

# TEXAS INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM

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## LIVING IN AN AMERICAN HOME

Living in an American household can be a wonderful experience. Indeed, it is one of the best opportunities for international students to improve their English language skills rapidly. For many, homestay is one of the most beneficial and enjoyable experiences in the United States, providing a special opportunity to learn about American culture while developing lasting friendships. Despite these positive aspects of a homestay experience, there is the possibility for misunderstandings and problems. In order to make a homestay as positive an experience as possible, you should read the information provided below and consider each point carefully as you consider living in an American home.

- 1) American families include many racial and ethnic groups and come from all socio-economic levels. In addition, **not all American families consist of a mother, father, and children**. For example, a family could consist of a mother and two children, two adults and no children, or single adults with or without other people living in the home.
- 2) **American families love pets**. Many families have cats and/or dogs indoors. Dogs are well trained and listen to the owner's commands. They are not usually chained, so they are free to walk around the house and the yard if the house is fenced in. It is important for many Americans to treat their pets as a family member.
- 3) Americans open their hearts and their homes with the goal of making guests feel welcomed and comfortable. However, Americans may not always interact in the same way that you and your family interact. Members of American families are often independent and tend to be involved with many personal activities. Families may not always do things together, and you may not always be asked to participate, but keep in mind that this is not a reflection of how the family feels about YOU—it is just a difference in culture. Americans will be happy to include you in many of their activities, but **do not expect to be entertained all the time**.
- 4) Adjusting to an American diet may be easier for some students than others depending on whether they are familiar with American food and eating habits. Americans will sometimes eat microwave or frozen foods which may or may not appeal to you. If you find it difficult to adjust to the American diet, please allow yourself a certain amount of time for adjustment. We encourage all students to take some initiative and learn to prepare some of their own meals at times when the family is away or when you want to enjoy food from your own country.
- 5) American families tend to share household duties and chores (cleaning tasks) regardless of age or sex. **All family members are expected to participate in the household tasks**, and as a new family member, you will be sharing in this family activity as well. This could include cleaning your bedroom and bathroom, helping to clean the dishes after meals, washing your own clothing, and helping with other small chores such as vacuuming. Helping with the household duties shows good will on your part and provides you with additional opportunities to talk and share ideas with your American family.
- 6) Please be aware that **most families will have house rules that you must follow**. The rules may include letting them know how late you will be out at night, when friends can visit, smoking, and telephone usage. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated by your American family, and it will show willingness on your part to involve yourself as a family member—not just a guest.