



# YES | INTRODUCTION TO THE USA 2025 2026



YES is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. government.



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# 2025-2026

# INTRODUCTION TO THE USA

## AN ORIENTATION WORKBOOK

FLEX and YES are programs of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. government.



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# The United States of America

A map showing the National and State Capitals







# Introduction

**Congratulations** on being selected as a United States Department of State scholarship exchange student!

As you read this introduction you are getting ready to live in the United States for an academic year. You may be experiencing both excitement and anxiety. And, undoubtedly, you may have many questions about the United States: What will it really be like? Is it like the movies or the things I see on social media? How are families similar to or different from my own? Will attending a U.S. school be just like attending my own school?

## Your PDO

Your pre-departure orientation (PDO) is designed to help you prepare for your experience in the United States as an exchange student. In your orientation and in this book, you will discuss and learn about aspects of American culture, high schools, religion, history, and American families. You will also explore your own feelings and ideas about situations that other exchange students have experienced.

## Using this Workbook

Throughout this workbook you may encounter some unfamiliar words. If you don't know what they mean, write them down. Appendix 15 contains a listing of common high school vocabulary words. You can circle words in this book and add other words that are new to you. Ask what they mean during orientation or learn them by reading this book. You will hear many of these words again and again throughout the PDO and during your time in the United States.

Take this workbook with you to your U.S. host community. There is information in the appendices that you may find helpful. You also may want to read it again as you try to understand what you see and experience in the United States.

Even though this workbook contains a lot of information, it will not tell you everything about the United States. It is not possible to generalize accurately about the United States, because of its vast size. This workbook contains a collection of many people's individual views and research on the United States. You will not get a clear picture as to what your lifestyle in the United States will be. Rather, you will begin to understand Americans and their society, and you will see some of the important historical and modern influences on them. And you can begin to reflect on some possible similarities and differences with your own country and its people. If you accomplish these two things, you will have made serious progress in your preparation for living in the United States.

## What is an American?

You will notice that the term "American" (and sometimes "North American") is used to mean the people of the United States. In the United States, we call ourselves Americans, from our full country name, United States of America. You can call us Americans, too. However, there is no such English word as "United Statesians," so we have simply always called ourselves Americans.

Good luck as you begin your orientation program to learn more about the United States. And, best wishes for an interesting and rewarding experience as an exchange student!

*- The FLEX and YES Program Teams*

# CHAPTER 1:

## About Your U.S. Department of State Exchange Program, the Scholarship, and Tools for Success

You are taking part in a scholarship exchange program funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Being selected and receiving this scholarship from the U.S. Department of State means that you have shown you have the potential to be a successful exchange student. Remember that with this honor comes a **responsibility: in America you will be viewed as an ambassador of your country**. You will be teaching people about the people of your country. Many Americans know little about your country and will form their opinions of your country based on you and your behavior. The U.S. State Department has specific goals for its exchange program scholarship participants:

### 1. *Gain an understanding of American society, people, values, and culture.*

There are undoubtedly many differences between your culture and American culture. It is important to understand and respect differences. Your willingness to accept the variations of American culture will lead to a more successful adjustment to an American host family and school life. We hope that your appreciation for American culture will stay with you throughout your lifetime.

### 2. *Interact with Americans and generate enduring ties.*

“Endure” means to last over time. The phrase “enduring ties” means that the relationships you develop with your host family and friends in the United States and your host community will last a lifetime. Many exchange students feel they have gained a “second family” in their U.S. host family. A lot of exchange students and their host families stay in touch and even visit with each other after the program ends.

### 3. *Teach Americans about your home country and culture.*

Participating in this program benefits you and the Americans you meet. As an exchange student, you teach Americans about your country and culture. Americans will learn about your country directly from the things you tell them, and also indirectly, from watching how you behave.

### 4. *Explore and acquire an understanding of the key elements of U.S. civil society.*

American citizens can and do act on their own to deal with society's problems. You are expected to gain an understanding of these elements of American society. To do this, you need to participate actively in volunteer service.

### 5. *Share and apply experiences and knowledge in your home country as alumni.*

These exchange programs do not end when you return home from the United States. FLEX and YES alumni are actively working to improve their communities using the leadership skills learned in the United States, and we hope you join them in their efforts and share what you learned with others.

## Exercise 1-1: Program and Personal Goals

The first chart below shows the 5 goals of the program. Read the goal in the first chart and write your objectives and steps you can take to achieve the goal in the spaces provided. The second half of the chart asks you to consider your personal goals and an example is provided (“Improve my English”). Think about your personal goals and list them in the second chart. Writing out your goals in advance can be helpful to make sure that you achieve them during your year in the United States.

### GOALS FOR THE PROGRAM

PROGRAM GOALS	YOUR OBJECTIVES	STEPS TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL
1. To gain an understanding of American society, people, values, and culture.		
2. To interact with Americans and generate enduring ties.		
3. To teach Americans about your home country and culture.		
4. To explore and acquire an understanding of the key elements of U.S. civil society.		
5. To share and apply experiences and knowledge in your home country as alumni.		

### PERSONAL GOALS FOR THE PROGRAM

Personal Goal: Example: <i>Improve my English.</i>	<i>I want to be able to watch a movie in English and understand what is happening.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Discuss the movie with someone else who saw it.</i></li> <li><i>Write down new words in a notebook and try to use them in context.</i></li> </ol>
1. Personal Goal:		
2. Personal Goal:		
3. Personal Goal:		

While students will find many ways to achieve both the program goals and their personal goals, the program has been specifically structured to require student involvement in volunteerism (throughout the exchange year) and International Education Week (IEW) in November.

## Volunteerism (Community Service)

A simple definition of volunteerism is giving some of your free time to help others, not in order to get money or prizes, but to make a difference for the better in your community. Volunteerism is a very important part of American society.

As a FLEX or YES exchange student, you are required to do a certain number of community service hours in the United States. Your Placement Organization will let you know how many hours are required. You should be *flexible* in seeking these out. Consider volunteering in something you know nothing about or, if you are interested in animals, you might volunteer at a local veterinary clinic for a few hours after school, once or twice a week. If you are considering a career in medicine, you could volunteer at a local hospital.

Other possibilities include:

- Participate in fundraising walks or runs for a cause you believe in.
- Work in a homeless shelter kitchen serving meals.
- Help the Toys for Tots holiday effort wrapping gifts for less fortunate children.
- Join organized clean-up projects in local parks or waterways.
- Be a Special Olympics volunteer supporting the athletes.
- Volunteer in the activity/recreation room in a home for the elderly (nursing home).
- Teach kids how to swim at a sports club.
- Tutor teens or younger children.
- Help out at an after-school childcare center.
- Lead children's activities in the park.
- Volunteer at the library.
- Help pack meals for house-bound people with disabilities or elderly people.
- Help care for the animals in a local shelter.

Showing an unselfish concern for the welfare of others—being altruistic—is considered by most Americans to be a great way to improve your community. Volunteering also provides an opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge, to learn about careers, to meet interesting people and to make new friends.

Volunteering has already affected your life directly:

1. Every year, program applications are reviewed by a group of over 260 Americans who volunteer thousands of hours of their time to help select you for this program. They receive no payment in return, just the satisfaction of learning about you and your home. They know they are contributing to the continued success of a great program.
2. Your American host family also volunteered to take care of you for a year without any compensation, but simply to learn more about you and your country and to share that knowledge with their family and community.

Your Placement Organization may arrange some community service activities for you to participate in. There may be after school clubs which focus on community service or your host family might participate in volunteer activities which you can participate through a community or through their religious organization. Many U.S. high schools require a minimum number of community service hours as a condition of graduation.

However, you will probably have to arrange most of your volunteer activities for yourself. If you don't know what kind of volunteer activities are available in your host community, use your communicative nature and ask your host family, Placement Organization, teachers, or classmates for suggestions. There are many ways that we can contribute to the betterment of our communities. Your activities will give you ideas and inspiration for when you return to your home community. Here are what some program alumni have to say about their community service experiences:

*“As a requirement from my Placement Organization, I had to complete 30 hours of volunteer work. At the beginning that sounded very hard, though after a while I understood that...through this participation, you can learn something that you never expected to discover about American culture. I worked with my host dad on cleaning up the mountain trail in the Great Smokies National Park... with my friends from church, we organized soup kitchens for which we cooked ourselves.”*

**Elnura, Kyrgyzstan**

*“I had the intention to bring a change in the society but didn’t have the courage. Volunteering through YES gave me that courage and now I am ready to bring a positive change in the society. I see YES program as the mirror that showed me what I can do and how to do it!”*

**Ahnaf, Bangladesh**

*“As I reflect upon my volunteering experience in America I really think back to the time at the homeless shelter. Having a chance to see the homeless individually, look into their eyes and see the appreciation they had for me being there and feeding them was very gratifying.”*

**Vusala, Azerbaijan**

*“My year in the United States...made me realize that we actually CAN change life for the better! Upon my return from the United States I had a strong feeling of bringing some changes into the lives of other Kazakhstani people and youngsters particularly. My first alumni activity was a Christmas party for orphanage #2... I still remember how happy I was after the event because I felt I had brought something good and positive into the community.”*

**Aziz, Kazakhstan**

*“As most teenagers, spending my free time helping others didn’t strike me as that much fun, who knew how much fun this work would end up being? Knowing you helped somebody, who really needed it, I can’t think of a better feeling. Helping someone have a new beginning, or just get back on their feet, gives such an overwhelming feeling of joy that its absolutely overpowering. Not even a thank you is necessary, because sometime pride takes over the mouth, but just look in the person’s eyes is enough, it says more than words ever will.”*

**Srdjan, Serbia**

*“Why would a family decide to accept an exchange student and share everything they have? The answer was volunteerism. This family volunteered to support me in all of my needs to make my stay in America as beneficial as possible. I was amazed to discover how many people are involved in community projects, charities, and other service-oriented organizations just within the region of North Carolina where I am.”*

**Nataliya, Ukraine**

*“Volunteering brought me out of my comfort zone, and I stopped taking everything for granted.”*

**Osama, Pakistan**

# Presentations About Your Country

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In addition to community service, all U.S. Department of State sponsored scholarship exchange students are expected to teach Americans about their home country (remember Goal #3). As an “ambassador” of your country, FLEX and YES students provide presentations about their home country in their host school and in their host community.

You can do country presentations at any time of the year. Many exchange students are nervous about making presentations, but afterwards are very proud and excited that they could share information about their culture with Americans. So, start thinking about your presentation now. How will you share and **communicate** with Americans about your country and its people? Here are some suggestions to get you started.

Once you are in the United States, you must **take the initiative** and plan when and where you will do your presentations by taking the following steps:

## 1: ASK

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Ask your Local Coordinator, host family, and school for ideas about where you can do presentations. This might include elementary, middle, and high schools; nursing homes; community groups; churches; etc. You will need to find out what time and date will work, how much time you will have, whether other students will also be presenting at the same time, and how much time you will have to set up your presentation.

## 2: DECIDE

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Decide what kind of presentation you will do. Will it be a poster to hang in your school hallway, a PowerPoint to share with your class, a speech you will give to a community group, an interactive activity, a table at a cultural fair, or a combination of these things? Talk to your LC or HF about what is practical and most effective.

## 3: DEVELOP

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Put your presentation together, and then practice it. Practice it at least once by yourself. Sometimes this feels silly, but it helps a lot. Check how long your presentation is and make sure it's not too long. If it's too long, people may lose interest. Then practice it for your friends or host family. This will give you confidence and make it easier to do it in front of other people on presentation day.

Remember, this is YOUR presentation. If it is a topic you find interesting, your enthusiasm will make it interesting for other people, too! Here are some comments from former students about their presentations:

*“When you stand in front of foreign people that you don’t know, when you understand that you and your audience speak different language and live on different continents, you ask yourself: how are we supposed to find common language? Or mutual understanding? How can I, a teenager exchange student, get attention from Americans, intrigue them, and make them fall in love with my country? It seems impossible, but challenge accepted and in the minute you start to speak, all of the sudden something happened to you: you are excited, you are obsessed with your motherland and you pass all your inspiration, emotions, memories through your listeners, and when you see that, they got it, in that minute you realize HOW AWESOME is to be an ambassador of your country, and what does it really mean: not only personally for you, but for your family, for your nation, for all future international world.”*

**Alena, Poland**

*“I currently have made twenty presentations and have an additional ten presentations scheduled for the near future. Out of the twenty presentations, one presentation was surprisingly outstanding. You see, I scheduled a one-half hour presentation at Legacy Commons Assisted Living Center during “Coffee Talk” and ended up having so much fun and interaction with the residents, I didn’t want to leave and they didn’t want me to leave...“Coffee Talk” was supposed to be a time of coffee and cookies for the residents who attend the meeting. My one-half hour presentation turned into nearly a two-hour presentation with the coffee and cookies going untouched. I had their undivided attention.”*

**Jelena, Serbia**

*“These presentations make me aware of my role as an exchange student, that I’m a representative of my country. Everything I do is being learned as “Indonesian Society.” The experience has made me dig inside myself to find out how much I know about my country, and to find out what values are different from America. I also found out how much foreigners know about my country and how they see Indonesia as a country. I now see the power of enthusiasm, the spirit of youth that wants to learn more, and the curiosity of people that want to see the world beyond their own country. I see bright ideas from people to create a world with better understanding.”*

**Nyimas, Indonesia**

These presentations can be a lot of fun, and it adds to Americans’ understanding of the importance of international education and exchange—without this, there would be no exchange programs! Appendix 3 provides more information about the logistics and content of the presentations along with photographs of former student presentations.

## Your Toolbox

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In order to have a successful year, there are specific skills, some of which you already have and some of which you will develop, that will be essential in navigating your exchange experience. Your PDO identified these tools and placed them in your imaginary “toolbox”. Just as a car mechanic needs many different skills and tools to ensure that a car performs well, so too do you as you adapt, address problems and succeed. Throughout this workbook, you will be reminded of the Tools discussed at PDO and their importance. You were introduced to the first four tools in the first session, and advised that these are considered “**Power Tools**.”



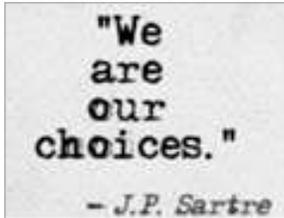
### **Communicative nature:**

If something is bothering you or you do not understand something, **speak up!** Many people will be available to support you, but you are responsible for taking the initiative and reaching out to them.



### **Flexibility:**

Life in the United States may not be what you expected, but if you are ready to make some changes to your routine and are willing to try new things, you will find it easier to adapt and enjoy yourself.



### **Responsibility:**

While many people will support you during your exchange experience, it is important to understand that you are responsible for your actions. You will be viewed by members of your host family, school and community as a representative of your home country—you may be the first or only person they ever meet from your country. This is a big responsibility for you, and you should take it seriously.



### **Initiative:**

Much of the success of your experience depends on you. Take the initiative to create positive relationships and try new things. Work to solve any problems that arise.

**You** can make this a successful experience. Throughout your PDO and highlighted in this *Intro to the USA* workbook, are 20 additional “Tools” you will find important for your life in America.



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## CHAPTER 1 VOCABULARY

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*Make sure you know the meaning of these important words:*

- Altruistic
- Community service
- Volunteerism
- Enduring Ties
- Ambassador
- Humanitarian
- Philanthropic

# CHAPTER 2:

## Placement Organizations, Chain of Communication, Problem Solving, Red Flags, and Green Lights

### Your Placement Organization

Once you arrive in the United States, your primary point of contact will be with your **Placement Organization**. This is the organization that recruits and screens families and schools that will host you. Your placement organization has many staff, some of whom are volunteers, in place to support you and help you have a successful exchange experience. Some of those people are:

#### Host Community Local Representative

Your Placement Organization will have a designated local representative who will live within 120 miles of your host family. The **Local Representative** (“**Local Rep**”) has been trained to facilitate your host family and school placement and will provide support throughout the year. Placement Organizations may refer to the Local Rep by different names (Local Coordinator, Area Representative, Community Coordinator) but they all have the same responsibility, and he/she will be your main contact while you are in the United States.

The Local Rep is responsible for recruiting and screening your host family. Your Local Rep probably made presentations about your exchange program in the community and spread news of the program by telling people she or he knows. When someone asks your Local Rep to host a student, your Local Rep begins a long process of learning about the family before deciding if they can host. Once a family “passes” screening, your Local Rep reviewed the applications sent to the Placement Organization to find which student would be the best fit for each family, based on the interests and activities you described in your application. Host families also apply to host and they are volunteering to host; host families do not receive any money to host.

You will have monthly contact with your Local Rep. Your Local Rep may live very near you and you may see him or her often. Or, you may mostly talk on the phone. Often, other exchange students (whether other Department of State-funded, or pay-program students) are placed in the same area as you, and your Local Rep is also their Local Rep. You may all do group or “enhancement” (cultural) activities together from time to time.

Soon after you arrive, your Local Rep will bring students together for an arrival orientation. You will learn about your Placement Organization’s rules, community service requirements and other rules in more detail. You can always contact your Local Rep if you have any questions about your host family, new friends, or school. Similarly, your host family and school may contact your Local Rep if they have problems or questions about you. If you feel that you have any problem that you need to discuss with your placement organization, you should contact your Local Rep first. At your arrival orientation, you will be given other names and information for your Placement Organization that you can contact if you cannot reach your Local Rep and need to speak to someone. You will also receive a card with this information. (See Appendix 4).

#### Your Placement Organization’s Regional Representative

Your Local Rep reports to a regional rep for the Placement Organization. The regional rep may be located in the same state or several states away from you. They might be based in the Placement Organization’s national office. A regional rep receives information about you from your Local Rep, such as how you are

doing in school and in your host family. Generally, you will not talk with a regional rep, but sometimes the regional rep may call you to discuss issues. You and your host family will receive information on how to contact your regional rep. You should call the regional rep if you are having difficulty communicating with your Local Rep.

### Placement Organization National Office

The national office of the Placement Organization may be in a different state than you are. However, the national office assigns you to a Local Rep and regional rep and make your program rules. Your Local Rep may contact the national office if there is an issue that they would like American Councils to share with your natural family back home or if they have questions about cultural issues.

## How You Can Prevent and Resolve Problems

It is natural that problems, some small and some larger, will arise during your exchange year. **Taking the initiative** and trying to solve problems through **communication** is critical to your success as an exchange student.

Ignoring problems or making demands often makes them worse. Adjustment problems will not go away or get better without discussion. It won't help if you wish your problems would just go away or think that a new host family or new school would fix everything. Talking about problems is not always easy, but it is the quickest way to resolve them. You will feel much better afterwards. **You are responsible** for trying to solve your problems, but you are not alone. Others can offer support provided you share your difficulties and are **flexible** in finding solutions.

Now let's look at some common problems that exchange students encounter. What would you do in the following situations?

### Exercise 2-1: Preventing and Resolving Problems

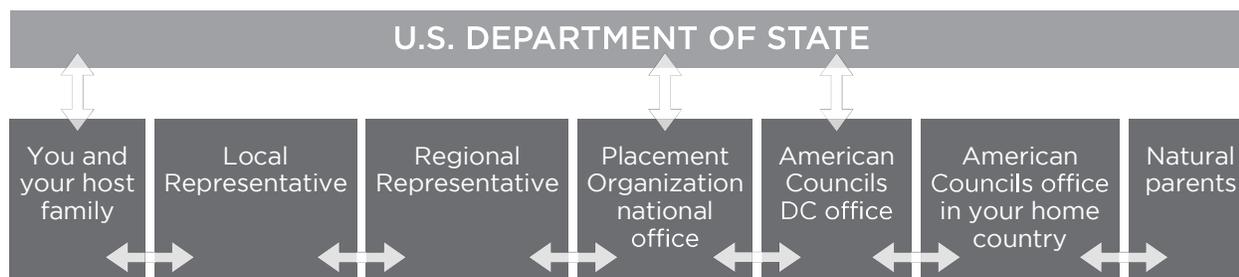
ISSUE	WHAT CAN I DO?
Not understanding assignments in school	
Feeling alone in a small, rural community	
Disagreeing with your host family about chores in the house	
Having problems making friends	
Having problems with host family food	
Not feeling enough attention from host family	
Not wanting to attend religious services with your host family	
Wanting to spend more time on the computer than host parents allow	

# The Chain of Communication

Sometimes problems may arise that cannot be solved between you, your host family and your Local Rep. These problems may need the involvement of FLEX and YES staff in Washington and your home country as well as your natural parents. These problems are communicated through the **chain of communication** below.

During PDO/Teachable Sessions, you discussed examples of how the chain of communication works. One student struggled to obtain a copy of their birth certificate while another called home with a small complaint that turned into a stressful situation for their natural parents. In both cases, using the chain of communication would eliminate confusion and resolve problems more effectively.

While it looks long, the chain of communication works very quickly and ensures that everyone who wants to support you is aware of the issues and can help you. This is a very structured communication and support network that ensures you will have a safe and successful experience in the United States. It can help you with problems that may come up. However, that network can only work if you use it! It is very important to discuss your problems with your host family and Local Rep. Of course, occasionally you will want to speak with your parents. That's natural! But, your natural family will often find it very difficult to help you. They are not physically near you and because of cultural differences, sometimes it will be difficult for them to give you advice.



The chain of communication has been designed to help you and your parents work out problems with the support of your Placement Organization, American Councils, and the program office in your home country (American Councils, AFS, Amideast, iEARN, or IRIS). The Department of State also communicates directly with students, placement organizations, and the program organizations.

You can see that the arrows on the chain of communication go both ways—this means that your natural parents can also use the chain of communication if they have a concern about you. Your natural parents might call the American Councils hub office nearest to them if they are concerned that they have not heard from you in a long time or if they have heard from you, and think you are sad or having a problem. Even though problems will be resolved faster if you take the initiative to talk about them, it sometimes happens that natural parents are the first to mention a problem. This is okay, too—our main priority is that you have a safe and nurturing exchange experience.

If you ever feel that you are having a problem that you truly cannot discuss using the chain of communication, you will have access to other people who can help you. This will include your Placement Organization's national office, as well as the American Councils Washington, DC office (1-800-621-9559) and the U.S. Department of State Exchange Visitor Helpline (1-866-283-9090). Both of these numbers will give you direct and immediate contact to representatives of American Councils and the U.S. State Department who staff these phones 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also send an email to the Department of State at [jvisas@state.gov](mailto:jvisas@state.gov). Appendix 4 provides a complete list of the contact information.

# Red Flag Issues

Over the years, some cultural differences have been more challenging for exchange students. We refer to these as “red flag issues” since they come up so frequently and present challenges to students and host families alike. What do you think are some of the most common challenges faced by exchange students?

## Exercise 2-2: Red Flag Issues

Here is a review of the red flag issues. Remember, these are typical issues that exchange students face as they adjust to living in the United States. They may or may not be issues for you, but the more you know about them, the more prepared you will be in case they do come up.

ISSUE #	ISSUE NAME	WHAT IT MEANS
1	Attitude/Gratitude	
2	Male/Female Roles	
3	Rules And Laws	
4	Food	
5	Religion	
6	Computer/Mobile Device/ Internet Usage	

### Red Flag Issue #1: ATTITUDE/GRATITUDE

While you are in the United States, you should try to maintain a positive attitude. If you have a negative attitude, people around you may think that you are not enjoying your experience, or that you’re not interested in meeting new people or trying new things. Having a negative attitude means constantly criticizing everything, complaining without looking for solutions, and behaving as if you wish you were somewhere else. Your experience as an exchange student greatly depends on your attitude and on the way you look at things. This issue is the number one complaint expressed by American host families (based on a 2017 study for the Council on Standards International Education and Travel). Remember, your host family has volunteered to open their home and their hearts to you and you must make an effort to be positive and show appreciation.

Gratitude means showing others you appreciate something they have done for you. You can express gratitude by saying thank you or by doing something nice. Below is a list of **polite phrases**. These phrases will help you to show your gratitude to others in many different situations, in ways that are typical in the United States. It’s important to remember that Americans place great value on polite phrases, and use them very frequently with everyone, including family members and close friends. Americans notice when others don’t use them. For example, many Americans may not realize they say, “please pass the salt” at the dinner table, but if you were to forget the word “please,” it would be noticed and considered rude or demanding behavior.

# Polite Phrases

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## GREETINGS

- Good morning!
- How's it going?
- How are you doing?
- How is your family? How was your day?
- How have you been?
- Nice to see you!

## MEETING NEW PEOPLE

- Can I join you?
- I'm pleased to meet you.
- I've heard so much about you.

## APPRECIATION

- Thank you.
- I appreciate it.
- That's so sweet of you. You are very nice.
- Thanks for including me.
- What would I do without your help?
- That is kind of you.
- You are so thoughtful. I'm glad you called.

## YOU'RE WELCOME

- No problem. Any time!
- It's no big deal. Don't mention it! Sure!

## NO

- No, thank you.
- I'm afraid I can't.
- Sorry, I have other plans. I would if I could.
- Unfortunately, I'm busy.

## YES

- Sounds good!
- For sure!
- Great!

## HELPING OUT

- I can do that while I'm out.
- Is there anything I can do to help?
- Call me anytime.
- I can do that for you.
- Can I get you anything? I'll get it for you.
- Would you like some? It's my treat.
- I'd be happy to.

- You can count on me.

## CONCERNED

- What do you think?
- What would you like to do? Are you all right?
- Are you okay? I miss you.

## ASKING FOR HELP

- May I please have...?
- Would you please help me to...?
- Might you have some time to help me with...?
- Let me know when you might be available.
- Could you repeat that please? I did not hear/understand what you said.

