HOMESTAY HANDBOOK FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Homestay is a great experience through which you can learn about Japanese language, culture and customs through daily conversation and communication with your host family. At times you may be at a loss about your new life with a host family who speak another language and live a different lifestyle. However, this is surely a once in a lifetime experience for both you and the host family to get to know each other's language and culture. We hope you find this handbook useful for you to make your homestay life fun and memorable.
If the university determines that any of the rules in this rulebook have been violated, you may be asked to leave your host family and will therefore have to find accommodation on your own.

A. Before choosing homestay

（1）Homestay is great for those who…

- ✧ Want to enjoy cultural differences through life with a host family
- ✧ Want to learn Japanese language in a daily setting
- ✧ Love to interact with people and join in their activities
- ✧ Have a positive way of thinking and are highly adaptable

（2）Who will be my host family?

- ✧ They may live in a house or an apartment
- ✧ They may or may not have (small) children
- ✧ They may be able to speak English or they may not be able to speak it much

There may be more than one KGU exchange student staying with one family, and in that case, you will be notified beforehand. This does not apply if your host family does not inform KGU that they have another student from another university or an institution at their home.

（3）How is my host family chosen?

We always do our best to find a host family that matches your requests. Also, as we hope your stay with your host family will be an enjoyable as well as comfortable one, we take your health-related information including your dietary needs into account, and inform your prospective host family of such information. Then, your prospective host family evaluates your requests to make a final decision on whether to accommodate you at their home. For

this reason, note that the more selective your preferences, the more difficult it is for us to find a host family for you. Also note that we may not always be able to find a host family that completely suits your wishes, and under certain conditions, we may not be able to assign you a host family. In such cases, we will recommend a dormitory as an alternative.

（4）How long does it take to get to KGU from the homestay? How can I get to KGU?

Many homestays can be reached in about an hour from the university, and some require bus and train travel to get to the university (It is common in Japan to take about an hour to get to school.) Although transportation expenses to KGU will be paid by you, we are unable to take your travel preferences into account (e.g. shorter commuting time, accessibility to KGU, etc.).

（5）About the homestay accommodation fee

One semester (Fall)	About 500,000 JPY
One semester (Spring)	About 400,000 JPY
Full year (Fall-Spring)	About 1,000,000 JPY
Full year (Spring-Fall)	About 900,000 JPY

B. What should I prepare before going to Japan?

（1）Pre-arranged items

Private Room

- ✧ Bedding (bed or futon)
- ✧ Closet or storage space
- ✧ Desk and chair
- ✧ Air conditioner
- ✧ Wi-Fi



Meals

- ✧ Weekdays: Breakfast and dinner
- ✧ Weekends and National Holidays: Breakfast, lunch and dinner

（2）Self-arranged items

- ✧ Clothes
- ✧ Towels
- ✧ Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, facial wash, soap, shampoo, etc.)
- ✧ Items other than listed in (1) Pre-arranged items

C. What is not included in the homestay accommodation fee?

① Lunch on weekdays

You are to make or buy your own lunch on weekdays including during long-term breaks.

② Outing Money

The cost of going out with the host family is not included in the homestay fee.

③ General Living costs

Please pay for your own phone bills, dry cleaning and other daily necessities, etc. If you need to use your host family's phone, please buy a pre-paid international/domestic phone card at a convenience store and use it to make the call.

D. Let your homestay life begin!

（1）Greetings are the basics of daily communication

On your first day, your host family comes to KGU to pick you up. You will probably be excited but nervous at the same time. The same is true for the host family. Begin with a smile and say hello. The first impression is very important!
Some families may be a bit late to come to meet you for work reasons etc. But please be a little patient as we are sure that they will definitely come to pick you up.

（2）Once you arrive at your homestay

Leave your baggage and ask your host family to guide you through the home. They will explain their house rules that they want you to follow. It is advisable that you take notes so as not to forget.

① Home inspection tour

Ask your host family to guide you through the house that you are going to stay. Please check with your host family the following:

- ✧ Where is my private room located?
- ✧ Where is the light switch?
- ✧ How can I use the air-conditioner?
- ✧ Where is the outlet?
- ✧ Where is the bathroom and toilet?
- ✧ Where is the kitchen and dining room?
- ✧ Are there any rooms that I should refrain from entering?

② Check and follow the house rules

Now that you are going to be a member of the family, follow the house rules. Write down the rules and always check back until you are fully accustomed with them. Don't hesitate to ask your host family if you have any questions or if there is anything you are unclear about.

For example, it is good to check the following:

<u>Going out / coming home</u>

- ✧ May I borrow the house key?
- ✧ Is there a curfew?
- ✧ By what time and how should I let you know that I will be coming home late / staying out?

