



**PRESTIGE
GUARDIANS**



**HOST FAMILY
HANDBOOK**

Prestige Guardians Ltd.

Drey Coppice, College Road, Bath, BA1 5RR, England, UK

www.prestige-guardians.co.uk

+44 (0) 1225859998



Hosting students from overseas

This handbook is produced to give you a guide on what you can expect and what is expected of you as a host family to overseas students. As a Prestige Guardians host family, you are providing a very important service to our students, as well as representing Prestige – the students you host will end up knowing you much better than they know us.

You will be visited by a Prestige Guardians coordinator, who will be looking for warm, comfortable, safe and hygienic conditions conducive to study and relaxation.

We rely on your support to enable us to deliver (and continue delivering) our acclaimed level of service – you are an essential partner and we very much appreciate your input.



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1. Introduction to hosting students from overseas

Your guest will normally be attending a private boarding school in the UK. Many of these schools offer fixed “Exeat” weekends in addition to the normal half-term holidays. During these periods, the boarding houses close giving staff and students a break and students require alternative accommodation arrangements.

Parents often choose host family accommodation because it offers safety, a ‘home away from home’ in a family atmosphere, where students can practice another language, learn about another culture, and be treated as one of the family.

When your student first arrives at your home it is therefore important to be welcoming and understanding, as staying in an unfamiliar environment can be an anxious time for a young person whose family lives far away. So, although students will sometimes spend time in their room working or playing, access to your living areas to watch TV, chat with your family or relax is invaluable.

- Language

Most students are here in the UK to study for exams, such as GCSEs and A Levels, and their spoken English is excellent. However, this is not always the case, and patience and understanding is required when communications are difficult.

- Dogs and Cats

The English love their pets, but this is not often shared by people from China and the Far East. Sometimes the students have had very little contact with any dogs or cats and consider them unhygienic and frightening. Please be sensitive to this, particularly when the student first arrives. They often leave loving pets as much as we do!



2. Your responsibilities as a host family

- Who is the student's guardian?

During the times that you are hosting, your responsibilities are to protect, care for and provide full board and lodging for your student on a day-to-day basis. All the while, the overall guardianship responsibility remains with Prestige, whom you should contact whenever a situation arises in which you are uncertain as to the appropriate action to take. Untoward occurrences, such as hospitalisation, unexplained student absences or other situations effecting student safety, should be reported to Prestige immediately. Should a student we have booked in with you, not arrive within 2 hours of when you are expecting them, it is your duty to advise us of this matter and we will follow up.

- What school contact is required?

You will not normally be expected to instigate contact with a student's school or to attend school occasions, which is a role undertaken by the Prestige coordinator. If there was a need for the host to contact or visit the school, it would be at the instigation of Prestige and with the agreement of the host.

3. What a student can expect from you

- Bedroom

Each student should have his or her own room or share with someone of a similar age and of the same sex.

Prestige Guardians needs to be aware of all students' sleeping arrangements in your house, so please confirm these to us, particularly if there are students from other organisations.



The students need to have:

- A comfortable bed with clean, warm bedding.
 - Somewhere to put their belongings.
 - A table/desk and chair (with lighting) for studying, ideally in their room.
 - 3 meals per day.
 - Internet access
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- Bathroom

Most students are used to taking at least daily showers in preference to a bath. Discuss suitable times for them to use the bathroom, and make sure your student knows how to use the shower (e.g. shower curtain!), toilet facilities, and where to put any rubbish. It may be prudent to suggest a maximum time for a shower – say, 5-10 minutes, as at home they are often used to unlimited hot water. Ask them to leave the bathroom clean and tidy. Also, if appropriate, make sure you explain the arrangements for disposing of sanitary items.

- Meals

Talk to your student about mealtimes, as **food is probably the BIGGEST area of comment** by students! Although they may not express it, good home-cooked food is hugely appreciated! We suggest that you speak to the student on their arrival about the types of food that they like/dislike – rather than buy a whole week's shopping beforehand.

Students are paying for full board accommodation, and as a guide will expect the following:

Breakfast - Teenage students are often ready for a lie-in in the mornings and therefore a late breakfast is common. They will be used to cereal and toast but a full English breakfast often goes down well!

Lunch can be a light meal, soup and bread, or sandwiches, a jacket potato, cheese on toast, or maybe pasta or noodles could be offered as an alternative, with some salad, fruit or a yoghurt, etc. Please bear in mind that school food tends to be fairly substantial and lunch is the main meal in school.

