

DEMI-PAIR GUIDE

**Cultural Experience vs. Cultural Shock:
How to make the best out of your
overseas placement**

*By Priceless
Exchange &
Langports,
Australia*



Ramona, demi-pair student from Switzerland from May 2014 to December 2014. Gold Coast, Australia.

We congratulate you on the decision to enter the English + Demi-Pair program. It takes a lot of courage to come to a new country and staying with a family you don't know! Yet it is a very rewarding and amazing experience and we are sure that you will be getting used to the Australian culture in no time!

We are here to look after you 24 hours per day. Please ensure you let us know should you have any challenges with your Host Family and/or working schedule.



Priceless Exchange contact details:

Andrea's Phone Number is 0438 010 276

Andrea's Email address is info@priceless-exchange.com

We always like to hear your feedback!

1. Welcome to Australia!

We wish you a really warm welcome to Australia! May it be in Brisbane, the Gold Coast or Sydney, we hope that you have a fantastic stay at Langports and enjoy the demi-pair program. Before you start studying and working in your new family, note that there might be a few differences between living in your home country and living in Australia.



Brisbane



Gold Coast



Sydney

Seasons

Australia is located in the Southern Hemisphere, which means that seasons might be the other way around! The sunrise and sunset hours could also be really different from your home country; for instance, in summer the sun rises around 4.45am and it would be quite normal for Australians to get up at 5.30am (especially in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast)!

Spring - September, October and November.

Summer - December, January and February.

Autumn - March, April and May.

Winter - June, July and August.

School hours & holidays

Different seasons also mean different school timetables! In Australia, children have 4 schools terms. Each term lasts for 10 weeks. In 2016, for instance, the term dates are as follows*:

- Term 1 from 25th January to 24th March
Spring holidays from 27 March to 10th April (2 weeks)
- Term 2 from 11th April to 24th June
Winter holidays from 25^h June to 10th July (2 weeks)
- Term 3 from 11th July to 16th September
Spring holidays from 17th September to 3rd October (2 weeks)
- Term 4 from 4th October to 9th December
Summer holidays from 10th December to 23rd January 2017 (6 weeks)

*These dates are subject to be slightly different from a state to another (ie, Queensland and New South Wales).

Please also note that children usually enter school for their preparation year at the age of **5 years old**. Before that age, most of them go to childcare, kindergarten and early learning centres (all week or once or twice a week only).

School grade levels are numbered **from Year 1 to Year 12**.

School hours usually run **from 9am to 3pm** from Monday to Friday.

2. The English + demi-pair program

The concept of the demi-pair program is to combine both English Language studies and work as an au-pair in an Australian family.

Depending on your visa obligations, your study objectives and the course you decided to choose, you will be studying at Langports either full-time (intensive program) or part-time. Then, in exchange for **20 hours of work per week (usually 50% housework and 50% childcare)**, you will receive 3 meals per day and accommodation in your host family. Please note that you will not get paid by the family, unless the family asks you to work extra hours. If that is the case, then the family would pay you \$10 per extra hour.

Students studying a full-time course at Langports

Students enrolled for a full-time course follow the timetable below:

Monday from 9.00am to 12.45pm, and from 1.45pm to 3.30pm.

Tuesday from 9.00am to 12.45pm, and from 1.45pm to 3.30pm.

Wednesday from 9.00am to 12.45pm, and from 1.45pm to 3.30pm.

Thursday from 9.00am to 12.45pm, and from 1.45pm to 3.30pm.

Friday from 9.00am to 12.45pm + optional activities until 3.30pm.

If you follow this timetable, your host family is most likely going to ask you to work for an hour in the morning and 3 hours in the afternoon and evening, from Monday to Friday, and maybe work for a few hours on Saturday too, depending on their specific needs.

As children usually finish school at 3pm, you will have to make sure that **you go home straight away after school**, in order to be on time for work. You will be given a precise work timetable along with your family profile. Please note that it is also important that you discuss this timetable with your family once you arrive in Australia.

Students studying a part-time course at Langports

Students enrolled for a part-time course study from 9am to 12.45pm from Monday to Friday.

