

Language Tree

Host Family Handbook



Language Tree

Penryn Campus | Cornwall



Contents:

Welcome to Hosting with Language Tree	-----	2
Language Tree Code of Practice	-----	3
Host Family Responsibilities	-----	4
Sickness & Illness	-----	7
Using WhatsApp	-----	8
Safeguarding	-----	9
➤ Prevent / Radicalisation	-----	10
Settling in & culture shock	-----	11
The Language Tree leaves of advice	-----	12
Terms & Conditions	-----	13
Payment of hosting fees	-----	15
FAQs	-----	16
Contact details	-----	17



Welcome to Hosting with Language Tree!

At Language Tree we believe in active and enriching learning that extends way beyond the boundaries of a classroom setting.

Our guiding ethos is Language, Culture and Adventure.

We help students improve their skills by using English to communicate both in the classroom and when engaging with the wider community and activities they are part of whilst staying with us.



We also emphasise the benefits of our students belonging to an international community of people from as many different countries and cultures as possible.

We choose our host families very carefully, focusing on your ability to give the warmth and welcome of a 'home away from home feel'. As a host, you provide one of the most important parts of the course for our students.

We encourage you to treat your student as a full member of the family enjoying meals, relaxing and spending time together when at home.

It is really important for you to speak English as much as possible with them to support their learning and to better understand and immerse them in the experience of their time here in Cornwall with us.

This handbook is the key document to guide you through hosting with us. By following this guide, we believe you will find hosting a far more rewarding experience than you first thought possible.

We look forward to working with you!





Language Tree Code of Practice for Host Families

- ✓ To encourage the student to speak English as much as possible in your home
- ✓ To maintain good communication with Language Tree and so be in a position to help resolve any problems that the students may encounter during his/her stay
- ✓ To encourage the student to feel at home and to treat him/her as a member of the family rather than as a paying guest
- ✓ To provide a clean and comfortable bedroom for the student(s)
- ✓ To provide access to a clean bathroom – this may be a shared or private bathroom
- ✓ To provide a home environment in which it is possible for the student to carry on his/her English studies properly
- ✓ To provide the student with a balanced and appropriate diet
- ✓ To get the student to the campus on time each day and to collect the student at the end of the day
- ✓ To show due concern for the welfare, safety and security of the student during his/her stay
- ✓ To provide 1 load of laundry per week, along with bedding and towels done weekly
- ✓ For students aged under 18, hosts may also be in touch with a student's parents. Hosts should ensure Language Tree are also informed of any significant communication between themselves and a student's parents
- ✓ To respect the student's different cultural background and to be sensitive to the particular needs of the student including in terms of sexual and gender identity

Host Family Responsibilities

It is normal for students to sometimes experience small difficulties in adjusting to the English way of life, especially for those students from a non-European background.

Guiding students through this process in a friendly and supportive way will often lead to building long lasting friendships.

Please remember that Language Tree staff are available to support you if you feel that there are particular cases where 'culture shock' is inhibiting a student's enjoyment of their time here, please do get in touch with us if this is the case.



House Rules & poor behaviour

Although a student is a paying guest, he or she is also a temporary member of the household and should, therefore, respect the internal rules of the home. It is always advisable to make clear to a student any particular customs of the house on arrival so students can be aware of this. It is also useful for hosts to inform Language Tree of any rules you may have too as this can help the matching process.

All students are also given a Student Handbook on arrival. This includes a Code of Conduct for students in terms of the types of language and behaviour that are unacceptable in all circumstances.

In the event of a student behaving aggressively or using any kind of abusive or unacceptable language - whether in English or another language – please let us know immediately. If you feel comfortable to do so, we also encourage you to tell the student this kind of behaviour is unacceptable. The ideal solution is that a student apologises and there is no further recurrence of that type of behaviour.

Sometimes young people, especially away from home, may wish to test boundaries. However, it is clear in our terms and conditions that this kind of behaviour can lead to removal from the course.

We are always available to support hosts in the event of unacceptable behaviour, so please let us know immediately if you experience this so we can provide the necessary support.

Home arrangements

In the student's bedroom, in addition to normal furniture (bed, wardrobe etc) there should be an area suitable for studying. If there is not a desk in the bedroom, then there should be an alternative space in the house where students can work if they wish to. Bedrooms should only be shared where this has been arranged in advance with Language Tree.



Warmth

Please bear in mind that many students from hotter countries do feel the cold, and may require extra blankets or duvets, and heating should be provided for a reasonable period in the student's bedroom if required / requested.

