

OUR ETHOS

“Gateway School of English (GSE) is more than a guarantee that your stay with us will be a successful English language learning experience. It is a promise that you will take back home with you an exciting total memory that will enrich you as a person, making you more aware of the world’s diversity and of the importance of reaching out across cultural barriers. In short, we offer you a gateway to the world and a pathway to success.”

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WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Esteemed Student,

Welcome to Malta and to Gateway School of English!

We are delighted to receive you on our premises and hope that the entire package of your stay, including aspects of academics, accommodation and leisure, will not only meet but also exceed your expectations. In fact, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on enrolling at GSE!

You have made an excellent choice in deciding to combine your English language learning with a visit to our beautiful islands. Thanks to Malta's history as an ex-British colony, English enjoys official language status along with Maltese, and this guarantees exactly what you, as a student investing in your education in another country, are looking for: an environment that produces top quality results in a very special and unique place. This is the reason why Malta is such a favourite destination among students who are looking for a balance of classroom and culture while having some real holiday fun!

Moreover, with our typical hospitality, approachability and our emphasis on individual attention, here at GSE, we go the extra mile in ensuring that our students have the best stay possible, and are always at your service, eager and willing to address any of your queries and concerns.

This is why we have put together this Student's Handbook to make your stay easier and help you start off on the right foot, while hopefully answering some of your questions as you orient yourself in your new surroundings. Inside you will find all the information you need on how to get settled in at the school and your respective accommodation, as well as an introductory guide on making your way safely around the island.

To conclude, we are fully confident that your learning experience will be a positive and productive one, and the time you spend with us will be well worth your while. This is our promise to you. We now invite you to proceed to discover how we deliver it.

May you have a lovely day and a splendid stay!

Warmest wishes,

The GSE Team

THE GSE TEAM: KEY PEOPLE

"Pleased to meet you!"

Here at Gateway, **your welfare** is of great concern to us, so if you ever need anything, whether it relates to **academics, accommodation, leisure** or anything else at all, you can reach any one of the contact people listed below.

We are here to help you!

CHARLES SAMMUT

General Director & Head of School
csammut@english-malta.com

KARL SAMMUT

Sales & Marketing Director
ksammut@english-malta.com

MARISA SAMMUT

School Residence Manager

ROMAN AZZOPARDI

Director of Studies (DOS)
dos@english-malta.com

REBEKKA MAMO

Assistant Director of Studies
(ADOS)
dos@english-malta.com

SCHOOL CONTACT DETAILS

Address: Gateway School of English (GSE)
Netz Educational Services Ltd.
No. 1, Bosfru Street (corner with Jonju Street)
San Gwann (St. Julian's)
Malta

Email: info@english-malta.com

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Fax: +356 2137 5086

Website: www.english-malta.com

Skype: gatewaymalta

Facebook: www.facebook.com/GSEMalta

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/gatewaymalta>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/gatewayschoolofenglish/>

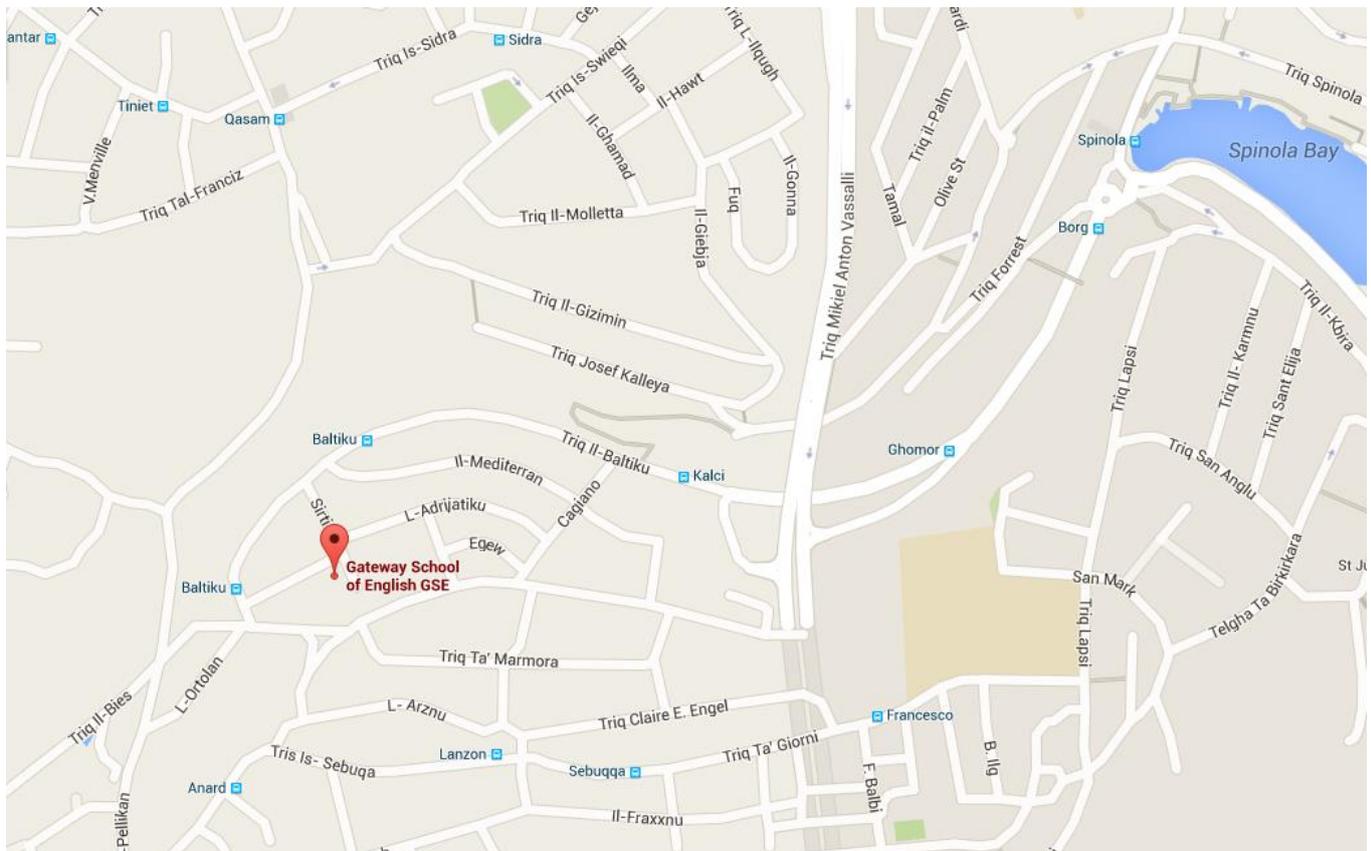
****Please reserve this number for genuine emergencies, when members of staff are not readily available in the school office or at the residence, or outside business hours (late in the evening or at night).***

