

Host Family Info Pack 2014~2015

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Host a Student. Change a Life!

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Frequently Asked Questions

Who is Twinn Palms?

Twinn Palms is a housing and management service company dedicated to providing comprehensive services to schools, host families, students and overseas partners. We ensure a safe and efficient process when dealing with homestays. With local support and in-field personnel, we have the resources to make the process of hosting a student comfortable, safe and easy. Twinn Palms' Homestay Coordinators recruit, manage and provide support to schools, students and host families to ensure a rewarding experience for all participants.

Who Can Host?

Homestay Families provide our international students a wide range of landscapes, climates, activities, and lifestyles. Homestay Families are also flexible and open-minded, are age 26 or older, come in all sizes and represent the diversity of American culture. Our families are of varied economic, religious and racial backgrounds. The best hosts are those who enjoy meeting new people and who can spend time with their student on a daily basis.

Will a Background Check be Required?

Yes. By law, it is required that we perform a background check on each person over the age of 18 who resides in your home.

How Long Does a Student Stay?

All students attend for a full academic school year, which is 10 months, generally August thru May. However, some students arrive in January for the spring semester. Most students go home during their 2-week Christmas break and all students return home for 2 months during June and July.

What Kind of Visa do the Students Receive?

The students receive an F-1 student visa. The school where a student will attend issues an I-20 Form (also known as the Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status-For Academic and Language Students). This is the form that states the name of the school that they will be attending and how long their stay in the U.S. will be.

What are My Primary Responsibilities as a Host Family?

- Providing your host student with a safe, supportive, and loving home for the academic year
- Welcoming your host student as a member of the family

and encouraging students to participate in all aspects of family life

- Providing your host student with his/her own bedroom, a desk, dresser, closet, desk, chair and adequate lighting and a quiet place to study
- Providing your host student with all meals (except school lunches, if provided by the school)
- Providing transportation to and from school and all school-related activities
- Provide wireless internet connection
- English must be the primary language spoken in the home
- Encouraging the exchange of ideas and providing students with exposure to the cultural and social environment of the home and neighborhood
- Providing the love and understanding a young person needs to enjoy a successful academic year in America

Does the Student Have Medical Insurance?

Yes, students have medical and accident insurance through Twinn Palms. Students and host families will receive an insurance card and a brochure detailing the policy coverage when they arrive in the U.S.

Will My Student Come with His/Her Own Spending Money?

Yes, students are expected to have their own spending money for personal expenses (toiletries, extracurricular school activities not included in the tuition, clothes, entertainment).

Can I Specify a Preferred Gender?

Absolutely, your home is your personal space and comfort zone. We want both you and our guests comfortable. Hosts who are comfortable accommodating both male and female students, may enjoy much better occupancy. You can also specify this on the application so our Homestay Coordinator will take it into consideration when searching for placement of students.

How Many Students Am I Allowed to Host at the Same Time?

We do not recommend more than two students of the same gender in a home, and both students must have their own private bedroom, access to a bathroom, and a quiet place to study.



Do I Get Paid to be a Host Family?

Yes, you do. A monthly reimbursement for expenses incurred is paid to each family for 10 months; August thru May. Your Homestay Coordinator will let you know the amount allotted for reimbursement in your specific region. The bedroom must be furnished with a bed, dresser, chair, desk and lamp, and the student must have access to a bathroom. You must be responsible for providing 3 meals daily, seven days a week (except on school days, if the school provides lunch as part of their tuition package). Additionally, the fee will include transportation upon their arrival and departure to and from the airport as well as when they leave at Christmas or spring break. Transportation to and from school daily and to all school-related activities, plus the normal shopping needs just like any member of your family, are included in this monthly reimbursement.

How Do I Get Paid?

You will receive your monthly reimbursement check on or before the last day of each month in either a direct deposit or a paper check. The first and last months the student is in your home your reimbursement will be pro-rated.

Will I Need to Pay Taxes?

No. This monthly stipend is a reimbursement for expenses incurred (i.e. food, gas, etc.). However, if you have any questions, we recommend that you consult with your tax professional. Twinn Palms will not issue a 1099 income statement for services rendered at the end of the year.

Do I Get Someone to Come and Visit My Home?

Yes. Your Homestay Coordinator will do the first visit during the on-boarding and vetting process, and the Regional Manager will make the second visits to your home; both at convenient times for all concerned.

What is the Role of My Second Visitor?

A second visitor is the Regional Manager, who will schedule a time to visit your home within 30–90 days of your student's arrival and ensure that the home environment remains the same as described in the host family interview that was conducted by your Homestay Coordinator before your student arrived. Second visits are mandated and are intended to serve as a secondary layer of support for both the student and your family.

