



LA ROUTE DES LANGUES

# HOST FAMILY PROGRAM FAMILY GUIDE

*Everything you need to know before hosting a student  
with La Route des langues USA*



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# INTRODUCTION

*Bienvenue* to La Route des Langues USA host family program! We are delighted to have you as one of our host families.

Thank you for opening your door to a student from France. Dedicated to the promotion of intercultural understanding, the host family program encourages participants to share their lifestyles, cultures and customs, allowing French students to improve their English while living the American way of life.

We are always amazed by the strong bonds created between host families and their students. By sharing each other's languages, lifestyles and cultures, we are rewarded with a better appreciation and respect for all people. We sincerely hope that this opportunity provides your family with memories and friendships that will last long after you say goodbye.

# PREPARING YOUR FAMILY TO HOST

Before your student's arrival, here are a few recommendations to prepare for the best hosting experience.

**ONE:** Your student already knows a lot about you and your family thanks to the information you have added to your profile on Guestbook. In addition, we recommend contacting your student via email, Facebook or other social media to experience direct interaction before his/her arrival. **ALWAYS** communicate in English **ONLY**.

**TWO:** Prepare your home for your student's arrival. In addition to the usual clean sheets and towels, you may want to consider:

**Student's Bedroom:** The student must have his or her own bed. A living room or family room is not considered a bedroom unless it can be completely closed off and regarded as a bedroom with complete privacy.

**Student Valuables:** Consider where the student may keep his or her clothes and personal items. Is there a secure place to keep valuables like a passport, cash or credit cards?  
**If your family is not home during the day:** Determine the best way for your student to let him or herself in and out of your home should a family member not be present when the student returns home.

**Household Chores:** As a family, agree on what you expect of your student in terms of household chores prior to his or her arrival. Some students have not done chores before, including making a bed, putting dishes in a dishwasher, or picking up after themselves. Decide who will show the student how to fulfill his or her household responsibilities.

**Laundry:** Some students bring a limited supply of clothing and need to do laundry frequently. Examine your laundry habits and decide how you can help your student after his or her arrival.

**Food:** Many American families lead extremely busy lives and often encourage their guests to "help themselves." It is good to model "helping yourself" so the student understands the custom. Some students feel comfortable with this but many are too shy. Families can handle this concern in several ways:

- o Some families leave out little baskets of fruit and snack foods on the kitchen table or in the student's room so if he or she is too shy to ask, food is available.

- o Visit the grocery store with the student the day after his or her arrival. Encourage your student to select some fruits, cereals and other "comfort foods" that he or she prefers.

If your family does not eat together, plan on how you will handle meals. Discuss who will help the student the first day or two until he or she settles into your family routine.

If your family is going out for a meal and it is a special occasion, the student may be asked to pay for the meal. However, if your family eats out more than once a week the host family is expected to pay for the student's meals.

**THREE:** Prepare your Family. Be certain to discuss the expectations of each family member and try to anticipate any special needs that might arise as a result.

**Your Children:** Discuss the types of activities that might appeal to both your children and your student. Older children often have busy schedules; they are encouraged to bring the student along with them as often as possible. Younger children often look forward to having a new big brother or sister with whom to play.

**You: Are You Ready?** Have you discussed your expectations with your family?

Remember that your student is above all—a teenager.

# THE FIRST HOURS/DAYS: MAKE THE STUDENT FEEL AT

## HOME

**Arrival:** Students will be met at the airport by the host family. Bring a sign with the student's name on it to hold up when greeting the student.

**Departure:** The host family will accompany the student to the airport and guide him/her to the right gate for check-in.

If you live far from the airport and driving/parking to the terminal comes at a high cost, please contact La Route des Langues USA in advance to arrange reimbursement.

Your student may not initiate conversation immediately; respect his or her age, lack of confidence with the English language, jet lag and new surroundings.

**Reintroduce Your Family:** When your student first arrives at home, reintroduce yourselves and use the names that you think will make him or her feel most comfortable.

