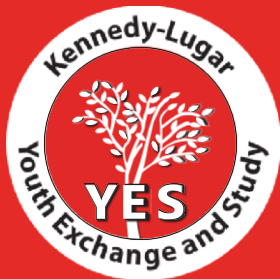




2023-2024 STUDENT HANDBOOK



Dear YES Scholars,

We share your excitement for the opportunity to spend a year in the U.S. as a recipient of the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study scholarship. The year ahead will be a unique time for you and your family.

We know that your parents will want to help you prepare for the year in the U.S. As you read this handbook together, you will find a checklist of things to do. You will need your parents' help with some of the tasks. For example, you will need their help with travel documents such as your pass- port, visa, permission to travel without parents (if this is necessary in your country), and arranging for school credit .

However, we hope you will be able to make some decisions and prepare some things yourself. Being able to make choices and act independently is expected of American teenagers. For example, write a personal letter to your host family, select a few small gifts to take to your host family and future friends, choose a few photos, books or other items to take from home, and pack your own suitcase.

Please discuss the program policies with your parents. Also discuss the allowances you will receive in addition to your monthly stipend, and the expenses for which they are intended.

Perhaps you have mixed feelings about your departure for the United States for a year. You are probably both excited and a little scared. Your parents, and perhaps grandparents, probably have the same feelings. It is normal for parents to worry about their children. Please be assured that the American family that is waiting for you in the U.S. is prepared to care for you in the same way they would care for their own children. After some time with them, you will feel at home.

Please be sure to take this Handbook with you to the United States. Your parents will have their Natural Parent Information Guide for their reference while you are gone.

Again, our best wishes to you and congratulations to you and your family as you embark on this international exchange experience.

Sincerely,

Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study Program (YES) Staff

Purpose of the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program aims to promote mutual understanding between Americans and people in countries with significant Muslim populations. This public diplomacy initiative was initiated by the U.S. Congress and provides secondary school students in 37 countries throughout the Middle East, Africa, South/Southeast Asia, South America, and Eastern Europe, the opportunity to live and study in the United States for a full academic year.

The YES program is carried out by a consortium of 16 U.S. not-for-profit organizations selected to participate through a competitive grant process. Consistent with U.S. laws, the Placement Organizations do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, or gender in employment or in making selections and placements of students.

GOALS OF THE YES PROGRAM

- 1. Acquire an understanding of important elements of a civil society. This includes concepts such as volunteerism, the idea that American citizens can and do act at the grassroots level to deal with societal problems, and an awareness of and respect for the rule of law.**
- 2. Develop an appreciation for American culture, an understanding of the diversity of American society and increased respect for diversity, and appreciation for others with differing views, beliefs and practices.**
- 3. Interact with Americans and generate enduring ties.**
- 4. Teach Americans about the cultures of their home countries.**
- 5. Gain leadership capacity that will enable participants to initiate and support activities in their home countries that focus on development and community service in their roles as #YESAlumni.**

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WHAT THE YES PROGRAM PROVIDES

The YES scholarship covers most of the costs of participating in the exchange program. However, there are some costs and fees that you will incur. Below is a list of what is covered by the YES program, and what is not.

THE YES PROGRAM PROVIDES:	THE YES PROGRAM DOES NOT PROVIDE:
A U.S. visa, including travel to U.S. Consulate for your visa interview	An international passport or any exit documents necessary to leave your home country
Program orientation activities, including pre-program preparation in your home country and re-entry preparation in the U.S.	Excess or overweight baggage costs
Round-trip domestic and international travel between your hometown and your host town in the U.S., to include 1 checked bag	Telephone calls and emails to your host family or natural family
Placement with a screened volunteer U.S. host family	Coverage for pre-existing conditions, treatment for chronic or recurring illness, and dental care
Medical insurance, except for pre-existing conditions, treatment for chronic or recurring illness, and dental care	Medical examinations required when you apply for YES
Monthly allowance of \$200 to help you participate in social activities, and buy calling cards, school supplies, toiletries, and other similar items	Travel during your exchange year with your U.S. host family and/or U.S. friends
Program activities arranged in local U.S. communities	
One-time incidentals allowance of up to \$300 for academic year students, \$150 for semester students, reimbursable to your host family	
Enrollment in a U.S. secondary school	

I. Introduction

In this chapter you will learn:

- **Why you are called an “exchange student”**
 - **What Placement Organizations are**
 - **The many different parts of the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program**
-

It is quite an honor to receive a scholarship for the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program! We encourage you to prepare yourself well for this wonderful opportunity.

This **Student Handbook** will tell you more about the program. Read the handbook carefully. It will give you important information on how to prepare for your year in the U.S. and will help you understand what living with a host family and going to school in our country may be like. This handbook is also your guide to the policies and procedures that you must follow while in the U.S. Together with the **Natural Parent Information Guide** your parents will receive, it should answer most of the questions you and your parents have before you start your orientation program.

If the English in the book is difficult to understand, ask someone to help you with words or ideas you do not know. You will find the definitions for some special words in the Glossary on page 88.

All students on the YES program receive this handbook. We will call the YES program “**the Program**” in this handbook.

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program is administered in almost 40 countries by a consortium of organizations led by American Councils for International Education, which includes AFS, AMIDEAST, iEARN and IRIS. One of these organizations is responsible for recruitment and selection of YES participants from your country, assisting you in obtaining a U.S. visa, logistical details concerning your international travel, and providing support to both you and your natural parents, including a pre-departure orientation and support communications while you are on program.

Approximately 16 private American organizations will select host families and support YES students while they are in the United States. One of these organizations will place you with an American host family, conduct special educational programs for you, and have a representative to help you during the year. Each organization has its own staff, procedures, and rules. In this handbook, we call these organizations “**Placement Organizations.**” You will learn the name of the Placement Organization which will support you when you receive information about your host family from the YES representative in your country. You also will learn more about your Placement Organization and its special rules from literature that your YES representative will give to you either at your pre-departure orientation (PDO) or at some other time before your departure for the U.S. You must follow the rules of your Placement Organization (often called PO) as well as those of the Program.

You and all other students on the Program will be called “**exchange students.**” Don't let that term confuse you. Foreign students studying in the U.S. are called exchange students even though their natural family or country may not be hosting American students. The term does not literally mean to change one student for another; it simply refers to students on a study abroad program. You will be called an exchange student, even if your natural family is not hosting a student. Therefore, in this handbook, when the term exchange student is used, you will know that it means you. There are different parts of the YES program, and several organizations administer the Program. The descriptions on the next page will help you understand what they are. But YES does have an Americans abroad component called YES Abroad, where 65 Americans study overseas in 14 YES countries.

A representative of the YES program might have visited your region and provided information about the Program.



The Many Parts of the YES Program

Recruitment. You may have applied for the Program completely online, or a representative of the YES program may have visited your region. YES representatives provided information about the Program, administered the English tests and interview, and gave instructions on how to complete your application. Recruitment Organization staff will continue to provide you information about the Program, including host family information, how to get your visa, and departure details. They will also be your parents' contact while you are in the U.S.

Selection. Finalists and alternates were selected by independent panels of exchange professionals. Merit-based selection was based on a complete and comprehensive application; teacher references; English language proficiency; an applicant's demonstrated preparedness for a year-long exchange experience; and a clearance on health status. All applications were evaluated against established and consistent criteria.

Placement. Placement means your assignment to an American host family. When you receive placement information, you will learn both about your host family and the Placement Organization that will organize your program in the United States.

There will likely be other students from around the world placed in the geographic area where you will live in the U.S. During the year, there will be activities in which you will be invited to participate with other students. You are expected to participate in all Program activities.

Orientation. You will attend a YES orientation program in your home country before leaving for the U.S. You will also have an orientation in Washington, DC, and a post-arrival orientation organized locally by your Placement Organization. These programs will include sessions about living in the U.S., attending an American school, and how to budget and use your allowances.

Arrival. The plans for your arrival in the U.S. will depend on several things, including your placement. You will spend two or three days in Washington, DC, before arriving in your host community.

Alumni. Once YES students return home, they will be welcomed by the #YESAlumni community. Your Recruitment Organization office coordinates alumni programming with the support of the YES consortium.

You are about to start an exciting program and a valuable educational experience. Best wishes for your preparation and year in the U.S.

II. Having Realistic Expectations

In this chapter you will learn:

- **What you will do as an exchange student**
 - **Your responsibilities and commitments**
 - **How to be successful**
-

The biggest challenge many exchange students face is coping with the differences between what they expected and what living in the U.S. is really like. Often students say: “It’s not what I expected,” “I wanted to live in a big city,” “I wanted to travel and see the USA,” “I thought my host family would be very rich.” These students did not understand the exchange experience, and they did not have realistic expectations.

Exchange students usually live with middle-income Americans. Most American middle-income families live in suburbs and rural areas, rather than cities. They have single-family homes (as opposed to apartments), and most adult family members work outside of the home. Many are single-parent families. They may have modestly furnished homes, and all family members, regardless of age or gender, share in the household chores: cooking, cleaning, yard work. They enjoy locally available sports and activities. They often do not have income that allows for frequent expensive purchases, costly cultural or recreational activities, extensive trips or vacations, or lavish furnishings.

Is this modest description what you expect?

Sometimes host families need to change their expectations, too. Often host families say: “Our student is not like what we read on the application.” “We thought our student would be independent, like American teenagers, wanting to make his own decisions, being able to choose, and liking to fix some of his own meals.” Or, “We expected our student to speak perfect English.” “We thought she would be very interested in trying a different style of life and a different

school system.” “We were sure the student would fit into our family right away.”

Does that description fit you?

The hardest time for both students and families can be the first few months together. Why? Because both students and host families “expected” something different than what actually happened. It takes time to find out how other people live and not misunderstand their actions. After some time together, both families and students will understand each other better. They learn what living together and sharing ideas means. Then the family living experience begins to be more comfortable for everyone.

What is an exchange experience? These are things you will do during your experience:

- **Accept the mantra: "Not better, not worse, just different!"**
- Take the initiative for making new friends and participating in new activities;
- Have a different way of life from your family at home – based on your host family’s economic level and the region and town of the U.S. in which you are placed;
- Change your habits to fit into the way of life of your host family;
- Follow the customs of the U.S. and your host family;
- Follow the laws of the U.S., the policies and procedures of the Program, and the rules of your host family and your high school;
- Study and participate at school;
- Learn, have fun, and notice changes in yourself throughout your exchange experience.

Responsibility and Commitment

You will learn about the U.S. while your host family learns about your country. They want to know your ideas and ways of doing things – that is one reason why families host exchange students.

You must make a commitment to yourself to be a good example of your country and culture in the U.S. Most of all, demonstrate a positive regard for others. Be active. Show people that you are interested in doing things with them. Show them that you are enjoying and appreciating your stay. Be flexible. Participate in all types of school and family activities, even if they are different from those to which you are accustomed. Be friendly and communicative. Take the responsibility for being a good exchange student.

Understand Your Own Country First

You will meet people in the U.S. who do not know about your country. Compared to the history of your country, the U.S. has a very short history (just more than 240 years). Only about 40% of Americans hold a passport, preferring to take vacation somewhere among the 50 states. Until a few years ago, Americans could travel to Canada and Mexico without a passport, and these were also popular destinations. Today, approximately 25% of Americans speak a second language, with Spanish being the most common.

Information about your country may be hard to get in small towns, and many Americans have not been well-educated about global geography. Be prepared to share and teach them, and to answer their many questions.

Some people may ask very naive questions, but others will be interested in your country's history, recent politics, current events, and social changes. You should be prepared to answer these questions and discuss how they compare and contrast with the U.S. You will have a wonderful opportunity to teach many people in the U.S. about your country.

Before you leave home, read your newspapers and learn the issues that are being discussed about your country at home and perhaps abroad. You may wish to bring a recent edition of your local newspaper or a news magazine with you. You can follow news of your home country online during your exchange year, which will help you know more about what is happening at home and keep you aware of changes taking place in your country, so that you will not be so surprised when you return home.

Plan to bring some photos, a map, and maybe a book on your country. Be prepared to make short presentations about your country to school classes, clubs or organizations during International Education Week in November and whenever else they might invite you to do so because #YESisIEW.

Plan to bring some maps or maybe a book about your country to share with your new American community.



Read About the United States



While you are in the U.S., you will have many opportunities to learn about this country. Not only will you learn from your family and friends, but you also will see documentary and other TV programs, and read the newspapers and news magazines. You will be a student of American culture at the same time you are a teacher of your own culture. You were chosen to be an exchange student because the Program has confidence that you can both teach and learn.

Knowing a little about the U.S. before you come will give you something to talk about with your family. It also is good to know what your own news outlets are printing about the U.S. Americans will ask you what people in your country know and think of the U.S. Can you answer their questions?

Your Personal Growth During the Exchange Experience

As an exchange student, you will be challenged to think about your own country and your own ideas. This YES experience will allow you to compare and contrast different points of view. You will see a different way of life, meet many new people, and experience situations that your friends at home will not. You may improve your ability to solve problems by yourself and learn how to get along in an unfamiliar place.

From all of your experiences, you should gain confidence in yourself. You may find that you can do things you never thought you could do.

The exchange experience gives you an opportunity to become a citizen of the world, as well as of your own country. Expect to change and grow and enjoy your new experience.

A Successful Experience

Give, respect, learn, be patient. The success of your exchange experience depends mostly on you. The more you give of yourself to your new family, school, and community, the more people will be interested in you and like you. Your host family has opened their home to you and wants to accept you as a son or daughter for one year. You, in turn, have a **responsibility** to treat your new family with respect and kindness. Learn their ways of doing things and discover your place in the family. Be as patient with them as you would like them to be

with you. Put on your best face as you learn to live in a new family.

When you face the small problems or conflicts that arise in any family, talk with your host family. Express your feelings openly and really listen to what family members say to you.

You will be very surprised how often Americans say “thank you” to show their appreciation, and “please” when requesting something. Polite phrases are **very** important in English. As you speak English, you must learn to use those phrases, too, as they demonstrate manners and respect.

For example, saying “Give me the book” or “Close the door” are commands. They could be rude if said in this manner. By adding polite phrases, they become requests and are much more acceptable: “Please give me the book.” “Thank you.” or “Will you please close the door?” “Thank you.”

It is very important that you express your appreciation to your host family. Saying “thank you” shows you have enjoyed something and appreciate what has been done for you. It makes your family feel good and they will feel you are respectful and appreciative.



You will begin to prepare for the program before leaving for the U.S.

III. Preparing for Your Departure: Documents, Luggage, Finances

In this chapter you will find
very specific information on:

- **Medical requirements
of U.S. schools**
- **What to bring and
what not to bring**
- **Travel documents and
how you will travel**
- **What money you will
need and receive**

**The chapter ends with a checklist
of things to do before you
depart for the United States.**

Medical Arrangements

Medical and dental examinations. As a part of your application, you submitted a *health certificate*, completed and signed by a physician and a dentist. It is important that the medical history on your health certificate is complete and accurate, especially regarding serious allergies. If you are asked to provide additional medical documentation, it is important that you do it immediately. Your status as a finalist for the YES Program depends on this. You and your parents must inform your local YES representative of any changes to your health or

medical conditions that occurred after the application (including the Health Certificate) was submitted to your local YES program office. Additionally, your local YES representative will give you a form called the *Health Addendum* to fill out before you leave for the U.S.

Immunizations. U.S. school authorities require immunizations for any student entering their school for the first time.

On your health certificate, there is a list of immunizations that schools require. They are the following:

- a series of four against polio;
- a series of four against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus, plus a booster dose within the past 9 years;
- a skin or blood test for tuberculosis; some schools also require a chest x-ray.

In addition, all schools require a series of immunizations against measles, mumps and rubella; these are known as the MMR vaccines. Some schools also require the Hepatitis B, Meningococcal, and Varicella vaccines.

If you need additional immunizations before you leave home, your YES representative will contact you. You must attempt to receive these immunizations. Any required immunizations that you are not able to receive in your home country, including the MMR, will be provided at no cost to you when you arrive in your host community. If you or your host family pays for any immunizations, the Program will reimburse you if you have a receipt. You will not be allowed to start school in the U.S. until you have received the required immunizations.

Potentially restrictive health conditions. A “potentially restrictive health condition” is one that could possibly limit or affect your participation in normal activities. If you have a potentially restrictive health condition (such as a serious allergy) the Program may accept you if you have a physician’s statement that the condition will not interfere with normal activities or be a problem for your host family. It is **extremely important** that the information you provide to the Program is complete and truthful. The more accurate the information, the better your Placement Organization can place and assist you if you need help during your exchange.

