

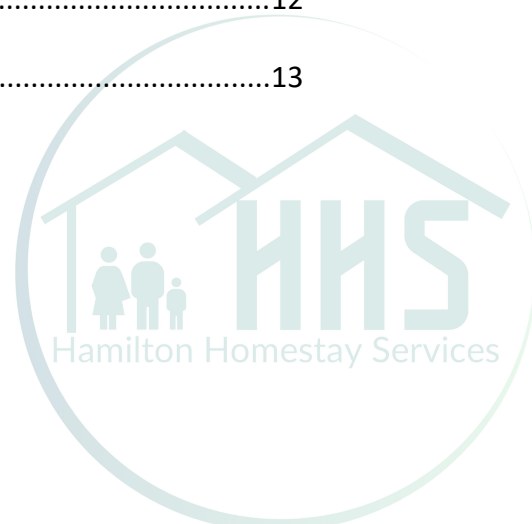
Hamilton Homestay Services

Homestay Handbook for International Students



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to New Zealand!

Thank you for choosing Hamilton Homestay Services (HHS) to provide you with homestay accommodation during your studies in New Zealand. We are committed to providing our international students with a safe, comfortable, and welcoming home away from home.

Our registered host families are carefully selected and trained by HHS. Our services are consistent with the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021, means your well-being and safety is important to us and will be protected.

Living in a homestay is a great way to experience New Zealand culture and to improve your English skills. You will have a built-in support system, as your host family will be there to help you with any questions or concerns you may have. You will also have the opportunity to make lifelong friends with your host family and other homestay students.

This handbook is designed to help you make the most of your homestay experience. It will help you to understand how to live with a New Zealand family, what you can expect and what is expected of you. Please read it carefully and ask for help if you need things explained.

We hope that you have a wonderful homestay experience in New Zealand!

WHO CAN ASSIST YOU

1. Chloe - Hamilton Homestay Services (HHS)

For any concerns or issues related to your homestay, Chloe, a dedicated staff member at HHS, is here to assist you. She oversees your homestay arrangements and is ready to support you during your stay. Don't hesitate to reach out to Chloe whenever you need help.

Phone: 020 497 2591

Email: hamiltonhomestayservices@gmail.com

Wechat ID: hamiltonhomestay

Whatsapp: +64 20 497 2591



You may contact Chloe during normal business hours - 9a.m. to 5p.m. Monday to Friday. Emails or messages would be preferred for non-urgent issues, and she would usually reply to you within 2 hours. You may contact her outside business hours when the situation is urgent.

2. Your host family

Your host family is ready and happy to assist you adjust to any difficulties that may occur with your new experience in New Zealand. Please feel free to talk to them and ask for their help whenever you have concerns or unsure about anything.

3. Your school

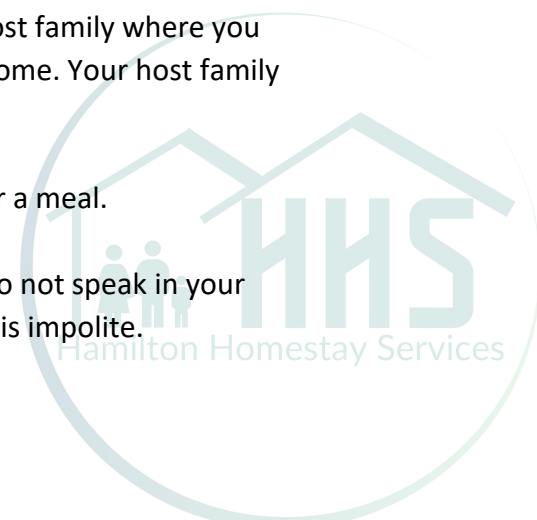
At the beginning of your study, your school will let you know who to contact and where you can find them when you need supports. Your school cares about not only your academic issues, but also your health, safety and well-being. Your school has the resources in place and can connect you to appropriate services if needed.

Call 111 in the event of a emergency such as a fire, urgent medical or police intervention.