If you follow this timetable, your host family is most likely going to ask you to work for an hour in the morning and 3 hours in the evening, or for 4 hours in the afternoon, depending on their needs. You will be given a precise work timetable along with your family profile. Please note that it is also important that you discuss this timetable with your family once you arrive in Australia.



Examples of tasks

Your tasks in the family can include:

- **Housework:** preparing meals or helping to prepare meals, ironing, washing clothes and folding, vacuuming, washing floors, dusting, cleaning bathrooms including toilets, cleaning up kitchen after meals, tidying common areas and children's rooms, preparing children's lunch in the morning etc.
- **Childcare:** waking up children in the morning and getting them ready for school, taking them to school and/or picking them up from school, helping children with homework, helping children getting ready for bed including assisting them with their bath, organising some activities for the kids in the afternoon, baby-sitting etc.

Length of the program

When you apply for the English + demi-pair program and once you receive your host family profile, you understand that you **commit to work and stay with your host family for 3 months (12 weeks)**. In other words, once you sign the host family profile, it is like signing a work contract, for 12 weeks. If you experience any issues during these 12 weeks, please do not hesitate to contact Andrea (see contact details on page 1) and she will do her best to find a solution with you and the family.

If you wish to stay longer than 3 months, you can also talk to Andrea about it. Indeed, we have students staying for 6 months sometimes! You can renew your placement in the same family (if the family agrees and is available) or in another family if everything went well during the first 3 months.

Public transportation

Australia is quite a big country. Did you actually know that you could fit all of Europe in Australia?

Therefore, Australians are used to traveling long distances between cities; it is also usual for them to travel for about 50 minutes to go to work, and come back from work (on average), especially because most of Australian families live in the suburbs. As a demi-pair student, you will also be travelling from your host family's home to the school **between 40 and 75 minutes every morning and afternoon**.



Brisbane buses



Gold Coast buses



Sydney ferry

3. Getting to know your host family

Your Host family has just like you; expectations. All of our host families are aware of the cultural differences and are more than happy to help you settle into their family lifestyle.

Working Schedule

You agreed to the working schedule of your Demi Pair Host Family on their profile form. All of our families are aware of our 50% housework and 50% childcare policy. If you have a very low English level and cannot understand the children, the Host Family can ask you to do more housework until your English is a little better. Sometimes a Demi Pair hasn't got the skills to look after the children, so the Host Family can ask for more housework too.

Either way, please let us know if you are not happy with your family's working schedule.

Connecting with Children

Getting to know the children of your Host Family is very important. If you want to build a close relationship with your Host Family's children, try to find out what THEY like to play, what THEIR interests are and then play on their level with them.

One very easy way is asking your children to show you their favourite toys or activities, or ask the Host Mum. Your Host Family's children will lose interest in playing with you very quickly if you try to make them play things they do not like.

As explained earlier, in Australia children go to school between 8-9am and finish around 3pm. Some families have after school activities planned for their children, but if not, children will come home after school. Children normally have to do homework and maybe you could help them with it.



There are other rules that you need to follow when looking after children:

- **Don't ever leave the children go playing outside unattended without asking the Host Parents first!** It is okay for children to play alone unattended in some countries, but NOT in Australia!
- **Always ask the Host Parents first before giving the children any treats/sweets.** Many families don't like their children eating sweets, and there are many allergies to consider!
- **Check with your Host Parents first before letting the children play games on your phone or computer or showing them a movie or letting them use the internet.** Some Families have restrictions on what they like the children to see and play with.

- **Always stay in the bathroom when watching the children while having a bath.** Children slip very quickly in the bath and accidents can happen quickly. Never leave children unattended in the bath.
- **Always tell the Host Mum everything that happened while you were looking after the children.** Sometimes children may be challenging you, trying to test your boundaries. If for any reason the children don't listen to you, tell the Host Mum! You may get the children into very unsafe situations if they don't do what you say. Report all accidents to the Host Family if there were any.

Remember that if you are looking after the children on your own, you are responsible for them! Keeping them safe is very important.

