

# Friends International Hospitality Scheme

## Hints for Hosting International Students

### Contact

#### 1. Make contact quickly!

The newly arrived student is very alone and might feel unwanted if you delay. Phone/ write/ visit and fix a date even if it is a little way ahead. Don't wait until life is quieter or less complicated! If you have problems making contact, please tell the co-ordinator who can probably help.

#### 2. Give very clear information about date, time and place

Ask whether the day and time you have suggested suits the student. Some will agree to it even though it is very inconvenient or actually not possible. Make it clear how long the student will be expected to stay with you, and whether it will include a meal. Be aware that some students come from cultures which have a more relaxed attitude towards time – valuing relationships over schedules. So don't be offended if they are not as punctual as you might like. If possible, collect your student and take them home, especially if it is dark.

#### 3. Keep in contact by phone, email or visit

If your first meeting has gone well, and you both have time to meet again, fix a date to suit you and your student. It is easy for time to pass and contact to be lost, but if you're able to, keep in touch by phone or e-mail. As you are host the student will probably expect you to be proactive about this.

### Hospitality

#### 1. Make the student feel at home

Don't feel your home must be immaculate. Allow the student to help if he/she seems comfortable doing that, but remember that in some cultures men never enter the kitchen.

#### 2. Children will be children

But different cultures have different customs regarding discipline and the place of a child. Flexibility is the order of the day.

#### 3. Cook a good British meal

Don't try to cook a curry for Indians or stir-fry for Chinese unless you really know your spices. Let them try something typically British, but avoid the most bland of foods. Check for religious or personal food preferences. Hindus do not eat beef. Jews and Muslims do not eat pork but like other meats (chicken, lamb). Many Muslims will prefer to meet "halal" meat (specially prepared by a halal butcher). Ask them how they feel about halal food – some will be more relaxed about food rules away from home, but all will appreciate the fact that you cared to ask. If in any doubt, offer vegetarian food, and tell them what it is made of.

#### 4. Show the way

Eating with a knife and fork may be unfamiliar. Provide an extra spoon, and show them by your example how to serve themselves and tackle certain foods. Perhaps ask them what are considered good table manners in their country.

#### 5. Raining cats and dogs

If you have a pet, check first that the student will not be freaked out by your friendly dog/ cat. Walking in the rain or cold through muddy fields is a peculiarly British custom usually not enjoyed by others.

#### 6. Accept hospitality offered

Allow your student to reciprocate by offering you hospitality. In many cultures shoes off inside is the norm. He/ she may even wish to cook a meal in your home if their kitchen/ dining facilities are limited.

## Language & Culture

### 1. Speak clearly, using 'standard' English

Avoid too much slang, difficult idioms. Be prepared to repeat or re-phrase to aid understanding. Don't speak more loudly to compensate!

### 2. Give information about yourself

Don't just ask your student all the questions. Volunteer information about yourself and your family. Show photos, artefacts that tell about you.

### 3. Remember it's not wrong, it's just different

We all have different ways of doing things which can cause surprise even shock on either side. Make allowances, be relaxed, but thoughtful and try to avoid giving offence. Don't try to correct a guest whose beliefs and practices are different to yours. As your friendship develops, pray for opportunities to talk about these matters.

### 4. 'Yes' may mean several things

In many cultures it is important to agree with the person older than you, or above you in status. You want to please them and tell them what they want to hear. This may mean that we don't always get straight answers to our questions or suggestions. The intention is not to mislead but to please. Learn how to get the agreement or information you need by asking less direct questions, and giving space for alternatives.

### 5. Family matters

Be aware that family is very important to most international students and they will be missing their families greatly at this time of adjustment. Ask often about family members. Ask for details. If there has been any kind of family tragedy or even happy event make a special effort to give support, recognising that distance from family will be felt acutely at such times.

## 1. Friendship

### 1. Work at becoming friends

Sometimes this comes without effort, and other times it needs working at. Allow the student to get close to you by being relaxed and involving them with different activities, as you might any friend.

### 2. Avoid misunderstandings

Be aware of gender issues, especially if you have teenage daughters whose friendly overtures may be mis-interpreted by male visitors. Deal firmly, but kindly with marriage/dating proposals. Try to ensure that you do not spend time alone with a guest of the opposite sex (this includes giving lifts).

### 3. Share yourself: share your faith

Be open, be honest and inevitably you will find you are sharing about why God is important in your life. Share faith stories: how God helped you (or a family member) in a time of need, etc. If there is interest, offer to get hold of scriptures in their language (or English). A visit to see a church or attend a service may be an interesting cultural experience, if no more, but do not suggest this for your first meeting with them. Should they wish to study the Bible, contact the hospitality co-ordinator if you don't feel able to help with this request.

### 4. Pray for your international friend & their family

You may be the only Christian they have ever had close contact with. Keep praying for them to be open to hearing God and finding Him for themselves.

For more information visit:

[www.friendsinternational.org.uk](http://www.friendsinternational.org.uk)

email:

[info@friendsinternational.org.uk](mailto:info@friendsinternational.org.uk)

The logo for Friends International features the word "friends" in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter "i" is orange. Below "friends" is the word "INTERNATIONAL" in a smaller, orange, uppercase, sans-serif font.

Reg Charity No 109409