



RIVER EAST TRANSCONA SCHOOL DIVISION International Education Program Student Guide Book



WELCOME TO RIVER EAST TRANSCONA SCHOOL DIVISION

On behalf of River East Transcona School Division (RETS), it is my great pleasure to welcome you to our division and our International Education Program, your new “home away from home” for the next few months, semester, or year! You are being welcomed to “Friendly Manitoba”—the hospitality and generosity you will enjoy are characteristic of our province.

Winnipeg is a multicultural city with a rich history and a thriving arts community, including the renowned Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. We have warm, eventful summers that provide countless opportunities for outdoor activities and visits to cultural festivals; and crisp, snowy winters that invite people to skate along the Nestaweya River Trail and check out the many warming huts designed for an annual international competition. We proudly cheer on our NHL hockey team, the Winnipeg Jets, and root for our CFL football team, the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

We are also home to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, which opened in 2014 with the purpose of enhancing the public's understanding of human rights, promoting respect for others, and encouraging reflection and dialogue. The museum is located at The Forks, which is situated at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers and has been a meeting place for over 6,000 years. Formerly a railyard, it is now a bustling destination with an array of shopping and dining options.

While in our program, I encourage you to take advantage of each day. Try a new activity or sport, join a school club or team, socialize with Canadian students, and you will be sure to discover all there is to do in your school and the community!

The following pages contain important information about your upcoming experience. Please read them carefully and let your agency or our program team know if you have any questions.

We look forward to welcoming you to our program!

Warmest regards,



Annelies van de Nadort
Director
International Education Program



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STUDENT PROGRAM HOMESTAY TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

HOMESTAY TEAM SUPPORT

Your homestay team consists of Program Co-ordinator Kimberly Peterson and Homestay Facilitator Gillian Timog. Their job is to support both the homestay families and the students. The homestay team mediate between the host family, the student, and the agency if one is involved and often do this by round-table discussion with all parties present.

If you experience any difficulty—including homesickness or other personal issues—at home or at school, please contact Kimberly and/or Gillian as soon as possible. Remember, we all want to make sure you are having the best possible experience!

Homestay Team Hours:

The homestay team work at the RETSD Administration Offices at 589 Roch St. from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. The office phone number is: +1 (204) 667-7130.

Non-Urgent Matters: For after hours non-urgent matters, a team member will respond to you the following business day. Please see below for after hours emergencies.

After Hours Emergency Contact:

Call our office at +1 (204) 667-7130 and when prompted enter extension 2209. Leave a message explaining the emergency and be certain to provide a number so we can return your call. Below, you can find our team's email information:

Ms. Annelies van de Nadort	Director	avandenadort@retsd.mb.ca
Ms. Kimberly Peterson	Program Co-ordinator	kpeterson2@retsd.mb.ca
Ms. Heather McDonald	Program Assistant	hmcDonald@retsd.mb.ca

Emails will be answered during office hours.

If you have a school related issue, please contact the International Teacher at your specific school.

ARRIVAL INFORMATION & IMPORTANT DATES

School Opening: Tuesday, September 8, 2026

Arrival Dates: September 5, 6, 7, 2026

First Day of Classes: Wednesday, September 9, 2026

Arrival Airport: Winnipeg Richardson International Airport (YWG) (www.waa.ca)

Please continue to check for entry regulations and updates from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

TRAVEL

Travel plans can be disrupted due to weather, delays, a missed connection, or any other number of reasons; however, do not worry. If for any reason you are going to arrive earlier or later than your scheduled arrival time, we are prepared for this. Please see the Emergency Contact Information (page 3) to communicate with us while you are travelling.

Arriving at Your Destination

You will be greeted at the airport by a member of your homestay family and an RETSD team member. We look forward to meeting you!

Domestic Arrivals

If you arrive in Winnipeg on a domestic flight (i.e., from Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary, or Edmonton), please follow the signs to the luggage pickup area. Our team member will greet you BEFORE you pick up your luggage. Look for us at the bottom of the escalator (it is the only escalator you will use in the airport). We will either have a sign that reads “River East Transcona School Division” or a personalized sign with your name.

International Arrivals

If you arrive in Winnipeg on a direct international flight (i.e., from the United States or Mexico), please proceed to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) for your passport check and issuance of your study permit (if applicable).

Pick up your luggage, pass Canadian customs, and head to the airport terminal exit doors. Our team member will be waiting right outside the doors to greet you. We will either have a sign that reads “River East Transcona School Division” or a personalized sign with your name.

If you will not be part of our Homestay Program, please confirm pickup arrangements with your custodian in Winnipeg.

