

# **Homestays: Rules, Regulations, Expectations**

## **Staying with a family**

Please remember that you are living with a family, which means that there are certain social obligations involved vis-à-vis other family members. Be friendly and polite to everybody. Try to adapt as best as possible to new folkways and habits. And please remember: you have not booked a hotel, nor are you a simple renter. You are staying with a family and may be expected to make a contribution in the family household. Offer your help wherever you can.

## **Moving in**

As you move into your homestay, join your hosts in checking your room, making sure that everything is in proper condition. Ask questions if you are uncertain about anything. This way, you can avoid problems or disagreements regarding anything missing or broken later on.

## **Conflicts and differences**

Conflicting interests and various sorts of differences are a part of everyday life and must by no means have just negative consequences. The learning effect can be of great significance for the student as well as the host-family. Be ready to deal with potential conflicts or differences in an open and honest manner from the beginning. Do not let the situation reach the crisis stage. Discuss problems with your hosts first, before turning toward outside help. If you believe, however, that outside help is needed, the people to contact are Homestay Coordinator Carola Deutsch ([carola.deutsch@freenet.de](mailto:carola.deutsch@freenet.de) or tel. 030-8027857) or the Academic Directors, Dr. Dirk Verheyen ([dirk.verheyen@fu-berlin.de](mailto:dirk.verheyen@fu-berlin.de) or tel. 030-83856582) or Dr. Kristina Rödder ([kristina.roedder@fu-berlin.de](mailto:kristina.roedder@fu-berlin.de) or tel. 030-83857587). Under no circumstances allow an issue or problem to fester unaddressed.

## **Meals and beverages**

As you know, breakfast and dinner (incl. beverages) are included in the FU-BEST homestay option. Additional food and beverages are not provided by the family and are thus a matter you are expected to take care of yourself. Perhaps you can be given some room in the family's refrigerator, etc. Please discuss these matters with your family and do not simply use their food and beverages without clearing things first.

## **Telephone use**

Most of you are likely to have a cell phone, so you have independent communication means. If you do not have a cell phone: please note that many German families have but one telephone. Please ask your family whether you are allowed to use it. Calls after 10.00 p.m. are to be avoided unless absolutely necessary. Do not use the family telephone for extended conversations, i.e., do not "hog" the phone. At the end of the month you may have to pay for your calls. Since calling overseas from a German cell phone is very expensive, you will need to get permission to use the family's regular telephone; in such a case, have the overseas person(s) call you back, so as to avoid unnecessary charges on the host-family's phone.

## **Internet**

Although the host-families tend to be connected to the internet, you should expect to have to arrange your own surf-stick in order to have personal internet access. Should your host-family permit you to access the internet via their computer and/or wireless set-up, do note the following: computer equipment and/or W-LAN access at your homestay should not be used for commercial purposes or in any way that infringes on state/federal/international laws regarding libel or copyright. The illegal download and storage of music and movies as well as the use of tools to access peer-to-peer networks at your homestay is not permitted. In sum: any illegal internet activity at your host-family's home is thus explicitly and fully prohibited. You carry full legal liability with respect to any and all use of the internet via your homestay, including use by others who may join you during such use. Your homestay hosts assume no liability with regard to any damage or loss (e.g. due to a virus) resulting from use of their equipment. Use of the host-family's computer and/or wireless access is only possible if explicitly permitted by your hosts, and is subject to their conditions.

## **Energy/Laundry**

Energy is considerably more expensive in Germany than in the United States, so be prudent when using it. Please do not take unduly long showers (once a day), and switch off the light and turn down the heating in your room when leaving the house. You may be allowed to use the laundry machine on your own or the family will do the laundry for you. Again: think of the energy costs, so coordinate your laundry needs with your hosts.

### **Hygiene**

Please do not leave the bathroom (bathtub/toilet!) in a messy condition. Remove hair etc.. Clean up after using it. The same goes for your room. Make sure it is kept clean and tidy.

### **Communication regarding your presence and absence**

On a regular basis, when you leave the home, it is vital for the hosts to know when to expect your return. This is particularly important with regard to evening meals and when the family has other plans for the evening. Thus, please notify the family if you will be late or if you are planning to spend the evening elsewhere. Above all, let the family know in advance if you are spending the night somewhere else. Inform them about any (extended) personal travel plans as well.

### **Inviting friends/relatives and staying longer**

Inviting friends/relatives over for a visit is always possible, of course, as long as the matter is properly communicated and cleared with your hosts; this includes having friends/relatives participate in meals, but be aware that your financial contribution in such a situation may under certain circumstances be expected. In case anyone stays with you overnight, please note that this would be subject to prior approval by your hosts and that you are expected to pay a compensation of 20 Euro per overnight stay (incl. meals such as breakfast). Your homestay ends on the Sunday after the semester's conclusion. If you wish to stay a few days longer, clear this with your hosts first and expect to pay 20 Euro per extra day (incl. meals).

### **Family activities**

Some families are eager to explain their culture, traditions etc. Follow up on such invitations and, circumstances permitting, use your initiative in suggesting ways to become better acquainted with the local culture. Although you are by no means required to accept every invitation, please remember that you are not simply a renter and that the social and cultural experience is a crucial dimension of any homestay. Similarly, sharing your own culture with your hosts (including perhaps offering to cook a particular kind of food for them) is an essential aspect to consider.

### **Language**

Living in a family provides an excellent opportunity to apply those language skills learned in the classroom. Simple politeness demands that you quickly learn and use words and phrases such as thank you, please, excuse me, may I etc. Try to speak as much German as possible.

### **Liability and Code of Conduct**

Please note that your homestay is subject to the conditions spelled out in the Declaration of Personal Liability you signed as part of your application as well as in the program's Code of Conduct (posted on our website).

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You have chosen to live in a family in a foreign culture: that takes some courage and motivation, so we congratulate you! The key concept, as in any society, is consideration of others. One cannot expect others to respect his/her own culture without readiness to make a serious effort to understand the culture of the country which one has chosen to live in. So, with that principle kept in mind, we wish you and your hosts a wonderful experience!

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**I hereby declare that I have read and accept the information and conditions laid down in this document.**

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**Your name (please print)**

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**Your signature**

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**Today's date**