Welcome to the Homestay Program!

The Homestay Program at The University of Winnipeg is a valuable and rewarding cross-cultural experience for both hosts and students. We want to ensure that both students and host families have a positive experience.

This handbook was designed to give you all the information you need to make your time in the Homestay Program a rewarding and positive experience. Please read through each section carefully and with consideration.

I hope this information will be helpful in your Homestay experience. The best way to start your program is simply talking with your Homestay family. It’s ok if your English is not perfect! We all make mistakes. The more you practice your English, the quicker progress you will have at the end.

Thank-you!
Camilo Nieto Sanchez
Homestay Coordinator
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Office Phone Number: 204-982-6631
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RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT

- Communicate with your homestay family. If you don’t understand something, please ask!
- Check with your homestay family about their house rules. Never smoke in your Homestay.
- Keep your room clean and tidy. You should vacuum and empty your garbage at least once a week.
- Clean up after yourself in the bathroom. Clean the shower after you use it, remove all hair, and wipe the sink. Do not leave wet towels on the floor.
- Help with meals by setting the table and helping to clear the table. In most families you will need to make your own breakfast and lunch. Clean up after you are done in the kitchen.
- Tell your host family if you are going to be late or if you won’t be home for dinner. Let them know by 3:00 PM, that day.
- Let your host family know where you are. Provide the information:
  WHO: Who are you going out with?
  WHAT: What will you be doing?
  WHEN: When are you going? & When will you be back?
  WHERE: Where are you going?

Remember: You are not staying in a hotel, and the host is not your servant. Please treat your host with courtesy and respect.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HOST FAMILY

- Pick you up when you arrive and drop you off at the end of the program. (For example, when you arrive and depart at the airport.)
- Acquaint you with the bus route to and from school so that you feel comfortable using public transportation.
- Orient you to Winnipeg, to the neighborhood, and to local services such as banks, post offices, convenience stores etc.

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

- It’s a good idea to communicate with your host family (through email) to get to know them and become comfortable with them.
- Many host families and students send pictures to one another; this will help you recognize your host family at the airport.
- Confirm your arrival time and date and flight number with your host. Let your host family and Homestay program know if there are any flight delays or cancellations.
• Provide you with a private bedroom (bed, dresser, desk/table to study at), internet access, and shared facilities.
• Provide you with food for three meals a day – breakfast and lunch materials so that you can make your own meal, and dinner (dinner will be made by your host family).
• Clearly explain what the rules and expectations are in their home (you can ask them to write this down if you don’t understand).
• Respect your rights, privacy, and culture, including religious and political beliefs.
• Always speak English when you are there and encourage you to speak English at home.
• Welcome and treat you as a member of their family; treating you with patience and respect.

**SOME COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HOMESTAY**

Some students may have certain beliefs about the Homestay Program. If you have any questions about the nature of the Homestay Program, please contact the Collegiate. The following list shows some common misconceptions about the Homestay Program:

1) Canadian families are all white and have a mother and father.
   - In fact, we call Canada a “Cultural mosaic”. Canada is a mix of ethnic groups, languages, and cultures. We are a multicultural society. The nature of families is also varied. We have Homestay families with parents, 2 grandparents, single dad, single mom, 2 moms, etc. We are proud to have all different types of families here in Canada!

2) The homestay house will be like a hotel.
   - In your new house, you will have your own room and you will share the house with your family. Think of yourself as a family member.

3) Meals will be like restaurant dishes with lots of options.
   - Most Homestay parents have full time jobs unless they are already retired. We can imagine that it is difficult to come home after a long day at work and to prepare a full meal for a whole family. Please understand then that your dinners may at times be quite simple. If you wish, a good idea is to help your Homestay parent in the kitchen. They would appreciate anything you do for your new family.

4) Accommodations and the facilities will be the same at each Homestay.
   - Every household differs, so accommodations and facilities differ as well. For example, in one homestay, you might need to share your bathroom with someone else. Or in another homestay, you will have to make your own lunch and breakfast. Just remember, every homestay is different!

5) You will be the only homestay student in the household.
   - In fact, in your homestay there can be up to 2-3 students in your household. The students come from different countries. This is a great opportunity to expand your knowledge and understanding of different cultures.

We hope you learn as much as you can in your Homestay. There are many lessons and experiences for you to have here in Winnipeg.
**ACCOMMODATIONS**

Your host family will provide you with a clean, comfortable place to stay. Some host families live in apartments and others in houses. Also, it is common to have bedrooms in the basement. The sizes and rooms all vary from host family to host family.

**MEALS**

You will find Canadian food different from your food; try your best to adapt. It’s a good idea to discuss what foods you like/dislike with your host family and to go grocery shopping with them so that you can see what is available. You will be preparing your own breakfasts and lunches to bring to school, but Supper will be prepared by your Homestay.

If you really miss the food from your country, offer to cook a meal for your host family. Make sure you ask your homestay family if a friend can come for dinner. Don’t invite friends over without permission. If you will not be home for a meal, tell your host family 3:00 PM, that day. If you decide to eat out with friends, your host family is not responsible for paying for that meal. Be sure you know when meals are served so that you can be at home on time. If you are not home on time, they may leave food for you to reheat instead.

**BATHROOM USE**

Ask your host family when you should take your shower. Keep your shower under 15 minutes! This is the usual and normal amount of time for showering in Canada and hot water can be very expensive. Clean up after yourself in the bathroom. Clean the sink after you have used it and hang up wet towels.

In Canada we put used toilet paper in the toilet (not the garbage can). We do not flush feminine hygiene products (ask your host family how to dispose them)

**LAUNDRY**

Ask your host family when and how they do laundry. If they prefer that you do your own laundry, ask them how to use the washer and the dryer. Usually, you wait until you have a full load of laundry. In most homes, laundry is done once a week. We do not usually do laundry after 10:00pm. Doing laundry late at night can be very noisy to your Host Family.

If you want to hand wash some of your clothes, ask your Homestay where you can wash clothes and were you should hang them to dry.

**TELEPHONE USE**

For long-distance calls, students should have a pre-paid phone card. These cards should be available at most convenience stores. Be sure to discuss guidelines about the amount of time that can be spent on the phone and the times when calls can be received.

If your student wants to have a phone plan for your cellphone, homestay families are not expected to cosign a contract with their student. Host families can help students find a phone plan, but cannot sign a contract with students.

**COMPUTER USE**

- Some families might not have a computer so if you have your own laptop computer, bring it with you. You will also have access to computers at school.
- Ask your host family how to log on to the internet and if there is a maximum amount of data you can use.
- Be very careful about using the Internet. Do not try to access inappropriate material.

**NOTE:** Don’t get into the habit of spending hours alone in your room at your computer. Limit the time spent playing video games. Excessive computer use will affect your school work, relationships, and health!
HEALTH PROBLEMS
Tell your host family if you are not feeling well. If you have to miss school, you are required to contact the Collegiate. If you are very sick the family will take you to see a doctor. You will have your Manitoba Health Card and Insurance Card to provide the Health facility and Pharmacy. This insurance will cover you anywhere in Canada.

KEYS
You will be given keys to your host family’s house. Please take good care of these keys and return them to your host family when you leave. If you lose your key you must pay the cost of replacing it and potentially the cost of replacing the lock. Be sure to always lock the door when leaving and returning home. This is a safety practice that most people follow.

SOCIAL PLANS
While academic study, growth, and development are the main goals of the Collegiate Program, group interaction and socializing are also very important. If you plan on going out, you must give information to your host family. It is helpful to answer the following:
- WHO: Who are you going out with?
- WHAT: What will you be doing?
- WHEN: When are you going? & When will you be back?
- WHERE: Where are you going?

ALCOHOL AND ILLICIT DRUGS
The legal age for drinking and purchasing alcohol and tobacco in Manitoba is 18 years. Drinking underage, excessive drinking, the use of illicit drugs and/or the use of false identification are strictly prohibited and might result in being asked to leave the Homestay Program.

TRAVEL
Students are encouraged to explore and experience Canadian culture during their stay in Winnipeg. This should not interfere with academic studies and be limited to school holiday periods. You must inform your host family of the dates you will be away and should also give information as to where you are going and with whom.

Many host families may want to include the student in their own local travel and holiday plans. Please inform the Homestay Coordinator of your travel plans by email: homestay@uwinnipeg.ca

If your host is traveling without you, the Homestay Coordinator must be informed prior to the trip.
The host family has 3 options –
1) They will have someone, a family member or friend that they trust, stay with the student while they are away. This person must be approved by Homestay.
2) If the trip is less than 3 days and the student is comfortable and understands they will be by themselves, it is OK to leave the student alone
3) The Homestay Coordinator can find a temporary homestay while the host family is away.

NOTE: Homestay families might have plans outside of the house. Please do not be worried if your homestay parent comes home late. A good idea would be to communicate daily with your hosts. They will let you know if they plan to come home late and they will have a prepared dinner for you at home.

SPENDING MONEY
You are advised not to keep large sums of money in your room. Do not borrow money from, or lend money to, members of your host family.
**INSURANCE**
Your belongings may not be covered by your host family’s house insurance. You should check with your parents to see if their insurance covers your possessions while you are studying abroad.

**LENGTH OF STAY**
If you are staying in the program for more than one term and want to stay with the same family longer, please ask them if you can stay and inform the Homestay Program ASAP.
If your host family cannot host you, then another family will be found for you.
You are required to give your host family and us **two weeks’ notice** if you decide to leave or move.

