

Host Family Handbook



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for opening up your home to an international student who is studying English at ELS Language Centers. Our students come from all over the world and the best way for them to speed their progress in learning English and to gain first-hand cultural understanding of the people of the United States is to live with an American family. This unforgettable experience provides a lifetime of memories for both the student and the Host Family members.

The mission of ELS is to provide English language and educational exchange programs that exceed the academic, professional, and social expectations of our clients throughout the world. Over the past 45 years, ELS has helped hundreds of thousands of students from over 140 countries around the world learn English using our innovative approach that makes language learning simple, fast, and enjoyable.

The goal of the ELS Homestay Program is to provide an interesting, cultural and educational experience for both the student and the Host Family. The more interaction between the Host Family and the student, the more enriching the stay will be for both.

A. Main Programs Offered by ELS

Understanding what your student is experiencing in school is a great help to providing support at home. Below is a brief description of the main programs ELS Language Centers offer. Students usually enroll in one of the three programs.

1. Intensive English Program

- Thirty 50-minute lessons per week for 4 weeks
- Full-time, year-round program
- 6 lessons each day,
- 8:30-4:00 Monday – Thursday
- 8:30-12:30 Friday

2. Semi-Intensive English Program

- Twenty 50-minute lessons per week for 4 weeks
- Part-time, year-round program
- 4 lessons each morning, Monday – Friday

3. American Explorer Program

- Fifteen 50-minute lessons per week for 4 weeks
- Part-time, year-round program
- 3 lessons each morning, Monday – Friday

B. The Classes

ELS students study all language skills including grammar and speaking in their SSP (Structure/Speaking Practice) class as part of their core curriculum. Students also have a Reading/Writing class and an individualized class in the Learning Technology Center.

In addition, students in the Intensive program take special interest courses that provide valuable extra practice in areas such as Conversation, TOEFL Prep, Pronunciation, Academic Listening, Film & Culture, Idioms, and Business English.

C. Becoming a Host Family for ELS Language Centers

The first step in becoming a Host Family for ELS Language Centers is the completion of the “Host Family Agreement” and the “Host Family Application and Profile”. All prospective Host Families must sign the Host Family Agreement and complete all parts of the Host Family Application and Profile in order to be considered as an ELS Host Family services participant.

After the initial paperwork has been completed, the Homestay Provider (HP) and/or the Center Director (CD) will arrange an on-site visit of the Host Family premises for the purposes of ensuring the home meets all ELS Host Family requirements. Once a Host Family becomes active in the Homestay Program, ELS will conduct occasional visits, with adequate prior notice and approval of the Host Family. Refusal by the Host Family to allow on-site visits may result in disqualification of the home from the Homestay Program.

ELS provides no guarantee that a prospective Host Family will be approved or used if they are approved. Certain factors, such as the presence of children or pets in the home, may prevent some students from accepting placement with a Host Family. Positive feedback from students and consistently good performance by a Host Family may be considered to prioritize the Host Families most often used.

D. Host Family Guidelines

1. **Initial Placement** - All students must be provided a private bedroom unless otherwise requested by the student and approved by the CD. If approved by the CD, there may be

up to three international students residing in a Host Family's home. In these approved cases, each student must be provided a private bedroom and each student must be of a different language/background, unless otherwise approved by the CD. Students from Non-ELS English language programs are prohibited unless approved by the CD. Students of the opposite sex (except for spouses and siblings) will not be placed with the same Host Family. Female students will not be placed with a Host Family headed by a single male. The placement of female students in homes with a teenage son or young single male adult is a rare occurrence and must be approved by the CD.

