

# Homestay Handbook

For International Students



HAMILTON HOMESTAY SERVICES

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Produced by Hamilton Homestay Services T/A AXPM Ltd

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## Welcome to New Zealand

Welcome to New Zealand! You are about to experience life in a new culture. Living with a New Zealand host family will help you improve your English, learn local customs, and develop independence.

It's normal to feel nervous or homesick at first, but remember — your host family, school, and HHS are all here to support you. Be open-minded, respectful, and willing to learn. This experience is not only about studying but about growing as a person discovering new perspectives, and creating lifelong memories.

## People Who Can Help You

There are many people who will support you during your time in New Zealand. You should always ask for help if you are unsure, worried, or have a problem.

### 1. Hamilton Homestay Services (HHS)

HHS organises and supervises your homestay placement. Contact HHS if you are unhappy, unwell, or have any problem you can't solve with your host.

Your direct contact at HHS is:

Chloe Tso

Phone: 020 497 2591

Email: [hamiltonhomestayservices@gmail.com](mailto:hamiltonhomestayservices@gmail.com)

### 2. Your Host Family

Your host family is your first and closest support. They care for you and help with your daily life. If you have a question or a small problem, talk to them first.

### 3. Your School's International Department

Every school has a staff or team who looks after international students. You can go to them for help with study, attendance, and/or personal matters.

### 4. Your Education Agent

Your agent can also support you and communicate between your family overseas, HHS, and your school.

**In an emergency, call 111 for Police, Fire, or Ambulance, then tell your host and HHS immediately.**



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## Having the Right Expectations

A homestay is a family home, not a hotel. Your hosts welcome you as part of their family and want you to feel at home. Some students may think that because money is paid, hosts should act like hotel staff or personal helpers — this is not true. Homestay is about sharing life and culture, not buying a service.

### Understanding Everyone's Role

Host family's role:

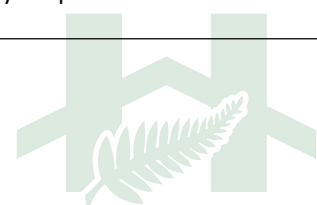
Your host family provides a safe and comfortable home, meals, and care and guidance in everyday life. They treat you as part of their family — not as a guest or customer.

Student's role:

As a student, your role is to join in family life, follow house rules, and show respect and gratitude. Help with small household tasks, communicate honestly, and appreciate the kindness your host family shows you.

### Right vs Wrong Expectations

Wrong Expectation	Right Expectation
"The host should clean my room and do my laundry for me."	You are responsible for keeping your own space tidy and may need to do some simple house chores.
"The host should drive me anywhere I want."	The host will help with school transport if agreed, but not for personal trips. Learn to use buses or walk when safe.
"The host must take me sightseeing because I paid for homestay."	Hosts may invite you to join some activities, but this is not required. Their main role is to provide care and a family environment.
"The host must cook the food I want."	Meals are provided according to normal Kiwi family food. You may politely discuss your preferences, but be flexible and open to trying new foods.
"The host family are not my real parents, so they can't control my freedom or tell me what to do."	Your host family is responsible for your care and well-being. They have the right to set house rules, curfews, and screen time limits. You must respect and follow these rules just as you would with your parents.



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## Activities and Travel

Host families may take you on outings, such as a picnic, a weekend trip, or visiting relatives. This is a kind gesture, not an obligation. If the activities cost money, you should pay your own share or contribute to fuel for long trips. Always show appreciation when your host includes you — a simple, *“thank you for taking me”* means a lot.

## Living with Your Host Family

Your host family will treat you as a member of their family. They will care for you, guide you, and help you experience New Zealand life. In return, you must be respectful, polite, and responsible.

### Being Part of the Family

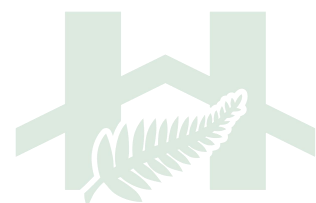
Every family has its own routine and lifestyle. Try to join in and show interest. The more you participate, the more comfortable you'll feel.

- Sit with your host family during dinner and talk about your day.
- Offer to help with small chores such as setting the table or cleaning up after meals.
- Be polite and friendly — greet your host when you come home and say goodnight before bed.
- Take part in family activities such as walking the dog, going shopping together or even watching television together.

### Open Communication

Good communication is very important for a happy homestay experience. Your host family can support you best when they understand how you are feeling and what you need.

- Remember to use your manners and say “please,” “thank you,” and “sorry”.
- If you don't understand something, ask - don't just guess and stay silent.
- If you are unhappy, homesick, or if something is wrong, tell your host family early.
- If you disagree with someone, it's okay to share your opinion - just do it politely and with respect.



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## **Independence and Responsibilities**

In New Zealand, students are encouraged to become independent and take responsibility for themselves. This includes looking after your own daily needs. It's an important part of growing up and learning to be confident in the world.

- Make your bed every day and keep your room tidy.
- Help with small chores such as, helping with meal preparation or emptying the rubbish.
- Prepare your school bag, lunch, and uniform by yourself when possible.
- Manage your time and get ready for school on time.
- Always tell your host where you are going and when you'll be back.

## **Privacy and House Manners**

Respecting privacy is very important in New Zealand homes.

- Always knock before entering someone's bedroom.
- Do not go through cupboards or drawers that do not belong to you.
- Keep noise to a minimum, especially late at night or early in the morning.
- Ask before borrowing anything or using the kitchen.
- Never post photos or private information about your host family online without their permission.

## **Following House Rules**

Every host family has their own house rules. These rules keep everyone safe and make living together comfortable. Follow your host's schedule for shower times, meals, and bedtime, and other house routines. Some common house rules include:

- Ask before inviting friends over.
- Lock doors and windows when you leave the house.
- Turn off lights and heaters when you leave the room.
- Always tell your host if you will be home late.
- No smoking, vaping, alcohol, or drugs.

If you are unsure about a rule, ask politely. If you accidentally break a rule, apologise and talk about it calmly with your host to fix the situation.



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## Showing Appreciation

Remember to thank your host for meals, care, and support. A smile, a kind word, a small thank-you note, or offering to help are great ways to show good manners and respect.

Hosts enjoy helping students who are polite, grateful, and considerate. They want you to feel at home, but they also expect responsible behaviour in return.

## Your Room

Your bedroom is your private space where you can rest, study, and relax. It should always be kept tidy and safe.

Your host family will provide you with:

- A comfortable bed with sheets, pillow, and blanket.
- A desk and chair for study (for short-term stays, your room may not include these)
- A wardrobe or drawers for your clothes.
- Heating in cold weather.

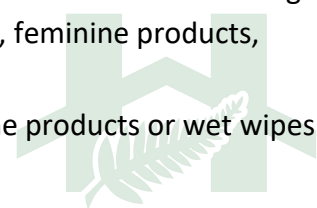
Your responsibilities:

- Keep your room clean and organised. Make your bed each morning.
- Open the window daily for fresh air (unless your host says otherwise).
- Ask your host before putting things on the wall or moving furniture.
- Tell your host if something is broken or doesn't work properly.
- Do not eat or store food in your bedroom — it can attract unwanted insects.

## Bathroom and Laundry

### Bathroom Use

- Please try to keep showers to around 10 minutes. This helps make sure there is enough hot water for everyone in the household.
- Turn on the extractor fan or open the window to remove steam after showering.
- Leave the bathroom clean for the next person — wipe water off the floor and sink.
- Your host will provide toilet paper and clean towels for you, but remember to bring your own toiletries (shampoo, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, feminine products, etc.).
- Only toilet paper should be flushed down the toilet. Feminine products or wet wipes must go in the rubbish bin.



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## Laundry

- Your host will tell you when laundry is usually done.
- Ask if you should wash your clothes yourself or if your host prefers to include them with the family's laundry.
- Change your sheets and towels every 1-2 weeks.
- Do not hang wet clothes in your bedroom — use a clothesline or drying rack.

