It’s newsletter time again and of course there have been many wonderful success stories with homestay over the past 12 months together with the few misunderstandings that are bound to occur in cross-cultural situations.

The vast majority of our students have settled in well and indicated that they have enjoyed their homestay experience. WELL DONE.

In this newsletter we have included feedback from students and advice from some of our homestay families to assist in compiling the following section which covers a range of issues that arise in homestay.

If you have any interesting articles, questions or suggestions, we would like to hear from you. Just send them to: isshomestay@qut.edu.au

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

Communicating and interacting with your student is essential. Talk to them, ask questions, and give them time to answer. If they ask you a question you don’t understand ask them to say it again. Remember English is their second Language. If they ask you if they may cook and you don’t want them to…then you have to explain WHY. Remember that most of the students do have some experience in cooking snacks for themselves and many of them can use gas. If you are still worried about this make sure that you are in the kitchen when they are using the stove.

Remember that during the first few weeks ‘Culture Shock’ is the most frequent reason for misunderstanding and communication difficulties. If you are having problems, talk to us and we can help.

CULTURE SHOCK

It sneaks up on you. You may think that your student is settling really well and then all of a sudden there is a complete change of character. They may become moody and withdrawn and sometimes even seem angry towards you.

This is not your fault. Culture shock is something that all students face to a greater or lesser degree. Try to be understanding and take positive steps towards helping them to become more active and interested in the host culture.

Please try not to react angrily.

First: Calm the student down. Suggest that you go and sit down to have a quiet talk. (this often takes the initial anger or urgency away and you will be able to talk more reasonably)

Then: Ask the student what is the problem or difficulty.
Ask leading questions, for example:
- Are you sure that the food is okay for you?
- Is the rice cooked enough for you?
- Are you missing home?
- Have you called your family?
- Are you sleeping?

Questions along this line will help you to find out what the problem is with your student or what they have misinterpreted and do not understand. Hopefully your explanation will help them to understand what has made them angry or upset.

Why it happens?

It does not come from one single event but is usually a combination of unfamiliarity with language, non-verbal behaviour, values and ways of reasoning, that cause frustration and tiredness.

As the problem builds up slowly, from a series of small events, it is not easy to know why students are not happy, why they do not want to participate in activities and why they are reluctant to speak the local language.

Here are some symptoms to keep a watch out for:
- Too much or too little sleep
- Eating too much or having no appetite
- Frequent minor illnesses
- Frequent stomach upsets
- Frequent headaches

Psychological symptoms also frequently occur:
- Loneliness or boredom
- Homesickness or idealising home attributes
- Feeling helpless; over-dependent
- Irritability, or even hostility
- Social withdrawal
- Great concern for health and security
- Crying
- Rebellion against rules

Homestay families should remember that culture shock is a normal part of a student’s adjustment and can be emotional and irrational. However, families can help them to make it a positive experience by helping them to work their way through it. Encourage them to take part in some activities, take them shopping (it always works with our female students particularly and the boys can help wheel the trolley). If your children play sports, take the student along to watch every now and then. I am sure that you will find many ways of including them in your life that will help them to become more positive and settled. If they are reluctant, don’t ask them, just say we are all going along and this includes you. Sometimes they are just saying “no” because they do not think that you mean to include them.

Once they have adjusted, and have made some friendships encourage them to go out and be with their friends as well. There will be times where they don’t want to do the things you are doing. But don’t forget that making them feel a part of your home and family is the real goal of Homestay.

If you think any of your students are showing culture shock symptoms, and they need help, or if you need some advice or help, please do not hesitate to call our office for assistance or clarification. PH: 3138 3846

EATING WITH YOUR STUDENT

QUT requires that you provide the students with 3 meals a day. So you need to make sure that they know what they can eat for breakfast. Again be understanding. If they eat toast make sure that you give them a selection of spreads. If they like yoghurt, you will probably find that there is something else that they don’t eat. For example a Chinese student currently in homestay just loves peanut butter. She has 2 slices of toast and a glass of chocolate milk (Quik). She also likes to have toast as a snack. At the moment the homestay mother is buying a large jar of peanut butter every week. However this is not a problem as she does not drink the juice and she does not eat biscuits or cookies. So this balances out and the homestay is not spending any more than she would normally do.

If you are a “one” person household you should expect to spend at least double what you would spend on yourself. This should include fruit and vegetables. With lunches you will find you have much happier students if you cook more the night before and leave a serving for them to take for their lunch. Cook some extra rice and serve this with some left over curry, or stir fry, or chicken skewers or whatever casserole you have prepared. The university has microwaves in all the Cafeterias for the students to use. If you are hosting Chinese students, there are certain areas in China where they really like to have chilli (lajiao) with everything. It is available at most Chinese supermarkets (Hypermarket, Fortitude Valley, Sunnybank). Some students buy it for themselves.