Meals

Most days, you will provide breakfast and an evening meal.

You are not expected to provide "between meal" snacks.

A packed lunch is required for weekend excursions, and possibly other days where students are out late.

The evening meal should be taken with the family and should consist of a least two courses (e.g. main course and dessert).

Access

Adult students should have a key to facilitate their own movements in and out of the home.

Students under 18 years old should never be at home alone and therefore will not require a key.

Students aged under 18 are not normally permitted go out unaccompanied while staying with a host family.

Language Tree provides a full programme of excursions and activities. If students aged under 18 are interested in doing something extra in the evenings, there could be the opportunity for them to join the residential students for evening activities. This will be agreed on an ad hoc basis through agreement with the host, the student and Language Tree.

However, when students choose to stay with a host family, the intention is that students are interested in being part of English family life. Therefore, we are keen to maximise the time students spend with their hosts in the evenings. For students who want lots of evening activities, it is more appropriate that they choose our residential accommodation option.

Personal hygiene and washing facilities

Students should have easy access to the bathroom and washing facilities throughout their stay. Of course, we understand there may be times of the day when there may be various demands for the bathroom.

Communication devices

Students usually have their own mobile or smart phones and bring their own charging cables.





Please check they have the correct plugs. Many of our students like to bring their laptops with them. All students should have access to wi-fi.

Additional Charges

Under no circumstances should any additional charges should be levied on a student without prior consultation with Language Tree.

Fire

Please ensure at the start of their stay that you show all students the most suitable route to exit the building in the event of a fire.

Language Tree will provide you with a risk assessment and a Fire Evacuation template. Students should be made aware of this plan on arrival and it should be displayed prominently in the student's bedroom.

Income Tax

You should carefully consider how you declare the income you receive from hosting students with us to ensure you are acting legally at all times. Depending on your situation, you may be eligible for the 'Rent-a-room' scheme. For the tax year 2025-2026, this scheme allows a person to receive £7,500 per year in rental income tax free:

<https://www.gov.uk/rent-room-in-your-home/the-rent-a-room-scheme>

Insurance

Please remember to advise your home insurance company that you are accommodating students. Similarly, for car insurance, you need to add 'business use' to your car insurance if you are driving students to and from the campus.

Carbon monoxide & smoke alarms

All Language Tree hosts must have carbon monoxide (CO) and smoke alarms fitted. It is essential that these are tested regularly to ensure they are functioning correctly.

Gas Safety Regulations

Hosts providing accommodation are classified as Landlords/Ladies under the Gas Safety Regulations (Installation and Use). These Regulations were introduced to ensure that all gas appliances in rented premises were modern and safe for tenant's use. Consequently, when providing a room for anyone, including an international student, you need to conform to the Regulations by ensuring that all boilers and central heating systems are installed and serviced under contract by "competent persons" only. Such work can only be done by businesses that are a member of the Association of Registered Gas Installers (ARGI). A certificate should be obtained and a copy provided to Language Tree.



Sickness & Illness

All students should have medical insurance as part of their visit as this is something that Language Tree recommends all students do.

In the event of a student falling ill, please contact Language Tree as soon as possible. For students aged under 18, you may also wish to contact the student's parents. There is a good chance the student may have already done this too. Please consult our illness information sheet to consider the best course of action. In the most typical scenarios, it may be that non-prescription medicines are sufficient.

In the event that medicines are prescribed, please ensure the student understands the dosage and that the medicine is kept in a safe place. For students under 18, we need to coordinate together to ensure parents are involved in the process and decision making.

Hosts are NOT allowed to offer or administer any medicines (prescription or non-prescription) to students under 18 without consent from the student's parents / guardians.

In the event that medical advice is required, please take the following steps:

- Ensure parents (for under 18s) and Language Tree are kept in the loop
- Consider which is the most appropriate organisation to call. The three options are:
 1. Call 111 for medical advice which is not covered by the Pharmacy First scheme and if it is not an emergency
 2. Visit your local pharmacy if you feel the illness is covered in the flyer here >

We recommend visiting your pharmacy before the arrival of your student to ensure they offer this service
 3. Call 999 – in the event of a medical emergency, always call 999



Speak to your pharmacist if you suspect you have:

- **Sinusitis**
(adults and children aged 12 years and over)
- **Sore throat**
(adults and children aged 5 years and over)
- **Earache**
(children aged 1 year to 17 years)
- **Infected insect bite**
(adults and children aged 1 year and over)
- **Impetigo**
(adults and children aged 1 year and over)
- **Shingles**
(adults aged 18 years and over)
- **Urinary tract infection**
(women, aged 16 to 64 years)



Using WhatsApp

At Language Tree, we use WhatsApp as our primary method of communication during our courses with students (age 13+), hosts and with our staff teams.