CULTURE, CUSTOMS & ETIQUETTE

Canadians are generally easy-going and fun-loving. We don't take ourselves too seriously and we aren't easily offended. There are, however, some cultural expectations and standards to be aware of. Use common sense and keep the following do's and don'ts in mind:

- Do knock before entering a home (and wait to be invited inside).
- Do remove your shoes before entering someone's home.
- Do offer to hold the door open for someone else (even strangers) when entering a building.
- Do say "excuse me" if you bump someone accidentally.
- Do say "good morning" when you see family members at breakfast and "good night" when going to bed (don't just enter or leave a room without a greeting).
- Do use a tissue to blow your nose (don't sniffle in public because this sound is considered rude).
- Don't slurp your food or chew with your mouth open.

Canadians generally get up early (6:00 to 7:00 a.m.), eat dinner early (around 6:00 p.m.), and go to bed early (10:00 to 11:00 p.m.). Dinner is often at a scheduled time, and it is important not to be late and to respect the dinner hour.

Doors to bedrooms are generally kept open unless a person wants privacy. A closed door means that you must knock and wait for an invitation to enter. Canadians will think it strange if you always stay in your room with a closed door. Bathroom doors are kept open when no one is inside.

Canadians value honesty and are usually quite direct. Apologize quickly when you make a mistake and try to solve the problem, making eye contact with the other person. Eye contact means honesty and sincerity and is very important in Canada.

Canadians speak quietly in public places; lower your voice level or laughter. Talk quietly on cellphones because loud phone conversations are annoying to Canadians.

Canadians brush their teeth often to get rid of bad odours. Clothing should not give off unpleasant smells so change your clothes often and use deodorant. Canadians shower or bathe once a day.

NO TOLERANCE FOR DISCRIMINATION

It is important to be aware of gender roles in Canadian society. Women and men are equal in and out of the home. Housework is generally a shared responsibility.

It is important to show the same respect for your host mother as for your host father.

Canada is a liberal and multicultural society. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. In Canada, all people, including immigrants and visitors, have the right to be treated equally without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. You should **never** refer to other individuals at school, at home, or in our society in racial terms or by skin colour.

Important: All students are to be treated equally by one another regardless of any of the above listed criteria including nationality. Students who bully other students in any way are subject to disciplinary measures with the school division and subject to dismissal from the International Education Program.

LIFE IN YOUR NEW HOME

Host families come in all shapes and sizes, including those with and without children, some with two parents and some with one. Our homestay families are representative of Winnipeg's multiculturalism.

Interact with your host family. Do not stay in your room with the door closed. Sit in the living room and read a magazine, be with the family to watch TV, help in the kitchen, and participate in family social gatherings.

Canadian family life is informal. Family members tease and joke and may even make fun of a parent. Parents are treated respectfully, but also casually and playfully.

Canadians love their pets and may treat their animals like family members. Dogs may even sleep on the bed at night with their owners. Don't tease or hurt the animals in the home.

Take note of special events in the home such as a birthday and help celebrate them. It is kind to make or buy a card and write a thoughtful message inside.

FOOD & DRINK

Families generally eat three meals a day. Breakfast is usually quick and light on weekdays. Cereal and/or toast are common and are often "self-serve." Most students bring a bagged lunch to school that they prepare themselves.

Dinners are usually the biggest meal of the day. It is a time to eat, relax, and socialize. Please make a point of maximizing the dinner experience; it is a great time to connect with your family and improve your English. To do so, be sure to be home on time for dinner and if you plan to be out with friends, it is very important to let your host parents know well in advance that you won't be home for dinner.

Many Canadians eat "leftovers" from dinner—either for lunch the next day or even for a dinner the next night.

CANADIAN MEALS

In any given week a Canadian family might eat Italian pasta, a Chinese stir-fry, a North American barbecue, and a British-style pot roast for dinner. Local grocery stores stock ingredients for meals made around the world. Your host family has been made aware of any food allergies you may have indicated on your application form. Talk to your hosts about your food allergies and let them know what foods you enjoy the most. Meals are usually served "homestyle," which means you help yourself to the various dishes on the table.

Your homestay family may invite you to go grocery shopping with them. If you join them at the supermarket, you can choose foods that you enjoy, and your host family can make note of them and purchase them. Please note that some of these foods may not be available or affordable all year round.

WATER

Water in Winnipeg is clean and drinkable straight from the tap. You can feel comfortable if your host family serves tap water only. Many Canadians feel that using plastic bottled water is not good for your health or the environment.

IN THE BATHROOM

Most Canadians shower in the morning, before work or school. Please talk to the members of your family about the best time to shower in the morning so there are no lineups at the bathroom. If you plan to shower at night, try to do so before 9:00 p.m., so you don't disturb the family late at night. A typical shower in Canada lasts about 10 minutes. It is important to note that Canadian hot water tanks are quite small; so long showers can use up all the hot water for the whole house!

Please keep the bathroom area clean and dry after you use it. Remove all loose hair from the sink or tub so the drain won't clog. Put this in the garbage can. The bathroom should look the same when you leave as when you entered it.

Sewer systems in Canada are high-capacity and plumbing in homes is durable. Toilet paper should be placed in the toilet, but feminine hygiene products should be placed in the garbage.

