



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

OTTAWA INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT PROGRAM

OTTAWA INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM (OISP)

International Student ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

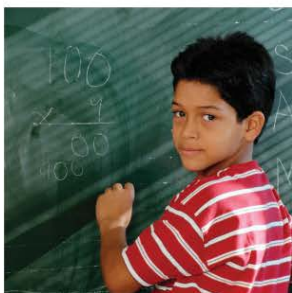
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board 2025/2026



440 Albert Street
Ottawa, ON
K1R 5B5
Tel.: 613-239-0314
Fax: 613-239-0608



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WELCOME TO THE OTTAWA INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM – OISP



A Message from the OISP Director

On behalf of all of the staff at Ottawa International Student Program Office, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all international students attending school at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board this year.

Moving to another country is a challenging and exciting event in one's life. It creates opportunities for discovery, and challenges one to learn and adapt to life in a new and different culture. It also encourages us to be open to new ideas and considerate of others as we learn the customs and rules necessary to fit in to a new culture, to make new friends and to be successful in a different home environment.

In order to help you adjust to your new learning and living environment, we have prepared this orientation handbook. I hope you will find it useful. Our international students, teachers, parents, host parents, OISP staff and Canada Homestay International have all contributed to the content of this book which should make it a valuable reference for all international students new to Canadian culture.

Please do not feel alone while you are here as there are many people who want to help you enjoy your stay and be successful in your studies.

In Ottawa, you will have the opportunity to achieve your educational goals and make new friends in a safe and beautiful setting. I hope your experience will be a positive and rewarding one.

Sincerely yours,

Geoff Best

Director

Ottawa International Student Program
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

OISP CONTACT INFORMATION

The Ottawa International Student Program (OISP) office is located at 440 Albert Street in Room 406.
The OISP office follows the school year and is open from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm.

Address: 440 Albert Street, Room 406, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 5B5

Website: www.studyottawa.ocdsb.ca

Email: ocenet@ocdsb.ca

Phone: 613-239-0314

Fax: 613-239-0608

OISP CONTACT

NAME	POSITION	E-MAIL	PHONE 613-239-0314
Geoff Best	Director	geoff.best@ocdsb.ca	
Anne-marie Bereza	Marketing	annemarie.bereza@ocdsb.ca	
Minsook Kang	Marketing	minsook.kang@ocdsb.ca	
Kevin Orange	Finance and Operations	kevin.orange@ocdsb.ca	
Vicente Conte	Office Administrator	vicente.conte@ocdsb.ca	
Eunyoung Shin	Admissions	eunyoung.shin@ocdsb.ca	
Chau Hoang	Admissions	chau.hoang@ocdsb.ca	
Yifan Li	Admissions	yifany.li@ocdsb.ca	
Greg Duggan	Director of Studies	greg.duggan@ocdsb.ca	
Jill Doherty	Academic Advisor	jill.doherty@ocdsb.ca	
Donna Bass	Academic Advisor	donna.bass@ocdsb.ca	
Susana U-Leong	Academic Advisor	susana.u-leong@ocdsb.ca	

HOMESTAY CONTACT INFORMATION – CANADA HOMESTAY NETWORK

For all inquiries please email: help@canadahomestaynetwork.ca

Senior Program Lead

Jennifer Eliason	613-686-6764	ext 2830
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Relationship Managers

Hilary Rust	613-686-6764	ext 2045
Josette Delorme-Pierre	613-686-6764	ext 2067
Yukiko Iwaski	613-686-6764	ext 2275
Harriet Amos	613-686-6764	ext 3013
Brenda St. Jean	613-686-6764	ext 2040

SCHOOL CONTACTS

At each of the following high schools there is a teacher who provides counselling and guidance to international students.

HIGH SCHOOL	EMAIL	TELEPHONE NUMBER
A.Y. Jackson Secondary School (9-12)	sharlene.demerchant@ocdsb.ca	613-836-2527
Bell High School (7-12)	kate.gorsline@ocdsb.ca	613-828-9101
Brookfield High School (9-12)	brooke.poirier@ocdsb.ca	613-733-0610
Cairine Wilson Secondary School (9-12)	russell.wolfe@ocdsb.ca	613-824-4411
Canterbury High School (9-12)	toula.makris@ocdsb.ca	613-731-1191
Colonel By Secondary School (9-12)	rachel.Nakashoji@ocdsb.ca	613-745-9411
Earl of March Secondary School (7-12)	natalie.dash@ocdsb.ca	613-592-3361
Glebe Collegiate Institute (9-12)	paula.leitch-blais@ocdsb.ca	613-239-2424
Gloucester High School (9-12)	amy.tremblay@ocdsb.ca	613-745-7176
Hillcrest High School (9-12)	daniel.lajoie@ocdsb.ca	613-733-1755
John McCrae Secondary School (9-12)	jennifer.mclean@ocdsb.ca	613-823-0367
Lisgar Collegiate Institute (9-12)	angela.linton@ocdsb.ca	613-239-2696
Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School (7-12)	wanda.kilfoil@ocdsb.ca	613-843-7722
Merivale High School (7-12)	elizabeth.rusch@ocdsb.ca	613-224-1807
Nepean High School (9-12)	jeff.dash@ocdsb.ca	613-722-6551
Ridgemont High School (9-12)	marianne.dawson.alexander@ocdsb.ca	613-733-4860
Sir Robert Borden High School (7-12)	susan.griffin@ocdsb.ca	613-829-5320
Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School (9-12)	christine.gagne@ocdsb.ca	613-834-4500
South Carleton High School (9-12)	sheri.eady@ocdsb.ca	613-838-4310
West Carleton Secondary School (9-12)	meagan.malboeuf@ocdsb.ca	613-832-2773
Woodroffe High School (9-12)	adam.lecuyer@ocdsb.ca	613-820-7186

