

International Student Handbook

International Student Handbook

I. American Etiquette

There are a lot of rules that govern American etiquette; therefore, we do not expect you to master all of them immediately. We will cover the ones we feel to be the most important and that will enable you to be regarded as a polite and well-behaved student. Please remember that it is entirely possible that you will see Americans breaking some of the rules we outline for you. It does not mean that the rule should be disregarded and considered unnecessary; it simply means that there are some rude Americans.

We encourage you to review these rules often so that you can develop good habits and so that you will be reminded of appropriate speech and behavior.

Rules of American Etiquette

1. When responding to any adult, you must answer by saying "yes, Ma'am" or "No, Ma'am" for females, and "yes, sir" or "no, sir" for males.
2. Always make eye contact when being spoken to.
3. When an adult asks a question - always answer. If you don't understand the question you can say, "I'm sorry I don't understand", or "could you repeat that please?" Never just say, "what?"
4. If you are asked a question in conversation, you should ask a question in return.
5. When you cough, sneeze, or burp, turn your head away from others and cover your mouth with the full part of your hand or the crook of your elbow.
6. Do not smack your lips, "tsk," roll your eyes, or show any other type of disrespect with gestures.
7. Always say, "thank you," when given something.
8. When you receive something, do not insult the gift or the giver. Be thankful and polite whether it is something you like or not.
9. Gentlemen should never wear hats inside a building that is not a sports facility. The rule is the same for ladies unless the hat is a dress hat that is a part of the outfit.
10. Gentlemen should always respect and care for ladies. Open doors for them, carry packages for them, allow them to go first, etc.
11. Guys should never hit girls; not even when joking.
12. Do not speak in a language that others in the group do not understand. There are some situations when it is very rude to speak your native tongue.
 - a. in the car with your host family
 - b. in your host home when members of the host family are present
 - c. to your classmate /in front of your teacher
 - d. when you are angry
 - e. when you don't want someone in the room to know what you are saying
 - f. when there is only one or two in the group who don't understand you
13. Be on time. When you are given a departure or arrival time it is very rude to keep people waiting.

Mealtimes:

1. Do not ask your host/hostess to cook something different for you than is being served to the others.

2. Do not refuse to eat what has been prepared and then cook for yourself later.
3. Do not fix yourself a snack after school that will make you not hungry at mealtime.
4. When you first sit down for a meal, immediately place the napkin in your lap. If your silverware is wrapped in a napkin, unwrap it as soon as you sit down and place the napkin in your lap.
5. Do not begin eating until everyone has been seated and the prayer has been given. If it is a buffet style meal, do not begin serving until after the prayer.
6. Never place your elbows on the table.
7. Use one hand to eat, unless you are cutting or buttering food. Never have your fork in one hand and a glass in the other.
8. Do not smack your lips or chew noisily.
9. When you are finished eating place your napkin on the table to the left of your plate.
10. When you are finished eating do not leave the table without asking to be excused. Then when you are excused clear your dishes and trash in whatever way your hostess requires. Always ask if you can help with clean up even if the response is always the same.

At School

1. Smile and say, "hello," when you pass teachers and staff members in the hallway.
2. Do not ask for rewards for good grades or good behavior.
3. When grading other student's papers, give only correct grades.
4. Follow along when reading together in class.
5. Do not work on anything but assignments for the class you are in.
6. Answer all written questions with complete sentences.
7. Respect other students' comments, opinions, and ideas.
8. If someone in the class wins a game or does something well, congratulate that person.
9. If you win or do well at something, do not brag. If you lose, do not show anger.

10. Listen and obey your teacher the first time a request is made.
11. Pay attention to assignment and project criteria.
12. Do your own work. Copying homework is cheating. It is cheating for the one who is copying and for the one who is allowing the copying.
13. Be on time to class.
14. Be prepared for class. Bring all of your class supplies with you. Do not ask to leave the class to get your supplies.
15. Always ask permission personally for anything that requires a change in the normal order of things. Do not assume that one person getting permission is a blanket permission for everyone.
16. Read memos and listen to announcements. Know what is going on that pertains to you.

