**TEXT**

**HOW TO BE SUCH AN AMAZING HOUSE GUEST**

**YOU GET INVITED BACK EVERY TIME**

Now this is how you win the best houseguest award.

Whether you're crashing with a friend for convenience, invited for a leisurely stay at a cousin's summer home, or headed to your future in-laws' place for the first overnight visit, house guest etiquette matters. And if you've ever hosted family or friends for an extended stay, you know just how refreshing a well-behaved, respectful, game, and grateful house guest is—and how exhausting a not-so-awesome one can be.

Here are 11 house guest etiquette rules to follow, no matter who you're staying with or how long you plan to be there. (Trust us, this is how you get invited back.)

**Be Clear About How Long You're Staying**

Make sure you clear the duration of you stay with your hosts as far in advance as possible—at their invitation, of course. Don't be vague or hope to extend your stay once you arrive. Of course, there is a chance they might extend an offer, but don't make assumptions. If your BFF says they'll be busy after Labor Day, book your return ticket to leave a full day before so they have some time to themself. The last thing you want to do is take advantage of your host.

**Don't Show Up Unannounced**

It's never a good idea to show up without notice—or, even worse, to show up with a pet, child, significant other, or friend (even if it's a mutual friend) in tow, unless you've cleared it with your host beforehand. You may call it spontaneous and fun, but your cousin and their spouse may call it inconvenient.

**Bring a Thoughtful Gift**

A grateful guest always [brings their host a gift](https://www.realsimple.com/holidays-entertaining/gifts/best-hostess-gifts)—a little something to show their gratitude. However, there's no need to haul something huge or extravagant all the way there. A local treat from your hometown bakery, a beautiful coffee table book, flowers, a nice candle, or bottle of wine all work perfectly. Headed to someone's vacation house? Get them something on theme: beach towels or a cocktail-themed gift would be perfect.

**Follow House Rules**

When you arrive, gently inquire about how things are done to avoid any misunderstandings. What time does everyone usually wake up and go to bed? Anything you should know about the kids or pets? Should you leave the thermostat alone? Pick up on other house rules by being in tune with your hosts. This could mean observing whether or not you should take your shoes off indoors or if you should keep your phone away from the dinner table. Also, refrain from finishing the coffee or milk (but if you do, replace it).

**Limit Your Phone Use**

Spending too much time with your face in a screen will make your hosts feel like they're boring you (and, honestly, you might be boring them). It makes your company feel like there's somewhere else you'd rather be, or someone else you'd rather be spending time with. Try to limit screen time and only check emails, texts, and social media in the privacy of your own room.

**Act More Appropriate Than Usual**

Before you walk down the hall in only a towel, curse, tell inappropriate jokes, or come downstairs for breakfast in your PJs, take cues from your host. When in doubt, err on the side of modesty. If you're planning a dinner out with your hosts, ask what attire is appropriate for the restaurant (e.g. no jeans) so you can pack accordingly.

**Be Extremely Helpful**

Unhelpful guests are rarely invited back. Things you should offer to do: Help prep or cook meals; set the table and do the dishes; offer to drive; occupy the kids while their parents take a well-deserved nap; fix a little something around the house if you have the skills; or take the dog for a walk. Even if you're turned down, the hosts will appreciate the gesture.

Things you should do without asking for a thumbs up: Clear your dishes when you're done eating; buy some groceries and maybe the fixings for cocktails; get your own kids out of the house for an hour or two; fill up the tank if you borrow the car; strip your sheets at the end of your stay (unless you're told otherwise).

**Be (at Least Somewhat) Self-Sufficient**

Your hosts might be happy to see a Broadway show or the Lincoln Memorial for the third time, but they may also choose to get some things done while you are out and about. Your friend might actually be working during the day, so being able to entertain yourself will be a godsend for both of you. If you're staying for more than three days, call up other friends who live in the city, bring some work of your own to do, or be okay exploring on your own. Let your host know your plans and when you think you will get back.

**Bring Your Own Toiletries**

Don't expect to use any of your hosts' toiletries or other items. If you realize you've forgotten to pack toothpaste, inquire about where you can buy a new tube. They'll likely be happy to offer theirs, but first demonstrate that you're not a mooch.

**Leave Things Cleaner Than You Found Them**

If there's one thing to take away from these etiquette tips, it should be this: Leave the place as clean as possible. The last thing you want is for your host to have to hire a cleaner after your stay.

On your last day, triple-check the bedroom and bathroom for your belongings. Strip the sheets and put them in a pillowcase at the foot of the bed. Do a quick wipe-down of the counters in the bathroom for toothpaste, extra cups, or loose hair. And, of course, return any items to their place, like a book you borrowed from the bookshelf.

**Say Thank You**

Thank your host three times: when you arrive, when you're about to leave, and once more after you've gone with a [handwritten thank-you note](https://www.realsimple.com/work-life/work-life-etiquette/how-to-write-a-thank-you-note). Here, an email won't cut it. Throw in a specific detail about how much fun you had doing a certain activity, how hard you laughed at a particular story, or how delicious a specific meal was. Finish with an offer to open up your own next time. For an optional but memorable thank you, pick up a fresh bouquet of flowers and leave them in a vase on the kitchen counter with your note before you leave. Otherwise, mail your card within two or three days of your visit.