

Staying / Living with an Irish Family Handbook



What is host family accommodation?

One of the most popular types of accommodation is staying with a local Irish host family. This means you live with the family as a household member and eat and relax with them. The Irish are renowned for their warmth, generosity and friendliness. Staying with an Irish family is a very enjoyable and beneficial means of getting to know Irish people and culture and is an excellent way to use and practice your English.

If I stay with a host family what should I expect?

The family will treat you as a member of the family and you will be expected to obey certain family rules (It is not a hotel). All families provide a private or shared room with access to all living areas in the house and family meals. Students will be expected to share the bathroom with other members of the family. Experience has shown us that living with a family is the most interesting and effective way to become fully immersed in your host country's language and culture.

Your host family will always do their best to engage you in daily conversation while making you feel as though you are in a "home away from home".

Remember your host family will have different customs and habits than you are accustomed to, and meals will be prepared according to local custom. All host families are within 30 minutes travelling time of the school.

A few questions you should ask yourself about staying with a host family:

1. Am I prepared? Do I have realistic expectations? Host families may not have the same comforts as your home does. Please remember you are coming to Ireland to learn about Irish Life and Culture so of course it will be different from your home BUT if you are willing to open your mind it will be a wonderful experience.
2. Am I prepared to live by the house rules? You will be treated as a family member and as such you will be expected to comply with your family's rules and expectations.
3. Can I adjust to unfamiliar food? Eating times could be very different, i.e. 6pm instead of 8pm, and the portions may be smaller or larger than you are used to back home. You should also expect the menu to be different from what you are used to.

How do I get the best out of staying with a host family?



Communication

Clear communication is perhaps the most important ingredient to successfully living with a host family. Only when everyone involved knows what is expected of them - and what to expect in return - can honest relationships develop. Ask your host family upon arrival where you will sleep and store your possessions, meal times etc.

It is also important to arrange access to laundry facilities, communication technology such as the Internet and your responsibilities regarding your room etc. Please note that not all host families have internet at home.

Cleanliness

While you are meant to feel like a part of your host family while you are living abroad, leaving your dirty laundry all over the floor will not endear you to anyone. Your mother won't be around to remind you, so be sure to be tidy while you are living abroad.

Putting all dirty laundry in a hamper or laundry bag, washing laundry on a regular basis, hanging up wet towels and laundry and cleaning the bathroom after use, will show the family that you have respect for them and their home.

There are other cleaning tasks you should do during your stay such as , washing up after you prepare food and/or eat a meal or snack, wiping down all kitchen surfaces you may have soiled, keeping all school or work supplies neatly tucked away, leaving any room as clean as you found it and pitching in during a general family clean up.

Caring

Living with a host family will only be truly successful if you put your heart into the endeavour. Anyone can become a tenant but becoming a part of the family and making lasting relationships requires caring.

Show that you care in small ways, such as:

- * Bringing a host family, a small gift when you arrive (one per family);
- * Offering to cook a traditional meal for the family;
- * Assisting with family scheduling and chores;
- * Duplicating photos that you take of yourself and your host family;
- * Make an effort to talk to host family.

Living with a host family should be a time for you to truly experience a new culture. With a little bit of communication, cleanliness and caring, living with a host family will be an exceptional experience that you will never forget!

How do we find our Host Families

Equinox Education Services have 16 years experience in placing international students with our host families. Nearly all our new host families are recommended by the schools we work with or by our existing valued host families. The steps involved include.

Step (1) Interested host families contact us

Step (2) Our Homestay Co-Ordinator inspects the house and students room etc

Step (3) Our Homestay Co-Ordinator explains in detail to host family what we expect from the.

Step (4) Host Families fill out the required paper work including Police Check

Step (5) If everything is in order we add all their details to our Homestay system

Summary of Practical Matters

- If you are unhappy with something, please discuss it with your host family. From experience a lot of problem can be solved by just communicating with your family. If after talking to still feel there is a problem, please discuss with programme co-ordinations or leaders.
- Find out what the arrangements are for laundry and using the internet (if available) when you arrive. A suitable arrangement should be discussed with your host family.
- If you are not planning to eat a meal at home, let your host family know beforehand so that they do not prepare a meal for you.
- Show respect for the host family home and property. If you break or damage anything, tell your host family as soon as possible.
- If you are cold, ask them for extra blankets in your room.
- Do not leave lights, electric or heaters on when you are out.
- Be on time for meals.
- Host families are not taxi services.
- Do not use the kitchen or help yourself to food unless you have agreed this with your host family. This will not be a problem, but it is good manner to discuss with your host family.
- Keep your room tidy.
- Make your bed and change your bed linen yourself if required (the host mother is not a chambermaid!)
- Leave the bathroom clean and tidy after using it. If you have any queries regarding the use of bathing/toilet facilities, discuss these with the host family. Females should enquire about the disposal of sanitary pads.
- Do not put pictures on the wall unless you have agreed this with your host family.
- Observe the safety rules of the house. If there are any small children, please be extra vigilant about leaving any dangerous items (e.g. medicines) out of their reach.
- For Minors (Under 18) all medicine **MUST** be left with host parent.
- You should seek permission if you wish to have any visitors. It should not be a problem, but it is good manners.