You can also show them a photo album and talk about your family. Ask your student if he or she has any photographs to share. Pictures are visual tools that help initiate conversation.

**House Tour:** Tour the house together. Indicate any areas that you consider private. Show him or her the bedroom and bathroom.

Show and explain the electronic device rules for your home including Wifi, internet guidelines and time limits.

Explain the operation of regularly used appliances and all kitchen and bathroom fixtures.

It is especially important to explain your shower and bathroom e.g. how to close the shower curtain, how to operate the faucets, proper use of the toilet, the length of time permitted in the shower, etc.

**Home Safety:** Explain all security precautions that the student must follow especially if he or she will be spending time alone at home. For example, if the student leaves the

house he or she should check to make sure that the doors are closed and locked, the dog is in, the cat is out; he or she has taken a key and/or has learned the combination to the garage door opener. Make sure your student keeps any medication or other items that may be harmful out of reach of small children.

Family schedule: Explain and stick to your regular family schedule and expect your student to do the same. Always expect your student to get up on time – even the first day after arrival. Your student may sleep a lot the first few days. If this persists or the student exhibits other symptoms of homesickness or jet lag after 3/4 days, contact your local coordinator.

Community Tour: Tour the neighborhood and the community together.

Family Activities: Turn off the television, computers, phones and tablets and participate in hands-on activities that your student can successfully join.

Recommended activities include: walking, cycling, bowling, skating, swimming, horseback riding, tennis...

Students also enjoy movies, concerts, the zoo, museums, visiting relatives, watching live sporting events, camping, attending a wedding, dancing, local tourist spots, shopping, simple board/card games, and lawn games

Fast food restaurants that serve pizza, theme restaurants, video arcades and/or other typically American "hang-outs" are popular with international students.

Give your student opportunities to listen to music that he or she likes. Share your own personal favorites. Music, as a universal language, helps bridge cultural gaps.

Meeting Friends and Other Family Members:

If you have children, encourage them to share "recreational" time with your student.

If you do not have children the same age as your student, make an effort to introduce him or her to other teens in the neighborhood, at church, synagogue, or at your local community center.

- Family Plans: Include your student in your family plans. Initially he or she may be too shy to tell you what he or she wants to do, but, eventually you will find out what activities or local sights are of special interest to your student. Communication is key.

Talk to your student and keep him or her informed of the details of your outings.

Explain several days in advance, the who, what, when, where, how and why of your plans. Discuss when you will be leaving, how you will get there, what you will do, where Grandma lives and how to address her. After you arrive, introduce everyone. Make a special effort to show your student the house and where the bathroom is located. Remember that your student may be too self-conscious or shy to ask questions.

After a special outing or trip, provide time to discuss the event. Talking after an outing is an opportune time to compare your student's experiences here to the way it is back home. This is a unique opportunity to have a truly intercultural exchange.

## CULTURE SHOCK & COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

What is Culture Shock? Culture shock is a heightened feeling of stress and discomfort which results when one immerses oneself in a foreign culture. Some degree of culture shock is inevitable if your student wants to truly live the American experience.

Will My Student Be Able To Communicate With Me? For our students, language difficulty is one of the biggest contributing factors to culture shock. The students become extremely fatigued trying to concentrate on English conversation all day long. As a result of this fatigue, the student may seem quiet or disinterested. He or she may even retreat to his or her room and avoid contact with your family for a short time.

Many students become frustrated with their inability to communicate complicated ideas. Their language ability may be limited to simple conversation. This can cause anxiety and result in the students' desire to interact with people from their own country or people who speak their own language so they can more easily express their thoughts and participate in more sophisticated conversations.

How Can the Host Family Help the Student with these Communication Challenges?

Be patient and speak slowly. You can help your student by speaking slowly, practicing patience, and keeping your sense of humor. Try to be tolerant of his or her initial reserve. As he or she becomes more comfortable in your home environment, communication will improve.