DAY OF ARRIVAL

Let us help you find your bearings!

- Important: Please inform the school of any changes in **flight** details or in case of a flight cancellation. Contact us by email mid-week and on our emergency phone number at the weekend.
- Please refer to the **map** and **address** below if you are finding your way to the school / residence alone (by bus or by taxi):

Gateway School of English (GSE)
Netz Educational Services Ltd.
No. 1, Bosfru Street (corner with Jonju Street)
San Gwann (St. Julian's)
Malta



- **Transport options** from airport to accommodation:
 - Private airport transfers with the school:
 - The trip from the airport to your accommodation (whether at the school residence, a host family, a hotel, or private apartment) must be booked *before* your arrival but you can book the trip back (from your accommodation to the airport for departure) at anytime during your stay (while you are in Malta).
 - Price: one-way €25, two-way €50, + €15 per additional person.
 - Public transport by bus:
 - If you have booked accommodation at the school residence:
 - Take bus number **X2** from Malta International Airport to Spinola Bay in St Julian's;
 - Then from the bus stop opposite McDonalds (by the sea) in Spinola Bay take bus number **120** towards Mater Dei Hospital and get off at the bus stop called **BALTIKU** (third bus stop from Spinola Bay). This is the closest bus stop to the residence. Walk uphill for 10 metres, then turn left into Triq Sirti (Sirti Street) and walk up the same hill. The school is at the top of the hill in Bosfru Street.
 - If you have booked homestay OR hotel accommodation:
 - Ask us or your agent for the directions and correct bus route.
 - Taxi service (eCabs 2138 3838, HiCabs 2137 2137, white taxis from airport booth).
- If you have booked transport with the school and have an **airport transfer voucher**, a school representative will meet you at the airport holding a placard with your name printed on it, and will accompany you to your place of accommodation.
 - In the event of a *delay* in the arrival of your transport, there is no need to inform the school as all transfers are monitored and delays under control.

- If you are staying at the **Residence**, breakfast is from 8:00-9:00 everyday (weekdays and weekends). Lunch is served at 12:15-13:00 on *weekdays* (from Monday to Friday) only.
- If you are staying with a **host family**, ask one of the family members to show you the way to the school, and make sure to check at what time meals are served.
- If you are staying in a **hotel** or an **apartment**, ask at the Reception or contact one of our staff members for directions to the nearest bus stop and for the bus which stops at 'Baltiku', San Ġwann (the bus stop by the School).
- If you **arrive on a weekend**, you will have your placement test on Monday morning at 9:00 and start your lessons after break at 10:45.
- If you **arrive on a weekday**, you can have your placement test on the same day and start lessons the following day at 9:00.

DAY 1 AT SCHOOL*

**For students starting on a Monday*

The Day's Proceedings

<p>9:00-10:00</p>	<p>Placement test</p> <p>The Director of Studies (DOS) will greet you at the school entrance and show you to the room where you will have your test. You will be given a general introduction by the DOS and can ask any questions you may have at this point.</p>
<p>10:30-10:45</p>	<p>Break time</p> <p>You can help yourself to some coffee and meet some of the teachers and other students.</p>
<p>10:45</p>	<p>Placements</p> <p>Wait by the reception desk at the school entrance for the DOS to give you your course book and show you to class. Time for your first lesson!</p>
<p>12:15-13:00</p>	<p>Lessons over; lunchtime</p> <p>Lunch at the residence canteen is for students who have booked accommodation here. Students staying at a different place of accommodation and who would like to have lunch at the school residence can do so at a cost of €10.00, after informing the school or canteen staff on which days they would like to have lunch. (Any special dietary requirements must always be specified in advance.)</p>
<p>13:00-14:30</p>	<p>Afternoon lessons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Conversation classes (as part of Intensive English) – 13:00-14:30 • One-to-One lessons in General English, Conversational English, Business English and a variety of ESP Courses (English for Specific Purposes) – can be of any duration, as agreed between management and student.

The Placement Test

The placement test takes between 1 hour – 1 hour 15 minutes and is the same for everyone. It is a reliable indication of your linguistic competence in English and is therefore crucial for us to determine what level of English you have and which class to place you in.

The best thing about this test is that you cannot fail it, because it is structured in a way that grades all levels from lowest to highest as it advances through progressively more difficult exercises as you go along. This means that no matter how much (or how little!) you know, there will always be a band in which you fit, and likewise, a group that is just right for you.

So you have absolutely no need to worry - just do your best, and let us do the rest. Make sure to only answer what you feel you know, then stop when / if it gets too difficult and you cannot continue. And if you really want to make the most of the test as an opportunity for us to know your true level, and place you in the best group for you to succeed, remember: no cheating!

If you are placed in a group that you feel is not of your level (too easy or too difficult), do not worry too much as this is quite normal and happens to many students on the first day, when the environment is new and the teacher spends more time getting to know all the students and their respective needs and abilities, rather than plunging straight into new teaching material. In that case, you can let the teacher know how you feel but it would be wise to wait patiently and stay in the same class for another couple of days until you give yourself a chance to adjust to the group and the teaching style.

If, however, you are still not satisfied with the level or feel uncomfortable in class for some reason or other, you can speak either to your teacher or to the Director of Studies at anytime. ***We are always available to receive students' questions and concerns.***

TUITION: THROUGHOUT THE COURSE

How we monitor your *feedback* and measure your *progress*

- On the third day of your arrival (typically a Wednesday, if your course starts on a Monday), you will be given a **First Week Questionnaire**. Please fill this out by the end of the day and hand it in at the office (upstairs on the second floor). This is important for us to gauge your initial reaction to the course and confirm your satisfaction. If there is anything you are not happy about (both at school or your accommodation), this form allows us to take action and make any necessary changes as soon as possible.
 - Please note that if there are any pressing issues or problems that you need to resolve urgently (e.g. if you can't understand anything in class, or if something is wrong in your room), you should let us know verbally straight away (at the school office on weekdays if in the mornings / afternoons, and on our emergency phone number at weekends or late in the evenings), so we can tackle it immediately.
- If you are a long-term student (staying for 4 weeks or more), you will have **tutorial sessions** with the DOS every few weeks to discuss your progress and ask for guidance on any concerns you may have, for example if you wish to change your class for some reason or other (ease or difficulty of level, lesson content or delivery, etc.). It is also an opportunity for you to pass on any suggestions you might wish to put forward to the administration or management, in relation to how you can improve your overall learning experience at the school.
- For students who wish to change their group to go to a higher level but are unsure of where they stand and would like more accurate assessment in conjunction with their teacher/s' feedback, we also offer **progress tests** which indicate whether you have made the improvements expected at your level and are ready to try the next.
- On the last day of your stay, you will be given a more detailed **Final Week Questionnaire** in which you will be asked to rate your experience at the school and assess the service you have received on all aspects of the academics, accommodation and social programme. You are also welcome to leave comments (good or bad) on your general impressions,

along with any suggestions that you would like us to consider so that we may improve our service.

You will see that we take everything our students have to say very seriously and appreciate the time you take to fill out our feedback forms as these give us insight into our clients' needs and allow us to act accordingly, for your own benefit.

Standard Daily Schedule

Monday - Friday	
09:00-10:30	General English (Session One – 2 lessons)
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-12:15	General English (Session Two – 2 lessons)
13:00-14:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afternoon Lessons: • Conversation Classes (as part of Intensive English Course) • One-to-One Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General English ▪ Business English ▪ Exam-Preparation English (IELTS, TOEFL, FCE, CAE...) ▪ English for Specific Purposes (Legal English, Medical English, Agricultural English...) ▪ English for Academic Purposes ▪ etc.

Last day of school

After your last lesson go to the office to:

- be presented with your end-of-course attendance certificate,
- reconfirm your flight details,
- confirm any airport transfers booked with the school,
- return your course book and any other resources borrowed from the library,
- say goodbye!

***At Gateway, we don't say "Goodbye",
we say "See you next time!" 😊***

THE SCHOOL

School Premises

Opening hours: 08:00-18:30

Gateway School of English (Malta) is located in a quiet and elegant residential neighbourhood close to the vibrant St Julian's Bay area.

The location was carefully chosen from a shortlist of over ten other possible locations because of its ideal combination of desirable features, including the social quality of the neighbourhood, safety and security, low building density and proximity to green zones, and accessibility from popular shopping and recreational centres.

The school was specifically designed to ensure optimal conditions for effective learning. It is a semi-detached four-level building comprising seven bright and spacious classrooms, common areas and plenty of indoor and outdoor space for relaxation and recreation. All classrooms are fully air-conditioned, summer and winter.

School Amenities & Facilities

- Academics office (second floor)
- Sales & Marketing office (ground floor)
- Free Wi-Fi access (all floors)
- Lounge area (first floor)
- Computer workstations for self-study and internet access (entrance hall, first floor)
- Library (third floor)
- Coffee machine (entrance hall, first floor)
- Soft drinks vending machine (residence Side A (same street as school), ground floor, below the stairs outside)
- Outdoor patio and yard with seating area and ashtrays (ground floor)

SCHOOL DOS AND DON'TS

DO

- Take a positive attitude! Smile, be friendly and polite with everyone. You are meant to enjoy yourself while you learn. Make the most of every moment!
- Mingle with students of other nationalities to practise your English as much as possible, in and outside of the classroom. Avoid sticking to people of your own nationality only, as you may easily forget to use English and start speaking in your own language.
- Engage in debates and discussions and express your opinion (respectfully) to learn more about other worldviews while practising your argumentative skills.
- Tolerate and respect cultural / political / ethnic / religious diversity, because this is what makes our world so colourful. You can learn a lot from someone who is different from you.
- Follow your teacher's instructions in class and let the teacher know when you do not understand.
- Approach the academic staff (teachers and DOS) with any questions or problems concerning course materials, homework, your level and progress (e.g. if for some reason you want to move to a different class), or if you need any advice. We are here to help you and are always available.
- Be on time for your lessons.
- Borrow books from the school library and read as much as possible - make full use of your free time.
- Ask about the weekly activities on the social / cultural programme.