OISP ACTIVITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS 2025–2026

Please refer to our website for any updates.
studyottawa.ocdsb.ca under the NEWS tab.

Toronto and Niagara Falls	September / May / June
Parc Omega	October / April
Montreal	October / May
Ski Trip	January / February
Quebec City	January / February

Contact Information:

Ottawa International Student Programs:
440 Albert Street, Room 406, Ottawa, ON K1R 5B5
Tel: 613-239-0314 x 2102
Email: ois@ocdsb.ca
www.studyottawa.ocdsb.ca





MEDICAL INSURANCE

Ingle Lewer – Contact Information

Collect call world wide: 1-514-375-8234 Toll Free: 1-888-575-1231

Email: customersupport@inglelewer.ca Website: www.inglelewer.ca/ocenet

STUDY PERMIT RENEWAL

From the day you arrive in Canada, check and REMEMBER when your Study Permit expires! Each year between March and May the OISP office will ask you what your plans are for the next year. If you indicate that you are returning to our school board, our office will send you a renewal notice. When you have paid your tuition fees for the next year, our office will send you:

- a) A (renewal) Letter of Acceptance stating that you will be continuing your studies
- b) A Receipt

It is your responsibility to complete the Study Permit renewal forms which can be found at www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/study-extend.asp and send it with all accompanying documentation to the immigration address indicated on the renewal form. Your host family or a staff member in our office can help you if you request it.

Note: Any student who lets his Study Permit expire will have to pay a penalty fee of \$200.00 CAD and risks being asked to leave the country.

You may have to wait 6 to 8 weeks to get a new Study Permit once you have applied. Please remember this when you are making plans to travel in the summer. Therefore, if you pay your school fees early, you will get your new Study Permit before the summer.

Students who are planning to attend university the following year will have to get their letters and Study Permit forms from the university.

TEMPORARY RESIDENT VISA (TRV)

Some countries require that students have a Temporary Resident Visa (TRV) to re-enter Canada after they have returned home for a visit. Usually the TRV and the Study Permit expire at the same time, but not always. If you have both documents, be sure to check to see when both of these documents expire.

Please Note: In order to apply for your TRV within Canada, you must hold a valid Study Permit, so complete your Study Permit application first. For detailed information please visit www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/cpp-o-apply.asp. If you have any questions, please contact our office.

HOLIDAYS AND IMPORTANT DATES

The following are some major Canadian holidays and important dates:

DAY	DATE	DESCRIPTION
Labour Day	September 1, 2025	This marks the creation of the labour movement and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of Canadian workers.
<i>Start of School</i>	September 2, 2025	First day of classes..
Thanksgiving (school holiday)	October 13, 2025	Celebration of the harvest. Families gather and have a festive meal, usually with turkey and pumpkin pie.
Halloween	October 31	Children dress up in costumes and go door-to-door, collecting candy.
Remembrance Day	November 11	The day of poppies. The poppy has long been the flower of Remembrance. It originally was a reminder of the blood-red flower which grew in the fields where many Canadians died in a place called Flanders in France.
<i>Christmas Break</i>	Dec 22, 2025-January 2, 2026	No school during this holiday period
Christmas	December 25	The birth of Christ, and it is a time for family gatherings and gift-giving. People generally take several days away from work, if they can.
Boxing Day	December 26	The day after Christmas, malls are filled with people either exchanging gifts or buying reduced priced gifts.
<i>Exam Period</i>	January 23-29, 2026	Final examinations for first semester
<i>Start of Second Semester</i>	February 2, 2026	First day of new classes
Family Day (school holiday)	February 16, 2026	Family Day is the third Monday of February and observed as a public holiday in Ontario.
<i>March Break</i>	March 16-20, 2026	No school
Good Friday (school holiday)	April 3, 2026	This religious holiday commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
Easter Monday (school holiday)	April 6, 2026	This religious holiday commemorates Jesus Christ's rise from the dead.
Victoria Day (school holiday)	May 18, 2026	Originally the birthday of Queen Victoria, the Queen of Great Britain from 1837-1901, it is now a more general celebration of the monarch's birthday and a time for a spring holiday that gardeners call "planting weekend".
<i>Exam Period</i>	June 18 -24, 2026	Final exams for second semester. Students should find out when their last exam is before booking flights home.
Last Day of classes	June 26, 2026	Last day of Examinations/classes for Secondary schools
Canada Day	July 1	The day Canada became a nation. Parades, large gatherings and fireworks are common.

