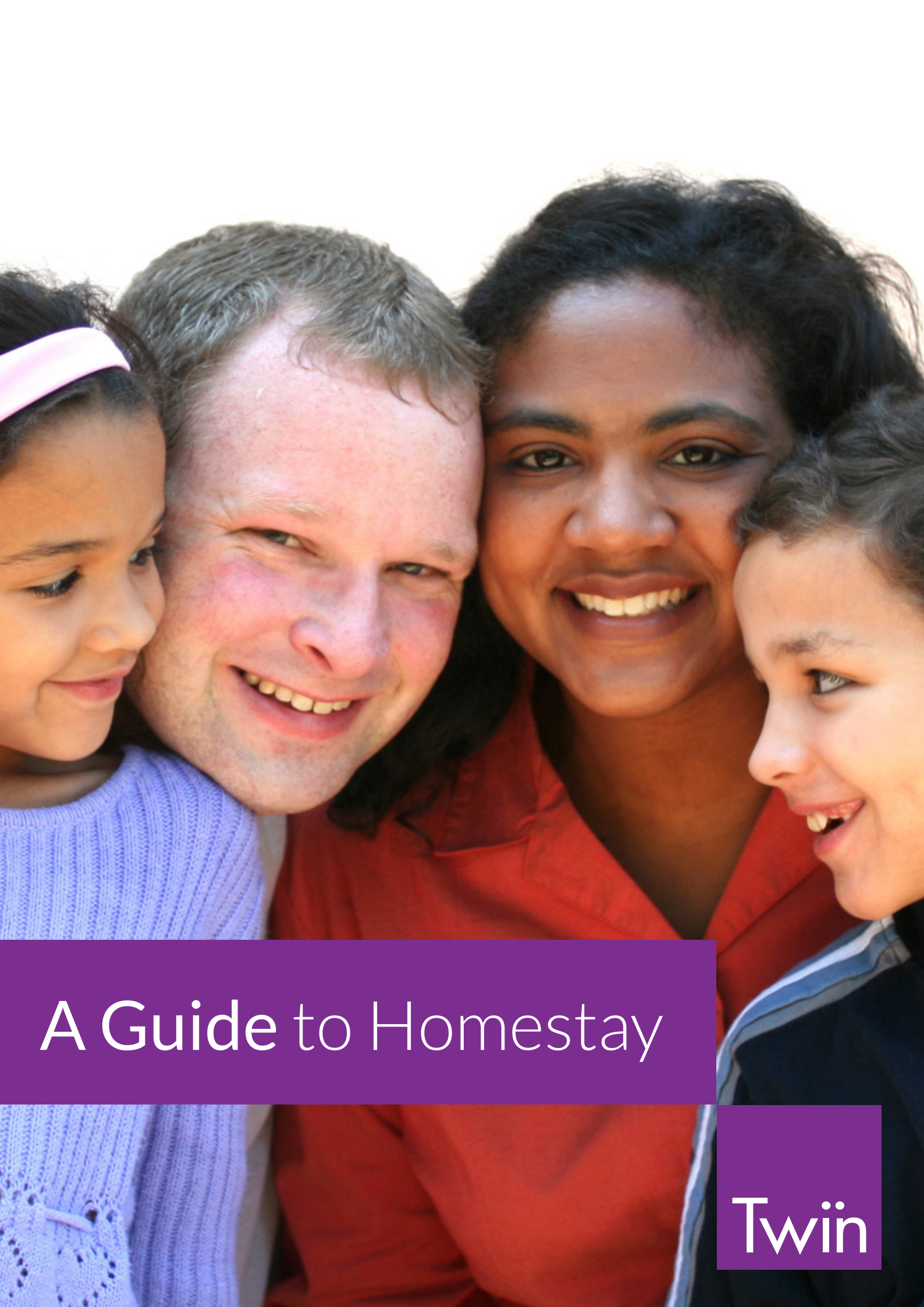




A Guide to Homestay

Twin

Welcome to London!

At Twin we know that accommodation is one of the most important parts of any person's stay with us, which is why we have put together this handy guide to help you and your students have a relaxed and enjoyable stay with us.

Please take some time to read through this guide and inform your students of everything they need to know about our hosts.

Why staying with a host family is such a great experience

Our families can vary from a single host mother, to a retired couple, to a family with pets and children. It is important to understand that our host families come from multi-cultural background offering a diverse and exciting environment. All Twin families are recruited, inspected and interviewed by our own staff or a local organiser to ensure your students have a safe and comfortable stay in London.

For many students this may be the first time away from home, and our experienced families will always give students a friendly welcome, and introduce them to all members of the household to ensure that they settle in quickly. Our families will also try to anticipate any problems, and will keep our supportive accommodation team updated to make sure students are happy throughout their stay.