## GETTING SOMEONE'S ATTENTION

- Excuse me.
- Pardon me.

## COMPLIMENTS

- You are easy to talk to. You have good ideas.
- You make me laugh.
- You are very talented. You're the best.
- Good job! Awesome!

## COMPASSION

- That's too bad.
- I'm sorry to hear that.
- Would you like to talk? That's a shame.
- What a pity.
- I hear you.

## CONSIDERATION

- We can work it out.
- I'd like to hear what you have to say.
- What do you think? I trust you.
- We make a good team.
- There's enough for everyone.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

- Good for you!
- That's awesome!
- I think that's great. You did a good job.
- Way to go!
- I'm proud of you.

## **APOLOGIES**

- I'll try harder next time. Excuse me.
- I'm sorry.
- I was mistaken. It was my fault.
- Please forgive me.

## **GOODBYE**

- Have a nice day. Keep in touch. Take care.
- See you later.
- Have a good one! Have a good time.
- I had a wonderful time. Thanks for everything.

### **Red Flag Issue #2: MALE/FEMALE ROLES**

While you are in the United States, you may encounter different attitudes towards male and female roles than what you are familiar with in your country. Things which may be regarded as gentlemanly or polite in your country, such as men offering to carry things for women, may be viewed differently in the United States. Your host family may ask you to do some chores (for example, asking a boy to cook or to wash the dishes, or a girl to take out the trash) that you would not be asked to do in your home country. Men and women are treated equally and have equal rights and responsibilities. You may be surprised to find out that your host mother mows the lawn or that your host father is the cook of the family. Adult women and men in the family have equal authority in setting rules and enforcing them with the exchange student and other children in the family.

It is important to remember that Americans hold this belief and to think about how you are expected to act. Since men and women are treated equally, they share all types of responsibilities. When you go out with a group of people, you should expect to pay for yourself regardless of who you are with. Also remember that even if someone invites you to go somewhere with them, they may expect you to pay for yourself.

### **Red Flag Issue #3: RULES AND LAWS**

The United States, like any other country, has rules and laws. Americans believe strongly in their rules and laws and expect them to be followed by everyone without exception. It is important to remember that breaking a rule will have a consequence. Not knowing about a rule isn't an excuse for not following it. You are expected to take the initiative and ask your host family about their rules. You should read documents which explain different rules, such as your school handbook, Placement Organization rules, and the student handbook which you received at your notification meeting.

As an exchange and scholarship student, you are a representative of your country, and will be held to a higher standard. You will be expected to follow all rules, even if you notice that some of your American friends don't follow certain rules. When an American breaks a rule, they can get caught and punished – and so can you. If you are caught breaking laws while in the United States, you could face serious consequences such as being arrested, going to court or paying a fine. You can also be sent home. In the next chapter, the various rules imposed by the U.S. government, your Placement Organization and others are discussed.

### **Red Flag Issue #4: FOOD**

In the United States you will encounter many differences in food. Your host family may expect you to prepare some meals for yourself – especially breakfast and lunch. After meals, you will probably be responsible for cleaning up after yourself and you shouldn't expect others to do this for you. Another major difference in the United States is that your host family will not constantly offer to feed you. They will offer you something to eat, and if you refuse, they most likely will not ask you a second time. They will also probably show you where the food and dishes are and encourage you to help yourself. Many American families plan their meals and may tell you what meal they will prepare on a certain day.

In the United States, eating cold cereal or a “pop tart” for breakfast is common and many teenagers do

this before school. Also, many American teenagers pack their own lunch before going to school. Many families believe that packing a lunch is both more economical and healthier than buying lunch at the school cafeteria or vending machines. Many packed lunches consist of a cold sandwich, a piece of fruit, vegetables, a drink, and maybe even a snack. Many American teenagers take their lunch to school in plain brown bags or in other lunch bags. Your host family is not responsible for giving you lunch money for the school cafeteria, if they have food in the house for you to pack your lunch.

Since every host family is unique, dinner in your host family will also be unique. Some families believe that having dinner together as a family is important. In other families, people go off to different rooms to eat dinner and may not even eat at the same time. You will have to take the initiative to ask your host family what is normal in their home. You should remember to offer to help clean up after meals as a good way to show your gratitude.

Some exchange students observe halal, Hindu, or other diets for religious or health reasons, such as allergies. If you have dietary requirements, there are some things to consider. Your host family is required to provide you with three meals per day; however, they are not required to accommodate special diets or make special meals. It is also not the host family's responsibility to purchase halal meat or prepare vegetarian meals. You are expected to eat what your host family provides. If you intend to follow a special diet, you must speak with your host family about how and what you eat and what options are available to you. Your host parent(s) may be able to make small changes in the way they prepare food in order to accommodate your diet. However, you cannot expect them to change the way they eat and the food they keep in their home only to accommodate your diet.

Keep in mind many foods available in the United States are halal—vegetables, fruits, dairy, pastas and rice dishes are part of the halal regime. Halal meat can sometimes be found in stores, but it is generally more expensive than non-halal meat. The host family is not required to purchase halal items for you. If you want to use your own money to purchase halal items, you may do so. You can also consider purchasing Kosher items. Kosher requirements are quite strict, so any Kosher product is guaranteed not to have any pork in it. If your meals require special accommodations, you should also offer to help prepare them and help clean up afterwards. This is a good opportunity to share how meals are prepared in your culture, and you can learn a thing or two from your hosts about cooking in the United States.

The most important thing to remember is to have good communication with your host parent(s) about meals and food in the house. Everyone has their own likes and dislikes, so be open and share them. Be polite when talking about food you dislike or any dietary restrictions you have. Remember, it is best to address this issue directly with your host parents since they are the ones who can help you resolve it. Your local coordinator or other placement organization representative can also be helpful if you are having difficulty adjusting to food in the United States. As always, good communication will go a long way to helping you have a healthy and tasty experience.

### **Red Flag Issue #5: RELIGION**

For many families in the United States, religion is an important part of their daily lives. As an exchange student living with a host family, you will have the opportunity to experience life as a member of your host family. This means taking part in their regular activities like any member of the family.

In the United States, many families believe that going to religious services weekly is an important activity

which the entire family does together. As an exchange student, **you are encouraged** to try attending religious services with your host parents, but **it is not required**. You should think of this as a learning opportunity since it's a great way to discover more about Americans in your community and experience something new. Religious services in the United States may be very different than in your home country. Many have activities that you probably don't have in religious centers in your country. Throughout the United States, religious centers (such as a church, mosque, synagogue, temple or other place of worship) are often cultural and social centers for the community where people gather for fun or other events.

In addition, many have a "youth group" where the younger members of the congregation get together separately to discuss different topics and do activities such as sports, dances, community service, and trips to other cities. This can also be a great place for you to meet new friends. As you can see, religion in the United States is not only about praying, but about many other activities which can help you to better understand American life and culture.

### **RED FLAG ISSUE #6: COMPUTER/MOBILE DEVICE/INTERNET USAGE**

Not all families in the United States have computers or Internet, and you should not assume that your host family will have this. If your host family has a computer, they will have rules that you must follow. Remember that host family rules for computer use also apply to a laptop, smartphone, tablet, or other mobile device that you bring from home or buy in the United States.

One of the most common computer rules is limiting the amount of time that you may use the computer or the Internet. Your host family is eager to learn about you and involve you in their activities. Spending too much time on the computer will interfere with this. Some exchange students spend too much time communicating with friends and family back home. Spending too much time with these activities can cause you to miss new opportunities in the United States and might give your host family the impression that you're not interested in becoming a part of their family.

Remembering these important issues and using your flexibility and communicative nature to solve them will help you to have a successful exchange year.

**Special Note:** Your relationship with your host family, PO and LC usually starts long before your arrival in the United States. Up until this time, your host family and LC will have seen only the very best side of you, from what is in your application – your host family letter, your list of activities and interests, and of course your smiling photos 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. Communicating via social media sites, messaging apps, and email is a good way to do this. Appendix 7 has further information about pre-arrival communications.

## **Green Light Issues**

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While "Red Flag" issues tend to negatively impact student placements, there are four more issues which some students might find concerning, but which generally turn out to be extremely positive. We call these "Green Light Issues". They include:

### **Green Light Issue #1: Double Placements**

When you think about traveling to America for an exchange experience, you may not have considered being

placed in a home with another exchange student. These “double placements” are actually quite popular as host families often decide that they want to host not just one student, but two students in the same year. These “super hosts” open their home to two students for a variety of reasons – they have the space, they like the companionship the students provide one another, and they learn about multiple cultures. Students from the same country are not placed in the same host family. The students get to learn about a new culture, share experiences with someone their age, and gain a new friend.

