

# A Guide to Living in Homestay Accommodation



**FIND YOUR  
FUTURE**

## Introduction

### Welcome!

We are delighted to welcome you to Southampton and Itchen College. Your homestay experience offers a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in British culture, practice English in a relaxed setting, and feel truly at home.

Before your arrival, you'll receive a profile of your host, including a photo and contact details. We encourage you to reach out and introduce yourself - it's a great way to start building a connection.

We hope your time with us is filled with new friendships, cultural experiences, and memories that will last a lifetime.

Warm regards,  
The International Team

### The International Team



**Lynne Jones**  
International Manager



**Sam Byres**  
Marketing Manager



**Coral Serjent**  
Accommodation &  
Welfare Officer



**Lisa Melendez**  
Student Support  
Officer

## Adapting to Life in the UK

Moving to the UK offers exciting opportunities, but it also comes with cultural differences that may feel unfamiliar at first. British customs, such as punctuality, queuing, and specific mealtime etiquette, might differ from what you're used to.

At Itchen College, we understand that settling into a new culture can be challenging. That's why our international team and your homestay family are here to support you every step of the way. Whether it's clarifying local customs, assisting with language, or simply being there to talk, we aim to make your experience enjoyable and successful.

While your host is there to support you, they are not providing hotel-style services. Politeness and friendliness are integral to British family life. It's customary to greet your host with a "good morning" or "good evening" and to say "please" and "thank you" regularly. These simple gestures help foster a warm and respectful relationship.

Remember, it's normal to feel a bit out of place initially. With time, patience, and the support of your host and college community, you'll soon feel at home in Southampton.



## Climate

The UK is known for its unpredictable weather, often experiencing sunshine, rain, and wind all in one day. Temperatures can vary widely, even within a single day, so it's essential to be prepared. In winter, average temperatures range from 0°C to 7°C (32°F to 45°F), while summer averages are between 11°C and 25°C (52°F to 77°F), with the occasional heatwave taking temperatures above 30°C (86°F).

### Preparation Tips:

- **Layer your Clothing:** Wear multiple layers to easily adjust to changing temperatures.
- **Invest in Waterproof Gear:** A sturdy umbrella and waterproof jacket or coat are essential for staying dry during unexpected rain showers.
- **Choose Appropriate Footwear:** Opt for waterproof shoes or boots with good grip to navigate wet and slippery conditions.
- **Stay Informed:** Regularly check weather forecasts to anticipate any changes and plan your day accordingly.

By dressing appropriately and staying prepared, you'll be able to comfortably enjoy all that the UK has to offer, regardless of the weather.



## What to expect on arrival

Your homestay provides a comfortable and supportive environment, ensuring you have:

- **Private Bedroom:** A fully furnished room equipped with a bed, desk, chair, clothes storage, and adequate lighting, offering a quiet space for rest and study.
- **Access to Common Areas:** Shared use of the lounge and dining areas, fostering a sense of community and opportunities for social interaction.
- **Heating & Lighting:** Adequate heating and lighting throughout your room and the accommodation.
- **Storage:** Space to store your clothing and personal belongings, promoting an organised living space.
- **Study Area:** A dedicated desk or table, either within your room or in a communal area.
- **Washing Facilities:** Access to clean bathroom facilities, with daily availability of a shower or bath.
- **Weekly Linen Service:** A change of bed linen and towels once a week, ensuring cleanliness and comfort.
- **Laundry Access:** Facilities to do your laundry, with at least one load per week included.

These provisions are designed to support your well-being and academic success during your stay.

## Commute

We aim to make your daily commute from homestay accommodation to college as smooth and convenient as possible. All homestays are located within a maximum of one hour's commute to the college, allowing you to enjoy a manageable journey each day. Many homestays are within walking distance, but for those located slightly farther away, public transportation options are readily available.

## Mobile

We recommend considering an eSIM for your mobile connectivity during your stay in the UK. An eSIM is a digital SIM card that allows you to switch between mobile networks without the need for a physical SIM card. To obtain one, ensure your phone supports eSIM technology - most modern smartphones do. You can then download an eSIM profile from a UK mobile provider or a dedicated eSIM service. This method enables easy switching between networks; this often comes with competitive data plans, and eliminates the need for physical SIM cards. Additionally, eSIMs can help you avoid high roaming charges and provide greater flexibility in managing your mobile services



# Living Environment

## Your Room

Your bedroom is your personal space for studying, relaxing, and sleeping. While it may not have a lock, for safety reasons, your privacy is respected, and you are expected to keep it tidy. Please do not bring friends into your room without permission from your host. It is not permitted to have candles or personal cooking appliances, such as kettles, in your room. Be careful with heated styling tools, like straighteners or curlers. Always place them on a heat-resistant mat, never on carpets, as they can cause burns, damage, or start a fire. Keep them on the mat until fully cooled, even after switching off. These guidelines help maintain a comfortable and secure environment for everyone.

## Meals

Your accommodation is half-board catered. This means you will receive breakfast and an evening meal daily, Monday - Sunday. Breakfast typically includes cereal, toast, butter, jam, and tea or coffee. Evening meals are usually served between 5:30 PM and 7:00 PM, but this varies from family to family. Please discuss mealtimes with your host families, so you can be on time for dinner. If your schedule means you will have breakfast at a different time to your host, you may have to prepare your own breakfast. If you are going to be late home for dinner, you must let your host know so they are not waiting for you and they can leave you a plate to reheat later. If you do not want dinner, then please give your host plenty of notice, so they can cook accordingly and do not waste food; 24 hours notice would be ideal or midday the latest.

## Meals Continued

Lunches on weekdays and snacks are your responsibility; your host will provide space for you to store these items, in the kitchen.

At the weekends, a light lunch will be provided. A light lunch could consist of a sandwich, salad or soup and a piece of fruit.

You must not use personal cooking appliances or store food in your bedroom without permission from your host. Additionally, students may only use the hob and/or oven if permitted by the host. However, you will have access to a microwave and a toaster for preparing snacks.

Remember, mealtimes are an excellent opportunity to engage with your host and practice English, so it's courteous to be punctual and to not use your phone during meals.



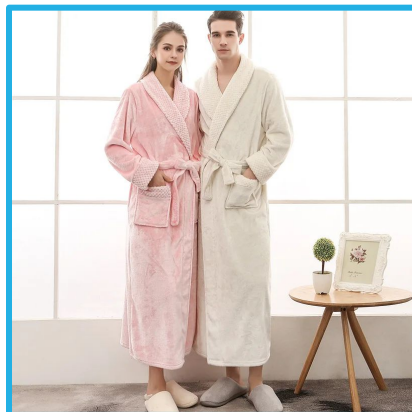
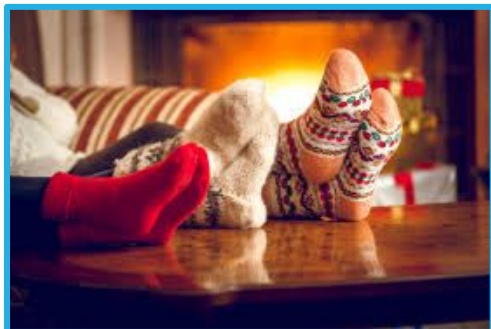
## Heating

In winter, your homestay is centrally heated, typically regulated by a timer to ensure warmth during key hours. If you feel cold, please discuss this with your host; they may be able to adjust the heating settings or supply you with an extra blanket. To help keep you warm during the winter, it is advisable to keep a jumper, warm pajamas, fluffy socks and you could also invest in a dressing gown - this is commonly worn in Britain, around the house, to help keep warm. Heating is usually switched off at night when you are sleeping.

English homes rarely have air conditioning due to the moderate climate. During warmer months, rooms can be cooled by opening a window, to allow fresh air in. To enhance airflow, consider opening windows on opposite sides of the room for cross-ventilation.

For additional cooling, placing a bowl of ice in front of a fan can create a localised cooling effect.

Remember, your host is there to support you, so don't hesitate to discuss any comfort concerns.



## Friends

If you wish to invite a friend over to visit, please obtain permission from your host. Please bear in mind that having friends round, in a family home, is not an entitlement of your stay. It's important to understand that some families may prefer not to have guests in their home, as they may view it as an invasion of their privacy. Should your host agree, they will likely expect your guest to depart by a reasonable hour. Remember, maintaining open communication and respecting your host's preferences ensures a harmonious living arrangement.

## Damages

Accidents can happen, but it's essential to report any damages to your host immediately as well as remembering to say "sorry" when you inform them. Timely communication allows for swift resolution and helps maintain a positive relationship. Depending on the situation, you may be asked to replace or reimburse the cost of the damaged item. Always be honest and proactive in addressing such matters.



# Health & Hygiene

## Personal Hygiene

Maintaining personal hygiene is essential, especially in shared living spaces. Be mindful of others needing to use the bathroom, and avoid spending long periods of time, in the bathroom, during peak times. In the UK, water is metered, and excessive usage can lead to higher costs. Therefore, it is important to minimise shower time and not leave taps running.

Always flush the toilet after use. Toilet paper is designed to dissolve quickly in water and should be flushed away. Do not dispose of used toilet paper in the bathroom bin. For feminine hygiene products, wrap them securely and place them in the bin provided; never flush them down the toilet.

Purchase your own toiletries, such as toothpaste, shower gel, shampoo, and deodorant, from local shops. Do not use your host's personal items without permission. Always leave the bathroom clean and dry, ensuring no water is left on the floor to prevent slips. If you notice any issues, such as: a blocked toilet, inform your host immediately; attempting to fix it yourself can worsen the problem.

By following these guidelines, you contribute to a harmonious and respectful living environment.

## Laundry

Your homestay host can either do your laundry for you or show you how to use the facilities; this will depend on your host's preference. Typically, one white wash and one coloured wash are completed each week. It is a good idea to check with your host about the laundry arrangements when you arrive, as some hosts may have a specific day in the week for doing laundry.

Please note that hosts usually do not offer ironing services, but they can often lend you an iron and ironing board. Also, wet clothes should never be dried in bedrooms, and you should avoid putting damp clothing into drawers or cupboards.

## Bed Linen

All bed linen and towels are provided by your host, who will also be responsible for laundering it and providing a fresh change of bedding on a weekly basis.



## Doctor/ Dentist

Some healthcare services are provided free of charge to everyone by the UK's National Health Service (NHS). However, certain treatments may require payment for 'overseas visitors.'

If you are an international student coming to the UK, please note the following:

- **Students on a Short-Term Study Visa** must arrange private medical insurance before traveling, as they are not usually eligible for free NHS treatment.
- **Students from European Economic Area (EEA) countries, Switzerland, and the UK's partner countries** who hold a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) or UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) can access free NHS care for necessary treatment. Please bring your EHIC or GHIC with you.
- **Students from countries outside the EEA** (such as Brazil, Chile, and many others) should ensure they have comprehensive health insurance before arriving, as they will usually be required to pay for NHS treatment unless covered by the Immigration Health Surcharge as part of their visa application.

Please check your visa requirements and healthcare entitlements carefully before you travel.

# Expectations

## Rules

Some hosts will provide you with written “House Rules”, designed to help you settle into their home and adjust to your new surroundings. If there is anything you don’t understand or are uncomfortable with, please speak directly with your host or contact the International Office at Itchen College. Sometimes misunderstandings can happen due to language differences, so it’s best to address any concerns early before they become bigger issues.

In addition to your homestay house rules, you will have signed the rules and guidelines provided by Itchen College before your arrival. Please remember that by doing so, you agreed to the following:

- Arrive on time for meals.
- Notify your host if you expect to be late returning home.
- Only help yourself to food if you have permission from your host.
- Return home by 10:30 pm Sunday to Thursday, and by 11:00 pm on Friday and Saturday (unless your parents have requested an earlier curfew).
- Avoid disturbing your host with unnecessary noise after 11:00 pm.
- Stop computer use by 11:30 pm daily.
- Treat all members of the homestay family with respect.
- Inform the college if you will be absent from lessons, by 08:45.
- Communicate openly with your host and provide them with your contact details.
- Not invite friends to visit your homestay without your host’s permission.

