

Guidelines for Students in Homestay

We welcome you to England and to Strode College. We know that where you live here is a vital part of your overall experience of studying in this country and Homestay accommodation gives you the opportunity to become a member of an English family and provides you with the family's support. This will help ease the transition as you settle into life in a new country.

Homestay accommodation means that you live in the home of a local host family. It is important to understand that a host family does not always consist of two parents living with children. Your host could be a married couple with children, single parent or single person, or two partners living together. Many of our hosts have pets – usually cats and dogs that live indoors. You may not feel very confident around pets but unless you are allergic to them, or very nervous, it will be easier to find accommodation for you if you can accept them. Please, however, let us know if you do not wish to live in a household with pets.

We hope that your host will encourage you to take part in family life, as this provides the ideal atmosphere to practice your English outside of the classroom and to learn about English culture and lifestyle.

We will do our best to place you with a suitable host family. Normally we try not to place two students of the same nationality or language group together but this is not always possible.

You will need to fit in with the rules of the host family just like any other member of the family. You will not be able to stay out late at night or bring friends round without asking first.

Please be aware that we cannot guarantee that Homestay accommodation will be within walking distance of Strode College but we do our very best to recruit host families that are in the vicinity.

Bedroom

You will be given your own private bedroom which is not shared with any other person. The room should contain a comfortable full size single or double bed, ample drawer and wardrobe space, a mirror, good natural light, waste receptacle, electrical sockets and a window with curtains or blind. A desk or table and a chair for study will also be provided in your room or elsewhere in the house where you can study undisturbed. Bed linen (e.g. sheets and blanket or a duvet) and hand and bath towels will also be provided.

The bedroom will be clean and tidy and adequately lit and heated. Please do not leave heaters switched on overnight or when you are out. Your host will provide extra blankets or an electric fan if needed.

Your host will need access to your room to clean and to provide you with clean bed linen and towels each week and will usually make you aware of a regular time when this will be done. You will be expected to keep your room tidy.

Bathroom

It is likely that you will share a bathroom with your host. You should be allowed to have a bath or shower every day. You will be expected to provide your own toiletries such as shampoo, toothpaste etc. Please be considerate about the length of time you spend in the bathroom and how much water you use as many homes will have a water meter and/or hot water restrictions. Make sure you leave the bathroom clean and tidy when you are finished.

It is the normal English custom to flush the toilet after use. For disposal of sanitary towels, it is best to wrap them in paper or in a disposal bag and place them in a dustbin or special receptacle but please check with your host what you should do.

Meals

Your host will provide you with a well-balanced diet of breakfast and an evening meal every day and additional lunches at weekends. Breakfast is usually a quick, light meal and may include bread/toast/cereal/fruit juice. Lunch may include sandwiches, fruit and a drink. The evening meal may be a cooked meal followed by a dessert. You may be asked to make your own lunch at weekends using food provided by your host. During the week you can buy lunch in the College Refectory or Brasserie. If you would like your host to provide lunch for you during the week there will be an extra charge.

If you have any particular dietary requirements or allergies please note these on the application form and discuss these with your host when you first arrive. Your host will usually cook the same food for you as they do for themselves so this may provide you with an opportunity to try new types of food. We encourage both hosts and students to be as flexible as possible regarding food.

We expect that your host will allow access to the kitchen at other times to make tea and coffee. If you want to eat large quantities of extra food such as biscuits, fruit or other snacks you will need to buy these yourself. You might offer to share your culture by preparing a meal for your host family on occasion.

Mealtimes

Mealtimes are an excellent opportunity for you to communicate and socialise with the members of the household and students and hosts are therefore expected to eat the majority of their meals together. Please show consideration to your host by letting them know in advance if you will be late or will not be requiring your evening meal on a particular day.

You may sometimes wish to bring a friend home for dinner and we therefore recommend you talk to your host at the start of your stay about what the general procedure is for inviting guests over.

Laundry

Your host will provide you with clean bed linen and clean hand and bath towels every week. Some hosts prefer to wash students' clothes along with their own. If this is not the case, or if you prefer, you can use the washing machine at times convenient to you and your host.

Your host will show you how to use the washing, drying and ironing facilities. Please do not wash clothes in the bathroom or dry them in your bedroom.