It is also important for you as a group leader to communicate with us and let our team know if any of your students are having any problems. **It is a good idea to go through this booklet with your students, to make sure they understand what is expected of them when staying in a host family.**



Settling in to your family routine



When your students first arrive at their host family, it is important that they speak with the family about their routine, as each family is different. This will help students to feel like a part of the family, and ensure that they know what time dinner will be each day, and if there are any other daily schedules that they should follow. Families will often have a short list of 'ground rules' which students must follow as well. Students should not be worried about this, as rules are simply in place to help them understand their new home environment.

Some house rules your students may be given could include:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Do not make outgoing phone calls from the host families phone, (incoming calls are ok if you ask permission) | 5. Visitors are welcome with the families permission, but not after 9pm |
| 2. Please call if you are not coming home for dinner | 6. Leave your washing in the laundry basket so it can be washed once per week |
| 3. Clean the bathroom after you use it | 7. No overnight visitors |
| 4. No smoking in the house | 8. Please avoid using the bathrooms at certain times when the family needs it |



Your accommodation

Students staying with hosts will have access to their own bedroom (or shared bedroom if booked with Twin rooms), and all common areas within the house. All students will stay in a relaxed environment where they can socialise with their hosts, or have some quiet time to relax in their bedroom.

In the house, students will have:

- Blankets/Duvet
- A drawer & wardrobe
- A desk or table to work at
- A lamp

Please be aware that in England it is common for bedrooms (and bathrooms) to not have a lock on the door, so make sure your students know they should knock before entering a room.

Electrical Equipment

If your students have electrical equipment they would like to use in the house (phone/laptop chargers, hair dryers, etc.), please make sure they speak to their hosts about them, so they can check for any differences in voltage to avoid potential damage to your students' electricals or the family's home.

Internet

Most of our host families now offer Wi-Fi and internet access. Students are able to use the internet whenever they want, but they must make sure they are not making too much noise after 22:00. For example, if they wish to speak with their family on Skype late at night because of the time difference, they should do so quietly, as other people in the house may be sleeping.

Choosing your families

Our accommodation team will always work hard to choose the most suitable homestay hosts for your students, which meet the requirements provided on your application forms. However, sometimes problems can occur when a student arrives, so please let us know if there are any as soon as possible so we can resolve any issues.

We will also always try and place you within a family that is close to Twin school, (or public transport links if your students are completing work experience). Please remember that London is a large city, so travelling for up to 40 minutes to get to school or an internship placement is quite normal.

Transportation

On the first day, we encourage your students to speak with their family about local transport, as they will be able to tell your students what the easiest and cheapest ways to get to school, and into the centre of London are.

Homestay hosts will also tell your students how long it takes to get to and from school, which will help them plan their days to ensure that they are not late.

Bathroom and Toilet

Students will have free access to the bathroom, but it is important that they talk to their hosts to work out a rota for baths and showers, so it is convenient for everyone in the household.

It is generally acceptable to have a bath or shower for 10 to 15 minutes. Although a longer wash is possible, please ensure that your students are considerate of other family members.

Students are expected to leave the bathroom clean and tidy after use. Students should not be embarrassed to ask the host how to use the shower or bath, as everyone's house is different.

Cleaning & Laundry

Remember the family home is not a hotel, so students must keep their room tidy, as hosts may clean their room while they are out of the house. Students will also be given a laundry bag where they can leave their clothes to be washed once a week.

Meals

While staying with their host families, your students will be provided with the meals you have agreed at the time of booking. This will be:

Bed & Breakfast:

- Breakfast only

Half Board:

- Breakfast
- Dinner

Full board:

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

As a guide, here are some examples of what could be included in each meal:

Breakfast

(Continental style):

Cereal
Toast
Butter/Jam
Hot drinks/fruit juice

Packed Lunch:

Two sandwiches (filled with
cheese/cold meats)
Packet of crisps
Fruit
Biscuits

Dinner:

Usually a hot meal consisting of meat, fish, pasta or vegetables.

Dinner times can vary from family to family, but it is generally between 18:00-20:30pm. Please encourage your students to ask their host families about meal times when they arrive, as this ensures that they will not miss dinner.

There may also be occasions where homestay hosts have prior arrangements and your students will have to eat alone, however hosts will inform your students of this in advance if it is going to happen. It is also important that your students inform their hosts if they are not going to be at home for dinner, or if they are going to be late, so please make sure your students understand this.

Some British families refer to dinner as 'tea', so make sure you ask if you aren't sure otherwise you might not get dinner!

General information

Culture Shock and Homesickness

Many students suffer from feelings of alienation, culture shock and homesickness.

In such a case, students must never be too shy to talk to the family to overcome this initial problem. Our families are experienced in hosting students and making them feel at home, so we are sure they will be able to help your students feel at home. Also, our accommodation team is always available to help if you or your students would like to talk to them.