## Rules Continued

If you do not return to your homestay by the agreed time and fail to inform your host of any delay, the following steps will be taken:

1. Your homestay will attempt to contact you directly.
2. If unsuccessful, they will call the designated emergency contact; a member of Itchen College staff will try to reach you. If they cannot speak with you, they may contact the police and report you as missing.
3. Your parents and agents will be informed, and appropriate college action will be taken.

You must not stay out overnight without written permission from your parents. This permission is included in your signed rules and guidelines, a copy of which will be given to your homestay host. Also, your parents must be aware of and approve any individual trips you arrange, as they occur.

## Attendance

You are expected to attend all your lessons and arrive on time. If you are unwell, you must notify the college each day of your absence. Email [absence@itchen.ac.uk](mailto:absence@itchen.ac.uk) before 08:45.

## Holidays

You must inform both the International Office and your homestay host of any planned absences from your homestay accommodation. This includes overnight stays away or visits home to your family. Please also inform your host if you have family or friends coming to visit you. You must complete a yellow travel form, found in International Reception, in a timely manner. Deadlines will be given and must be adhered to.

Attendance to all lessons, during term time, is compulsory. Therefore, no refunds will be given if you choose to leave your accommodation early. Similarly, arriving late at the start of any term does not entitle you to any reduction in accommodation fees.

## Drugs and Illegal Substances

Students are strictly prohibited from using or possessing any drugs or illegal substances during their programme at Itchen College. Any student found with drugs will be required to leave the homestay and will be subject to the College's disciplinary procedures.

## Problems

If you experience any issues in your homestay, you are encouraged to speak directly with your hosts or visit the International Office for assistance.

To ensure your satisfaction, we will ask you to complete feedback forms. Your host will also provide regular feedback, to help us maintain a positive homestay experience for everyone.

## Safeguarding

Always carry your homestay host's name, address, and telephone number with you. While Southampton is generally a safe city, it is strongly advised that you do not walk alone at night. Avoid carrying your passport or large amounts of cash, and keep personal belongings, such as mobile phones and cameras, secure at all times.

### Inspections

All of our homestay hosts and their homes are inspected annually to ensure they continue to meet the college's standards. Every member of the household is required to complete regular DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks, to confirm they have no criminal convictions.

### Contact

Your safety is extremely important to us. If, at any time, you feel unsafe or are concerned that someone you know may be at risk, please speak to us - we are here to help.

The International Department has a designated Safeguarding Officer, **Lisa Melendez**, whom you will meet when you arrive. Lisa is part of our trained safeguarding team and is available to support you whenever needed. Her email address is: [lmelendez@itchen.ac.uk](mailto:lmelendez@itchen.ac.uk). Alternatively, you may contact **Debbie Finch**, who is the safeguarding lead at Itchen College. Her email address is: [dfinch@itchen.ac.uk](mailto:dfinch@itchen.ac.uk).

## Safeguarding Leads:



**Lisa Melendez**  
International  
Safeguarding Lead



**Debbie Finch**  
Safeguarding Lead

In the event of an emergency, the out of hours  
contact number is:

**+44 7384 832408**

For emergency services call:

**999**

**This is for genuine emergencies only. Please save this to  
your mobile phone.**

## Useful Links

### Transport

*Click, tap, or scan the QR code to go to the website*

Bluestar  
(Bus):



The Train Line:



National  
Express  
(coach):



Radio Taxis:



### Medical Information

Royal South  
Hants (Minor  
injuries):



NHS Direct or call  
111 (medical  
advice):



Register with a  
Doctor:



Register with a  
Dentist:



## Useful Links

### Recommended Hostels

*Click, tap, or scan the QR code to go to the website*

YHA:



Smart Hostels:



Hostel World:



### Other

Revolut  
(Multinational  
Online Banking):



IQ Mobile (eSIM):



Currency Exchange:

