

Becoming a BLS English Host

BLS English is a language school based in Bury St Edmunds that specialises in teaching English as a foreign language. Our students come from all over the world and are of all ages. Whilst studying with us, they stay with carefully selected local hosts as this gives them the best opportunity to dive into a new culture and the English language. Students make a deliberate choice to stay with a host. They are looking first and foremost, for comfortable, welcoming accommodation where they can feel at home and practise their English in an informal environment.

The experience is rewarding for both students and hosts alike. Students benefit enormously from chatting in English in a relaxed, natural situation, practising over dinner what they have learnt in class. For hosts, the benefits include:

- the chance to meet students from all over the world
- experiencing different cultures and traditions
- the opportunity to share your traditions and cultures
- swap culinary ideas!
- the safety of accommodating an overseas student via a reputable school, rather than accommodating lodgers or tenants
- an active, experienced and caring team of people to rely on for advice and support
- flexibility of having short or long term students to fit in with your personal situation

We are committed to the highest standards of student care and support. Students stay from as little as one week up to a year in some cases, and our accommodation team takes great care in matching suitable students and hosts.

Frequently Asked Questions

We hope you might find the answers to some of your questions here, but please do contact us if you can't find the information you are looking for:

When would I host? We are a year-round school and welcome new adult students almost every week of the year. That said, our peak period is July, but we also welcome large numbers of teenage students around Easter time and throughout the year.

How long do students stay? It varies, so we take great care in matching students according to the type of student a host prefers. Adult students stay for a minimum of 2 weeks – but some stay for several months, up to a year in some cases. The average is in the region of 1 month. However, we have regular visits from a number of school groups, aged from 10 – 17 years old, who typically stay for 1 or 2 weeks.

I don't live in Bury St Edmunds – can I still host? Yes! A number of our hosts live outside the town. In order to host you would need to live within 30 minutes drive of the school.

How many students can I host? Although most students are individuals, a number of students will come in school groups and request to live with the same host. So if there is sufficient space, our hosts can look after 2 - 4 students at a time!

How do the students get to school? If you live within a 30 minute walk of the school (at the student's pace), they will be expected to walk to school. Younger students would need accompanying, or being shown the way until they are sure of the route. For journeys that exceed 30 minutes walk, we ask that hosts drop off and collect students from school.

Where are the schools? Our main offices and Adult Centre is based at 147, Kings Road, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3DJ, our Junior & Residential Centre is based at 8 Springfield Road, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3AN and our seasonal school for teenagers is at 5 Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1UZ.

What about food? Food is a key part of the home stay experience and the student will be expected to eat the same food as other members of the household. The vast majority of students stay on a full board basis, sharing meals with their hosts. Full board rates include breakfast, a packed lunch and an evening meal. At weekends, the student should eat all meals with the family unless other arrangements have been made.

What is the school timetable? Teenagers would typically start school at 9.30am and finish at 17.00pm. Occasionally there are evening activities arranged, and most students would go on excursion each Saturday. Most adults would still have a full programme of classes at the school, and optional attendance at evening and weekend activities.

Are bunk beds acceptable for your students? Yes, bunk beds are acceptable and one student is acceptable per double bed.

Will you want us as hosts as we have no children/are retired? Definitely! Some of our students ask specifically request a host with no children - they may prefer a quieter house where they can study.

I work full time – can I still become a host? Yes. Teenage students will be with us at school or doing activities each week day and we try to work with people's schedules as much as possible.

What nationality will the students be? We look after students from all over the world, from Athens to Zagreb. In 2014, we welcomed students from 50 different countries.

How old will the students be? We welcome students from the age of 10 to 80! You will have the opportunity to talk with our accommodation team about what type of student will suit you, and factors such as age, gender and nationality will be considered.

I have pets – will this mean I can't host? Not at all. We ask our students before they arrive if they have any allergies and are happy living with a host who has pets in the home and make sure we place students accordingly.

How much do I get paid? You will receive payment for hosting. The daily rate varies slightly with the student. Please contact us for full details about rates.

When will I receive payment for hosting? You will receive payment on the Friday after the start of the hosting by bank transfer.

I've never hosted before – what support will I receive? When our accommodation team visits you, we will take you through the Host Handbook and explain what is required of hosts and answer any questions you may have. Also, our office is open Monday to Friday, and we are here to help with any questions you may have or to offer any advice if there is anything you're not sure of. We also have an out of hours contact number should an emergency arise. BLS English is accredited by the British Council and was graded as "exceeding expectations" by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, the governing bodies that regulate and assess language schools in the UK. So you can be assured that you are working with a professional organisation.

Will I be asked to host at short notice? On occasion we do have students who require a host at short notice, and we may call you to ask your availability. However we know that not everybody will be available at short notice, and will understand if you are not able to host.

I want to become a host. What are the next steps?
Contact Lucy or Gemma on 01284 765511
or homestay@blsenglish.co.uk

We will arrange a time to visit and see the rooms the students could be using. It will also give us an opportunity to talk and discuss what type of student placements would work best for you and go through any queries you have.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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