DON'T

- Be afraid of making mistakes in English when you are speaking. It is very important to challenge yourself and practise as much as possible so that you can gradually become more and more comfortable with the language. It is always better to speak incorrectly than not to speak at all, so do not hold back. We guarantee that that is how you will learn! And don't worry, the teachers are here to help you.
- Expect miracles! Be patient with yourself and your progress. Remember, learning a language is a process that takes time and requires patience and practice. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day!
- Disrupt the flow of the lesson or distract the teacher and other students.
- Write on your course book, as you will return this at the end of your course in exchange for your certificate. Please remember that other students will be using the book after you. Your teacher will give you photocopies of pages you use in class and need to write on (e.g. with exercises to complete).
- Be more than fifteen minutes late for the lesson.
- Eat in class or in the library. You are only allowed to drink water in the classrooms, and you can eat in the common areas indoors, on the patio and on the roof.
- Remove your shoes and walk barefoot.
- Litter and leave any rubbish on the floor. Use the bins provided in every classroom.
- Smoke indoors.
- Throw cigarette ends and ashes on the floor. Use the ashtrays provided in the school's outdoor recreational areas.
- Consume alcohol on the school premises.

- Leave your personal belongings unattended.
- Stay in class if you are unwell, especially if you are coughing and sneezing, have an eye or ear infection, or anything that is contagious. Please respect the people around you, and feel free to ask us to get you a doctor.
- Disturb public peace. Your own enjoyment should not impinge on someone else's so please remember to always behave in a civilised manner.
- Push chairs up against the walls in class, for example when you are doing group work or moving around the class.

ACCOMMODATION

Golden Rules:

1. Respect the standards of your accommodation and leave facilities as you find them.
2. If there is anything you are not happy about, either at the school residence or your host family, **please let us know as early on as possible**, so we can resolve the issue and give you a satisfactory solution. Do not leave it till the end of your stay to tell us if anything is wrong, because it will be too late for us to change anything by then.

SCHOOL RESIDENCE

Residence Premises

Adjacent to the school, the school residence provides a comfortable and modern home for those students at GSE who choose to live as close as possible to the school, with just a three-minute walk from bedroom to classroom.

The building is a fully detached three-floor structure made out of traditional Maltese limestone and has 22 oak-furnished bedrooms (6 double rooms, 12 triple rooms and 4 quadruple rooms), and 8 bathrooms. A huge bonus is that, unlike in other places of accommodation (including host families), all bedrooms are **fully air-conditioned**, in summer and winter.

Accommodation at the residence is available on half board basis, providing breakfast and lunch. It is **not self-catering** and does therefore not provide facilities such as kitchenettes, related kitchen equipment (microwaves) or self-service laundrettes (washing machines, tumble dryers etc). There are, however, kettles and fridges available for use in the TV rooms, where a few items of food and groceries can be kept. For students who would like to go out for dinner or order a takeaway delivery, there are plenty of restaurants and coffee shops nearby to choose from.

Residence Amenities & Facilities

- On your first day you will be given **two keys**: one for your room and one for your personal locker. If these are lost, a €20 charge will apply, as locks will have to be changed for security reasons;
- Personal desk, chair, wardrobe and locker per person;
- Desk lamps can be provided on request;
- Canteen for breakfast and lunch (ground floor);
- Fridge in every TV room where students can keep some snacks and perishable goods for short-term use. *Do not leave any products behind after your departure*;
- Cold / soft drinks vending machine (Side A, ground floor, outside below the stairs, same street as school);
- Laundry service at reasonable prices (€1 per item of clothing and 30c per item of underwear), however long-stay students (staying for 4 weeks or longer) can benefit from discounts (please ask at the school office);
- TV lounges with satellite TV (access to BBC, Sky News, CNN etc);
- Free Wi-Fi access (on every floor);
- Adapters can be provided at cheap prices;
- Patio with tables and chairs for outdoor relaxation and socialisation.

Residence Meals

- **Buffet breakfast** is at **8:00-9:00** in the canteen from Monday to Sunday.

This includes a selection of: three types of bread; toasted bread; two choices of cereal; scrambled eggs; butter, ham, cheese and jam; tomatoes (when in season); tea, coffee and hot chocolate; hot and cold milk; free flow of water and orange squash.

- **Lunch** is served in the canteen at **12:15-13:00** from Monday to Friday. No lunch is served on Saturday & Sunday.

This consists of: fresh vegetable soup, grilled vegetables, salad, potatoes (mashed, baked, roasted or chips), tomatoes, chicken **or** pork

or breaded fish, free flow of orange squash and water, seasonal fruit or sweets.

- Students not accommodated at the residence who would like to have lunch here can do so at a cost of €10.00, after informing the school or canteen staff on which days they would like to have lunch. Any **special dietary requirements** must always be specified in advance.

