



## How to Be A Welcoming and Supportive Host Family

**Ask questions.** Find out about your new son's/daughter's natural family, school and environment. What's easy and what's difficult. Is their behavior here similar to their behavior at home?

**Don't judge.** There's more than one right way. Exchange students are teenagers. They are not through growing, learning, or changing.

**Communicate directly.** Exchange students need praise and support as well as knowing where they stand and if there's a problem. Don't make them guess if you're happy or you not.

**Stop problems quickly.** Explain what is bothering you when it's small so it doesn't get worse.

**Be patient.** Understand that you have rules and expectations that don't match what your exchange student has grown up with. Use patience and discuss what you expect with your student.

**Support the rules.** YFU rules and local, state, and federal laws are in place to protect you and your student. If your son/daughter gets into trouble for breaking YFU rules, it's not okay that you were the one who helped them.

**Ask for help.** Never hesitate to ask for YFU help. The National Office telephone number is: (800) 833.6243

**Just say it.** Don't talk behind your student's back or through your own children. If you need to say something, say it.

**Don't compare.** Your son/daughter is new to your home. Even if you've heard the question one hundred times in past years or from your own children, remember each student has only one experience. Be kind.

**Be specific.** Don't say, "Be home at a reasonable time." What is reasonable to you may be totally unreasonable to them.

**Be clear.** Rather than using a figure of speech, "It might be nice if you made your bed", say what you mean.

**Love, support and care.** Sometimes when they seem the least lovable is exactly when they need comforting the most.

**Sympathize.** Remember, being an exchange student isn't easy. How would you do in the same situation?

**Teach and learn.** Differences in culture means variations in what is and isn't appropriate behavior. Learn about your student's culture and teach them about yours.

**Be fair.** Don't give your student special privileges you wouldn't give your own kids.

**Encourage involvement.** Your student should spend time with Americans, speaking English. Learning about US culture is best done by speaking the language and spending time with Americans.

**Assist.** Some students have difficulty making friends. Discuss what teenagers in the US normally do to reach out to peers.

**Report strange behavior.** Unusual or disturbing behavior should be communicated to your Local Coordinator immediately. LCs are trained to know what is okay and what isn't (or they know where to find this information). If you don't know who your Local Coordinator is, call the National Office at 1.800.833.6243

**Help with homework.** Textbooks are difficult for many American students; they can be really hard for exchange students.

**Guide.** Encourage your students to take classes that aren't available in their home country. All students are REQUIRED to pass their classes with a "C" grade, even if it doesn't count at home. Check with the school to see how they are doing.

**Include.** Your student will be eager to join family activities. Help them balance family, friends, and school.

**Open your family.** Don't treat your new son/daughter like a guest. Students want to be a part of the family.

**Be consistent.** Don't do things in the beginning of your relationship that you don't plan to do throughout the program. Students can live for a year without fresh French bread and chocolate if your budget doesn't allow. Do what makes you comfortable.

**Enjoy yourselves.** That is what it's all about.