Medication. If you take any medication regularly, bring enough of the medicine for the period of time you will be away from home, if possible. *If there is a physician’s prescription, carry a copy of your prescription as well as a full explanation in English of the dosage and use of any medicine you take.* U.S. customs officials may want to see this when you enter the U.S. You also will need a copy of the prescription if you need to buy more of the medication while in the U.S. Put your medication and prescriptions in the bag you carry on the airplane so you don’t lose it during travel. Some medications that are available

without a prescription in your home country are only available by prescription in the U.S. Your U.S. host family may require that students consult with a doctor before allowing him or her to continue taking the medication. Many supplements that are common in your country are unfamiliar to most Americans, and without sufficient information they may be confiscated by your host family. Further, U.S. schools do not allow students to bring *ANY* sort of medication, whether prescription, over the counter, or herbal, onto school property unless approved by the school nurse and administrators; bringing unapproved medication to school may result in suspension.

Eyeglasses or contact lenses. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, bring your prescription with you. Also bring an extra pair of glasses, if you have them.

Insurance. Program participants will receive U.S. accident and illness insurance. You will receive more information about it later. You also will receive basic insurance information, claims filing procedures (how you get money back from the insurance company when you have seen a doctor and paid the bill), claim forms, and an insurance card when you arrive in the U.S. Insurance programs vary between Placement Organizations, but none of them provide coverage for pre-existing conditions, and generally do not cover chronic conditions or treatment for long-term illnesses that develop on program.

School Credit Arrangements

Credit in the U.S. School “credit” is the recognition by a school that you have successfully taken courses and met academic requirements. American schools have 12 grades. Even if you are placed in the 12th grade in your American school, the Program cannot guarantee that you will receive an American high school diploma. Many schools, however, give a “Certificate of Attendance” to exchange students. Each school has the authority to decide which type of document is awarded. Neither the Program nor your Placement Organization can influence the school’s decision. It will be based on individual school, state, or local policy. **You must accept your host school’s decision.**

Credit in your home country. Before you leave for the U.S., it is your individual responsibility to talk with school officials in your home country about the procedures for receiving credit for attending school in the U.S. As soon as possible, talk with your headmaster or school director about what requirements you may have to meet. Your school at home may require a description of courses offered in the U.S. It is very difficult to get school documents once you have left a U.S. school, so please be sure you have the necessary papers in hand before you return to your country.

Before you leave home, you and your parents also should check on university

entrance requirements. It is the student's responsibility to make exam arrangements before they depart for the U.S. Participants may not request to leave the U.S. earlier than May 15, 2024 in order to take exams.

Planning What to Take to the U.S.

Pack appropriately. It is important to take adequate clothing, but do not take extra items that are not needed. The following pages give you suggestions.



All major international airlines charge passengers for their second piece of checked baggage, and nearly all U.S. airlines charge passengers for their first piece of checked baggage as well. This may also be true for internal flights within your country to your city of departure, and airlines in your country may have even more restrictive baggage weight limits. The YES program will not pay any baggage fees over what the Program allows, either

on your flight to the U.S. or on the return flight to your home country. This includes payment for a second piece of checked luggage, and any fees imposed by the airline for overweight or oversized baggage. Airlines will allow you to carry one bag on the plane, called “carry-on” luggage, which also must be a certain size and weight, and must fit in the overhead bin or underneath the seat in front of you. If your bags go over these limits, **you must pay for the extra luggage.** Or, the airline can simply refuse to take all the luggage you have. **You will be responsible for all your own luggage. You may have to carry it often. Do not take more than you personally can carry at one time.**

Remember that at the Program’s end you will have to get your things home again. You will have more things to bring home that you have acquired in the U.S. If your luggage exceeds airline allowances, you will have to pay for the overweight fees. This can be very expensive and the cost is not paid for by the Program.

Clothing. Program participants will live in all parts of the U.S. The U.S. is so large and the weather so varied that it is difficult to recommend exactly what to take. For appropriate clothing for the region in which you will live, look at **Appendix II: Climate in the U.S.** You might need to buy some clothes while in the U.S., especially if you come from a region with a very different climate. Your incidentals allowance (see page 16) can help you buy appropriate clothes if you do not have them.

A Suggested Basic Clothing List for the U.S.



For everyone:

- 1 jacket
- 1 raincoat
- 3 warm sweaters
- 3 pairs of pants
- 2 sets of sleepwear
- Special clothing for sports
- 4-7 complete changes of underwear
- 1 bathing suit
- 1 pair walking/gym shoes
- 1 pair special occasion shoes
- 1 pair everyday shoes

In addition, for boys:

- 3 shirts
- 1 sport coat/jacket
- 1 tie

In addition, for girls:

- 3 blouses
- 2 skirts
- 1 dress
- 1 special occasion dress

On this page is a very basic clothing list. You may need to adjust it when you learn about the region of the U.S. where you will live. Also, once you receive your placement information, e-mail them to ask for their packing suggestions. If possible, you should take more sweaters, shirts or blouses, and pants than are on the list. Americans change their clothing daily, at least undergarments and shirts or blouses. These items are washed after one wearing. Consider bringing one traditional outfit from your home country for your cultural presentations.

Gifts. Think carefully about the gifts you will take to your host family. The cost is not important; it is your thoughtfulness in taking something from your country that is important. When choosing gifts, do not forget to consider their size and weight. They must go into your luggage. Americans appreciate even small gifts. **DO NOT** wrap your gifts. Security/customs officials may ask to see the gifts and you may be required to unwrap them.

Below are some ideas for gifts that you could bring:

- A recording of your country's music.
- Handicrafts of your country or region. **DO NOT, however, take knives, swords, other sharp objects, or pistols as the airlines may confiscate them for security reasons. These items are also unacceptable in schools and in many homes in the U.S.**
- Picture book of the country or region you are from, showing geography, historical places, views of rural and city life, etc.
- Photos of your own family, friends, house, school, community, country.
- Special foods of your region or country, such as fruit preserves, candy, etc., but not those prohibited. (See the list below.)

Do not take:

- Any alcoholic drinks. Because you are under the legal drinking age in the U.S., these may be taken from you by U.S. customs, even if they are gifts for adults.
- Fresh food (including cheese or meat), plants, or flowers. U.S. law prohibits taking these products into the U.S.

If the total value of your gifts is more than U.S.\$100, you will have to pay an import tax ("duty") to U.S. customs when you enter the country.



Handicrafts or pieces of clothing of your country or region are thoughtful gifts to take to your host family.

Do not forget to consider the size and weight of the gifts you select. They must go into your luggage.

Some things from home. Do not forget to take along a few things that you enjoy and can share with others. Here are some ideas:

- Photo album of your family, home, friends, school, and country.
- Your favorite music.
- Equipment for your favorite sports.
- Hobby materials—for drawing, painting, collecting, reading, or whatever you like to do when you have free time. (If you are serious about music, you may want to rent an instrument in the U.S. rather than take your own. Customs laws of your country may make taking a musical instrument out of the country difficult.)
- A few books you would like to read in your native language.
- A book about your country, a school publication, or recent magazines to show to your new family and friends.



Your cultural or traditional clothes, and photos of historical or famous buildings in your country, will likely be of interest to your host family and new friends.

Think about what things you might like to have while away from home. They should be things that make you happy. They also will help you share some important parts of your life with your American family and friends.

What not to take. Do not take *electrical equipment*, unless it uses exactly 120V/60Hz current or you have an adapter. Battery powered equipment, of course, can be used anywhere. Different countries use different DVD systems. DVDs from home may not work in the U.S.



Remember: choosing your gift thoughtfully is much more important than the amount of money it costs.

Finances

Allowance. *The Program does not pay your host family.* Families host YES students because they are interested in learning about other countries and cultures and in sharing their lifestyle. By giving you a home and meals and by accepting you as a family member, your host family pays the largest portion of your living costs.

You will receive a monthly allowance of \$200 from your Placement Organization. This is to pay for things such as school supplies, toiletries, social activities, and phone cards/your phone bills. You will need to pay for your own bus fares, snacks, gifts, phone calls, movies, sports events, and meals out with friends during your year in the U.S. You must buy your own personal items, such as shampoo and deodorant. If you travel with your school class or your family, you will probably have to help pay for the trip. It will be your responsibility to pay for your own personal items and social/cultural activities.

Here are some sample costs of items in U.S. dollars. Prices will vary in different parts of the country:

- School football/basketball game: \$4
- DVD or Blu-Ray: \$20
- Movies: \$8-15 per person
- Roller skating: \$10
- Bowling: \$8 per game; \$2 to rent shoes
- McDonald's (for lunch): \$5-7, average
- Music concert: \$40-150
- School notebook: \$3-5

At the end of the school year, many students wish to buy special school souvenirs. Upper classes may have special class rings which may cost as much as \$90-200. Some important school dances may cost \$10 a person. The formal, end-of-the-year dance, the Prom, may cost \$50 a couple or more, not including elegant clothing which students may buy or rent.

Incidentals Allowance. An additional U.S. \$300 will be available to help pay for program-related items. This money will not be given directly either to you or your host family upon your arrival in the U.S. Your host family will be reimbursed for appropriate expenditures. Therefore, you and your host family should decide together how this allowance could best be used. To avoid any confusion about the distribution of the incidentals allowance, and the expenses that it can cover, you should discuss the details of your incidentals allowance with your local representative in the U.S.

A few examples of appropriate incidentals allowance expenditures are clothes for physical education class, a lock for your school locker, or a year-book. Once you and your host family have made purchases, receipts must be

submitted to the Placement Organization for reimbursement. **Note:** It is usually a good idea not to spend all this money at once. You may need some of it for later in the program year—to purchase a school yearbook, for example. Each school produces a yearbook that has photos of students, teachers, and activities. Yearbooks cost as much as \$40-\$80.

Budgeting. Making a budget means planning how you will spend the money you have. You will need to learn to budget your incidentals allowance and monthly allowance carefully. *It is important to use your allowance for school and daily expenses and not save it all for gifts, or expensive electronic equipment, to take home at the end of the year.* A part of your exchange experience is to participate in many aspects of family and school life and you will need to pay for some of the things you do. You will learn about budgeting money at your pre-departure orientation in your country. Your host family can help you, too.

Using your monthly allowance. The money you receive each month is to help you participate in school and community events with your family and friends. It will let you go to sports and music events, get a soda or hamburger with friends, buy toiletries, and other things.

If you choose to save your allowance rather than use it, it means either you are not participating in activities, or expecting friends or host family to pay for you. **This is not acceptable.** It will cause you to lose friends or to have difficulties with your host family. Most other exchange students must provide their own spending money; they do not receive allowances.

You will find that many American teenagers earn some of their own money. If you have the time and opportunity, you also may be able to earn money by doing informal part-time jobs for neighbors, such as cutting grass or baby-sitting. This type of small, part-time work is not a violation of your U.S. visa. These small jobs do not pay a lot, but they help, and provide you with an opportunity to participate in a common American teenage activity. According to the terms of your U.S. visa, you are not allowed to be employed on either a full or part-time basis; you may only accept sporadic or intermittent employment such as those described above.

Borrowing and lending money. Standards of living vary around the world, and even within the U.S. Sometimes there is a difference between the amount of money you can spend and the amount your host family or friends can spend. *It is never a good idea to borrow or lend money,* even with your host family. It can make your relationship difficult. It may be difficult for you or for them to repay debts. If your host family lends you money in an emergency, give them a written receipt and pay them back immediately. If you choose to loan money, always get a receipt, even if the loan is to someone in your host family. If you have problems with money, tell your Placement Organization immediately. If you have more spending money than your host family has, try to be sensitive to this and do not flaunt it (show off) by making excessive and/or expensive purchases.

Remember that you are to participate as a family member. Do not expect your host family to provide you with expensive items and experiences. You are not a guest; participate and appreciate being a member of the family.

Carrying money while traveling. It is important for you to change any money you will bring with you into U.S. dollars before leaving home. Never put cash in luggage. Carry it with you in a protected pocket, purse, or wallet.

The YES program provides you with the money you will need in the U.S. You are encouraged not to bring large amounts of money with you. Furthermore, the customs officials of your country may require a document which will allow you to take more than a designated amount of U.S. dollars out of your country. It is your responsibility to find out about any restrictions on taking out U.S. dollars, and to procure necessary documents.

Bank accounts. You should open a bank account in the U.S. You can have an account in your own name. You will need to fill out a W-8 form to open a bank account as a non-U.S. citizen resident. The bank will have this form. Keep track of what you spend and keep your bank statements as a record. Remember to close your account before you go home. If you have any problems with money or your bank account, ask your host family or local coordinator for help. If problems continue, immediately inform your Placement Organization.

Travel Documents

Before You Leave

- ***Passport.*** To enter the U.S. you need a valid international passport issued by your country. If you hold a valid international passport, check with the appropriate authorities to make sure a new type of passport has not replaced the type you have. Also, check to make sure that your passport does not expire before the end of your program year. If you do not have a valid international passport, the Program representative in your country will give you advice on how to obtain one.
- ***DS-2019.*** When your acceptance is confirmed, the Program will help process a U.S. government Form DS-2019 (also known as “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor 'J-1' Status”). This form permits you to receive your U.S. visa. This form, together with your passport, goes to the U.S. Consulate when you apply for your visa. You will have assistance with this step from your YES in-country representative. The DS-2019 form shows the dates that you may legally be in the U.S. Keep this form and take it back home with you at the end of the year.
- ***U.S. Visa.*** A visa is a stamp or sticker that the U.S. Embassy or Consulate puts in your passport. It gives you permission to enter the U.S. It is good only for entry into the U.S., unlike your DS-2019, which states how long you may remain in the U.S. Program participants come to the U.S. on J-1 visas.

These are “non-immigrant, exchange visitor” visas. When in the U.S. on this visa, you may not work at formal jobs and you must attend school. This is not a tourist visa and it is valid only while you are on the Program. Because you are coming to the U.S. on a government exchange, the visa you receive requires you to return to your country at the end of the exchange program. The U.S. visa issued to you will not be amended or extended beyond the Program end date.

- ***Permission to travel without parents.*** In many countries, a child must have with him/her a parental permission to travel. This document, a notarized, witnessed declaration or power of attorney, permits a minor to leave the country without his/her parents. Your YES representative will provide you with information on this and any other documents you may need to obtain from your country, such as an exit/transit visa.
- ***Exit customs form.*** You may have a customs form from your country and/or the country in which your international departure airport is located. These forms usually require information about you (name, nationality, etc.) and about what you are taking with you. The amount of currency you are carrying must be declared. Usually there are questions about whether you are taking any weapons, alcohol, narcotics, or antiques (old, valuable examples of your country’s crafts). You should not take gifts that are antiques. Sometimes musical instruments are considered antiques. **Also, do not take gifts that resemble weapons or are weapons.**

On the Airplane

While on the international flight you will receive one form that you need to complete so you are ready to go through immigration and customs at the airport in the U.S.

- ***U.S. Customs Declaration.*** You must complete this form and have it ready to give the customs official in the airport. (See the sample “Customs Declaration Form” on page 22.) Study the form so that you understand it. The customs official may ask you to show the gifts you are taking to the U.S. Do not take any fresh meat or fish, cheese, plant products, other living things, or alcoholic beverages with you. These items will be confiscated by U.S. customs officials.



Travel Arrangements

Departure from home

If you have not traveled before, you may be a little nervous about it. This section of your handbook will help you feel more confident because it will explain how to read an airline ticket, as well as give other details about YES program travel.

You and your family will be notified by your YES representative about your travel arrangements. You will likely travel to an international departure city for one night and then fly to the U.S. with other YES students from your country. **The Program will reimburse you for your transportation from your home to the designated departure city, providing you present your used ticket.** They will not reimburse for the ticket of family members or anyone else.

All students on the YES program will travel to the U.S. on flights arranged by the Program. Students will travel to the U.S. in groups on regularly scheduled commercial flights. There will be an adult with the group called a “flight leader.” The flight leader represents YES during your international travel and will help you if you need it.

Luggage. All major international airlines now charge passengers for their second piece of checked baggage, and this may also be true for internal flights within your country to your city of departure. Additionally, airlines in your country may also have even more restrictive baggage weight limits. The YES program will not pay any baggage fees above what the Program allows, either on your flight to the U.S. or on the return flight to your home country. This includes payment for a second piece of checked luggage, and any fees imposed by the airline for overweight or oversized baggage.