Irish Culture & Things you should be aware of:

Meals

The host family is expected to provide a healthy breakfast, lunch and evening meal each day. Please check meal times. If you are not able to be at home for the usual evening meal, let your host family know

Typical meals would include: -

Breakfast - coffee/tea, Juice, bread, cereals.

Lunch - light lunch e.g. sandwich, drink, fruit, chocolate bars etc

Evening Meal - Normally meat/fish, vegetables including potatoes/rice or pasta, fruit and coffee/tea.

Snacks - Normally Tea / Coffee and biscuits etc

All host Families will be given your information (profile sheet) so they will be made aware of any medical problems or dietary requirements.

Students agree to eat meals provided by host family and understand that they cannot pick and choose what they want to eat.

Bathroom facilities

- You are allowed a daily hot shower and should inform the family at what time you plan to take it. A shower should last no longer than 10 to 15 minutes.
- Please tidy the bathroom after you use it as other family members will also use these facilities.

Families & Homestay House

- Host families come in all sizes from a single member host family to families with 2 or 3 children. When selecting a host family our most important consideration is that the host family will make you feel part of their family.
- Irish families tend to have quite a lot of visitors and it is very common for your host family to be visited by friends, family and relatives on a regular basis.
- Host families like to have international students stay with them as it allows them and their families the opportunity to experience new cultures.
- The Host families will provide you with a quiet area to study in. Sometimes this is in your room and other times this is in a quiet area of the house like a dining room etc.

Irish People

- Irish people have a good sense of humour and they like to laugh and make jokes so please do not take what they say too literally.
- Tattoos: Tattoos in Ireland have a totally different meaning than in other countries. People in Ireland that have tattoos have them as a sense of fashion/ Art or the names of their children etc so please do not be alarmed if you see people with Tattoos as it doesn't mean that they are bad people etc.
- Irish people like to watch TV in the evenings and quite often ask the student to join them. This is a common family activity.

Academic Term / Year Students

- Students who are here for an academic term / year will be provided with school uniform and school books.
- Host Families in association with Equinox Staff will assist you get both of these items.
- Students must obey school rules and respect school time table.
- Students cannot attend Discos or House parties that are not supervised by Equinox Education Services or are not official school events.
- Students must understand that the subjects they prefer depends on availability and classes sizes.
- Follow school rules, keep up with school work in school.
- Each student will be assigned a local Equinox Co-Ordinator upon arrival.

Other Useful Information:

Things to bring to Ireland

- Some warm clothes. Even on a hot summer day the evenings can get chilly, take a sweater and be prepared. In Winter it can get very cold.
 - A Light and heavy jacket with a hood for the rain
 - Comfortable shoes for walking
 - Adopter for Irish Sockets (If you use something Electrical)
 - Medicine for stomach ache, colds etc if required
 - Dictionary and Notebooks
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- Euro Cash. Please note that Ireland use the Euro.
 - Some photos of your family / home (Good talking point with host family)
 - If student would like to cook for host family, they can bring some sauce etc.



If I get Sick or fell sick

If a student feels sick, they should say it to your host family if it is outside school time the host family can then call a staff member or leader. We can then arrange a doctor / hospital visit if required. All families will have the emergency contact numbers.

Phones Laptops & other devices

If students bring mobile phones , Ipads etc , please note that these cannot be used in the classroom and school rules regarding mobile devices need to be obeyed at all times. Also, if they use it to call other countries or each other it can be very expensive and special note needs to be taken regarding time difference. With regards to laptops please note that not all host families have internet or Wi Fi. **NB:** Please note all things of value like, wallets, laptops, phones etc are the responsibility of the student, and not the Dorm staff or host families.

You should use this handbook as a reference tool for the simple dos and don'ts during your time in Ireland. I wish you good luck and hope that your host family experience will provide you friends and memories that will last you a lifetime.



Noel Doyle - Managing Director