

# What to Expect in a Brock Homestay



Take your learning beyond the classroom. Homestay is a fantastic way to be introduced to Canadian culture and the community in the Niagara Region. It is an interactive arrangement in which you will have a variety of different experiences. Your Homestay family will help you become comfortable in St. Catharines and at Brock University by providing assistance and guidance. Homestay is about being part of the family and enjoying the comforts of living in a family home.

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## About Our Brock Homestay Families

Homestay families are as diverse as the International students who stay with them. Our Homestay families vary in size, age, and ethnic background. Although many of our Homestay families consist of the traditional family (mom, dad, and children), it is not uncommon for a Homestay family to be a single parent with children or a single person (young or older).

Within the family unit you will find that most Ontarians work outside of the home and have a very busy lifestyle. You will find some differences, both personal and cultural, between you and the Homestay family. With patience and understanding these differences will seem minimal a short time after your arrival.

Remember, you are choosing to study in a new environment and to learn about a different way of life - enjoy the differences!

### **Homestay Family Selection**

Homestay families are carefully screened and selected by Brock University representatives and each home has been inspected. Applicants are required to attend orientation sessions, participate in an interview and obtain a Criminal Record Clearance from the Niagara Regional Police. Each approved student room in the home meets fire safety regulations. If you should have any questions or concerns, please speak with the Housing Coordinator.

### **Location and Transportation**

All host families live near a bus route within St. Catharines or Thorold. For more information on using the public transit, please visit [www.yourbus.com](http://www.yourbus.com) Homestay families are not responsible for providing transportation. Each student will receive a bus pass from Brock University which will provide them with access to public transit.

### **What Does Homestay Include?**

As part of a new family, you will be able to use any of the rooms except for family members' bedrooms. Each home will have different amenities, which may include TV/DVD, piano or even a swimming pool. Basic internet services are included.

### **Bedroom**

Each bedroom will be equipped with a bed (including linens), a dresser, and will have a window. You will have access to a desk or table area for study purposes.

### **Meals**

Homestay with meals includes 3 meals per day, plus snacks. Families all function differently and you may be in a home where you are required to make your own breakfast and pack your own lunch to take to school. If you require guidance in doing so, please be sure to let your family know.

Usually dinner time is spent together as a family eating at the dinner table and conversing. Just like in your hometown, each family will have different food preferences and dining styles. Eating meals with the family is a great way to practice speaking English and make new friends. Please notify your Homestay family in advance if you will not be home for dinner.

Homestay without meals means you must purchase and prepare all of your own meals drinks and snacks. You will have access to the kitchen and dining area and may use all appliances and utensils for food preparation and storage. You are required to clean up after yourself when you have prepared a meal.

### **Internet Usage**

Basic internet is included in each homestay household. Please note: Many families may not have unlimited internet. Students are financially responsible for any additional charges incurred while using the internet (for downloads, online orders, et cetera). We recommend that you discuss internet use with your Homestay family soon after your arrive.

### **Laundry Facilities**

Laundry is included in Homestay. Your Homestay parent may offer to launder your clothes, or you may have access to the laundry facilities in the home. If you choose to use the machines, please be sure that you understand the proper way to use them and request assistance from your Homestay family if you have any questions. Water conservation is common and laundry is typically done once per week.

### **Household Chores**

Everyone in the family will have some household responsibilities. Please volunteer to help with making meals, cleaning up afterwards, or doing other household chores. You will find that males and females are expected to share the household duties. Please also keep your room clean and tidy and please do not leave dirty dishes or food in your room.

### **Pets**

Many Canadian families have pets, usually dogs and cats. In Canada, dogs and cats are very clean and friendly and make nice companions. You may be surprised by how much you enjoy them once you get used to their presence in the home.

## What is Not Included in Homestay?

You should bring your own toiletries (shampoo, razors, etc.) and other personal items, as these are not provided by the Homestay family. If you choose to eat outside of the home at a restaurant you would be expected to pay for your own meals.

## Personal

In Canadian culture it is important for people to use deodorant, brush their teeth often, and shower daily. Showers should not last more than 10 minutes and it is very important to be sure that the shower curtain is inside the bathtub and water is not on the floor. Tissue is flushed down the toilet, but sanitary napkins are wrapped and placed in a garbage container. Your Homestay family will help you get used to living in their home, it is very important to talk together about their family habits.

## Alcohol and Tobacco Use

You must be at least 19 years of age to purchase or consume alcohol or tobacco products in Ontario. Smoking is prohibited in all public buildings, as well as in most family homes. If your Homestay family is 'smoke-free' you must not smoke in the home. Many non-smoking families have insurance rates based on no smoking in their homes. Some families will allow students to smoke outside of the home - please speak with your family about expectations about smoking and ask them where the ashtray is (and be sure to use it).

## Safety

Although St. Catharines might not be a very large city, we ask that you always be aware of personal safety procedures. It is important to use the buddy system at night. Also, it is a good idea to telephone your Homestay family and tell them when you will come home, if you will arrive late or if you will be walking home alone. As well, it is important to know that taking a car ride from a stranger is not advisable at any time. If you choose to travel by taxi be sure to use a registered taxi company - such as 5.0 Taxi or Central Taxi. Never use Speedy Cab - it is an illegal taxi service.

## Telephone Use

You will be able to use the family phone for local calls. For making long distance calls, you are expected to use "Prepaid Phone Cards". The rates are excellent and you won't have to worry about long distance bills following you home - you are responsible for any long distance phone calls made by you. If you are on the phone

late at night please be sure to use an area of the home where you will not disturb other household members.

### **Culture Shock**

At some point during your time away from home, you may begin to have overwhelming feelings of disliking everything about being in Ontario: including the food, the English language, your teachers, your classmates, etc... This is a very common yet serious psychological state. You may not recognize the negative feelings as culture shock. Easy remedies to improve your state of mind include: talking with your friends and Homestay family members when you are feeling down, making a favourite recipe, asking your Homestay family if you can invite some friends over to the house, or listening to familiar music. If you need someone to speak with, the ESL Services team is always here to help you out!

### **What to do if you have a concern?**

If you have a problem or concern about your homestay, there are ways you can obtain the assistance that you need. Our Brock team is here to support and assist you in creating a plan to work together towards a solution.