Connecting with You Host Parents

The Host Families expect you to be independent, reliable, helpful, friendly, safe, responsible and generally fun to be around.

They expect you show self-initiative; no family likes to have to tell their Demi-Pair to do one thing one hundred times. If you find it hard to remember how you do something, maybe writing it down may be helpful. It is the Demi-Pair responsibility to learn the family's routines and standards. **Show your family that you care and that you want to learn, it is a 'give and take' relationship, the more you give, the more you'll get.**

You will get to know your Host Parents very well. Treat them like you would a friend. It is very nice to show them you care on a personal level; making them a cup of tea or coffee when you feel they are stressed, or a gesture like 'why don't you go for a quick walk, I will look after the children for a while', would be very appreciated!

Please make sure you give the family their own time in the evenings. It is totally fine to join your host parents when they are watching a movie, but they need some alone time too when the children are in bed.

Extra tip for Asian Demi pairs: Communication is very important in the western culture. We say what we feel. Eye contact is very important; when you talk to your Host family, look them in the eyes, it shows respect. We communicate pleasure and displeasure through facial expression, smiling when we are happy and a serious face when we are not happy. So please smile! If you are not happy with anything you must talk to your family, or us or your education agency.



General Manners

Please make an effort to spend time with your family outside your working hours and on the weekends.

Make an effort to be part of special family occasions like the children's birthday parties and some outings the family invites you to join. Remember you are expecting to be part of your Host Family on the Demi-Pair program and your family expects you to be part as well. Talk to the family about weekend plans making sure they know when you are home and when not. Offer to babysit every now and then.... This will be greatly appreciated!

Please note that Langports organises regular activities for the students (afternoon activities, day trips and weekend trips). **Being a demi-pair and spending time with your host family means that you will NOT be able to participate in all the activities, due to your work commitments.**

Some little tips about showing good manners:

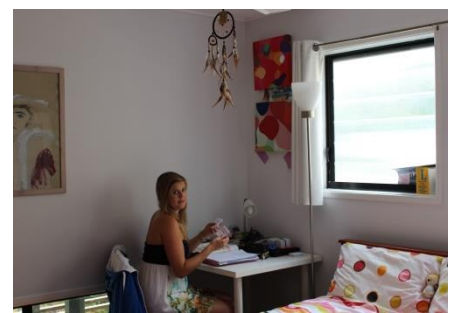
- **Let the Host Family know when you leave the house and when you get back.** Host Families like knowing when their Demi-Pair leaves the house and comes back so they know everything is okay. Please also let them know if you stay out overnight, and don't come home for dinner.
- **Communication solves most problems! Please be open with your family about your likes and dislikes and challenges you may have.** Host Families will always try to do their best to make it right for their Demi-Pair but you will need to do your best to communicate your feelings to.
- ***It is very, very important to add, 'Yes Please' and 'Thank you' to every sentence in Australia!***
- **If you experience any challenges at school, feeling ill or homesick, please let your Host Family know!** They will see that you are feeling down and they will worry about you, knowing what is going on will make it easier for them to understand you.
- **Please always check with your Host-Family before inviting a friend to your Home.**
- **Don't use your mobile phone while you are working,** the phone needs to stay in your room.
- **Always let the Family know if you are running late coming home.**
- **Australia is a very multicultural country. Most families are mixed families; there are very few 'real Australian' families. Citizenship in Australia is much easier to obtain than in many other countries, so an 'Australian family' might have moved here from Malaysia, England, New-Zealand, South Africa etc. To become a host family, all our families have to speak English at home.**
- **The Australian food culture varies from family to Family.** Australia is a very mixed country culturally. Every Family does things their own way, and eats their own foods. If you wish to eat different foods or more then please buy some snacks yourself that you can keep in the fridge or in your room. *The Host Family needs to provide 3 meals per day, of whatever they eat themselves,* everything else is up to you to get, unless the family offers you to help yourself. **Please note that in Australia, a typical lunch is made of a sandwich (salad sandwich, meat sandwich, egg sandwich etc.), a fruit/cereal bar and a drink. If the Families meals are not enough for you, please cook yourself some rice with the meals, I am sure your family won't mind at all!**
- ***Extra Tip for Asian Students: We don't share food and drinks!*** Please be aware of this! Always take your own glass for a drink, don't share glasses and bottles with the Children of your Host Family!