Helpful Hints:

Is your rice too hard for your students?

Solution: Add a little more water and cook 5 mins longer. Soft and fluffy is particularly what Chinese students seem to like.

Are you hosting a big eater? This is usually an issue during the first few weeks after they have arrived as they may be used to rice for each meal of a day.
Solution: Try to serve the right portion for a big eater. Cook more rice. This can also be associated with ‘Culture Shock’ during the first few weeks and should settle down.

If you prefer your student to prepare their own lunch, show them what they can use. You may have to show them several times until they become more familiar with your home. They may not have fridges like ours and most of the food may be bought fresh on a daily basis or, and this is becoming more common, because the mothers are also working, they go out for dinner or the house keeper/relative prepares the meal for them.

Please discuss any food likes and dislikes with your student as their normal diet may be quite different from yours. However part of the Homestay experience is trying food from different cultures and you should encourage your students to try new things.

Most important to the homestay experience, we would hope you will eat dinner at the table with your students. This is how they learn to interact with you; find out what the family is about; what you have been doing for the day and it makes them feel part of the family.

Make sure that your student knows what time you serve dinner and that you expect them to be home for dinner most of the time.

Another issue that has been reported recently is where a Host was buying some food for themselves and other food for their student. The student felt that they were being treated as a second class person. If you have special dietary requirements, please explain to your student that you have to eat different food. The host should provide the same meal that the family usually eats.

‘Use by dates’ is a continuing issue. If you buy fresh and then freeze the food, please explain to the students that freezing “stops” any deterioration but we must use the food as soon as possible after it has been defrosted.

EXAM TIME....DOES YOUR STUDENT HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT DUE?

Have you noticed that your student is spending a lot more time in their room at the moment? They don’t want to help you as much and seem a bit stressed.

Well Mid-Semester exams and assignments are all due around the end of April and you will probably notice more of this around June.

General English students have a test at the end of every 5 weeks. EAP students have several assignments and presentations due throughout their course with a big set of exams during the last week.

Please try to be understanding and supportive of what they are going through during these times. If you think your student may need extra help or counselling please give us a call and send your student to see us as we can arrange for them to get some help.

INTERNET

Internet is a facility that has become imperative for students to have available in their homestay.

In the confusion of many providers and how much it costs and what is the best for you and the students…What do you do?????

The best option unlimited ADSL provider of your students can bedroom, it is a service and is to upgrade to an wireless with the choice. The access from their fast efficient doesn’t drop out.

You will still have to make sure that your students understand that they should not download Movies, Music or Games as this will cause the service to slow down.

Depending on how many students you are hosting, they should only have to pay between $5 and $10 per week each. You as the host should also be contributing to the cost if you are using the internet.

Check out these providers for the latest best deals:


http://my.bigpond.com/internetplans/broadband/wireless/plansandoffers/default.jsp


JUST A LAUGH

One night sitting at the dinner table with one of our delightful Chinese students, we were all ready to eat our delicious pork stir fry and rice. Chopsticks were in everyone’s hand, when all of a sudden she jumped up and went to the cutlery drawer and came back with a splade.
RECREATIONAL TRIPS/OUTINGS

Most students appreciate the chance to experience activities with a difference. Getting them involved in Australian family outings to sporting events, local attractions and social events such as BBQ’s and parties will provide memorable experiences.

You may want to take your student on some interesting and inexpensive outings, for instance, Mt Coot-tha Lookout (an ice cream or coffee just tops off this magnificent view), Riverside or Southbank Markets, picnics in Botanical Gardens. However, if you plan to take your student on an expensive outing, such as a theme park, then please discuss the cost with your student and ask if they would like to do it.

QUT International Student Services (ISS) also organises regular trips like horse riding, surfing at a Gold Coast beach and bushwalking. These activities are a great way for them to meet new friends and have some fun. Please encourage your student to participate. Ask them to call in at our office and request information on our latest trip or check out what is available on the website: www.issupport.qut.edu.au

RESPECT

Respect is very important when we accept the role of Homestay Host to international students.

Recently we have heard of instances of hosts using “bad language” as a part of their every day conversation and particularly if the student has done something that annoys the homestay host.

People not used to swearing including most of our students can be highly offended by this. Students have come in to see us, feeling very upset and disillusioned about what has caused this language to be used while talking to them.

Please remember that it is totally inappropriate to swear at any student under any circumstances.

Respecting the privacy of the student’s room is also very important. This is the students’ personal space and they should be allowed to make the room feel like home. Do make sure they know what is acceptable if they want to put something on the walls. If the student is untidy, just ask them to close the door.

Respect the fact that every student is “different” and be aware that with each new student you will have to make sure that you tell them the ‘Home Rules’, encourage them to ask questions and remember to be reasonable. What would you allow your own children to do? If you do not have children of that age, try to remember what your mother allowed you to do at the same age. Cooking noodles and snacks when you are around should be acceptable as long as they are prepared to clean up after themselves.

