



What are Hosts like?

- Hosts come in all shapes and sizes. You might be living with a couple, a family with children, a single parent with children, or a single man or woman. They might be young or they might be old. Some might have religious beliefs different to yours. Some live within walking distance to the school but for others you will need to take a bus.
- Some hosts have pets living in the house. If you have an allergy to any animal, you need to let us know before you arrive, so we can place you accordingly. You should also tell us about any other allergy, special dietary requirements, or any medical conditions you may have. This is so that the School, and your host, can be prepared for you.
- Each host is different. Your hosts might be very different to the family you have at home. They might live in a very different house and have a different lifestyle. This does not mean that one is better than another, just different. Things may not be done the same way as they are in your own country. Whilst you are staying with your host, you should try to do things the way they are done in Scotland.
- Try to resist comparing your host with your friends host; all host experiences are different, that's what makes them so exciting and unique.

Communicating with your Host

- Your host will provide support for you during your stay and will offer conversation, friendship and advice on cultural differences, and you will be able to practise your language skills a lot with them.
- Try to talk with each member of the household every day. Spend time communicating with them, show interest in them and stay at the dinner table after you have finished eating to converse with them. They may want to know about you, your country, your family, your dreams and your life. Talking with them about these things will improve your English skills and your relationship. Be sure to ask them questions about themselves too, and take an interest in their routines. Communication and patience are important.
- When you are introduced, ask your hosts what names they would like to be called. Very often they will want to be called by their first names but it is important you ask them their preference. Make a note of the family name, address and contact details and carry it with you at all times.

The Scottish Lifestyle

- Most people work or go to school between the hours of 8am and 6pm, unless they have a job where they are working more unusual hours. When your hosts are at home, they still have to cook, clean, take care of their children and do many other jobs involving the running of the household. Please be considerate of this and don't expect them to be your servants. Offering to help with the washing up after dinner would be a nice contribution to the household; as would offering to help with the dinner. However you should **never** be expected to babysit any younger children.

- Your hosts are not obligated to entertain you, nor will every household have the entertainment options available that you are accustomed to. If you are bored at home, you need to find ways to entertain yourself, or come to the School and socialise in the evenings.

Rules

- Most families have rules. If the family has children, you may need to follow the same rules that the children have. Most families also have a curfew and they will expect you to be home for dinner at 18:00. You will be given an evening curfew, which you must adhere to
- You should not expect your host to wait up for you, or pick you up. Always come home whilst there is still public transport running.
- If you smoke, you must follow the smoking rules of the household, which may mean smoking out of doors. You also need to know that Scotland has a law that does not allow smoking in any public buildings, including bars, restaurants and bus shelters.

Your Bedroom

- You will be sharing a bedroom with another student unless you have requested a single room. You should have a bed, a storage area for your clothes, and a table or desk for studying.
- Please do not stay in your room all the time with the door shut or your hosts may think that you don't want to communicate with them or don't like them. Try to spend time with them when you have the opportunity. If you want to stay in your room and study, then let them know this is what you are doing.
- You are responsible for keeping your room tidy. Your host will do your laundry for you at least once a week, and will use their preferred detergent and fabric softener.

Meals

As you are living with a Scottish family, you can expect to be eating Scottish food. Your host will provide breakfast and dinner during the week (the School will provide lunch) and a packed lunch at the weekends.

Breakfast – some host families will sit and eat breakfast together, others may be busy or more rushed in the mornings and will show you what is available then let you serve yourself. A Scottish breakfast tends to consist of toast and cereal, sometimes with the addition of eggs, fruit or bacon. Hot oat cereals, or porridge, may also be eaten. Tea is very common at breakfast time and indeed any time of day in Scotland, however if you prefer coffee that is fine too. You just need to let your host know.

Evening meal ('dinner') – you should find out from your host what time dinner will be and make sure you are there to eat. Normally dinner will be around 18:00 which might be earlier than you are used to. If you're not going to be home for dinner you should let your host know. The only time you will not be home for dinner is if you are eating out as a group with your group leader. Meals at home should be eaten together at the table. The food may not be the same food you have in your country but you should be willing to try it and accept it as another one of the differences between your own family and your host family. They may enjoy food that you do not; if something is repeatedly served that you don't like, again you need to let your host know. You could suggest that you teach your host how to cook a meal that you enjoy at home. This might help them to understand what foods you do like to eat and introduce them to your culture. Cooking together may also improve the relationship and they may see this as a welcome contribution to the household.