TRAVEL AND HOLIDAYS

While students are encouraged to explore and experience Canadian culture through travel during their stay here, it is expected that travel will not interfere with your academic studies and should be limited to designated school holidays.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

A student who enters grade 9 in Canada will need to earn a minimum of 30 credits to graduate and qualify for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

Note:

Students who have successfully completed one or more years of high school in their own countries are given equivalency credits and do not have to repeat a year when they come to Canada. For example, a student who has completed and passed grade 9 in Turkey will be given credits for his year when he provides proof with an official document from his home country school.



REQUIRED COURSES (18)

SUBJECT AREA	MINIMUM CREDITS
English	4
Mathematics	3 (1 credit in grade 11 or 12)
Science	2
Arts	1
Health and Physical Education	1
Canadian History	1
Canadian Geography	1
French as a Second Language	1
Civics	.5
Career Studies	.5
Additional English, third language or social science	1
Additional Health and Physical Education, Arts, or Business	1
Additional science or technological education	1
Literacy Test	Required
Community Involvement	40 hours

ELECTIVE COURSES (12)



To graduate, students need at least 30 credits from required and elective courses. They must also pass the Literacy Test (OSSLT) and complete 40 hours of community service or volunteer work.

If you are planning to attend university, you must make sure you have all the courses and prerequisites you need. Careful planning in grade 10, 11 and 12 with the help of your guidance counselor will ensure you meet the requirements. All universities require that students have 6 courses at the grade 12 academic level to apply.

For further information on graduation requirements, go to the Ontario Ministry of Education website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

When you decide to come to Ottawa to study, you and your parents must sign a Participation Agreement in which you agree to obey certain school rules. Please make sure you read and understand this agreement.

These are the main rules that you must follow:

- You must start the semester with four courses or a full time-table. If you are having a lot of difficulty you may ask to drop one course. This can only happen if you get permission from the OISP Academic Advisor and your guidance counselor. These two people will make the decision together. You cannot drop a course on your own.
- You must be working hard to maintain a C+ average.
- You can change a course with your teacher's approval.
- You must take the proper sequence of courses (pre-requisites) like other Canadian students.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

An important goal of international students is to improve their English while attending school in Canada. Several of our schools offer special second language support classes for all levels of learners. These courses help students become proficient in English.

When students first arrive in Ottawa, they are assessed for their language abilities and are placed in certain English classes based on the results.

Students with a strong foundation in English are placed in regular English classes.

Students who need to develop one or more of the skills of reading, writing, speaking or listening are placed in the most suitable English as a Second Language (ESL) class.

Here is a list of our ESL levels **in ascending order**. These courses form a progression from the beginning level to regular English.

ESLAO	Beginner
ESLBO	High Beginner (many international students who have studied some English in their own country are placed in this level when they first come to Canada)
ESLCO	Low Intermediate
ESLDO*	High Intermediate
ESLEO	Advanced
ENGLISH Grade 10 or 11	After ESL

PLEASE NOTE:

- ***ESLDO is considered a crucial course in a students' language development and must be taken. It cannot be skipped.**
- Each ESL course is worth one credit and is included in a student's overall average.
- ESL courses are not connected to a grade level. Students progress through the levels at different rates depending upon their motivation and work ethic.
- Students can count 3 ESL credits towards their compulsory 4 English credits.
- To graduate from high school in Ontario a student must pass a grade 12 compulsory English course.
- To apply to college or university in Canada a student must pass a compulsory English course at the grade 12 level.
- Students who study in Canada less than 3 years and want to attend university here must take an English language proficiency test in addition to passing grade 12 English. Such English language tests include TOEFL, CAEL, IELTS and CanTEST.

PRACTICING ENGLISH

International students have found these useful ways to meet English-speaking people and practice English:

- Practice English as part of the normal household routine
 - talk with your homestay family during dinner and relaxation time
 - join family events and outings
 - play with children
- Join school clubs (e.g. choir, drama, band) and/or sports teams
- Go on school trips

- Get involved in community activities outside of school at:
 - local community centres
 - churches
 - summer camps
- Consider getting involved in activities in a variety of ways:
 - act as a volunteer
 - take part in sports
 - take courses in art, crafts, music, French

REPORT CARDS

High school students will receive two reports each semester: a progress report card approximately half way through the semester and a final report card at the end of the semester.

Reports Cards & Parent-Teacher Interviews

OISP Host families and all custodians are invited to participate in Parent-Teacher interviews. By doing so, host parents will become fully acquainted with the progress of the student and will be better able to support the student academically and emotionally, as needed.

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

Your first obligation in Canada is to attend school every day and go to all your classes. You can have fun, too, but your main job is to do well in your studies.

You must bring a written note signed by your custodian or host family each time you are absent. This rule applies to students both under and over 18 years of age.

If you are absent without authorization or a meaningful explanation, there can be serious consequences: you may lose academic credits; you may be expelled from your school; you may be expelled from your homestay and your custodianship may be cancelled.

BEHAVIOUR

Code of Conduct is based on the governmental Code of Conduct for students in public schools in Ontario and applies to all students. The code of conduct for students in Ontario can be found at the Ontario Ministry of Education website: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/conduct/conduct01.pdf>

The code of conduct and the rules for your school can also be found in your school agenda book. If you have not received one, please ask a teacher or a vice principal or principal to help you get one.