Students have the right to accept or decline a double placement; double placements can happen only if the students and their natural parents agree.

### **Green Light Issue #2: Dogs, Part of the American Family**

Pets are a special part of American life. Just as your host family might include host siblings, there is a good chance it will include “host pets”. In America, pets are often treated as a member of the family. Sixty-eight percent of American households have a pet (fish, cat, dogs) and at least one in every three homes have a dog.

Perhaps it is not common to have a dog as a pet in your country. In some places, people keep dogs for security and guarding their property, rather than as a playful pet in the home. In other cultures, dogs are considered unclean, and would never be allowed to live in the family’s house. Aggressive or dangerous wild dogs are problematic in some parts of the world and understandably some students may be unaccustomed to interacting with animals at home. In America, pets are considered part of the family. While this may be difficult to understand, it is important that students be open-minded to the role of pets in the United States.

### **Green Light Issue #3: Small Towns, Big Hearts**

Perhaps you currently live in or near a large city. Maybe you dream of living in an equally large American city like New York City or Los Angeles; in fact, fewer than 1% of students are placed there. If a student is placed in a city, a “typical” city might be Rochester, New York, Davenport, Iowa, or Madison, Wisconsin. While these cities are sizable (100,000 or more in population), students are more likely to be placed in the suburbs of a city, a small town some distance from a city, or a rural area with an even smaller population.

Students cannot choose where they are placed – remember that host families are volunteers. While host families must undergo a rigorous screening process, once approved, the decision about where to place a student is based on where there is interest in hosting. Most of the FLEX and YES students are placed in small towns because that is where there is more interest in hosting.

The prevalence of small-town placements can be attributed to people in large cities already having more access to international communities, smaller and more expensive living space and a higher cost of living. Families and schools in smaller towns are genuinely interested in learning about other countries through the eyes of young people. Schools in small towns are welcoming and enjoy learning about the countries FLEX/YES students are from. Big city schools are often operating at maximum enrollment and it's much less common for FLEX/YES students to be placed in big cities.

One of the most common refrains of former FLEX and YES students, who lived in small towns, is that they thought it would be boring, but it turned out to be one of the best aspects of their exchange year. They got to know everyone in town and teach so many people about their home country.

### **Green Light Issue #4: Places of Worship, Part of the Community**

In many FLEX and YES countries, religion is a private, individual experience. The role of houses of worship in the United States is extremely different from what most students have experienced in their lives. Especially in smaller U.S. host communities, houses of worship are part of the larger community and sometimes are a key social center.

While host families cannot force a student to attend religious services, students should take some part in the family’s churchgoing rituals if they are comfortable doing so. Please note that there are often alternate, nondenominational (non-religious) activities they can engage in at the place of worship while their host family attends services. There are many different non-religious activities in U.S. houses of worship, and this provides FLEX and YES students additional opportunities to meet people and make friends amongst the wider host community.

**Green Light Issue #5: Empty Nest Hosts**

There are many different types of host families including those older couples who have no other children living in the home. Perhaps they never had children, or they are “empty nesters” — their children are now adults and living elsewhere.

Some of the most successful placements can be with older empty nesters as they tend to enjoy the activity the exchange student brings to their now quiet home. If retired and no longer working, these host parents generally have the time and interest in hosting and sharing their lives with international students.

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## CHAPTER 2 VOCABULARY

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*Make sure you know the meaning of these important words:*

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- Placement Organization
- Local Representative (Local Coordinator, Area Representative, Community Coordinator)
- Regional Representative
- Hub
- Red Flag Issues
- Green Light Issues
- Attitude
- Gratitude

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## TOOLBOX

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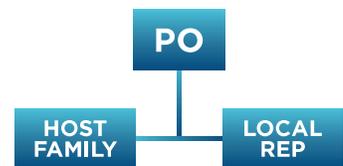
*In this section, we have added some new tools to your growing Toolbox.  
Be sure to remember:*

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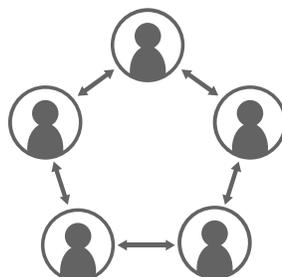
- Polite Phrases



- Structure of POs



- Chain of Communication



# CHAPTER 3:

## Rules and Expectations

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### Different Types of Rules

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Besides understanding the goals of the program and the expectations placed upon you as a scholarship exchange student, there are also rules that you need to know and follow while on program.

It is also important to understand the difference between a rule and a law. A rule is something that may apply to one group of people, but not another group. For example, your Placement Organization may have allow you to take a driver's education class (not the actual driving test) at your U.S. high school. Your friend, on the other hand, may have a different Placement Organization that does not allow exchange students to take a driver's education class.

A law is something that has been legislated (enacted into law) and applies to everyone. While you are in the United States, you are expected to follow all program rules and U.S. laws. What are some of these rules and laws?

#### **Rules: Program, Host Family, School**

The FLEX/YES **program rules** are what you and your natural parents agreed to when you signed the parent/student agreement in the application. A copy of the agreement can be found in Appendix 5. The rules outlined in the agreement govern program travel, health issues and behavior. It also explains the technical requirements related to your J-1 visa. Some of these rules are general program rules; some are visa rules; and some are U.S. laws. You are expected to follow ALL of them. Additionally, your Placement Organization will have its own set of rules and these will be explained to you in detail by your Local Rep.

**All families have rules** that they expect their members to follow. In some families, a rule might be repeated often (e.g. place dirty dishes in the dishwasher), or even written down on a family bulletin board (e.g., add to list of needed groceries when you take the last glass of milk). Sometimes family rules are unspoken but still expected to be followed (i.e., never chew with your mouth open).

Appendix 8 offers a list of suggested questions you should ask your host family in order to learn about their routines, rules, and customs. These questions will help you learn about your new lifestyle in the United States and to learn something about your host culture's beliefs and values.

The American high school is structured very strictly; most American students obey these rules and you may not find a lot of sympathy if you do not follow them. There are different regulations in every high school and you must familiarize yourself with the restrictions in your school. High school rules are generally written down and found in a handbook provided to all students. A sample handbook is included in Appendix 16.

### **Consequences of breaking rules**

Host family and placement organization consequences for breaking rules vary. If you break a rule, your host family or placement organization will begin to take disciplinary steps. For example, if you spend more time than you are supposed to using your or your host family's computer, your host family will probably take away your computer privileges for a certain amount of time. If you continue to break the computer use rule, your host family may contact your Placement Organization, and your Placement Organization may give you a verbal warning or a **warning letter**. Warnings, whether verbal or written, are usually the first step in the disciplinary process, as are encouragement ("steps to success") letters.

For more serious infractions, your Placement Organization might put you **"on probation."**

Both warning and probation letters will explain the problem and how your Placement Organization expects you to change your behavior, and how they will support you in doing that. The letter will also give dates for checking on your progress and reviewing the situation and is shared with your natural parents.

If you continue to disrespect your host family, PO, or program rules, your Placement Organization might ask the Department of State for approval to send you home early.

### **Laws: U.S. Federal (National), State, County, and Municipal (town)**

If you break a U.S., state, county or town law, you may be arrested by the police, placed in jail, required to appear in court, and sent home early from the program.

If you break program rules you also risk being sent home early. Following the rules is a responsibility that rests entirely on you. So, please be sure to read all the rules in the Parent/Student Agreement and in the Student Handbook. You received a copy of the Student Handbook when you were accepted for the program and a copy of the Parent/Student Agreement can also be found in Appendix 5 of this Workbook.

Familiarize yourself with the program rules and U.S. laws. Unfortunately, every year several exchange students break U.S. laws and face very serious consequences. For example, the law against shoplifting, the crime of stealing something from a store, and laws against fighting or threatening violence are very serious.

U.S. high schools have "zero tolerance" policies towards violence. This means that fighting, physical violence, bullying (in-person or online), or threatening violence towards the school or others will be punished by suspension (not letting you attend school for a few days), expulsion (not allowing you to attend school anymore) and possibly arrest. Your school will give you a booklet describing their specific rules and policies. An example can be found in Appendix 16. You should learn your American high school's rules and take them very seriously. Further, the exchange program will not tolerate any acts of physical or verbal violence, whether in or out of school, or if the police become involved; such behavior may result in an early return home.

## Exercise 3-1: Whose Rule?

WHOSE RULE?	RULE:
<b>Pre-Departure Orientation</b>	Example: No cell phones
	Other:
	Other:
<b>Program</b>	Example: No travel to other U.S. cities without permission
	Other:
	Other:
<b>U.S. Law</b>	Example: It is against the law to shoplift
	Other:
	Other:
<b>Placement Organization</b>	Example (different for each Placement Organization): No piercings or tattoos
	Other:
	Other:
<b>Host Family</b>	Example (different for each HF): Curfew at 9:00 PM
	Other:
	Other:
<b>High School</b>	Example: Follow the dress code
	Other:
	Other:

To better show the consequences of acting irresponsibly, the following is a letter written by a 17- year old female exchange student who shoplifted from a department store just three weeks before she was scheduled to return to her home country. She was caught by the police. This is one very real and possible consequence you could face if you break any U.S. law. The Department of State, American Councils and your Placement Organization can do nothing to interfere or help you. The student who wrote the letter was very lucky that the judge let her go when the store agreed to drop the charges. However, the judge required that the student immediately return to her home country within 24 hours. She had no time to say goodbye to friends or buy souvenirs.

*“I am a former exchange student from 2004-2005.*

*I lived with a host family in Texas. You are about to experience one of the best years in your life. I know your feelings—you’re a little bit scared, uncertain, excited. It will definitely be a great year for you if you make it so. Believe me, there are many ways to turn your dreams into a nightmare, it happened to me. Here is my story.*

*I never thought that I would or could ever commit a crime. But it happened...something twisted in my mind and I made a huge mistake. It only took a moment, but then it was too late to go back.*

*Everything went so quickly – suddenly I was sitting in the back seat of a police car with handcuffs on. I’d seen this in the movies but it was impossible that it could ever happen to me. I couldn’t understand what was happening, it all seemed like a terrible dream and I wished it would be over. Even after they put the bright orange prison jumpsuit on me, I still thought it wasn’t anything serious.*

*I spent the night in jail. The worst thing was sitting there alone, waiting, and thinking about what I had done and how I had disappointed and hurt my host parents and my parents at home. At 5:00am I was taken to another jail where I had my fingerprints and pictures taken. I spent almost 15 hours there in a cell with three other prisoners, and it was a horrible thing. Most of the time I cried hysterically, then, when I didn’t have any liquid in my body to produce tears, I just sat on the cold metal bench and stared at the wall in front of me. I was sure that one more minute and I would lose my mind.*

*I was briefly allowed to watch TV in the hall with twenty other mostly male prisoners. Some of them were cursing, some gave me dirty looks and made nasty gestures. That evening I stayed in an isolation cell because there wasn’t any room for me in a cell with other people. My cell was narrow and tiny, and only had a metal bed, toilet and sink.*

*They woke me at 6:30am and gave me a cold sandwich. Then I and other prisoners were sent to court to appear before the judge. All the judge did was call each prisoner by name, read the charges and decide if they could be released from jail until their court date, on the condition that they pay a set amount of money, or bail. The judge denied my bail, but I had no money and couldn’t have paid it anyway. I didn’t get to say anything during the court—that was it, back to jail.*

*As soon as I stepped into my new cell I could tell I was no longer an ordinary person—I was a prisoner who must obey all the jail rules. The officer who explained the rules was mean, she cursed and yelled and I couldn’t understand her accent, which made her angry and she yelled louder.*

*I can tell you a long story about the day that I spent in that cell, but I won’t –it’s a kind of thing you don’t want to hear the details about because they’re very sad. I’ll just tell you that by the end of the day I was sure that I’d be stuck in jail forever because of the judge’s decision.*

*If you think that you would never do a bad thing while you are in the United States, don’t be so sure, I thought so about myself but it turned out that I actually did a very bad thing. Think about your parents, your host family, about your coordinator and your friends. You might not get a second chance and you could ruin your life. I learned a very good lesson from my suffering. I matured because of the misery I had brought on myself. Sometimes people choose the wrong and hard way to transform from a teenager to an adult. I don’t want any of you to experience it. I wish you good luck with your future experiences and always remember that the choices you make will lead your life.”*

## Rights and Privileges

Now that you have an idea about the program rules, you should know that you also have rights while on the exchange program.

You may have heard from alumni about some of the things they enjoyed while in the United States, but some of those things may be privileges, not rights. You have a right to things that the program must provide to you. Privileges are things that you may be lucky to have. Your host family, school and Placement Organization are not required to provide them. Which of the following things do you think are rights, and which are privileges? Check the correct box for each choice:

### Exercise 3-2: Rights and Privileges

	RIGHT?	PRIVILEGE?
Host family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Host school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Money to buy lunch at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Three meals a day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your own room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your own bed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monthly communication with your Local Rep	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reasonable access to natural parents by telephone and email	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of mobile phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monthly stipend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decision to accept double placement with another exchange student	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using host family or school computer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement in grade (10, 11, or 12) level of student's choice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Driver's education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Round trip travel from home to the United States	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking trips with host family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*The correct answers can be found in Appendix 10.*

It is important that you know your rights as a scholarship student and that you are able to use your communication skills to raise questions or bring awareness to a situation which you believe conflicts with the rules and intent of the program. You must **SPEAK UP!** The chain of communication is in place to support you during difficult times.

For example, there was an instance in the past where students found themselves living in a home with two other exchange students; this is against program rules. The students assumed it was a temporary situation, but it lasted through the remainder of the exchange year. The students did not advocate for themselves. A problem cannot be corrected unless you advocate for yourself!

The basic provisions the program provided to you are in place to ensure that you have a safe and successful exchange year in the United States. These are listed in Appendix 11 along with the steps you should follow if you find that your situation is different than what is listed as Basic Program Provisions. It is important that you know the rules and laws contained in this workbook, the Student Handbook, and the Parent/Student Agreement from your application. The more you know before you travel to the United States, the better prepared you will be for your time on program.

During your PDO, students were divided into small discussion groups to consider solutions for some challenging situations. Listen to the possible solutions as each situation is presented and note appropriate solution below.

### Exercise 3-3: Situations and Solutions

**SITUATION:** Your host family plans to take a 2-week vacation to visit Disney World in Florida, but they can't afford to bring you along, so you need to stay with a temporary host family until they return.



**SOLUTION:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SITUATION:** You finish your after-school activities at 4:00pm and you have to carpool home with a friend or wait an hour and a half until your host dad can pick you up on his way home from work.



**SOLUTION:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SITUATION:** Another exchange student's host family invites you to accompany them on vacation during the winter holidays, but your Placement Organization does not allow this.



**SOLUTION:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SITUATION:** You want your host family to buy you a smart phone, but they say it is too expensive.



**SOLUTION:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SITUATION:** Your host family expects you to make and eat a COLD lunch consisting of a meat and cheese sandwich with chips and a piece of fruit, but you know the warm hamburger and French fries at the school cafeteria will be much healthier for you.



**SOLUTION:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SITUATION:** You are placed in the 10th grade in the United States. The classes available to you are not as advanced as you thought they would be, and may affect arrangements you made with your home school.



**SOLUTION:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In addition to understanding your rights and privileges, it is important that you are aware of what the FLEX and YES programs do and don't provide to participants. Page ix, found at the front of your Student Handbook, lists what the program does and does not provide. This list also appears in the following chart. The scholarship covers most of the costs of participating in the exchange program. However, there are some costs to you.

THE PROGRAM PROVIDES:	THE PROGRAM DOES NOT PROVIDE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• U.S. visa, including travel to U.S. Consulate for your visa interview</li><li>• Program orientation activities, including pre-program preparation in your home country and re-entry preparation in the United States</li><li>• Round-trip domestic and international travel between your hometown and your host town in the United States, including limited checked baggage as confirmed by your program office</li><li>• Placement with a screened volunteer U.S. host family</li><li>• Accident and sickness protection insurance, except for pre-existing conditions, treatment for chronic or recurring illness, and dental care</li><li>• Monthly allowance of \$200 to help you participate in social activities, purchase helpful things like mobile phone data, school supplies, toiletries and other similar items</li><li>• Program activities arranged in local U.S. communities</li><li>• One-time incidentals allowance of \$300, to be spent in consultation with your U.S. host family and your Placement Organization</li><li>• Enrollment in a U.S. secondary school</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An international passport</li><li>• Excess or overweight baggage costs</li><li>• Data or phone plan coverage to connect with to your host family or natural family</li><li>• Coverage for pre-existing conditions, treatment for chronic or recurring illness, regular check-ups, and dental care</li><li>• Medical examinations required when you apply for the program</li><li>• Travel with U.S. host family and/or U.S. friends</li></ul>




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## CHAPTER 3 VOCABULARY

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*Make sure you know the meaning of these important words:*

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- Privilege
- Right
- Law
- Rules

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## TOOLBOX

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*In this section, we have added some new tools to your growing Toolbox.*

*Be sure to remember:*

---

- Rights and Privileges



- Different Types of Rules



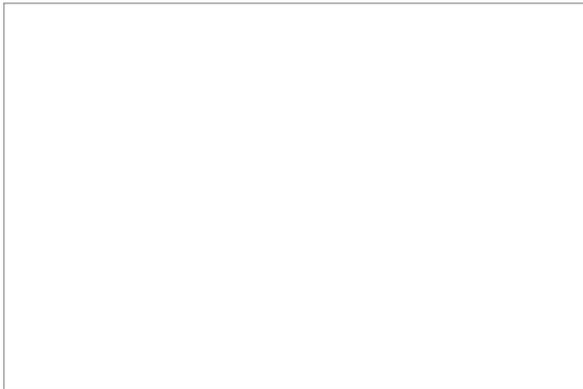
# CHAPTER 4:

## Culture and American Values

**Culture is the attitudes, values, beliefs, and ideas that a group of people hold in common.** People from different cultures differ from each other in some ways, while being the same in other ways. They dress differently and eat different things. They raise their children to behave in different ways and value different things. They talk to elders differently, and to children differently, too. All these things make up what we mean by the word “culture.” It is important for you to understand your own cultural values and to learn about American ones.