HOMESTAY FOR DOMESTIC STUDENTS

ISS now manages accommodation services for domestic students and is responsible for the new Accommodation website: www.qut.edu.au/accommodation.

As part of this service, we are considering opening up homestay to domestic students who would mainly be from rural and regional backgrounds. This also has the added advantage of your international student meeting and befriending a local student. We would love to hear from you about this and of course only families interested in hosting domestic students would be approached.

HOMESHARE

Do you have any friends or relatives who don’t want to do homestay but don’t know what to do with that spare room?

How about sharing the house with a student who wants to look after themselves but need a furnished room (at a reasonable price), roof over their head and occasionally someone to talk to?

ADVERTISE ON OUR NEW ACCOMMODATION WEBSITE:

www.qut.edu.au/accommodation
**IN MEMORIAM**

**THIS YEAR SOME OF OUR WONDERFUL HOMESTAY HOSTS HAVE PASSED AWAY.**

WE WOULD LIKE TO PASS ON OUR SINCERE SYMPATHIES TO THE FAMILIES OF:

- OLGA STRITZKE
- JOY RICHARDSON
- LORRAINE ELS
- ROSS (PARTNER OF LESLEIGH WAGNER)

Enough of the serious stuff.....NOW FOR THE FUN BITS.

**HOW GOOD IS YOUR HOMESTAY? ★★★★★**

**How this works:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development: Your willingness to improve your homestay skills (attending information nights, keeping in contact with the Homestay Coordinator for advice)</th>
<th>Availability: Your ability to provide stable, ongoing accommodation throughout the year including your ability to recognise when you need your annual break from homestay hosting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food: Your ability to provide enjoyable, filling and healthy meals consistently</td>
<td>Household-general: Your home’s standard of basic fixtures and fittings (washing machine, access to telephone line, internet, shower/bath, toilet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming: Your willingness to treat the student as a family member consistently</td>
<td>Friendliness: Your willingness to be involved with the student on a regular basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun: Your willingness to offer your unique personality to help create an environment that is much more than just accommodation and meals</td>
<td>Student’s room: Your home’s standard of basic bedroom items (bed, desk, wardrobe, desk lamp, bedding, fan, heater)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness: Your ability to keep a level of cleanliness that meets a safe standard with both you and the student cooperating</td>
<td>Household-luxury: Your home’s additional facilities that the student can access (eg. spa bath, swimming pool, computer, second toilet, clothes dryer, extra storage space if required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation: Your proven ability with English language and your willingness to share conversation with students</td>
<td>The extra mile: Your willingness to accommodate needs beyond your normal daily tasks of a homestay host (eg. taking the student to hospital or giving some TLC to a homesick student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Your home’s closeness to transport and the university</td>
<td><strong>Total stars</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Give yourself between one and five stars for each question according to how you evaluate your own homestay. This is your own personal chart. It is designed for you to get an idea of how you think you are going. You will probably be surprised at just how much you offer and how generous you really are.
WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS…

55-65 You are a top homestay provider. Your home is warm, friendly and welcoming. Your food is given with generosity and consideration, your facilities are way beyond expectation and you always involve your students.

45-54 You provide a consistent, clean and healthy homestay with all the basic necessities for a student in an environment that is mostly welcoming and warm.

25-44 With a bit of help and advice from a homestay consultant you could have the kind of homestay that makes your home attractive to students. Right now, you provide a standard homestay with basic facilities. You are attentive but are a little inconsistent in your emotional availability for your students. You often feel a bit burned out and used by schools, agents and students. Consider taking a break - come back and join a homestay workshop or professional development program before taking in more students.

10-24 Why not give homestay a miss? Its hard work, often with few emotional and financial rewards. You need something that doesn’t rely on your maturity and strength day after day. Homestay hosting can offer tremendous rewards but your attitude appears to be below par. Call for help from friends and neighbours who also do homestay. They’ve usually “hit the wall” at some stage during their homestay careers too.

Easy does it: Self scoring is always a fun but thought-provoking experience - we hope you got something out of taking the time to check your rating.

Some final points for you to consider:
No homestay is ever continuously ‘perfect’ - you can be down at 10-24 stars for reasons of illness, added stress such as having a baby or moving house - understand that your score is about how your homestay is most of the time.

Be aware that no objective measuring tool has yet been designed.

In the meantime be kind to yourself and know that you would be reading this article if you weren’t committed to providing a great homestay experience.