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT FOLLOWING THE RULES

You will be given a warning if you are misbehaving, frequently absent from school, or if you are failing a course. Your parents will also receive a letter informing them of your behavior.

Finally, you may be asked to leave the program if you do not show signs of improvement. No refunds will be made for students expelled from the program.

Please see the International Student Code of Conduct on the back cover of this handbook.

STUDYING IN CANADA

Some Characteristics of Canadian Education

You will likely find some differences between the educational/value system in your own country and that in Canada. It is essential for you to understand the appropriate and accepted roles for students in the Canadian educational system.

In Canada:

- Students are encouraged to ask questions for clarification, to challenge information, or to extend thinking. The philosophy of education in Canada includes the idea that students should be involved in an interactive learning process; that is, they should not sit passively and accept or memorize what the teacher says.
- Teacher-student relationships tend to be relatively informal compared to those in many Asian countries. For example, teachers may begin the class with a joke or with friendly conversation.
- Group work is an important part of school learning; it stresses cooperation, tolerance, and compromise. It is also evaluated as part of your mark.
- Discussion is often used as a means of teaching. Students are expected to be able to discuss in order to develop their ideas and opinions and to present them in class.
- Students learn not just information, but how to arrive at conclusions, to solve problems, and to analyze. As part of this process, students are often asked how they got an answer, rather than just what the answer is.
- Plagiarism (submitting the work of another person as your own, or copying the work or words of another person and presenting it as your own) is a serious offence. A student can receive a "0" or fail a course or assignment for plagiarizing someone else's work.

TIPS FOR STUDYING IN CANADA

- Don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand. Teachers expect to be questioned. Make sure you understand what the teacher wants you to do in an assignment. If you are quiet, the teacher will think that you understand. Teachers are usually available before or after school for questions and extra help.
- Be on time for class. If you are late you will be marked as late on the attendance sheet. If you cannot attend a class or be on time, notify the school in advance and explain the reason. If you miss a class, see the teacher the next day to find out what you missed.
- You will probably find the classes less structured in Canada. You will also have to organize your own time after school for study. Plan your time carefully, balancing school work, English practice, and relaxation.
- Hand in all assignments on the day they are due. If you are not able to finish your assignment on time, talk to your teacher before it is due. If you miss any assignment/quiz/test/exam, see the teacher and ask if there is any way to make it up.
- Almost everything you do that is assigned by the teacher counts in your final mark. That means that class tests, presentations, discussion assignments, working in groups are worth certain marks. Overall, class work is worth about 70% of your final mark while the formal examination itself is worth between 20% and 30%. A student who works hard all semester will likely pass the course, but a student who doesn't work hard and misses many classes will likely fail.

PEOPLE IN THE SCHOOL

School Staff are eager to help international students adjust to the new learning environment.

- Principal:** The principal is in charge of programs at the school and works closely with staff, students and parents.
- Vice-Principal:** The vice-principal assists the principal in running the school and looks after discipline.
- Teachers:** Students have different teachers for different subjects. You can call the teacher Mr. Ms. or Mrs. as appropriate and the person's surname (e.g. Mr. Smith), rather than "teacher".
- ESL Teachers:** They help students learn English and strategies for success in their other classes.



There may be school specialists who work with teachers and help students learn. These people include:

Teacher-Librarians who help students access resources on the Internet and learn about books, tapes, videos, and magazines.

Guidance Counselors who assist in planning students' timetables and applying to university. They can tell you about other programs in the schools and in the community.

Office Secretaries, who assist in registering students, do the school's office work and answer phone calls.

Teaching Assistants who help teachers in the classroom.

Resource Teachers who help students who require additional assistance.

Custodians who keep schools clean and make sure the building is operating safely and properly.

LIVING EXPECTATIONS

You must live with a family, preferably with an English-speaking family who can help you with your English. You cannot live alone or with a friend in an apartment.

If you change families, you must inform our office right away. If you insist on living alone, you will have to leave our program.

Although Canadian students 18 and over may legally live alone, this does not apply to international students, who, as a condition of acceptance to the OISP, agree to live with a family all of the time they are studying with OCDSB. It should be noted that the majority of Canadian high school students live with their families until they have completed high school and university. Living with a family provides students with the necessary support and stability they will need to succeed in school and a foreign environment.

CULTURE SHOCK OR THE ADJUSTMENT PROCESS

As a newcomer to Canada, you will go through a predictable sequence of stages in adjusting to your new circumstances. The adjustment phase usually takes 3 to 4 months.

1. Arrival and first impressions:

You will be excited to be in a new environment and everything will seem new and wonderful.

2. Culture Shock

You may become less optimistic as you find it difficult to make friends and learn English. You will miss your friends, family and everything that was familiar. You may become depressed and long for home.

3. Recovery and optimism:

You feel better because you are experiencing success at school and making friends. You feel more confident about fitting in at school.

4. Acculturation:

You become more comfortable in your new surroundings and can balance the new culture with your own culture. You can appreciate what the new experience is bringing to you.

HOMESTAY GUIDELINES AND RULES

CANADA HOMESTAY NETWORK (CHN)

Canada Homestay International has been working closely with OISP since 1999 to provide safe, caring, and friendly homestay accommodation for its international students. It has established the guidelines and rules for the Ottawa International Student Program that you find below. Please study them carefully and make yourself familiar with them.

A Note to All Custodians

If you are acting as a custodian for a student but are not connected to the homestay program, we encourage you to consider the information below as you develop your own guidelines.



PREPARING FOR YOUR HOMESTAY EXPERIENCE

Every host is different—just like every student.

What our hosts have in common is that they want to provide a safe, caring environment for you. We choose hosts who will provide the same comfortable, healthy and supportive home life they would ask a host family to provide for their own children.

Why do we trust our hosts? Because we've met them in person and toured their homes; we've talked with them about their experiences in the world and in Canada, and we've helped them adjust to being hosts. We have also asked students like you to evaluate them. If they fail to meet our—and your—expectations, we won't work with them again.

If you're not happy with your match, tell us. You can call or email us. You can also speak with your coordinator when he or she visits your school. We are always glad to hear from you.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT HOMESTAY?

Your homestay experience will largely depend on your own attitude and friendliness. How can you make the most of living in Canada? Come with an open mind and be ready to embrace the ways in which Canada and the people you will meet here are different and unique. Your host family will be eager to help you adapt to their family and Canada. The more you get involved in your new life the happier you will be.

GETTING SETTLED

The first few weeks living in a new country with a new family can be difficult. You may feel homesick and frustrated with your new environment and the language. This is natural. Give yourself time to adjust to your new surroundings. We've found that doing the following things when you first arrive will help you feel settled. And please remember: you're not alone. We're always here to help.

A TOUR OF YOUR NEW HOME

Please ask for a tour of your house when you first arrive. Your host should show you where everything is, with special care to point out your bedroom and bathroom; the kitchen and dining area; the laundry room; the linen closet (or wherever clean linen and towels are kept); and so on. Please make sure you understand how to use:

- The bathroom, including the bath/shower, toilet and sink;
- Appliances and entertainment items, like the TV, microwave;
- The fire extinguisher, as well as what to do in the event of a fire (for example, suitable exits and emergency phone numbers).
- See below for a discussion of the laundry facilities, telephone and the computer/internet.

You can treat this house as your own but do respect everyone's right to privacy and quiet. Always knock and announce yourself before entering someone else's room, and be considerate when using common areas.

Make sure you meet all members of your host family. Repeat their names so you can remember them.

A TOUR OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Ask your host for a tour of your new neighborhood, including directions to and from your school and any local attractions or meeting places.

Ask your host for help using buses —how and where to buy passes/tickets and getting to know the local routes.

Make sure you understand how to recognize public telephones, and ask your host to help you write a list of important contact numbers which you can keep with you at all times.

If your host cannot show you how to get to school before your first day and cannot arrange for anyone else to help, please contact the homestay office for assistance.

As a courtesy, the homestay family may drive you to an appointment but they do not provide daily transportation to and from school.

LIFE INSIDE THE CANADIAN HOME

Your host family will have certain rules concerning daily life in the house. These include when to have baths and showers; where food can or cannot be eaten; how to do laundry; curfews; smoking (or non-smoking) policies; limits on the use of the television/ stereo/VCR and other family property; family schedules & bedtime hours; when it is OK to have friends over, and so on. There may be areas of the house your host will ask you not to use. Please respect their wishes.

All the rules or guidelines that apply to your family members also apply to you. We ask our hosts to arrange a family meeting to go over the house rules at the beginning of your stay.

For any students under the age of majority the following rules will be upheld in addition to household customs:

- † No smoking (and no purchasing cigarettes) – under age 18
- † No drinking – under age 19

It is your responsibility to understand and observe all household rules. If you are having any difficulty doing so, please contact the homestay office for assistance.

Household Chores

Your host parents will welcome you into their home as a member of the family. As part of the household, you will be expected to do some assigned chores. For example, you will be responsible to keep your room clean, and other areas of the house if you use them. You should also be prepared to help with meal preparation, cleaning of dishes, and doing your own laundry.

In many cases, you may also be an older brother or sister to your homestay family's children. We hope you set a good example for them. However, you will not be expected to babysit them.

Laundry

Please check with your host at the beginning of your stay to work out a laundry schedule. They may ask you to do your own laundry. Please ensure that you have a full load and are not washing a few items every few days.

Bedrooms

Your bedroom will include a window and smoke detector nearby; bed and bedding; a dresser, desk, chair, and lamp for studying; a closet; and adequate heat, light and ventilation. Please ask your host to show you how to use the bed and blankets, and where to find extra blankets if needed.



Your homestay family will discuss with you what you can put on bedroom walls and how to attach items. As a courtesy, and to conserve energy, please turn off the light before leaving your room. Your host may also ask you to turn down the heat in the room when you are gone for the day, if it is operated on a thermostat.

Bathrooms

Please try to leave the bathroom clean and dry after you use it. Your host will explain when to use the bathroom and for how long. Most students will share their bathroom with one or more family members or other students. If there are several members of your household, please be considerate with the use of hot water, which might run out before everyone has showered!