If the toilet clogs or backs-up, inform your homestay family immediately and ask for help. It is important that you ask your homestay family for the location of the "shut-off" valve for these instances.

LAUNDRY

Canadians wash clothes approximately once a week. Put your dirty clothes in the hamper provided by the host family. The host family will either teach you to wash and dry your clothes or they will do your laundry. It is important that you talk to your homestay family about laundry expectations.

PRIVACY

Canadians like their privacy—please knock on a bedroom door and wait to be invited inside. Do not simply walk into a bedroom or bathroom uninvited. Do not enter the host family member's bedroom when they are away because this is their private space.

Your privacy is also important to Canadian families, and they will respect your bedroom as well. However, please remember that the host parents, as adults, have the right to enter your bedroom for a variety of reasons when you are not there (for example to clean).

HOMESTAY RULES & EXPECTATIONS

Your homestay family is responsible for providing you with:

- A clean, well-supervised environment.
- Clean bed linens and towels.
- Three meals daily—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—and snacks.
- Reasonable use of the entire home and utilities, and instruction in their use.
- Rules that are reasonable and age-appropriate in conjunction with our school division.
- A private bedroom with a bed and bedding, desk, closet, lamp, dresser, opening window, storage space for books, and school materials.
- Internet access.
- A key to the house or the entry code.
- The code to deactivate the alarm system.
- Space, time, and opportunity to study and complete your school assignments.
- Assistance (when possible/needed) with homework and assignments.
- Contact with the school regarding your academic progress and attendance at parent-teacher meetings, as required.
- Transportation to and from the airport (at the start and end of your program).

You (the student) are responsible for following these guidelines:

- Show respect to all family members, their belongings, and house rules.
- Keep your bedroom and bathroom tidy and clean up after yourself if you use the kitchen.
- Abide by homestay and school curfew.
- Request permission to have friends over in your home before you invite them. Then introduce your friends to your homestay parent(s).
- Do not have friends of the opposite gender in your bedroom.
- Inform your homestay parent(s) where you are going, with whom, and when you will return.
- Always be reachable by cellphone when away from home.
- Do not take food or drink to your bedroom without permission.
- Reimburse your homestay family if you cause any damage.
- Try to participate in family activities.
- Have written permission from your natural parents/guardians and homestay team if travelling outside of Winnipeg or Canada.

AROUND THE HOME

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

You are staying in a homestay as a member of the family and are encouraged to participate in all family functions. We encourage families to eat the evening meal with their student(s) for conversation and family time.

Every family will be different: their daily routines, when they eat their meals, what they do during leisure time, and how they celebrate their family functions. Be prepared to be independent!

In most families, both parents work full time; this means that at the end of the day, they are looking forward to a relaxing evening. After dinner, they may watch a movie together, go for a walk in the neighbourhood (depending on the season), or do some other chores or light housework. Some families with children may have evening activities to attend, such as kids' swimming lessons, sports practice, art class, etc. Families with kids are generally busy!

Most families dedicate the weekend to cleaning their home and doing laundry, a task you may be expected to participate in. They may choose to spend some time with extended family or friends or participate in family outings near their home (e.g., going to a park, celebrating birthdays, going to the movies, going for ice cream). Families with children will be busy with kids' activities throughout the weekend, as well.

It is important to note that Winnipeg is the urban centre of the province of Manitoba and other Canadian urban centres are **not** close. For example: Calgary is a 13-hour car drive or a two-hour flight away, Vancouver is a 25-hour car drive or a three-hour flight away, and Toronto is a 22-hour car drive or a three-hour flight away. Therefore, do not expect your host family to travel to other cities over the weekend due to time and monetary constraints.

COMMUNICATION & CELLPHONES

For safety purposes, students and homestay families must have a way to communicate.

- You should note that you will need a working cellphone in Canada. Host families (and our program) need to be able to contact you when you are away from the home and in case of emergencies.
- Cellphones should have text message and voice message functions.
- Cellphones must be fully charged when you leave the home.
- You must answer your cellphones promptly when you are away from home (please do not turn it off).
- You should put the cellphone numbers of all your host family members in your phone.
- Please program the International Education Program emergency number in your phone: (204) 667-7130, ext. 2209

You and your natural parents/guardians are responsible for all costs incurred in relation to having a cellphone plan.

PhoneBox™

To simplify the process for international students to obtain a Canadian phone number and cellphone plan prior to arrival, PhoneBox is offering SIM cards that can be sent to you (overseas) in advance of your departure at no cost. You may also choose to get an eSIM card that you can use right away. To check your device's compatibility for an eSIM card or for more information, visit the [PhoneBox website](#).

COMPUTER USE

Many students arrive with a laptop or purchase one when they arrive. Please know that it is not a requirement of your homestay family to have a computer for you. Homestay families must provide Internet access, preferably Wi-Fi, and cannot charge you extra fees for this access.

