

## UVIC HOMESTAY Welcoming your Students

### First Impressions

First impressions are extremely important in fostering successful relationships with your students. **The first weekend that you spend with your students will affect how they interact with your family for their entire stay.**

Students often come from more formal cultures. Students can easily mistake our casual manner and approach to visitors as lack of interest in them.

Planning special activities for your students' first weekend will help make the student(s) feel welcome in your home and feel like real members of their Canadian family.

Here are some ideas, provided by other hosts, to help you make your students' stay with you as special and memorable as possible:

### *When Your Student(s) Arrive—*



Hold up a sign with your student's name at the arrival location.

Create a welcome bouquet to greet your students at their arrival.

Have your children draw/paint welcome signs to hang on your students' bedroom doors.

### ***The First Night–***

On the first night that your students join your family, make sure that your schedule is free so that you can spend time with your students to help them feel comfortable and at ease in your home and with your family.

Assist them to phone or Skype their family at home to let them know that they have arrived safely.

Prepare a basket of goodies for your students' rooms for the first night and first couple of days. They may be tired and jet-lagged after their long journey, so a basket of fruit, crackers, or snacks will be much appreciated if they wake up hungry during the night. Often students will be too shy to directly let you know they are hungry or to request or accept an offer of a snack.

Prepare a basket for their room with a towel, face cloth, and a few toiletry items so that they can freshen up when they arrive.

Prepare a special welcome dinner or party with your family on your students' first or second night so that your students have a chance to meet and interact with all members of your family.

Give your students a picture of your family, with the family members' names written on the back, so that they can easily remember everybody's name.



### ***The First Week–***



Remember to speak slowly and clearly as students' language levels usually suffer from jetlag, culture shock and information overload during the first week!

Make an effort to include the students in family conversations and to direct questions individually to each student to help them feel like they are part of the family.

Try to spend some one-on-one time with each student to help build their confidence in speaking and listening to English. This time will help each of you get to know the other and for you to feel comfortable together.

Place a schedule on the fridge with your family's activities for the week, so that your students can get accustomed to your daily routine. Sit down with your students to plan some activities to do together each week, which can be included on the family calendar.

Place an empty picture frame in your students' rooms and encourage them to insert pictures of their friends and family at home. This will help to make your students feel at home and it will also give you a good opportunity to ask your students questions about their home life and learn more about their culture.

Ensure that you are making time to interact with your students after dinner each night. Your students will be very eager but may be very shy about involving themselves in your family activities. Play a game, do a puzzle or go for a walk with your students in the evening.

Go for a drive together to show them the highlights of your neighbourhood and the city.

When you escort your students on the bus routes to downtown, take them on a tour of some of Victoria's beautiful sights (Eg. Legislative Buildings, Empress Hotel, Chinatown, Fan Tan Alley, Market Square, Bastion Square, Bay Shopping Centre).

### ***The Remainder of the Program—***

Although the first weekend is very important in establishing a good relationship with your students, it is essential that you involve your students in your daily family life for the duration of their stay in Victoria so that they feel like a member of the family.

## **Making Time for your Students**

We realize that most Canadian families are very busy, so please make sure to set time aside in your schedule to spend with your students so that they feel welcome and comfortable with you. Make sure you include your students in your family life and arrange some special activities to share with your students.

For example, if your child is playing in a soccer game, offer to take your students to watch the game and go out for ice cream afterwards. The time that your students spend with your family will help you to get to know each other better and feel more comfortable sharing your living environment.



Never fail to invite your student on family outings, even if they have declined your invitation several times.

## **Issues or Concerns**

In our experience, we have found that over 90% of student issues or concerns about home placement stem from difficulties that occurred during the first weekend/week of their stay.

Preventing problems is essential as often students who have experienced difficulties in the first week find it challenging to overcome them, and it can result in students moving.

If issues arise, our staff endeavours to work with the host and student to facilitate their efforts to solve the problem together as effectively and quickly as possible. We encourage both host and student to discuss any areas of concern openly and honestly, so that both parties are aware of the concern and if possible, can make changes to resolve the situation.



We encourage you to attend UVic Homestay events, where you can connect with staff and other host families.