Telephone Usage

Collect calls or calling cards are recommended. It is not acceptable for students to run up charges on the host family telephone account. The OISP program discourages phone calls home more than once a week as it makes it more difficult for the student to adjust to life in Canada.

Telephone & the Internet

Please make sure you know how to use the telephones in the house. In case of emergency, dial “911” and you will be connected with an operator who will be able to send the police, fire truck and/or ambulance. This number should be near the telephone and you should discuss other emergency numbers and what to do in the event of a fire or emergency.



Your host will allow you a reasonable amount of time to make local calls on the house phone. However, please call collect or use a calling card or credit card when phoning long distance. Remember not to talk on the phone for too long at a time (more than 15 minutes). Do not make calls late at night or early in the morning. Your host may agree to allow you to use a separate phone line, but you should expect to pay for it.

Similar rules may apply to the use of the internet. As with a private phone line, if your host agrees to let you have a private internet connection installed, you should expect to pay for it.

Use of Computers

We encourage you to use computers for schoolwork. However, the OISP guideline is that computer use must end at 10:00 p.m. Chatting with friends back home should be restricted to 1 hour per day of recreational use. The family that you are living with must approve any variation to this policy. Students who do not adhere to this policy risk having their computers disconnected.

Meals

Everybody likes different foods. Part of the fun of homestay is learning what Canadian families like to eat, and teaching your host family what you like to eat. Now is your chance to prepare a traditional meal from your home country for your host family. This will be a treat for you and them!

Your host family will always provide your meals—but this doesn’t mean that your meals will be served to you. Sometimes your hosts will not be at home for every meal—and sometimes they will have different customs from you for certain meals.

Here is what you can expect in a typical Homestay regarding meals:

- **Breakfast.** Each host family has its own unique morning schedule, so it is important to decide on a routine that will work best for everyone. Weekdays, breakfast is a quick, light meal. On weekends, families may prepare breakfast together. Some families eat a hot breakfast; others prefer to have something cold, such as cereal or toast, and juice.
- Your family might leave it up to you to decide what to eat in the morning—please ask them to show you where the food is kept and how to prepare your own breakfast if this is the case.
- **Lunch,** eaten midday, usually consists of a light main course (soup, a salad, or a sandwich), a drink (water, milk, or juice), and a dessert of fruit or cookies. You will be able to bring a bagged lunch to school from your home.
- **Dinner.** Your host family will try to have a sit-down dinner—which is usually the largest meal of the day and may consist of a main course, with or without a salad—as often as their weekly schedule allows. It is the most important meal of the day. It is very important that you communicate with your family when you will be home for dinner (dinners are usually eaten between 5:00 and 7:00 pm). To be considerate, if you will not be home for dinner, you **MUST** phone your family and tell them before dinnertime. This way, they will not expect you, they will not worry, and they will leave some supper for you in the fridge.
- Please try to be at home for this family dinner hour as often as possible as this is the best time for families to talk about their day and for you to bond with your host parents and host brothers and sisters.

It is important that you are happy with the food prepared for you— you can speak to the host or we can. Let us know. If you have special dietary needs—if you have extreme likes or dislikes, or any allergies—please discuss them with your host as soon as you arrive.

LIFE OUTSIDE THE CANADIAN HOME

Canadian families spend a few evenings each week engaged in leisure activities and relaxation. We encourage you to spend some time with them. However, it's perfectly alright to spend a few evenings out with your own friends from school.

Night Life

When you do go out, please tell your homestay family where you will be going, and how you can be reached (include all relevant phone numbers); when you will be home (remember your curfew!) and who you will be with. This information is important for your safety and your host's peace of mind.

Please do not assume your homestay family knows where you are, or remembers plans you have discussed in advance. Always review your plans with your homestay family on the evening you're going out. Always let your host know when you will be coming home—and always call if you're going to be late. They will worry if you're not home on time. When you do get home, please enter the home quietly!



Curfews

Host families and international students need to discuss curfews. Students are expected to respect the routines and rules of the household.

The OISP guidelines are that students should be home by 9:00 p.m. during the week.

Weekend curfew guidelines are as follows:

Grade 8	09:00 p.m.
Grade 9	10:00 p.m.
Grade 10	11:00 p.m.
Grade 11	12:00 a.m.
Grade 12	01:00 a.m.



You must phone your host if you are delayed past your curfew, or require help, at any time.

If you do not follow these guidelines you could be asked to leave the program.

Visitors

The OISP homestay program does not approve of overnight visitors or visits. If you wish to have a guest then you must ask for permission from your host. Your guest could be asked to pay \$35.00 per night.

In cases when your homestay host is away and needs to make alternate sleeping arrangements for you, the host must inform the Homestay Program Coordinator of where you will be staying with the family's name, address and phone number.

You are not permitted to bring guests into the homestay if the homestay family is not at home. The opposite gender shall not visit private areas/bedrooms.

Travel With Your Homestay Host or School Group

Many Canadian families like to spend weekends or short holidays in the country, in a cabin or a second home, with family or friends. Some families spend school vacations in other parts of the country or abroad. If you cannot or do not want to go with your host family, please contact us to make other arrangements.