GENERAL RULES

You are expected to follow these guidelines for a safe and positive homestay experience:

1. Be part of the family. Do not treat the homestay as a hotel. Try to join in family activities, talk to your host family, be willing to share your thoughts, concerns, and achievements.
2. Be honest, respectful and friendly with your host family, they will treat you the same way as you treat them.
3. Respect your host family's privacy and property, always ask before borrowing or using any personal items.
4. Ask for permission before going out and always tell your host family where you are going. Inform them if you are going to be late returning home. Your host family must know where you are at all times.
5. Notify your host family in advance if you won't be home for a meal.
6. Ask for permission to invite friends to your house. Please do not speak in your language with your friends in front of your host family as this is impolite.



7. Follow the established house rules, including curfew times. Respect the family's routines and expectations.
8. Offer to assist with household chores, and keep your own bedroom clean and tidy.
9. If you have any concerns or questions, try to talk openly to your host family as soon as the problems arise. Prompt communication helps in resolving the issue and maintaining a positive relationship with your host family.
10. Strive to communicate in English as much as possible. The more you engage in English conversations, the better your language skills will become.

YOUR BEDROOM

You will have a safe and comfortable bedroom. Your room will be furnished with a bed, adequate bedding (pillow, bed-sheets, blankets), wardrobe or drawers, desk and chair, and heater.

It's your responsibility to keep your bedroom clean and tidy. Please keep your belongings organized, make your bed everyday, pull back the curtains and open the windows during the day to let in fresh air. Please do not hang wet clothes in your room and do not take food to your room (except for snacks).

Bed sheets and pillowcases should be changed every one or two weeks, depending on your host's guidelines or your preferences. Please ask your host about this arrangement. If you don't know how to change the bed linen or make your bed, ask your host for help.

Please be mindful of electricity usage and do not run your heater excessively. You should turn it off before you fall asleep and when you leave for school. To leave a heater running while you sleep or while you are away is a safety hazard and a cost issue for the host.

Some families use electric blankets to warm the bed. Turn them on an hour before bed and turn them off when getting into bed. Avoid sleeping with the blanket turned on for safety. Remember to turn off the electric blanket during the day.

Ask your host for permission if you wish to decorate or rearrange your bedroom or furniture. Use Blu-Tack or Command adhesive tape/hooks for any wall hangings. Do not use nails, sticky tape, or pins.



There are usually no locks on bedroom doors in New Zealand. Feel free to close the door whenever you like, signaling your need for privacy. Your host family will respect your privacy by knocking on the door and waiting for a response from you if they need you. Likewise, please respect the privacy of others in the household and avoid entering closed rooms without permission.

While your room offers a quiet space for homework and personal time, remember the importance of social interaction with your host family. Try to spend quality time outside your room to enhance your English and strengthen relationships. Excessive time spent in your room may be perceived as impolite.

MEALS

Your host will inform you of the family's usual meal times. If you won't be home for a meal or expect to be late, kindly notify your host in advance. You can request your meal to be kept for reheating upon your return.

It's important to communicate your food preferences with your host, especially regarding portion sizes. Don't hesitate to ask for more food if you're still hungry.

Your host family will do the cooking and many hosts do not allow students to cook in their home. If you want to use the kitchen to cook and you are capable of doing it, please discuss with your host and ask for their permission first.

Your host family will prepare meals they typically eat, giving you a taste of New Zealand cuisine and culture. Try to be open-minded and ready to try new foods—it's a delightful way to learn about local flavors. If there are specific food or drinks you prefer that your host doesn't provide, feel free to purchase them yourself.

Food we usually eat in New Zealand:

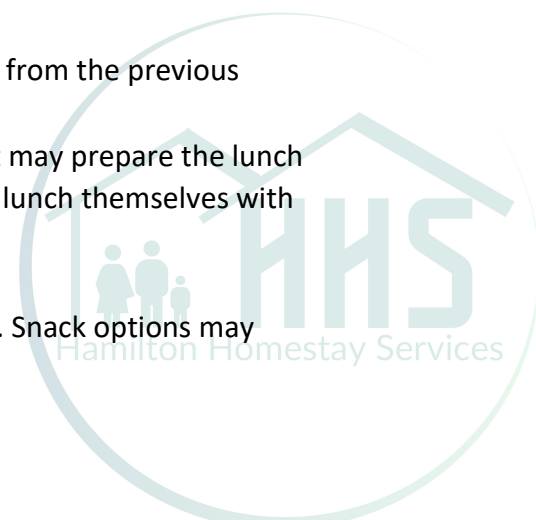
Breakfast: toast, spreads, cereal, milk, juice, fruit, eggs, etc.