How will my student get to and from school?

You are responsible for providing transportation to and from school. Your student may take the school bus or be driven to school by a family member or a friend with a driver's license. Students who live close to school may walk or ride a bike. Some schools have school buses and, of course, students may take this form of transportation to and from school.

Are Students Allowed to Drive?

Students are not permitted to drive any motor vehicle (including motorcycles, mopeds, ATVs, and cars) except during the course of an accredited driver education class. Students may enroll in a school-sponsored driver education class if their host and natural parents permit it. Twinn Palms does not guarantee any student that he or she will have the opportunity to get a driver's license. Host families may not permit their students to drive their car for any reason; if a student is taking a driving course, he or she must drive in the school's designated vehicle with a certified instructor. Students may need to purchase additional insurance depending on the course.

Note: It is becoming increasingly difficult in most states for international students to obtain a driver's license. Check with the Department of Motor Vehicles in your state for the official regulations. Students will incur all cost.

When Can I Expect my Student to Arrive?

Students arrive in August for fall placements and in January for spring placements. Host families and Homestay Coordinators will receive detailed flight information as soon as it is available, usually in the months of June or July, and November or December, respectively.

When Does My Student Have to Leave?

Students may have open-ended return tickets. They book their own flights home with guidance from their parents, host families, and/or their Homestay Coordinator. The program ends on the last day of school, and with permission from their host family, students may stay up to one week past the last day of school. Twinn Palms encourages host families and students to discuss return flights well in advance of the end of school to ensure that the Travel Permission Form is properly filled out and approved by the natural parents and that everyone feels comfortable with the selected departure date. Student visas expire every 12 months at which time they must be renewed in their home country.

What Do I Do when the Student Arrives?

To a student, first impression is very important; therefore, we highly recommend that you take the time out of your busy schedule to show your new student around your neighborhood. Some students would also like to open bank account at a bank branch nearby or get to know how to do their basic shopping. As host, you also need to show your student around your home and let them know how to use your kitchen equipment, laundry machines, and give them tips on how to stay safe in and outside your home and what to do in case of any emergency. Students normally get very busy later when they start school, so the first week is a great time to bond and to get to know each other.



Does the Host Family have Legal Guardianship of the Student?

Yes. The student's parents will assign the host family the authority and responsibility to care for their child, and to manage the child's education and living arrangements while in the U.S. This guardianship over the minor gives the host family the same rights of a parent to a child. The Custody Agreement documents will be fully signed and will be given to the host family prior to the student's arrival.

Will an Agreement be Drafted Between Twinn Palms and the Host Family?

Yes. Twinn Palms will provide each host family with an Agreement which details the relationship, expectations and responsibilities of all parties and must be signed by all family members over 18 years of age.

Will I, as the Host Family, be in Contact with My Homestay Coordinator Throughout the Year?

Yes, your Homestay Coordinator is required by Twinn Palms to be in monthly contact with you and your student. Your Homestay Coordinator is also required to submit monthly reports on each student s/he is supervising. Homestay Coordinators are required to visit with your student(s) in person the first month and continue to contact the student on a monthly basis, visiting him/her every other month in person at a minimum. Your Homestay Coordinator is also required to contact you on a monthly basis and visit your home at least once per semester after your student has arrived. Your Homestay Coordinator will help support you with any questions or adjustment issues that you may have throughout the year. Many Homestay Coordinators also set up student and host family events throughout the year in order to stay in touch. Twinn Palms encourages you to reach out to your Homestay Coordinator between monthly contacts if you have any issues, big or small. Homestay Coordinators are trained to help host families and students resolve issues and enjoy a rewarding experience!

What If I Can't Reach My Homestay Coordinator?

If for any reason you cannot reach your Homestay Coordinator or don't feel comfortable discussing a particular concern with him or her, you can always call your Regional Manager or the Twinn Palms national office. The Twinn Palms office has a comprehensive support team in place who are available at any time to assist you with any concerns or questions you may have. Twinn Palms also will have a 24/7 emergency hotline that host families may call after business hours.

What Happens if the Placement Doesn't Work Out?

Your Homestay Coordinator will work with you and your student to resolve any adjustment issues that your family or student may be experiencing. Our experience shows that most "problems" are a result of miscommunications, unrealistic expectations, or cultural misunderstandings. The majority of the time, misunderstandings can be resolved through mediation and open communication. Your Homestay Coordinator will conduct mediation and counseling with your family and your student as soon as an issue arises. If, after mediation and counseling, it is determined that the issues cannot be resolved, your Homestay Coordinator will place the student with another host family (within the same school district whenever possible). A student may not change families without approval from their Homestay Coordinator, as any new host family must be fully screened and vetted in compliance with Twinn Palms program regulations.

What Happens if My Student has Behavioral or Academic Problems During His/Her Stay in My Home?

Students are required to sign an agreement to abide by all Twinn Palms program rules before they arrive. If any problem should arise, the Homestay Coordinator will step in and work with the student and family to determine what action is necessary. If a student is not following rules or struggling academically, your Homestay Coordinator will address the issue with the student and may schedule a mediation/communication session to discuss the behavior and identify concrete ways to remedy the issue. When appropriate, the Homestay Coordinator will contact his or her Regional Manager to issue further disciplinary action, including a warning, probation, or more serious consequences. Students are well informed of Twinn Palms's disciplinary procedures and are expected to abide by the program rules at all times.



Program Rules

Student Rules

It is the responsibility of each Twinn Palms student to know and abide by the program rules. Students are required to read and sign off on the Program Rules and Code of Conduct prior to their arrival in the U.S. The rules are discussed at length at their home country pre-departure orientation and reviewed again when they arrive in the U.S. at the national or local community orientation. Twinn Palms encourages all of our host families to become familiar with the rules and review them with their student, again, upon his/her arrival to the community.

Rules listed in bold are zero tolerance rules and will result in immediate disqualification from the program. All other program violations will be reviewed by the Twinn Palms disciplinary committee to determine an appropriate course of action. Twinn Palms' goal is to help as many students and host families as possible in order to complete a successful year.

- 1. Students must abide by all U.S. laws.**
- 2. It is against the law in the United States for high school students to buy or drink alcohol. This law applies to all Twinn Palms students as well. The legal age for buying and consuming alcohol in the United States is 21.**
- 3. The use of drugs for non-medical reasons by Twinn Palms students under any circumstances is strictly forbidden. Examples of nonmedical (illegal) drugs are cocaine, LSD, medications taken without a prescription or for recreational use, and marijuana.**
4. Twinn Palms students are not permitted to hitchhike.
5. Twinn Palms students are not permitted to purchase, carry, or use firearms under any circumstances.
6. Twinn Palms students are not permitted to hold part-time jobs; the F-1 visa does not allow it. A non-immigrant alien who accepts paid employment is subject to deportation.
- 7. Students are not permitted to drive any motor vehicle (including motorcycles, mopeds, and cars) except during the course of an accredited driver education class. Students may enroll in a school-sponsored driver education class if their host and natural parents permit it and it is permissible in the host state.**
- 8. Students are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes while on the Twinn Palms program.**
9. The Twinn Palms program is an academic program. Students must carry a full course load and maintain a minimum C average in all courses. **If a student is expelled from school for any reason, it is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.**
10. Students must attend school daily unless sick and under a doctor's care or with special permission from host parents.
11. Students must complete all homework and assignments.
12. Students are not permitted to visit such places as pornographic shops, adult theaters, drinking establishments, gambling houses, or any websites related to pornography.
13. Students must respect and abide by all host family rules, act as a member of the family, and voluntarily help with household chores.
14. Except in cases where a student's safety is in question, students must follow the appropriate chain of communication and contact their Homestay Coordinator or a Twinn Palms support staff member if there is an issue or concern with their host family. Students may not discuss their host family's private affairs or family life with people outside of the home or the Twinn Palms program.
15. Students cannot change families and schools without mediation or due process. With the exception of emergencies, host family changes will not be considered during the first 30 days of arrival to the host family. Students cannot move from the host family home without permission from their Homestay Coordinator and approval from the Twinn Palms national office.
16. Students are allowed to travel only if accompanied by a responsible adult (25 years of age or older), if:
 - a) their Twinn Palms Regional Manager has received an Student Permission Travel Form signed by their natural parents;
 - b) their host family approves;
 - c) the trip does not involve missing any school.

The exception is a school-sponsored trip. Students must notify their Homestay Coordinator of all proposed travel plans at least four weeks prior to the trip. Students may return to their homeland for holidays as long as they do not miss any school days.



Program Rules (Cont'd)

17. Students must show respect for their Homestay Coordinators and follow all program guidelines.
18. Students must not engage in any sexual contact or sexual activity that is culturally inappropriate in the U.S., including (but not limited to) contact with minors or with any members of the Host Family household.
19. Sexual intercourse on-program is prohibited.
20. Athletic eligibility or participation is not guaranteed. It is dependent on local and national rules and school policies. Students will not be permitted to change schools or host families in order to play sports.
21. High school graduation diplomas are not guaranteed. They are dependent on local and national rules and individual school policies. Students will not be permitted to change schools or host families in order to obtain a diploma.
22. All students must have insurance coverage through Twinn Palms. Students are responsible for paying any outstanding claims before they leave the U.S.
23. Parents and friends may visit the student during the academic year, but the host family is not responsible for the lodging or transportation. Check with your Homestay Coordinator who can help arrange accommodation for your guest(s).
24. No student may enter into any contractual agreement, be it business, marital, or religious, while on the program.