Please send us a message to request to join our hosts' WhatsApp group.

We have found WhatsApp is the most convenient way for us to keep in touch with hosts and students to keep everyone informed about our programme and any changes on a day-to-day basis.

We will use WhatsApp to:

- Give updates about our courses and the associated activity programme – at the start of each week we will post the activity programme for the week in the WhatsApp group
- Give updates on pick up times and locations when returning from excursions – this can be particularly useful and important in the case of unexpected delays

You are welcome to:

- Contribute to the WhatsApp group with your own messages as long as they are connected to the themes mentioned above
- Initiate additional conversations with other hosts that can then be continued outside the group – for example lift sharing or coming together for an additional activity
- Agree with the student you are hosting to communicate through WhatsApp for the same purposes outlined above

Please do not:

- Write personal messages in the WhatsApp group (you can always send Language Tree a direct message if there is something you would like to discuss)
- Post information in the group about your student, particularly student illness or absence – this should be a direct message to Language Tree.
- Contact any of the hosts outside of the group chat (apart from for the reasons outlined above)
- Save contact details of other hosts in the group without permission from those hosts

When you are not hosting with us, we will remove you from the WhatsApp group.

If you receive an unwanted message from a host or student, please let us know immediately even if this is after the end of the hosting period.

We know hosting can often lead to long term friendships between hosts and students. **For students aged under 18, please remove their contact details from your phone at the end of their course.**

In the event, that they would like to stay in contact, please do so through email that includes their parents. You will have these contact details from the initial host introduction emails.



Safeguarding adults & students under 18

Hosts who have agreed to accommodate students under 18 are subject to legal rules and regulations regarding Safeguarding. However, we also apply these principles to the hosting of adults too.

As part of hosting with us, you will need to complete the British Council Level 1 Safeguarding course. A link will be provided to you and it takes around 30-45 minutes to complete the online course.

DBS checks for all adults (aged 18 or over) must be in place before a student aged under 18 can be placed with you. Please inform us of any changes to the people living in your home.

Students under 18 will always be with you during their time with their host family.

The expectation is that students are at home with you or they are engaged in activities with us.

Under no circumstances, should students aged under 18 be free to engage in unsupervised and unknown activities.

Students may return to the host family home after lessons, activities and excursions on foot if a host lives within 10 minutes' walk of our campus. During this time, students are expected to return directly to the host family and send us a message when they arrive home. If there are any delays for a student to arrive home, it is essential hosts and Language Tree are in immediate communication.

Hosts are expected to call Language Tree if your student is not able to attend school or they are going to be late for any reason.

Concerns

If you have any concerns about the welfare of a student staying in your home, please contact one of the following people who will be available 24 hours per day:

- **Joel Ashton | Principal – 07957 497937**
- **Janey Ashton | Designated Safeguarding Lead – 07828 021754**

Language Tree will support you and the student in full with ongoing steps from there.



PREVENT

As a language school, we have a duty to inform all our employees and host families about PREVENT, which was introduced by the UK government as part of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Part 5, Chapter 1). Prevent is about safeguarding our students to keep them both safe and within the law. The Prevent duty is not about preventing students from having political and religious views and concerns. The government has defined extremism as ‘vocal or active opposition to fundamental British core values.’

The four fundamental British core values are: 1) Democracy 2) The rule of law 3) Individual liberty 4) Mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and of those without faith.

As a host family for Language Tree, you, along with the staff at school, have a duty to be aware that vulnerable adults or children may be drawn into extremism, or can be vulnerable to being radicalised. If you are aware of any student being drawn into any kind of terrorism as a consequence of radicalisation, then you need to report it to Language Tree and/or the Police, no matter how trivial your concerns may be.

If you would like to gain more awareness, please go to the following link which should link to the most up to date Home Office introduction package and provide you with a certificate on completion.

<https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk/edu/screen1.html>



Settling in & culture shock

Culture is something that is learned.

What is considered normal and polite in one country may be regarded as rude or even illegal in another.

Culture is how we perceive aspects of everyday life in our own country: food, housing, religion, government, family life, attitudes to law and order and even celebrations.