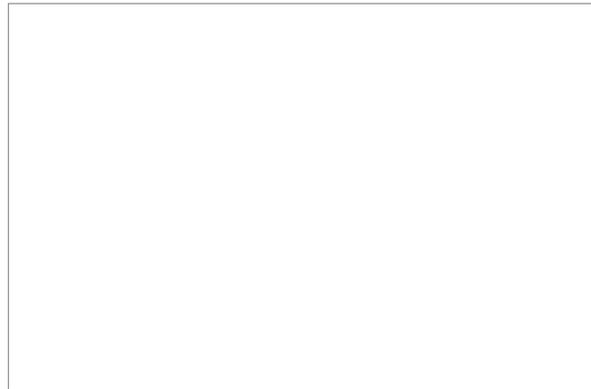
### Exercise 4-1: Determining a Definition of “Culture”

Imagine that you want to tell someone about your country – about what is most important to you about it, and how it is special. Of the photographs you have, pick the four that illustrate the most important of these things. Draw a small sketch of each photo in the boxes below (to remind you, in the future, of what was in the photo) and then finish the two sentences under each drawing.



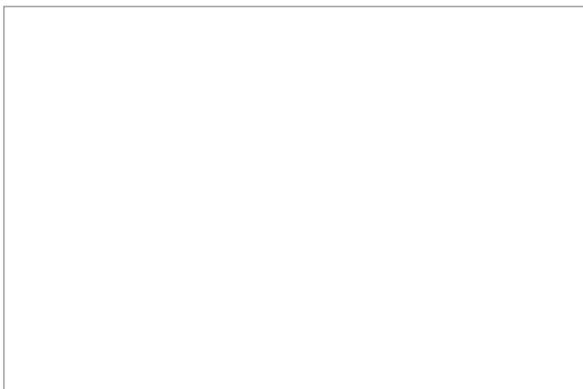
This is a picture of: \_\_\_\_\_  
It shows that in my country, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



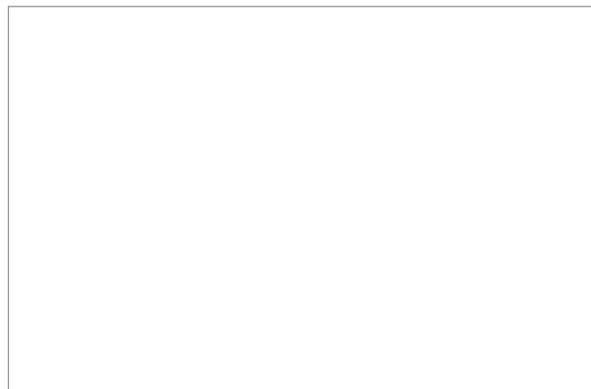
This is a picture of: \_\_\_\_\_  
It shows that in my country, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



This is a picture of: \_\_\_\_\_  
It shows that in my country, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



This is a picture of: \_\_\_\_\_  
It shows that in my country, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Looking back at these pictures, do you feel that you have explained very much about your country? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. What more would you like to share about your country? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. How could you do it? What could you photograph that might show what you want to share? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Here are some photos and descriptions of the United States. Look at them and read about them.



*The Statue of Liberty is a famous U.S. monument in the harbor of New York City and is a symbol of the United States. At the base of the statue is a poem by Emma Lazarus that says, in part, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."*



*Americans came from many different countries for many reasons.*



*Our capital city is Washington, D.C. Americans are proud of having a democracy "of the people, by the people, for the people."*



*The United States has beautiful protected natural areas throughout the country. Many Americans like to enjoy the outdoors.*



*Americans like sports, even if only to watch. American football is especially popular. High schools, colleges and universities may spend a lot of money on sports, where individual students can shine and support school spirit.*



*Some Americans live in rural areas, far from communities or extended family members. Being able to live independently, without others' help, is valued in the United States.*



*Many Americans live in suburbs, outside of central cities. In the typical suburb, houses are set back off the street, and include sitting and recreational areas in the back of the house. In many suburbs, chatting and interacting with neighbors is common, whether on front porches or in back yards, or while walking dogs, supervising children and doing yard work.*

What do the photographs and captions tell you about the United States? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What else would you like to know? How could you find out? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

One thing you will want to share with your host family and new friends is your understanding of the culture of your country. Have you been able to do that with your photographs? Let's see.

## Exercise 4-2: Your Country's Culture

Make a list of all things you think are distinctive about your culture (you should be able to list at least 10.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Look back at this list and draw a circle around the number of everything that you did or could photograph.

What things are left? These are probably more abstract words that describe why people do things.

We can make a simple definition of culture if we use only those “why” words. Remember:

***Culture is the attitudes, values, beliefs, and ideas that a group of people hold in common.***

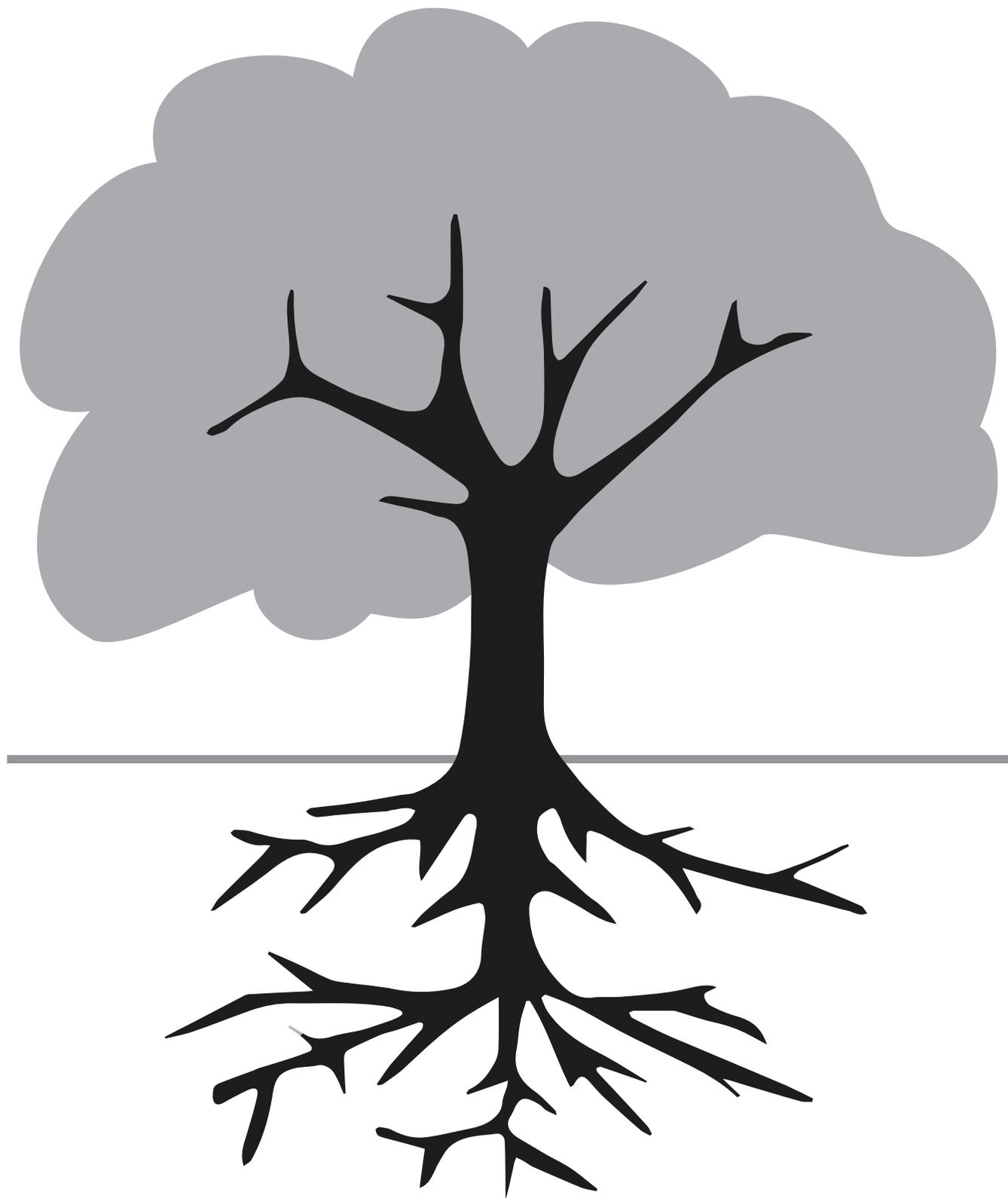
This definition of culture is different than the one we more often use which refers to music, art, and literature (sometimes called the “fine arts”). This new definition will be useful to us as we try to discover what it is that makes Americans “American,” and what makes you like others of your nationality.

