

Personal
ENGLISH TUTORS

Student Guide

*Most of the advice in this handbook is aimed at younger students,
but please read it whatever your age, as it contains
essential information for all students.*



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Personal English Tutors

Student Homestay Information

Your Host Tutor Family



To open your own home to overseas students, involves considerable responsibility. Your host tutor family will do their best to provide you with care and support. They are also interested in sharing their lifestyle with you and want to experience your culture and its differences. An authorised representative of Personal English Tutors has visited each host family and interviewed them about their interest in hosting international students. All of them have been assessed for their suitability as Host-Family Tutors.

Our host families can be very different. Some have children of their own. Others have children who are now grown up and no longer live at home. Some families may be single parents and have only one adult living in the house. Some live in big houses, others live in smaller houses. You can be sure that all of our host families are looking forward to meeting you, and that they care very much about helping you to feel comfortable in the home and in your new surroundings.

We will give your host families as much information as we can about you before you arrive. This will help your host family to know some things about you such as, foods you like and dislike, any allergies or medical conditions you may have, etc. We will also try to place you in a home where we think you will be comfortable and where your host tutor can support you as you pursue your own particular interests.

Using English in the home

It is important that you use English at all times when you are staying with your host family, even when you are not having formal lessons. If you spend too much time listening to music, chatting on the internet or emailing your friends in your own language, you will not fully benefit from your homestay experience. Don't be shy, talk to your host family. Watch television with them, even if at first it is difficult for you to understand the language. Use every opportunity to practise speaking English. It will be a big challenge for you at the beginning of your stay, but soon you will notice that your effort is bringing you real progress.

A code of conduct for students

- Host tutors are usually reluctant to set down rules in the first few days and this can make the student unsure of what is expected of them. Remember that it is not a hotel and that you are living with a family who also have standards for the other members of the household.
- As a member of the host family, it is likely that you will be able to use any additional facilities the host family has at their home. Your host tutor will advise you on what facilities you can use. You should respect whatever rules are in place for their use.
- Please respect families and property and be aware that any breakages must be paid for.
- The idea of a homestay is for you to get involved in our British lifestyle and to learn English. Mixing with the family is a great way to do this. If you spend most of your time in your room, then you are missing out on valuable experiences that can make your stay in England a fantastic experience. You will learn far more from mixing with your host tutor family and their friends than you will behind a closed door.
- Don't be nervous! Please remember that it's okay to make a mistake. Host families know and understand that you are learning English and are only too willing to help you.
- Don't compare your friend's host family with your own. Some families have big homes with swimming pools, where others have small homes with no extras. Remember that it is the people that live in these homes that are important. The relationship that you have with your host family is by far the most important aspect of your homestay. It's not the size of the house or what they have as these are just material things that in the long run are not really important.
- Host families are not expected to be your taxi driver. If you are planning an outing, make sure that you have discussed it with your host family. If the host tutor is able to, she may offer to drive you, but make sure that you have alternative transport organised if they are busy.
- All tickets and entrance fees are to be paid for by the student. Please don't wait for the host family to pay. Ask how much it will cost and have the money ready. If you can't afford to attend these outings let your host family know in advance. All snack foods and soft drinks are to be paid for by the students.
- Please remember that it is illegal for anyone under the age of 16 to smoke. The minimum age for drinking alcohol in Britain is 18.
- If you have a problem or are seriously worried about any aspect of your stay, please try to speak to your host tutor about it first. If you are not able to resolve the problem this way, call PET on 01608 811 342 during office hours, or in an emergency call 07968 018 445. We will do everything we can to resolve any difficulties which you may be having with your stay. PET is also a member of ABLIS and in serious cases of concern they can also be contacted for assistance and advice.

Use of the telephone and internet

Ask the host family if you can use the phone. Don't just think that it is your right to pick up the phone and take it to your room for an hour or two. Some family phones are also business phones, so please make your calls short. You will be responsible for paying for these calls, so we suggest that you buy an *International Phone Card*. This card can usually be used for any type of phone, a mobile phone or a private phone and it does not cost a lot of money.

If you have a mobile phone, depending on the brand and model, you may be able to buy an English "SIM" card to make calls from your own mobile phone. You may also like to investigate the possibility of having International Roaming on your existing mobile phone. You will need to contact your mobile phone provider for information about this service.

Most host tutor families have a broadband connection for the internet, but you will need to ask your host tutor for permission to use any computers in the house. If you wish to access the internet and email system through their computer or through your own laptop, you must discuss this with the host tutor and make sure you respect their rules for this access.

Meals

You should receive three healthy meals a day. The host family will cook what they usually cook. This will help you to learn about England and its culture. From time to time, it is natural that you might wish to have food that is familiar to you. You could sometimes offer to go shopping with your host tutor and help her to buy the foods that you can use to cook a meal for the family. Meal times are great opportunities for you to practise speaking English with your homestay family.

Caring for your safety

General points to remember

- Take care of yourself at all times!
- Keep your passport and flight tickets in a safe place (A good idea is to keep a photocopy of your passport in a separate place)
- Be careful at night
- Do not hitchhike
- Don't trust strangers
- Don't wear tee shirts or bags which display that you are a foreign student
- Emergencies dial 999 – ambulance / police / fire brigade
- Look at the person's face when you speak
- In the UK women and men are considered equal
- Show respect to everyone – family, teachers, strangers, etc.

