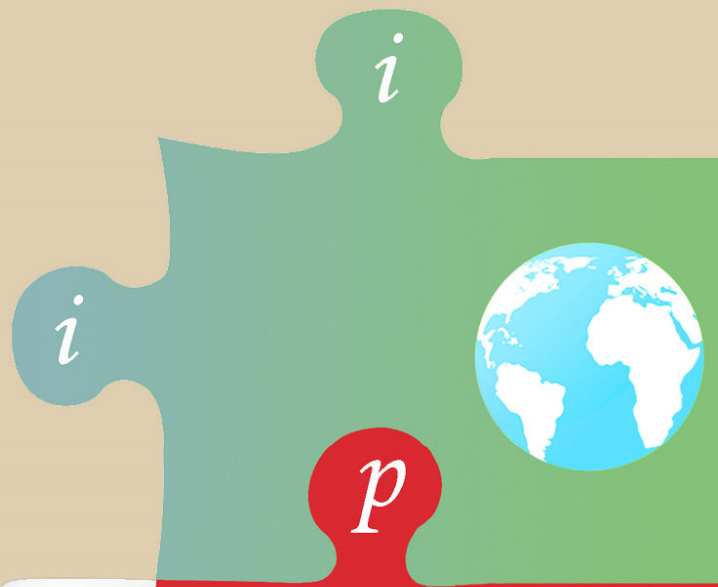


Guide for Host Families

Hosting an international visitor in your home



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GUIDE FOR HOST FAMILIES

Thank you for your interest in hosting an IIP visitor. We've prepared this guide in order to give you a general idea of what to expect along with some basic advice on how to deal with potential difficulties that can arise in cross-cultural relationships.

Hosting is a fantastic opportunity for sharing new ideas and experiences so we hope this guide will be helpful in creating a rewarding time for all involved.

We encourage our participants to be pro-active and actively seek ways to immerse themselves in the host community and culture. At the end of this guide you can also find a list of question ideas that we give to our participants to help them settle in with host families. It may also help you anticipate some of the basic points visitors often need help with.

If you have a question, please talk to your host school coordinator, or contact IIP

International Internship Programs (IIP)

7-5-4 Koyama, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo 142-0062, JAPAN

Tel: +81-3-5750-6055

Fax: +81-3-5750-7712

intl-presenters@interntraining.com

www.interntraining.com/

BEFORE ARRIVAL

Arrangements

Once the Host Family Information Form has been completed, IIP will pass your details on to the visitor who will then be in touch with you directly. We greatly appreciate the host family assistance and kindness in hosting our visitor and trust that it will be an exciting experience for you. As much as possible, we hope the visitor can be thought of as one of the family with no special favors and no special expectations. Therefore, we ask the family not to make any special allowances for the visitor or treat them as a special guest.

Communication

We encourage visitors to make contact with their host family as early as possible in order for everyone to get a little acquainted prior to the arrival. No doubt there will be things you would like to know about the visitor and likewise, more details about your family and the local area will help them prepare. Although not essential, we hope that by the time the visitor does arrive, a warm relationship has already begun to grow.

AFTER ARRIVAL

At first

Once safely arrived, the visitor will probably be feeling a mix of excitement, nervousness and exhaustion and they will be very glad to be met with a friendly face after their long journey.

Everyone is different in how they react upon arriving in a new place and some may appreciate a little time alone to reflect and take in their new surroundings. The fatigue and jet-lag may last one to two weeks as the visitor adjusts to the time difference, so please bear this in mind if they seem a little subdued. If you do have any concerns during the first few weeks, however, please talk with the contact person at the host school or contact IIP.

Household chores

With the visitor being part of the family, having him/her help around the home is expected. We encourage visitors to actively seek ways to be useful and find out for how they might help but please consider which chores would be appropriate and feel free to ask him or her to help whenever needed. It may be best to start with tasks you can do together until the visitor knows the routine and how things are done. Please also bear in mind that some visitors will have a very full schedule at the school and may not always have so much time and energy to spare.

Religious beliefs and practices

Although Shinto and Buddhism play a part in many Japanese customs, traditions and practices, they do not necessarily regulate one's daily life and so for the great majority of visitors, there will be no need for the host to consider this aspect of life. However, please be sure to clarify any religious practices that you follow that may have a bearing on the visitor living with you. If you have any questions or you would like to know how best to approach this aspect in a cross-cultural setting, please feel free to contact IIP for guidance.

Orientation

As he or she settles in, the visitor will start becoming familiar with the household's routines, habits and customs. We encourage the visitor to find out as much and as soon as possible, how things work so that he or she can integrate smoothly (*please see the list of questions we encourage the visitor to ask at the back of this guide*). As he or she will be keen to be part of the household, please be sure to help the visitor get to know how and when to use appliances and amenities around the home. It may take a little time for them to feel comfortable in your home, so repetition and reassurance can often help.

