

Cultural Immersion's Home Stay

Frequently Asked Questions

What Are The Requirements For Being a Host Family?

Host families are as different and diverse as Australians themselves. There is no typical host family: families with teenagers, no children, young children, children who are grown, single parents and grandparents. Host families all have a common trait - the willingness to open their hearts to an international student and provide room, board, love, guidance, and the experience of what everyday life is like in Australia.

Note: Preference will be shown to families who demonstrate that they speak English at home (for the learning benefit of the student). Host parents **must** have undergone, or be prepared to undergo (and pass) a Police Clearance. Cultural Immersion will reimburse each family in attaining Police Clearances if they currently do not have one.

What Are The Steps To Becoming a Host Family?

Families applying to become a host family must first complete a **Host Family Expression of Interest Form** that assesses initial eligibility. After reviewing the expression of interest form and checking your references one of our staff will contact you to schedule an in-home interview with all family members present.

At this interview you will be asked a series of questions relevant only to the home stay and the information gathered will be kept confidential. We also request referees and references attesting to your good character and suitability for hosting an international student. The information we gather is used to assess your suitability in being a host family. We confirm your suitability in writing. If you are not eligible then we shred your information in compliance with our privacy policy.

What Will We Be Asked and Surveyed At The Family Interview?

We assess suitability based on the information gathered at the in-home interview. We survey and ask questions about the family's housing conditions, financial ability to host (host families are **not** expected to be wealthy), family structure, routines, rules as well as willingness, motivation and capacity to host.

We must match the needs or requests of the student to the most suitable host family environment and we must follow a strict process in doing so. Some information will be passed to the visiting international student such as a recent family photo, number of children in the household, pets, smokers, distance from learning centre etc.

Note: Applying or completing the interview does not guarantee that you will be asked to become a host family. We select suitable host families based on strict criteria and the final selection is solely at our discretion.

What Must Host Families Provide For Their Student?

We ask that our host families care for the students as they would their own children. A caring, safe, supportive and considerate environment is very important. Families are expected to provide students with their **own bedroom (for privacy and studying), meals including a cut lunch & transport** (or public transport coaching) to & from the learning centre in the morning & afternoon and some help with their English homework. Students provide their own spending money for personal expenses, such as long distance calls, clothing, extra toiletries, school supplies, etc. Students will have their own full medical insurance. We may request families provide a brief summary on student's home stay.

How Do Children of Host Families Benefit From Hosting a Student?

Many of the students accepted into the program indicate an interest in being placed in families with small children. As long as the student is not asked to share a room with any child under 12 years of age, these arrangements work well when the student has some privacy and a quiet place to study. Children of all ages in host families will gain a broader perspective on the world, learning more about geography, communication, and international cultures. Young children usually love having a big 'brother' or 'sister' from another country and strong bonds of friendship are formed!

How Will Our Family Benefit From Hosting an International Student?

There are many reasons why hosting is a wonderful experience for the entire family. You will learn about another culture's customs and traditions; your family will do more things together and you will start a life-long friendship with your new 'son' or 'daughter'. Members of your own family may feel closer to one another through sharing your daily lives with an international student. When your student returns home you will have a special friend in another country. But most of all, you will have a lot of fun!

We Both Work and We May Not Have Time to Entertain a Student. Is that OK?

In most of our two-parent families, both parents work. Students are not expecting to be "entertained" but to become a part of the family. By participating in the local high school students will develop a circle of friends and should not be dependent on the family for entertainment.



SUMMARY OF THE STEPS IN BECOMING A HOST FAMILY

Step 1: Expression of Interest

After reading & understanding your obligations and our expectations submit "Host Family Expression of Interest Form".

Step 2: Submitted Form Checked

We thoroughly review the "Host Family Expression of Interest Form" and check references.

Step 3: Family Interview

If the family seems to be a good potential host, we will set up an interview in their home. All family members are required to attend. We carefully screen each family.

Step 4: Acceptance

We evaluate all of the information including the application materials, reference checks, Police Clearances, and information from the interview to assess the family's suitability. Families will be notified in writing whether or not they have been accepted.

Step 5: Preparing the Host Family

We will hold a special Host Family Orientation which details what responsibilities families have, what to expect throughout the home stay period and a lot of other practical information involved in hosting.



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Cultural Immersion's Home Stay Frequently Asked Questions, cont.



Would We Need To Plan Special Trips or Activities For The Student?

The student would enjoy attending family outings but planning special trips for the student is not a requirement. Your student should be treated like any other member of the family and fit into your family's plans and structure. However we do request that you provide activities and sightseeing opportunities for the student on weekends.

We Live In The Country Area Outside Of Adelaide - Can We Host a Student?

Many international students come from large metropolitan areas. For most students living rurally or in a small community is not a problem. Students soon come to feel comfortable in any setting as long as their host family is loving and supportive. The majority of students are hosted in the Adelaide metro area. Please note that the majority of the learning program is conducted within the metropolitan area, therefore please consider how this would impact on your ability to provide daily transport for the student.

Can Host Families Select Their Own Student?

Sorry but no. You can request to host a particular gender only, but a female student cannot be placed in a family with male children. It is very important that potential host families accept the student as a member of their family and provide the student with a nurturing and loving family environment. Factors such as similar values, activities and interests (sports, arts, intellectual pursuits, etc) as well as acceptance of the student's religious beliefs are considered. We take the matching process very seriously and we try to maximise compatibility. Hosting does require a short period of adjustment for all family members and for the student. Careful matching aims to make that adjustment easier and aims to facilitate a hosting experience that is fulfilling, rewarding and positive!

How Will Host Families Be Prepared For The Hosting Experience?

Once you become an approved host family, you will receive information from us on the hosting experience. The information will include a **Host Family Handbook** which can be referred to throughout the program. You will need to attend a **Host Family Session** prior to your student's arrival where you can get answers to any last-minute questions, meet other host families and learn how to support your student through the normal adjustments.

"The staff at Cultural Immersion were so professional. The hosting experience was wonderful and gave all our family a different perspective on another country's customs and way of life. We enjoyed it so much and we have a lifelong friend." Liz, Woodville



Can Single People Apply To Host an International Student?

Single people are welcome to apply to Cultural Immersion to host an international student. On occasion, some students will prefer living with a single person and enjoy the extra attention afforded them by a single person. Prior permission from the student's natural parents is required for these types of placements and applicants must be at least 25 years old and financially capable of providing room and board for another person. All applicants must also be able to assist with transport for the international student.

What If There Are Problems With The Student or The Hosting Experience?

Since the hosting experience involves human beings with different expectations and goals, it would be unrealistic to expect the experience to be "problem-free". Cultural Immersion provides 24 hour support to assist in resolving any difficult situation that may arise. It is important to keep an open mind and not to jump to any conclusions as some misunderstandings can be worked out through communication with a neutral third party.

In the event of a more severe problem or serious personality conflict that is deemed too great to overcome, students may be moved to another host family and in extreme cases returned to their home country. It does not happen very often, but when a host family breaches any requirement or if their living conditions change where it negatively impacts on the student we have the authority (and duty) to remove the student. We have a duty of care towards the student and are responsible for their welfare.

Trouble-shooting and problem solving will be further discussed in the orientation sessions. It is important that all host parents attend these sessions.

Will Host Families Receive an Allowance?

Host families receive a fixed daily allowance of \$30 per day (current from May 2008). We aim to make the allowance equitable. This allowance is distributed by cheque or directly by electronic banking. If the student leaves the host family early for whatever reason the allowance also ceases. Our hosting arrangements operate on the premise that host families are motivated by the cultural benefits and the willingness to share their lives with an international student and not by monetary gain.