Additional Twinn Palms Program Guidelines

In addition to following the above listed program rules, Twinn Palms students will be expected to adhere to the following guidelines at all times.

- Students must always be aware of his/her responsibility as an international student and make a determined effort to be successful in his/her school, host family, and host community.
- Students should make all necessary efforts to integrate with non-international students at their schools and with their host family and make American friends.
- On special occasions (holidays, birthdays, etc.), the student's priority must be to spend this time with the host family.
- Students are encouraged to limit daily international phone calls, emails and digital communication to parents or friends in their homeland and to respect their host families' rules regarding internet and phone usage. All students should be aware that if it is determined that excessive communication with friends back home is contributing to adjustment issues, a counseling plan may be implemented to support in the acculturation process.
- Twinn Palms students are expected to return home in the same physical condition as they arrived; this means that students may not get pierced, tattooed, or drastically change their appearance in any way.



Host Family & Student Expectations

HOST FAMILY

House Rules

- Clarify your expectations early on.
- If you have some specific rules (for example, no television after 10pm or no visitors after 7pm) then consider putting these rules in writing.
- Be sure students understand any specific rules or preferences, or normally “unspoken” rules in your home. (For example, if a certain chair is reserved for a certain family member.)
- If possible, explain rationale for rules.

Food / Meals

- Tell student what time you expect them for meals.
- Provide breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks.
- Provide a variety of foods including adequate proteins, fruits and vegetables.
- Ask if the student has serious dislikes or preferences.
- Be prepared to spend a minimum of 50% of monthly fees on food.
- If you elect to eat one of the three meals in a restaurant. You should pay for the student’s meal.

Respect

- Respect cultural or religious differences.
- Respect student’s privacy in their room.
- Listen to and ask about additional needs.
- Be truthful. Express concerns or rules in a respectful manner.

Family Life

- Treat the student as a member of the family, not as a guest.
- Treat them as you would wish your own children to be treated in another country.
- Include the student in family activities where appropriate.

STUDENT

House Rules

- Each family may have different house rules. Your family should explain these to you.
- You should talk about the house rules with your host family.
- Be sure to understand and respect their expectations.
- If you are not sure what to do, ask questions.

Food / Meals

- Be on time for family meals.
- If you will be late or absent, phone your family in advance.
- If you have allergies or serious dislikes, tell your family.
- Offer to help with small tasks such as setting the table or clean up.

Respect

- Respect the house rules.
- Respect cultural or religious differences.
- Be truthful. Express concerns or needs in a respectful way.

Family Life

- You are expected to behave as a member of the family, not as a guest.
- Try to participate in family activities, both work and play.
- Talk to your family about problems or needs.



HOST FAMILY

Bedroom

- Provide a comfortable, private room with a bed (sheets, blankets, and pillow), closet, dresser / shelves, desk, chair, lamp.
- Respect the privacy of the student's bedroom.
- Unless there is an emergency, permission to enter a student's should be requested.

Household Chores

- As a member of the family, students should be expected to help with light household chores such as setting or clearing the table.
- If students are interested, they may be encouraged to help with other light chores.
- Students should not be expected to babysit for or engage in heavy cleaning or housework.

Language Practice

- The purpose of placing international students in American homes is for them to practice English.
- Host families can help by conversing with students on a number of topics and helping them build their vocabulary, or by explaining movies, television or other contexts.
- Be patient and try to remember that lower level English students may need time and assistance to learn basic words and structures.

Cultural Exchange

- As a host family you are the first representative of American culture.
- Students will perceive American customs through your examples.
- As you share your family customs, you may also want to explain other traditions you are aware of.
- It is also useful to ask students how things are done in their culture in order to allow them to express their experience with cultural difference.

STUDENT

Bedroom

- Students should keep their bedroom clean and wash bedding as needed.
- Your host parents are not expected to clean your bedroom.

Household Chores

- As a member of the family, you should help with the general household work such as you can offer to clear or set the table
- If you are interested, you could help with meal preparation, taking out the garbage or sweeping the floor.
- You may help with the children by reading to them or playing with them; however, you should not be expected to babysit.

