

*The International Education Department of Lambton College and Lambton College itself cannot assume liability or accept consequences for the behaviour of international students which are not within the jurisdiction of the college while the student is a registered student at Lambton College. Furthermore, the responsibility and liability of the Homestay Coordinator does not go beyond the search for and placement of students in a homestay environment.*

This RESOURCE GUIDE provides information to homestay families and to international students. It should be used as a *guide* and as a first source of information.

The information and guidelines provide a resource for host families and international students to ensure a consistent and enjoyable experience for all.

**How to use this guide:**

- ⌘ Please keep this guide in a handy location so that it can serve as a resource and reference for hosts and students alike.

**Staying up to date:**

- ⌘ If you think there is an error or something needs clarification, please contact the Sarnia Homestay Coordinator.
- ⌘ If you have a question or concern, please check the Resource Guide. It will be helpful to have it on hand if you are phoning the Coordinator.

This handbook is designed to give you all the information you need to make your homestay experience as positive as possible. Please let us know if there is something you do not understand, or if you have questions about anything regarding homestay. The international housing coordinator carefully selects each family to match your needs, ensuring you will have a comfortable and enjoyable stay. Homestay families are as diverse as the international students who attend educational institutions in Sarnia/Lambton, but what the homestay families all have in common is a desire to contribute to the lives of others. Living with a Canadian family will be a very rewarding experience that you will never forget. Once you have your confirmation of who your homestay family is, you will be able to contact them and begin to develop a lifelong friendship. You will have many questions to ask and having these questions answered will help you to adjust more quickly to your life as a student in Sarnia/Lambton.



It is normal to experience some difficulties while living with a family away from home and in a country with a different language and culture. The objective of this guide is to assist and prepare the international students, and the host family for this wonderful learning experience.

As a homestay coordinator, I am happy to help both the homestay student and the homestay host! Please feel free to contact me whenever you need, either by phone, e-mail, or in person.

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**Upon arrival:**

The monthly fee paid by the international student scholarship includes three meals per day, your own fully furnished private room and study area, and access to the entire house. The homestay family will show you all these areas, and may explain a few things like house rules and expectations. Make sure you ask all the necessary questions to understand everything. It is always a great start for homestay students to establish good communication with their homestay family, even if the English skills are not perfect, and there are mistakes. The homestay family understands and will be patient, they will be glad to help you improve your language skills.

Take some time to get to know each other, and feel comfortable. The host family will want to know about your country, and family. Pictures will be a great way to start. The host family will orient you to travel from home to Lambton College, the city, the neighbourhood, banks, post offices, grocery stores, pharmacies, convenience store, bus routes, etc.; and will provide an English speaking environment. Your homestay family will encourage you to speak English in their home.

**Respectful relationship:**

Both you and your host family will need some time to feel comfortable with the new living environment, both parties will treat each other with kindness, and will respect the rights, privacy, and culture of the other part, including political and religious beliefs. The host family will invite you to participate in family activities, to facilitate learning of the Canadian culture.

You have the responsibility to ask the host for clarification if something is not clear. You also should ask the homestay coordinator if the confusion and/or conflict persist after you have spoken to your host family.

**Personal space care:**

It is your responsibility to keep the bedroom clean and orderly. You should not leave clothes or towels lying around on the floor, or under the bed. Check with host before taking food into the bedroom, or before putting anything up on the walls, or moving furniture around in your room.

**Change of plans:**

You, as a homestay student, should notify the host in advance if there is a plan to arrive home later than expected, or to spend the night away. Communicate as soon as possible with host family if there is a sudden change of plans.

**Meals:**

All the meals are provided by your homestay. You may be expected to prepare your own breakfast and lunch. If so, the host family will show the student what can be made, or taken for these meals. It is recommended to the student to buy a plastic container to carry the lunch to school, and do not take the household spoons, knives, and forks out of the house.

The evening meal is a family time with all household members sitting down together to eat and discuss the day's events. Some of the best experiences in a homestay are learning Canadian culture and spending time together while eating meals. The family should be notified as soon as possible if you will be late or absent for dinner.

Although meals are included in your homestay fee, you may want to purchase food, drinks or snacks that the family does not regularly use. Meal plans are available at the cafeteria on campus which can be used to purchase meals or snacks.

Adapting the taste to Canadian food may be challenging for some students at first, but it is part of the Canadian experience. If there are serious difficulties adapting to the food, the student should communicate with the host, and the homestay coordinator to find a solution.

If the homestay family invites you to go with them to a restaurant for the evening meal, who pays for the dinner should be clarified ahead of time. If you have to pay, the host family should give an idea about the cost of it.

**Computer and Internet Access:**

We recommend that you talk to your homestay family about your computer needs, and that you bring or purchase your own computer if you want computer access at home.

