

How to Make Your Home Guest Friendly

Properly Fulfilling the Mitzvah of
Hachnasat Orchim – Hospitality in the HIWP community

At the Hebrew Institute, our community takes hospitality seriously, and we all try to make our homes as welcoming as possible. Sometimes our guests are more observant, sometimes less observant, sometimes they may be great Torah sages, and other times we may have folks over who are being exposed to Jewish traditions for the first time. It is a challenge to make people feel comfortable; in some ways it's even an art. Below are some tips to help every home in White Plains become part of a critical mitzvah.

When hosting (and always), be committed to community standards of kashrut

Even if the guest has different ideas - stricter or less strict - about kosher observance, when you maintain the community's standards, your guests will be assured that you are following well-accepted rulings. By following these standards you are creating a spirit of trust that will help put all your guests at ease. Please observe as well the standards regarding heating food on Shabbat which we have included in as well.

If you are hosting on Shabbat please be careful to check on the following:

- **Have you shut off the refrigerator and oven light?** Of course this is a regular halachik matter even if you are not hosting. You can either unscrew the bulb, or cover the switch that pops open when you open the door (there are actually Velcro switch covers that you can use week to week. <http://www.kosherimage.com/fridgeez.html>).
- **Have you provided your guests with either tissues or pre-cut toilet paper in the washrooms?** One way to make a Shomer Shabbat person feel at home is for them to find that you pay attention to the same Shabbat details as they do, whether you have been strict about them until this point or not. (Note: if you find yourself in the washroom without any torn toilet paper, the needs of "*kvod habriot*" – human dignity - allows you to use the toilet paper roll. Just try to tear it in a different way than you would during the week)
- **Have you provided liquid soap for those washing their hands?** Ashkenazic Jews do not use solid soap on Shabbat, since doing so would change the form from a solid to a film/liquid (a Shabbat prohibition). Liquid soap is permissible, since it is just going from a liquid to a sudsy liquid.
- **Is the light on in the washroom?** It may be necessary to tape light switches so that guests - Shabbat observant or not - do not inadvertently turn off your lights. Everyone occasionally slips up, and having tape, especially on washroom

lights which are normally turned off upon exit. Covering the switch can save a lot of embarrassment and difficulty for the next customer!

- **Not all your guests - even good friends - will necessarily know Hebrew well.** So it is considerate to provide *benchers* for *birkat hamazon* with some English - at least English instructions - if not transliterated or translated. If you cannot read Hebrew, then it is certainly permitted to bench in English. Remember to announce pages too.

I've shared this guidance in the hope that each of our homes can be as friendly and open to Shabbat guests as possible. You can do your part by being sensitive to these and other matters.

Wishing you a beautiful Shabbat!

Rabbi Chaim Marder

(with many thanks to Rabbi Asher Lopatin for the core of this text)