Dinner should ideally be taken with the family, and consist of at least two courses e.g. a main course of chicken, fish or red meat with vegetables and a dessert/fruit. Chinese students eat less red meat but rice, noodles and pasta are popular. Ask them what they like. They may even like to cook a meal for you if given the opportunity.



Snacks – Students should not expect to help themselves and ‘snack’ in between meals, but encourage them to ask. If hungry (teenagers are often growing fast!) something like biscuits or cake, cup noodles or some fruit should be available. A hot drink and a biscuit before going to bed would be appreciated, especially if the dinner is early.

Sometimes, the student’s table manners cause a little concern. Remember, for some of them, they have only just become accustomed to using a knife and fork (they may have only used chopsticks before). Please respect this difficulty and we would also ask you to appreciate that slurping food, talking with mouth full etc. is broadly common and acceptable in China, but at the same time try to offer some sensitive guidance if you feel it is necessary. The student guidelines ask them not to leave the table until everyone has finished and to carry the plates out to the kitchen at the end of the meal.

- Internet Access

Students expect **access to an internet connection**, preferably wireless. Many schools now also provide this. The internet is used for academic work and also to stay in touch with their family and friends during the holiday period. It is extremely difficult to place students in host families who have no internet access. Students are told not to download large files, such as films, games and music, as this can lead to problems with your normal access.

Students should not need to use your telephone landline, although some have pre-payment cards to ring home to their parents. They should always ask for your permission.

There is increasing concern about the dangers to young people of free and unrestricted access to the internet without appropriate controls. Prestige Guardians suggests that hosts limit access in the best interests of the student. For example, wireless internet may sometimes be switched off overnight – students are used to this as schools will also have restricted networks. However, it is impossible for Prestige Guardians and you as host families to police this effectively and therefore the liability and responsibility for internet use and downloads rests with the student. That said, it is recommended that host families use software such as Net Nanny or similar, to restrict access to certain websites or content.

- Laundry

Particularly over a half-term, students will have some laundry. Please let your student know where they can put their laundry and the days that you use your machine.



4. What you can expect from the student

Students have guidelines on staying in a host family, and although they are paying guests and don't have particular duties or chores, they are expected to be polite and courteous, and you should give them friendly guidance on this if required. It is likely that your student will have a lot of school work and possibly revision to do during the holiday period, so they may spend more time in their bedroom than you would expect.

- **Times to be Home**

Prestige has guidelines on times to be home as below. If your student goes out, you should always know plans, return times and **exchange telephone numbers**. Students are told to always contact their hosts if there is a change to plans.

Aged under 14	Must be accompanied by an adult member of host family
Aged 14	Home by 7 pm or before dark, whichever is the earlier
Aged 15-16	Home by 9 pm
Ages 17-18	Home by 10 pm

- **Not Allowed!**

- **Staying away overnight** is forbidden unless specific permission has been given in advance by Prestige Guardians, normally with the consent of the student's own parents.
- **Friends of students are not allowed to stay** with you unless Prestige Guardians has approved temporary guardianship in advance. This is for legal and insurance reasons.
- **Students are not allowed** to **smoke** and may only drink **alcohol** with your express permission and under your supervision. **Hair dying** and body **piercing are** also forbidden.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact us **immediately**.



5. What you can expect from Prestige Guardians Ltd.

- Communications

Arrangements regarding the student, school and transfer times will be confirmed to you in writing, (by email) prior to arrival. You can contact Prestige at any time should you have any queries or concerns.

- Support

In the case of extreme emergencies, please phone **07551 081009**. This service is available 24 hours per day. Otherwise you should ring the office on **01225 859998**.

- Payment

- Housekeeping Allowance: We have a standard rate per night, which will be clarified with you at the time of booking. We will confirm in advance, and in writing, the amount you will be paid for the student's stay.

Should there be a **cancellation**, we will do our best to find another student but, if not, we have a cancellation policy which pays up to 7 nights' accommodation.

If you have a student booked in just for the day time, a different rate applies – you will be made aware of this when we make the booking.

- Expenses: Prestige Guardians will pay your mileage if you collect the student from school (currently 50p per mile). If the student has no pocket money we can also cover the cost of the student's entrance for activities such as swimming, cinema or a visit to an attraction or National Trust property (to a maximum of £25, but please ring if in doubt). **All claims should be supported by itemized receipts and sent to the office, as expenses are added to the parents' account.**
- Payment is made direct to your bank, using the BACS system. After the end of the event (i.e. Exeat or Half Term), you will need to submit a claim form (online or by post). The payment will normally arrive in your account shortly after receiving your claim form.
- Legal contractual arrangements.

