

Homestay accommodation

Our homestay families reflect the diversity of life in the United States. They include young, senior and single parent families and couples with and without children. Hosts have varying ethnic backgrounds and different interests and lifestyles. Please refer to the United States of America homestay accommodation factfile for more details.

Your life in a homestay

Living in a homestay will allow you to practice your English in a real-life setting. It is important to remember that you are both part of a family and a guest at the same time.

You may have to help with household chores, keep your bedroom tidy and make your bed each morning. Make sure that you always ask for permission to bring friends around and let your family know if you will not be at home for dinner or will be going away for the weekend! We want you to be comfortable with your family, but we can not promise a family of a specific, age, gender, or ethnicity. Every family is different and will have their individual lifestyles. Please make sure you understand your house rules upon arrival.

Meals

Please tell your host if there are foods you like very much or do not like at all. Often, it is common for students to go with the host family to the grocery store to pick out food items.

Breakfast: Breakfast is usually a light meal consisting of cereal, fruit, toast, juice or coffee. Often these foods will be made available to you and you will prepare your own morning meal.

Lunch: You will be responsible for purchasing your own lunch at the school, a local restaurant or from the local stores. A refrigerator and a microwave may be available for use at school or you may purchase your lunch in a nearby restaurant or cafeteria.

Dinner: Dinner may be a shared meal in the evening, or occasionally you may prepare your own meal with food supplied by your host. Leftovers, food remaining from a previous meal, are common to have at least once per week. It is polite to ask for a second helping if you are still hungry.

What to bring

The US has very diverse climates and weather can range from very hot to very cold, therefore please check the weather in the region you plan to visit and pack accordingly. Your host will provide you with bed linen and towels. You can purchase toiletries and other personal items locally, but you should plan to bring specific items with you such as prescription medications if you require them (in adequate supply).

Telephone use

Be sure to discuss phone usage with your host family on arrival. Your host's telephone should only be used for local and incoming calls. Remember to notify your family and friends of any time differences to avoid calls in the middle of the night. Students are asked to limit their calls to no more than 20 minutes, as there is usually one telephone line per household. You should purchase a phone card or use a personal mobile telephone for all long distance or international calls since it is very expensive to make international calls from a home line. Nearly all cell phone providers in the USA offer pre-paid cell phones, which are affordable and can also be purchased after your arrive for personal use.

Internet

Most families have either wireless or DSL Internet in their home. However, you should plan to bring your own laptop since many families will not have a computer for you to share. All Kaplan centers are equipped with computer labs as well, with free Internet access at the center during business hours!

Laundry facilities

Be sure to discuss this with your host family after you arrive as laundry facilities will depend on your selected homestay option. Your family may have a laundry schedule once per week. If your family does not do your washing, please take it to a laundromat to wash and dry - please do not wash clothes in the bathroom or hang them to dry in your bedroom or on cupboards. The average cost per load of laundry (wash & dry) in an American laundromat is USD \$5.

Drinking

The legal drinking age in the US is 21 years old; please obey the law and do not drink if you are under-age. It is courtesy to ask your host family for permission to drink in their home even if you are legally permitted based on your age.

Smoking

When you book your accommodation, please request a family that allows smoking if you smoke. Most hosts will request smokers to smoke outside. In most US cities, it is illegal to smoke inside public places. Please make sure you discuss these rules with your host family. It is also general courtesy to ask someone for permission to smoke next to them (even if you are outside).

Getting to and from school

Your host will help you find your way to and from school on your first day and also show you how to use public transport. Journey time will depend on the location of your homestay. On average, it takes students about 45 - 60 minutes by train or bus to get from their homestay to the Kaplan International Center.

Things to remember.....

- You are a part of the family as well as a guest.
- You may have to take part in family chores
- Purchase a phone card or a pre-paid cell phone for international calls
- Do not bring or store food items in your bedroom
- Ask permission before inviting guests or friends to your homestay
- Notify your family if you are not coming home for the night or will be away for the weekend
- Ask permission to smoke
- Ask permission to drink alcohol, even if you are above the legal drinking age of 21 years
- Speak with your host family as much as possible to get the most out of your homestay
- Accompany your host on outings and family activities
- Expect cultural and personal differences and be tolerant of them
- Be willing to try new foods
- Ask questions and become familiar with American customs

Note: For information about residence accommodation, please request the appropriate residence fact file.