2. **Bedroom Furnishings** - The student's bedroom must include a minimum of the following: bed, dresser, closet, night table or stand, and good lighting for study. While a desk and chair placed in the student's bedroom provide a quiet study area for completing homework, these are not required to be in the student's bedroom. These furnishings may be elsewhere in the home so long as the study area offers a quiet workspace. A phone may be provided but is not required in the student's room. Clean bed linens must also be provided for the student on a weekly basis.
3. **House Key and Common Areas** - Students must be given a house key to use during their stay with the Host Family. The student should also be provided warm and inviting access to all common areas of the home (kitchen, living room, family room, etc.) Students should be encouraged to spend time daily in the common areas with the family.
4. **Bathroom** - The bathroom may be a private or shared facility. If many family members are using a shared bathroom, it may be a good idea to post a schedule of showers/baths, etc. Clean towels must be initially provided for the student.
5. **Laundry Facilities** - If the home has laundry facilities, the student needs to have access to them. If the home does not have laundry facilities, the Host Family must arrange for the student to be able to accompany them when doing the family laundry. Generally it is the student's responsibility to wash and dry his/her personal laundry. Some Host Families may prefer to wash the student's clothes, towels, and linens with those of the family. Please discuss your laundry procedures with your student.
6. **Meals** - Breakfast and dinner must be provided daily as part of the Host Family responsibilities. Exceptions for the quantity of meals provided may be made for specific ELS locations and in certain situations with the approval of the CD. Special meal or food requests/requirements based on religious or other needs will be communicated to the Host Family by the HP and/or CD for approval or disapproval by the Host Family prior to final placement of the student.
 - a. **Breakfast** can be hot or cold; self-serve is fine as long as the Host Family explains this procedure to the student. The Host Family should show the student around the kitchen, letting the student know where cooking utensils and breakfast foods are kept.

- b. **Dinner** should be a sit-down meal as a family at least 4 or 5 nights a week. Meals should be nourishing and the menus should be varied. On evenings when the Host Family will not be able to sit down to a meal, the student must be provided with a prepared meal. The Host Family can leave prepared foods in the refrigerator for the student with instructions on how to heat dinner.
 - c. **Lunch and Snacks** – Lunch and in-between meal snack foods are not included in the Homestay Program fees. Students will be expected to respect the Host Family’s conditions for access to their refrigerator, pantry and other areas containing food items. In return, the Host Family will be expected to protect all personal food items and other consumables purchased by the student and stored in the Host Family’s refrigerator or pantry.
7. **Speaking English** - The major purpose of ELS Language Centers is to provide intensive English instruction. Host families must possess native-like English fluency. English must be the primary language used in the home at all times. Concerns expressed by the student about language other than English being spoken in the home will constitute a valid reason to remove the student from the home and discontinue use of the home as an ELS Host Family residence.
8. **Arrival of the Student** - Students will arrive at the Host Family’s home on the Sunday before their course begins and depart from the home on the Saturday following the completion of their course. If a student under the age of 18 requests to arrive early and the Host Family can accommodate this request, a nightly fee will be charged to the student. All early arrivals and/or additional nights must be discussed with the HP and CD. The student must be able to move into the Host Family’s home on the Sunday preceding the start of the session. A smooth and pleasant Sunday arrival is critical to the success of the Host Family and student relationship.

An adult family member must be home to welcome the student upon arrival. In the event the Host Family will not be available on arrival Sunday, the HP and CD must be notified so arrangements can be made to accommodate the student with another Host Family until the original Host Family is available to receive this student. If the original Host Family is still unavailable on the Tuesday following the student’s scheduled arrival, they may lose the placement for that student and a different Host Family may be arranged by ELS to accommodate the student.

Host families should not plan to be away from the home during the student’s term of stay. If an absence is necessary the CD must be notified in order to make the appropriate arrangements for the student.

9. **Transportation** - Requirements for Host Families to provide transportation for the students vary from center to center. However, all Host families should be familiar with the ELS center location. Host families that are not required to provide transportation for the student to and from school should assist the student with center directions and location information in the first few days of their stay. New Students must report to the

ELS Center at 8:15 am on the first Monday of their program. If required, the Host Family is requested to assist the student in understanding the public transportation available and the route to be taken to the ELS center.

10. **Student/Host Family Incompatibility** - Host families have the right to request that a student be moved from their home if sufficient cause for the removal is documented and communicated to the HP and CD.

If a student provides sufficient information regarding concerns about the assigned Host Family, the student also has the right to request and receive placement with a different Host Family. The request may be based on any one of the following reasons:

- The distance exceeds the 30-45 minutes travel time requirement to/from the ELS Language Center.
- There is another student in the home with the same first language/background.
- The meals provided do not meet ELS Host Family requirements or agreed to standards.
- The restrictions imposed by the Host Family are inappropriate to the student.
- The condition of the room does not meet the ELS Host Family requirements.
- There is a personal conflict between any member of the Host Family and the student.
- The Host Family cannot adequately carry out Host Family requirements and responsibilities.
- English is not being spoken as the primary language in the Host Family home.

