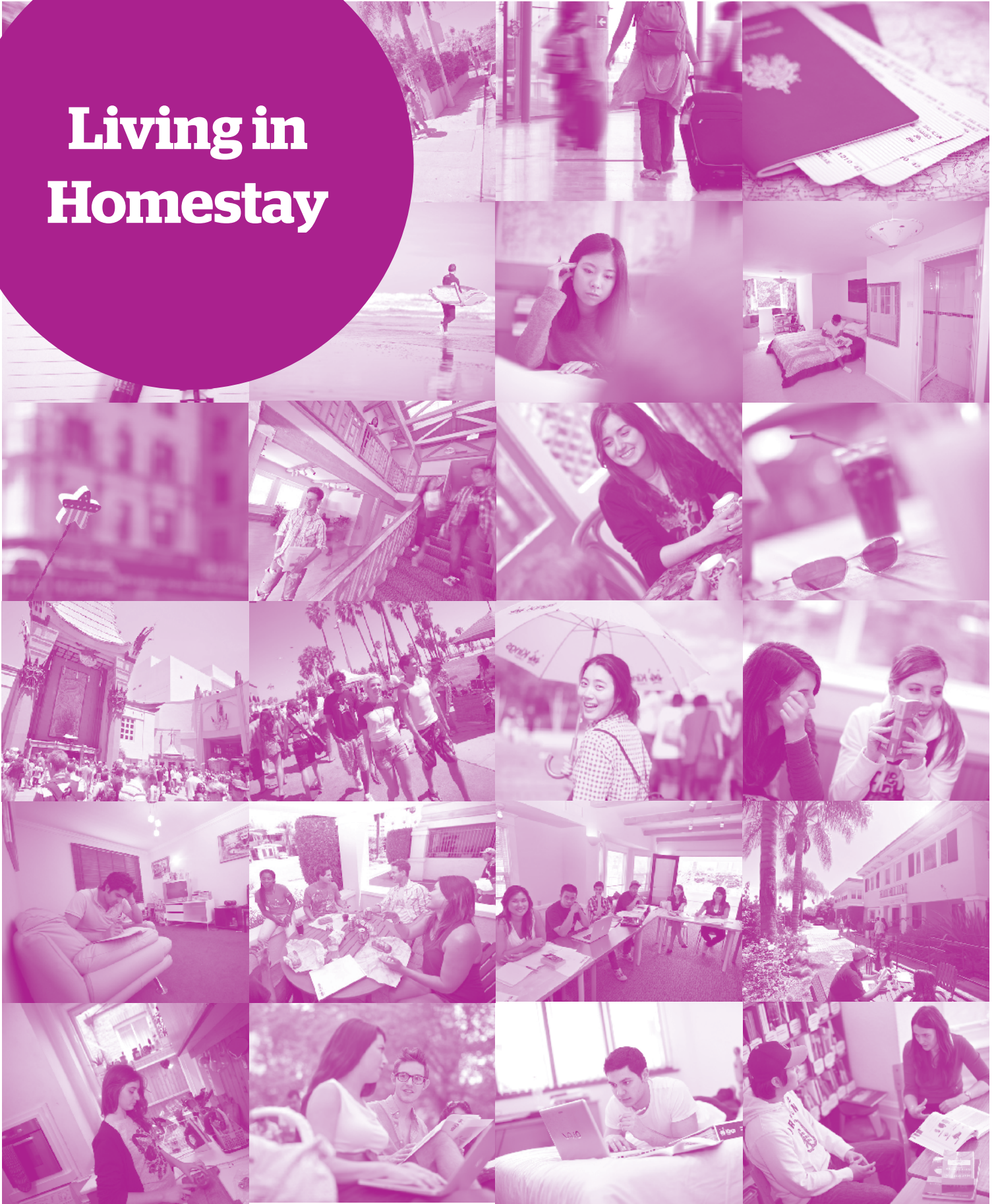


# Living in Homestay



## 4. Living in homestay

### Introduction to Homestay

A homestay is ideal if you want the support and comfort which being a member of the family brings. You can practice your English every day and feel a part of U.S. family life. Strong personal bonds are often created between student and host, which last well beyond the hosting period.

We take the selection and monitoring of our host families very seriously. The Housing Manager has carefully vetted every host family. We also publish a comprehensive handbook for all our

host families so that they know exactly what is expected of them.

Our homestays are all very carefully selected and regularly inspected by our experienced Housing Managers. We have developed strong, long-term relationships with many local hosts including working families, couples, single people and retired people.

We will provide you with details about your homestay before you arrive. Below is a typical letter with example homestay details.

### Different types of homestay

The family you stay with may be different from your own family in many ways. In families with two parents and one or more children, the cost and pace of life usually mean that both parents have to work. They take young children to pre-schools, or pay a nanny to look after them during the working day. Related families do not always live near each other as they did in the past.

There are now many single-parent families in the U.S. Children are cared for by one parent, usually the mother, for most of the week, but have time with their other parent on some weekends or some holidays.

Many visitors to the U.S. think that American parents treat their offspring more like friends than children. It is true that relations between parents and children are generally more relaxed and less strict than in many other countries.