**POLICIES REGARDING MINOR STUDENTS**

- **CURFEWS FOR MINOR STUDENTS:**
  Host families have the right to set house curfew times.
  We recommend a 10:30 pm curfew from Sunday to Thursday and 12:30 am curfew on Fridays and Saturdays. Make previous arrangements with your Homestay if you are attending an event that ends after curfew. **Always** inform your host family where you are and when you will be back home. It’s important to be clear and communicate with your Host Family about where you are. Your host family may worry but remember, this worry comes from a place of care for you and your safety.
  **For students above 18 years old:** Although there is no set curfew for you, please be mindful if/when you come home late. Be considerate; come into the house quietly and remember to lock the door behind you!

- **SLEEPOVERS FOR MINOR STUDENTS:**
  Weekend **sleepovers are allowed at the discretion of your host family and provided that** the home where the sleepover will take place is also part of our Homestay Program.

- **TRAVEL FOR MINOR STUDENTS:**
  The Homestay Coordinator must be informed with the full details of the trip. (location, departure and return date, who you are going with, and contact information).

**PAYMENT OF HOMESTAY FEES**
The UW Homestay program pays your host family for your stay according to the length of your Program. If you decide to stay longer, you will need to pay directly to your Host family $25 per extra day or $750 per month.

**DAMAGE OF PROPERTY**
If you damage or break something while you are staying with your host family you must pay for the item to be fixed or replaced. It can be difficult to tell your Homestay host that you have broken something. If this is the case, see the Homestay Coordinator who can help you in this situation.
WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE
In life, conflicts are inevitable since we are not the same. It is normal and common to have conflicts in your life. It is important, however, to be open about the conflict; especially if it is serious and persists. The key to avoiding conflicts and ending them is communication. You must talk about the conflict. This is hard when a conflict occurs with the host family, because you feel like the guest in their house and your English skills may not be equal to theirs. You should try, however, to resolve the conflict within the family. If you can’t, talk to the Homestay Coordinator immediately!

Often, you will find conflicts result from misunderstandings. You may feel the family does not spend enough time with you. You may find they do not eat rice very often or you want more vegetables. But, if you tell them, they will try to correct the problem.

After all, the family wants you to be happy. Yes, they are paid for homestay. But it is also a labor of love, something they take on to help others and interact with different cultures. They are open-minded, good-spirited people. If you approach them with problems, they will try to help you. But they are not mind readers. You must raise your concerns.

Sometimes problems can be worked out; however, if there are serious problems, a change in host families can also be made.

Do not change host families without permission from the Homestay Program. Before moving, you must submit your Notice of Change form signed to the Homestay Coordinator and give two weeks’ notice to your Homestay.

STEPS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS:

Step 1. Discuss the issues with your hosts. Do not be afraid to speak to your host, they may not know that you have some problems or concerns. If it is a misunderstanding, after talking about it you will understand each other better. Or you both can find solutions that you and your hosts would agree with.

Step 2. If it does not work, ask the Homestay Coordinator for help.

IMPORTANT: Before Leaving or Moving Out of Homestay!
• If you are planning on leaving the Homestay Program, you and your host family must sign the Notice of Change form two weeks before you plan to leave and return this form to the Collegiate.

• The University of Winnipeg Homestay Program is for current University of Winnipeg students. The Homestay Program and/or the host family have the right to ask a student to leave the Homestay Program if they are no longer UW students or have not attended any classes for over two weeks (not including academic breaks).

• When students and host families join our program they agree to the policies of the program. It is unfair for students or host families to try to negotiate changes in living arrangements such as reduced fees or friends moving in, etc. If students and host families wish to remain in our program they must follow the rules of the program.

• Students are responsible for any damages that may occur during their stay at Homestay. If students damage or break something during their stay at homestay, they must pay for it.

• If a student does not follow the homestay policies they might be asked to leave the program.

• If you request to move and have changed families more than once or have been more than a year since your homestay placement, you will be charged the $450 placement fee again.

• The placement fee and homestay fee are non-refundable.

• Students who move without providing 2 weeks’ notice will be required to pay for the 2 week period after their move.

• Students will leave their room as they found it. Meaning, they will clean the room, take out any trash, wipe down surfaces, etc.

We hope you have a wonderful experience in The Homestay Program!
Please let us know if you have any questions.
Notice of Change of Homestay Form

Student’s Name: ____________________________________________________________
(Please print)

Host Family’s Name: _______________________________________________________
(Please print)

Date: ___________________________________________________________________

Date that student will leave homestay: ________________________________

Student’s signature: _______________________________________________________

Host family’s signature: __________________________________________________

Collegiate Advisor signature: ______________________________________________

Return this form to The University of Winnipeg Homestay Program Coordinator.

Office Notes:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________