Plan “Hands-on” Activities. Include your student in activities that do not require continual conversation like games, sports, music or cooking.

Communicate with Pictures.

Communication is more than just talk. People can communicate with gestures, pictures and even with their imaginations. One of the quickest ways to help La Route des Langues USA students amass a substantial number of words is to show them pictures. Sunday ads from newspapers which feature different product lines or fully furnished rooms are a few examples. Children's picture books are equally fine resources.

Provide an opportunity for your student to speak his or her own language: Inviting a native speaker over to your home to talk with your student and your family can result in a wonderful and memorable evening for everyone.

Communication Techniques: Following are some additional techniques to consider when communicating with your student:

Speak slowly, deliberately and distinctly—not loudly.

Face your student so he or she will benefit from your expression and body language. When necessary, repeat what you have said or rephrase it

Avoid asking, "Do you understand?" as a student may nod but not necessarily understand. Listen carefully to what your student says to you. Ask him or her to use visual clues.

Offer genuine encouragement so that your student feels approval and will continue to make an effort to converse with you.

Do not hesitate to use a translation app that has both English and your student's native language.

# ESTABLISHING RULES

**Your student is required to follow your family's rule while he/she is staying with you.**

ESTABLISH THE RULES, EXPECTATIONS AND SCHEDULE IMMEDIATELY. Do not treat your student as a GUEST initially and then change the rules later.

Your family and your student come from two different worlds. Consequently, your student may be unfamiliar with many of your ideas and customs.

As these customs may differ from your own and from American laws, it is important to discuss these differences with your student.

The following are some guidelines to help your family create and maintain a successful homestay experience.

Establish Your Family Rules: Discuss and explain the following expectations that are specific to your family's lifestyle:

- Typical bedtime and rising time
- Curfews & rules for visiting
- Rules for going out without adults / use of public transport / ride share (not recommended under 15 yo)
- Hygiene Rules: shower, laundry, and cleanliness
- Telephone and computer/internet etiquette/frequency/times

Mealtime rules:

- o Which meals does the family eat together?
- o Are meals served "family style"?
- o Which meals must the student prepare himself?
- o What are your family traditions at mealtime?
- o What family members are responsible for meal preparation and cleanup?

Family Member: Treat your student as a member of your family or at least as you would like your own child to be treated by a family in another country. Please remember above all that your student is a teenager and requires your guidance and understanding.



**Motorized Vehicles:** Students are not permitted to drive any motorized vehicles or ride a motorcycle, ATV, jet ski, or a go-cart while visiting in the U.S. They must use seat belts at all times when riding in a car. Go-carts at an amusement park are permitted. They are permitted to ride in a boat if they are wearing a flotation device.

**Religion:** Students are welcome but not required to attend worship services with your family. There should be no attempt made to change his or her beliefs. If your student does not wish to attend services his or her choice must be honored. Students often enjoy participating in youth oriented church activities.

**Smoking/Alcohol/Recreational drugs:** Students are NEVER allowed to smoke, use non-prescription or recreational drugs, or drink alcohol. (If they are 21 years of age they may drink only at the discretion of the host parents.)

**Food:** Your student can eat regular family meals, however, occasionally you may want to provide opportunities for him or her to have "comfort" foods. It is fun to visit the grocery store together to select fruit, snacks and other items that give them a little taste of home.

**Household Chores:** Help your student become a part of the family by expecting him or her to help out just as your own children do. As some students have never done housework before, it is important to do the "chore" with your student the first time so that he or she understands exactly what is expected. Ask your coordinator for assistance if you find that you are having difficulty communicating your expectations to your student.

**Babysitting:** Your student is NEVER allowed to baby-sit (except when taking part in our "Family Helper" program)

**Home Alone:** Students that are 15 years of age or older may be left home alone for short periods of time. If you are going to be away from home for the entire day and your student will be alone, contact your coordinator to see if she can help you make alternative arrangements for your student.

