



## **BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES FOR CROSS CULTURAL INTERACTIONS**

You may not view how you and your family go about your day as a ripe opportunity for “Cross Cultural Interaction”, but it is in fact where the most cross cultural interaction, learning, and miscommunication can arise. You are not just learning to navigate living with someone who lives in an entirely different culture than yours, but also with someone who grew up with a different family. Each family, even within the US, has a unique culture of their own. The way you do things is different even from your next-door neighbors! We have compiled this list of best practices and strategies from families who have had a wide range of hosting experience, but each experience is unique! With this understanding, please review the expectations about your household rules with your Area Representative and then with your student as well. We suggest writing down the rules so everyone has clear expectations and can refer to the rules. This won’t alleviate all miscommunication and all stressful situations, but we have found it sure gets you off to a great start!

### **AROUND THE KITCHEN**

**Kitchens are often the central room of the home, but the “rules” around the kitchen vary greatly from country to country and home to home. What are your rules around the kitchen?**

- How will your student know what food they can take from the refrigerator or cabinets? Do they need to ask before helping themselves to a snack? How will they know if certain food is designated for a certain meal and is off limits?
- How will your student know what the expectations are around portion control? What steps do they need to take if they finish the last of the milk, eggs, cereal, etc.?
- Will your student be allowed to or expected to make breakfast/lunch on their own? What are appropriate foods for these meals?
- Who is responsible for cleaning up after each meal? Where do they put their dishes when they are done with their meal?
- What will your student’s responsibilities be in the kitchen in regards to cleaning up after meals?
- Are there certain meals that are eaten together? What is the rule if someone is going to be late for dinner? What are the rules for food eaten outside of meal time?
- Does anyone in the home have any dietary restrictions your student should be aware of when cooking or when bringing outside food into the home?
- What are the guidelines around food your student may want such as sodas, snacks, etc., if not generally what is purchased by the family?
- Where should trash be put, and do you recycle, compost, use a garbage disposal, etc.? If so, what goes where?
- Where is food allowed to be eaten in the home, aside from the kitchen? Is food allowed in the bedrooms?



## **CHORES**

**Some students arrive with the expectation that they will help around the house and will be comfortable doing so. Others may not be used to having chores at home so will need more direction on how to be helpful in your home. The level of responsibility each student has at home varies significantly from country to country and family to family. Think about responsibilities in the home and how you want your student to engage.**

- What is the level of cleanliness expected in your student's room? Who is responsible for cleaning their room, and how often?
- What must be done daily? Making the bed, emptying the trash, picking clothes up off the floor, laundry, etc.?
- Who is responsible for making sure the sheets on the bed are changed and washed? How often is this done?
- Where should your student put dirty laundry/dirty towels? Who is responsible for doing the laundry?
- How often will laundry be done? Is there a specific time of day laundry is or is not allowed to be done?
- What chores will your student be responsible for daily/weekly/monthly?

## **PRIVACY AND PERSONAL SPACE**

**The norms around privacy and personal space are often something we often take for granted in our home, but often do not realize that our personal boundaries and expectations are cultural.**

- Are there rules around when your student's bedroom door may be closed/locked?
- If your student has friends in their room, are they allowed to have the door closed?
- What are the rules about entering someone else's bedroom where a door may be closed, or even if the door is open?
- Are there any rooms the student should not enter without permission?
- What are the rules in your home regarding opening drawers, closets, cabinets, etc.?

## **BATHROOM AND HYGIENE**

**Often uncomfortable to discuss but can be the source of many issues if not talked about upfront! Using the bathroom may be the first communication hurdle a student faces in your home...talk about this right away!**

- Will your student expect to take showers, baths, or both?
- What time of the day will your student be showering?
- What is an appropriate length of a shower?
- When they are done showering, may they get ready in the bathroom or do they need to free up the bathroom for the next person?



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- If the bathroom floor gets wet, how should the student clean up the water?
- During a shower, is there a bathroom exhaust fan that must be turned on?
- How often or how little is it acceptable to shower?
- Will your student use a new towel every time they shower? How many towels are used per shower/bath? What do they do with their wet towel?
- What is not allowed to be flushed down the toilet?
- How are sanitary items disposed of?
- Where is additional toilet paper stored and what should your student do if they finish the last roll of toilet paper?
- What toiletries in the bathroom is your student allowed to use versus what are they expected to provide for themselves?
- When the bathroom is not in use, does the door remain open or shut?