## Meals

Your host provides three meals each day — breakfast, lunch, and dinner. In New Zealand, meal routines may be different from what you are used to, especially for breakfast and lunch.

### Breakfast

Breakfast is usually self-served, meaning you prepare it by yourself using the food your host provides. Common breakfast foods include toast, cereal, milk, yoghurt, fruit, or porridge.

Your host will show you where to find food for breakfast and how to use kitchen appliances, such as the toaster, kettle, or microwave. After you finish, please clean up after yourself and put everything back. If you are unsure what you can use, ask politely: *“Can I use this for breakfast?”*

### Lunch

Lunch is also often self-prepared or packed in the morning. Your host will make sure there is enough food for you to prepare lunch, or will help pack it if you are younger.

In New Zealand, students often bring a cold lunch to school — for example, sandwiches, fruit, muesli bars, or leftovers that are safe to eat from last night's dinner. Hot lunches are uncommon because most schools do not supply microwaves for reheating food. If you prefer warm food, you can bring your own thermo jar or insulated lunch containers.

### Dinner

Dinner is usually the main family meal and is often a hot meal cooked by your host. It is a great time to talk, share your day, and practise English with your host family.

General tips:

- Don't waste food. Take small portions first and ask for more if you are still hungry.





- It's okay to ask for snacks between meals if you feel hungry.
- Tell your host if you have any special food needs or preferences.
- If you do not like a food, say politely: *"Sorry, I'm not used to this food."* Your host will understand.
- Always say thank you after every meal.

## Internet and Screen Time

Internet is for studying, staying in touch with your family, and light entertainment. Please use it fairly and respectfully.

Good habits:

- Avoid high-demand online gaming or large file downloads, as this can slow down the Wi-Fi for everyone.
- Use the internet mostly for your homework and talking with your family or friends back home.
- Do not watch or share inappropriate content.
- Be respectful during family time — avoid using your phone during meals or while people are talking with you.

Your host family or your parents might have rules about how long you can use your phone or tablet. Some families may collect phones at night. These rules are to help you stay healthy and well-rested, so please follow them. If you think your study requires extra computer time, ask your host for permission first.

## Curfew and Safety

Your host family will set a curfew time, which is the time you must be home each evening. This rule is for your safety - is it a measure to make sure your host knows you are safe and accounted for. Always follow the curfew set by your host. If you are running late, lost or in trouble, contact your host immediately.

Safety reminders:

- Do not walk alone after dark.
- Always tell your host where you are going and who you are with.
- Never get into a stranger's car or accept rides from people you don't know.
- Do not use Uber, taxi or other ride-sharing services without permission.



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## Travel and Risky Activities

Always ask permission from your host family and HHS before travelling or joining activities outside your normal routine. This includes overnight trips, water activities, or long outdoor activities. Your host and HHS must know where you are going, who you are with, and when you will return.

If your host invites you to join a trip, confirm with your parents and HHS first. You are expected to pay your own costs (such as tickets or fuel) and to thank your host for including you. Never join a trip, event, or outing without prior permission.

## Transport

Your host family will help you learn how to travel safely to school and around the city.

- If you go to school by bus, your host will help you get a bus card for cheaper fares.
- If you walk or cycle, always use footpaths or cycle lanes and cross the street at pedestrian crossings.
- Remember that in New Zealand, cars drive on the left-hand side of the road.
- Always wear a helmet when cycling.
- If your host drives you to school or activities, always wear your seatbelt.
- If another adult offers to drive you, ask your host for permission first.

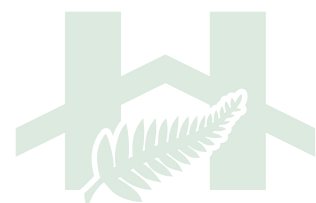
## School Attendance

You must attend school every day and arrive on time. If you are sick, tell your host early in the morning and your host will call the school to explain. If you are sick for more than 3 days, you will need a medical certificate.

If you missed school for any reason other than sickness, you must get approval from your school and HHS first.

Good attendance tips:

- Prepare your bag the night before.
- Go to bed early so you wake up on time.
- Eat breakfast before school so you can focus in class.