The host family will provide unlimited access to internet in the house.

The two main reasons for making internet access available for students are: academic research on-line to complete school assignments and to provide an efficient and economic option to communicate with family and friends in the country of origin.

Please remember that the school has computer labs that are available for student use for many hours each day and are free of charge.

**Pets:**

Most Canadian families have pets, normally dogs and/or cats. They are considered part of the family, and are clean, friendly, and excellent companions. You are encouraged to enjoy them as you get used to their presence.



**Cell Phone:**

If your cell phone operates with a SIM card, a Canadian SIM card can be purchased. The use of a long distance phone card to call family and friends in the country of origin is recommended. Skype is highly encouraged.

**Personal care:**

You are responsible for personal toiletries. Most Canadians are now on a “Green move” to save the energy and protect the environment, and for this reason, the daily shower should not last more than 10 minutes. It is important to be sure the curtain is inside the bathtub to prevent spills of water on the floor. Toilet paper is flushed down the toilet, but feminine hygiene products are wrapped in toilet paper and placed in the garbage. The host family members will instruct you about the use of the laundry facilities and cleaning supplies to ensure you keep your private living space clean. As part of the worldwide effort to reduce the carbon footprint, most Canadians do the laundry once a week, and only when there is enough clothing for a full load. Hydro companies encourage people to do it after 9:00pm and all day weekends, to reduce the workload on the systems and prevent a massive blackout.

**Household Help:**

You will be treated as a member of the family. Most families in Canada do not have a live in maid, and everyone in the family has some household duties. You should volunteer to help with making meals, cleaning up afterwards or doing other household chores. The homestay parents are not servants and will be pleased if you help with chores, along with the other family members. You will also find that both males and females are expected to share the workload of the household.

**Money and banks:**

Do not carry a lot of extra cash with you on a daily basis; debit/bank cards are much safer to carry and are widely accepted. If you have questions about banking, you may ask your host family or the International Department for help. There is no bank on campus, but there are automatic teller machines (ATMs) available. You may want to consider opening an account at a bank close to the campus or to your homestay. Your homestay family will help assist you to make an appointment at a bank to open an account when you arrive.

**Transportation:**

You will be able to walk, ride a bike or take a bus to school from your homestay. If you need help with bus or taxi transportation, your family will be happy to help you. Although families may help out, they are not expected to transport you on a regular basis. Cyclists over 18 are encouraged to wear helmets for their own safety, but are not required to by law.



<p><b>Bus pass:</b> Buses are available regularly, and a map of the city will be provided to you, with the information required to use the bus.</p>
<p><b>Guests:</b> You will need to ask your homestay family before inviting guests to their home. Some families may have room to accommodate guests, but they should not be expected to. If you have family visiting, they should arrange to stay at a nearby hotel. Host families will not have your boyfriend or girlfriend stay overnight. It is best to talk openly to your host family about your relationships and their household guidelines.</p>
<p><b>Smoking:</b> Most Canadians do not permit smoking in their homes, however, many will allow for smoking outdoors. You must cooperate with your family and their rules regarding smoking. Many non-smoking families have insurance rates based on no smoking in their homes.</p>
<p><b>Damage:</b> The host family has the responsibility to obtain tenants insurance to cover the expenses incurred in the event of any damage or normal tear and wear to personal belongings caused by the student.</p>
<p><b>When conflict arises:</b> Flexibility, patience, and understanding are key factors for a great relationship between hosts and homestays. Many things that are taken for granted, will pose a conflict when two different cultures come together to live under the same roof. Hosts in Canada are diverse and multicultural, and may be at different stages of their lives. They may be immigrants who came to Canada a few decades ago, and have gone through the same learning experience as the homestay student will go through now. Personalities are just as diverse also, and will be exposed as the time goes by. We are all human beings, and in that sense, the homestay experience will be simultaneously extremely rewarding and stressful. There will be conflict, and it is a normal and unavoidable part of life, but the key to minimize and eliminate it is COMUNICATION. Homestay students and homestay families have the responsibility and the right to communicate with each other, but if it does not solve the problem, or need help to talk to the other part, talk to the housing coordinator in person, by e-mail, or by phone.</p>
<p><b>Leaving a homestay:</b> Homestay families expect to have a student in their home for the entire term of study. Many families have invested money to accommodate for students. It is very disappointing for them to have a student leave homestay. If the homestay student decides to leave homestay, should notify</p>



both the homestay host and the homestay coordinator no less than one month before the change. A notice to leave or change homestay form must be filled out and signed, by both the student and the host, and brought to the homestay coordinator. It is very important for the coordinator to be aware of all the changes planned.