Cleaning

- The entire residence, including all bedrooms and bathrooms, is cleaned *on a daily basis* (floors are washed and bins emptied everyday).
 - **Bed linen** is changed every weekend.
 - **Towels** are changed once a week but can be changed more regularly *upon request* (maximum once every two days); just ask a staff member whenever you would like a fresh towel.
 - **Dirty laundry** can be handed over to canteen staff at breakfast or lunch on any day, and will be returned *within 2-3 days*. (Rate: €1 per item of clothing and 30c per item of underwear; long-stay students staying for 4 weeks or longer can enquire at the school office for information on discounts).
- ***Please ensure that the hygiene of all facilities is maintained. It is of utmost importance to leave bathrooms clean after use, especially considering that bathrooms are shared and will be used by others after you. Leave them as you would like to find them.***

SCHOOL RESIDENCE DOS AND DON'TS

DO

- Mingle with your roommates and other students using English.
- Use the TVs in the lounge areas and watch the English channels available to practise your listening (e.g. BBC, Sky News, CNN...).
- Keep your bedroom and the bathrooms clean and tidy.
- Pay for any damages you cause.
- Inform the canteen staff about any special dietary requirements you may have if you did not do so before your arrival when booking your accommodation.
- Be punctual for mealtimes and let the canteen staff know if you are missing a meal.
- Tell the cleaning staff when or how often you would like to change your towel (maximum once every two days). Bed linen is changed every weekend.

DON'T

- Lock yourself up in your room for too long. You should go out and about with other students to discover Malta and practise speaking English!
- Disturb public peace, especially at night. This means that there should be no loud music, shouting or partying in or outside the rooms. Any sort of disruptive, violent or indecent behaviour will be punished and can lead to expulsion.
- Smoke indoors. Ashtrays are provided on the tables on the patio outside.
- Drink alcohol on the premises. Alcohol consumption at the residence is strictly prohibited.
- Lose your keys. A €20 charge will apply if keys are lost as locks must be changed for security reasons.

- Litter in the common areas. Use the bins in your rooms.
- Leave your clothes lying around as the cleaning staff will not be able to clean your room properly. Use the wardrobes.
- Wash clothes in the bathrooms. Laundry services are provided at reasonable prices (€1 per item of clothing and 30c per item of underwear. Discounts apply for long-stay students staying for 4 weeks or longer; enquire at the school office).
- Take bath towels or bed linen out of the residence.
- Move furniture around. Ask for a member of staff to help you.
- Slam any doors.
- Leave doors or windows open while the air-conditioner is on.
- Leave air-conditioners on while you are away. They will be disconnected.
- Waste water or electricity.
- Rest your feet against the walls as this can leave permanent stains.
- Hang clothes or towels out in the common areas as this looks unsightly.
- Drape wet fabrics on wooden furniture as this can damage the wood.
- Leave your luggage on the desk or bed.

HOMESTAY ACCOMMODATION

For students preferring the 'homestay solution', we have a number of carefully chosen host families living within 5-10 minutes' walking distance from the school, which means that you would still be in the same upmarket neighbourhood. Staying with a host family enables students to interact actively with the local culture and adopt a more familial lifestyle, while ensuring total English language immersion.

We have personally known all the families hosting our students for years, and can safely say that they are reliable people with whom students have always been happy to live. In fact, we know them so well that we can easily match students with the family most suited to their individual preferences. We also carry out regular inspections to ensure that the standards of the premises and services promised are being maintained.

Moreover, the fact that they are all native English speakers gives students maximum exposure to and practice of the language. The best proof of our students' satisfaction with these families is in their recommendations to their friends back home, who very often end up enquiring and requesting to stay with these families too when they come on their own language trips.

If there is anything you are not happy about in regard to your host family, please approach one of our staff members as soon as possible.

Upon booking your homestay accommodation, you will be provided with your host family details which include the home address and contact details of the family members, so you can get in touch by email before your arrival, if necessary.

Host Family Meals

- ***Ask your host family at what time meals are on your day of arrival.***
- ***Make sure that your host family knows if you have any special dietary requirements.***

Breakfast: cereal, white bread, toasted bread, butter, ham, cheese, jam, tea, coffee, milk and water.

Dinner: can vary from meats / fish with vegetables to a pasta dish or some kind of fast food (not more than twice a week), followed by dessert (fruit or sweets). Free flow of water is included.

Laundry

Laundry arrangements should be discussed with your host family on the first day of arrival.

Host Family DOs and DON'Ts

DO

- Interact with family members in a polite and friendly manner to practise your English.
- Respect family members' privacy (private spaces, personal time etc.).
- Speak to your host family if there is anything you are not satisfied / comfortable with.
- Keep your room and the other parts of the house that you use (bathrooms, kitchen, living areas, dining room etc.) clean and tidy.
- Be on time for meals and respect the household schedule.
- Let your host family know in advance if you are missing a meal or if you expect to be late for whatever reason.
- Leave your room tidy and put clothes away in the wardrobe provided so that your host mother / father can clean the room properly.
- Offer to pay for any damages that you cause.

DON'T

- Be noisy or play loud music, especially at night when the household is asleep.
- Lose your key or give it to anyone.
- Invite friends over without your hosts' permission.
- Move furniture around without first asking for permission.
- Waste water and electricity. Only use as much as you *need*, and *when* you need it - don't let the water run or leave anything on (light, TV, air-conditioner etc.) if not in use.
- Go inside the bedrooms of your hosts or other residents without permission.

- Use the kitchen, the cupboards and the fridge / freezer to cook, heat, store or freeze food without permission.

MALTA FACT FILE

General Information

The Maltese **archipelago** is situated 95 km south of Sicily and 290 km from the nearest point on North African coast. It consists of three main islands – Malta, Gozo and Comino, which together make up a total area of 316 km². The main island, Malta, is 27 km long and, at its widest, it does not exceed 14km across. It is indeed small, but has plenty to offer nonetheless, as you will soon find out! The population stands at around 425,000.