If there are any special house rules or things the visitor should be aware of, please let the visitor know as soon as possible to avoid misunderstandings. This is especially true for any costs that he or she should pay. Please see the section "Expenses" below for more information on this point.

Access

Most host families will allow the visitor to have a key to the house as this makes the stay easier for all concerned and is a sign of trust. However, if for any reason this is not possible, please ensure the visitor has a means of accessing the house at all times in case of emergency, bad weather or other immediate need.

In addition, please make sure the visitor is aware of any security measures or considerations they should heed when coming and going, such as not leaving windows open, time locks or alarm systems.

Transport

The host school is generally responsible for arranging daily transport to and from the school for those times when the visitor is involved in activities there. As each placement is based on a unique set of circumstances, the hosting parties will likely discuss the precise mode of transport collectively. However, the visitor is responsible for all personal travel arrangements and trips in their own time. Therefore, please provide information or assistance on the available local transport, including how to buy tickets and travel cards, until the visitor becomes more familiar with the system.

Medical treatment

Should the visitor become sick or need any medical attention, please do not hesitate to contact your family doctor, host school or IIP. All visitors carry a personal insurance policy covering most medical expenses. In certain cases, the visitor may need to pay first and then make a claim with receipts issued by the treatment center or clinic. If you are available to assist the visitor in attending medical centers and clarifying payment systems, it can be very reassuring. IIP keeps a record of all individual policies, so if necessary, please contact us for further support.

Meals

There is no need to make any special provision for the visitor's meals. Part of the anticipated home life experience includes sharing meals with the household and getting a 'taste' of the local culture. If, however, the visitor has any special dietary needs or considerations, such as allergies, vegetarian or diabetes, the host family will of course be notified in advance. Likewise, please be sure to inform IIP and the visitor of any such circumstances in your home that he or she need be aware of.

In Japan, typical servings and portions tend to be smaller than many other countries. The visitor may take some time to adjust to the amount of food eaten so please do not be offended if he or she does not eat all that is served or declines an offer of more.

Many visitors will also enjoy preparing an authentic meal from Japan for the host. We hope you will have the opportunity to sample some of the cuisine. Likewise, sharing knowledge and techniques of food preparation is a great way to explore each other's culture so helping out in the kitchen is a great opportunity for the visitor to contribute and learn at the same time.

Expenses

The visitor will be paying you a fixed amount to help defray food and utility expenses on a weekly or monthly basis. We ask the visitor to discuss the most appropriate schedule and means of payment directly with the host family as soon as possible after arriving.

Please be sure to clarify any costs that would fall outside the regular homestay fee and to avoid embarrassment or confusion, please also discuss how much the visitor should expect to contribute if there are any family trips, excursions or eating out that he or she will join.

If for any reason there is confusion or error, please speak with the host school contact person or get in touch with IIP to resolve the matter.

Meeting others

Your visitor will be interested in learning about community and the local way of life so any opportunities to meet family, friends and neighbors would be a valuable chance to immerse further in the culture. If you are able to introduce him or her to others and suggest ideas for involvement in the local community, that would be much appreciated.

Weekends & holidays

As much as possible, we ask that you let the visitor participate in your regular life at weekends and fit in with your family's schedule. Many aspects of daily life hold opportunities to explore differences and gain further enrichment so please consider taking the visitor with you when you are out and about in the neighborhood, involved in activities and events or pursuing hobbies and interests.

Of course, everyone needs their own space and time so please do not feel the obligation to always be suggesting ideas or inviting the visitor along. We hope things will find a happy balance through discussing options and seeing what suits everyone best.

Over the summer holidays when schools are on break, the visitor will be responsible for their own activities and accommodation. Most visitors use this time to travel and study and find it a great way to complement the school activity with further enrichment. Of course, if the host is happy for the visitor to remain with them at this time, it is often highly appreciated. We urge visitors to confirm holiday plans with their hosts as soon as possible and give plenty of notice to allow schedules and other arrangements to be coordinated. If you find there is any uncertainty regarding your visitor's plans, please let IIP know.

Handling difficulties

When people from very different cultures live together, misunderstandings do occur but most issues are small and can easily be resolved. We expect our program participants to be very open with their hosts and to discuss any concerns right away. However, for many Japanese people this can be a little daunting as it is sometimes counter to how matters are dealt with in their own culture. Therefore, we hope hosts will bear in mind that a visitor may not always raise an issue directly or as soon as it occurs, with he or she hoping to avoid expressing anything that could seem negative. It is therefore not uncommon for a visitor to keep concerns to themselves rather than communicate them directly. However, IIP urges our participants not to do this as it is the visitor who is there to learn 'how things are done' in the host country and he or she is expected to do everything they can to accept this and adapt accordingly.