(Article from Homestay Magazine, with thanks to Roberta Shaw)
TOMATO AND LAMB CURRY  (This is totally delicious and not too spicy)
Source:  *Australian Good Taste* - October 2006 , Page 102 .   Recipe by Alison Roberts

**Ingredients (serves 4)**
- 1 tbs olive oil
- 500g lamb leg steaks, cut into 2cm pieces
- 1 brown onion, finely chopped
- 100g (1/3 cup) rogan josh curry paste (or buy a jar of the prepared sauce)
- 1 x 400g can diced tomatoes
- 2 tbs tomato paste
- 250ml (1 cup) beef stock
- 750g butternut pumpkin, peeled, deseeded, cut into 2.5cm pieces (I also add some sweet potato and potatoes)
- 200g green beans, topped, coarsely chopped
- 150g (1 cup) frozen peas
- 270g (1 1/3 cups) basmati rice
- 1/2 cup fresh coriander leaves

**Method**
1. Heat 3 teaspoons of oil in a large heavy-based saucepan over medium-high heat. Add half the lamb and cook, turning, for 1-2 minutes or until browned. Transfer to a heatproof bowl. Repeat with the remaining lamb.
2. Heat the remaining oil in the pan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring, for 5-6 minutes or until soft. Add the curry paste and cook, stirring for 2 minutes or until aromatic.
3. Add the tomato, tomato paste, stock and pumpkin. Cover and bring to a simmer. Add the lamb and cook, partially covered, for 15 minutes or until the pumpkin is almost tender.
4. Add the beans and peas and cook, partially covered, for 5 minutes or until vegetables are just tender. Meanwhile, cook the rice, following packet directions. Drain. Divide the rice among serving bowls. Top with curry and coriander and serve.

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CHICKEN AND SWEET CORN SOUP
Source: *Simply Food* - May 2007    Recipe by Kate Murdoch

**Ingredients (serves 4)**
- 1 litre chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon finely grated ginger
- 310g can corn kernels
- 310g can creamed corn
- 3 green onions, chopped
- 3 small chicken breast fillets, thinly sliced

**Method**
1. Place the chicken stock in a large saucepan with the soy sauce, ginger, corn kernels and creamed corn.
2. Cook over medium heat and simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Add the chicken and green onions and cook for 3-4 minutes or until chicken is cooked through.
4. Serve sprinkled with extra chopped green onion.

© Tips:  This is a very quick and easy version you can make from pantry staples and store-bought stock. You can also add noodles or extra green vegetables to this recipe and use salt-reduced stock for a healthier meal.
MARINATED PORK WITH SNOW PEAS AND CHOY SUM  (This is a big favourite with my family and students)
Source:  Super Food Ideas - October 2007 , Page 54 Recipe by Manu Feildel, RSC

Ingredients (serves 4)
• 1/3 cup chicken stock
• 2 tablespoons kecap manis
• 1 tablespoon soy sauce
• 1 tablespoon sesame oil
• 4 (150g each) pork butterfly steaks, thinly-sliced or 500g diced pork
• 200g trimmed snow peas
• 1 bunch of Choy Sum (chopped into 4)

Method
1. Combine chicken stock, kecap manis, soy sauce and sesame oil in a bowl. Marinade pork while you prepare the vegetables.
2. Heat wok over high heat until hot. Add peanut oil. Swirl to coat. Add onion, garlic and ginger. Stir-fry for 1 minute or until onion is softened. Add pork. Stir-fry for 3 to 4 minutes or until almost cooked through. Add snow peas and choy sum. Stir-fry for 1 minute. Add sauce mixture. Stir-fry for 1 to 2 minutes or until pork is cooked through.

And for those hosting Middle Eastern students:

CHICKEN AND VEGETABLE BIRYANI (I haven’t tried this one yet but I intend to in the next couple of weeks. It looks great)
Source:  Fresh Living - April 2005 , Page 38 Recipe by Michelle Noerianto

Ingredients (serves 4)
• 2 tbs oil
• 1 large red onion, halved and thinly sliced
• 3 cloves garlic, crushed
• 4cm piece fresh ginger, peeled and grated
• 2 tsp ground cumin
• 1 tsp ground fennel
• 1/2 tsp ground chilli
• 5 chicken thigh fillets (about 550g), cut into 3cm pieces
• 1 cup basmati rice
• 250g cauliflower, trimmed into florettes
• 150g European flat beans, cut into 5cm lengths
• 1 cup chicken stock
• 1/4 cup toasted flaked almonds
• 1/4 cup continental parsley leaves

Method
1. Heat the oil in a large heavy based saucepan, saute the onion over a moderate heat for 5 minutes or until soft. Add the garlic, ginger, cumin, fennel and chilli and cook for another minute. Add the chicken and stir over the heat for 5 mins.
2. Stir through the basmati rice, cauliflower, beans and chicken stock. Cover and reduce the heat to medium low. Simmer uncovered for 8-10 mins or until the rice has absorbed the liquid. Do not lift the lid, set aside for 15 mins to finish steaming. Serve sprinkled with the flaked almonds and parsley leaves.