Due to its central position in the heart of the **Mediterranean**, it takes only one to three hours to get to Malta by air from most European cities. There are frequent and direct connections with major European cities including Rome, Paris, London, Frankfurt, Brussels, Amsterdam.

With regard to **climate**, Malta enjoys warm dry summers and mild winters. Temperatures range from 12°C in the winter months to around 30°C in August, the hottest month of the year.

Malta's is an export oriented economy, whose main productive sectors are the tourism industry, the manufacturing industry, the maritime industry, the film industry & financial services. The **Euro (€)** is the country's currency.

On an international scale, Malta is a Member State of the **European Union** and is within the **Schengen Area**. If you are an EU citizen, you are entitled to travel freely around the Member States of the European Union, including Malta. For you, no special formalities are required to enter an EU country. If you are a non-European Union citizen travelling to Malta for a longer period, and do not require a **Visa**, you should apply for a **Temporary Residence Permit** after a stipulated period of time. We can help you with the application process free of charge. Non-European citizens requiring a Visa to travel to Malta should make sure to apply for a Schengen Visa before travelling to Malta.

In addition, as an **ex-British colony** and following its independence from the British Empire in 1964, Malta became a member of the **Commonwealth**, a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign states. It is now one of just three other Commonwealth member countries in Europe.

Thanks to its colonial past as part of the former British Empire (together with other English speaking countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand), Malta treasures its **English speaking tradition** and **bilingual identity**, and the Maltese are proud to belong to a world-wide community of 1.8 billion speakers of English. **English is in fact an official language of the Republic of Malta** and its principal language of instruction. This, of course, is what makes Malta an international destination of choice to learn English.

Of relevance to all foreigners visiting the islands, it is good to know that the crime rate is relatively low when compared to other countries in most parts of the world, so there is no need to worry too much when it comes to **personal safety**. However, it is never advisable to take unnecessary risks, such as carrying too much money or other valuable items on your person and leaving your possessions unattended (bags, mobile phones, wallets). If you are reasonably cautious at all times, you will not need to worry about anything. In case of **emergency or illness**, please refer to the useful numbers towards the end of the handbook, or ask the school staff for guidance.

On the academic front, the **University of Malta** (the only one on the islands) traces its origins to 1592. There are now around 10,000 students including over 750 foreign students from 80 different countries, enrolled in degree and diploma courses. International high school students who have completed their secondary or high school education in another country but who do not possess the necessary entry requirements, may apply for enrolment in the basic Foundation Studies Course to qualify for admission as undergraduate students. The University of Malta has eleven faculties: Arts, Built Environment, Dental Surgery, Economics Management & Accountancy, Education, Engineering, Information & Communication Technology, Law, Medicine & Surgery, Science and Theology.

In more recent history, Malta made itself known in the **LGBT community** through its official recognition of LGBT rights. Following the enactment of the Civil Unions Bill, civil unions (same-sex couples & gay marriage) were first introduced in September 2013. The bill grants civil unions the same rights, responsibilities, and obligations as marriage, including the right of joint adoption. Parliament gave final approval to the legislation on the 14th April 2014 by a vote of 37 in favour and 30 abstentions. President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca signed it into law on the 16th April, and the first civil union followed shortly on 13th June 2014.

Public & National Holidays in Malta

All public and national holidays are celebrated on fixed dates year after year, except for Good Friday which depends on the Spring Equinox to determine the day for Easter Sunday.

The ***school is not open on public holidays***, and lessons missed on public holidays which fall on weekdays will not be recovered.

Shops are usually closed while some pharmacies are open depending on the local pharmacy roster, which is available online.

- **1st January** – New Year's Day
- **10th February** – Feast of St Paul's Shipwreck
- **19th March** – Feast of St Joseph
- **31st March** – Freedom Day
- **March / April** (no fixed date) – Good Friday, followed by Easter Sunday
- **1st May** – Labour Day
- **7th June** – Sette Giugno
- **29th June** – Feast of St Peter and St Paul (*L-Imnarja*)
- **15th August** – Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady (*Santa Marija*)
- **8th September** – Victory Day / Feast of Our Lady of Victories
- **21st September** – Independence Day
- **8th December** – Feast of the Immaculate Conception
- **13th December** – Republic Day
- **25th December** – Christmas Day

Attention: Important Information

- Vehicles in Malta drive in the opposite direction, i.e. **on the left side of the road**. Be careful when crossing and always look left and right first, to make sure it is safe to cross.
- The **speed limit** on the open road is 80 km/h and 50 km/h in the built environment.
- All **road signs** are in English.
- For those wishing to rent a car and drive during their stay, **international driving licences** are accepted.
- The legal age for the purchase and consumption of **alcohol** is 17.
- In Malta we use the British **three-pin rectangular plug** system, so you will need an adapter to connect your two-pin electronic devices. These are available at cheap prices from the school and in many hardware stores and other general-purpose shops in the vicinity (supermarkets, grocers, stationeries etc).
- **Stamps** may be bought from most newsagents / stationers. The nearest Post Office is located in Naxxar Road, San Gwann, but other branches may be found in most areas all over Malta and are open everyday except Sundays.
- **Wi-Fi** is freely and conveniently available in a number of hotspots in public areas all over Malta and Gozo.
- Most **shops** typically open from 09:00-13:00 and again from 16:00-19:00 on Monday to Friday, and in the morning on Saturdays. The most popular open-air flea markets (locally referred to as *il-monti*) can be found in Valletta and Marsaxlokk fishing village, mainly popular for the fish market (Sunday till 12:00).
- Traditional Maltese delights include local honey, wine, peppered cheeselets (*gbejniet tal-bzar*), savoury cheese or pea-cakes (pastizzi), Kinnie (a soft drink) and local Cisk beer, among plenty of others. World-renowned souvenirs include handcrafted lace (*bizzilla*), Mdina Glass and silver filigree.

- There are **banks** and **ATMs** (Automated Teller Machines for cash / cheque withdrawal / deposits) in every town and village, and exchange bureaux in Sliema, St Julian's and Valletta. The bank and exchange bureau at the Malta International Airport is open 24/7. Banks are normally open every morning from Monday to Saturday, and till early afternoon on weekdays. **Foreign currency** can be exchanged easily, but payment in the major international currencies is often accepted (possibly against conversion charges) by most hotels, restaurants and larger shops, as are international bankcards.
- **Healthcare** in Malta is of a high level and conforms to European standards. The quality of the medical care offered locally is excellent in quality, and is available in both public and private hospitals (see section 'Useful Numbers' for contact numbers of state hospitals). EU member state citizens should carry their European Health Insurance card (E111) with them at all times, and all foreigners are advised to take out a personal medical insurance policy. Mater Dei Hospital, Malta's general state hospital is only a 10-minute drive from the school (see section: Useful Numbers).
- **Pharmacies** can be found everywhere and are open during normal shopping hours:
 - Monday to Friday at 09:00-13:00 and from 16:00-19:00,
 - Saturday morning,
 - Sunday morning depending on the local pharmacy roster (also applies to public holidays; roster available online).
 - The nearest pharmacies can be found in San Gwann and St Julian's and are within walking distance from the school.
 - The **Airport Pharmacy** in the Arrivals Lounge at the airport is always open from 08:00-22:00, including Sundays and public holidays.

Getting Around: Malta's Public Transport

Thanks to Malta's small size, travel is very easy and there are a number of transport options that will allow you to navigate your way around with ease and efficiency.

- The **public bus service** is a convenient option as there are routes all over Malta and Gozo, making all places easily accessible, from the more popular tourist hubs to quieter or less central areas. Spinola Bay in St Julian's (12 minutes away from the school on foot, 3 minutes away by bus, number 120 from bus stop 'Baltiku') is the closest place to the school from where many major and connecting buses can be caught. From here you can catch direct buses to the capital city of Valletta and to all the popular beaches in the north of Malta, among other places of interest. If you need more information about specific routes and buses, you can ask us for an updated list of bus numbers and a bus route map.
- **Taxi service** options include:
 - eCabs – 2138 3838
 - HiCabs – 2137 2137
 - White Taxis – 2369 6071 / 9997 7761?
- **Car rental** with or without chauffeur service is available at either local or international car hires, of which there are plenty in both Malta and Gozo, particularly but not exclusively in the tourist areas of St Julian's and Sliema (Malta). The daily rate can range from an average of €16 - €28. International and national driving licenses are acceptable.
- **Renting scooters, motorbikes or bicycles** is also an option, however not all roads are easily accessible with these means. Bicycle lanes can be found lining some of the major roads, but are not usually very long.
- **Sea Travel:**
 - The ferry service is the most common means of transport between Malta and **Gozo** as it is very regular and only takes 20 minutes. A sea plane service links the Grand Harbour in Valletta to Mgarr Harbour in Gozo.
 - Other regular boat services connect both Malta and Gozo to the smaller island of **Comino**.

- Ferries or water taxis also run between Valletta and **Sliema**, in the Marsamxett Harbour that connects the two major cities.
- Traditional Maltese boats (*dghajsa* singular, *dghajjes* plural) also operate as water taxis in the Grand Harbour (Valletta).

LEISURE: OUR SOCIAL PROGRAMME

Our social programme will help you make the most of your time in Malta. It is built around varied and exciting activities which give students more insight into the Maltese culture and way of life. We strongly believe that culture and leisure are an important part of learning, and Malta offers many engaging and rewarding possibilities both for the young as well as for the mature. Moreover, these activities give you a chance to interact with fellow students and make new friends while practising your English.

While on a school-organised activity, students are accompanied by the school's group leader and a fully licensed guide when visiting historical places such as the capital city of Valletta. Return transport is also organised by the school.

Below are a few of the weekly excursions typically on offer on the programme:

- Gozo & Comino in a day
- Valletta by day: guided tour, sightseeing and shopping
- Valletta by night
- Marsaxlokk Fishing Village, Blue Grotto beach, Hagar Qim & Mnajdra Temples
- Mdina by night
- Mdina by day, San Anton Presidential Palace Gardens, Ta' Qali Crafts Village (where the best souvenirs can be bought)
- Afternoon Rabat & Mdina tour with trackless train ride
- The Three Cities
- Malta National Aquarium
- 'Splash 'n' Fun' water park (summer only)
- Popeye Village
- Evening bowling at the Eden Superbowl bowling alley in St Julian's
- Countryside walks such as Golden Bay & Majjistral Nature & History Park
- Summer beach trips: Golden Bay / Mellieha Bay / Paradise Bay / St Peter's Pool etc.

Apart from the regular trips that usually take place every week or weekend, we also organise other activities such as five-a-side football games, sightseeing flights by plane over the Maltese islands, beach trips to picturesque and sometimes less accessible beaches, and countryside

walks “off the beaten track”, in further flung places such as Dingli Cliffs, Buskett Forest, Verdala Palace, Girgenti etc.