If it seems the visitor's actions or manner is not in keeping with the way things are done, please explain why. In most cases, inappropriate behavior or actions are unintentional and often due to a misunderstanding or unfamiliarity with cultural norms or language. It is therefore best to explain important issues as soon as they occur and we hope hosts will not feel put out if having to broach any such matters.

The vast majority of visits run smoothly and generally any problems can be resolved between the visitor and host family. However, if necessary, please contact IIP for any advice or support.

Culture shock

Adjusting to differences in climate, food, living environment and daily routines will always be necessary. Combined with the initial jet lag, the beginning of the stay can be very demanding on the visitor. The visitor may also add to this by pushing him or herself to be highly active and working to make a positive impression. To help the visitor overcome these changes, please be patient and understanding during the first few weeks. At this time, some visitors may keep problems to themselves as they tend to think others may not understand their needs and feelings. However, most adjust quickly and soon get into the swing of things.

In addition, homesickness is a normal feeling for anyone being far away from familiar surroundings. For some people opportunities to be included in activities and a chance to feel part of a group can help them adjust while others may prefer more private time at first in order to take in their new environment. Where possible, please create an initial setting that allows the visitor to understand he or she is free to become involved or free to take a little time alone should they desire either.

Some people naturally adapt quicker than others but if for any reason you are concerned your visitor is struggling or not coping well, please do let IIP know.

Please see the “Questions to Ask Your Host” section starting on the next page - these are the points many visitors will be thinking about

Please visit our home page for more information:

www.interntesting.com

Questions to Ask Your Host

Please talk to your host family about living arrangements and lifestyle as soon as you arrive and whenever you are not sure.

Here are some question ideas to help you.

Daily Routines

- What time does everyone usually get up in the morning? How about at the weekend?
- What time do you usually have breakfast?
- What time do you/the people in the house leave for work?
- What time do you/does the family come home in the evening?
- What time do you usually eat dinner/eat in the evening?
- What time do you/does the family usually go to bed?

Bathroom

- When can I take a shower/bath?
- Can I store my toiletries in the bathroom? Should I leave my toothbrush and toothpaste in the bathroom?
- Where should I keep my towel?
- Is there a water restriction or time limit for taking a shower? (* especially important in Australia)

Kitchen

- Is it OK to prepare my own food occasionally? Can I use the kitchen from time to time?
- Can I store my own food in the kitchen?
- Could you show me how to use this? (* cooker, tool, machine, etc.)
- Is there any kind of food that I cannot keep in the kitchen? (* allergies, religious reasons, etc.)
- Is it OK to help myself?

Laundry

- When can I wash my clothes?
- Are you able to include them with the family washing?
- Where can I hang my clothes to dry?
- Is there an iron I can use?

Internet & Telephone

- Can I use the internet?
- How can I connect? Is there a password?
- Is there a bandwidth limit? (* very important – it may be very expensive for the host if you use the internet a lot!)
- Would it be OK to make a phone call?
- Should I pay for the Internet/phone call?

Questions to Ask Your Host

Security

- Would I be able to have my own key?
- Is it OK to leave my bedroom window open when I go out?
- Please show me how to lock up?
- Is there anything I should be careful about when coming and going?

House Rules

- Are there any house rules I should follow?
- Please tell me if there is something I should or shouldn't do.
- Is it OK for a friend to visit me here?

Activities

- How do you spend your free time?
- How do you usually spend your evenings?
- What kind of activities do you/does the family enjoy?
- Is it OK for me to join in?
- Would it be OK for me to watch TV/listen to music?

Helping Out

- Please let me know how I can help around the house?
- I'd like to help with the housework.
- Are there any chores I can help with?
- Can I cook for you/the family sometimes?

General Questions (especially in the middle of doing something)

- Am I doing this right?
- What is this for?
- How does this work?
- Could you show me how to....?
- Could you help me?
- Can I help?

Mistakes, Damage, Breakages

- I think I might have broken/damaged *something*.
- I'm afraid I've lost *something*.
- Can I pay for the repair?
- Can I replace it?

Questions to Ask Your Host

Transport

- What kind of transport is available in the local area? What's the best way to get around?
- What is the best way to get to...?
- Is there a train/bus service?
- Can I get a pass/travel card/season ticket?

Money

- When would be the best time to pay you? At the start of the month or at the end?
- Should I pay every week or every month?
- Please let me know if there is anything else I need to pay for?
- Can I pay something towards this? (* special cases: eating out, trips with host, etc.)

Saying No/Doing Your Own Thing

- Do you mind if I don't come/ I go out/ I don't join you?
- Thank you for asking but I'm fine.
- I've had enough. Thank you. (*only use this for food & drink!!!)

! Remember – always ask if you are not sure !