Telephone

We ask that you are able to receive incoming calls at reasonable times of the day as it is important that the College and members of your family can contact you. Use of the telephone is not included in the accommodation fees and it is up to the host whether you are allowed to use their telephone for outgoing calls and at what cost. Please discuss the use of the telephone with your host.

The internet

Strode College do not guarantee internet access in any accommodation. If you are fortunate enough to have internet access please do not exploit the facility.

Ask your Homestay host family what is the maximum usage/download cap per month on their broadband contract. Even if it is described as “unlimited” it will still be subject to a fair usage policy and your host may incur a penalty if the limit is exceeded.

Remember that if you wish to do more than just emailing or surfing the internet e.g. if you intend to upload/download photographs, music, video, films or to play online games you should discuss this with your host first.

If your Homestay host family's broadband package needs to be upgraded to cope with your requirements your host is likely to ask you to pay a contribution towards their increased monthly bill.

Please be aware that your Homestay host family is entitled to prevent you from using their broadband connection entirely if you do not agree to reasonable use of the facility. There is access to the internet at College (including a wireless network) during opening hours.

Access

We expect you to be given your own key so please make sure that you return it at the end of your stay. Please take care of your key and do not keep it with the address of the house. You must tell your host if you lose your key.

Transport

Some Homestay accommodation is located quite close to the College but most can be reached within 15 minutes on public transport.

You are asked not to rely on your host to drive you everywhere but to walk, cycle or use public transport where possible. Please note that, unless you have been advised otherwise, while travelling in the host's vehicle you are travelling at your own risk as you will not be covered by their insurance, therefore in case of any accident you will not be protected by it. You can obtain information regarding public transport from the College website or from your host.

Your host may be able to drive you to activities at College or in the community if you make polite and reasonable requests.

If you use a bicycle please ensure that you are acquainted with the Highway Code before setting off.

Leisure time

We expect you will have use of the common living areas of the house as any other member of the household. You may enjoy accompanying your host family on outings and they will be able to give you advice about local places of interest, activities and sports facilities. We will also encourage you to access the facilities and extra curricular activities available at the College.

Insurance

It is essential for all students to arrange insurance to cover your possessions, personal effects and valuables against loss, damage or theft. You may also wish to arrange cover for medical bills and personal injury following an accident. Please note that you will not be covered by the host's insurance in case of fire, flooding etc.

Wellbeing

E-safety

Be careful about sharing your personal information online. If you have any suspicions about someone you have met via the internet speak to your Homestay host family or a member of the Student Support Team.

Personal Safety

In the unlikely event that you are involved in an accident or are taken ill when away from your Homestay accommodation or Strode College the emergency services will search your mobile phone for "ICE numbers". ICE stands for In Case of Emergency.

Please ensure that you store on your mobile phone at least 2 UK telephone numbers listed as:

ICE1 **ICE2**

For example:

Contact name:

Telephone number:

ICE1

Strode College's emergency mobile phone number

ICE2

Your Homestay host family's telephone number

ICE3

Your UK guardian's telephone number

Illness

We strongly recommend that you register with a doctor (GP) and dentist as soon as you arrive. If you are a full time student whose course of study is for 6 months or more you will qualify for National Health Service (NHS) medical treatment on the same basis as anyone who is ordinarily resident in the UK. Even if you are entitled to NHS treatment whilst in the UK you should consider taking out insurance which covers the additional possible costs resulting from illness, which can be substantial. Further advice is available from the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) website www.ukcisa.org.uk

Medical insurance

If you are not entitled to NHS medical treatment you should make sure you have adequate medical insurance to cover medical costs if you fall ill and also to cover the additional possible costs resulting from illness. Further advice is available from the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) website www.ukcisa.org.uk

Absence

If you plan to go away at a weekend or overnight it is essential that you give your host a contact telephone number and address and tell them when you expect to return. It is your responsibility to inform the College's Accommodation & Welfare Officer as you will not have to pay for your accommodation when you are not staying at your Homestay. It is your responsibility to provide up to date and accurate information e.g. you must inform the College and your host if you change your mobile telephone number.