Breakfast is usually self-served. Your host will show you where foods are kept in the pantry and fridge and you would help yourself.

Lunch: sandwiches, wraps, fruit, yogurt, soup, toast, leftovers from the previous night's dinner, etc.

Most New Zealand students take lunches to school. Your host may prepare the lunch for you, but it is a normal practice for students to make their lunch themselves with support from the adults.

Snacks: your host is required to provide you with snacks daily. Snack options may



include biscuits, cake, muffins, chips, muesli bars, fruit, nuts, etc.

Dinner: pasta, rice, salads, roast meat and potatoes, bread, etc.

Your host will prepare dinner for you everyday. Dinner should be eaten with the host family. It's a good time for you to engage in conversations and practice your English.

Please respect and try to follow the table manners in your homestay. Here are some common table manners in New Zealand:

- Avoid bringing cell phones or devices to the table during meal times.
- Wait until everyone has their food before starting to eat.
- Indicate you've finished your meal by placing your knife and fork together. Stay at the table until everyone has finished eating.
- Pass food bowls to one another rather than taking everything on a plate.
- Request items like salt or sauce by asking someone to pass them to you, instead of reaching across the table.
- Lift food on forks or spoons, not the entire plate close to your mouth.

BATHROOM & TOILET

Most New Zealand houses have one small hot water cylinder for storing hot water. When you use too much hot water, the cylinder will get empty and there will be no hot water for other people. Therefore, please keep showers under 10 minutes and avoid taking baths. If possible, aim to finish showering by 9pm to minimize household noise and allow everyone to rest in a quiet environment.

When using a shared bathroom, please leave the areas as you found it. Make sure floors and surfaces (such as the basin top) are dry and ready for the next person to use.

Remember to bring your own toiletries, such as body wash, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, and feminine sanitary products. Your host will provide toilet paper and clean towels to you. Please ask the host where to store your personal toiletries in the bathroom.

When using the toilet, please sit down rather than standing or squatting. Toilet paper should be flushed down the toilet. Please make sure not to put anything (such as wet wipe) other than toilet paper into the toilet as it may get blocked.

For male students, please lift the toilet seat before urinating and ensure to put it down after use. Maintain cleanliness and be mindful of your habits. For female



students, please inquire with your host mother about the appropriate disposal of menstrual pads or tampons. Do not flush pads down the toilet.

LAUNDRY

Upon your arrival, your host will provide you with details about the laundry arrangement in the household. It is common to wash clothes once or twice a week, rather than on a daily basis. Usually the host will do the laundry for you, but if you wish to wash your own clothes using the host's washing machine, please discuss this with your host. They will provide guidelines and instructions on how to use the appliances.

Ask your host where to put your dirty laundry, when to change the bed sheets, and where to hang your wet clothes. Please remember not to hang wet clothing and underwear inside wardrobes or bedrooms, as this can lead to mold and dampness. Also do not place wet clothes on or near heaters for drying, as this can cause a fire. In summer we dry our clothes (including underwear) outside on the clothesline. In winter, a dryer may be used.

Ideally, you should be responsible for sorting, collecting, and ironing your own clothes. Your host will offer assistance if needed, so do not hesitate to ask for help.

INTERNET & MOBILE PHONE USE

You will have internet access in the homestay for free. Your host will tell you the Wi-Fi password when you arrived.

We encourage you to buy a New Zealand SIM card with international and local minutes and data. Your host will take you to buy one if needed. Remember to save your host's contact number in your phone, and tell your host your contact number as well when one is available.

When make calls to your friends and families in your home country, please be considerate and don't talk on your phone late at night. The houses in New Zealand are built with woods and the soundproofing is not very good. The noise from your bedroom will disturb others' sleep.

If there's a landline in the homestay and you want to make an international call, you must ask for permission from the host and should pay for the cost.



Please avoid spending too much time on your mobile phone or computer as this makes it harder for you to adjust to the new environment and to build a good relationship with your host family.

Do not download copyright material on the internet as this is illegal. The host family could get a fine for that and the internet could be disconnected as a punishment.