4. In the House

- **Please be mindful of electricity, Internet and water usage in your Host Families home.**
- Don't leave the light, air-conditioning or heater on during the day when you are not there.
- In most families, Internet access is not unlimited so please avoid downloading movies without your family's approval and limit your Internet use to keep contact with your family and friends or do some research for your homework.
- Australia has really strict water restrictions; so in order to preserve and conserve water please limit your showers to 5 minutes and make sure that you do not let the water run while you are brushing your teeth.

Please be aware that the family can get you to pay for carelessness usage of water, internet and electricity.

- **Keep your room and bathroom clean and tidy. Keep your belongings in your room.**
- **Please always use the bin for sanitary items; never flush anything down the toilet.**
- **Please ask you host family how long you can use the internet on a daily basis.** Not every family has unlimited internet access. Don't download movies before checking with you family.



5. Doing the Work

- **Take your time and observe your family's routines and ways of doing things. If you are unsure, please ask to be shown again.** Sometimes it helps to write things down. Some Host Parents are particular about certain things, like how to vacuum and fold the laundry. Remember it is always better to ask one more time than assuming.
- **If you are home before anyone else, please have a look around the house for things to do, like unloading the dishwasher; taking the rubbish outside, swiping the floors, general tidy of the house and/or children's room, folding the laundry.** Your Host Family will appreciate your initiative!
- **When you're finished with your tasks for the day under 4 hours, please ask your Host Parents what else you could help with.** It is very uncomfortable for the host parents having to come and knock on your door if you go straight into your room.
- **Be reliable!**

'And remember, this is a very rewarding program for both of you; it is a give and take. If you are prepared to give a bit more, you will be given more in return! '

6. Ideas for age appropriate play

Thank you <http://www.respiteforme.com>

3 - 6 Months old children

- Cradle, gym, squeeze, playpen toys
- Use a mirror and ask the baby "Who's that?"
- Imitation games
- Sounds of music
- Change in voice
- Bath time

6 - 18 Months old children

- Games of drop and throw
- Bounce chair
- Games: Peek-a-Boo, Hide and Seek
- Feeding fun (easy to eat finger food)
- Water play (use wash cloth puppets, sponges of different shapes and colours, bubbles to blow)
- Bath time play (floating toys, sponges, washcloth puppets)
- Kitchen play

18 Months – 4 years old children

- Experiment with clay and colour
- Paints and do handprints
- Play with water and forms
- Wiggle
- Play follow the leader
- Dance
- Play hide-and-seek.
- Let the child "help" -- at the store, preparing dinner.

Ages 5-7

- Bake and frost cut out cookies
- Fly a kite on a windy day
- Go on a walk and collect interesting rocks, leaves or other items
- Feed the ducks at the park
- Make a present for someone special
- Play UNO, Crazy 8s, or Old Maid
- Play badminton or croquet
- Go for a walk and find interesting places to practice "balancing"
- Have a garden picnic
- Cloud watch on a bright summer day

Ages 8-10

- Start a scrapbook with a page for pictures of favourite things
- Go on a camera scavenger hunt to find odd objects to photograph
- Make greeting, get well, or holiday cards for special people
- Read a selected book out loud and tape record it
- Play Monopoly, Life, Sorry, or hangman
- Go for a bike ride
- Go to the park and play soccer, tennis, tags

Ages 11-13

- Watch a TV program and identify negative stereotypes
- Look up your state on the Internet: what is the major industry?
- Build and paint a bird house - watch for occupants
- Rent rollerblades and learn to skate, safely
- Make a list of people you admire - look them up on the Internet
- Mow the lawn or wash the car together
- Play computer and video games together

Notes

My Address:

My school address:

My Host Family's Phone Number:

Andrea's Phone Number: 0438 010 276

Emergency Number (Police, Ambulance and Fire): 000

Other notes: