



MAYAN FAMILIES

Sponsor Visit Guidelines



Before The Visit

- We want your visit to be well planned and to run as smoothly as possible. To give us sufficient time to organize your trip, visit requests should be made at least **2 weeks in advance** for most of the year, and **4 weeks in advance** for the high seasons of November-February and July-August.
- A visit from a sponsor is a very special experience for students and they will likely shuffle around their schedule in order to be able to see you. But it is important to remember that students and their families often have very busy work and school schedules. Although this is considered a small sacrifice to be able to meet someone who has had such a great impact on their life, we do not want to cause unnecessary disruption to their daily lives. Please limit visit requests to one per student, per trip. Visits should take place within office hours: Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, and should not require students to take time off school.
- Student's homes are often very small. This means that it can be overwhelming to the family to receive large groups of people in their home. We therefore try to keep visiting groups as small as possible (6 people or less).
- To ensure you and the student have the best experience possible, a Mayan Families representative must always be present and visitors should not meet with a sponsored child or family without going through the proper sponsor visit process. This policy is for the protection of both our clients and our sponsors.



- Occasionally, sponsors ask if they can take their sponsored student out for an activity, such as swimming or out of the area. This is a kind offer but in order to safeguard our sponsored children and their families and respect cultural norms, many of these activities which would take a child out of their normal home environment, or the Mayan Families office, are not possible. If you are unsure whether an activity would be suitable, contact us and we can discuss it with you.
- Receiving a gift from a sponsor is very special to students and their family. As we aim to boost our local economy, we prefer that sponsors organize gifts when they arrive, and there are plenty of shops here in Panajachel where you can buy toys and gifts. We also ask sponsors to provide gifts which can be of benefit to the entire family. **Please limit the size of gifts to fit in a school backpack.**

Suggested gifts:*

Photos of yourself, your family, or your sponsored student and their family
Books, games or toys
Coloring or puzzle books
A sweater or cardigan

Please do not give:

Gifts of a religious nature
Cash
Unhealthy snacks (candy, chocolate, lollipops, etc.)
Gifts that do not fit into a school backpack

* Please be aware that the majority of our female students use traditional rather than Western clothing. Mayan Families would be more than happy to arrange a gift of traditional clothing for your sponsored student if you would like this.

During Your Visit

■ Remember that you are in a new culture, different to your own and this may require acting a bit differently. Guatemalan culture is conservative so please wear modest clothing: women are asked to wear skirts or bottoms that fall below the knee and tops that cover shoulders and mid-sections, and men are asked to wear bottoms ranging from ankle to just above the knee and are also asked to avoid tank tops. Sturdy footwear is also recommended, as families may live in rural areas and a short walk may be required. This walk could be steep and/or slippery.

■ It is courteous to say “con permiso” (with your permission) upon entering someone’s home. Once inside the house, it is impolite to enter rooms you have not clearly been given permission by the family to enter. Please also keep an eye on any children that you have brought with you, to ensure that they do not do this.

■ The support you are providing to your sponsored student is extremely important and the relationship between a sponsor and their student and family is very special, but also please be mindful that your student has their own parents or caregivers. Please do not behave in a way which undermines their role as the main caregivers, and please do not take children away from their caregiver. It is wonderful to greet your sponsored student with a hug, but as Guatemalan culture is very conservative, please let any such displays of affection be initiated by your student or their family first.



■ We are pleased to facilitate and encourage relationships between sponsors and their student through visits and letter writing. However, this must be coordinated through Mayan Families. Visitors should not provide any personal information (Facebook, email, phone numbers or addresses) to their sponsored student or accept this information from them. Any sponsor found to be making contact outside of Mayan Families may have their sponsorship terminated.

■ Visiting a student’s home is one of the best ways to find out what their greatest needs are and to plan any future support. However, please avoid making any promises to students that you may not be able to fulfill.

Suggested talking points for visits:

1. How your student is doing in school. Favorite subjects, difficult subjects, special projects etc.
2. What your student would like to do when they are older
3. It is great to tell your students a little bit about yourself: where you live, your job, your family, the weather where you are from, hobbies, pets

Important note: Photography and/or Videos

Sponsor visits are very special occasions and we appreciate that you may wish to take photographs to capture the happy memories and share them with your friends at home! However, we have a duty to protect the privacy and ensure the security of the children and families that we work with, and we take this very seriously. Please always ask permission from the parent or caregiver before taking a photograph. To respect the privacy of students and their families, recordings (videos or audio) cannot be shared on social media, and the sharing of photos should be done respectfully and in moderation. If you share any photographs on social media, do not identify a child’s location, full name, or details about the family.

I have read and understood the Sponsor Visit Guidelines and will act accordingly during and after my visit.

Full Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____