TRANSPORT

Your host will teach you how to travel between home and school. If you are going to take a bus to school, your host will explain to you what bus route to take and give you the bus timetable. They will also take you to buy a bus card which will give you fare discounts - free travel if you are under 13 years old, half price if you are between 13-24 years old. You are responsible for paying your own transport costs. Your host is not required to drive you to school unless this is indicated when you applied for the homestay.

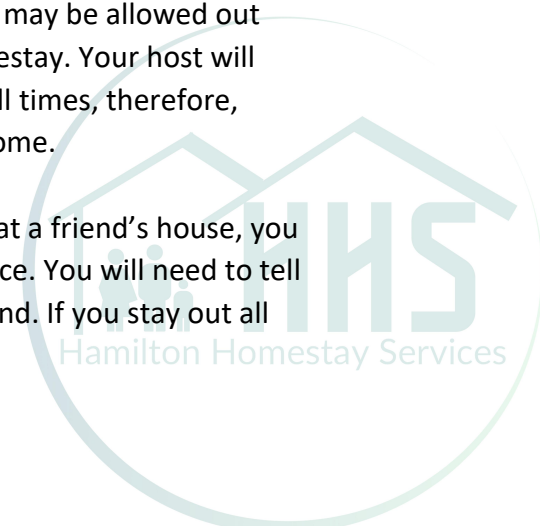
Taxi is expensive in New Zealand and it's not very common in Hamilton. Uber is available, but students under 15 must not be driven by a stranger alone without the company of an adult from the host family.

Our homestay service doesn't include airport pickup on your first day or taking you to the airport on your last day. You should discuss with your school about the airport pickup service. Different schools might have different policies and procedures on this. We might be able to provide the transport between the airport and the homestay to you upon request, for extra cost. For students under 18 years old, you will need to ask for the school's approval for such arrangement.

CURFEWS & SAFETY

Your host will set rules about what time you must return home in the evening. We suggest all students should be home by 6:00 PM from Sunday to Thursday during the school week, on Friday and Saturday evenings older students may be allowed out later. Please respect and follow the curfew rules in your homestay. Your host will need to know where you are and make sure you are safe at all times, therefore, remember to let your host know if you are going to be late home.

If you are under 18 years old and you want to stay overnight at a friend's house, you must gain approval from the school and your parent in advance. You will need to tell your host the name, contact number and address of your friend. If you stay out all



night without seeking permission first, or didn't return home after curfew time and didn't contact your host family, your host will report to the school and HHS.

HOUSE RULES

Your host family will have some house rules which are usually polite things that you should do during your stay. For example, if you would like to invite a friend to the house, you need to ask your host in advance.

HOLIDAY

If you wish to take a holiday in other city, in other country, or in your home country, you must ask for permission from the school and your parent. Schools have their own policies and requirements for the travel of international students. The host family and HHS must be informed about the itinerary of your holiday including when you will return to the homestay.

If you go on a holiday for seven days or more, and request that the host hold and keep your belongings in your room during that period, we will hold the room for you but you will need to pay a room holding fee equals to 50% of the homestay fee. If you are away for six days or less, then a full payment will be required.

FAMILY OUTINGS

Sometimes your host family may invite you to go on an outing, such as go to the cinema or the zoo, or even go to other city for a holiday. If the activities cost money, you should pay your share. This may be different from your own country where a host may pay for everything. Don't be shy to ask the host family about how much you need to pay when they invite you for an outing.

SICKNESS

If you are feeling unwell, don't hesitate to tell your host and they will take you to see a doctor. You are covered by travel and medical insurance which is arranged by your school or education consultant. When you see a doctor, you should pay first, and then bring the receipt to the school to make a claim. Please contact your school for the details of your insurance as HHS is not responsible for it.



If you are going to be absent from school due to sickness, remember to inform the school. Your school may require a doctor's certificate if you have sick leave for 3 days or more. Your school will explain to you how to report sick leave and who to contact.

ALCOHOL & SMOKING

The legal drinking and smoking age in New Zealand is 18 years old. Smoking is forbidden in many public places. If you are over 18 years old and smoke cigarettes, ask your host if smoking is allowed in the home, and if yes where you can do it.

