

# Hints for Hosts



## 'Yes' may mean several things

In many cultures it is important to agree with the person older than you, or above you in status. You want to please them and tell them what they want to hear. This may mean that we don't always get straight answers to our questions or suggestions. The intention is not to mislead but to please. Learn how to get the agreement or information you need by asking less direct questions, and giving space for alternatives.

## Family matters

Be aware that family is very important to most international students and they will be missing their families greatly at this time of adjustment. Ask often about family members. Make a special effort to give support recognising that distance from family will be felt acutely at times, especially if there is a family anniversary or tragedy.

## Friendship

### Work at becoming friends

Sometimes this comes without effort. Other times it needs working at. Allow the student to get close to you by being relaxed with them and involving them with different activities, as you might any friend. Listen out for any news about their country and contact them immediately to show your interest/concern. It will mean a lot.

### Pray for them

You may be the only Christian they have ever had close contact with. Keep praying for them to be open to hearing God and finding Him for themselves. If they are already Christians, encourage them in their walk with God and offer to pray with them.

## Share yourself: Share your faith

Friendship is unconditional, but obviously our desire is that others will come to know the Lord. Be open, be honest and inevitably you will find you are sharing about why God is important in your life. If appropriate, you could share faith stories of how God helped you (or a family member) in a time of need, etc. If there is interest, offer to get hold of scriptures in their language (or in English). A visit to see a church or attend a service may be an interesting cultural experience, if no more, but don't necessarily suggest this for your first meeting with them. Tell them what to expect if attending a service.

## Avoid misunderstandings

Be aware of gender issues, with some cultures being especially sensitive. Where possible have same sex driver or two students in the car.

## And finally...

Be encouraged that students really love being invited into a home and will normally overlook any cultural blunders which are covered over by the warm welcome they are given.

## Your local contact is...

Tel: 01920 460006

Email: [info@friendsinternational.uk](mailto:info@friendsinternational.uk)

Web: [www.friendsinternational.uk](http://www.friendsinternational.uk)



## Helpful tips when hosting international students

Hosting international students should be a fun learning experience for both sides. Remember, warmth of welcome and genuine interest will more than compensate for any lack of cultural knowledge.

## Contact

### Make contact quickly

The newly arrived student is often lonely and will feel unwanted if you delay making contact. Phone/email/text/visit and fix a date, even if it is a little way ahead. You could suggest a neutral meeting place and then arrange for them to come to your home at a later date. If you have problems making contact, you can get in touch with your local Friends International staff worker who will try to help.

### Keep in contact

After a student's first visit, try to keep in touch by phone or e-mail and fix another date to suit you and your student.

### Give very clear information

Ask whether the day and time you have suggested suits the student. Some will agree to it even though it is very inconvenient or actually not possible. Make it clear how long the student will be expected to stay with you, and whether it will include a meal. If possible, collect your student and take them home, especially if it is dark.

## Hospitality

### Make the student feel at home

Don't feel your home must be immaculate. Allow the student to help if they seem comfortable doing that, but remember that in some cultures men or guests never enter the kitchen.

### Cook a British meal

Don't try and cook a curry for Indians or stir-fry for Chinese. Let them try something typically British, perhaps a casserole with good flavouring. Check for religious or personal food preferences. Muslims do not eat pork and Hindus do not eat beef. Normally Muslims will only eat halal meat, which you can buy at a halal butcher. Alternatively, cook a vegetarian dish, or use a meat-substitute e.g. Quorn.

### 'No' may mean several things

Be aware that in some cultures it is polite to refuse food, drink etc. when first offered and you may need to offer a second or third time before the student feels able to accept. Don't fill up their plate with a big helping; allow them to try small amounts first.

## Show the way

Eating with a knife and fork may be unfamiliar. Provide an extra spoon, and by your example show them how to serve themselves and tackle certain foods. Expressions like 'Tuck in!' or 'Let's say grace' will need brief explanation.

## 'Raining cats and dogs'

If you have a pet, check first that the student will not be scared or even offended by your friendly cat or dog (dogs are considered unclean by most Muslims). Walking in the rain or cold through muddy fields is a peculiarly British custom usually not enjoyed by others!

## Accept hospitality offered

Allow your student to reciprocate by offering you hospitality. In many cultures shoes off inside is the norm. They may even wish to cook a meal in your home if their kitchen/dining facilities are limited. Some may turn up with a dish of food they have made.

## Language & Culture

### Speak clearly, using 'standard' English

Avoid too much slang and difficult idioms. Be prepared to repeat, write down or re-phrase to aid understanding. Don't speak more loudly to compensate!

### Give information about yourself

Don't just ask your student all the questions. Volunteer information about yourself and your family. Share photos and artefacts that tell about your life.

### Remember it's not wrong, it's just different

We all have different ways of doing things that can cause surprise or even shock on either side. Make allowances, be relaxed but thoughtful, trying to avoid giving offence.

