



Thank you for extending life-changing hospitality and friendship to international students out of reverence for Jesus! Please, first and foremost, commit to praying that God will use this time in a meaningful way to draw these students to Himself. This usually starts with establishing a relationship with them that can extend well beyond this holiday.

Something to keep in mind: Your home may be the very first American home these international students have ever entered. Please make sure it is comfortable and that the common areas are clean - free of clutter and trash.

I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. - Matthew 25:40

Pre-Dinner Contact:

If you have been assigned students (hopefully minimum of 2), we suggest you contact them as soon as possible either by phone or e-mail to:

- Introduce yourself
- Let them know the schedule for the holiday
- Arrange for their transportation
- Find out if the students have any special dietary restrictions
- Inquire if they need to be back to the campus by a certain time
- Let them know you are looking forward to meeting them

Put the Students at Ease:

- Name tags are always a good idea...for the students and the Americans. You may even want to write the name phonetically for hard-to-pronounce names. Don't be afraid to ask them to repeat it until you have it down.
- If you can, try to learn the student's names prior to the day of the dinner.
- Give them a tour of your home.
- Students will often ask if they can help in the kitchen. They will feel like they have contributed. Try to reserve some tasks that they can easily handle.
- Children are also great at making students feel more comfortable and at home.
- Pets can go either way. Some internationals have strong fears of dogs or cats. Please ask your student how they feel about pets and accommodate accordingly.

Cultural Differences:

- Shoes – Many Asian cultures remove their shoes upon entering a home. You may want to let the students know that Americans tend to leave their shoes on in the house. Let them know that they are welcome to leave theirs on or remove them. Some hosts keep several sizes of slippers near the door, but this is not necessary.
- Eating Habits – Most Americans grew up in a culture of “Don’t chew with your mouth open. Don’t make noise. Never let food hang out of your mouth.” This is not true in many countries. Please be prepared to embrace the differences.
- Gifts – Often the student will bring a “thank you” gift, usually something from their country. Just a note, if they bring you a bottle of wine (and you don’t drink wine), avoid saying something like “we are Christians and don’t drink.” Accept it graciously and put it aside.

The Meal:

- Pray before your meal in your normal manner. Before we pray, we take time to explain what we are doing (thanking God for the food He has provided and for His blessings). Keep this simple. We have never had a situation where we felt like we had offended the students or made them feel uncomfortable. They know we are Christians.
- Serve the foods that are traditional for you. The students want to experience our culture.
- In many cultures, the plates are passed to someone who serves all the food. In most American homes, all the food is put on the table and then the food dishes are passed around. You may need to explain how your family does it.
- Most international students are not used to our portions. Don’t be surprised if they take very small portions initially. Also, we tend to put our condiments on the meat. Many internationals use it as a dipping sauce.
- Place Cards on the table are a nice touch. This allows you to control where everyone is sitting. If students come early, you may ask them to make the place cards for everyone. This gives them something to do while waiting for the meal to be served.
- If you’re hosting students from Asia, you might try putting chopsticks on the table, especially if you are not too good at using them. Let the students show you how to use them. They will get a kick out of it, and you might even learn a new skill!

Conversation at the Table:

- In many cultures, the table is not a place for talking. You may want to ask the student about family meals in their country, explaining that this is generally a time for American families to ‘catch-up’ on what is going on in each other’s lives. Ask if this is similar to how it is in their families and if they have a similar holiday in their country. If they say ‘No’, ask about the biggest family-oriented holiday in their home.

Conversation at the Table Continued:

- Take some time to explain the origin of the holiday in America.
- You might start things off by telling everyone what you are thankful for and encouraging everyone to share.
- We like to use conversation cards, such as the one called 'LikeU'.

Other Points of Conversation Can Include:

- Where do you live (specifically)? Try to have a world map or pull one up on your phone so they can show you (usually before or after the meal). Show more interest than just "China" since you probably already knew that. Have some follow-up questions like, "Is that in the city or a rural area?"
- What do your parents do? How often do you speak with them?
- Do you have siblings? If they are from China, remember they have a single child policy there, although some do have siblings.
- What are you studying and what do you plan to do with your education when you graduate?
- How long have you been in the US and at ASU? Many have gone to an undergraduate college elsewhere.
- Do you have pets back home?
- Do you or your family have any religious background?