In addition, we make it a point to include local annual events, especially those particular to Maltese traditional and popular culture, which are well-attended by locals and tourists alike. These give students the opportunity to experience Malta up-close and at its best, whether it is food, entertainment or history that is on offer; there will always be something of value (tangible or not!) to take away with you.

One example is Easter Week, renowned for its unique customs such as the Good Friday street processions, the lavishly decorated church interiors and related Easter artwork handcrafted by skilled local artisans, and the sweets and snacks typical at this time of the year. Similarly, in summer there is a village feast every single weekend, in a different town or village every time, with a full-fledged fireworks display, live entertainment, open parish church and corresponding band club/s (usually old buildings of significant architectural value), and plenty of food stalls all over.

Among the best-known yearly events are: the Notte Bianca, Birgu by Candlelight, BirguFest, the Rolex Middlesea Yachting Race, the International Fireworks Festival at the Grand Harbour, the Delicata and Marsovin Wine Festivals, the Strawberry Festival at Mgarr, Casal Fornaro Bread Festival in Qormi, the Medieval Mdina Festival in the old capital city of Mdina (also known as the Silent City), the internationally famous Isle of MTV concert, the Senglea Maritime Festival and others.

CLIMATE & WARDROBE: WHAT TO WEAR IN DIFFERENT SEASONS

If you come in **summer** you will need:

- ✓ light cotton / linen clothes
- ✓ swimwear
- ✓ shorts
- ✓ bermudas / short trousers
- ✓ sleeveless / short-sleeved tops / shirts / dresses
- ✓ t-shirts
- ✓ flip-flops
- ✓ sandals / open shoes
- ✓ beach shoes
- ✓ sunblock
- ✓ sunglasses
- ✓ beach towel

- Typical temperatures between June and September: 25-38°C
 - The school and residence are both fully air-conditioned, while fans are provided in host families.
-

If you come in **winter** you will need:

- ✓ coat / jacket
- ✓ warm clothes
- ✓ long-sleeved tops / shirts / dresses
- ✓ tights
- ✓ scarf
- ✓ beanie
- ✓ gloves (optional)
- ✓ closed shoes
- ✓ boots
- ✓ umbrella

- Typical temperatures between October and March: 12°C -20°C
 - Since buildings in Malta do not have central heating systems, in winter we use air-conditioners or heaters, and it is necessary to **dress warmly indoors** as well.
 - The school and residence are both fully air-conditioned, and host families use gas or electric heaters.
-

If you come in **spring / autumn** you will need:

- ✓ light shirts
- ✓ half-/long-sleeved tops and t-shirts

- ✓ longer shorts
- ✓ light trousers
- ✓ cardigans
- ✓ light jackets / thin raincoats
- ✓ both closed and open shoes

- Typical temperatures from March-May and September-October: 15-25°C.
- The weather in these transitional seasons can be very variable and unpredictable, but is generally quite mild. It is advisable to get a variety of clothes with you just in case it happens to be a bit cooler or warmer than you expected. It would also be a good idea to have a few extra layers handy to add on or remove depending on rising / lowering temperatures, but there is typically no need for thick or heavy clothing.

Note: Make sure to check the weather forecast regularly in the days before your arrival so as to get a clearer picture of what it's like at the time and to know more or less what to expect.

Reminder of our pre-arrival availability for you

If in doubt, or if you have any last-minute questions you'd like to clarify before your arrival, do not hesitate to drop us a line by email (info@english-malta.com), on Skype (gatewaymalta) or on our social media sites:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GSEMAlta>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/gatewaymalta>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/gatewayschoolofenglish/>

Useful Numbers

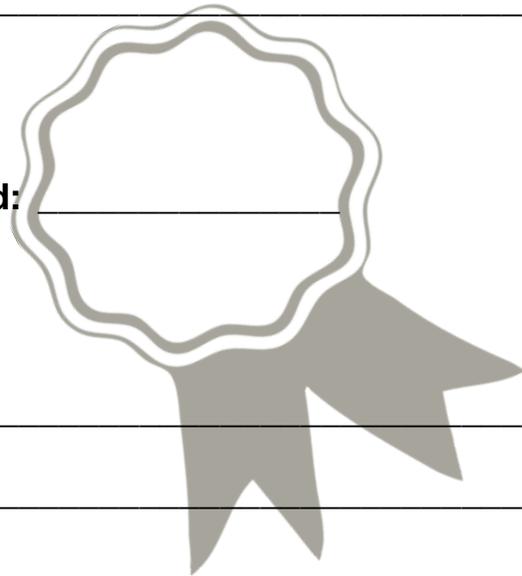
- International direct access code (for overseas calls): 00
- Malta country direct dialling code: 356
- Emergency: 112
- Ambulance: 112
- Fire Brigade: 112
- Police Emergency: 112
- Police Station St Julian's: 21371694
- Police Station San Gwann: 21386121
- Malta Mater Dei State Hospital: 2545 0000
- Gozo General Hospital: 2156 1600
- MaltaPost central post office: 2122 4421 / 800 7 22 44 (Freephone)
- Directory Enquiries: 1182
- Directory Enquiries (Vodafone): 1189
- Directory Enquiries (GO): 1187
- Gozo Ferry: 2155 6114

My Notes (3 sheets back-front – 6 pgs total)

Goals I achieved through my stay at GSE

- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____

Level I attained:



What I need to work on next

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Memories of Malta

***Top landmarks to see and
places of interest to visit:***

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-
-
-
-

Best places to eat:

-
-
-
-
-

***Best places for entertainment
(to hang out / meet people / socialise / have fun):***

-
-
-
-
-

Stick best photo here