DAMAGE

If you find anything broken in your room or if you damage anything in the house, please tell your host family quickly so that they can fix the problem as soon as possible. If you or your guests cause damages to the host's property, either carelessly or deliberately, your host may request you to pay for the repair. Your travel insurance may or may not cover such situation. It is your responsibility to ensure that your insurance policy meet your needs.

Remember to close the windows, lock up the house and turn on the alarm (if applicable) when you leave the house. If you are given keys or an alarm code, keep them safe and do not share them with anyone.

New Zealand's electricity is 240 volts so check carefully before plugging in any appliances you have brought from your country.

REPORT & COMPLAINT

If there is anything in the homestay that makes you feel uncomfortable or uncertain, we encourage you to talk to your host first. Sometimes the problem is due to a lack of communication and cultural differences. Open and honest communications can resolve many issues. Remember, your host family cares about you and they want you to enjoy the stay in their home.

If you find it too difficult to talk to your host about the problem, please contact HHS and we will assist you in communicating and solving the issue. If the problem cannot



be resolved, you may request a change of host as a final option. We will also visit you in your homestay regularly to make sure you are well taken care of.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

When you first arrive you may find it difficult to express what you want to say and don't quite understand what people are saying. Don't worry, this is normal, and it will get better. Try to relax and find other ways to communicate. For example, you could write things down, or use hand gestures, or use an electronic translator. If people speak too quickly, don't be shy and just politely ask them to slow down and say it again.

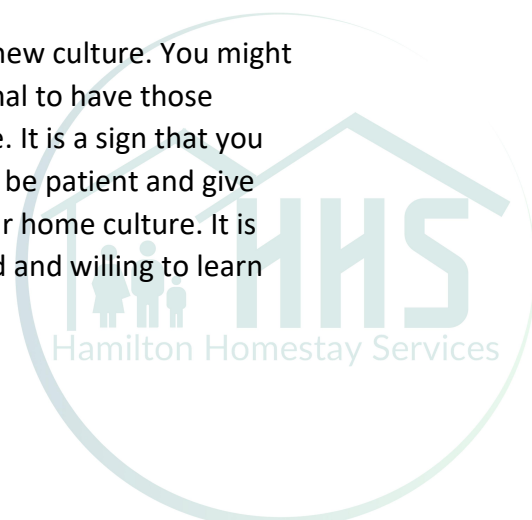
The best way to improve your English is to immerse yourself in it as much as possible. Engage in conversations with your host family, fellow students, and teachers. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. The more you talk the better your English skills will be. Remember, language barriers are normal in the early stages of adapting to a new country, but with time and persistent practices, you'll overcome this obstacle soon.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

New Zealand is known for its unique cultural blend, which may differ from the cultural norms of your home country. People in New Zealand tend to be approachable and friendly, often addressing one another by their first names. They also engage in physical contact often, such as hugging and kissing on the cheek, as a way of greeting or showing affection. If they touch your arm or put their arm around your shoulder, they are showing they care about you.

People in New Zealand are often direct and open in expressing themselves. Children in New Zealand are often raised more independently and they are taught to stand up for themselves. You may find it unusual to see the family argue when they disagree. Actually your host family would like it if you could express your thoughts and feelings directly and honestly like they do.

There might be times that you find it difficult to adapt to the new culture. You might feel anxious, angry, sad, and just want to stay alone. It is normal to have those negative feelings when someone is immersed in a new culture. It is a sign that you are out of your comfort zone and that you are growing. Try to be patient and give yourself time to adjust. Don't compare the new culture to your home culture. It is important to respect the cultural differences, be open-minded and willing to learn about the new culture.



HOMESICKNESS

Homesickness is a common challenge that international students may face when studying abroad in New Zealand. It's natural to miss the familiarity of home, family, and friends. Thanks to the technology, you can stay connected with your loved ones through video calls or messages. However, we don't want you to spend too much time on your phone or computer. Your host family wouldn't like that either.

We encourage you to engage in local activities and events, explore the country, and make an effort to immerse yourself in the new culture to build a sense of belonging. It's also a good idea to establish routines, stay busy, and set achievable goals to keep your mind occupied. Remember that homesickness is a temporary phase, and by embracing your new environment and experiences, you'll gradually build a sense of belonging and make New Zealand feel like a second home.