Please note that due to the guardianship contractual arrangements between Prestige Guardians and you the host family, as well as our contract with the students and their parents, ALL ARRANGEMENTS must be done through the Prestige Guardians head office. It is essential that you contact us if any of our students contact you directly for two reasons – if



we do not know about the arrangement, then we simply cannot pay you; also, the responsibility of guardianship would fall to you and this is very different to being simply a host family where we support you.

6. Other information

- **Health and Safety:** Make sure all electrical appliances are safe, particularly in the student's room. Smoke alarms must be fitted in the house. Explain to the student basic escape routes, access to the outside doors, and the location of any necessary keys.
- **Mobile phone numbers:** Swap numbers, so they are known to all parties, as well as land line and any other useful contact numbers. As host, you should at all times know where your visitor is and be able to contact him/her if required.
- **Student illness:** In case of student illness or accident, take the same precautions as you would with your own child. If in doubt, your first course of action should be to contact your family doctor in the usual way. The student will have been registered with the NHS by the school. If the illness becomes more serious or hospitalisation ensues, or treatment at your local A&E is necessary, you should immediately contact the Prestige emergency number: **07551 081009**.
- **Household and Car Insurance:** Prestige Guardians Ltd has professional liability and indemnity insurance, but host families must have household contents insurance. Standard policies include cover for accidental damage by visitors and third party liability insurance. Please inform your insurer that you will have a student visitor in your home. Standard car insurance policies cover the holder for a minimum of third party claims whilst the car is being used for domestic, social and pleasure purposes, but not for business. If in doubt, you should consult your insurer.
- **Safeguarding:** The safety and welfare of children, or Safeguarding, means protecting children from physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. Prestige Guardians is committed to the protection of all children in its care. Host families should refer to our Safeguarding Policy.

Our aim is to ensure at all times a caring and secure environment in which students feel safe, respected and valued. We have a policy of trust, openness and clear communication between students, school and Prestige Guardians staff and our host families, so that the student's welfare is the top priority. If you have any concerns, the DSL is **Miss Leonor Liz-Losada**, mobile **07551 081009**.



As a host family, you will be expected to protect the students that you host and you and any members of your family who are 16 y/o or older will be required to have a valid Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

7. Tips from existing hosts for hosts – what to do...?

Firstly, **DON'T WORRY** if the students want to spend some time 'chilling out', lying in or playing computer games. School life can be very busy, and some relaxation time is often what is needed. Please treat your student, as you would wish your own children to be treated if they were staying with a host family, and hosting will be a rewarding experience.

Most students are interested in the host family they are staying with and like to chat about experiences in their own country and here. But they are away from home and in unfamiliar surroundings, and time can pass slowly. It is good to involve them in helping you around the house, perhaps asking them to set the table, fill the water jug, calling other students or family members to the table, make tea or coffee for everyone and hand around the biscuits, etc. Try them on a few of the following family activities:

- Cinema visit.
- Visit to town centre, supermarket or local shopping centre – they love shopping!
- Physical Exercise: swimming, tennis, football, basketball, bicycle ride, bowling, trampoline.
- Arts: – painting, drawing, music – many students play a musical instrument.
- Cooking - Looking up recipes, get them involved in a menu for dinner!
- Helping around the house and garden, assisting in washing the car, hanging out washing, sweeping leaves, or posting letters in the nearby post-box.
- Crafts – One host taught students to knit and held a 'knitting a scarf competition'. Other hosts have made Christmas decorations, cards, sewing napkins.
- Seasonal Events - Pumpkins for Halloween, Guy and bonfire for 5th November.
- Nature - Making nesting boxes for birds out of odd pieces of wood, planting seeds.
- Games - Monopoly, Scrabble and games to help improve the student's English vocabulary – e.g. how many items can you name in the kitchen, garden, bathroom, etc.

If you have any concerns either before or during your student's homestay, please do not hesitate to contact us.



And finally....

.....thank you for agreeing to host our students. We aim to make it a positive experience for both hosts and visitors. Your feedback is always welcome.

8. Prestige Guardians – Contact information

Director:	Miss Leonor Liz-Losada
Email:	mail@prestige-guardians.co.uk
24/7 Emergency:	Miss Leonor Liz-Losada
Tel:	+44(0)7551081009
Guardian Supervisor (Europe):	Miss Leonor Liz-Losada
Email:	leoliz@prestige-guardians.co.uk
Tel:	+44(0)1225 859998
Accounts Department:	Mrs. Maysa Marques
Email:	accounts@prestige-guardians.co.uk
Tel:	+44(0)1225 859998