

Adjusting to the Family Stay

Student Preparation Activity

Congratulations on deciding to do a family stay! You probably already realize that this experience will lead to more profound connections and a higher level of immersion into the culture; however, what might take you by surprise is that you may experience some discomfort as you encounter difference in daily life during your family stay.

The objective of the following activity is to help you become aware that your host family may be different from your own family, and that their daily lifestyle may feel different while you are staying with them. By adjusting your expectations and going into the experience with an open mind, you will be able to better appreciate the differences – as well as the similarities – that you discover while staying with your host family.

Step 1: Read the situations below and indicate whether you would feel comfortable, uncomfortable or neutral if you encountered that situation during your family stay.

Situation	comfortable	uncomfortable	neutral
One or more of your host family members smokes a lot.			
You are vegetarian but your host family prepared you a dish with meat in it.			
Your host family does not go to bed before midnight.			
You have to take a shower but there is no hot water coming out of the tap.			
There is hot water in the shower, but you were told your shower should only take 5 minutes.			
Your host family has a dog.			
Nobody in your host family speaks English.			
Your host family's house has thin walls and you can hear noise from other rooms and cars and noise from the street.			
There is no air conditioning in your host family's home.			
Your host family is very interested in politics and they ask you your thoughts about the U.S. president.			
The girlfriend or boyfriend of your host sibling hangs out with you and your host sibling most of the time during your family stay.			
Your host sibling brings you to parties and people are drinking and smoking there.			
Your host family eats a lot of fish.			
Your host family doesn't take you to as many places as your friend's host family.			
Your host siblings are younger than you, 11 and 13 years old.			

Adjusting to the Family Stay

Student Preparation Activity

Step 2: In English: come up with some solutions or coping strategies that might help you manage the situation.

Examples:

- Find a spot in the house that you like (a comfy chair or a patio) where you can journal or read or just reflect
- Read a familiar book or watch a familiar TV show if it's possible
- Do an activity that feels familiar (go running or play piano)

A word of caution: connecting with friends or family in the U.S. may only amplify your discomfort.

In the target language: if you need to communicate with your host family to address the situation, practice how you would say what you need to say to your host family member to convey the message:

Step 3. In a small group of other classmates, discuss which situations made you uncomfortable. Were you surprised that any of the situations listed here? Share what you came up with as a coping strategy or solution.