It is recommended that homestay families discourage you from spending an excessive amount of time on the Internet and encourage you to seek a healthy balance between computer use and other activities. Please note that homestay families do not have to provide **unlimited** Internet time, and sometimes they may need to set very specific limits on any Internet surfing.

Homestay families may also wish to set up Internet content blocking software for their home. If your host family finds you surfing inappropriately, they will contact the Homestay Co-ordinator, and your parents will be notified. If you are caught looking at pornographic websites or downloading copyrighted content illegally (e.g., music or movies), there is immediate suspension of computer use in the home and possible dismissal.

HOUSEHOLD CHORES & LAUNDRY

You should keep your own bedroom (and bathroom) clean. You may be asked to help clear away the dishes and put them in the dishwasher or get some other chores in the home. You may be asked to do your own laundry. Please follow the instructions of how to use the washer and dryer in your home.

BABYSITTING & DOG WALKING

You are not expected to be responsible for younger children (babysitting) or dog walking at any time.

CURFEWS

Canadian families go to bed very early compared to some other cultures. Host parents will typically go to bed between 10:00 and 11:00 p.m., so that is the quiet time in the home. If you must be up later than that to do homework, please be respectful and quiet in your room (know that everyone else will be sleeping). In Canada, it is rude to call a home after 9:30 p.m., because no one wants to be disturbed after this time.

For High School Students

As a rule of thumb, most families set a 10:00 to 10:30 p.m. curfew, Sunday through Thursday, and the weekend curfew would be 12:00 or 1:00 a.m. If going out of the home, you must:

- Ask permission from the host family in advance (the host family can say “no” to your plans, as a parent).

- Make sure your cellphone is fully charged.
- Give the host family all details of your planned whereabouts.
- Inform the family who you are going with and provide the friend's homestay contact information.
- Obey your curfew time and do not come home late.
- Call your homestay parents if you miss a bus or will be late.
- Keep your homestay parents aware of where you are.

FRIENDS

As with all teenagers, it is critical for your hosts to know your whereabouts during or outside of school hours. If you are going to the mall or visiting with friends, let your homestay parents know where you are, who you are with, when you will be home, and provide the contact information of your friend. Also, ensure your cellphone is charged before you leave.

Your homestay parents have the right to say "no" for a variety of reasons. Remember, they are your "parents" while you are living in Canada and even if you do not agree, they have the responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Obey all curfew times. If you disobey the house rules, your homestay parents have the right to limit your freedoms in the future. Remember that you must ask permission if you wish to bring another student into your house for a visit. Please be respectful.

Canadians generally like it when student friends are visiting, but there are times when this is not convenient for the family, so ask permission.

HOMESTAY FEES

The monthly homestay fees paid to your homestay family are intended to closely balance some of the expenses your family incurs while caring for you, such as expenses for groceries and utilities (e.g., gas, water, electricity).

These fees are to cover reasonable expenditures. If you are asking your hosts for premium products (protein powder, vitamins, large amount of food, eating out), know this is not covered in the fees and they will be your responsibility to purchase.

DAMAGE IN/TO THE HOME

You are responsible for promptly reimbursing your homestay parents if you cause damage in the home. Don't be scared if an accident happens; that is normal and a part of life. No one will be angry if something unexpected happens. Simply tell your host family and apologize. They will see if the damage can be fixed, and we will come up with a solution to the problem.

HEAT & ELECTRICITY

Canadian homes are often built of wood and are well-insulated. Most Canadian homes have central heating (natural gas furnace) and air conditioning.

Canadians prefer a cool temperature in the home. If you are cold, please tell your host family and ask for an extra blanket, etc. Canadians generally wear warm clothes inside the home, such as a sweater or housecoat and slippers.

Our Manitoba climate is quite extreme (hot summers and cold winters) and our climate is very dry. To keep our homes comfortable, we depend on air conditioning during the hot summer months and our furnace during the coldest months of the year. Our homes are equipped with HVAC systems (heating ventilation air conditioning) to heat and cool the home. An HVAC system pumps cool/hot air through the home and it enters the rooms through vents in the floor. An air vent in a room, such as your bedroom, can usually be shut, but it does not seal completely. Closing this vent may cause the room to get very hot or cold, depending on the season. Please note that your homestay family may ask you to keep your window(s) shut during the coldest/hottest months—simply to keep in as much hot or cool air as possible.

Canada's electrical supply and electrical outlets (sockets, wall plugs) are the same as those in the USA. The electrical supply is 110 Volts and 60 Hertz (cycles per seconds). Canadians are generally very energy-conscious. Make sure you turn off the lights when you leave a room and turn off appliances and other electronic devices when you are finished using them.

NOISE IN THE HOME

Most Canadian homes are built of wood and houses built of wood transfer sound very well (as opposed to concrete and brick homes). Please keep in mind this transfer of sound, for instance during phone/online conversations with your family and friends back home or when you are playing video games, as you may not realize you are speaking louder than usual.

