Etiquette in the U.S.

While people in the U.S. might seem more informal or laidback than your country, there are certain manners that are very important. Below are some suggestions:

**General information:**
- Reply to all communications from your host.
- If you cannot accept the invitation, explain why you cannot attend, and consider suggesting another time to get together.
- Keep in touch with your host to update them on how things are going.
- If you do not understand something, ask! Most people are more than happy to speak slower or explain in a different way.
- Call your hosts immediately if something comes up and you cannot go. Plans change all the time, but it is important to tell your hosts.
- Be on time! Punctuality is important to most people.
- For most visits to your home, wear everyday clothes. For special events, it is appropriate to ask your host what the attire, or dress, will be.
- Do not bring friends to your host’s home without an invitation or permission.

**At the table:**
- If there is a napkin, put it on your lap
- Do not put your elbows or arms on the table.
- Wait until everyone is seated at the table before eating.
- Use serving spoons to remove food from the serving dish. Do not use your personal spoon or fork, or hands.
- Do not speak with your mouth full.
- If there is more than one fork, knife and spoon at your plate, it is ok to ask which one to use. Usually, you start with the outside and work in – but always ask!
- If you are offered another serving of food, it is ok to say either “yes, please,” or “no, thank you.” Be honest – nobody will be offended by either answer and you will probably not be asked again if you say no. It is ok to change your mind after, though.

**At your host’s home:**
- It is possible that you will be treated as “one of the family” rather than a guest. Statements such as “make your self at home,” “help yourself,” and “let me know when you are hungry” are meant to make you feel more comfortable. It is ok to ask for a drink or what time dinner will be.
- Ask your host if they would like you to remove your shoes upon entering the home.
- Remove your hat when you enter the home.
- If you are invited over for a meal, tell your host immediately about any dietary restrictions you have.
Other cultural nuances:
- The Family Friendship Program is a cultural exchange. Your hosts may not know what is different in your culture, so they may not know what to explain without questions from you. Likewise, please be open to any questions from them about your culture.
- Americans tend to initiate conversations and offer a lot of information when meeting people for the first time, but are often hesitant or cautious when asked personal questions. Offensive questions might include:
  - How much a home or other personal item costs
  - Age
  - Salary

Miscellaneous Advice
- Talk about your life in your own country, your family and home, your studies, your friends, your interests, etc
- Share photographs of your family, friends and home
- Make time to spend with your hosts
- Communication is key!