## **AROUND TOWN AND IN THE CAR**

**There are likely to be many differences in terms of personal freedom and communication styles so please make sure everyone is on the same page. This is an area where a communication breakdown has high potential for conflict to arise!**

- When your student needs a ride somewhere, how much advance time do you need for them to give you?
- May your student “catch a ride” with a friend instead of taking the bus, and how should they communicate this to you?
- When you are picking up your student, what are your rules regarding punctuality and being at the agreed upon pick up spot? How you will communicate if you or the student are running late or in a different location.
- When your student is out, what is their curfew? Is it different on weekends than it is on weekdays?
- What are your rules regarding having friends over for dinner, friends sleeping over, friends over on school nights, etc.?
- What are your rules regarding allowing your student in other people’s cars?
- What are your rules regarding visits to friend’s homes/sleeping over friend’s homes?
- What are your rules regarding dating/intimate relationships?
- Is your student allowed to have friends over if you are not home?
- Is your student allowed to go over to a friend’s house if the friend’s parents are not home?
- Will the student need to help with gas money when catching rides with siblings or friends?
- What are the guidelines for your student to offer rides to other friends?



## **ELECTRONICS**

**A hot topic for most families as every family has their own rules regarding the usage of electronics. The most important thing to remember is that the use of electronics is a privilege not a right, and your student must follow your host family rules.**

- How will your student communicate with their family back home, and how often? You set the rules on this, but we suggest a skype call every other week!
- Did your student bring a cell phone? How are they setting up service if so? What is their data plan? Many students like to use online chatting apps like “what’s app” and don’t realize that they are eating up their data if they are not connected to wireless.
- What are your rules around being on the phone, using the phone at night, playing games online, etc.? Your student needs to follow your rules! If this is your first time with a teenager in the home, ask us for advice on how to handle this one if you need some guidance.
- If the home phone rings, should your student answer it? If so, what are the appropriate words to use, and how should they take a message for you?

## **UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY? YOUNG CHILDREN AND PETS**

**Your student may not have grown up with young children or pets in the home and need some guidance around what is appropriate and how to help everyone remain safe!**

- Are there any precautions your student must follow in regards to child-proofing, such as shutting baby gates, locking cabinets, not leaving choking hazards within reach of small hands, turning in handles on the stove, etc.
- What is considered “safe” play with little kids? Are piggy back rides okay, holding them upside down, etc. What do you consider to be too rough?
- How should your student respond if a little one acts aggressively towards them (hitting, biting, punching)?
- If a little one (young child or even an animal) “asks” for food, is the student allowed to give them food? (most relevant if the student is eating a snack, candy, etc.)
- If a child in the home is crying and the student is unsure if an adult has responded to the cries yet, what should your student do in this situation?
- Are the animals allowed to go outside/come inside? Are there guidelines around letting an animal outside, such as using a leash, doggie bag, etc.?
- Are the animals allowed on the furniture?

## **MONEY**

**No one likes talking about money but these issues are best addressed ahead of time to avoid any potential problems.**

- How will your student access money from home? Will they need to open a bank account, or have access to a credit card?
- What large purchases, if any, does your student plan to make while they are here? We



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recommend talking to your Area Representative if it seems your student is spending money excessively.

- What will your student be expected to pay for on family outings, movies, etc.?
- Your student has access to approximately \$200 per month for school activities, books, sports uniforms, field trips, social outings, etc. Please talk to your Area Representative if it seems your student is limiting themselves on social and academic experiences due to finances.

## **FAMILY OUTINGS/SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

**Upon arrival, your student may not yet feel a part of your family so this can be a tough one to navigate!**

- Which family events are required, and which are optional? Please be clear on this with your student. They may not know if you want them to attend certain family events if you are giving them a choice. We recommend if it is something the family is doing, you should give the student clear instruction that they are expected to participate as well. If you say “would you like to come”, they may assume you do not actually want them to come, or don’t care if they do. If you want them to attend, tell them. (The exception to this is religious services. Students may not be required to attend religious services, but we do encourage them to attend as a learning experience, at least once.)
- What are the norms regarding certain family events (holidays, weddings, birthday parties)? What is appropriate dress? What are the customs and appropriate behavior? Is the student expected to bring a gift? How do they greet the hostess? Discuss these things prior to the event.