A. In addition to the rules of etiquette you will be encouraged to speak English as much as possible. Please do not become frustrated at us when we remind you frequently to use English. It is in your best interest to do this rather than to choose the easier method of speaking your native tongue whenever possible. You will not improve in English unless you practice it.

- a. English only should be used in your host home unless you are speaking to your family on the phone.
- b. English only should be used in the classroom unless there is someone having difficulty understanding and the teacher has asked you to explain it in their language.
- c. You should never speak in your native tongue when there are others in the room who don't understand you.
- d. When driving in a car with host parents or American adults you should only use English.

B. In some countries bathroom habits are different than here. Make sure you know the customs in the home you are staying.

- a. In the US we flush toilet paper and do not put it in the trash can. Ask your host family if there are special instructions regarding what can be flushed.
- b. In some cultures it is appropriate to wet the whole bathroom when washing or showering. This is not the case in the US. You must be careful not to flood the bathroom, the sink, the floor, and the mirror. These things degrade badly when exposed to too much water. If you do get things wet, make sure you dry them off when you are finished.
- c. Ask what is appropriate to go down the drain. If there is no garbage disposal you cannot put food down the drain.
- d. Ladies, ask if there are special instructions regarding personal feminine products and their disposal.
- e. There are certain bathroom areas at school that students are not allowed to use at any time. Listen to those instructions and obey them.

C. Ask your host parent to advise you on appropriate dress in and outside of the house including being modest when coming from the shower.

- a. Practice modesty in your host homes and dorms. When you are in family areas make sure you are fully clothed. Girls make sure shorts are not too short or too tight and guys if there are women or girls present you should wear a t-shirt.
- b. It is never appropriate to wear tight, short, or suggestive clothing. Do not wear clothing that depicts demons, skeletons, bad language, immodest pictures, etc. If you are not sure what a shirt is saying check with an adult first to make sure it is okay.
- c. Different churches have different ideas of what is appropriate dress. Make sure you follow those guidelines when getting ready for church. Do not assume that if you have always worn t-shirt and jeans to church it is okay to do so here.

II. What to do if a problem arises that you feel you need help with.

A. Airport trips

- a. Your host parent will coordinate pick up and drop off at the airport when you arrive and when you need to leave.
- b. If the host parent is unable to arrange for airport transportation they can call the international office to see if we can help facilitate the pick up or drop off, however, keep in mind that we will not have the bus this year so there will be no large vehicle to pick up large groups.
- c. If someone other than your host parent takes you to the airport it would be considered polite to offer them gas money for the trip.
- d. If no one is available, there are airport shuttles that can pick up and drop off people. There is a cost for this service that will be the responsibility of the student.

B. Tutoring

- a. Please keep in mind that your first few weeks may be incredibly overwhelming. See your teachers immediately if you think you are going to need extra help.
- b. If the teacher is not willing or able to provide enough tutoring to make you feel successful contact the international office for extra help.

C. Problems with Host parents

- a. Students are not allowed to “shop” for host parents. They are assigned by ICEM and are expected to be maintained for the duration of the school year.
- b. If you have an issue at your home you are to first let us know in the international office so that we can provide needed intervention or counsel.
- c. Students will only be allowed to change host homes if it is the request of the host parent, there is violation of Christian values, there is an issue of adequate care, or it is the request of ICEM. Students are not allowed to change because they don’t like the rules, they don’t like the house, or they want to stay with a friend.

- d. Students will not be allowed to move from host parent to dorm or dorm to host parent without the approval of Hannah.

D. Host parent out of town

- a. Occasionally a host parent may need to go out of town at such a time or place that the student cannot go with them. If that is the case it is the responsibility of the host parent to find someone their student can stay with until they return.
- b. Usually the best option for finding someone is to check with other host parents and see if they can help you out. Your host parent may ask you to check with your friends and see if there is someone you can stay with.
- c. As a last resort, if you cannot find anyone you can ask the international office to help you find someone. Please do not ask this at the last minute. We can't work miracles.