At Language Tree, we support students with what to expect and how to behave during their stay but you may find these pointers support that process for you:

- Please encourage your student to talk and to practise their English. This can be done in many ways such as asking them to tell you about their experiences, food likes and dislikes, activities they enjoy and so on.
- Be ready and interested to hear about their cultural norms without judging or comparing to your own.
- Be prepared to be the conversation starter! Many of the students will be too shy to begin a discussion. Don't worry if these conversations are brief or slightly confused.
- Be careful of using informal slang words, these can be particularly hard for students to understand. (If you have a grammar background, words with a Latin root are generally easier for European students to understand as it may be a similar word in their language. Phrasal verbs are particularly hard for students to grasp as they are often metaphorical, e.g. look up to, run out of, get away with).
- If a student is struggling to understand an aspect of a conversation, it is often easier to move on and forget it rather than spending lots of time trying to get them to understand something.
- Google Translate & Google Images are magic for helping to explain tricky vocabulary (but beware – they don't always provide the right answer!).
- Ensure that they take advantage of informal social occasions so that they can meet more English people. For example, they should be encouraged to attend Language Tree's social events and excursions.
- Encourage them to talk to local people, even just a few words every day.
- Let them become aware of our non-verbal forms of communication and our body language, and respect that these may be very different to their own!



The Language Tree Leaves of Advice!

1. Being friendly is the key to a happy relationship with your students. You are already just the type of family with that something special - because you have agreed to open your home to someone from another culture and country!
2. Enjoy the experience and treat this student as a member of your family during their stay with you – it is an experience you will probably both remember for many years to come.
3. We will put you in touch with your student before they arrive; please ensure you check your 'junk mail' and 'unknown senders' as sometimes messages do go astray, particularly from an international email address. A friendly response from a host family can make ALL the difference to a student's stay.
4. When the students arrive, check with them if they have contacted their family back home to let them know that they have arrived.
5. If you haven't done it already, ensure you and your student exchange phone numbers when they arrive to make contacting one another easy, and help them make sure they can keep their phone charged. With international phone numbers, we find WhatsApp can be the easiest way to keep in touch.
6. When your student arrives, please take time to orientate them to relevant local services and to the house and area they will be staying in.

At Language Tree we do everything possible to ensure that you are happy too! Tell us if we aren't getting it right ☐





Terms and Conditions and Legal Requirements

Behind successful hosting are some key terms, conditions and rules that ensure the hosting experience is a safe, legal and positive experience for everyone.

These rules are designed to protect all the people involved in the hosting experience: the student, the host and Language Tree.

1. The host accommodation is to include at least a single room, provision of breakfast, evening meal and full board at weekends – this will be a packed lunch when students are joining us on excursions. Occasionally some students may prefer self-catering accommodation and then there will not be a requirement to provide food.
2. In addition to the bedroom facilities, students should also have access to the other key facilities as described in the Code of Practice on p2 of this document.
3. Language Tree will provide hosts with the student's full timetable. Please ensure you are familiar with the timetable. On certain days, like when we go to The Minack Theatre, students will require a packed lunch instead of an evening meal at home.
4. While we offer a full schedule of excursions, our Sunday excursion is optional and this provides some time in the week for you to have a day with your student. This does not need to be an expensive or paid for activity. It is a key opportunity for the student to see some aspects of life in the UK. Typical activities range from going for a walk, playing a board game, playing pool or watching some TV together. We hope this is something you can mutually agree with the student.
5. During the student's programme, there may be 1 or 2 late finishes. This is for when we do excursions like visiting the Minack Theatre. For these events, you may be required to meet us at an agreed location to collect the student to get them home safely.
6. There are to be no more than four students accommodated at one time in one host family house, unless by special agreement with the students and Language Tree.
7. Apart from in exceptional circumstances agreed with parents and hosts in advance, Language Tree will only provide host family accommodation for unaccompanied minors aged 13 or above. For students aged under 18, the host family and Language Tree will be acting 'in loco parentis'. Throughout a student's time with us, we also have open communication with parents, usually through WhatsApp. In the event of any decisions / concerns about students, effective communication through these channels is essential. We are always available to support hosts, parents and students.
8. Prior to hosting a student, Language Tree will provide you with information about the student, the dates of their course and the programme they are studying on. We will always endeavour to place students with hosts where we believe there will be some areas in common to help make the experience as successful as possible for all parties. We will also put you in touch with the student and we recommend some brief contact between you and the student to say hello before the start of the programme.



9. At the point you agree to host a student, please ensure that you are fully committed and available for the hosting dates. It is a big – but worthwhile commitment – and all parties will be making various bookings on the basis of the hosting you are providing. If there is a change in circumstances and you have any problems with the dates you have agreed to host a student, you must give us as much notice and information as possible.
10. If there is a problem with a student during hosting, please get in touch with Language Tree to discuss the issues as soon as possible. We find through clear, open and friendly communication most problems can be easily resolved and can occur through simple misunderstandings.

