



HOMESTAY STUDENT GUIDE:

Living with a Canadian Family

Welcome to the Tamwood International Homestay Program. This guide contains information for making your experience enjoyable and memorable. Living in a homestay is the ideal setting for learning new skills and experiencing Canadian life. This opportunity benefits both students and the families in various ways as you share the cultural experience and new friendships with one another.

Your experience in a homestay will depend on your attitude. Come with an open mind; be friendly and be ready to accept all people for their unique differences, in the same way you like people to appreciate you.

When we choose a host family, we take into account three important aspects:

1. Interactive Canadian Families

Families are selected to interact with students, and support them to enhance their language learning and cultural experience. Family structures vary in Canada. There are traditional homemakers, active families who volunteer and do other activities after work, moms or dads who work from home, single parents with children or retired individuals who also have time to learn more about you.

Canada is a very multicultural country and we are very happy that our host families reflect this wonderful fact. Many of our host families come from **a variety of ethnic backgrounds**. They are Canadians and offer you an opportunity to see exactly how wonderfully open the cultural diversity in Vancouver can be.

We welcome differences in Canada. For Tamwood it is very important that **students accept any Homestay Host, regardless of their race; national or ethnic origin; colour; religion; gender; age; mental disability; physical disability; and/or sexual orientation**, in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

2. Safety and cleanliness

All our homestays are located in safe neighborhoods. We select families who can offer a minimum of:

A private furnished room with:

- A window
- A bed with clean linen, blankets, pillow, dresser, desk, chair, lamp and closet
- Access to a bathroom and bathroom facilities
- Access to laundry facilities, routines and laundry soap
- Meals requested as per the meal plan (full board or half board)
- A key to the house and instructions on how to use a security system if the family has one

3. Homestays accessible to the school by public transportation

We understand that commuting time is important for our students. All our accommodations are close to public transportation. Students can commute from *35 to 50 minutes to the school*. This is normal commuting time in Canada. The first day after arrival, **hosts are asked to show students bus/train stops and how to use the public transportation**. After that, students take **public transit** between their homestay and the campus as they feel comfortable enough to travel alone.



We do our best to match your preferences.

At Tamwood we work hard to match your interests and needs with your host based on your request in your application. We are very careful to take into account your **allergies, dietary restrictions and, religious needs**. For this reason the matching process begins as soon as we receive your application.

We carefully select our Hosts by inspecting their houses and interviewing them before they become part of our Tamwood Homestay group. We discuss with them our expectations when hosting international students and the care and attention you will need.

Please be aware that living in a homestay goes two ways. Each family opens their home to you and makes room for you in their lives. It is important that you understand that they have their daily routine with jobs and interests. There will be rules, just like in your own family. One goal of your stay should be respecting and adapting to cultural differences.

Living in a Canadian Family:

Here are some suggestions to help you have a memorable stay in your homestay. Be curious, kind and considerate, as this will be a life learning experience. Enjoy! ☺

- **Multicultural Families**

Canada is a very multicultural country and we are very happy that our host families reflect this wonderful fact. Many of our host families come from a **variety of ethnic backgrounds**. They are Canadians and offer you an opportunity to see exactly how wonderfully open the cultural diversity in Vancouver can be.

- **Houses**

It is assumed that North Americans are rich and live in large beautiful homes. However, you will probably be living in a **middle-class, regular family**. You will share the space with your hosts and maybe some other family members like children or grandparents. Many houses have bedrooms in the basement (under the main floor of the house) or have separate suites for people to rent.

In Canada, family members are very independent and each member usually **assists with the household chores**. Keep in mind that your host family will not have a maid to look after your needs, neither will the host cater to all your demands. **You are also responsible for any damages you may cause in the house.**

- **Cleaning**

It is very common that everyone in the family participates in keeping the house clean and tidy. There are no gender roles allocated to this activity. You may be asked to help with some household chores, such as setting the table and washing the dishes. Your homestay family will expect you to **keep your room neat and tidy**. Also, if you have a private bathroom, you may be asked to clean it yourself.



- **Schedules**

Generally, North Americans leave for work quite early (between 6:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.) and arrive home around 6:00 p.m. Dinner is usually served at 6:00 or 7:00 and most families get ready for bed after 9:00 p.m., and are asleep before midnight. Please be aware about this when you come home in the evening and be respectful of not causing a noise disruption. If you are going to be late, please let the host know.

- **Meals**

Most meals are quite simple and may differ in portion size and cuisine from your country. See some examples below:

- Breakfast is usually self-serve and families often do not eat together. It is usually continental style - tea or coffee, cold cereal **or** some toast with peanut butter/jam **or** yogurt or fruit. If you are on the half board program – it is not acceptable to also make a sandwich or other food to take away for later.
- Acceptable breakfast time is from **6am – 9am or 10am** at the latest on a weekend. Avoid confusing breakfast as lunch.





- The Full board program includes lunch - which is usually a sandwich and fruit or cookies. Either the student or the host will prepare the lunch. *Please talk to your host if you are allowed to choose food from the fridge for lunch.*

- Lunch in Canada is not a large meal, although many people will take “**leftovers**” (uneaten food from dinner) for lunch the following day. Water in Canada is the preferred drink choice and is

very safe to drink.

- The Half board program **Does not include lunch**. If you are home on a weekend, please plan accordingly and don't expect your host to provide lunch. Ask if there is a space in the refrigerator where you can store some lunch items for yourself if you don't plan to buy out.

- Dinner is the largest meal of the day and is usually eaten together with the host family. The meal may include meat, potatoes, vegetables/salad, pasta, stir fry and rice. Desserts are not usually offered, but a host may offer a piece of fruit.