E. Injury/illness

- a. In the event of illness or injury your host parent can take you to the nearest clinic or emergency room if required. You should have already pre-arranged a plan with your parents how this will be handled financially.
- b. Even if you have insurance in your home country, most of those plans require you to pay for care up front and then be reimbursed once the forms have been turned in. If you have a credit card - that is the best way to handle the expense. You can pay right then and there is a receipt that can be accessed from the credit card company.
- c. In the rare event that you do not have a credit card, you will need to call your family and find out how they want to handle payment. They can usually wire funds or pay by credit card over the phone.
- d. Host parents are not expected to pay medical bills for students.

IV. Activities governed by the organization

- A. Dating:** We prefer that our international students do not date at all. However, there are times that despite our wishes or best intentions relationships will develop.
- a. Students who do go out should always go in a group and not just a boy and a girl. A boy and a girl should never be alone.
 - b. Host parents will research the boy or girl in question just as if they were dating their son or daughter.
 - c. Wise curfews will be made and enforced.
 - d. The student's parents and host parents should be aware and approve of the relationship.

B. Driving or riding in cars with other students.

- a. International students will not be allowed to drive or have cars unless they are seniors living with a family member.
- b. Students should not ask host parents to teach them to drive.
- c. Students living with host parents are not allowed to have cars or drive regardless of age.
- d. International students should not ride in cars of other students without the express permission of their host parent (for every instance).
- e. Students wishing to leave campus with another student must have a written note from the host parent.

C. Church attendance and behavior

- a. All international students are required to attend the Saturday night services. This will be a part of their Bible grade. Students will not be excused for more than one service a month without a deduction in grade.
- b. If the host parent is unable to bring the student they are responsible to find alternative transportation for their students.
- c. All international students and host parents are expected to attend at least Sunday morning church. Students are to attend with their host

parent. If they want to go to a Spanish, Korean, Chinese, etc. church they are to do that at times other than Sunday morning.

- d. Students are to be respectful and quiet during services and should not wear hats in church, use cell phones to talk or text, or listen to music players during services.

D. Computers

- a. We would prefer that students not bring computers at all. That being said, most of you will have them anyway because your parents see it as an essential of your education and communication.
- b. Students who do have their own computers are not allowed to have them in their bedrooms ever. There is too much available that tempts you to be unwise morally in that area. If we require you to use computers only in public areas we can help eliminate that temptation.
- c. Remember that very little of what you are doing on the computer is actually academic. Allow your host parents to be wise in restricting computer time so that other endeavors can be pursued.
- d. Computers are subject to inspection at any time. Any student whose computer is found to have pornography will have their computer taken up and will lose the computer privilege.

E. Dress code (including school jackets)

- a. Dress code is established by the school and is not open to interpretation. It is listed in the student handbook and must be followed as written.
- b. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure they are in appropriate uniform before they leave for school.
- c. Not getting laundry done is **not** a reason to be out of uniform.
- d. Excessive dress code citations can result in fines. These are above what the student pays for tuition and must be paid by the student in the business office.
- e. Boys are not allowed any piercings at all. Girls are allowed piercings in ears only. Students who arrive with inappropriate pierced jewelry

will have to remove it for the duration of their stay here. (They will not be allowed to wear them on weekends or after school).

F. Music and movies

- a. Like any kids, international kids away from home, will want to stretch the parameters of society. It is our responsibility to maintain godly standards regarding media influence with you.
- b. Regardless of what you have experienced in the past while you are here you should never watch “R” rated movies or movies with vulgar or demonic themes even if they have a rating below “R”.
- c. When you want to go to a movie or watch a movie on tv – you should first ask your host parent for permission and let them approve the movie.
- d. Do not make plans to meet at a theater and decide when you get there what you will watch. Don’t ask your host parent to drop you off at a theater without another adult.

G. Cheating

- a. Cheating is a very serious offense. It is considered cheating to copy homework, to let someone look off of your assignment or test, to download answers from the internet, etc. Anytime you are not doing your own work you are cheating. You will be punished for cheating whether you are the one taking the answers or the one giving the answers, both are wrong.
- b. It is not considered noble to hide the cheating of others. If you see students cheating it is your responsibility to report it.
- c. There is no good reason to cheat. If you are stressed and tempted to take a short cut such as cheating, see the international office for help or tutorials.

H. Smoking/Drinking/Drugs

- a. Smoking, drinking, and drugs are grounds for immediate dismissal. Regardless of your age and the age at which it is allowable by law, we do not allow these behaviors ever.
- b. Students are not allowed to carry any medicines on their person or to share medicines with anyone else. If you need medication it must be given by your host parent or by the school nurse.
- c. Be responsible and report violations if you see them.
- d. The school has permission to do random drug testing if there is a suspicion that there is a problem.

I. Vandalism

- a. Students are to respect the belongings of others and take pride in their school and their homes to ensure that they stay nice.
- b. Students should not hit or kick walls, doors, lockers, etc. when they are angry.
- c. Students should not write on walls, desks, or any other furniture.
- d. Vandalism is an extreme form of rudeness and will not go unpunished.
- e. Students involved in vandalism will also be required to make restitution and to counsel with the international staff.
- f. If the vandalism is on school property the school may choose to dismiss the student.

J. Events in which international students are expected to participate:

- a. Students are required to attend and participate in the Saturday evening international student service and student activities planned by the international department.
- b. Students are expected to attend and participate in international chapel services.
- c. Students are expected to perform in the Christmas television show.
- d. Students are expected to attend Church on Sunday mornings with their host parent.

K. Dual Credit

- a. Students can only participate in the dual credit program if they have been approved by Dr. Bearinger.
- b. Students involved must be able to provide transportation to and from San Jacinto College during the school day.
- c. Students that leave campus and do not go to the college will be dismissed from the program.

L. Lunches and lunch time

- a. All students are required to go to the lunch room whether they want to eat lunch or not.
- b. Students are required to buy lunch at school unless there is a medical reason they cannot eat the school lunches. If that is the case they should pay for the lunch groceries if they want to bring a lunch.
- c. Lunch tickets can be purchased by the day, week, or month.

M. Computer Lab

- a. There is a computer lab in the international office. Students are not to be in the lab without written permission from a teacher for a specific purpose.
- b. Students are not to be on the internet unless there is a teacher in the room with them.
- c. Students must use the computers in English, they are not allowed to change the language settings.
- d. Students are **not to eat or drink at all** in the computer lab.
- e. The computer lab is to be kept clean and well cared for. Push in chairs, put headphones away carefully, do not roll chairs over headphones, etc.
- f. Students are not to change passwords, background images, security settings, languages, default browsers, or add or remove programs from the computers.

- g. Students are not allowed in the lab during lunch time without a teacher in there with them (by special permission only).

N. Places off limits to students.

- a. The elevator is for the staff and those unable to use the stairs because of injury or handicap. Students are not allowed to use it unless they are with a teacher or they are delivering something for a teacher that cannot be carried up the stairs.
- b. The restrooms, right outside the elevator, are for the church and for staff members only. Students are not allowed to use them at all.
- c. The restrooms downstairs by the DK office are for staff only and are not to be used by students at all.
- d. Students are not to be upstairs during lunch or before school starts.
- e. Students are not allowed to leave the school for lunch or call to have lunch delivered to the school.
- f. Students are not to leave the lunch room until everyone is dismissed.

V. Areas the host parent sets the parameters. There are many areas of instruction that may be unique to your particular household. We encourage you to learn the parameters that have been put in place in your individual home.

A. Students have different ideas about what is a comfortable temperature in the house. Students should follow the host's rules regarding: opening windows, changing the thermostat, use of fans, or use of space heaters. Remember that things here may be different than what you are used to.

B. Many of you will have your own cell phones. This does not mean that you are not subject to rules regarding those phones. You will be required to submit to the rules of your household regarding phone

usage and will be subject to the phone being taken up if you break the rules. Cell phones out at school will be taken up and you must pay \$15 to get it back.

- C. Do not ask host parents to put you on their cell phone plan.** This can create problems if you don't pay your portion of the bill or if you don't complete the term of the contract.

- D. Host parents may need to help you set up a bank account that your parents can deposit money to for you.** If this is the case, let your host parent know what you need.

- E. Students should not miss school without the host parent's permission.**
 - a. Students cannot decide when they are staying home, they should ask the host parent for permission if they are sick.
 - b. Students should not stay home because they are not ready for a test, they have incomplete homework, or they don't have clean uniforms.
 - c. Some of the international girls get very sick with their monthly cycle. Let you host parent use their wisdom to determine whether it is bad enough to permit you staying home. Sometimes you are stronger than you think you are.
 - d. Students who just refuse to get out of bed will face consequences.
 - e. Be careful and alert to the number of absences you are accruing. If you exceed the allowed number of days you may be required to take summer school to make up days.

- F. Curfew**
 - a. Host parents will set curfews for their students like they would for their own children. Students often don't realize the danger of being out after dark, so we will guide you into making safer decisions.

- b. I tell my children that anything godly can be done before 10:00. That is a good rule of thumb. There shouldn't be too many occasions where being out late is needed.
- c. Your host parent may choose whether or not you can spend the night with a friend, they will have checked out the home like they would for their own child before making that determination.
- d. Do not make plans without consulting your host parents and then expect them to drop everything to take you where you want to go. Host parents should be asked permission not just told what you plan to do.

VI. Host Parent compensation

A. Host parents will receive a monthly stipend of \$500 to help defray the cost of providing for their student.

- a. Students should be prompt in paying their school bills so that checks can go out on time. Tuition and fees are due on the 1st of the month.
- b. Host parents are paid August through May, however the fee is a set fee for the school year that has been divided into 10 monthly payments. You are not paying for a whole month you are not getting. You are simply getting 10 months instead of 9 to pay the entire amount. In other words the host fee is \$5000 for the year regardless of how many payments it is divided into.
- c. If a student plans to stay for summer they will be required to pay \$500 per month for June and July.
- d. Your payment to a host parent doesn't mean that they have to do what you say. They are not your employees and you are not paying them so that you don't have to do any work. You are simply helping out with the expenses required for your care.
- e. It is good for you to do chores at home especially if the other children in your home have chores. Do not act like you are being mistreated if you are asked to help out around the house. Don't wait

for someone to tell you what to do. Be alert and helpful where you can.

- f. Do not ask your host parent to loan you money or to purchase things in their name. If you can't afford what you want you should not be buying it.

VII. Interaction between your host parents and your parents.

A. Some of your parents may want to have a very involved relationship with your host parents. This is fine as long as there are a few things to beware of:

- a. Do not enter into personal agreements or financial arrangements outside of the school. Don't ask your host parent for a discount for their services. All fees are to be paid through the school. This protects you from being taken advantage of in many ways.
- b. Many times you as the student will have to translate between your host parents and your parents. This is usually fine, but if a problem arises we may require another interpreter to insure that the conversations are not too one sided.
- c. Help your parents be at ease by assuring them that your host parent is watching out for your health and safety. If you have a concern in this area, talk to us first. We don't want your parents to be alarmed about something they are not here to fix.
- d. Please don't assume that if your family visits you they can stay with your host family. Ask them first to see how they feel about it. Some host parents may not have room or it may cause unneeded stress. If your family does stay in your host home they should limit visits to about 3 days. Any stay longer than that should be done in a hotel or with someone other than the host parent.

B. Some parents don't get involved at all.

- a. If your parents have very limited English skills and are unable to communicate with your host parents, offer to translate or at least send greetings occasionally.
- b. Let your host parent get to know your family through you.

III. The International Office

O. Your International Team

Your international student team consists of:

Patricia Gehret – Director of ICEM (phone: 832 723 5659)

pgehret@yahoo.com

Hannah Gehret – International student coordinator and Korean Dorm Dean (phone: 832 893 5182) cnpark@msn.com

Jill Johnson – International Student Coordinator (phone: 832 771 9959)

Jillyjohn1@yahoo.com

Scotty Henderson – ICEM Church Pastor ljhend1@solutia.com

Ron and Becky Dansby – International worship leaders

rondansby@gmail.com

P. Hours

- a. The international office is open during all school hours. Mon-Fri
- b. If you have an emergency after school hours you can call Patricia, Hannah, or Jill.

Q. Student Services

- a. There are computers in the international office that the students are allowed to use. If you need the computers to do homework, please prepare in advance and do not expect to wait until the last minute. The international office cannot print 40 students homework in a reasonable amount of time. **Print what you can at home.**
- b. Tutoring is offered through the international office if you need extra help.

- c. The international office will help with reference letters and essays for college applications when needed.