We are there to support you and the student in an impartial role. If necessary, we can relocate students with a new host but it is important you continue to host the student professionally until the new accommodation is available. Relocation should be seen as an absolute last resort.

11. The daily rate of payment is one-seventh of the weekly rate.
12. No compensation is payable for cancellation or postponement prior to the proposed date of arrival of the student, or if the student is refused entry to the United Kingdom. In this scenario, Language Tree shall, however, try to replace the student as soon as possible and will give you as much notice as possible.
13. When cancellation or postponement is advised after the proposed date of arrival, one week's compensation will be paid except when a replacement is offered.
14. If an overpayment is made, the amount overpaid shall be returned in full to Language Tree immediately.
15. The host must inform Language Tree of any changes to living circumstances and this includes changes to the people living in your home or renovations you might be commencing or undertaking whilst the student is staying with you.
16. Hosts will need to provide a copy of a valid gas safety certificate as part of the registration process.
17. If a host is driving a student to or from the campus, they must have 'business use' added to their insurance. Any car used for the transportation of students must also have a valid MoT and all road laws must be followed at all times.
18. The host agrees that Language Tree will share some information about the host in order to introduce them to the student. Such information may include name, address, type of accommodation, hobbies and other relevant details.
19. The host agrees to read and abide by the Safeguarding section of this booklet and to complete the British Council safeguarding course that is available online. We will provide you with the link to this course.

20. The host agrees to abide by the terms, conditions & legal requirements detailed in this booklet. Failure to do so may result in the student being removed from your care.

Payment of hosting fees

Unless other arrangements are agreed, payments will be made via BACS straight into your bank account.

We pay half of the hosting fees on arrival and the final half on departure.

We pay £250 per student per week.



FAQs

What to do if



I NEED TO BE AWAY FROM HOME OVERNIGHT

Please contact Language Tree. It is normally not acceptable for students to be left alone in your home overnight, but we will endeavour to assist in any way we can. In the event of an emergency, we may be able to offer our residential accommodation for a short stay.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TIME MY NEW STUDENT IS ARRIVING

This really shouldn't happen! We will keep you up to date on student arrival times. The planned arrival time will be discussed in advance. In the event of delays on the arrival day, we will keep in touch with you to let you know. Hopefully, by this stage you may also be in direct contact with your student too.

I NEED ADVICE ABOUT A PARTICULAR NATIONALITY

We do not wish to encourage stereotyping, but there are often cultural details that will help you to make a student feel at home. Language Tree are more than happy to discuss this with you.

MY STUDENT HAS LOST MY HOUSE KEY

We would advise that your address should not be attached to the house keys. It would be reasonable to ask your student to pay for a replacement key.

CAN I DRIVE A STUDENT IN MY CAR?

Yes, you can drive with students in your car like any other person you may give a lift to. You should have 'business use' on your car insurance and it is important that all normal laws are followed for speed limits and that everyone in the car is wearing a seat belt.

MY STUDENT HAS THEIR OWN FOOD AND/OR DOESN'T WANT TO HAVE MEALS WITH US

On their arrival, you should ask if your student has any food likes or dislikes, as this should encourage the student to eat with you. This is also something we try to ensure is known and agreed in advance. However, by discussing it at the beginning of the stay can help to engage the student in eating with you. It may be that they are unsure of what they are eating and in some cases this may need explanation!

MY STUDENT WANTS TO COOK IN MY KITCHEN

Discuss this with your student should it arise. We do ask that students be allowed to make (hot) drinks and light snacks in your home as they wish. Students should be able to make tea, coffee and small snacks without having to buy their own things. It is at your discretion if you wish them to buy their own food if they wish to cook other meals.

WE ARE STRUGGLING TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER

Students who attend Language Tree courses all have different levels of English. Where possible, speak slowly or even draw a picture or use written words to help communication. Many students are extremely nervous at first, but you should find in a short time that they are feeling more relaxed and will communicate more easily.



I'VE HAD AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE AND WANT TO DO THIS AGAIN!

We get this a lot, welcome to the team!

Contact details



Joel Ashton

Tel: 07957 497937

Principal

Email: joel@languagetree.co.uk

Janey Ashton

Tel: 07828 021754

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Katy Daly

Tel: 07450 174694

Assistant Manager

Email: katy@languagetree.co.uk

In an emergency, please phone Joel first