Differences in Culture

Differences in culture can cause misunderstandings for hosts as well as students. Families can feel offended when things are said in the wrong way and so can your students. For example, 'please' and 'thank you' are used a lot in England, and families may feel offended if students do not use these terms of politeness. Different cultures may express politeness in different ways, and in many cultures requests are expressed much more directly than British people are used to. For example: A student who says, "give me the salt" at the dinner table may not be disrespectful to you, but the family may consider it impolite.

Students may also find other cultural differences, such as attitudes to relationships and culture, but please welcome them with an open mind. Also, if you are unsure about anything, our accommodation team are always here for you and your students, if there is anything that they feel uncomfortable about.



Religion

Students' beliefs are respected and received with an open mind, but you must be discrete in the family home and adapt to the cultures of the family, environment or country.

Students' friends

Students are allowed to have guests stay, only if they gain permission from the host family. This should be arranged in advance, and guests may not stay later than 21:00.

Heating and Hot Water

Adequate heating will be provided in the student's room at no extra cost. It is normal for most family homes to turn off the heating at night and during summer periods (May to early September), so if your students are cold, they can ask the family for more sheets or a blanket. Remember it may be warm for the family, but you may still be cold and it is important you tell them.

Keys

Students are always given a front door key and freedom to come and go as they please, but they must make sure they lock all doors and windows when they are leaving the house, (unless someone else is in when they leave).

If there are any problems with keys, please talk to the accommodation team. If you misplace or lose your set of keys, you may have to pay for a replacement set which may be expensive, so please be careful with the house keys.

Language

Conversation is an important part of your students' learning process and the family may provide you with help and encouragement, but it is up to your students to try!

They are here to improve their English so they should make the best efforts they can; families understand that sometimes they may be frustrated, embarrassed or just shy, but sometimes they may be the same! If you stay in your room, the family will not disturb you as they understand that you wish to be alone or stay in private, so please do not misinterpret this as if the family does not want to talk to you.

Money

We advise that students always keep their money in a lockable space, (generally in their suitcase), and only take what they need out of the house at any time. This ensures that the majority of students' money is safe, and if they lose their wallet or purse, they will still have some money at home.

Airport transfer

If you have booked an airport transfer, the driver will have a board with your name at the arrival hall. If you cannot find your driver, always go to the terminal INFORMATION DESK, call the emergency taxi phone number on 0208 777 8888 or 0208 462 1200, alternatively you can call our 24-hour emergency line on +44 (0) 7711 905 766. Drivers generally arrive just before your flight lands so that you have enough time to get through baggage and Immigration formalities.

Telephone

Use of the telephone by students is a common cause of misunderstanding. Students should always ask before using the family's private phone, and this should only be to receive incoming calls. Students are not allowed to make outgoing calls as it can leave the family with a large bill.

Smoking

Smoking is not allowed in the home under any circumstances, so you MUST make sure your students are aware of this.

Contact us

Transfer of families/change of accommodation

It is not always possible to find the best match of the host family with the student. We always do our best to find the most suitable family for you to meet your requirements, however, at times misunderstandings, lack of communication, a difference of expectation or a personality clash may cause the family and student not to get on.

Sometimes, you have a genuine problem, in which case, it is vital that you talk to the school immediately and not just ask for a move without communicating your reasons. Most of the time, your concerns can be sorted out without a need for a move but if you wish to be moved, please let us know. Sometimes, it is important to take advice given to you and understand the family's point of view, but generally if you wish to be moved or are leaving earlier than planned, you must give the school the required notice period. We will aim to arrange for a suitable transfer to a new home as early as we can, generally no longer than within one week, but during the busy period, we do our best to find you the most suitable replacement based on availability. If you or your family decide it is best for you to be moved, we ask for a suitable notice period, usually more than 1 week to find a replacement home, unless it is an absolute emergency or complaint.

Problems and complaints

We do our best to take on board any concerns or problems you may have. It is important you communicate these to us while you are here so that we are able to deal with it. Your feedback is always welcome and we hope to deal with any complaints or problems efficiently and promptly. In the same way, if the host family has concerns, they will approach you, but if you are unable to understand them, please check, or ask for things in writing so that there is no misunderstanding.

General

Communication is very important to avoid any misunderstanding. The school is very experienced in dealing with many students, so it is important you talk to us if you have any doubts or problems. Families generally worry about you, if you are out late or not returned home on time. You should always tell the family if they are going away for a night or a weekend; or if you are going to be very late one night.

If you are ill, you should consult the family who will either contact us or help you by themselves.

You must never talk to the family about financial arrangements with regards to accommodation, the families are advised to do the same, if this issue presents any problem, please let the school know.

Please note that families in London may work with other agencies but most of our families are long serving and well experienced. Just as you can talk to the school at any time, families stay in regular contact with us to discuss any concerns or uncertainties or at time complaints. Remember, the school and the family want you to have a good experience, but it takes you and the family to adapt to each other for everyone to be happy.

During office hours, if you need to talk to our team please contact.

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In case of a **real** emergency where you need to speak to us out of office hours call +44 (0) 7711 905 766