If your student is skirting these rules, please contact your coordinator IMMEDIATELY.

**Travel:** If you will be taking an overnight trip with your student it is necessary for you to email the parents to obtain their permission. The email with the natural parents' permission should then be forwarded to your coordinator.

If your student is planning on traveling without you, notify the coordinator immediately and he or she will make the necessary arrangements and contact the student's family.

# MONEY

Your financial obligation to the student is no more than would be considered common courtesy to any other visitor. Host families are expected to provide at least for the basic needs of the student (food, laundry). They are not expected to cover all of the student's expenses.

## **Small expenses**

Although the amount each student brings varies, each student does have some spending money for snacks, souvenirs, trips, and incidentals. La Route des Langues recommends that students bring at least \$100/week as pocket money.

## **More expensive activities**

Families who are willing to invite the student to restaurants or paid activities are welcome to do so but are not required to.

On family outings it is totally ok to ask your student to pay his or her own way for admissions, personal items etc. as he/she has come financially equipped to do so. Please do not plan on more than one restaurant meal or expensive activity per week if your student is expected to pay for the outing. Communication is key: please advise the student beforehand of activity costs.

Expensive activities such as amusement parks, concerts, sporting events can be arranged and paid in advance when added to your family profile on Guestbook as "options".

If these activities have not been planned in advance and are decided during the student's trip, it is recommended to contact La Route des Langues USA. We will connect with the student's family to have their approval on the expense.

Provide a safe place for your student's money, passport and valuables. Unless otherwise requested, your student will only need to carry \$25-\$75 in cash at any given time. Have your student use a credit card for shopping.

La Route des Langues USA strongly discourages host families from loaning money to the participant. The currency exchange and international check delays make receiving a check from the participant's home extremely difficult to cash, often taking over two weeks. A wire transfer, however, can usually be completed in 24 hours with little difficulty.

# EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

In the unlikely event that you encounter a situation that requires special attention, here are a few guidelines to assist you. In all cases, the first concern of La Route des Langues USA is the health and safety of the student and the host family.

**Call Your Program Coordinator Immediately:** La Route des Langues USA is counting on the host family to contact their coordinator immediately at the first sign of any difficulty or issue with their student. Please refer to the emergency phone numbers provided by your coordinator.

## INSURANCE PROCEDURES:

Students are personally responsible for paying any medical costs they incur should the doctor decline to accept their insurance.

The host family should not pay for medical costs under any circumstances.

**Be certain to keep a copy of the student's insurance information and medical release on your phone at ALL TIMES**

**24 Hour Assistance:** La Route des Langues USA is available to help you 24-hours a-day. We help with lost passports, communication difficulties, personality conflicts, and medical emergencies. No problem is too small or too big.

**Accident or Illness:** In the case of a medical emergency, please take care of your student's medical needs immediately and notify your coordinator. The students are completely covered by insurance. If it becomes necessary for you to do the paperwork, please use the insurance address provided on all forms and give copies to your coordinator immediately. As a host family, you should never provide your home address. The escort will assist with the insurance paperwork (group programs only).

**Medical Release Form:** The parental release necessary for medical care can be found on the student application. Please take a picture of this and your student's medical information; save it to your phone so you have it with you at all times.

**Insurance:** Students participating in homestay programs are insured for illness, injury

and loss of life. The coverage begins upon boarding the airplane for the departure flights to the United States and terminates upon arrival of the return flight in their home country. Specific insurance information is provided in your orientation materials.

All bills or other information received during your student's visit or after your student's departure should be referred directly to La Route des Langues USA.

Damaged or Stolen Property: If your host family sustains any property damage or loss due to accidental or intentional means, or any financial costs for which the student assumes responsibility, please report to your coordinator IMMEDIATELY.

o Any damage or loss must be reported BEFORE the students depart, if financial compensation is requested.

## CONTACT US

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