
Houseguest Prep Checklist

Make out-of-town visitors feel welcome, comfortable, and maybe even a little pampered.

Have a spare key made.

Tell guests where it will be hidden (if they'll arrive while you're out) or hand it over when they get there, so they aren't ringing the doorbell every time they return.

Make the bed with clean sheets.

If you have a guest room, freshen up its linens.

Test the air mattress.

If your "guest room" is a blow-up mattress in the living room, see that it's in good condition. Inflate it to make sure there are no holes, and, if you have time, vacuum the surface so it's free of dust.

Gather extra pillows and blankets.

Guests may be used to sleeping with two pillows, so an extra set (stored under the bed) is a good idea. Fold an extra blanket and lay it nearby in case guests get cold.

Make room in a closet.

If there's a closet in your guest room, be sure that it isn't stuffed with Christmas decorations and such. If there's no guest room, clear a little space in your own closet for a suit jacket or dress that needs to be hung.

Buy (or create) a suitcase stand.

Clear off a storage trunk or have a folding stand ready for guests' luggage. It will help them stay organized and keep the room neater.

Have toiletries readily accessible.

All of those mini bottles you've collected from hotels? Use them! Have shampoo, conditioner, body lotion, a bar of soap, and toothpaste in plain sight in the guest bathroom. If you're sharing a bathroom, leave toiletries in a basket by the bed.

Set out a spare towel.

Consider offering one that's a different color from your everyday towels, so a guest knows which is hers.

Buy or make a few snacks.

Have breakfast basics on hand: coffee, orange juice, fruit, granola, muffins. Small snacks for the afternoon will likely be appreciated too.

Create a list of possible activities.

Think about what guests might want to do when they visit, and know when shops or museums are open.

Gather local magazines, brochures, and maps.

If you're heading to work instead of playing tour guide, have the local paper or magazines available with listings of attractions. Get a local bus or subway map, or provide directions if guests are driving.

Put a few books near the bed.

Give guests something to read before they go to sleep. If there's an interesting book about your town, even better.

Leave important phone numbers.

Put together a list of emergency contacts in case something happens while you're out. Give the name and number of a neighbor, family member, even a plumber (if you have tricky toilets)—anyone whom guests might need in a pinch.

Write down household instructions.

How does the remote control work? What's the deal with that newfangled alarm system? Give guests some pointers in case they're stumped while you're gone.

<http://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/organizing/houseguests-prep-checklists>