DO NOT lock your luggage. This especially includes your checked luggage. If you lock your luggage and it needs to be examined by security officials, they will break the lock, perhaps also causing damage to your luggage. Visit www.TSA.gov for more information about acceptable locks.

Never leave luggage out of your sight while traveling. Luggage left unattended in an airport may be stolen, or it may be destroyed by security officers. If you must leave your luggage for a brief time, be sure another member of the group you are traveling with watches it for you.





Travel to the U.S.

You will travel from your hometown to an assigned international departure city. In that city, there will be a Travel Meeting before your departure. Your YES representative will give you your international ticket and explain your travel route. You also will receive a blue YES T-shirt, which must be worn at all times until you reach your host family. Once in the U.S., your Placement Organization (PO) will tell your host parents the date and time of your arrival. Your host parents or PO representative will meet you at the final airport.

Arrival in U.S.

Once your plane arrives at your first arrival point in the U.S., you will go through immigration and customs. You will also be asked to put your fingers on a touch pad so that the officer can scan your fingerprints, and the officer will take your picture with a digital camera. The officer will then check your passport, the visa stamped in it, and the DS-2019 form. The officer will scan your passport, generating an electronic arrival record with data, called an I-94. Finally, the officer will stamp your passport. The customs officer may ask you questions about the YES program, your final destination, and your home country; please answer questions honestly and to the best of your ability.

will be met by YES airport staff who will take you and the other YES students arriving that day to the orientation site. If your first arrival point is somewhere in the U.S. other than Washington Dulles Airport, you will continue on to your connecting flight. Once in Washington, D.C., you will be met by YES representatives at the airport who will take you to your hotel and orientation site.

Travel to your host family

You and the other students traveling to other parts of the country will travel from the Washington, D.C. orientation to the airport. Students with host families who live within driving distance of Washington, D.C. will come and pick up their student at the end of the orientation program. YES airport staff will assist you with checking in for your flight and give you any travel instructions you need. It is important to listen carefully to them and let them know if you have any questions or you don't understand everything they say.

Sometimes students must change planes in another city by themselves. If this happens to you, the airline employees can help you if you have questions. If you are too excited or nervous to speak English, you can use the *Quick Reference Guide on Travel to and Within the U.S.* This guide has messages to show to the person who helps you if you are having difficulties finding your way through the airport. If you are having other travel problems, call the toll-free number in the Guide. This call will not cost you any money. YES travel staff are available at all times at that phone number.



Take a musical instrument only if you have checked with customs officials in your country. Sometimes instruments are considered antiques and are not allowed out of the country.

On the next page is a sample electronic ticket (e-ticket). Take some time to familiarize yourself with this document. YES staff will give you your e-ticket at the travel meeting held in your international departure city the night before you travel to the U.S. You can see that the top portion of the e-ticket contains technical information and abbreviations that make sense to the airline; the lower part spells your itinerary out in clear language that makes sense to you. It also includes FREE telephone numbers that you can call if you have problems while traveling in Europe or the U.S. When calling the U.S. number, YES travel staff will help you make new flight reservations and will call your Placement Organization, who will inform your host family of your new flight. You may call the number anytime during travel until you reach your final destination and someone meets you there. There is no cost or charge for calling this number.

Air travel in the U.S. is usually very efficient, but sometimes travel plans don't work as scheduled. Weather, mechanical problems, and/or late departures may cause you to miss the connecting flight on which you have been scheduled. Try not to be upset if this happens to you. No one likes to have a long wait in the airport or to unexpectedly overnight while traveling, but these are things that may happen. If this happens to you when the YES airport staff is with you, they will schedule you on new flights and make overnight arrangements, if necessary. They will contact your host family, giving them your new arrival time. If this happens to you when you are traveling alone, call the YES travel emergency phone number, and YES staff will help you.

Your trip to the U.S. will be exciting. If you read and understand the information here and that which you will receive from your YES representative, you will be prepared.

Flights / E-Tickets Details

This is an important travel document. Please present your e-ticket to the airline agent upon check in and keep it with you all the time. Your e-ticket will be given to you by the YES representative in your departure city and will look like one of the two documents shown on the next page. Please look at these documents and your own e-ticket and make sure that you understand the information so you will be prepared.

**YES Travel Emergency Phone Number:
1-855-KLYES-00
(or 1-855-559-3700)**

Student Number:	20080020230513
Last Name:	NJERI
First Name:	EUGENE
Country:	TANZANIA
Final Destination:	MINNEAPOLIS, MN
Placing Organisation:	IRIS
Flight Date:	AUG 05, 2019
ITIN:	KQ 495 V 01AUG MO ZNZNBO HK1 510A 615A /DCKQ*3CR3K8 /E KQ 102 V 01AUG MO NBOLHR HK1 1145P 645A +1 /DCKQ*3CR3K8 /E BA 4656 V 02AUG TU LHRIAD HK1 1030P 1010P HRS /DCUA*KNMJ6W UA 7930 V 06AUG SU IADMSP HK1 932A 1108A HRS /DCUA*KNMJ6W
E-TKT:	ELECTRONIC TICKET RECORD INV: CUST: PNR:HNIH TKT: 0165712023549 ISSUED: 28JUL10 PCC: 5UL1 IATA: 23234363 NAME: NJERI/EUGENE NAME REF: 20080020230513 TOUR ID: IT8UA2814AS FOP: CPN A/L FLT CLS DATE BRDOFF TIME ST F/B STAT 1 KQ 495 V 01AUG ZNZLHR 0510 OK VPAXACSD OPEN 2 KQ 102 V 01AUG NBOLHR 1145 OK VPAXACSD OPEN 3 BA 4656 V 02AUG TU LHRIAD HK1 1030 OK VPAXACSD OPEN 4 UA 7930 V 06AUG IADMSP 0932 OK VPAXACSD OPEN

Departure Date	Departure Time	Departure City	Airline	Flight Number	Arrival Date	Arrival Time	Arrival City
08/01	5:10 AM	Zanzibar, (Kisauni) TANZANIA	Kenya Airways	495	08/01	06:15 AM	Nairobi, (Jomo Kenyatta) KENYA
08/01	11:45 PM	Nairobi (Jomo Kenyatta), KENYA	Kenya Airways	102	08/02	06:45 AM	London, (Heathrow), UK
08/02	10:30 AM	London, (Heathrow), UK	British Airways	4656	08/03	10:10 PM	WASHINGTON DULLES, DC
08/06	09:32 AM	WASHINGTON DULLES, DC	United Airlines	7930	08/06	11:08 AM	Minneapolis, MN

Your travel notification will look like either the above or the below itinerary.

*** ITINERARY RECEIPT ***

AGENCY/AIRLINE NAME
M A S TOWN OFFICE LOS ANGELES US
NAME: AZMAN/AMMALINA AISYAH
E-TICKET NUMBER: 2322411345131

DATE OF ISSUE 17DEC10
RLOC MH - LBK19

DATE	FLIGHT	DEPARTURE AIRPORT	ARRIVAL AIRPORT	TIME	CLASS	BAG
11JAN	MH 002	KUL-KUALA LUMPUR	LHR-LONDON HEATHROW	2355	G -OK	20K
02JUL	MH 003	LHR-LONDON HEATHROW	KUL-KUALA LUMPUR	1200	G -OK	20K

Pre-Departure Checklist

You have many things to think about as you get ready for your exchange experience. To help you remember the important things, look at the checklist below. Everything on it is necessary. Be sure you do everything. Check off each task as you complete it so you know it is done. Good luck!

Pre-Departure Checklist

1. Read this **Student Handbook** with your parents so you all know what to expect and how to prepare.
2. Make sure your parents read their materials about the YES program.
3. Send an email or call your local YES representative to confirm your acceptance of this scholarship by the deadline they provide.
4. Get an international passport. Verify with the appropriate authorities that it is valid for overseas travel.
5. Get a "permission to travel without parents" document, if required by officials in your country.
6. Get immunizations required for school, if directed.
7. Get a letter from your doctor if you have any restrictive medical conditions.
8. Prepare a current academic transcript to provide to your U.S. host high school.
9. Talk to your home school about requirements for accepting credit from your U.S. high school, and/or taking equivalency examinations when you return.
10. Your host family will be selected based on what you wrote on your application. If anything has changed (smoking, health, other important information), inform the Program immediately and explain.
11. Make a list of any prescription or non-prescription medications, including eyeglasses, etc., to carry to the U.S. Also, make copies of your prescriptions.

- __12. Get extra prescription medication you will need while in the U.S. (Don't forget to pack these in "carry-on" luggage.)*
- __13. Buy a two-language dictionary for English and your native language.*
- __14. Buy or prepare clothing you need from the basic list.*
- __15. Choose some small gifts for your host family. Do not wrap them. NO alcohol, sharp objects, or perishables.*
- __16. Choose the personal items from home you will take.*
- __17. Pack your luggage yourself so its size and weight are acceptable to the airline, and so you can carry it yourself. Know everything that is in your luggage.*
- __18. Pack this handbook in your carry-on luggage. You will need it! Also pack the Introduction to the USA workbook - this is required!*
- __19. Prepare a packet (such as a large envelope) to carry with you on the plane that will include the following: airline ticket, passport with DS-2019 Form attached, parental permission to travel, special medical information from your physician (if needed), a pen, and information on your host family: name, address, and phone number. (Some of these things you will get at the Travel meeting.) Put this packet in your carry-on luggage. You also may want to consider a travel or neck wallet.*



Clothing and equipment for your favorite sport is something you might want to bring from home.

IV. Preparing Yourself for the Cultural Experience

In this chapter, you will learn these ideas about living in a different country:

- **A new definition of culture**
 - **How living in a different country can produce a reaction called ‘culture shock’**
 - **How you can adjust to life in a new country**
-

Many students come to the U.S. with all of the right clothes, documents, and other things from home, but they have not prepared for their trip in the most important way – that is, in their attitudes and understanding of themselves, their community, and their country. Your understanding of yourself, together with your desire to learn, your curiosity, and your openness to new things, will help you more than anything else you can bring.

Understanding Yourself as a Product of Your Own Culture

Culture. One definition of culture is the values, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas that a group of people hold in common. Culture is not only houses of worship, special ways of dressing, or folk dances. Rather, buildings and dances are outward reflections of the internal values of the people who built them or do them. They show something about the beliefs or ideas of the people of that country.

Your culture. You have some opinions and ideas that are uniquely yours. But many of your attitudes, values, and beliefs are generally the same as those of your family, your community, and your fellow citizens. You, and other young people in your country, learned to think the way you do because you were taught to do so. However, not all the people in the world think the same way. Because your friends and neighbors may have the same views and opinions that you do, you may not realize that other people may have different ideas.

Your host culture. The YES program offers you the special opportunity to live with people who have very different backgrounds from your own. This opportunity to live with people who have different attitudes and beliefs will give you a better understanding of your own ideas. It will also give you a very good understanding of how people in the U.S. think. Best of all, the exchange program gives you the chance to see that many ideas are common to all people.

Acceptance. It is important to appreciate and accept the fact that everyone has his or her own way of looking at the world. It is also important to be able to notice differences without saying one view is right and one is wrong. You should be careful not to let your own values and attitudes prevent you from enjoying the different life around you in the U.S. You will be the person moving into a new environment. Adjusting to it is necessary to have a successful exchange experience. It is always okay to 'agree to disagree' on a topic.

Adjustment. If adjusting to life in the U.S. becomes difficult, it may be because of a conflict between the ideas and values you find in the U.S. and your own. If you know this, you will be able to understand why you sometimes find it hard to live in another country. The section below explains the adjustment process you will experience and gives you ideas on how to adapt to your new environment. **Remember: not better, not worse, just different.**

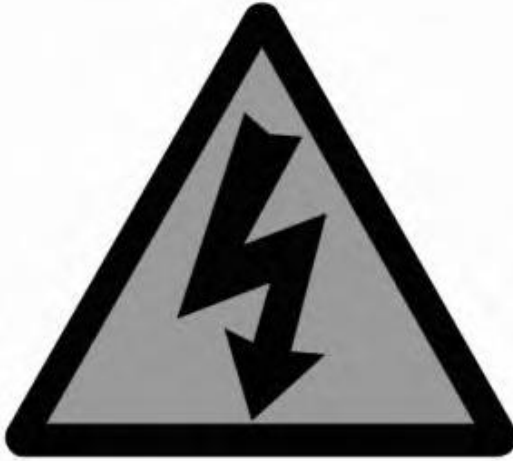
Culture Shock

When you live in a new country, many of the things you are accustomed to are missing or done differently. You must think about how to do even the simplest things. For example, perhaps in your country you embrace and kiss people on the cheek to greet them. In the U.S., you may shake hands, but mostly you will just say "hello." There are hundreds of little things, such as greeting people, that are different in each country.

When you first live in a new country, it is fun to see the differences and to learn how to do things differently. Sometimes, however, you get tired of having to remember how to do so many things differently. You may feel that *everything* is different; nothing seems familiar or comfortable to you. This is very common. Almost everyone who lives in a different country feels this way sometimes. When this is a problem for you, it is called "culture shock."

Culture shock means that your mind is tired of having to think about everything. You are tired of having to analyze and understand all the new things you see. If you get very tired, your mind stops trying to understand so much, and you may withdraw. Instead of trying to adjust to the new society, you may become quiet and prefer to think of home, where you felt more comfortable. You may even feel confused or angry or isolated. You might think people don't like you. You may feel lonely. You can even wonder if you can get along in such a strange place.

Culture shock happens to most people. If you experience culture shock, you should not think that you have failed or that you cannot be a good exchange student. But you do need to talk about it or write down how you feel. Your host family, local coordinator, and Placement Organization representative know about culture shock and may be able to help you understand your feelings. Writing in a diary is also a useful way of expressing what is bothering you. This will help a great deal.



How will you know if you have “culture shock”?

Some of the common physical indications:

- I am eating more or less than I usually do.
- I am sleeping too much or too little.
- I have to go to the bathroom more than usual.
- I have stomach aches or headaches that I usually do not have.
- I cry more than I usually do.

Some other indicators:

- I feel helpless and think I need help from people of my own country.
- I get angry more often and at things that are not very important.
- I don't want to learn more English or even speak the English I know.
- I am always thinking I will be cheated, robbed, or injured.
- I am afraid to go to new places and do new things.
- I am very homesick – I wish I were back home.

What can you do if you think you have culture shock?

Here are some easy things to do:

- Remember that most people living in or visiting foreign countries have these feelings. Do not worry that you are “the only one” who feels this way.
- Try to decide what particular things are bothering you, no matter how small or unimportant. It may help to write them down.
- Analyze the differences between your values and ideas and those of the people with whom you are living in the U.S. Which ones seem in conflict?
- Develop an attitude that *you can learn to live with these differences*. Do not worry that you will lose your own culture; it is a part of who you are. But you can try living in the new country, and you can do it successfully. **Not better, not worse, just different.**
- Plan small tasks each day that will help you meet people and accomplish something – like preparing a new food to eat, talking to someone new, accepting an invitation to go somewhere. And do each task!
- Find the humor in some of the difficulties. Being able to laugh at some of your mistakes is healthy.
- Do some exercise or sport each day, even if it is only taking a walk.
- Eat regularly and eat healthy foods.
- Write an email to your placement organization's representative, if you don't feel like talking.
- Relax, take a deep breath, and be glad you have the opportunity to live in a country different from your own. Learn to accept the new ideas and ways of life without forgetting your own.



Adjustment

As you improve your English and begin to get around by yourself, you will feel more comfortable in your new home, school, and community. You are likely to be more interested in the people of your host country and you will even be able to laugh at the little things that once bothered you. Then you are on your way to adjusting to life in the U.S.

Remember that most exchange students go through a difficult period. But it is just a step on the way to adjusting to a new lifestyle. **Try not to send your natural parents unhappy emails or call home about each problem.** You may find that what is bothering you one day may be resolved in the next day or two. But your natural family will not know, and they will worry and feel they need to call you or call their local YES representative to ask about you. Try not to overreact to small difficulties as they will usually pass quickly.

Rather than calling your natural parents, talk with your host parents. They are near to you and can help you quickly. As you begin to rely on them and solve problems yourself, you will feel more comfortable. You will become more confident that you can adjust to your new lifestyle. There are many people who can support you – see page 68 for more information.

When you are better adjusted, you will accept most U.S. customs as just another way of living. You will feel comfortable with daily life and experience fewer anxious moments. With better adjustment you will not only accept the food, drinks, habits, and customs, but actually begin to enjoy some of them.

As you adjust, you will see that the environment does not change. Your attitude toward it changes. You will begin to understand why the people in the U.S. live the way they do and you will communicate better. The sooner you do this, the sooner little problems will begin to disappear and you will feel more comfortable living in the U.S. **Comparing the American way of life to yours at home, can only make things harder. Acceptance is key and again: not better, not worse, just different.**



V. Getting Settled in the U.S.

**In this chapter, you will read
how former exchange students
learned to:**

- **Live as a member of an American family**
 - **Make friends in the U.S.**
 - **Be an American high school student**
 - **Live in an American community**
-

Your Host Family

The most important part of getting settled in the U.S. is becoming a **member** of your host family. As soon as your local YES office provides you with your host family's contact information, contact them! They have invited you to be a member of their family for the year, not a guest. That means you need to learn how they work and live together so that you can fit in. Host families reflect the diversity of the U.S. They are of different races and ethnic origins. They have different lifestyles based on such factors as education, age, salary, geography, and religion. Some families will have children, others will not. What they will have in common is an eagerness to welcome you into their home and to share their lives with you. Your experience in America will depend on your efforts to learn about and understand all kinds of American lifestyles. It is one of the most important parts of the YES program.



Exchange students usually live with a family in a suburb of a larger city or in a small town or rural area. Families who live in smaller towns and rural areas usually have single-family homes and are thus more likely to host exchange students than those living in big cities, where the cost of living is higher. In most American

homes, there are several bedrooms: one for the parents, and one or more for individual children or for siblings to share.

Sometimes students are initially disappointed to be placed with a family in a rural area or a small town. That disappointment is not an appropriate reason to change host families. Most students placed in small towns and rural areas learn to enjoy that lifestyle and the chance to know everyone living in that area.



Talk with your host parents or your local coordinator about problems you have adjusting to your life in the U.S.

In the U.S., a small town is one with fewer than 30,000 people. “Rural” means that there might be fewer than 8,000 people within an area where the economy is dependent upon farming. When Americans think of rural areas, they tend to think of open land where farmers have large, industrialized farms. The average size of a farm in the U.S. is 450 acres (182 hectares).

If you live in a small town or rural area, everyone will meet you. You may be the first person from your country - or the first YES ambassador! - that people living in a small town have ever met. One student said, “At home, I lived among three million people and my town in the U.S. had 4,000. It was a pretty small town. Whenever people asked me, ‘Who are you living with?’ they knew my host family when I said their name! That’s what I liked. Everybody knew everybody. It was pretty easy to communicate and connect.”

Wherever you live, you will spend most of your time in school and with the host family. Rural areas and small towns may have small elementary and middle schools, but frequently have large high schools that bring students from long distances by school bus. The school will provide after school activities, including sports and clubs. Your home should have all the conveniences of homes in bigger cities.

Below are some suggestions to think about and talk over with your host family.

Household schedules. Every family has developed a routine for how they live. Each family's routine or schedule is different, depending on how many family members there are, how many people work outside of the home, how old the children are, or what they do for hobbies or recreation.

It is important to watch, ask about, and learn what your family does and at what times. Ask your family about the time they eat breakfast and dinner and if everyone is expected to eat together. Other "rules" or family behavior patterns to watch and learn about include when to bathe or shower and what to do with dirty clothes. **Learn what your family's rules are and follow them.**

An important part of the family schedule is the use of the family car. Americans are very dependent upon their cars because of the distances between homes and services and a lack of effective public transportation. You will have to fit into the family's transportation schedule when you need rides to special events. In time, you may make friends who drive and can give you rides.

Personal hygiene. Customs of how one bathes (or showers), and how often, vary from country to country. Some people think Americans are too concerned about cleanliness and body odor. However, it is customary in the U.S. to shower or bathe *every day* and change into clean underclothes *every day*. When the weather is warm, shirts or blouses are worn only once before washing. (In fact, all clothes are washed frequently. Washing machines and laundry soap do not damage clothes.) Both men and women use underarm deodorants, and women generally shave underarms and legs. Body odor is offensive to Americans, but they may not feel comfortable discussing it.

Some people from other countries may consider these daily rituals unnecessary. However, personal hygiene probably will be very important to your host family. *Do your part by being a good family member and developing these habits from the beginning of your stay in the U.S.* If you have questions, ask.

Personal space. You may have your own bedroom or you may share one with your host brother or sister of the same gender. Remember that even though you have some "personal space," your room is still a part of your host family's house. You will be expected to keep your room clean and neat, including your closet and dresser drawers. Making your own bed should become a part of getting up in the morning. It is one of the first duties most children in the U.S. learn. Families also have rules about where dirty clothes are kept for washing. Follow their rules.

You also will share common areas of the house. Be respectful of other family members and take your own things from these areas and put them where they belong.

Privacy. Most Americans think that everyone needs to be alone sometimes. You will need privacy and other family members will, too. Try to find out the times your host family is usually together and when they go to different rooms. This is important. You may not be used to doing many things alone or in another room. It is not because family members don't like each other. It is just customary for Americans to do some things individually.

If you spend too much time in your room, however, your family may worry that you are unhappy or sick. You also will miss opportunities to share time with your family. Try to spend the "family times" with them. Family times may be dinner, immediately after dinner, or on weekends. Find out what these times are in your home. Spending time together could mean eating together, just talking, playing games, watching TV, or going out together. On the other hand, your family will expect that you need time to read and study. They will think you will want to do these things quietly, probably by yourself.



Spend time with your host family. This will help you understand each other better, and will make your adjustment to American life easier.

Household chores. Home life in the U.S. may be very different from, or quite similar to, life in your own country. A "family" in the U.S. may consist of two parents or a single parent, with a child or children at home or who are grown and no longer live at home. Sometimes other relatives live in the home. Most women hold jobs outside of their homes. In the U.S., this means that *all* members of the family, men, women, *and* children, usually share the duties and jobs around the house.

In most American families, everyone is expected to do all types of "chores." Chores are the various tasks done in and around the house.



You will need to do your share of the household chores when you live in an active family, in which all members must help with the housework.

Boys and men help with the cooking, cleaning, and dish washing. If it is difficult for you as a young man to do certain tasks because of your beliefs, you need to dis-cuss this with your host family. Perhaps you can determine what other chores you can do more comfortably.

From a young age, most American children learn to take care of their own rooms and help with small chores, such as emptying waste baskets and washing dishes. Teenagers frequently have regular duties, such as cutting the grass, washing the car, vacuuming, or helping wash and iron clothes. A part of growing up in the U.S. is being responsible for doing chores.



In some families children earn weekly spending money for doing specific chores. Very early they learn the value of work and earning money. They usually can use their spending money for snacks, books, or even clothes.

It is a very good idea for you to talk to your family about what household jobs you should do. Also, ask *how* to do them. For example, ask them to show you how to use their vacuum cleaner or washing machine. Your host family may not know that your natural family has different systems or machines. They may not think about explaining how to do things. Ask them to demonstrate so you will feel comfortable using their equipment.

Breakfast. American families are very active and busy. In the mornings, each family member may prepare his or her own breakfast before leaving the house. If you are accustomed to having your mother or grandmother prepare a breakfast meal for you, this may be an adjustment. It may mean learning what things are available for breakfast and opening the refrigerator and kitchen cupboard to prepare your own food. You may not find the same foods that you eat at home. You will need to learn what the different foods are, where they are kept, and what you may eat for breakfast and for snacks. You may have to learn how to prepare some of your own meals! Remember: ask questions!

Share yourself. Your host family has invited you to live with them because they want to get to know you and learn about your country. They want to share their ideas and help you understand the U.S. and how Americans live and think. Spend time with each member of your family. If your host parents are home when you return from school, **talk to them about your day and ask questions about theirs.** This shows you care and are interested in sharing in their family and life. Talk to them about things you do not understand. Ask if you can help them with the chores in the afternoon.

At dinner time, join in the family conversations so you can get to know your host family. Ask your host parents about their work and what family members do for fun. You can share some hobbies, like going to a football game or a concert with the family, or bike riding with host brothers and sisters.

Make a special effort to spend time with the children in the family, if there are any. It is especially important to show interest in host brothers and sisters your own age as well as those who are younger than you. It is easy for them to become jealous because of the attention *you* receive. They, too, must adjust to having a new family member in the house. Try to teach them about your own customs while asking and learning from them about theirs. Respect their private times and their own friends. You will not necessarily be best friends with your brothers and sisters, but you should be friendly with them.

For many American families, participation in religious services and other activities at a religious center is very important. Even if you do not share their religious beliefs, this is another important way you can learn about your host family and American institutions and share their lives. (There is more about religion beginning on page 62.)

Show appreciation. Very few things are more important in your home than *thanking your family* for what they do for you. It is not customary in the U.S. to give expensive gifts or big parties to thank someone. Small things will make your family feel good: a smile, saying “Thanks, Mom,” helping with chores, or being able to take care of yourself. Notice how often other host family members show appreciation and how they do it. It may be done very differently in your own country, but showing appreciation is always important.

Obey the rules. Many exchange students who come to the U.S. believe that



families are very liberal and that students will be very independent here. Compared to your life at home, teenagers may or may not be more independent. But you should realize that *all* families have rules and regulations even though they may be different than your family’s at home.

One family rule – called a “curfew” – is the time that teenagers must return home at night. This aspect of life in the U.S. may be different from what you are used to in your own country, but you will probably be expected to follow the same rules as other teenagers in your family. If there are no other teenagers in your home, your family will set rules similar

Make a special effort to spend time with the children in your host family.

to those of families with teenagers. Parents set curfews because they are concerned about the welfare of their children. If you are late, they will be worried about you and they might get upset and angry.

Depending upon the norms in your own family and culture, you may find the authority figures in the American family different than yours at home. In most American families both parents determine and enforce family rules. Women often have the most contact with the children, and their authority is respected. Accepting rules and direction from your host mother is very important. Some male students in the past have not done so and very serious problems between students and their host families have resulted.

Regardless of what you are accustomed to in your natural family, *you will be expected to follow the rules of your host family* when you live with them. If you do not obey, it insults them and shows a lack of respect. Breaking family rules usually results in punishment. For teens, this often means not being allowed to go out with their friends for one weekend or longer, and perhaps loss of the privilege to watch TV or use the phone for certain periods of time.

Look for the positive. You are not going to like everything about your new family. That is natural. No one is happy about everything that happens at home, such as what is expected of oneself, some of the rules, some of the food, or maybe the way one family member behaves. There are always pleasant and unpleasant aspects of family life. Your family may not like everything about you, either, but everyone needs to think about the positive and to respect others. Learn to either accept or ignore the things that bother you and concentrate on what you enjoy. Talk to your family and try to work out the difficulties.

Most students are able to work out the small difficulties they have adjusting to a new family and stay within the same host family throughout the exchange experience. Occasionally students change host families. Usually these are because of a change within the host family, such as a serious illness, change of job, or relocation to a different city. Sometimes students request to change families because they don't have their own room, want a bigger house or wealthier family, or want to live in a city rather than a rural area. These are not valid reasons for a change of family.

If you do have problems with your host family, it is best not to talk about it with other friends or exchange students. Discuss problems only with your host family, your local coordinator, or Placement Organization. Personal information told in public is called "gossip." Gossip hurts people's feelings and can be harmful to people's personal reputations and to YES' reputation.

Stay healthy. Staying in good health will help you enjoy your exchange experience. Exercise will help you stay healthy. Many Americans walk or run in their neighborhoods for exercise. Others join school or community

sports teams or do aerobic and other physical activities with groups in the community.

Sleeping regularly is important to good health. You may need more sleep than you did at home. You will get tired from concentrating on so many new things and speaking a new language during the day.

Food and meals are important. You can be sure your host family will eat foods that are very different from back home. Meal times will probably also be different. No matter how you feel about what they eat and when, it is important that you taste everything and try to get used to American eating habits. Sometimes students become *too* concerned about food and think about food, eating, and gaining weight more than they need to. Talk to your host family or your Placement Organization representative if you are extremely worried about these things.

Tell your host family when you feel ill, and they will help you decide whether or not to see a doctor. If you have medicine from home that you should take, make sure your host family knows about it – whether it is prescription, over the counter, or herbal – so that they understand and can also help you make sure that it will not interact negatively with any other medicine you might need to take. Remember, no type of medicine or supplement is allowed onto school property unless approved by the school nurse and administrators.

Your Friends

When you come to the U.S. as an exchange student, you will be separated from your old friends. You will have the opportunity and the challenge to make new friends.



Students make friends through a variety of activities, such as playing sports or joining a club.

Friends at home. The roles of friends vary from one country to another. You may have friends now that you have had for many years. You may have had the same classmates ever since you began school. Perhaps your friends are very close to you; perhaps you have a few close friends and many acquaintances.

Friends in the U.S. You may find that friends in the U.S. are not so permanent. Some American families move from one place to another every few years. This means that new friends must be found. It also means that Americans need to be very friendly and outgoing, and they need to make an effort to find friends.

The same thing will happen to you. You will be new to your family, your school, and your community. Your host family may take you places and help you meet people. They may help you at school and in the neighborhood, or through groups to which they belong in the community, such as church groups. People join groups or clubs to make friends. You, too, will have to look for groups of people you like to find new friends.

At school, you will learn that students do not stay in the same class together all day. The students in one subject may not be in any other subject together during the day. Students make friends in clubs after school – sports clubs (although athletic eligibility or participation in school sports teams is not guaranteed and is subject to authorization by your local school district and the responsible State authority), hobby groups, volunteering, drama and singing groups, etc. They also make friends through youth groups in the community and the church. This may be a new idea for you, but you will have to look for new ways to make friends while you are in the U.S.

Meet lots of people and make lots of friends. Having many friends is one way to learn and enjoy the many aspects of life in the United States. Depending upon your age and the students you are around, you may find some students have romantic relationships with each other. They may spend time only with each other; some may have sexual relations. Sometimes exchange students find one “special” girlfriend or boyfriend they have romantic feelings for. Being involved in a close relationship with one person limits your opportunities to meet and get to know other people.

You will find that many classmates participate in social activities in groups, not as couples. This is a better way to meet a variety of people. This also is a good way to observe how girls and boys interact. Behaviors that are acceptable in your home country may produce different, and perhaps unpleasant, responses in the U.S. Participate with groups of your peers and learn from them.

You should try to know many different people and spend your time with them, not only with other exchange students. You may be tempted to spend a lot of time with other exchange students or other foreigners because it seems easier to make friends with them. But the more time you spend with them, the less time you have to get to know the U.S. directly, through its own people, and the less likely American students will be to try to become friends with you.

Your School

Going to school in the U.S. is a great opportunity to really understand teenagers in America. You also will have the chance to study new subjects, possibly in a very different way from the teaching styles you knew at home. You are expected to attend classes and complete all assignments, and to adjust to the differences you find.



Take the initiative to make friends. Say hello to people. Smile. Join in their activities. It will take some time, meeting lots of different people, perhaps, before you find a few close friends.

Schools in the U.S. are the responsibility of state governments and local school districts. Therefore, there are **many** differences among schools in the U.S., including the number of students (from as few as 100 to as many as 3,000!), and the number and types of subjects taught.

Each school also has its own policies regarding exchange students. The school officials will determine to which grade level you will be assigned. Even if you are in the 12th year in an American school, the YES program cannot guarantee that you will receive an American high school “diploma” (the graduation document). Many schools will give only a “Certificate of Attendance” to exchange students. If you have questions about graduating, ask your local coordinator or placement organization representative, not your school.

Each school has the *authority* to determine your grade placement and to decide which type of document is awarded. Neither the YES program nor the Placement Organization can influence the school’s decisions. It will be based on individual school, state, or local policy. You and your natural parents must accept the school’s decision and must not repeatedly ask about graduation or a diploma.

Although there are many differences, the following aspects of secondary schools tend to be the same throughout the U.S.

Types of courses. High schools in the U.S. offer many different courses for students. There are university preparatory courses that are academic and are required for students who want to continue their education. There are job-related courses including secretarial subjects, business classes, mechanical and other trade skills, and computer science. Students also attend classes they choose, called “electives.” These include subjects like music, drama, art, school government, and journalism.

Differences. You will find school in the U.S. very different from school in your country in several ways. One is that it offers such a variety of classes. You may find it more flexible because you probably will be allowed to choose some of your own classes. You also may feel that the school is less formal than

your own because of different teaching styles and class schedules. Both teachers and students may dress less formally and in some cases teachers may allow students to call them by their first names. This does not mean they are not to be respected.

Students move from classroom to classroom throughout the day. They often stop at their lockers to change books. The time between classes is very short and you may have to learn to hurry from one class to the next. *Being on time for the start of class is very important and sometimes part of your grade.*

In some subjects there will be daily or weekly homework assignments. Work done outside the classroom is usually graded and will be considered in the final mark for the class.

In U.S. schools students are expected to do their own work, unless they are assigned a group project. If students study together or work on homework together, each must do his/her own paper. "Helping" someone else may be considered "cheating" (dishonest) if one person does the work for the other. In such cases, neither student will receive grades for the work that was done, as punishment. Likewise, if students help each other on exams, or take notes into an exam, it is considered dishonest and students will be punished for it. Dishonesty, or "cheating," is considered a serious offense, even resulting in expulsion from school.

During classes, students are not allowed to talk to each other while the teacher is speaking. It is considered rude to the person speaking. Expressing one's opinions in class discussions is expected. Repeatedly challenging a teacher, however, is disrespectful and unacceptable. Differences of opinion are more appropriately handled in a "one to one" conversation with a teacher after class.

Even though your U.S. school may be different, it does not mean it is "easier." All students, whether or not they will continue on to university, have required subjects they must complete successfully to graduate from high school. American students who want to go to a university must not only take academic classes and receive high grades, they also must be active in school activities.



During an exam, students must do their own work and not be involved with "cheating."

Universities in the U.S. seek “well-rounded” students – those who have good grades *and* also have been involved in many different activities. There are three criteria for admission to most universities: high grades in required academic courses, a high score on a national level scholastic aptitude examination, and active participation in the arts, sports, school government, or similar activities. Even though you will not be permitted to stay and go to a U.S. university, it is important for you to know how your American classmates prepare for university.

Your course schedule. As an exchange student, you will be required by your U.S. high school to take academic classes. They may be ones you do not have in your own school, such as U.S. history and government and American literature. You also will be expected to take math and science classes. Most exchange students also enjoy having the opportunity to take elective classes, such as cooking, computers, or mechanics.

You will not be able to take only academic classes or only electives. In the beginning, you may find some academic classes difficult because of your English but your effort should enable you to succeed. An all-elective schedule is not typical of the U.S. high school experience either. The exchange program wants you to have an authentic high school experience, which means taking both academic and non-academic courses.

School rules. U.S. high schools have “zero tolerance” policies towards violence and plagiarism. Any fighting or physical violence will be punished by suspension, expulsion, or possibly arrest. Plagiarism is copying the work from someone else, either a classmate or from the internet. U.S. schools have strict rules that limit the use of cell phones on school grounds. Your school will provide you with a booklet describing their specific rules and policies; you should be familiar with their rules and take them very seriously.

Your Community

Get to know it. Before you feel at home in your community, you must know it. No matter how small the town is where you live, you should find all of the services you need. Walk around and discover your immediate neighborhood. Then, find out where things are in your community: the grocery store, the post office, the bank, the library, clothing stores, bus stop, etc.

If you live in a small town you may be able to walk to all of them. If you live in a suburb or in a rural area, you will need to go to the central area of your community by bus or car.

When you get the opportunity, go with family or neighbors and begin to locate where the services are. You probably will feel much more at home once you are familiar with your community.

Getting settled and feeling comfortable will take time. Be patient. Be active. Accept advice and help from your family. Meet people. Begin to make friends. Soon you will start to feel at home in the United States.



In time, you will become familiar with services and shopping in America.

You should get to know your new community and find out where things are located.



VI. Language Learning in the U.S.

**In this chapter you will
learn how to improve your
English by:**

- **Taking advantage of daily language learning opportunities**
 - **Finding and working with a language helper**
 - **Just speaking and hearing it all day!**
-

What can you do to feel at home in the U.S. as quickly as possible? Be able to speak English. When you can speak with people, you can get to know them. You can ask why they do things. You can explain how you do things differently. You can express your happiness, your frustrations. You can ask for help.

Many exchange students find that using English all the time is difficult and tiring. One student advises, *“Be really patient and strong even when you don’t understand English and feel bad. Try to participate in the conversation! Time passes very fast, so don’t waste any time.”*

You may be surprised when you arrive in the U.S. that your English is not as good as you thought it was. You may have studied English for several years in school. You may find it very easy to read and understand this book. Then why is it so difficult to understand people and to speak?

There are several reasons why this can happen. It is easier to learn to read, answer questions in a textbook, or memorize a dialogue than it is to talk with someone who uses words you do not understand and who speaks too fast! It is probably easier for you to understand people from your country who speak English as a second language rather than native English speakers. The problem may be that you have not spent time speaking English in the same everyday manner that you speak your own language. And using everyday language is a very different situation from being in a language class.

You also may be hearing “American English” for the first time. If you studied English with someone who speaks “British English,” you may find that some expressions, pronunciations, spellings, and sentence patterns are different in the U.S. Will learning American English ruin your British English? You will probably develop a different accent and change some of your expressions. But if you become fluent in American English, you can change the few expressions necessary to get along in your English classes when you return home. It is nothing to worry about.

You may find that you become very tired listening to English all of the time. This is normal. It happens because you have to listen very carefully in order to understand. You may need to rest, listen to some music, or read for a while to relax.

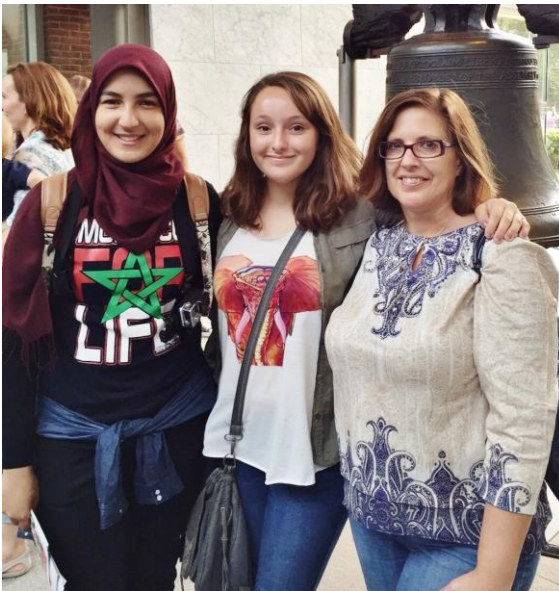
How You Can Help Yourself

You are in the perfect situation to learn English – you are surrounded by English speakers who probably do not speak your language. To take advantage of this situation, and be able to see your progress, you may want to make some plans for how you will learn.

Here are some points to keep in mind:

1. Focus on everyday conversation. Learn first the things you need to understand and say in your home.
2. Listen to everything around you. Listen to radio and TV news and talk programs. Listen especially carefully when someone is speaking to you.
3. Ask people to “speak more slowly” or “repeat” what they have said if you do not understand. You will be surprised how fast you begin to recognize whole sentences and questions.
4. Repeat back what someone has told you to make sure you understand. This is especially important if you are expected to follow directions or be somewhere at a certain time.

5. Keep a list of expressions and words that are new and useful. Try to use them.
6. Carry a pocket dictionary with you to use when you cannot remember a word or do not know one. (Try to buy a two-language dictionary before you leave your country. You may not be able to find one for your language in your community in the U.S.)
7. Record yourself while you talk with a family member or friends. Later, listen to the recording to hear how you might improve.
8. Read newspapers and magazines aloud to others or have them read to you – especially the comics.
9. Do not be shy about watching TV programs that teach young people English, such as “Sesame Street.” Young children will usually enjoy helping you practice conversation. Some TV game shows can help you with English, too, because they have questions and answers.
10. Relax, enjoy, and do not take yourself too seriously. Laugh at yourself and help people laugh with you when you make mistakes. Mistakes and obstacles are part of life: have you had a year in your life at home without a problem? Do not expect your exchange year to be the anomaly. Some of your embarrassing moments with English will be your funniest stories when you return home!



Be willing to laugh at yourself when you make mistakes. Do not take yourself too seriously.

Who Can Help You

You will find that many people around you will help. If you ask them, your family and friends will correct your English and help you say what you want to say. You may want to choose one special person—a “language helper”—who will help you regularly with your English. It could be a member of your family, a friend, or one of your teachers. Choose a person whom you like and respect. It must be someone who will correct you when you make an error and who will help you practice.

What You Can Do With a Language Helper

First, your language helper needs to talk to you to find out how much you already know. Then together you should plan what you need to learn. It is best to learn the everyday sentences, questions, and answers that you need to use. Keep your lessons very simple. Follow these easy steps:

1. Tell your helper what you want to learn about – such as how to ask where something is or how to answer questions about liking or disliking something, such as a movie, or something about your U.S. high school.
2. Have your helper write down several sentences, including questions about that topic.
3. Listen as your helper says the dialogue or sentences.
4. Repeat what your helper has said.
5. Listen again.

You will find many people, including all the members of your host family, to help you with your English.



6. Repeat again.
7. Try to use the sentences in a short conversation.
8. Write down, read, or tape record the sentences that your helper has written. Keep them to study on your own.

Remember that you want to learn the *spoken* language. The more often you practice listening and answering, the faster you will speak comfortably and fluently.

Have patience and do not be afraid to *ask questions*. You will hear many expressions and “slang” words that you do not know. Ask your friends or language helper what they mean and when and where you can say them. Some expressions are not appropriate for use at the dinner table!

Make time every day to *practice* your English. If your language helper is willing to help you every day, that would be wonderful. Maybe in exchange you can teach your helper your own language!

Good luck, have fun, and make friends learning English!





VII. Program Policies

In this chapter you will learn important rules of the exchange program, including those regarding:

- **Use of alcohol**
- **Driving a car or other vehicle**
- **Traveling to other cities or states**
- **Shoplifting and other unlawful activities**

The policies presented here are the general ones for YES participants. Variations regarding specific policies and procedures exist among Placement Organizations. You will receive additional information from your specific Placement Organization. You are expected to respect and obey the rules of your Placement Organization, as well as the policies of the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study program, as stated in Form 7 of the YES application.

Every year a number of students are dismissed from the YES program and return to their home country without successfully completing their YES experience. Reasons have included violations of YES and Placement Organization policies such as: poor grades or repeated failure to complete assignments or attend school; shoplifting or other violations of the law, like drinking alcohol; physical violence at school or in the host home; inability to adjust to family or school; not following host family rules; driving; and other unacceptable behavior.

Alcohol

Students are required to observe all U.S. laws with regard to the minimum drinking age. The minimum drinking age in the U.S. is 21. The student will be considered for program dismissal.

Drugs

Program participants may not possess or use drugs that are illegal in the U.S. Violators of this policy may be dismissed from the Program and are subject to prosecution by the U.S. legal system.

Computer/Internet

Students are required to follow ALL RULES regarding use of the computer (regardless of whose property it is) and the Internet as determined by his/her Placement Organization, host family, and/or host school. Students who place private (contact information, pictures, etc.) or inappropriate information on the Internet may be dismissed from the program. The rules are intended to protect students' safety and are based on federal guidelines and laws governing what can and cannot be posted online. Violation of any of these rules may result in dismissal from the program or criminal charges. Students who in any way put the safety of themselves or others at risk by misusing the Internet may be dismissed from the program.

Dangerous/Risky Activities

The following activities have been determined by most insurance companies to be too risky, and treatment for injuries sustained while participating in the them will not be covered by insurance: driving any motorized vehicle (such as a car, motorcycle, all-terrain vehicle, etc.), hang gliding, bungee jumping, jumping on a trampoline, parachute jumping, parasailing, scuba diving, piloting a private plane, mountain biking, mountaineering, rock climbing, skate boarding, extreme sports, handling or using a firearm, and any other activities prohibited by your Placement Organization.

Driving

Exchange students are not permitted to drive any motorized vehicle under any circumstances. Violators of this policy will be considered for program dismissal. This applies even if a student is in possession of an International driver's license or if the host family feels that the student is a responsible and careful driver. Exceptions may be granted for farm equipment if allowed by the student's Placement Organization and covered by insurance. If authorized, the student must observe precautions regarding safety and legal limitations.

Employment

The J-1 visa permitting the student to stay in the U.S. restricts employment. Program participants may seek only small part-time jobs, such as babysitting, yard clean-up, etc., according to specific regulations of placement organizations.

Leaving the Program Early

If the student is absent from the host family, school, or other place to which the Program has assigned him or her, without obtaining the written approval of the Program, the Program may determine that the student has left the Program through his or her own voluntary action. In this case, the Program is absolved from all obligations, legal or otherwise, to the student or his/her parents or guardians for the student's current or future well-being. The Program will, if the circumstances warrant, work with the student to return to the Program. However, if this cannot be accomplished, a decision will be made that the separation from the Program is final, and the student will receive a letter from the Program sponsor indicating that the student has been reported to the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The student's medical insurance will be canceled.

Marriage

Married students are not permitted on the Program. If marriage occurs while the student is a participant or is discovered to have occurred prior to the student becoming a participant, the student will be considered for Program dismissal.

Medical Treatment of a Student (Including Emergencies)

Before a student arrives in the U.S., the Program must receive written permission from natural parents to obtain emergency medical attention if needed (see Permission for Care of My Child form from your application). Students will receive complete medical attention in case of an accident or emergency. Each insurance provider has specific policies and restrictions governing the types of expenses they will reimburse. YES program organizations, their representatives, and host families are not responsible for any medical bills not covered by insurance incurred by a student regardless of who signs a hospital admission form. The Program also is not responsible for any negative results because of medical treatment.

Pregnancy

If a Program participant is found to be pregnant she must return to her home country. Male students who cause pregnancies also must return home.

School

Attendance. All Program participants must attend a high school and maintain a normal course of school work. Non-attendance may result in consideration for Program dismissal or determining that the student has left the Program.

Performance. Allowing for an initial period of linguistic and/or academic adjustment, a student must achieve and maintain adequate academic results. After a reasonable period of time, poor motivation, under-achievement, or inappropriate behavior in combination with poor family adjustment, may be cause for Program dismissal.

Expulsion. If a student is expelled from school, that student will be considered for Program dismissal.

Student Expenses

The Program provides visas, travel arrangements, host family and school placements, allowances, and insurance. The Program is not responsible for additional student expenses beyond the incidentals allowance, monthly pocket allowance, and official Program activities and travel. The host family is responsible for three meals a day for the student and must provide **either** lunch money *OR* a bag lunch if the school does not provide free lunches for the student and the student cannot go home for lunch. If the host family provides a cold bag lunch, then the host family is **not** required to provide additional money for the student to purchase hot food at school. All other expenses, such as extra school fees or activities, social activities, personal and hygienic supplies, and telephone calls, are to be paid by the student using the Program allowances.

Student Travel

It is the policy of the Program that only authorized student travel is permitted.

Authorized student travel must meet these three criteria:

1. The YES placement organization has knowledge of the student's location and **approves** the travel in advance, and/or the program organizations have obtained the natural parents' written permission for the travel;
2. The student's safety is assured to the greatest extent possible; and,
3. The travel does not interfere with school attendance.

Unauthorized travel may constitute termination from the Program. The YES placement organizations in the U.S. determine authorization for travel. Procedures for obtaining permission to travel vary by organization.

Theft/Shoplifting

Stealing something from a store or shop is called shoplifting and is a serious crime in the U.S. Students involved in theft (either from an individual or from a place of business) or shoplifting may be dismissed from the Program and are subject to prosecution by the U.S. legal system. **DO NOT TAKE THE RISK!** You could end up in jail, paying a “fine” (large amount of money), losing your YES scholarship and being sent home, and possibly not being allowed to return to the U.S. in the future.

Violation of the Law

If a student is found to have violated a U.S. law, is arrested, and/or is charged with a crime, the student may be dismissed from the Program, but is first subject to prosecution by the U.S. legal system. Your status as a recipient of a Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study program scholarship does not provide you with protection from prosecution by the U.S. legal system.

Visits with Natural Family, Home Country Friends or Relatives Who Live in the U.S.

Such visits are strongly discouraged during the Program year, especially during the initial adjustment period. Such visits interrupt the continuity of the relationship with the host family and may diminish the exchange experience for the student and host family. Policies vary by placement organization.

Visits to the Home Country While on Program

Such visits are not allowed. Exceptions may be made, contingent upon Program approval, in case of the death or imminent death of an immediate (mother, father, brother, sister) family member. An unauthorized visit will result in dismissal from the Program. Such non-emergency trips break the continuity of the relationship with the host family and may diminish the exchange experience for the student and host family. Any requests for exceptions must be presented to your Placement Organization and approved by the U.S. Department of State.

Return to Home Country at the End of the Program

All students must return to their home country at the end of the program on the date assigned by the responsible YES program organization. Students will not be allowed to remain in the U.S. after their assigned return-travel date. Those who do not adhere to this will be reported to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and will have their program insurance canceled.

Officials of your country will not be pleased if students do not return home at the end of the YES program. This could jeopardize the participation of other students from your country in the future.

Program Eligibility Requirements

Participation on the Program. Applicants will be considered for a scholarship to participate on this Program if:

1. No immediate family member has applied at any time for permission to emigrate to the U.S.;
2. The applicant meets the YES age and grade (class) requirements for his or her country; and,
3. The applicant is a legal citizen or permanent resident of the country from which he or she applies.

As participants of an exchange program funded by the U.S. Government, YES students are subject to the U.S. Department of State's Two-Year Home-Country Physical Presence requirement [212(E)], which stipulates that the student must reside in their home country for a minimum of two years after completing their educational or cultural exchange program before they are eligible for immigrant or temporary worker status.



VIII. Hints for a Successful Exchange Experience

In this chapter you will learn some keys to a successful exchange experience, such as

- Staying in regular, but not excessive contact with their natural family**
- Adapting to appearance and grooming norms in the U.S.**
- Avoiding politics**
- Seeking ways to participate in some aspects of religious activities**
- Respecting smoking laws and school and family rules**
- Being careful in use of the telephone, computer and social networking sites**
- Being tolerant of differences from home**

Communicating With Your Family Back Home

In this day and age it is easier than ever to stay in touch with people all over the world; distances are immediately closed when you chat with your family and friends on Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP, such as Skype), free wireless messaging apps (such as WhatsApp), social media, text, or email. These advances have made staying in touch while you are away from home quick, easy and less expensive. While it is important to let your family back home know how you are doing, you should be careful not to spend too much time communicating with them. If you do this all the time, your host family will think you are not interested in them, and you will miss out on getting a real American experience. Although VoIP, social media, texting, email, and other devices put your family and friends back home just a click away, try to use these things *wisely*. Remember you are expected to follow your host family's rules regarding how much time you can spend on the computer and on the phone while you are in their home.

If you need to use the telephone to stay in touch with your natural family, keep in mind that to dial your country directly from your host family's telephone will cost \$5-7 *per minute*, and you are solely responsible for paying any phone bills for calls *you* make. Instead, you can save a lot of money by buying a telephone calling card (using your monthly allowance) from most local convenience shops or gas stations in your community. The calling card rates are usually less than \$0.25 per minute.



Try to wear the same type of clothing that others of your age wear.

Use of the Telephone

Cell phones. Your host family's rules about when and how long you may use the telephone apply to your cell phone too, if you have one. Many U.S. high schools forbid the use and even presence of cell phones on school property or in classrooms, and teachers and schools have the right to confiscate them.

Be brief when using the telephone. Phone calls should not be long, and you should not use the phone too much. You are only one member of your host family. Other members also will need the phone. Do not give your host family's phone number to everyone. A few friends may have it, but do not abuse the use of the family phone.

Calling cards. If you wish to call home, you should purchase a calling card using your monthly allowance. The rate is much less expensive than dialing directly from your host family's phone, and this will allow you to avoid charges to our host family's home telephone.

Long distance calls (within the U.S.). Always make arrangements with your host family **before** you make long distance calls. They should know who you are calling and *how you will pay* for your calls. Find out how much the call will cost, and watch the clock when you are calling. Pay your family back immediately. Long distance calls can be very expensive.

Telephone bills. You must pay all of your telephone bills *before* you leave the U.S. Do not expect your host family to pay them for you. If you leave unpaid bills when you return, your family at home will be asked to pay them.

Skype and Social Media

As with email and Facebook, it is important to make sure that your Skype and social media name, profile, and photo do not contain any inappropriate or offensive words or images. Make sure to make note of the time difference between your home and your host community before making calls.

Personal Appearance and Grooming

Regardless of the amount of clothing you may have brought, you should be able to dress appropriately for most occasions by using the basic clothing list suggested on page 13. If necessary, your incidentals allowance is available to help you purchase unexpected or essential clothing items that you may need, but do not have. Be sure to check with your Placement Organization first.

There will be times when jeans or shorts are not appropriate. Try to wear the same type of clothing that others of your age wear at the events you attend. Sometimes clothing and hair styles are ways that people express freedom and individuality, but students are expected to dress appropriately at home and at school. The following are examples of clothing that many high school campuses do not allow their students to wear: low-cut or revealing clothing; clothing that exposes the body or undergarments; clothing showing profanity; or clothing advertising or depicting alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, or nudity.

Tolerance

You will meet, perhaps even in your host family, people of different religions, social classes, political views, economic levels, and ethnic groups. Though living or going to school with people very different than yourself may be a new experience, it is a part of the American experience. Strive to be open-minded, setting aside judgments, and enjoy the opportunity to learn about and from new groups of people.

Political Expression

Views. The political views you express are only your own. You should tell this to people you meet who may think you represent your country officially. You are in no way an official representative of your country's government.

Representation. On the other hand, for many Americans, you may be the first or the only person from your country they have met. This means that your behavior will give people an impression of what your fellow citizens are like. The Program hopes that all exchange students are friendly and active, and that they will share some of their culture with their host community.

Involvement. As an exchange student, however, you should not become involved in the political activities of the United States, no matter how strongly you feel about an issue or a candidate. Your involvement may be misunderstood, resented, or disliked.



In many areas of the U.S., religious institutions are centers of musical and social life.

Religion

Exchange students and their host families frequently have very different ideas about religion. For some families, religious services and the other activities offered by their places of worship are important to their weekly routine. For others, religion is not an important part of their lives.

The majority of Americans (73.7% according to 2016 data) identify as Christians (mainly Protestant and Roman Catholic). In addition, 2.1% are Jewish, 0.8% are Muslim, ~1% are Buddhist, and ~1% are Hindu. 3% of Americans identify with other faiths, and 18.2% are unaffiliated with any religion.

You are encouraged to join your family in all their activities, including religious services, unless your beliefs make it impossible. It is your choice, however, to attend or not to attend services.

Even if your own religious beliefs make it impossible for you to attend services with your host family, you may take advantage of the many other social activities offered by most U.S. churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques. You may find a much better opportunity for friendships and social activities than you expected. In many areas of the U.S., religious institutions are centers not only of religious life, but also of musical, recreational, and social life. Do not overlook the possibilities of sharing this part of your family's life.

On the other hand, your host family may not attend religious services, or may attend different ones than you would prefer. You may ask your host family to help you find a place of worship of your own denomination, if they do not attend and you wish to do so. It is possible, however, that in some parts of the U.S. you may not find the place of worship of your choice.

Both host families and students must respect each others' rights to their own beliefs and must not try to influence or convert them. If you have any concerns about this issue, talk to your host family and also with your Placement Organization representative.

Smoking

In most U.S. states purchasing cigarettes and smoking is illegal for anyone under the age of 18. Failure to abide by state laws can cause problems for students and host families, and may be cause for Program dismissal.

In general, smoking is becoming less and less accepted in the U.S. and is often a topic of discussion among friends. It is not permitted on airplanes, or in government buildings and most private offices. In restaurants and schools, if it is permitted at all, it will be only in specific, designated areas.

Sometimes students do not say on their applications that they smoke because they fear they may be disqualified. Whether or not you smoke you will not be allowed to smoke while on the YES program in the U.S. Form 6 of your application required that you signed your name stating that you understand that smoking is not allowed while on program.

Don't forget that you signed a statement in your application (Form 6) which says: "I understand that there may be laws restricting smoking in my host state, host school, or that my host family may have objections regarding smoking in their home. I agree to honor these laws and restrictions."

Your Online Presence

One of the most exciting and challenging parts of your experience on this program will be living with a U.S. host family. Your relationship with your host family, Placement Organization, and Local Coordinator usually starts long before your arrival in the U.S. Once you and your host family are matched, you will receive contact information from your YES representative about your host family and Local Coordinator. As soon as this information is available, many exchange students immediately contact their new host family by emailing them, calling them on the phone or on Skype, or friending them on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, etc).

Your host family and Local Coordinator have seen only the very best side of you from what is in your application – your host family letter, list of activities and interests, and, of course, smiling photos of you with family and friends. It is important that you build on the positive impression that you established in your application by continuing to share information about yourself that accurately reflects your personality and interests. This can be tricky when communicating over very long distances, not face-to-face. **Unfortunately, there have been cases where things such as a student’s inappropriate email address or inappropriate content posted on social media have caused host families so much concern that they change their mind and decide not to host the student.**

Here are some tips for how you can ensure that you are interacting with your new host family, Local Coordinator, and other new American friends and family in appropriate ways that will encourage their positive impressions of you. A good thing to keep in mind is to imagine your *grandmother* is seeing your social media profile (Facebook, Instagram, email address, blog, etc.) -would grandma be shocked? Would she approve?

If you have any questions before arrival, contact your YES program representative in your country – they are happy to help you prepare for your upcoming exchange experience.

Email

Make sure that the email address you are using is appropriate. An email address that contains profane (curse/swear words), or questionable words (words associated with violence, that are sexual in nature, attractiveness, or political language), are not appropriate and should not be used. Open a new email account and use only this new account to communicate with people in the U.S. A safe format to follow is *firstname.lastname.YES@gmail.com*.

If your emails end with an automatic “signature,” make sure that this signature is appropriate. Violent, profane, or sexually suggestive song lyrics would be an example of inappropriate content for an email signature.

Facebook, Instagram, and Other Social Media Networks

These social networking sites can be a great way to casually get acquainted, share photographs, and feel connected. However, if you choose to “friend” your Local Coordinator or any members of your host family or host community on Facebook, first review the content (posts, photographs, videos, friends’ comments) to make sure that it accurately represents your personality and interests. Delete any content that may appear inappropriate or offensive to others before accepting or sending a friend request. Content that may be offensive to others includes (but is not limited to):

- Profane language or cursing/swearing (bad words) in ANY language
- Language that is derogatory or shows aggression towards individuals or groups of people
- Violent or sexually explicit song lyrics
- Photographs where you are “partying” that could be interpreted as using alcohol or drugs
- Photographs where you are wearing tight, revealing, or very few clothes
- Photographs showing weapons (guns, swords, etc.)
- Graphic, violent or otherwise potentially offensive images

Of course we hope that you do not have any content of this nature on any of your social media accounts. If you are not sure whether something is appropriate or not, it is better to remove it and not risk making a bad first impression.

You should maintain the appropriateness of your social networking sites for the duration of your exchange year. You are responsible for continually monitoring the content on your pages to make sure it is appropriate, and for deleting anything inappropriate. If you are concerned about friends posting things on your wall that might be inappropriate or offensive, consider changing your privacy settings to limit who can post to your page. If your Local Coordinator or a member of your host family sees something inappropriate on your page, it could be reported to your Placement Organization, who in turn may ask your YES program representative in your country to inform your natural family about it.

Teens use social media in the U.S. most commonly to interact socially and maintain real-life friendships online. Using social media as a means to convey religious or political beliefs is not as common in the U.S and may be viewed negatively if done to excess or extremes.

These guidelines apply to ALL social networking sites, regardless of the language they are in. Don't think that your LC or host family won't see your profile on non-English sites. Review all of your accounts for content that may be inappropriate or inoffensive (as described above).

General Tips

In all communication with your Local Coordinator and host family, do your best to be:

Respectful. Use polite language, do not make demands, show interest in your new host family and community, and use this opportunity to learn about them!

Honest. Tell them the truth about yourself, what you like and don't like, what your home is like, etc. Don't feel you have to exaggerate or tell your LC and host family things you think they want to hear but aren't actually true. This helps your LC and host family to prepare to receive you and make your transition more comfortable!

Open-minded. Your host family and LC may have beliefs, habits, traditions, routines, and overall lifestyles very different from your own. This is part of what makes the exchange experience so unique and exciting! You should feel welcome to talk about your own beliefs, habits, traditions, etc., as well, but refrain from making negative judgments or comments about America or your home country. Make sure to keep in mind that you are coming from two different cultures and that what you will encounter in America, as you will learn in your Pre-Departure Orientation, is "not better, not worse, just different." Do not get into arguments with your host family or LC. If something comes up that concerns you, please feel free to contact your local YES program representative in your country to discuss your concerns.

Positive. You are most likely very excited about going to the U.S. Let your host family and LC see that. They are just as excited to be hosting you!

We strongly encourage you to follow the guidelines listed here and to work hard to build a positive relationship with your host family and Local Coordinator from the very beginning.

Remember this guiding principle for social media: if grandmother saw your post, picture, or profile - would she be shocked? Would she approve? Would you be embarrassed?

Please contact the YES representative in your country with any questions before arrival about social media.

IX. When You Need Some Help

**In this chapter you will learn
the type of help each of these
can provide:**

- **Your host family**

 - **Your Placement Organization**
-

All students face some adjustment problems. This is normal and nothing to worry about. If you need help while you are an exchange student, you will have people to aid you. Simply ask for help.

Many people will be there to help you. Your host family, your friends, your Placement Organization representative, and your embassy or consulate can all be of some help.

If a situation is uncomfortable, do not be afraid to discuss it with your host family, local coordinator, or to contact your Placement Organization. For more serious problems, remember that you have legal rights while you are in the U.S. A crime is a crime anywhere. If you are the victim of a crime, tell your host family, local coordinator, Placement Organization or a trusted adult about it immediately.

Your Host Family

You and your host family should be able to solve most problems that come up. You are a member of the family and, just like at home, the family is your main source of help. You can trust your host parents, talk to them, and confide in them if you have problems. They cannot help you if they do not know that something is wrong.

Your family is willing to make adjustments to help you feel more comfortable. However, you also must adjust and try to live as they do while you are in the U.S. As you have read, it will not always be easy, but it is possible. Let your family help you through the hard times. Trust them.

If you have problems with your host family and have tried to work them out but cannot, let your Placement Organization know – ask for help.



If you need help or have a problem while you are an exchange student, let your host family or Placement Organization know. They cannot help you if they do not know something is wrong.

If you do not feel safe discussing something with your host family or local coordinator, tell a trusted adult.

Your Placement Organization

Your Placement Organization is responsible for the selection of your host family and school. The Placement Organization will tell you who to contact in case you have questions or have problems that you and your host family cannot resolve. The Placement Organization also will help you in case of emergencies.

When you receive information about your Placement Organization from your YES representative, write the information on the next page. If you don't receive your representative's name and phone number at that time, you can fill it in later.

Placement Organization: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Your representative's name: _____

Representative's telephone number: _____

Your Embassy or Consulate in the U.S.

Your home country's embassy or consulate can help you with certain administrative questions, if needed, while you are in the U.S. If you think you need help from your embassy, contact your Placement Organization first. There are many things your embassy cannot do, such as exchange money, arrange for free medical or legal assistance, or make travel arrangements.



X. The Future Years

In this chapter you will explore:

- **What you can expect to learn from the exchange program**
 - **How to prepare to go home again**
-

Your Learning – What to Expect

Exchange students learn a great deal from their experience of living with a new family in a different culture. Some of the learning is personal growth in maturity and the ability to think for themselves. Some of the learning is awareness and understanding of the world.

You are taking a big step by becoming an exchange student. You are leaving familiar places and people. You are going to find out that you have the ability to get along in a foreign country, in a different language, with a family and lifestyle very different from your own. You are going to learn not only how to take care of yourself, but also that there are other kinds of people and other ways of living. You may find new ways to make friends and do things and develop new ways of expressing yourself. You are going to share yourself and your country with people who may never have known anyone from your country.

As a result of your exchange experience, you may become more proud to be a citizen of your own country. You will be able to explain the strengths and weaknesses of your own country and those that you experienced in the U.S. You will be able to think of values and attitudes as “different” rather than “right” or “wrong.” (You will laugh in June when you hear someone say 'not better, not worse, just different' because you will know how true it is.) You probably will make some good friends in the U.S. You may become interested in a profession that has an international focus. You will very likely develop a strong interest in what is happening in the world and will want to contribute to a better understanding among countries.



Returning Home—Some Re-Entry Thoughts

Returning home after a period in another country is sometimes called “re-entry.” It means you will be re-entering (or entering again) into your own culture. Because you will learn and change so much during your exchange experience, you may find it difficult to adjust to your own country again when you go home. This handbook should stay with you from notification to return home as there are many helpful hints and suggestions for the entire exchange experience outlined here, like these thoughts about going back home in June.

You may think that nothing has happened at home in your absence. That will not be true, of course. But you are the one who has had an experience that is so different. You may find it difficult to express how deeply you feel about your host family and friends, what wonderful times you had, and how much you liked certain aspects of American culture. Your family and friends may think you are boasting or that you feel superior. These are common reactions when exchange students return home.

In addition, separation from your host family may be difficult. You may want to plan to keep in touch with them in the future.

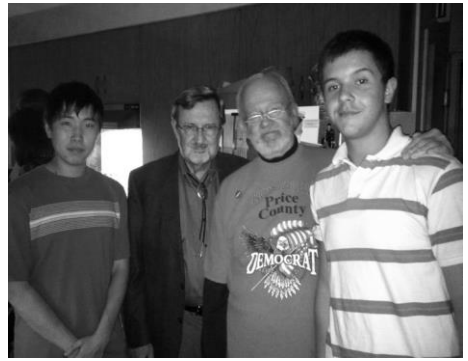
Your Placement Organization will provide information about re-entry before you return home. It is important to remember that problems of re-adjustment to one’s own country are common. They are nothing to worry about, but it is better to be prepared than to be surprised. Re-adjustment, too, is a part of the exchange experience and a part of your growth and learning. It is the beginning of the opportunity to put your experience to positive use in your home country, and towards mutual respect and world peace.

Your Continuing Relationship With The YES Program

YES alumni events are devoted to community service, opportunities for professional development, leadership activities, and English language/American cultural activities. We want to see your success at home too - share with us online using #YESAlumni. YES alumni in the past have engaged in clothing and food drives, helped to clean parks and neighborhoods, and worked with orphans, disabled children, and others in need. Alumni fine-tune their English public speaking skills through debate tournaments and model UN forums. They have helped to monitor national elections. Alumni often participate in computer and Internet training and professional skill development training on topics such as "conducting a job search" or "how to write a resume." Social activities range from movie nights to picnics and holiday celebrations. In short, alumni activities are designed by YES alumni, for YES alumni. They give participants the chance to help themselves and their communities, as well as provide them the opportunity to promote the YES program and to socialize with other alumni and Americans.

You can learn more about alumni activities, alumni news, alumni opportunities, and publications at www.yesprograms.org. Again, connect with YES alumni around the world on social media using #YESAlumni.





You may want to make plans to stay in touch with your host family and friends you have made during your stay in the U.S.

XI. Conclusion

You have read about many things in this handbook: what being an exchange student means, how to prepare for your year in the U.S., and how life in your host family and American school may be different from your own.

Please read this handbook again and discuss it with your parents. Make sure you complete all of the items on the checklist (see pages 26-27) before leaving home. Be sure both you and your parents understand what your incidentals and monthly allowances are to be used for. And, re-read the Program policies.

On the last pages of the handbook you will find useful information on U.S. holidays, climatic regions, the U.S. postal system, time zones, temperature and measurement conversion charts, and the abbreviations for the 50 states of the U.S.

We hope you find this handbook informative as you prepare to leave and useful once you are in the U.S. Please bring it with you to the U.S. You will use this handbook during your orientation classes and throughout your exchange year, and even once you are back home in your country.



Best wishes for your exchange year!



APPENDIX I:

Holidays in the U.S.

Holidays marked with * are official U. S. holidays. Unless otherwise noted, schools and most workplaces are closed on these days. Some holidays fall on different dates each year. The 2022-2023 dates are given when this is true.

Labor Day*, first Monday in September. Honors working men and women. (May 1, labor day in many other countries, is *not* a holiday in the United States.) (September 4, 2023)

Rosh Hashanah - Jewish New Year, first and second day of Tishri in the Hebrew calendar. Usually in September or October. (begins September 15, 2023)

Yom Kippur - Jewish Day of Atonement, tenth day of Tishri in the Hebrew calendar. It marks the end of the ten days of penitence that began with Rosh Hashanah and is the holiest day in the Jewish year. It is usually in September or October. (begins September 24, 2023)

Columbus Day*, celebrated on the second Monday in October. The European explorer, Christopher Columbus, landed in the Americas on October 12, 1492. *Some* schools and offices are closed. (October 9, 2023)

United Nations Day, October 24. Marks the anniversary of the United Nations Charter coming into force in 1945, and celebrates the work of this organization.

Halloween, October 31. Children, and sometimes adults, dress in costumes and wear masks. School parties are held. Children in their costumes go from house to house demanding “treats” by saying “Trick or treat.” People give them candy, cookies, and other “treats.”



Election Day, the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Some banks and some businesses are closed. (November 7, 2023)

Veterans Day*, November 11. Honors veterans of all wars. *Some* schools and offices are closed. (Observed on November 11, 2023)

Thanksgiving Day*, the fourth Thursday in November. Day set aside by early European settlers in America to join with the Indians in giving thanks for their harvest. Families gather together for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. Often turkey and cranberries are served. Friday after Thanksgiving is usually a school and business holiday. (November 23, 2023)

Hanukkah, eight-day holiday beginning on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev in the Hebrew calendar. Known as the Festival of Lights, it commemorates the re-dedication of the Temple of Jerusalem in 165 B.C. (begins December 7, 2023)

Christmas Day*, day when Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. December 25 for Roman Catholics and Protestants; January 7 for most Orthodox Christians. Gifts and/or cards are exchanged. Schools and universities close for a winter holiday, which extends from Christmas through New Year's Day. Offices and stores are closed on December 25 only.



New Year's Day*, January 1. Winter vacation for colleges and schools extends through New Year's Day. Most businesses are closed.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day*, the third Monday in January. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a major African-American leader of the 1960s non-violent civil rights movement. (January 15, 2024)

Valentine's Day, February 14. People send cards and gifts of love and affection to family, sweethearts, and friends.

President's Day*, celebrated on the third Monday in February. It honors George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. George Washington (born February 22) was the first president of the United States. Abraham Lincoln (born February 12) was president of the United States during the time of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery. Schools and some offices are closed. (February 19, 2024)

St. Patrick's Day, March 17. St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland – he converted Ireland to Christianity – and this day has special significance for Americans of Irish descent, but others also may observe it by wearing something green.

April Fool's Day, April 1. A child may tell you that your shoe is untied and then cry, "April Fool!" when you look at it. It is customary for both children and adults to be "fooled" by such April Fool tricks.

Passover, fifteenth to the twenty-second day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar. Commemorates the sparing of the Hebrews in Egypt and begins with a special Passover meal. (begins April 22, 2024)

Good Friday, the Friday before Easter. The day observed by Roman Catholics and Protestants as the anniversary of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. (March 29, 2024)

Easter, day celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ observed by Christians. For Roman Catholics and Protestants, it is the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after March 21 (March 31, 2024). Orthodox Easter sometimes falls on a later date (May 5, 2024).

Ramadan, begins the first day of the month of Ramadan in the Islamic calendar. A month of daytime fasting that ends with the celebration of the Feast of Breaking Fast. The fast is observed as a celebration of thanksgiving, as well as a way of gaining social empathy – feeling the pain of those less fortunate people who do not have enough food. (Begins on or around March 10, 2024)

Mother's Day, second Sunday in May. Mothers are given special attention, and usually a small gift and/or card. (May 12 2024)

Memorial Day*, last Monday in May. Day originally set aside to honor soldiers killed in the Civil War (1861-1865). The custom now for many Americans is to honor deceased relatives or friends killed in any military action by decorating their graves. Memorial services are held. (May 27, 2024)

Father's Day, third Sunday in June. Fathers are given special attention, and usually a small gift and/or card. (June 16, 2024)

Eid al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice, occurs on the tenth day of the month of Dhu-al-hijjah in the Islamic calendar. The feast coincides with the time of the holy pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). (Begins the evening of June 16, 2024)

Independence Day*, July 4. The national day of the United States, it commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Parades and fireworks are common.

APPENDIX II:

Climate in the United States

The United States divides naturally into six climatic regions, excluding Alaska, Hawaii, and other outlying territories. The list following each climate description shows the winter low and summer high temperatures for various cities in that region.

North Pacific (Oregon and Washington to the crest of the Cascade Mountains). This is the wettest part of the country, with rain and snow on some high slopes exceeding 150" (3,800 mm) annually. Most of the moisture falls during the winter, often in the form of snow. Summers are dry. Temperatures are mild during the rainy season – averaging around 40°F (4°C) and rising to highs around 90°F (32°C) in the summer.

	Winter low	Summer high
Portland, OR	30°F (-1°C)	87°F (31°C)
Seattle, WA	36°F (2°C)	76°F (24°C)

Mid-Pacific and Rockies (Oregon and Washington east of the Cascade Mountains, Central/Northern California, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado). This area is dry and sunny most of the year. The year's average rainfall is 12" (305 mm). Temperatures vary widely according to the altitude, rising as high as 115°F(46°C) and dropping as low as -66°F(-55°C).

	Winter low	Summer high
Sacramento, CA	40°F (4°C)	90°F (32°C)
San Francisco, CA	48°F (9°C)	65°F (18°C)
Denver, CO	18°F (-8°C)	85°F (29°C)
Boise, ID	25°F (-4°C)	87°F (31°C)
Helena, MT	15°F (-9°C)	85°F (29°C)
Pendleton, OR	30°F (-1°C)	87°F (31°C)
Spokane, WA	25°F (-4°C)	85°F (29°C)
Cheyenne, WY	16°F (-9°C)	86°F (31°C)

Southwest (Southern California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Southwestern Texas). This is the hottest and driest region of the United States, averaging less than 10" (254 mm) precipitation a year, mostly in the form of summer showers. No crops can be raised without irrigation. There is dry air and summer temperatures may be over 110°F (43°C). Winters are cool and dry, with frosts in January and February, but temperatures usually remain above freezing.

	Winter low	Summer high
Flagstaff, AZ	15°F (-9°C)	75°F (24°C)
Phoenix, AZ	35°F (2°C)	105°F (41°C)
Los Angeles, CA	48°F (9°C)	82°F (28°C)
Albuquerque, NM	28°F (-2°C)	91°F (33°C)
Santa Fe, NM	20°F (-7°C)	82°F (28°C)
Carson City, NV	25°F (-4°C)	88°F (31°C)
Las Vegas, NV	35°F (2°C)	100°F (38°C)
Salt Lake City, UT	20°F (-7°C)	93°F (36°C)
El Paso, TX	30°F (-1°C)	96°F (35°C)

Midwest (from the Dakotas and Minnesota down through Central Texas). This region is moderately dry, averaging about 23" (610 mm) annual precipitation along the Canadian border and 32" (813 mm) in Texas. It rains mostly in late spring and early summer. Northern winter temperatures can be very cold, indeed, and summers are hot throughout the region. Temperature extremes range from -50°F (-45°C) in North Dakota in the winter to 115°F (46° C) in Texas in the summer.

	Winter low	Summer high
Des Moines, IA	16°F (-9°C)	85°F (29°C)
Topeka, KS	20°F (-7°C)	88°F (31°C)
St. Paul, MN	10°F (-12°C)	80°F (27°C)
Kansas City, MO	25°F (-4°C)	86°F (30°C)
Bismarck, ND	2°F (-16°C)	84°F (29°C)
Lincoln, NE	15°F (-9°C)	88°F (31°C)
Oklahoma City, OK	27°F (-3°C)	93°F (34°C)
Pierre, SD	9°F (-13°C)	89°F (32°C)
Austin, TX	40°F (4°C)	96°F (36°C)

Southeast (all states east of the line drawn from Lake Superior to the tip of Texas and south of the line drawn from Missouri to New Jersey). This region is moderately rainy, averaging between 30" (762 mm) and 50" (1,270 mm) rainfall a year. Precipitation is year-round. Winters are mild, with occasional snow in the northern part of the region. Generally, summers are sunny and hot, with temperatures from 80° to 90°F (25° to 35°C).

Southeast

(Continued on Next Page)

	Winter low	Summer high
Montgomery, AL	35°F (2°C)	90°F (32°C)
Little Rock, AR	35°F (2°C)	95°F (35°C)
Washington, DC	30°F (-1°C)	95°F (35°C)

Wilmington, DE	25°F (-4°C)	83°F (28°C)
Miami, FL	60°F (16°C)	88°F (31°C)
Tallahassee, FL	42°F (6°C)	90°F (32°C)
Atlanta, GA	35°F (2°C)	90°F (32°C)
Baton Rouge, LA	43°F (6°C)	93°F (34°C)
Baltimore, MD	25°F (-4°C)	90°F (32°C)
Jackson, MI	36°F (2°C)	92°F (33°C)
Raleigh, NC	30°F (-1°C)	87°F (31°C)
Trenton, NJ	28°F (-2°C)	88°F (31°C)
Columbia, SC	35°F (2°C)	92°F (33°C)
Houston, TX	43°F (6°C)	95°F (35°C)
Richmond, VA	28°F (-2°C)	86°F (30°C)

Northeast (all states east of the line drawn from Lake Superior to the tip of Texas and north of the line drawn from Missouri to New Jersey). This region is moderately wet, averaging between 30" (762 mm) and 50" (1,270 mm) precipitation. Winters can be very cold, with snow accumulation common. Summers are temperate to hot, with more humidity in the interior. Average temperatures range from 0° to 32°F (-18° to 0°C) in the winter to 80° to 90°F (25-35°C) in the summer.

	Winter low	Summer high
Hartford, CT	20°F (-7°C)	83°F (28°C)
Chicago, IL	16°F (-9°C)	85°F (29°C)
Indianapolis, IN	20°F (-7°C)	90°F (32°C)
Frankfort, KY	23°F (-5°C)	87°F (31°C)
Portland, ME	15°F (-9°C)	80°F (27°C)
Boston, MA	25°F (-4°C)	80°F (27°C)
Lansing, MI	16°F (-9°C)	85°F (29°C)
St. Louis, MO	25°F (-4°C)	88°F (31°C)
Concord, NH	11°F (-12°C)	81°F (27°C)
Albany, NY	15°F (-9°C)	82°F (28°C)
New York, NY	29°F (-2°C)	88°F (31°C)
Columbus, OH	21°F (-6°C)	87°F (31°C)
Philadelphia, PA	25°F (-4°C)	86°F (30°C)
Providence, RI	22°F (-6°C)	80°F (27°C)
Nashville, TN	30°F (-1°C)	90°F (32°C)
Montpelier, VT	9°F (-13°C)	80°F (27°C)
Charleston, WV	26°F (-3°C)	86°F (30°C)
Madison, WI	12°F (-11°C)	84°F (29°C)

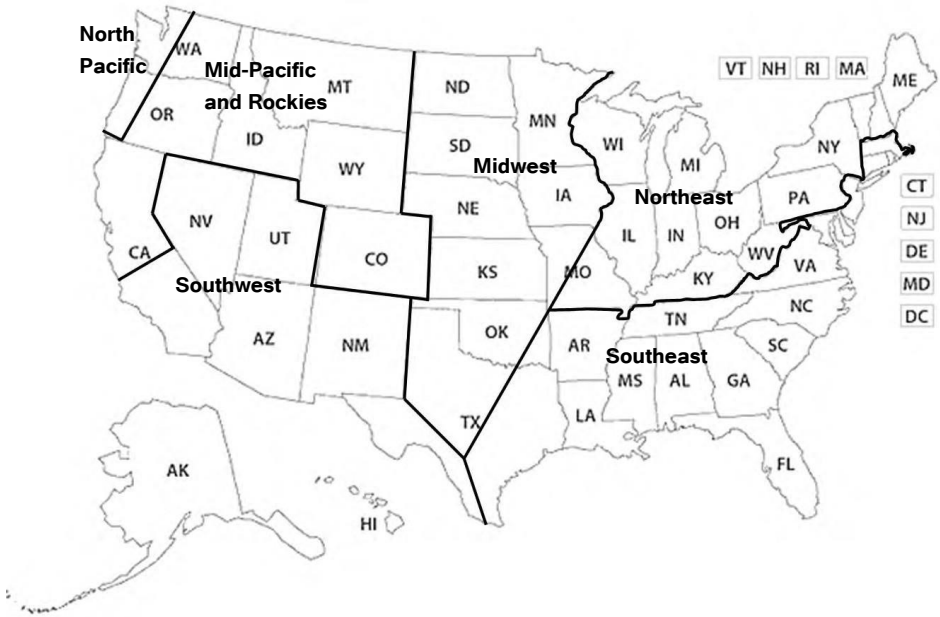
Alaska. The climate is widely variable. The southeast coast is generally temperate and rainy; the interior summers are short and very hot, with exceptionally long days, and the winters are very cold. Temperatures range from -30°F (-35°C) in the winter to 90°F (32°C) in the summer. Precipitation ranges from 150-200" (3,810-5,080mm) in the southeast panhandle and the coast along the Gulf of Alaska to 6" (15 mm) in the Arctic region.

	Winter low	Summer high
Anchorage, AK	10°F (-12°C)	65°F (18°C)
Fairbanks, AK	-10°F (-23°C)	65°F (18°C)
Juneau, AK	25°F (-4°C)	65°F (18°C)

Hawaii. The islands have a pleasantly mild climate all year round due to cooling trade winds, with temperatures from 70° to 80°F (20-30°C). Rainfall varies from hundreds of inches (2,540 mm) in the mountains to less than 10" (254 mm) in the lowlands.

	Winter low	Summer high
Honolulu, HI	65°F (18°C)	85°F (29°C)

Climatic Regions in the United States



APPENDIX III:

Using the Telephone in the U.S.

Telephone Directory. This well-organized book includes a great deal of useful information. Some host families may still use one, and some may not.

- *The White Pages* of the Directory list alphabetically by name all subscribing residents and businesses in the geographic area. You can also search for a number online at www.whitepages.com.

- *The Yellow Pages* (“classified section”) list services, products, and professional people in categories arranged alphabetically. In the back of the classified section is the index to the Yellow Pages, which will enable you to quickly locate the products, services, or professionals you want. You can also search for a number online at www.yellowpages.com.

Directory Assistance. If you cannot find the number of a person or business, dial 411 or 555-1212 for directory assistance. There is a charge for using Directory Assistance.

Information. If you do not know the telephone number of someone out of town, find the area code number of the city in the front pages of the phone book. Then, dial “1” plus the three digit area code plus 555-1212. Tell the operator the name of the city and the name of the person you wish to call, and you will be given the number. There may be a charge for this information call.

Operator. Dial “0” (zero) for the operator if you need help.

Public Telephones. Public pay telephones are generally available in booths outdoors and indoors throughout American towns, although the number of pay phones has declined sharply in recent years due to cell phones. Local calls cost \$0.50 and sometimes require that you insert additional money for more time.

Private Telephones. Most Americans have cordless or other push-button phones at home.

Local Calls. Dial the seven or ten digit telephone number, as given. The length of the telephone number for a local call, seven digits or ten digits, depends on the geographic area. Ten digit telephone numbers are used in some highly populated areas.

Long distance Calls. This is a call made to another town or state. The rate (cost) for a long distance call depends on the time of the day, the length of time you talk, the distance of the call, and the type of call.

Toll free (800, 866, 877 and 888) numbers are assigned to businesses that

want their customers to be able to place calls to the business without paying for the call. Airline reservation offices and mail order companies are examples of businesses that provide toll free numbers as a service to their customers.

International Calls. Dialing direct from your host family's phone is a very expensive way to place an international call, costing \$5 to \$7 per minute.

Calling Cards. A "calling card" is a pre-paid way to make long distance telephone calls without incurring a charge to your host family's telephone bill. You can purchase a calling card with a value of \$10, \$20, or more. Depending on the city or country to which you call, the card will provide a certain number of calling minutes. Calling cards are available in many stores.

Calling Plans. Your host family might have a calling plan set up that enables them to make less expensive long-distance and international calls during certain hours (such as evenings and weekends). It still costs money, but is much less expensive than dialing direct. However, you would be responsible for paying your portion of the bill.

Emergency Calls. Many cities use the phone number **911 for emergency help** from the fire department, the police, or for an ambulance. Find out the procedure (or number) for the place you live from your host family.

If for some reason you do not feel safe or comfortable calling your placement organization's national office, you may call either the American Councils general emergency number, 800-621-9559, or the Department of State emergency number at 866-283-9090. Both of these numbers will give you direct and immediate contact to representatives of American Councils and DOS who staff these phones 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. YES students can email yessupport@americancouncils.org and ALL students can send an email to jvisas@state.gov.

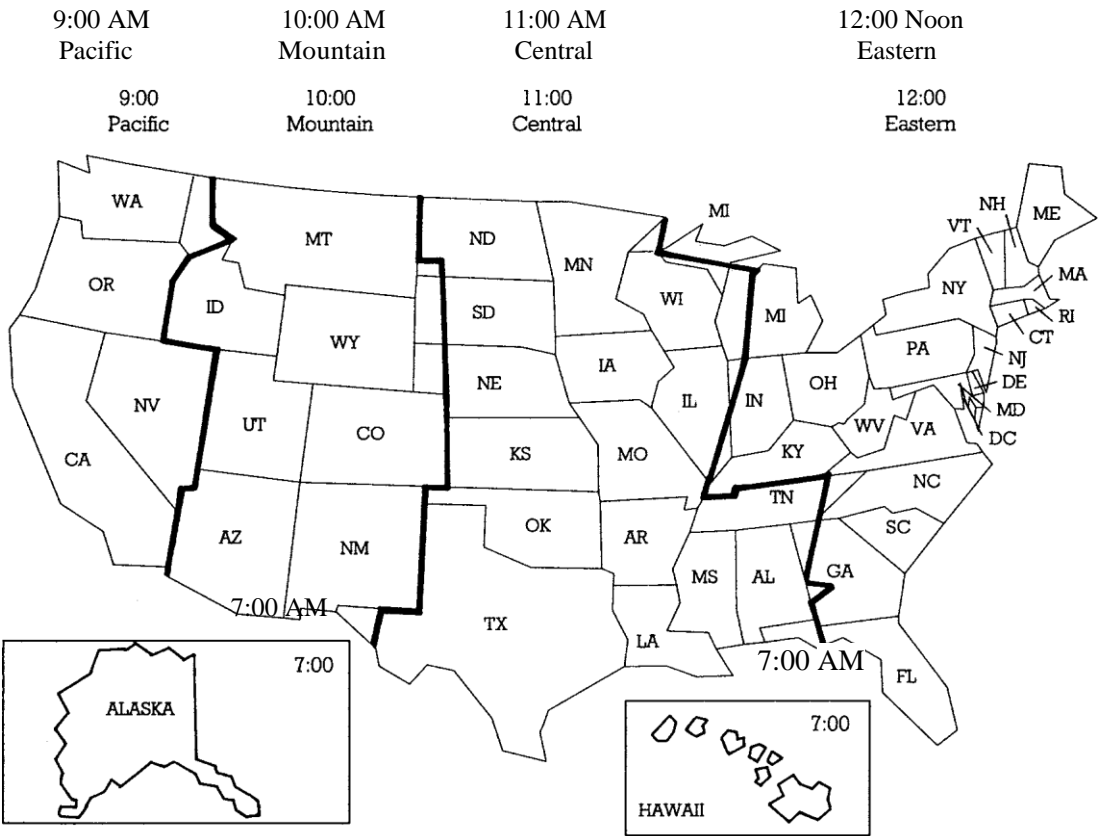
Cell Phones. Most U.S. schools either do not allow cell phones to be used on school property or do not allow students to even bring cell phones onto school property. Students risk not only losing their phone, but also may be suspended from school for violating this rule. Each Placement Organization and host family will have different rules but, generally speaking, rules about regular phone use apply to cell phones as well and must be respected. Purchasing a cell phone and paying monthly service fees for a cell phone can be very expensive (and is prohibited by some Placement Organizations), and will cut significantly into your \$125 monthly allowance.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). These are services such as Skype, Vonage or Google Voice: You can talk, instant message (IM), or make video calls for free or at reduced cost using these services. Software is usually free and easy to download. However, you should **NEVER** download anything onto your host family's computer without asking for and receiving their permission first.

APPENDIX IV:

Time Zones in the U.S.

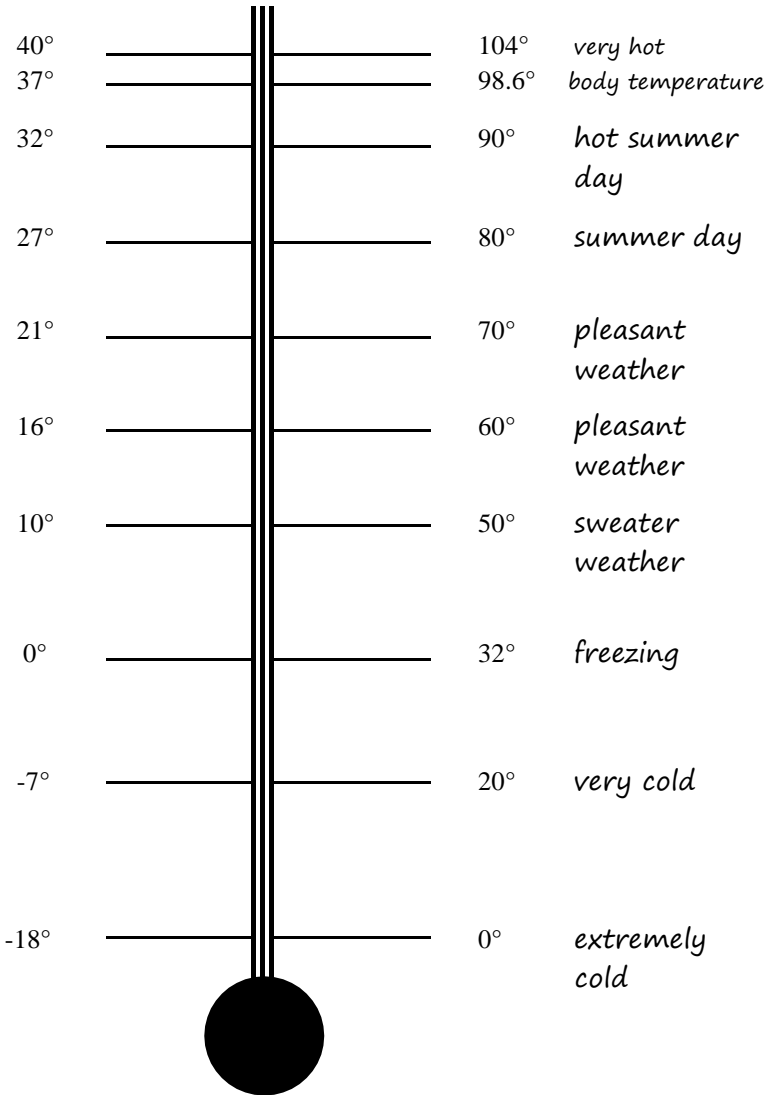
Time Zones in the USA



APPENDIX V: Temperatures

Centigrade

Fahrenheit



Measurements

Liquids

1 gallon = 3.785 liters

1 quart = 0.946 liters

1 pint = 0.473 liters

4 quarts = 1 gallon

2 pints = 1 quart

2 cups = 1 pint

Weights

1 pound = 0.4536 kilograms

1 ounce = 0.946 liters

2.2 pounds = 1 kilogram

.035 ounces = 1 gram

16 ounces = 1 pound

abbreviations

lb. = pound

oz. = ounce

Lengths

1 yard = 0.914 meters

1 foot = 30.48 centimeters

3 feet = 1 yard

12 inches = 1 foot

1.09 yards = 1 meter

3.28 feet = 1 meter

0.39 inches = 1 centimeter

abbreviations

yd. = yard

ft. = foot

in. = inch

Distances

miles

kilometers

abbreviations

0.62 =

1.0

mi. = mile

1 =

1.609

5 =

8.045

50 =

80.45

100 =

160.9

APPENDIX VI:

U.S. State Abbreviations

Use These for Postal Addresses

AK	Alaska	MO	Missouri
AL	Alabama	MS	Mississippi
AR	Arkansas	MT	Montana
AZ	Arizona	NC	North Carolina
CA	California	ND	North Dakota
CO	Colorado	NJ	New Jersey
CT	Connecticut	NE	Nebraska
DC	District of Columbia	NH	New Hampshire
DE	Delaware	NM	New Mexico
FL	Florida	NV	Nevada
GA	Georgia	NY	New York
HI	Hawaii	OH	Ohio
IA	Iowa	OK	Oklahoma
ID	Idaho	OR	Oregon
IL	Illinois	PA	Pennsylvania
IN	Indiana	RI	Rhode Island
KS	Kansas	SC	South Carolina
KY	Kentucky	SD	South Dakota
LA	Louisiana	TN	Tennessee
MA	Massachusetts	TX	Texas
MD	Maryland	UT	Utah
ME	Maine	VA	Virginia
MI	Michigan	VT	Vermont
MN	Minnesota	WA	Washington
		WI	Wisconsin
		WY	Wyoming
		WV	West Virginia

Glossary

The following terms have special meanings in relation to the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program. Most are explained more fully in the text of this handbook.

allowance - a set amount of money. Two types of allowances are provided by the Program:

Incidentals allowance - one time allowance of up to U.S.\$300 available to the host family to pay for initial costs for starting the school year.

Monthly allowance - U.S.\$200 provided monthly to pay for personal expenses such as personal items, telephone calls, and social activities.

alumnus (male); **alumna** (female) - student who has completed an exchange program. Also called a “returnee.”

application - the process of completing the forms (writing essays, providing health and school records, etc.) that allow a student to be considered by the selection committee for a YES scholarship.

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) – a bureau of the United States Department of State that administers U.S. Government-funded exchange programs. These programs serve the greater interest of U.S. foreign policy with a goal of mutual understanding between the U.S. and other countries.

culture - in relation to the YES program, culture is used to mean the attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors that a group of people have in common. (It is not used in the sense of fine arts: painting, music, sculpture.)

culture shock - a reaction to living in a country different from one’s own.

DS-2019 - This is a document issued by the program sponsor, in this case the U.S. Department of State, certifying that your admission into a program has been accepted and that you are "eligible" to apply for a J-1 visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad.

exchange student - a term used to refer to a student from one country attending school in another country. It does not literally mean one student changing places with another within a family and school.

Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program - This public diplomacy initiative, authorized by Congress in the aftermath of September 11, builds bridges of international understanding, especially between Americans and people in countries with significant Muslim populations. High school students from 40 countries live as a “son” or “daughter” with a U.S. family and attend one year in an American high school.

host family - a family who invites an exchange student to live with them as a family member during the exchange period.

I-94 Form - The I-94 is the Arrival/Departure Record, in electronic format, issued by a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer to foreign visitors entering the United States. The visitors are provided with an annotated stamp in the foreign passport.

local representative (of a Placement Organization) - each student will have a local representative who will assist him/her as necessary, and provide periodic educational and social activities for the exchange students within a geographical area.

natural family - the biological or legal parents of the student.

orientation - information provided prior to the Program to help prepare for the experience. Orientation materials for the Academic Year Program include this handbook, the Natural Parent Information Guide, and material on the U.S. which you may receive from the U.S. Embassy in your country. An orientation program will be provided before departure for the U.S. You will also have an orientation in Washington, D.C. before you travel to your host family. The orientation program will consist of classes about the United States, its culture, schools, and family life-styles.

passport - a legal document provided by one's own government that contains one's age, date and place of birth, and nationality. Some countries have national passports. An international passport is needed to travel to most countries outside of one's own.

Placement Organization - private, not-for-profit, educational organizations that help YES Academic Year students to study and live with host families in the USA. They select host families and provide local representatives who assist students and host families and conduct educational programs and activities.

reentry - the process of returning to one's own country and culture. Just as a student needs time to adjust to a foreign culture, so will s/he need some time to get accustomed to being home again.

recruitment - the process of learning about the YES program from one of its representatives, taking an English test, and deciding to apply for the scholarship, if qualified.

Recruitment Organization - the organization through which YES operates in your country.

returnee - a student who has returned from an exchange program. Also called

an alumnus or alumna.

selection - the process of reading all of the student applications and determining which students will be finalists and alternates. This process takes place in the United States and is done by experienced evaluators. This process is objective, as the selectors have no connection with any government or any of the students.

states - the 50 geographical areas that together form the United States of America. In addition to the national government and laws, each state has its own government and specific laws, and authority to create certain institutions (such as schools). Local rights are guaranteed to the states by the Constitution of the United States.

U.S., USA - abbreviations for United States, or United States of America. These can be used interchangeably.

United States Department of State - the federal foreign affairs agency of which the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) is a part. See Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs above.

visa - a stamp put into a passport by the Consulate of a foreign government. It permits the holder to enter that country. There are different types of visas; each provides permission for a certain amount of time and certain activities. Exchange students to the U.S. are given a “J-1” visa that allows them to study but not to work. The visa will show the date by which the student may enter the country.

volunteer - a person who works without receiving pay. Some of the placement Organization representatives and all of the host families are volunteers.

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