General Comments:

- We recommend not discussing politics, especially during your first contact.
- Avoid anything that implies their country is anything less than the U.S.
- Conversational English is something most students want to practice. Allow equal exchange. Also, complement them on their English skills as appropriate.
- Please be sensitive to the fact that most students have little to no exposure to Christianity. Follow the Holy Spirit and remember most international students come to Christ through **relationships built over-time on trust**. This starts with us being curious about their culture/beliefs, which gives them permission to do the same. Opportunities to share your faith will typically come as the relationship develops.
- Do not discuss persecution of Christians in their country. Most students will not know anything about this, and this isn't the time to educate them on the subject.
- The students may want to help with cleaning off the table and doing the dishes. Please let them, as it makes them feel more at home. You may have to show them how to use the disposal or load the dishwasher.
- What is Thanksgiving without leftovers? Try to have some "throw-away" containers you can send home with them.

Games & Entertainment:

- Providing games that encourage interaction between the students, your family, and other guests can help break the ice. We recommend puzzle, skill or card games!
- Playing group games after dinner is a fun way to end the evening. Ex: Pit Card Game, Two Truths and a Lie, Farkle Dice Game, or any game your family usually plays if it's fairly simple and does not depend on one's knowledge of American culture.

Pictures:

- Take pictures and send them to the students afterwards. Please send them to us too! Let us know if you don't want us (IFI) to post them on social media or include them in our newsletters.

Follow Up:

- Look for ways to maintain contact with the students. You have made a connection that can lead to a longterm relationship. If you have enjoyed this experience, say something like, "We really enjoyed ourselves. Do you think we could do it again sometime?" Ask something like, "Would you like to learn how to make pumpkin pie? How about getting together next (whatever date) for a cooking lesson?"
- Be sure to follow-up with your students a day or two after the dinner. Let them know how much you enjoyed having them in your home.
- Sometimes the student will initiate a follow-up. They may invite you to their apartment for some of their home-cooked food.
- Tell your friends about your experience. IFI can always use more volunteers in the future!

Common Fears:

- *I have small children.* International students typically love children and are missing their own siblings.
- *I have no experience with international students. I would be embarrassed if I couldn't understand them.* They are used to this and will be very patient with you. They appreciate our effort as many Americans will avoid them due to this fear.
- *I don't know what they might like to eat.* They like FOOD! They are usually very open to trying new things.
- *I'm a little intimidated to try this on my own.* How about joining in with someone who is already planning on having internationals for dinner? They would probably appreciate the help!

Checklist for Holiday Hosting

- Pray for the students you will be hosting (we suggest hosting two or more).
- Cover the following in your initial contact:
 - Date & time of the event. Note - many internationals tend to run late.
 - Transportation - If they are driving, provide directions to your home. If you will pick them up, give the time you will be there.
 - Ask if they have any food restrictions. This may be for health or religious reasons.
 - Ask if they need to be back home by a certain time. Let the students know a tentative schedule for the day.
 - If you have a pet, ask if the student has any allergies to pets or feels comfortable around them.
- Try to learn the students' names before they arrive. Feel free to ask us for help!
- Tidy the house and ensure the common areas are clean, free of clutter, and comfortable.
- If driving students, make sure your car is clean and comfortable.
- Determine your menu. Is there anything you would like the students to help with, like setting the table, etc.?
- Name tags? If multiple guests.
- Table place cards.
- Games for before and after dinner.
- When the students arrive, give them a tour of your home. Point out the bathroom.

The Meal

- Pray as you usually do.
- Explain the mechanics of the meal (passing food, "help yourself", etc).
- Think about things to talk about at the table. Make sure you ask them open-ended questions that can't be answered by "Yes" or "No". The background of the current holiday would be appropriate.
- If you are going to a relative's home for dinner, clear your guests with them. Conversely, if the relatives/friends are coming to your home, let them know in advance you will be hosting international students.

Next Steps

- Let students know you enjoyed their visit. Share photos with them (and us please)!
- Although not obligated, consider how you want to continue the relationship(s) and reach out to us for recommendations on how to do so. We would love for you to get more involved! (: