

How Do You Do Things In Your Home?



Association for Teen-Age Diplomats

Congratulations on your new son or daughter. The year ahead will be filled with challenges and rewards. We thought it would be helpful to know some of the topics that host families and exchange students encounter in their daily routine, and in the process of becoming a family unit. We recommend that you consider the topics below, and have a family meeting, complete with your own children and your exchange student, to discuss your family rules and routines soon after your exchange student arrives. **DO NOT** hold this meeting the first or second day after your student arrives. They will still be struggling with language and time adjustment. They must be able to get their feet on solid ground before they will comprehend the conversation. On the other hand, do not wait more than 3 weeks to have this discussion. Otherwise, patterns and emotions may become too set in their ways to be open to as frank a discussion that needs to occur about the expectations of the family. **The most important thing is for everyone to talk about expectations so there are common understandings.**

Food

When are meals? Is everyone expected to be there?
Are breakfast and lunch on their own, or are they family meals?
Show your student how to use the microwave.
Is snacking allowed: anything you want or just specified food (ex. leftovers)?
Is there a limit on the amount of a food or beverage one can have?
Can you eat in the living room? Bedroom?
Does student have any food dislikes or allergies?

Table Behaviors

Is it important that your student eat "American style"?
Is it important that everyone eat basically the same thing (same menu) at the table? Does everyone need to try every food on the table?
When are meals? Is everyone expected to eat together?
Teach your student how to use all of the appliances in the kitchen.

Dishes

Who does the dishes, loads the dishwasher (how do you want that done), unloads the dishwasher, dries the dishes?
Are dirty dishes washed immediately, left on the counter, left in the sink?

Communication Methods (Telephone, Cell Phone, Internet)

What are your limits for communication time in the house?
When can calls come into the house?
Are there limits on the time (on the phone, on the internet ("screen time"), etc.)?
Who pays for telephone or cell phone calls?
What are expectations around sharing with other family members?
Explain the use of the answering machine and call waiting.
What are your rules on texting?

At Home Entertainment (TV, Computer/Internet, iPods, Stereo, etc)

What are expectations around sharing with other family members?
Are there limits on screen time (number of hours, after homework, on weekends, etc.)?
What is the tolerable noise level?
Who decides which program to watch?
Is there a computer/TV/noise curfew?
Can you change the TV channel if someone is sleeping in front of the TV?

Pets

Is the dog/cat allowed inside/outside?
May the dog/cat sleep on the furniture or bed?
May the dog eat table scraps? Can it eat off the dishes?

Bathroom

Who uses which bathroom?
What is the schedule?
Who gets priority?
How long is too long, especially for showers?
Do you have limited water pressure, water supply, hot water?
Do you expect everyone to shower daily?
Should the toilet seat and cover be left up or down?
Should the door be left open or closed?
Should the soap dish or sink be dried?
Should the shower curtain be left open or closed?
Should the shower door be wiped down?
Who can use whose soap, shampoo, hair dryer, etc?
Who buys the toiletries?
Where should wet towels be put: hung up, in laundry?
How often are towels replaced?
Where are individual's towels kept?

Bedroom

Should the door be left open or shut: when you aren't in the room, in the room studying, asleep?
Do you knock before entering or just open the door?
Does the bed have to be made every day, never, or only on special occasions?
Are clothes to be: put away, left on the chair or bed, left on the floor?
Who is responsible for cleaning the bedroom?
Is the student allowed to hang things on the wall with tacks, tape, other?
If the student is sharing a bedroom, what are the expectations of both sibling and International Student relative to lights, music, window open/closed, when to get up or go to bed, how to study and where?
Are friends allowed in the bedroom? Friends of the opposite sex? With door open or closed?

Laundry

Where should the laundry be left: hamper, bathroom, laundry chute, bedroom floor?
Does everyone do their own laundry, or is this one person's responsibility?
How often are sheets changed? Who does it?
Where are clean sheets and towels kept?

Living Room

Who uses the living room? For what activities: watching TV, studying, sleeping, eating, talking?
Can you put feet on the furniture?
Do coasters need to be used for drinks?

Family Expectations

What family activities is your student expected to participate in?
Is there a curfew?
Does one have to ask permission before going somewhere or is a note sufficient?
What are the house rules? What are the consequences?
If there are small children, are there any special rules/expectations with them?
Are there assigned household chores? Weekly, daily, rotating, etc?
Does the family attend church together? Every week or only on certain occasions? What clothes required?
Does your student want to attend your church, a different church, no religious services?
Who brings in the mail? Who pays for stamps?
Is smoking allowed in the house, in certain rooms, outside, not at all?

Odds and Ends

Should shoes be taken off in the house?
Where should studying be done? In the living room, bedroom, kitchen?
Are doors shut, opened, locked, unlocked?
Should lights be left on or off when not in a room? Are there night lights or certain lights left on at night?
Are windows left open or closed in the summer/winter?
Where are wet clothes, shoes, animals placed?
Is student on any medication? What are the student's needs/expectations from the Host Family relative to the medication?
Is gift giving important/expected? If so, remember home made gifts from a student on a budget are as valuable as purchased gifts. Is a card or hug all that is expected?
Explain for which occasions gifts are exchanged.