Safety in your host family home

Although we do not own or manage any of the host tutor homes shown on our website or in our brochure, as part of our Safety First Policy, we do our best to ensure that host families take the safety and wellbeing of all our students very seriously and that their homes are well maintained for your comfort and safety.

Nevertheless, please remember that you must take special care of yourself. In particular:

- Check the layout of your home so that in an emergency you can get out quickly and easily.
- Check for a fire extinguisher and fire blanket, and read the instructions on their use.
- If you are unsure of how to use any appliances, please ask a member of your host tutor family.
- If your home has night storage heaters, these must never be covered.
- Take special care when moving around the property at night.
- Look out for glass patio doors or glazed interior doors - they should have stickers on them.
- Notice potential risks posed by swimming pools, ponds, steep drops or steps in the garden.
- Understand that all activities during your home stay are undertaken at your own risk.

If you have any concerns about the safety of your host family home, whether it be the garden, the equipment or the facilities, then please tell your host tutor immediately.

Medical emergencies

If you are hurt or become ill while you are staying with your host family, you should tell them immediately. You will have medical insurance and can access all regular medical services available in England. In the case of an emergency, your host tutor will contact the appropriate emergency service to get assistance. Your host tutor will also contact Personal English Tutors.

Counselling and support

PET welcomes suggestions and comments from students and takes seriously any complaints, grievances or concerns which they may raise. You should first speak directly to your host tutor. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you. Your host tutor may be able to sort things out to your satisfaction. If not, you may prefer to take the matter to PET directly. If we are unable to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction you may decide to make a complaint or suggestion in writing. In such cases, we shall contact you as quickly as possible in order to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed. We will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it and any actions taken or proposed.

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome or feel at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, PET will offer to refer the matter to the Accreditation Body for Language Services. Alternatively, you may wish to write to them directly yourself, at PO Box 3403, Norwich NR7 7JG, *telephone: 01493 393471, email: info@ablsaccreditation.co.uk*. ABLs will call for a full report from PET, and the Inspector will then examine matters thoroughly before responding. This may result in a positive solution, but if not, the matter will be passed to the Chief Inspector. The Chief Inspector will investigate and if he/she considers the complaint has been satisfactorily handled by PET he/she may recommend that the complaint be dismissed. If, however, the Chief Inspector considers there has been unsatisfactory

performance on our part he/she may recommend a full or partial re-inspection. The Chief Inspector's decision will be final.

We hope that we shall be able to satisfy your concerns. If not, you may wish to seek independent legal advice. PET recognises and acknowledges your right to complain or express a grievance, and we hope to work in the best interests of the students in our care.

Attendance policy

PET has never had a single absence in its 20 year history, and we intend to maintain this record! However, in case a student should fail to arrive without explanation, we have the following policy.

- EU students who fail to arrive and fail to provide any explanation for their absence within 3 days will not be entitled to any refund of fees.
- Visa national students who fail to arrive and fail to provide any explanation within 3 days will be reported to UKBA (the United Kingdom Border Authority).
- The host tutor will notify PET immediately if their student says that they intend to move from their agreed address.
- The host tutor will notify PET if the student does not attend all lessons or shows excessively poor performance or effort in lessons. A written record must be kept of lesson times.
- Students must normally sleep at the host tutor's home each night. If a student wishes to sleep over somewhere else, he or she must inform the host tutor of the dates, and the name, address and phone number of where he or she will be staying. This information must be passed on to PET at the earliest opportunity. Students under 18 years of age must be in the care of an approved responsible adult. If a student of any age fails to return to the host tutor's home without warning, PET must be informed immediately.
- In the case of unexplained absences, PET will enact its normal absence procedures and inform the UKBA and/or police as appropriate. Host tutors will receive their full payment as if the student had been present.

UK laws

For some students, the laws in their home country may be different from the laws in the United Kingdom. Overseas students should note that in the United Kingdom:

- It is illegal for persons under 16 to engage in sexual activity.
- It is illegal for persons under 16 to buy or use tobacco products, and persons giving tobacco products to someone under 16 can be fined or charged with a criminal offence.
- It is illegal for persons under 18 years old to buy or drink alcohol, and persons giving alcohol to someone under 18 can be fined or charged with a criminal offence.
- It is illegal for someone under 18 to gamble.

Personal English Tutors will endeavor to:

- Ensure the well-being and safety of all our students
- Provide appropriate pastoral care to all our students
- Make all our students feel valued and respected
- Provide quality education for all our students
- Develop the best resources, facilities and services
- Maintain the highest standards of teaching
- Foster intercultural understanding in a friendly environment
- Provide courses which provide internationally relevant content
- Enable learners to feel linguistically competent in any part of the world
- Empower learners to reach their individual potential and goals

Staying with a host family should be a very positive and rewarding experience..

It is a wonderful opportunity for you to discover another culture, make long-lasting friends and significantly improve your English.

Whatever your age or experience of English, we aim to provide you with the best experience, enjoyment and success!