Students are not allowed to travel outside the city, without their host parents, unless they have the permission of their parents.

Your biological parents must sign a "Parental Permission to Travel" form for each trip outside of your host's city. If you are traveling without your host parents, you must give your host a detailed itinerary of such travel, including the names and addresses of those you will be traveling with and staying with during such travel.

Travel outside Canada

Your biological family must arrange travels outside of Canada. It is the responsibility of the student and biological family to research and obtain the necessary visa/documents from the embassy or consulate of the country to be visited.

The homestay office must be notified of all travel arrangements outside of Canada. The OISP office can provide the student with a letter or registration that will aid their re-entry into Canada.

Driver's License

The legal age for driving in Ontario is 16 years. International students are permitted to enroll in a driver training program offered at their school if the student submits a signed permission from his/her parents to the Director of the OISP. The training program will give them the experience of driving while accompanied by a licensed instructor. OISP students are discouraged from driving homestay family vehicles. The OISP program strongly discourages students from owning their own car.

Smoking

Canadians observe strict rules about smoking. It is illegal to buy cigarettes in Canada if you are under the age of 18. Students under the age of 18 in the OISP homestay program are not allowed, under any circumstance, to smoke in Canada—at home, at school, or elsewhere.



For students who smoke, who are over the age of 18, you are expected to observe all municipal rules about smoking. This means: no smoking in public buildings, on public transportation, or in public places, including bars and restaurants.

If you want to smoke at home, you must ask your host. Some hosts may allow you to smoke inside the house, some hosts may ask you to smoke outside the house, and some hosts will ask you not to smoke at all. You are expected to respect their wishes.

If you break these rules, you may be expelled from your homestay and homestay program and your Custodianship cancelled.

Alcohol and Drugs

The legal age for drinking alcohol in Ontario is 19 years of age.

You will be expelled from the homestay program and your custodianship will be revoked if you drink or consume alcohol or other intoxicants.

MONEY AND VALUABLES

Pocket Money

Please bring an adequate amount of money for extra expenses such as meals out of the home, movies, extracurricular school activities, and so on. Homestay fees do not cover these costs. Also, your Homestay fees do not include costs of major family outings. If you choose to participate in family holidays and/or travel where there are extra costs, you should expect to pay.

While theft is not common in Canada, it can and does happen. To keep yourself and your valuables safe, please do not carry or display large amounts of cash at any time. Displaying wealth can also lead to uncomfortable situations among your peers: money attracts attention, and if other students think you have a lot of it to spend, they may start expecting you to pay for their meals and activities.

You should not be expected to lend money to, or borrow money from, other students or members of your host family household.

When you arrive in Canada, it's a good idea to open a bank account. This is common practice in Canada and is the most reliable and safe way to handle money. Bank accounts are insured by the Bank of Canada; you are not risking anything by depositing your savings with a bank. It's also convenient: you can access your funds at ATMs (Automated Debit Machines) and even pay for meals, retail purchases and tourist attractions with your bank card.

Valuables

It's a good idea to make two copies of important documents (such as airline tickets, health insurance forms, and your passport): one for you to keep with you, and another for your hosts. Keep the originals in a safe place—they should not stay in your school bag or suitcase.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the event of a medical emergency, please call 911 from the nearest phone. This is a toll-free call that will send medical, police, or fire services to you immediately. Then call the Emergency Telephone number for homestay located in the front of this Guide. The homestay coordinator will assist you to contact your host family as well as notify your own family if/when necessary. If you are admitted to a hospital, you must call your insurance company within 24 hours.

CONVERSATION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

You have come to Canada to become more confident and assertive in English, so be brave! You might make mistakes at first, but your host family will help you. The best way to improve your English is to practice!

Using English With The Whole Family

Use your English in events that include other members of the household, such as:

- Looking at family photo albums and videos
- Playing cards/board games
- Planning holidays and weekend outings
- Having a picnic/barbecue, instead of eating at home



Using English One-on-One

Try to use English in as many simple daily activities as possible, such as:

- Conversation, especially at dinner;
- Setting the table, meal preparation, gathering, etc.;
- Accompanying your host on errands (a trip to the supermarket is an interesting event for both of you, to identify and describe your favourite foods)
- Exercising (run, walk, aerobics, swim, etc.)
- Watching TV (programs which stimulate conversation and the sharing of ideas).

TECHNIQUES FOR MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Accept invitations to talk about yourself—don't be shy! Try to give full answers to questions—explain how you feel and why, rather than simply saying “yes” or “no.” Offer lists of things you like and don't like.

Ask your hosts to explain idiomatic expressions and slang. These can be hard to understand at first—and lots of fun to use. For example, “hang on” is equivalent to “one moment, please” or “please wait.”

If someone asks, “Do you understand?” be honest! Don't just say “Yes” for the sake of harmony! Instead, ask for help. Ask if your host understands you. Try to rephrase what you've said, or what you've heard. It can take effort—but it will always be worth it.

Smile and laugh a lot.