**Keys:**

Keys to the homestay’s family home will be provided to you, and should be carried with responsibility. If the key is lost, the host family must be notified immediately, as the locks may have to be change. If it happens, you will have to pay for the expenses of changing the locks.

**Alarm systems:**

Many homes in Canada have alarm systems. The host will explain you how to operate it. If the procedure is not properly understood, you should ask again, and practice a few times, until you feel comfortable using it. Most alarm companies charge homeowner a fee when the alarm goes off by mistake, therefore the system has to be handle with care.

**Health problems:**

If you are sick, the host family should be notified. The College must be informed of any absence, with a request for material to cover the school work while you are away from school.

**Alcohol and illicit drugs:**

Excessive drinking, the use of illicit drugs and/or the use of false identification is strictly prohibited and may result in removal from the homestay program.

**Children in the host family:**

It is not expected or advisable for the homestay student to babysit the children of the homestay family. The following guidelines are for protection and safety of everyone:

- Never be alone or behind closed doors with anyone’s child.
- Never change diapers, take to the toilet, or bathe anyone’s child.
- Avoid swinging or wrestling with the children.
- Host children are not allowed in the student’s room to ensure privacy.

**Lifetime friends:**

**The homestay program is a wonderful opportunity to making friends for life. Many students and families stay in touch for years, and some even return for visits.**

**There are also cases in which the homestay family visits the student in his/her home country.**

**Safeguards:**

- ⊗ Students should never agree to babysit or do housekeeping.
- ⊗ Respect everybody else’s political and religious beliefs.

- ⌘ Unwelcome advances or uncomfortable situations for students or hosts should be reported immediately to the Home Stay Housing Coordinator.
- ⌘ Host and students should never borrow or lend money from one another.
- ⌘ **Place your passport, plane ticket, and any other travel document in a safe and secure location.**

**Students are expected to:**

1. Students must abide by the laws of Canada and by house rules.
2. Students may use drugs only if prescribed by a doctor.
3. Students are not permitted to purchase or drink alcoholic beverages, unless over the age of 19. Alcohol consumption in the home is at the discretion of the homestay host.
4. Smoking is discouraged in most homes, but often students are allowed to smoke outside only.
5. Students are not permitted to possess or to purchase weapons of any type.
6. Students are expected to follow reasonable rules established by Homestay hosts.
7. Students are encouraged to use English as much as possible during the ESL program, especially in the homestay.
8. If students have friends over it is disrespectful to speak their native language in front of the Homestay family.
9. When a student calls home, use of his/her native language is acceptable. After hours phone calls to overseas family should be arranged with the host family.
- 10. Be polite and courteous with all members of the family. Talk to them about how your days are going, and ask about their work and activities. Try hard to share the family experience. Use "please" and "thank you".**
11. Treat the home and its possessions in a caring, respectful manner. Your host family will then be respectful of your things.
12. Maintain the security of the home: be careful to close and lock windows and doors as requested by your host family.
13. Be sure to understand the operation of the heating thermostats, and when they should be used. For example, don't leave heat at the high setting when you leave in the morning. As well, talk over the use of the shower to be sure the arrangement is suitable for all family members. Showers should not be too long because hot water heating is very expensive.
14. Mealtimes with host families are very important, and should not be missed, except for important functions.
15. Discuss food concerns with host families. Tell them if you dislike a type of food, or if you wish for a particular food.
16. Communicate with your host family if you have to follow a special diet for health reasons.
17. Follow the evening curfew time rules. Curfews are established for the health and safety of students, and to avoid disruptions to the family.

18. Ask permission before bringing a guest. Most families will not allow you to have a guest of the opposite sex in your bedroom.
19. If you wish to invite a friend for dinner or to stay overnight, ask your host family before inviting your friend. Likewise, if you want to stay at a friend's house, tell your host family in advance so they will not worry.
20. If you have travel plans, be sure to discuss them with your Host family at the earliest possible date. Sometimes they can help you with arrangements. Do the same if your parents or other relatives are coming to visit. Talk to your host family about the plan and the dates. If you are away from home and your return plans change, call your host so they won't worry.
21. Remember, it is not polite to speak a language that some people in the group can't understand. Therefore, if you have a group of friends visiting your Homestay speak in English, at least part of the time when family members other Canadians who don't understand your language are there.
22. It is a good idea to help at home. If you see that family members are busy or have some extra work to do, perhaps you can help by setting the table or putting the dishes away.
23. If you are lonely or worried or feel sick, talk to your Host family. They may be able to help you. It is a normal feeling to be worried or sad at times and families understand those feelings. If you are not feeling well, it is difficult to study successfully.
24. If you have a concern or problem at home, talk to your Host family about it. It is the Canadian custom to discuss any disagreements or concerns as soon as they arise. If you are uncertain about how to discuss a problem, ask the Homestay Coordinator for help.