E. Financial Guidelines

1. **Payment for Homestay Students** – Students pay all fees, including Homestay fees, directly to ELS Language Centers. The Host Family will never collect fees directly from students or make private payment arrangements with students. The Host Family will be paid by the HP every 4 weeks based on the ELS payment schedule. Payment schedules will be provided to the Host Family by the HP or CD. The Host Family will be provided an IRS Form 1099 reflecting the amount paid to the Host Family at the appropriate time. Please contact the HP and/or CD directly with any questions or concerns about payment

The Host Family should not discuss personal financial matters or the fees they receive from ELS for providing Host Family accommodations with the students. Discussing such matters may result in termination of the Host Family from the ELS Language Centers Homestay Program.

It is important to note that placement of a student into a home is not a guarantee of income. The student may fail to arrive as expected, cancel their ELS school commitment or change their housing request at the last minute. In any case the HP and/or CD will make every effort to notify the Host Family of the circumstances as soon as possible and place another student in the home if practical. In the event no student is found to replace the original student, ELS will have no obligation to pay the Host Family.

2. **Use of Family Telephones** - Telephone deposits may not be collected from the student. If outstanding telephone debts are a concern of the Host Family, the host should consider either placing a long-distance block on the telephone or obtaining a separate line for the student that has a long-distance block. One of these options is strongly recommended.

ELS will assist in communicating Host Family concerns to the students about financial concerns expressed by the Host Family, however, ELS takes no responsibility for unpaid telephone or other expenses incurred at the home by the student. These matters must be discussed and solved between the student and the Host Family.

3. **Student Vacation** - With the Host Family's permission, a student vacationing for up to one month that will return to the Host Family may leave all personal items in the home. If permission is granted by the Host Family to leave all personal items in the home, the student will be charged a fee, which will be provided to the Host Family, for this period of time. The appropriate fee will be 50% of the full Host Family rate for the student vacation time since the host will not be required to provide meals.

F. Other Important Matters

1. **Respect the Student's Cultural and Religious Beliefs** – The Host Family must be respectful of the cultural and religious beliefs of the student. Host Families may certainly invite the student to attend religious services, and the student may accept for politeness or curiosity reasons. However, if the student chooses not to go, the Host Family must accept this as well.
2. **Health Insurance** - All ELS students have medical and hospitalization insurance either through ELS Language Centers, through an independent insurance company in their home country that extends coverage to the U.S. or through the student's own travel insurance. It is always a good idea to ask your student to provide you with copies of his/her medical insurance information for emergencies. All ELS students who have paid for medical insurance through ELS Language Centers have an insurance ID card that is updated each session that the student is enrolled.
3. **Household Chores and Duties** – Students should be encouraged to make their own beds and keep their rooms neat and clean. However, students are paying guests in

the Host Family residence and will not be required to perform household chores or duties.

4. **House Rules** – The Host Family should discuss the house rules with the student at the beginning of the student’s stay. The Host Family must provide a list of their personal house rules to the HP and CD.
5. **Vacations/Weekend Trips** – The Host Family may take vacations or weekend trips and invite the student to join them if it does not conflict with the student’s school schedule. If the student will be responsible for any expenses, *it is very important that these expenses be discussed beforehand.*

If the Host Family will be away from home at all during the student’s stay, this must be discussed with the CD before the student arrives or as soon as possible. The CD will determine whether or not the student should be moved to another home temporarily during the Host Family’s absence.

6. **Student Problems** – If the Host Family becomes aware of a personal problem or difficulty that the student is experiencing (whether school-related or personal), this should be brought to the attention of the CD. Such matters are kept confidential unless the contrary is necessary to provide a solution.

G. Important Phone Numbers

ELS Center _____

Homestay Provider (HP), *Insert Name & Number* _____

Center Director (CD), *Insert Name & Number* _____

H. Conclusion

We hope this Host Family Handbook has provided you with the information you need to make your participation in the ELS Homestay Program a successful and rewarding experience for you and your family. Remember to have fun as you get to know your student. You are creating bridges between cultures by opening up your home to a student from another nation. Thank you!