Bathroom

- When using the bathroom, always close the door. If the door is already closed, knock to be sure that no one is using it. If you share a bathroom with other family members, please limit your bathroom time to 15 minutes in the morning. You will need to supply your own toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant, shampoo and soap. However your hosts will provide towels for you.
- Clean up after yourself every day. Pick up your dirty clothes and hang up your wet towels to dry. Try not to leave water on the ground. Don't leave the sink dirty. It is okay to put toilet paper in the toilet but females should check with their host regarding the disposal of sanitary items.

Other Rooms

Television and Stereo

Please be considerate if watching television or listening to the stereo in communal areas. You need to discuss the use of them with your host. They may not want you to use them at all, or they may only want you to use them at certain times of the day, for instance not later than 22:00 at night. Or, they may restrict the content; they may ask that you don't watch movies or television programmes that are not appropriate for other members of the household. They also may not like loud music or certain types of music. Please be considerate of your hosts and follow the rules that they give you.

Telephone

You should not use your host's telephone unless they give you their permission.

The Computer/Internet

Your host family may have a computer but you need to ask them if it is available for you to use and when you are allowed to use it. If they have internet access, you should check with the family before connecting to the internet. Please do not visit pornographic sites or download music or movies illegally.

Damage to property

Accidents do happen and if you break or damage anything you must tell your host immediately. The sooner they know, the better the chance that they can fix it. Be especially careful with cigarettes, nail varnish and hair curlers or straighteners. Any damages incurred will be payable by you so take care and respect your surroundings.

Culture Shock

- It is normal to feel some forms of 'culture shock' when you are in a new country for the first time. You may have trouble adapting, eating or sleeping, or you may feel homesick. If you do, it is best that you remind yourself that this is normal and that it will pass.
- Try to make sure you eat well, sleep well, take enough exercise and get some fresh air (your Mackenzie School Activity Programme should help with this!)
- It will also help if you talk to your hosts and try to make new friends; then you will feel less isolated. It will not help if you feel sorry for yourself, spend time on your own or call home all the time; doing these things will make it worse.
- Try to really get involved in class and on activity, make the most of it and you will soon feel better.

Illness

- If you feel unwell during your stay you must tell your host, group leader, or school as soon as possible. If you need medical treatment your host can contact their family doctor or NHS 24. Please speak to the School Office if you require medical advice.
- If you are unable to attend school through sickness or illness you must tell your host, the school and your group leader immediately.

Safety

Edinburgh is generally very safe but it isn't your home city so please be careful.

Things to remember:

- When going out after dark, try to go with a friend so you are not alone
- Do not carry too much money or visible valuables, such as expensive watches
- Don't flash your mobile phone or iPod around.
- Leave large amounts of money at home – ask your host to look after it for you.
- If you are sharing a room with a student you do not know ask your host to look after anything valuable, just in case.
- Leave identity cards and passports at home or with your group leader.

Always carry the address and telephone number of your host, the school emergency contact card and the mobile number of your group leader in case of emergencies.

What to do if there's a problem

- If you have a problem in your Scottish home, talk to your host about it first. Many problems can be resolved by communication. Your host is not a mind reader and may be unaware that there is any problem.
- If the problem still cannot be resolved, talk to your group leader or a member of the Mackenzie School team, who can let the host organiser know that there is an issue. Then we can try to resolve the issue. We may invite your host to come to school to discuss it together. We may ask you to put your complaint in writing. We will also request a period of investigation so that we can look into the problem properly. Do not always expect an instant solution.
- In some cases, you may need to change host. All the arrangements will be taken care of if this does happen, so you don't need to worry.

The Golden Rules.....

- We want you to have as good an experience as possible at Mackenzie School, and that includes the host experience.
- Be sure to communicate with them as much as you can. If you are going to be late, or won't be home for dinner, let them know in advance.
- Let them know your likes and dislikes.
- Work with them to find solutions for any issues that you or they might have.
- Understand that you are not staying in a hotel but in someone's home and this brings with it a certain responsibility.
- You should respect your host and treat them as you would like to be treated.
- Make the most of the opportunity to learn English and live the Scottish lifestyle, even if you are only here for a short time.
- Most importantly of all, have fun, stay positive, make good friendships and take happy memories home with you!