VISITING PARENTS

The Homestay Program provides housing for students while they are attending school. Visiting parents do not have to be accommodated.

CHANGING HOMES

It will take some time to adapt to your new home because the culture and family environment are very different than what you are comfortable with. You will also be tired and uncomfortable from jet lag when you arrive and from anxiety about your new life. Take some time to adjust to your new home and talk to your host family about any difficulties you are having. Canadians are open-minded and prefer for you to talk to them if you are having a hard experience.

Situations can arise wherein the student and/or the homestay family request a change. It is important that both our students and homestay families know they are encouraged to deal with the situation themselves or contact us for support.

If you feel that you would like to change homes, please contact Kim and/or Gillian from our homestay team. If there are problems, then the first step is to see if there can be changes made in the home to solve the misunderstanding. There may be instances when the root of the problem is unclear. However, these situations can be opportunities for growth and learning.

LIMITATIONS

Drugs/Alcohol: It is not acceptable for you to take drugs and/or consume alcohol, and doing this may lead to immediate dismissal and expulsion from the program.

Driving: You are not allowed to pursue getting a driver's licence or to drive a car (or any motorized vehicle) while in Canada.

Overnight Trips: You are not allowed to go on overnight trips without adult supervision. If you are travelling on an extended overnight trip, you must get permission from the program and must have the adult supervision of someone 21 years old or older who we can contact and verify for liability purposes. Your homestay families must inform us of the details of any trip you are planning. You are also not allowed to leave the country without previous approval.

Visiting the United States: Most students require a U.S. visitor's visa and ESTA clearance (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) to enter the United States. You also need adult supervision and written permission from your natural parents/guardians. You are allowed to travel with your host family, a friend's family, an adult relative, or on a school trip with a teacher. Ask your host family about any trips you are planning to get the proper approval. Vacations and trips should not interfere with school attendance!

Hitchhiking: No hitchhiking is allowed.

Smoking: Smoking is not permissible for any of our students. It is illegal for any underage person to purchase cigarettes in Canada; doing so will break the law.

Paid Job While in Canada: Immigration Canada does not permit you to take a paying job in Canada while on your study permit. To do so may result in expulsion from Canada.

CLOTHING SUGGESTED FOR YOUR TIME ABROAD—WHAT TO PACK

Please note: This is a general guideline of suggested clothing items.

March/April/May

- Sweaters (e.g., fleece, wool, cotton)
- Hoodies, jeans, leggings
- Long- and short-sleeved shirts
- Pyjamas
- Sunglasses



June/July/August/September

- Shorts, cropped pants, skirts
- T-shirts, light jeans
- Bathing suit, sun hat, sunglasses
- Sandals
- Light sweater
- Light hoodies



October/November

- Rain jacket, warm coat
- Rain boots/shoes
- Long-sleeved shirts
- Hoodies, sweaters
- Jeans, sweatpants
- Gloves
- Warm pyjamas, slippers



December/January/February

- Warm winter coat
- Possibly ski pants
- Warm hat (a "toque")
- Gloves and scarf
- Clothes you would wear in early spring or fall
- Jeans, pants, tops, hoodies
- Warm pyjamas, slippers
- Winter boots





SCHOOL

Your school is part of River East Transcona School Division, the second-largest school division in the province of Manitoba. Our school division includes 42 schools, serving approximately 17,500+ students from kindergarten to Grade 12. Six of our 42 schools are high schools, offering Grades 9 to 12.

Every semester, we welcome 100 to 150 international students from countries around the world.

Your school has received your detailed student profile, including a list of the courses you may have requested. You will receive your timetable with all the courses you are registered in as soon as it is finalized.

Important: if you require transcript validation or have specific graduation or course requirements, it is important you make our program team aware so we can co-ordinate your schedule accordingly.

A school welcome letter will be included in your airport arrival package. Please read this letter carefully, as it will contain important information about your first day of school, what you can expect, and what you need to bring. It will also list the school staff available to support you.

On your first day of school, you will be asked to bring in to school your passport and study permit. The school team will make a photocopy of both documents and send them to the International Education office. We will keep these copies on our records, in case of emergency.

Once the school returns your study permit and passport, you should store both items in a secure place in your room at your homestay family home. Do not carry them in your backpack or leave them in your locker. If you require identification at the gym or anywhere else, either take a picture or a photocopy of your passport and study permit, instead of bringing the original documents.

You can expect the following, additional, **approximate** costs while in our program:

- \$100–\$150/semester for school-/course-related activities/field trips. Costs and activities may vary per school and per term. The International Education Program cannot guarantee availability of all activities/field trips.
- Approximately \$85/month for a Winnipeg Transit student bus pass (youth fare).
- Fees for optional classes and/or extracurricular-related expenses, such as an art kit, culinary class uniform, sports uniform, etc.
- Optional school-based national/out-of-country trips (e.g., ski trip, band/orchestra trip).

If you have not already done so, please visit the [International Education Program website](#). As well, please familiarize yourself with the program rules and expectations in our Homestay Guide, available on our website.

Graduation: International students who are graduating with a Manitoba High School Diploma are eligible to attend the Graduation Convocation, Dinner & Dance.

RECOMMENDED ETIQUETTE AT SCHOOL

Be Polite: Say “please” and “thank you” when applicable and say “excuse me” if you require assistance or need to get someone’s attention. Do not interrupt people when they are speaking, particularly teachers.

In the Classroom: Raising your hand and waiting for the teacher to call on you is standard protocol in all classrooms.

Appropriate Physical Contact: Canadians value their personal space, but some forms of physical contact are common. Handshakes are routine when being introduced to someone for the first time and a pat on the back is a common way of supporting or congratulating someone. Hugging during a final farewell or to console someone is also common.

Greeting Teachers: Canadians greet one another using their given/first names. In class, however, use Mr./Mrs./Ms. and your teacher’s second/family name: e.g., Ms. Smith.

TRANSPORTATION TO SCHOOL

Transportation to school will be your responsibility. You may be able to walk, ride a bike, or you may have to take public transportation (Winnipeg Transit bus). You will not be eligible for the school bus unless your homestay family is located outside of the city limits.

Your homestay family can help you get familiarized with your neighbourhood and the city. This will help you identify certain landmarks and gain perspective of the spaces around you.

Please remember that your homestay family is not your on-call driver, but they will exercise their parental role and use their discretion regarding your transportation needs or requests.

Don't expect your homestay family to drive you to school, and don't expect they can provide regular transportation to sporting events, extracurricular activities, or volunteering responsibilities.

If you will be attempting graduation while in our program, your homestay parent will be required to be your safe grad driver for the event.

WINNIPEG TRANSIT BUS

We encourage you to visit the Winnipeg Transit website and print off some key bus routes and maps to assist you in your few first days ([Find a route | Winnipeg Transit](#)).

Once you have a cell phone with data available, we encourage you to download the **Navigo app**. This app will allow you to search for bus stops, check the time schedules, and create a route. This will be especially helpful when it is cold outside; you want to limit your time waiting at the bus stop during the winter months.



Your homestay family will assist you to get familiar with the bus to school. We also encourage you to ask your homestay family to do a practice trip with you before your first day of school.

STUDYING IN CANADA

IMPORTANT RULES AT SCHOOL

- You must attend all classes—skipping classes is never permitted. Poor attendance could be a cause for dismissal from the program.
- Don't be late for any class.
- Do your homework and school assignments every day and hand them in on time.
- No cheating or plagiarizing.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF CANADIAN EDUCATION

You may find some differences between the educational value/system in your home country and that in Canada. It is essential for you to understand the appropriate and accepted roles for students in the Canadian education system. Here are some of the general characteristics of education in Canada:

- Students are encouraged to ask questions for clarification, to challenge information, or to extend thinking. The philosophy of education in Canada includes the idea that students should be involved in an interactive learning process; that is, they should not sit passively and accept or simply memorize what the teacher says.
- Teacher-student relationships tend to be relatively informal compared to other countries.
- Group work is an important part of the school learning; it values co-operation, tolerance, and compromise.
- Discussion is often used as a means of teaching. Students are expected to be able to discuss in order to develop their ideas and opinions and to present them for reactions. One of the main objectives of a discussion is to arrive at a mutually satisfactory understanding or a solution to a problem.
- Students learn not just information, but how to arrive at conclusions, to solve problems, and to analyze. As part of this process, students are often asked how they got an answer, rather than just what the answer is.
- Plagiarism (submitting/copying the work of another person and presenting it as your own) is a serious offence and may lead to dismissal!

TIPS FOR STUDYING IN CANADA

- Don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand. Teachers expect to be questioned. Make sure you understand assignments that are given. If you're quiet, that will be taken as a sign of understanding. Teachers are usually available before and after school for questions and extra help.
- Be on time for class. If you can't attend or be on time, notify your homestay family in advance and they will contact the school to notify them. If you miss classes, see the teacher the next day to find out what was missed.
- You will probably find the classes more informal in Canada. You will also have to organize your own time, since you won't be given a schedule to cover non-class time ("spares"). Plan your time carefully, balancing schoolwork, relaxation, and practising English.
- Hand in all assignments on the day they are due. If you are unable to finish your assignment on time, talk to your teacher before it is due. If you miss an assignment/quiz/exam, see the teacher and ask if there is any way to make up for this.
- Organize your notes and keep all handouts from your teachers.

EMERGENCIES & MEDICAL

Assuming the role of your parent, your homestay family is prepared to respond to your medical needs, including taking you to medical appointments and responding to school medical emergencies. Please ensure that you always have your guard.me insurance card with you.

Call 911 if you need help from the police, fire department, or ambulance. 911 is a free service.

MEDICAL COVERAGE & MEDICAL CARE

All students participating in the program are enrolled in our medical insurance plan provided by **guard.me**. Our insurance company provides you with a wallet-sized identification card that facilitates visits to the doctor or hospital. Your airport welcome package will include this medical card, general information, and a policy summary. Please take time to review this package so you can familiarize yourself with your type of coverage.

In the event of an illness, please seek medical care as needed. Ask your homestay family for help. If you are seriously ill or have a medical emergency, please go directly to the hospital, and contact your homestay family immediately.

mobileDOCTOR allows you to connect with Canadian doctors on Maple, a telemedicine company, as part of your guard.me health benefits. **Maple** provides access to doctors, Canada-wide, on your phone, tablet, or computer anytime, anywhere.

Seeing a doctor on Maple is safe and reliable and can help prevent the need to go to a walk-in clinic or Emergency Room.

Doctors can diagnose injuries and illnesses (cold, flu, cough, earaches, hives, infections, pink eye, sore throat, urinary tract infections, vomiting/diarrhea), write prescriptions, and provide lab requisitions.

The [guard.me website](#), provided specifically for River East Transcona School Division, will provide access to the following:

- Policy documents
- mobileDOCTOR
- Claim submissions
- And many more resources for you

You can access the [keep.meSAFE](#) resources specifically designed to support mental wellness during the challenges that international students face while studying abroad. You can also access these resources in the My SSP app from the Apple store or Google Play.

PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS

ON THE STREET

- Plan your route—know exactly where you are going and let others know your schedule.
- Avoid shortcuts and dark, isolated places.
- Carry ID and limited money.
- Never accept rides from strangers.
- Do not hitchhike.
- Keep homestay parents and friends informed of your whereabouts.
- Walk with someone else or in a group instead of walking alone.
- When crossing the street, wait for the walk signal and for traffic to be stopped. Walk quickly—do not walk out into the road and expect traffic to stop for you.
- 911 calls are free from any phone (i.e., payphone, cellphone, home phone)

BICYCLING

- Manitoba law requires that legal safety helmets be worn when riding a bike.
- Traffic rules for bikes are the same as for cars. Observe signs and traffic signals.
- Don't ride on the sidewalk or in crosswalks.
- Always wear brightly coloured or reflective clothing.
- Front and rear lights are required at night.
- Always lock up your bike. Lock the frame and wheel to the bike rack. A U-lock is recommended.

TRANSIT BUS

- Be vigilant while on the bus.
- Don't take the bus too late in the evening.
- Look after your personal items and don't leave them unattended.
- If possible, ride the bus with a friend(s).
- Sit alone or next to a person who "feels safe".
- If you are lost, speak with the bus driver, call your homestay family, or talk to a police officer.
- If you have forgotten or lost items in the bus, contact the Lost Property Office by calling 311.

SCAMS/FRAUD

- Never give or loan money to a person who approaches you on the street. People will take advantage of your trust.
- When you buy something, make sure you get a receipt and are charged the right amount.

- Make sure your debit/credit card is returned promptly.
- Never give your credit card information or copies of your card unless you are ready to buy something.

AT SCHOOL

- Never carry large sums of cash—especially not to school!
- Take care of your belongings at school. Do not leave an iPad, wallet, laptop, cell phone, and other items unattended.
- School lockers may not be completely safe from theft, so it is best to always keep valuable items on you.
- Don't tell your locker combination to anyone.

WILDLIFE

Manitoba is the meeting place of several major terrestrial ecosystems – prairies, boreal forest, and tundra. Aquatic ecosystems, including wetlands, rivers, and lakes, are also major features of Manitoba's landscape. Manitoba's biodiversity consists of the many thousands of plants, animals, and fungus species that make up these ecosystems. Moose, elk, caribou, deer, wolves, and black bears (polar bears in the north of the province) are common in Manitoba.



WILDLIFE IN THE CITY

Winnipeg is a medium sized city of about 850,000 people, covering a large geographical area. We have many parks and wooded areas within city limits. Winnipeg is home to wide variety of birds and small animals such as squirrels, rabbits, red fox, and raccoons. Larger animals you could encounter in the city are deer and coyotes.





Coyotes adapt very well to a variety of environments, including urban, so it's not unusual for them to be seen within city limits. Generally, they are timid creatures that avoid human contact; however, caution should always be used.

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A COYOTE

- Do not approach the coyote—give it an escape route.
- Do not run—move away quietly when it is not looking in your direction.
- Pick up small children or pets.
- If it approaches you, make eye contact, stand tall, make noise, shout, and throw projectiles at hand.
- Raise your arms or a jacket above your head to appear large—continue until it leaves the area.