<u>Meals</u>

- ✧ What time do we have breakfast, lunch and dinner?
- ✧ By what time and how should I let you know that I will not be eating at home? (By e-mail? Text?)
- ✧ If I come home late, may I heat up my meal and eat at home?
- ✧ I don't eat XXXX and XXXX. (Your dietary needs and requests)

<u>When you want to invite your family and friends</u>

- ✧ May I invite my family and friends over?
- ✧ May I do so while you (your host family) are away from home?

<u>Restroom / bathroom / toilet</u>

- ✧ Where can I put my personal items such as toothbrush, facial wash and towel?
- ✧ Where can I put my shampoo and soap?
- ✧ What time may I use the bathroom / shower?
- ✧ How long may I use the bathroom / shower?
- ✧ Where should I put my sanitary items? (Female)

Laundry

- ✧ Should I do my laundry on my own, or will you do it with the family's laundry?
- ✧ How often may I do the laundry?
- ✧ Where can I put my clothes that need to be washed?
- ✧ How can I dry my laundry? Where can I hang them?

Living room

- ✧ May I watch TV?

Kitchen

- ✧ May I cook sometimes?
- ✧ May I use the fridge? May I put my food or ingredients in the fridge? If so, where should I store them in the fridge?
- ✧ May I drink something from the fridge without asking you?

Besides these, you are encouraged to list the questions you want to ask your host family in advance for smoother communication.

E. Tips on how to communicate with your host family

（1）Greetings are the basics of daily communication

- ✧ In the morning: 「おはようございます」("Ohayo Gozaimasu" meaning good morning)
- ✧ When going out: 「行ってきます」("Ittekimasu" meaning I'm leaving)
- ✧ When coming home: 「ただいま」("Tadaima" meaning I'm home)
- ✧ When going to bed: 「おやすみなさい」("Oyasuminasai" meaning good night)
- ✧ Thank you: 「ありがとうございます」("Arigatogozaimasu")
- ✧ I'm sorry: 「ごめんなさい」("Gomennasai")

（2）Meal times

In Japan, people say 「いただきます」("Itadakimasu") before eating their meal and 「ごちそうさま」("Gochisousama") after eating. Those are the phrases to express gratitude to the person who cooks and prepares the meal for you.
Your host family considers which menu would make you happy, and prepares your meal. So please try everything at least once. There may be a food that you don't eat in your home country, but you may be able to eat it prepared with Japanese seasoning. Take a little bit on your plate first and taste it. If you think it's good, then take more of it and enjoy!

Please ask your host family about proper etiquette when eating in Japan. Ask them how to hold chopsticks and rice bowls, or how to eat noodles, etc. and try it in a real setting. It would be a valuable experience that cannot be done in your home country.

（3）Help with daily house chores

You are not a guest in your homestay. In order to experience a real Japanese lifestyle, you have chosen to stay with a host family. As a family member, you are encouraged, but not forced, to help with daily house chores.

For example,

- ✧ Cleaning
- ✧ Clearing the table after a meal
- ✧ Bringing your dishes to the kitchen sink
- ✧ Drying your laundry / washed clothes

Please help even with small matters if your time allows. This may be a chance to enrich your communication with your host family and make you feel more like a family member.

（4）Spend some time in the living room

There are some people who like to stay in their room outside of meal times. But as you have chosen to stay with a host family, why don’t you spend some time in the living room with the family to watch TV and have a chat? Your host family will surely be very happy to talk with you. It is definitely a great chance to improve your Japanese.

（5）Share your schedule by making a calendar

Make a calendar and write your schedule such as class timetable, school events and trip with your friends. Share it with your host family by putting it in a place where your host family can easily check whether or not you plan to eat at home and if they need to prepare a meal for you.

（6）When going out with your host family

Your host family may ask you to go out with them. If you have time, please do join them.

Please note that costs such as transportation expenses or entrance fees should be covered by you. If your host family covers your expenses, please don't forget to say 「ありがとうございます」("Arigatougozaimasu" meaning thank you).

F. Be mindful of…

（1）Electricity in Japan is expensive!!

Electricity in Japan is very expensive, thus a number of households try their best to save electricity. In particular air-conditioners consume lots of energy. When using an air-conditioner, please take care when the setting the temperature. If it is hot, wear light clothes, and if it is cold, wear a lot of clothes in the house so that the temperature can be adjusted accordingly. When you are out of your room, make sure to turn off the air-conditioner as well as your room light.

（2）Save water

Saving water is another important habit when living in Japan. When taking a shower, don't keep the water running. You can drink tap water in Japan.

（3）When disposing of garbage

Please make sure to check with your host family on how to dispose garbage. Rules for separating and disposing of garbage in Japan are very strict.

