family take messages for you? Is there an answering machine? Should calls be referred to family members or you at work or just written down? When is it best for you to use the phone? You should never make long distance calls that will be charged to the family phone. Therefore, you need to understand how to access your own telephone credit card company through the host family's long distance carrier.

11. Outgoing mail:

Can you leave mail to be picked up by the local postman or should it be taken to the post office? May you receive mail at your host family's address, or should you only plan to have mail sent via the church or your supervisor?

12. Circuit breakers, water cut-off, and so forth:

How do the systems in the house run? What should you know how to do in case of problems with electricity, plumbing, air conditioning, fire, and so on.?

13. Emergency procedures:

In case of emergency, who should be called? How do you contact the fire department, rescue, police? What about host family members, supervisor.?

14. Special events and times:

Will there be times that the family would like for you to make alternate plans? For example, during a special meal or party hosted by the family for friends or family, would it be better for you to plan your own activities during that time? How does the family feel about you inviting a friend over occasionally, for example, to watch a movie? Remember that no dating is allowed during the summer.

15. Pets:

What do you need to know about family pets? Do they need any special care or have special dietary concerns?

16. Solicitors and sales people:

How should you deal with calls or visits from persons that you do not know?

17. Special concerns:

Are there special needs that either you or a member of the host family have that need to be discussed? Medical conditions, physical limitations, allergies?

18. What about?

Is there anything else you need to discuss with your supervisor concerning your living arrangements this summer?

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