Tips to Encourage Communication

Conversation may be very difficult at first—but you must keep trying! As you go along, keep in mind that it helps to:

- Speak English at all times.
- Speak slower, not faster, if you're having trouble making yourself understood. Try rephrasing the same ideas using different words.
- Listen to the expressions your hosts use in English, make sure you understand them, and try to use them, too.
- Use charades, pointing, and body language!
- Try writing items down—sometimes your reading and writing skills will be ahead of your verbal skills. Make the most of them!
- Purchase a Foreign Language—English dictionary.

If all else fails, call the homestay coordinator for assistance! We have interpreters available and can arrange to get you extra help at school.

COMMON CHALLENGES

A Word About Communication — And Compromise

We hope that you enjoy your time with your host family.

If you experience any problems the following process is helpful; please try it:

1. Speak with your host family immediately if you are upset by something. Most families will be happy to talk to you and to find out what can be done to resolve the problem.
2. If the problem cannot be resolved by speaking with your family, please call the homestay coordinator for help. Do not call your parents or Agent before you speak to us. We can help you better and more quickly if we hear about the problem from you directly. You can always call them later if you are not happy with our solutions.



Persistent Problems

If a problem comes up again between you and your host, the first thing we ask you to do is to contact us for assistance. Our goal is your (and your host's) safety, happiness, and health; we've found that most problems can be resolved when we listen to one another's feelings and thoughts. In some cases we may have to find you a new host family.

Why Would You Be Moved?

A student may be relocated (and may even be sent back to his or her home country) if he or she is disrespectful toward his or her host family or refuses to follow the family's rules. We are also very strict about how our host families should treat you. We will relocate you immediately if any member of your homestay household:

- Regularly fails to provide adequate and/or healthy food.
- Neglects you, by failing to include you in suitable family activities, or by failing to pursue constructive communication and conversation with you.
- Willfully disrespects you, either through lack of consideration or insensitivity toward your feelings and/or culture.
- Fails to provide a clean and adequately maintained physical environment; or
- Continues in unresolved personality conflicts with you, individually or in the family;
- Steals your property
- Harasses you in any way—verbally, emotionally, physically, or sexually.

Final Thoughts

Almost every difficulty our students face in homestay is connected with poor communication. It's not surprising—in your first weeks in Canada, you may have a hard time making your hosts understand what you need and how you feel—and your hosts may have a hard time making you understand them. This is totally natural and to be expected.

Sometimes the difficulty communicating can result in either the student or the host seeming rude or insensitive—or both. Sometimes we can all just become frustrated and unhappy. But we're here to help. We know it can be hard at the beginning, but **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** We've helped lots of people like you get through the first, hard, days and weeks.

Here are a few things to keep in mind while you adjust:

- We know that the hardest thing for you to do is complain. We know that lots of ordinary things about your homestay may feel strange at first, and we know that you won't want to seem ungrateful or unhappy. But it's okay to ask for help. Please don't say things are "fine" if they aren't. (But don't make insults, either!) Please be patient and try to be as specific about your needs and feelings as possible. Ask specific questions, whether you're concerned about laundry or dinner.
- It's okay to need some quiet time to yourself—but sometimes the best way to grow more comfortable at home is to keep busy and involved, to meet people, and most of all to talk—your hosts have welcomed you into their home because they want to know about you. If you're feeling overwhelmed (or even a little homesick), then why not practice your English by telling your host family all about life at your home!

In the meantime, please stay in touch!

And remember: **Have fun!**



Memo



As an international student of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, you must adhere to the following:

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

1. Students will obtain satisfactory results in their courses to continue in the program.
2. Students will take a full program. If students wish to change their program (e.g. drop a course) they must first obtain permission of their guidance counselor and the OISP academic advisor.
3. Students will follow the rules of their school.
4. Students have the responsibility to share their report cards, and school letters with their parents and homestay family.
5. OISP or the school will provide written reports to the parents of students who are experiencing difficulty in our school system (e.g. attendance or academic results).

ATTENDANCE

6. Students will strive to attend school on every school day of each term. All students (including those 18 years of age and older) who are sick and absent from school will bring a note signed by their host parent explaining their absence.
7. Students who are absent from school for a valid reason are responsible for making up all the work and assignments they have missed.
8. Students who cannot maintain regular attendance at school will be withdrawn from the program.
9. Students who are withdrawn from the program will return to their home country immediately at their own expense and without any refund of tuition fees.

HOMESTAY

10. Students will live with a homestay family for the duration of their studies.
11. Students will advise the homestay family of their emergency contact details.
12. Students will follow and respect homestay family household rules and property. These include showing consideration and courtesy, agreeing to a suitable home time and bed time, and advising the homestay family of outings and visits.
13. Students will negotiate the use of telephone, computer and internet facilities with the homestay family and abide by their decision in relation to this usage.
14. Students will be treated as a respected member of the family and will be expected to be an active member of the household.

CONTACT DETAILS

15. Students will obtain permission from the OISP office before changing accommodation.
16. Students will advise their school and the OISP office of their new contact details within seven (7) days.

OVERSEAS STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE

17. All students must have health insurance to cover medical emergencies, illness and medications while in the program.

CANADIAN LAW

18. Students will obey Canadian laws and regulations at all times.
19. Students are not permitted to work for pay.