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## Sickness

If you start to feeling unwell, tell your host family straight away. They will check how you are feeling and help you decide what to do next. For mild colds or flu, rest at home, drink plenty of water, and take approved medicine if needed. In New Zealand, it's common to recover at home for small illnesses — people don't usually visit the doctor for minor colds.

Your host family will take you to see a doctor if you have a high fever, breathing difficulties, strong pain, or illness lasting more than three days. You will pay for the doctor's fee, and remember to keep all receipts and doctor's notes for your insurance claims.

## Insurance and Damage

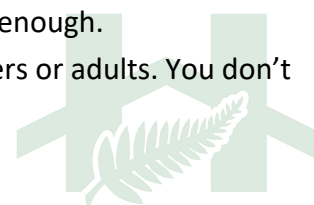
All international students must have medical and travel insurance. This covers doctor visits, accidents, or damaged property. If you accidentally break something, tell your host immediately—don't hide or fix it yourself. If the damage was accidental, your insurance may cover the cost. However, if it was done on purpose or through careless behaviour, you or your family may need to pay for the repairs or replacement.

## Kiwi Culture

New Zealanders (often called Kiwis) are friendly, relaxed, and more casual than formal. They value politeness, respect, and kindness towards others. Kiwis enjoy friendly conversation and humour, and they often smile or say hello to people, even strangers.

Communication tips:

- Say “please”, “thank you”, and “sorry” often.
- Smile and greet people with “Hi” or “Hello.”
- When someone helps you, even with something small, always say thank you.
- Make eye contact when talking — it shows you are listening.
- Kiwis often use friendly phrases like “no worries,” “sweet as,” or “cheers.” These mean “it's okay” or “thank you.”
- When someone says, “How's it going?” — they means “How are you?”, it's a friendly greeting, not a serious question. A simple “Good, thanks” is enough.
- People are usually called by their first name, even for teachers or adults. You don't need to call them *Mr* or *Mrs* unless they prefer it.



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- If you don't understand something, it's perfectly fine to ask the person to speak slowly or repeat.
- Don't pretend to understand — it's okay to say, "Sorry, can you please say that again?"
- It's okay to make mistakes — people appreciate your effort to communicate. The more you practise, the easier it will become.

Common cultural habits:

- Kiwis respect each other's personal space. Do not stand or sit too close when talking.
- Close your bedroom door if you need privacy, and knock before entering someone else's room.
- Don't touch other people's belongings without asking.
- Being on time is very important in New Zealand. If you are running late, send a message or call to explain. Don't keep people waiting without telling them.
- In Kiwi families, everyone helps with small jobs around the house. You may be asked to do simple chores, and it's polite to offer to help sometimes.
- Kiwis enjoy outdoor activities and nature, weekends are often for family time, sports, or outdoor adventures.
- New Zealand is a multicultural country, so you will meet people from many different backgrounds. Everyone is encouraged to respect cultural differences.
- Kiwis are curious about other cultures and love learning about your home country too. Share your traditions, food, or celebrations — your host family will appreciate it.

## Culture Shock and Adjusting

When you move to a new country, it's normal to feel happy and excited at first, but later also feel sad, homesick, or frustrated. This is called culture shock, and almost every international student experiences it. Don't worry - these feelings are temporary and will get better with time.

How to adjust:

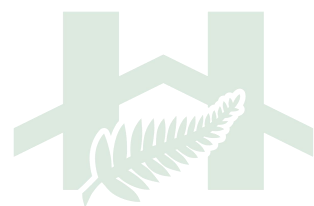
- Talk to your host family or school staff about how you feel.
- Stay active — spend time outdoors and join family activities.
- Be in the moment and try to enjoy new foods and experiences.
- Keep in touch with your family at home, but also focus on your new life in New Zealand.
- Take care of your body, eat healthy food, rest well and get enough sleep.



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Remember, adjusting takes time. Be patient with yourself, and don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

Homestay life is about learning and developing independence, kindness, and respect. The more effort you make, the more rewarding your experience will be. Enjoy your time in New Zealand and make the most of this opportunity.



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