If you do not keep the College informed about your whereabouts we may deem it necessary to inform the UK Border Agency and this could jeopardise your stay in the UK.

Curfew

Your host will agree with you what time they would like you to be at home in the evening. It would normally be expected that students under the age of 18 will be in their accommodation by 11.00 pm, however there will be occasions when this can be negotiated with your host. You are expected to tell them where you are going and provide them with a contact telephone number and address.

College Emergency Mobile Telephone Number

As a student living in Homestay you will be provided with an emergency mobile telephone number. This phone is held by a duty manager on a rota basis throughout the academic year (excluding Christmas, Easter and summer holidays) out of normal office hours. We ask you to keep the number with you at all times but to only ring the number in case of emergency and in need of immediate help from the College.

999

If you require the assistance of an emergency service (fire, ambulance or police) you should dial 999. The operator will ask which service you require and they will connect you. Calls to 999 are free of charge.

Friends/family

You should always ask your host's permission before inviting friends round to your Homestay accommodation and agree how late in the evening your friends can stay.

Homestay host families are under no obligation to provide accommodation for students' families. We recommend that visiting family members arrange hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation during their visits.

Smoking

In England it is illegal to sell cigarettes to individuals who are under the age of 18. Most of our hosts will not allow you to smoke in the home. Please do not put yourself in danger by

smoking out of the window of your bedroom. Ask if there is a suitable place outside to smoke.

Behaviour

If you commit an offence under British law then you will be dealt with by the police and the Home Office.

You will be obliged to abide by the Strode College Student Code of Conduct. Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct can lead to disciplinary action with the possibility of exclusion from College. Copies of the Student Diary and College Charter will be made available to you on enrolment. Information about the Code of Conduct is in the Student Diary. You will be informed of the College Student Disciplinary Procedures and Student Complaints Procedure as part of your induction to the College. Information about these procedures is also contained in the Student Diary.

Let your host know if you break anything belonging to them as you are liable to pay for it.

We would recommend that you make the best use of the day to study and get a good night's sleep otherwise your studies are likely to suffer.

Always be friendly and treat your host with respect and your host will do the same. Do not forget to say "please" and "thank you" when you ask your host something.

In England the sexes are equal and you should treat women with the same respect and attention as men especially during conversation. Women have careers and work outside the home.

If, after repeated warnings, you fail to follow the Homestay Guidelines you may be withdrawn from the Homestay programme. You may be asked to immediately leave your Homestay accommodation for any serious matter such as misuse of drugs and/or alcohol, illegal activity etc.

Correspondence from College

The College cannot give information to parents (or anyone else*) relating to a student's academic progress, attendance or social development without the student giving consent to the College to disclose information. This consent was requested on the College application form and may/may not have been given by you.

*Information about a student's application, enrolment, attendance and progress at Strode College may be passed to the Home Office for purposes connected with immigration.

First few days

During the first few days it is important to remember that there is a settling in period. Everything will seem strange and unusual as it takes time to feel at home and adapt to new surroundings and for you and your host to get used to living together. It is at this time that you should discuss with your host and agree on those matters which you feel will make you more comfortable, as this will prevent misunderstandings occurring later on.

We suggest that you discuss the following with your host during the first few days of your stay:

- Mealtimes and dietary requirements
- Use of the kitchen
- Use of the bathroom
- Escape route in case of fire
- Where you can keep valuables e.g. passport
- Laundry
- Can you put pictures on your bedroom wall?
- What happens at weekends?
- Use of the telephone/internet
- Can you bring your friends home?
- Can you use your own TV, laptop etc in your bedroom?
- How late can you stay up studying or listening to music without disturbing the family?
- Locking up the house/setting house alarm
- Cultural/religious requirements
- Buses to College/surrounding area
- Local shops and amenities
- Any other details that you feel you may need to know regarding your safety and security

It is suggested that when you arrive at your accommodation both you and your host look at your living area together and complete and sign a checklist which describes the condition and contents of it. Photographs may also be taken if desired.

Payment

The charge of £100 for arranging Homestay accommodation is non-refundable once we have arranged the accommodation and should be paid when submitting the online Homestay Accommodation Application Form.

No retainer is paid to the host over the academic holiday periods (including half terms) if/when you are not present. You should be allowed to leave your belongings in your room.

