



Dear Family,

Hosting a Youth For Understanding (YFU) International Exchange Student is a great opportunity for any family. It is an excellent way to share the language, culture and customs of another country. It is a means of establishing lifelong international friendships! We are pleased to send you this information packet on how you, too, can become a YFU Host Family.

YFU International Exchange Students range in age from 15 to 18 and come from a range of different countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Chile, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and more.

When we receive your completed application, we will put you in touch with a local YFU representative who will talk to you in more detail about the YFU program and the host family selection process. In the meantime if you have any questions, please call 1-877-516-9111 or (519) 653-0550 to reach the YFU Canada office during regular business hours or email us at any time.

**strive** **make**  
**to increase** **the world** **hosting an**  
**cultural** **your home** **exchange student**  
**understanding** **is a fun and**  
**rewarding**  
**experience**

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# Host Family Information Packet

## YFU Canada

### FACTS

- The Youth For Understanding (YFU) International Exchange Program was established in 1951 by Dr. Rachel Andresen.
- YFU is a non-profit international student exchange program with offices in 40 countries around the world.
- YFU Canada's office is located at 688 Hespeler Road, Cambridge, Ontario.
- YFU Inc. the program's International headquarters is located in Washington, DC USA.
- YFU's mission is to promote global understanding.
- YFU Canada provides six-week summer, semester and year programs for Canadian high school students ages 15 to 18 years. On semester and year programs, students live with a host family and attend school in their host country.
- International students from a variety of countries attend high school and live with host families in Canada for 11 months.
- YFU is a volunteer based program. Volunteers assist in recruiting, screening and supporting students, host families and other volunteers. They are essential to every part of the program.
- Host families are volunteers who open their homes and hearts to international students for a school year and are rewarded with an experience of a lifetime.
- Community volunteers who are trained in cross-cultural issues give support to host families and students during the stay to help cope with cultural adjustments.
- Optimist International through support from local Optimist clubs recognizes and promotes the YFU exchange program to Canadian youth.
- The majority of our funding comes from program fees. The balance of our revenue comes from donations from service clubs or individuals. We are a registered non-profit organization.

**Embrace the world - become part of the international YFU family!**



# Q & A:

## YFU Answers Your Questions About Hosting

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Usually when a family considers opening its heart to an international exchange student, lots of questions come up. Here are some of those that are asked most often.

### **How will our family benefit by hosting a YFU student?**

There are many reasons why hosting is a beneficial experience for the whole family. You'll learn about another culture and language, without leaving home. You'll start a lifelong relationship with your new "son" or "daughter" and when your student returns home, you'll have a special friend in another country.

Members of your family will feel closer to each other through sharing your daily lives with a YFU student. If you have children, they will gain a broader perspective on the world, learning more about geography, communication and international cultures. If your children are young, they will probably love having a big brother or sister from another country. Most of all, you will all have a lot of fun!

### **Why should we host through Youth For Understanding?**

YFU is one of the oldest, largest and most widely respected non-profit inter-cultural exchange organizations in the world. We are dedicated to international understanding and world peace through exchange programs for high school students. Since our program began in 1951, our hallmark has been the extraordinary support we have provided to

more than 150,000 students and their host families.

One of our nearly 2,000 professionally trained volunteers works with each student and family, providing support and guidance every step of the way. Professional counselors and language tutors are also available when needed. As one host mother put it, "YFU was there for us whenever we needed them, 24 hours a day."

### **How many international students come to Canada each year? What countries are they from? How old are they?**

Between 40 and 50 YFU students will come to Canada each year from over 15 countries in Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific, including countries as diverse as Japan, Finland, Venezuela, Germany and Brazil. Canadian students also live abroad each year through YFU Canada. All YFU students are 15 to 18 years old.

### **How long do YFU international students live in Canada? Would our student live with us the whole time?**

YFU international students live in Canada for 10 months, from approximately late-August through early July. With the exception of arranged field trips and orientations with YFU, your student will be part of your family during his/her entire exchange experience. Semester students stay for 5 months, arriving together with the others and leaving early February or arriving in January and leaving with the others in July.