（4）Dry your futon



People hang their futon outside to dry because humidity is very high in Japan and mold may grow. Ask your host family how to dry your futon. Futon that are dried in the sunshine have a nice smell and are comfortable to sleep in!

（5）Clean and keep your room tidy



You are essentially renting your room from your host family. Please clean your room frequently and keep it tidy. Check with your host family where t the cleaning tools are kept and how to use them. In Japan, there is a proverb, "A bird does not leave its nest in a mess".

It means that we should clean up after ourselves and return everything as it was before we used it. At the time you return home from homestay, if you are cleaning up and making your room even more beautiful than when you moved-in, you are already Japanese!

（6）Keep yourself clean too

Take a shower or a bath every day to keep yourself clean!

（7）Keep your valuables at your own risk

We strongly encourage you to keep your valuables such as your passport and cash in a locked place like your suitcase. If you lose something in your room, you may lose trusting your host family, causing an awkward atmosphere within your homestay. In case of emergency, your host family may enter your room without your permission. To live comfortably, don’t put your valuables in reach of other people.

（8）If you break or damage something during your homestay

If you damage the floor, wall or any piece of furniture in your homestay, tell your host family right away and apologize. It is very important for you to be honest and tell the truth to the family. Also, please report it to Residence Center when necessary.

（9）When sick

Go to see a doctor when you are sick as your condition could be infectious. Wear a mask when around your host family so they do not get sick too.

（10）COVID-19 Infection Prevention Measures

Try to make the utmost effort to prevent transmission of COVID-19 from before you start your homestay, and for the duration of your stay with the host family (Wash your hands and gargle well).

（11）About time management

- ✧ Follow the curfew, preferred shower time limit, etc. of your host family.
- ✧ Let your host family know when you plan to go out or on a trip, and what time you’re

coming home (or if you are not coming home), your destination, and the schedule and contact details so they can reach you.

（１２）Having friends

- ✧ If you would like to invite your friend over to your host family's house, please make sure to ask your host family in advance every time.
- ✧ Do not bring friends of the opposite sex into your room.
- ✧ If your friends and family come to Japan for a visit, please have them stay in a hotel or other similar facilities.

（１３）Large purchases

Please let your host family know ahead of time if you plan to purchase a bicycle, or something large

（１４）When uploading photos that show your host family onto social media

Please always obtain permission from your host family when you wish to upload photos that show the family or your room to any social media.

G. Important

（１）When your host family is away

During your stay, your host family might have to leave the house for a few days. In this case, please discuss with your host family where you will stay.

＜If you are to stay at your homestay＞

- Make sure to discuss what should you do regarding meals.
- Be careful not to cause any damage to the house (fire, water damage etc.)
- Don't forget to close all doors and windows.

＜If you are to stay at a KGU dorm＞

- Depending on availability, you may be able to stay at a KGU dorm.

(Limited availability. Contact the Residence Center as soon as possible to enquire)

★You will have to cook for yourself and at your own expense.

- Your host family will not receive compensation for the period as your accommodation fee will be used to cover your dormitory fee.

（2）Eating out with friends

When eating out with friends, you will need to pay for your own meal. Your host family is under no obligation to give you money for your meal.

However, if they do so, don’t forget to thank them.

（3）Refund of accommodation fee

There will no refund of the accommodation fee if you move-out early.

H. When you don’t get along well with your host family

You are away from home and here in Japan, and living with your host family. During your stay, there may be some things that don't work out well in the way you would like, or you don't know what to do. You may be frustrated and stressed out, and have a negative impression of your host family. If this is the case, we would suggest that you try the following.

Step 1) Talk to your host family about what you think the problem or trouble is, and share your honest feelings with them. Most occurrences of students not getting along with their host family are caused by lack of communication. You may feel there is a language barrier, but it is important for you to show them that you really want to communicate with them. Your host family will surely try their best to understand you.

Step 2) If you think you cannot solve the problem by following Step 1, please consult with Residence Center staff. In some cases, we intervene and talk with your host family.

I. Closing

At the beginning of your homestay, you are probably still nervous but have high expectations. At first you feel that things may work out easier than you expected. However, as time passes, you may become tired and feel stressed about the cultural and lifestyle differences. On such occasions, try to remember why you chose homestay. After a while, you will get used to life in the homestay and you will surely have a lot of fun. If you feel distressed or disappointed, come back and read this handbook again.

Each host family has their own lifestyle, habits and set of rules. It is nonsense to compare your own host family to your friends'. Consider the positive attributes of your host family and always be grateful to them for accepting you as a family member.

Click on the pictures below and have a look at our alumni homestay participants' voices!

The host family experience at KGU! (Deedee, France)



The host family experience at KGU! (Marcello, Italy)



International students at KGU meet their host families for the first time!