- *If you are going to be late or away for dinner, please contact your homestay family in reasonable advance – at least by 4:00pm to let them know ahead of time.* The host prepares food extra for you and it would be a waste to throw it away in case you won't be home for dinner.

- *If you are late for dinner*, your host can save your dinner until around 10:00pm at the latest - depending on your host. It is not acceptable to expect dinner or be preparing food in the kitchen after that time.

- **Cooking** – use of the stove to cook food in most homestays is **not permitted** - for various reasons. Please clear this with the host before using their stove and kitchen utensils and please respect the host decision should they say no.

Please note that **snacks are not included in the full board meal plan. Lunch and snacks are not included in the half board program.** Also, the meals of our homestays are as diverse as their members. Our hosts come from different backgrounds and you will most likely eat a variety of foods, like Indian, Italian or Korean.

• Hygiene

Personal hygiene is very important to Canadians and because you will be living in close contact with other people, your host family will appreciate you having good hygiene. Most Canadians take showers rather than baths. Most Canadian homes have a hot water tank – which is smaller than an adult person. Using too much hot water is inconsiderate, so be mindful that showers don't take more than 10-15 minutes and not later than 10:00pm to not disturb other members of the home. Some families will also schedule showers in the evening as well as in the morning. It is good to ask if you are permitted to use the shower **more than once a day or late at night**. If you share the bathroom, you should consult with the other person/s about each one's schedule to avoid conflicts.

Your Canadian shower should also have a shower door or curtain. If you have a curtain, make sure it is always inside the tub so that water is not on the floor. There are no floor drains in Canada. If water gets on the floor, clean it up.

- **Bathrooms**

Please ask your family about any rules regarding the bathroom and the toilet they may have in their home. For example, it is ok to put toilet paper in the toilet and flush it – in small amounts. Large amounts of toilet paper will block the plumbing and cause flooding. Also, sanitary items like napkins and tampons should NOT flushed and should be placed in the bathroom garbage bin. It is your responsibility to make sure the garbage is emptied at least once a week. Ask your host where you can dispose of the garbage.

Students are responsible to keep the bathroom tidy and clean after every use! Always pick up after yourself!

- **Recycling & Environmental Awareness**

Canadians are environmentally conscious. Plastic, glass, cans, styro foam and other materials are recyclable and they are not thrown in the garbage. Ask your host family to show you how they sort and throw away the recyclables.

Canadians are also energy conscious, so it is normal to switch off the lights after you leave a room.

- **Smoking/Vaping/drugs**

Canada supports a smoke-free environment. If you are a smoker please let us know in advance. You are only allowed to smoke outside of the house in a designated area (if approved by your host) and there are many areas of public spaces that smoking is not permitted. Vaping cigarettes, drugs and alcohol is not to be brought to your homestay and is completely forbidden for ages under 19.

Canada supports scent free environments. Please be mindful when using scented perfumes, lotions or other scented products. Some individuals have allergies to scents.

- **Laundry**

Most host families have a washer and dryer machine, and you should ask if you are expected to do your own laundry. Usually, the hosts will explain the house rules to you, for example if you will have to do the laundry by yourself or if they will do it for you. Also, there might be a schedule that will need to be respected.

Not all homestay families are comfortable with washing the clothes of the students staying at their home. They do not want to damage any of your clothing that may need to be washed differently than what is common here in Canada.

If you wash your own clothes, you should ask for instructions on how to use these machines and when it is a good time to use them. In most cases, families do not like you to wash small loads to save energy and water; it is advisable to do a load only when you have enough to fill the machine.

Usually doing laundry once a week should be sufficient.

- **Internet and Phone Calls**

Internet is included in the homestay fee. Please use the internet services at your homestay to support your education or connect with family members and friends.

If you are planning to watch movies, download videos or larger files there are internet options available at the local telecommunications company.

You should try to make phone calls between 9am and 9pm. Speak to your homestay family if you need to make calls outside of these times or if you expect to be on the phone for longer than 30 minutes. It is your responsibility to purchase your own calling card or service plan for long distance calls.

Common Courtesies

- If you are going to be late or away for dinner, *please* contact your host well in advance to let them know ahead of time.
- Most people take off their shoes before entering their home, but some families may not ask you to do so.
- If you ask in advance, host families often do not mind if you invite a friend over to the house for a visit, but no overnight guests.
- If you are going to arrive later than your expected curfew time, please call your host in advance to let them know.
- Refrain from speaker phones and loud conversations late in the evening or early morning. It is your responsibility to have your own phone and long distance plan.
- Saying “*please*” and “*thank you*” goes a long way!! Canadians are an extremely polite culture and they expect the same from you. Especially because your host opens their home to you.
- Be respectful of noise and showers and keep within 10pm. Most members of the home are probably resting after this time. If you are out late, please be quiet when returning home.
- Treat the home and property with respect and care as if is your family home.
- Lock the doors and windows and gates when you leave the home.
- It is your responsibility to keep you bedroom clean and tidy and report and maintenance issues to your host.



• Privacy

If you feel tired or just want some time alone, it is perfectly okay to go to your bedroom. You are not obligated to stay with the homestay family at all times. If you want privacy, close the door to your room.

• Communication

The more effort and attitude you put into your Homestay experience, the more rewarding the experience will be gained. If you have a problem with your host family, please make sure you talk to your host family in a positive and construction manner so that you can solve the problem together. If a resolution cannot be found, students can then contact Tamwood accommodation staff.



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HOST WHEN YOU ARRIVE:

- What are the house rules?

- How can I contact you?

- How can I get to school? Where is the closest bus / train stop? Can you please show me?

- When is dinner time?

- Can I take food from the fridge for lunch? If yes, what am I allowed to take?

- How do I get to the closest supermarket?

- What are the rules for doing laundry?

- Do I have access to Wi-Fi?

User Name: _____

Password: _____