Language Practice

- In order to improve your English, you must practice.
- Your homestay is an excellent place to practice English.
- Your host family can help you understand how English is spoken in everyday situations and can explain things you don't understand.

Cultural Exchange

- Many host families choose to host international students as a way to exchange culture.
- They want to learn about your country and culture.
- When you experience real differences between American culture and your own, it may be interesting to share those differences with your American hosts.
- Sharing differences may also help them understand what you are experiencing in America.



Who Pays for What?

HOST FAMILY

- Three meals every day. *(Excluding lunch during school days, if provided by the school.)*
- Snacks. *(Including snacks that you allow them to buy from the Asian market.)*
- Dinner out if the family is going out.
- Activities, if it is a family activity. *(i.e. a baseball game or trip to the movies).*
- Toiletries. *(Buy what you normally buy for your family. If the student wants something special they can buy it for themselves. Use common sense if they want Crest instead of Colgate and the cost is about the same get what they want. If the cost is greatly different they buy their own.)*
- All fuel to get to and from activities and school. The student should not pay for rides.
- All costs related to laundry. The student should not pay to have laundry done.
- Costs to pick up student at the airport or to return them to the airport.
- Reasonable Christmas gift if the student stays for the holidays.

Treat them like one of your own.

If they want 6 cans of soda each day.

Please don't buy it! Say, "NO".

If they want a ton of junk food...say "No."

STUDENT

- All clothing needed/wanted but their uniform.
- Any school supply needs above the allotted limit for books and supplies.
- Any meal they choose to go out for with friends when a meal is available at home.
- Any activity they choose to do outside of a family activity.
- All travel expenses related to trips home to China or if they are visiting another part of the country without the host family.
- Any specialty item they request if it is significantly more expensive than what the family normally buys. *(i.e. She/he wants Neutrogena shampoo instead of Pantene.)*
- Their own phone and phone charges.
- Any extra books they want to buy. *(i.e. Hamlet in Chinese.)*
- Any extra study books they want to purchase. *(i.e. SAT Prep or TOEFL Prep.)*
- If the family is taking a big trip that will involve hotel rooms, planes, and high ticket admission (Disney). The student should pay the main costs: including plane hotel, and admission. The student should be given the option to participate. If he/she declines, other supervision should be arranged with the Homestay Coordinator. Sometimes it is better to ask the family than the student.

I'm Ready to Host! What's Next?

1. Application

You will need to fill out the Application which your Homestay Coordinator can give you. We invite you to type the information as this will be sent in its entirety to the natural parents, and clear and concise information is greatly appreciated.

2. Pictures

We need a current picture of your family as well as pictures of the front of your house, pictures of the student's bedroom, bathroom and common living areas. Most families provide us with 5-7 pictures.

3. Family Profile

The third page of the Application has a Word document guide of a Family Profile which you can use in writing a hearty profile about your family, home and lifestyle. Once we receive this information our in-house staff will design your Family Profile for you. Your Family Profile is then sent out to the natural parents who will get a snapshot of the family that their son or daughter will live with. Here are samples of Host Family Profiles.

5. In-Home Visit

Once we obtain background check clearances, your Homestay Coordinator will schedule a visit to your home. We require that all family members be present so that we have an opportunity to meet all of you and get to know you.

6. Agreement is Issued

After the Home Visit is completed, the Homestay Coordinator will ask the national office to issue the Host Family Agreement which will detail the relationship, expectations and responsibilities and must be signed by all family members over 18 years of age.

7. Matching and Placement

Based on your Application and the student's Homestay Application which each student fills out, your Homestay Coordinator will now begin the process of matching you with a student.

8. Host Family Orientation

National office personnel, Regional Managers and your Homestay Coordinator will conduct an intensive orientation where you will receive your Host Family Guide to help prepare you and your family to receive your new family member. Additionally, the Cultural Sensitivity Training is a must for all Host Home participants.

9. Airline and Student Arrival Information

Your Homestay Coordinator will provide you with arrival details and a Twinn Palms Welcome Sign for you to greet your student at the airport.

10. Guardianship, Insurance, and Additional Safety Training* (if needed)

Prior to the arrival of your student, the national office will provide you with your student's insurance card as well as fully executed documents whereby the natural family awards you Guardianship and Custody of their child.

*Depending on the school your student will attend, your Homestay Coordinator will let you know if you need to attend specific training and provide additional documentation prior to the arrival of your student.



4. Background Check

Please have all members of your household over the age of 18 fill out the Authorization to Perform a Background check. We will perform a Level II FBI check which will give us clearance at the City, County, State and Federal level. We do not need to perform a credit or employment background check. This process usually takes 48-72 hours and is all done electronically.

*Host a Student.
Change a Life!*