For more information about reducing the risk of conflict with coyotes and other wildlife, visit www.manitoba.ca/human-wildlife and [Coyote - English Fact Sheet - Web \(manitoba.ca\)](#)

CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock is a very real psychological process everyone experiences upon arrival in a new country. There are several stages of culture shock, and they affect everyone differently. The key to coping with culture shock is to understand the stages and that the feelings associated with each one is normal.

The process of adapting to a new culture involves continual learning through communication, change, and commitment. You must be open to new experiences while being attentive to the unfamiliar ways people in the host culture express themselves, both verbally and non-verbally.

The good news is that almost all students get past these feelings and end up having a wonderful experience.

STAGE 1: ACCEPTANCE

You may feel excited when notified of acceptance and placement in the RETSD International Education Program. You anticipate cultural differences but have only a superficial awareness of adjustment difficulties.

STAGE 2: ARRIVAL/CULTURE SHOCK

You may experience excitement upon arrival, followed soon by discomfort because of many obvious and subtle differences (culture shock). The entire structure of school, family, and community life is unfamiliar. Your sleeping habits may change. Different food and eating customs may cause difficulties. Many questions arise regarding how to relate to others. For example, how do you behave toward the opposite sex in a different culture?

STAGE 3: SUPERFICIAL ADJUSTMENT

When finally feeling more comfortable with schoolwork, language, the homestay family routine, etc., your sense of isolation may be replaced with a sense of belonging. You may adjust on a superficial level and feel more at ease.

STAGE 4: FRUSTRATION

Upon making the superficial adjustment, you can examine your new surroundings more carefully, and deeper differences between them and others may become more apparent. Going to school, participating in community activities, and the rest of daily life may seem insignificant. The wish to accomplish something important may surface. You may feel frustrated with the task of accomplishing study goals in a foreign language, which may seem enormous. Difficulties may arise in fully understanding and adapting to certain customs of the host community. Coping with these obstacles may prove more difficult than expected.

STAGE 5: COMPLETE ADJUSTMENT

Slowly though, the deeper currents of the new culture are absorbed, accepted, and even valued. A transformation occurs. You may begin to question your original cultural assumptions and way of life.

STAGE 6: ANXIETY ABOUT RETURNING

As departure time nears, you may feel apprehension mixed with excitement at the thought of leaving and returning home. When you realize how close you have grown to the people around you, you begin to sense how you have changed. You may even feel guilty for wanting to stay and to not return home.

STAGE 7: READJUSTMENT

Once home, the contrasts of old and new may come as a shock. No longer the centre of attention, you may find no one is interested in the details of your year or feelings. The final part of this stage involves a shift in perspective and brings an understanding of the validity of both cultures.

It is important to remember that this outline of the adjustment cycle is general in nature and does not have specific boundaries. Some students may experience the cycle as stated, above, while others may find one stage is more pronounced than another and some stages slip by quickly and unnoticed.

TIPS & TRICKS (To Minimize the Effects of Culture Shock)

Do Your Research: Know as much as possible before you leave so there are fewer surprises once you arrive. Make use of the Internet and don't hesitate to email the homestay team with as many questions as you like.

Be Open-Minded: Don't judge and try not to compare. Canada is different from your home country. That's one of the reasons you chose it for your study abroad experience! Challenge yourself to learn about different ways of doing things; don't dismiss them as wrong or inferior.

Get Involved: Participate in school clubs and/or sports teams and, if possible, become active in the community.

Be Patient: Give yourself time to adapt to your new surroundings and make new friends. Don't put pressure on yourself; it takes time to acclimate.

Keep Active: Feeling good physically will help you to feel good mentally. Make physical activity part of your daily routine and/or your school timetable.

Relax: Make sure your day includes time set aside for mental rest. Studying, speaking English, and navigating the day-to-day realities of a new country and culture require a lot of energy. Spend some "down time" each day listening to music, surfing the Internet, or reading a book in your first language.

Manage Your Connections to Home: Keeping in touch with family and friends is vital and can be a valuable support during your overseas stay. Too much contact, however, can be counterproductive. Keep in touch but not at the expense of making new friends, participating in activities, and/or keeping up with your studies.

Stay Healthy: Eat foods that are good for you and make you feel good. Get enough sleep at night. Consider taking a vitamin supplement. Don't wait too long to visit a clinic if you are feeling ill.

Ask for Help: You are not alone at RETSD. If you are feeling sad, lonely, or frustrated, talk to your homestay team or a staff member at your host school.

Most Important of All: Remember why you came to Canada! It is supposed to be different and challenging. If Canada was the same as your home country, there would be no reason to come.

IN CONCLUSION

Embrace this experience!

There will be good times and bad, times of nervousness and joy. In the end, you will come out with new strengths you never thought possible. In the decades to come, you will look back at your decision to study overseas as a landmark in creating who you are as an adult, allowing you to make a strong and unique contribution to the global community—in your own special way.

We are proud to be a small part of your journey!



RIVER EAST TRANSCONA SCHOOL DIVISION
International Education Program
Student Guide Book