### **What are the requirements for being a host family?**

As one host parent who is a single mother puts it, "The important ingredients are that you like teenagers, that you are able to communicate and that you feel that you have something to give. It doesn't take a lot!"

All kinds of families can host YFU students; married couples with teenagers, young children, grown children or no children at all, or single parents with at least one child living at home. All you need to do is open your home and hearts to your student and provide a room, meals, love, guidance and the experience of what everyday life is like in Canada. It's easy and fun!

### **Will our YFU student speak English?**

All YFU students who come to Canada have studied English for at least two years and are able to speak, read and write English. Most of them have studied our language for five years or more; in addition many countries require their students to pass an English proficiency test before being accepted into the program.

Undoubtedly, you will find that your student's English ability will improve remarkably during your months together; something host families often find both exciting and gratifying!

### **Will our YFU student attend school?**

Yes. Your student will attend your local high school and will take courses typical for Canadian of



his/her age. They are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities.

### **What other kinds of activities will our student participate in while in Canada?**

The intention behind hosting is to have your YFU student be part of any activities your family is involved in, from household chores to family outings. YFU students come to Canada expecting a family experience, not a travel program. However, many families enjoy showing their student what makes our country special. Everything from historical places to natural wonders, sporting events and the fine arts! As one host father said, *"We see things through new eyes when we're showing off our country to our YFU student. We've developed a new appreciation for things we took for granted before."*

No doubt your YFU student will also make friends in school and in the community, and will be involved in activities through these networks. YFU also arranges optional field trips that provide the opportunity for students to learn a little more about Canadian culture.

### **How much does it cost to host a YFU student?**

*There is no charge.* The only expenses for your family will be the costs of including another person in your regular activities, including meals. YFU's support service network is available to you whenever you need it at no charge.

### **Will our family be paid for hosting a YFU student?**

*No,* a YFU host family is never paid, as our goal is to encourage family members to accept their international student just like a brother/sister or son/daughter. This way, hosting becomes an enriching experience for the whole family.

### **Are we responsible for our student's medical bills or spending money?**

*No.* YFU international students have their own medical insurance and bring their own spending money.

### **Does YFU require that we have a separate bedroom for our international student?**

*No.* You don't need to have a separate room for your YFU student. He or she may share a bedroom with a same-sex child. All you need to provide is a bed and study area.

### **How are YFU students and host families matched up?**

The first step is for your family to complete an application and be interviewed by a YFU volunteer. Then, your YFU volunteer will help you choose your international student, taking into consideration a number of factors to help make the best possible match.

Variables include your family's values, the kind of activities you're involved in (sports, arts, intellectual pursuits, etc.), your religious preferences, whether you would prefer a student who is quiet or outgoing, which area of the world you would prefer your student to be from, and so forth.

Hosting does require a period of adjustment for all family members and for your student in the beginning. Common interests and values make that adjustment easier.

### **How will YFU prepare us to be a host family?**

As soon as you agree to host, you will receive a copy of *YFU's Host Family Handbook*, which will be your reference guide throughout the exchange year. Also, before your student arrives, you will be invited to an orientation program for host families.

Here you will get the answers to any last-minute questions, meet other host families (including some who have hosted before and can share their experiences with you). Also, you will learn how to support your new "family member" through such experiences as culture shock and speaking a new language. You will also be invited to a second orientation, shortly after your student arrives.

Finally, keep in mind that your most important resource, your volunteer YFU Area Representative, will be there to answer questions and help you out in every way, all year long.

### **What will happen if we have problems while hosting?**

Members of YFU's support network, including professional counselors, will do their best to help you resolve any difficult situations that arise during the year. Often, the only thing that's needed is a chance to talk things over with a third party, and YFU volunteers are trained to provide an opportunity for students and family members to feel safe to discuss what's troubling them.

Occasionally, YFU will find another home for the student, although this usually isn't necessary. If you are a parent then you will understand that getting through a difficult time with a child can be a very rewarding experience. It's that way with hosting, too!

### **Who do I contact for more information about hosting a YFU student?**

If you are interested in hosting a YFU student or if you have other questions, please contact YFU at [inbound@yfu.ca](mailto:inbound@yfu.ca).