Los Angeles is a large and very diverse city that is a magnet to people of all backgrounds and origins. We have some couples of the same sex in our host family program. They are wonderful, excellent hosts who treat all of their students with the same respect that they should expect to receive as hosts. However, we understand that some of our students may not come from a culture that is as open with homosexuality as the United States.

You may stay with a retired couple, or you may be with a widow or widower who is living alone. Being a host to visiting students may be a way for them to earn some extra money and have some company. However, it is quite possible to find yourself in a family with two parents, two young children, and plenty of relatives visiting regularly. Grandparents may look after children. You may meet lots of aunts, uncles and cousins, as well as family friends. In short, family circumstances vary a lot in the U.S. today.

### What you can expect of your homestay family

Your homestay family will do their best to make you feel "at home," but some things will seem strange at first. The same is true if you are staying in a student hostel or residence. The important thing is to be "open" to the new culture.



Our Ref:SEA/15199

Dear Mr. Hong

Thank you for your enrolment to attend our College at 1555 Cassil Place, Los Angeles. We have pleasure in confirming your course, dates and accommodation details as shown below:

Course:

Intensive

Accommodation:

Self-Catering, Homestay, Single, 24/Sep/10 to 11/Oct/10 with

Mrs. M Delices-Amos, 24 Sierra Bonita Ave, West Hollywood

Tel: +44 20 84021125

Host - Mr. and Mrs Delices-Amos

Jobs - Mr. Amos is a sales manager and Mrs Amos is a credit controller

Children - Young daughter

Pets - None

Distance - 20-30 mins on public transport

A very lovely, charming family who live in a large house with wooden floors.

Hobbies include: keep fit & reading.

Transfers:

We will be happy to arrange your transfer. If you require this service, please supply your full flight details if you have not already done so. If you do not require this service, please advise your Host family of your intended arrival time.

May we welcome you to Kings Colleges and hope that you will enjoy your stay with us.

Yours sincerely

Holly McKee-Clark

Housing Department

Families in the U.S. may be different to families in your country. For example, women usually have a job, even when they are married. Many women go back to work after having a baby. Some host families are older people whose children have left home.

## What will your host family try to do for you?

They will:

- Do their best to make you feel at home and treat you as a member of the family
- Encourage you to speak English as much as possible.
- Give you a clean and comfortable room where you can sleep, relax and study
- Make sure you have enough to eat
- Show concern for your health, safety and welfare during your stay
- Respect your cultural background
- Be sensitive to your needs
- Keep in touch with Kings and help with any problems you have.

As a new member of the family you will take part in the normal routine of family life in the U.S. You will probably meet other members of the family, as well as friends and neighbors. These will be good opportunities to practice your English.

## Greetings and names

American people almost always greet each other with a handshake when they meet for the first time. Friends and relatives often give each other a hug. Your host family may ask you what is usual in your culture, so that you feel comfortable. Ask the family members what you should call them. Most of them will be happy for you to use their first names.

## How can you fit in with your host family?

Every household has its rules about what members should or should not do. Therefore it is important to be sensitive to the rules of the house. In some households the fridge door is a place where you will find lists of school timetables, house rules, shopping lists and other important reminders.

The most important rule is to be considerate. Always consider other people's needs and feelings. Here are some general tips on how to fit in with your host family:

Punctuality or "being on time" is important in the U.S. If your classes start at 9:00 a.m., it is important to be there at 8:55 a.m. ready to begin. In the same way, it is important to be on time for meals with your homestay family. If you have other appointments make sure you turn up on time.

In the U.S., punctuality is not so important for some social occasions, such as parties. Hosts will often say 8:00 p.m., but in reality it is okay to turn up at 8:30 p.m. If you are not sure, ask your hosts what time they would prefer you to arrive. Remember that you are sharing a home, not staying in a hotel.

Ask if you should wear slippers, not shoes, in the house. Do not smoke anywhere in the house. If you are a smoker, ask where you can smoke. You may have to go into the garden or somewhere else outside. If you are going to be late home, or plan to stay away overnight, tell your host family so that they do not worry about you!

Your host will give you a key or keys to the house. Look after these keys and try not to lose them. If you are the only person at home, always shut the windows and lock the doors when you leave.

If you want to invite a friend home, ask your hosts if it's okay with them. If you are not sure

about something, just ask. You can begin: "Is it okay if I..." Remember that American people can be quite indirect, so when they say, "Well, not really" they mean "Absolutely not!"

Here are some points to remember when spending time with American families:

Other nationalities often think Americans are reserved when it comes to personal space. Americans may not embrace and kiss you on both cheeks when you first meet but, in time, they can show themselves to be very warm.

At first, Americans use "small talk" when they don't know someone well. This may include talking about the weather. But "small talk" is often just a way of finding out what you have in common. It can quickly become "big" or "interesting" talk.

In some countries it is not the custom to say that you feel ill or upset. This is not so in the U.S. If you are feeling unwell or upset, it is OK to say what the problem is. You will find most American people are concerned and ready to help if they can.

### Study tip

Watch how Americans greet each other. Listen to what they say. Can you tell how close or friendly they are by what they say and do? How does this compare with your culture?