In the first week of your arrival you will be required to pay the College one term's Homestay accommodation fees and payments will be paid by the College to your host weekly. Your parent(s) will be invoiced at the start of each subsequent term for that term's payment.

Students should not be required by their host to vacate their room at any point during the Homestay period, unless in an emergency situation.

No payment is made to the host when you are on holiday or absent from your accommodation for another reason. It is your responsibility to inform the College's Accommodation & Welfare Officer to ensure that you do not pay for your accommodation when you are not there. If you do not stay in your Homestay accommodation for a full week the provider will be paid for a part-week.

The Homestay period

The period covered by this agreement is for the duration of the academic year 2011/12. The arrangement between the host and Strode College covers only the period specified in the agreement. Any arrangements made outside of this period are between the student, the student's parent(s) and the host and are the responsibility of those parties.

Accommodation is arranged by the College from the day before your course begins (5 September 2011 for new students or 7 September 2011 for returning students) to the day after it ends (27 June 2012) including half terms but excluding Christmas, Easter and summer vacations. If you wish to stay with your Homestay host family during these vacations it will be a private arrangement between you, your host family and your parent(s). You are encouraged to plan well in advance of the vacation periods as your host family may not be able to accommodate you and alternative arrangements will have to be made.

<u>Term Dates</u>	<u>Autumn</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>
Term Starts	5 September 2011 (new students) 7 September 2011 (returning students)	3 January 2012	16 April 2012
Term Ends	16 December 2011	29 March 2012	27 June 2012

Vacation periods 2011/2012

Christmas	Saturday 17 December 2011	Monday 2 January 2012
Easter	Friday 30 March 2012	Sunday 15 April 2012
Summer	Thursday 28 June 2012	To be confirmed

Cancellations/transfers

Once an arrangement has been made to place you in Homestay accommodation it is deemed to be firm and all reasonable efforts should be made by the host to honour it. If however they are forced to break off the arrangement due to a change in personal circumstances we will endeavour to transfer you to new Homestay accommodation within one week of being notified.

Except in exceptional circumstances you will be expected to remain in your Homestay accommodation for at least the first half of term in order to allow you time to settle at College and adjust to living in the UK and with your host family. Parents may be charged by the Homestay host family if they require their son/daughter to move earlier than this.

If you have a reason for wanting to leave your Homestay accommodation that cannot be resolved satisfactorily between you, the host and Strode College we will endeavour to transfer you to new Homestay accommodation within one week of being notified.

If you cancel your Homestay accommodation with less than one week's notice you will have to pay a cancellation charge of one week's rent.

In the unlikely event of a breakdown in your Homestay accommodation arrangement, Strode College will endeavour to find you alternative Homestay accommodation. It may, however, be necessary to place you into College approved bed and breakfast accommodation for a short period of time until suitable accommodation can be arranged. If it is not possible to

find you suitable Homestay accommodation, your parent/guardian may have to assist in finding alternative private accommodation.

Agency

In booking accommodation for students and making payments on their behalf the College is providing a service for the convenience of its students and is not acting as their agent. The College cannot accept responsibility for any damage caused by students in the home nor will it pay compensation for any such damage.

Feedback

We are always concerned that students enjoy their experience of Homestay accommodation so we will contact you at least once a term to make sure that everything is OK. We will also ask you to complete a Homestay questionnaire during the first few months.

And finally....

We expect our hosts to provide you with good accommodation, good food, to be friendly and helpful and to make you feel at home. We hope that they will treat you as one of the family and you must also treat them with consideration.

If you are having difficulty adjusting to your host family, communicate your problems and concerns with them. Often problems and misunderstandings can be resolved in this way. If they cannot, please contact the Accommodation & Welfare Officer at the College who will arrange to meet with you privately to discuss your concerns and then with you and your host.

Contact details

Annabel Mitchell: Accommodation & Welfare Officer
Tel: 01458 844477 (Thursdays and Fridays)
Email: amitchell@strode-college.ac.uk

Bill Scott: Student Support Manager
Tel: 01458 844454
Email: bscott@strode-college.ac.uk

Please note that you will be asked to sign an agreement to these guidelines on arrival at Strode College.