With this definition, culture is not a physical thing. The photographs we chose did not show *our* culture; rather they *reflected* some of our values or attitudes. For example, the Statue of Liberty is important because of what it represents — that a value of Americans is the importance of giving less fortunate or poorer people a chance to make better lives for themselves in a new land.

Look back at the photos you brought with you. What aspects of your culture do they reflect? You may have never wondered why you live like you do — or ever imagined that other people may live and think very differently.

## Exercise 4-3: Culture as a Tree

Look at the 10 descriptions of your culture that you wrote earlier. If these are things you could **see** (and photograph), write them on the *leaf* part of the tree. If they are things that are **hard to see**, write them on the *roots* part of the tree – the more important and profound ones at the deepest root section.



## Exercise 4-4: How We Learn Our Cultural Values

In the chart below, write down the values your family told you they have tried to teach you as you were growing up. Then list the names of the children's books or folk tales that you brought from your country and then the names of the historic figures or heroes. For each book, tale or hero, write which important value is being taught. Did you pick the same books and heroes as others in your group? Were the values you identified the same?

WHAT YOUR FAMILY TRIED TO TEACH YOU:	VALUE TAUGHT:

CHILDREN'S BOOK OR FOLK TALE	VALUE TAUGHT:

HISTORIC FIGURE OR HERO:	VALUE TAUGHT:

In the next section we will begin to look at some of the values that tend to be important to Americans. As you read about them, consider whether these are also values in your home country.

### **Determination/Creativity/Problem solving/Optimism/Personal Responsibility**

American culture is known for encouraging entrepreneurs and inventors. Americans like to find ways to solve problems and believe the future will be better. Americans believe no problem is too big to solve. They tend to focus on the positive side of things, and in general, are confident that hard work will pay off

and that in the future things will be better. Americans tend to think that everyone is responsible for their own actions, even if things go badly. If a student is unprepared for a class assignment or test, the student should expect to receive a poor grade and not look to his/her classmates for the answers. So, you may encounter difficulties while you're on FLEX/YES, such as with finding friends or volunteer opportunities, but remember that you CAN solve these problems if you think creatively.

### **Privacy/Importance of personal property/Individualism**

Personal space is very important for U.S. teens and is seen almost as a right. A few examples are things such as personal lockers at school, and a bedroom or personal part of the bedroom. In addition, having time alone is something which most Americans enjoy, because it provides a good chance to clear their heads or to think seriously about a problem or situation. In addition, students should understand that taking things without permission is seen as taking away someone else's privacy, and is not appropriate. If you borrow something, return it quickly and in the same condition.

### **Honesty**

Honesty is an important value to Americans, who from childhood are taught the value of telling the truth. Americans expect people to be truthful and can be seriously offended by dishonesty. If students are dishonest, Americans may form a bad impression of the student and of their country. In general, if people are direct and honest about a problem, Americans are more willing to listen to and try to help in this situation. In addition, academic honesty is very important. Cheating on a test and plagiarizing (copying from someone else or from a book, website or AI and presenting it as your own work) will have serious consequences.

### **Politeness/Conflict avoidance**

Using polite words and phrases such as "please" and "thank you" is very helpful in American culture. Americans can be offended if opinions are expressed bluntly and sometimes it's necessary to use extra phrases ("In my opinion...", "Of course there are other ways of looking at it, but to me it is important..." etc.) to convey respect for other points of view. Being honest is important, but students should be careful not to express opinions in a way that may be seen as insulting someone else or as dismissing their values/opinions. Avoiding conflict is generally seen as a positive thing. Some American families even have an unwritten rule: "Never discuss politics or religion," for example, which may surprise you if you come from a family or culture that values straightforward discussion of these topics. It would be wise to spend some time observing your host family's way of dealing with disagreement before jumping in with an opinion. To talk about important topics, use your skill at being polite, including the politeness phrases you have learned.

### **Character is more important than appearance**

Americans value individuality and try to avoid being superficial. Defining someone by his/her appearance can be offensive to some people. Americans believe that it's important not to judge someone before getting to know them, and value this as a good way to meet people with different ideas/interests.

**Well-roundedness**

Americans believe that it is an important part of student life to take part in a variety of different activities, clubs and teams. Students should be encouraged to try many different activities, as they might find something new which they like, plus it's a great way to make and socialize with friends. Americans value being knowledgeable in a wide variety of subjects and consider learning about many different topics instead of just specializing in one thing a key element of a well-rounded education.

**Punctuality**

Americans value punctuality and being late is seen as disrespectful and inconsiderate. Americans expect to be informed in advance if someone expects to be late, and that this won't be a regular occurrence. If a person is late, Americans may simply leave without them, or not invite them in the future.

**Practicality**

Americans try to be sensible about situations and try to focus on facts and current situations instead of trying to change the past. Reasonableness and common sense are valued by most Americans. Americans believe that making an assumption about what will happen is bad practice; they encourage others to be prepared for any outcome.

**Personal hygiene**

Americans value and expect others to maintain good personal hygiene, which may be defined differently in your country. For Americans, washing one's clothes after one wear and showering every day are important habits. This also means that you should always present yourself accordingly, especially in school. Some manners of dress may be considered inappropriate by Americans (clothing with inappropriate references, revealing clothing, etc.) so you should discuss personal appearances with your host family and read your U.S. high school's "Code of Conduct" handbook.

**Thriftiness/Frugality**

Americans believe that saving money is important and try hard not to waste money, food, or goods. Some common ways Americans save money are by using coupons, comparison shopping, buying in bulk, etc. Americans try hard to save money, because they get satisfaction from knowing that they were able to get a good deal.

**Altruism**

Many Americans volunteer their time and donate money to help people in need or causes that are important to them. They generally place a high value on giving to others. You will see many examples of Americans asking for and giving donations and volunteering time to religious organizations, schools, children's programs, animal groups, environmental causes, and much more. Host families, for example, are showing their altruism when they open their homes to welcome an exchange student into their families.

## Exercise 4-5: American Values

Americans have many proverbs that teach the values described above. Can you think of 1-2 proverbs or sayings from your country that are related to each value and write them in the right-hand column. Is the lesson the same as the lesson in the American proverb? If not, which one appeals to you more? How might the difference arise in your exchange year?

VALUE	A proverb in your country that teaches a related value
Determination; Creativity; Problem Solving; Optimism; Personal Responsibility	
Privacy; Importance of property; Individualism	
Honesty	
Politeness; Conflict Avoidance	
Character more than Appearance	
Well-roundedness	
Punctuality	
Practicality	
Personal hygiene	
Thriftiness; Frugality	
Altruism	

Here are some questions for your reflection:

1. How do these American attitudes compare with typical attitudes in your country?
2. Are there any American values described that you personally share? Are there any that are new to you or that you disagree with?
3. How might any of these values — especially the ones that are new for you — affect your exchange year?

Further information about how these American values developed can be found in the Supplemental Reading section at the end of this workbook.

### U.S. Regional Differences

The United States is a very large country, separated geographically by mountains rivers and, in the case of Hawaii and Alaska, oceans and other countries. Americans may live in huge cities or on a farm far from the nearest neighbor. Different immigrant groups have tended to cluster in some parts of the country. While the values we have reviewed are generally accepted throughout the country, you may find some regional differences as well. Northeasterners are sometimes seen as fast-paced compared to Southerners and West Coast Americans, whose pace tends to be a bit slower. If you follow the news, you will see big regional differences in Americans' politics. How people show respect and politeness may be different from place to place. You will learn your host family's regional values quite well; just remember that Americans in other parts of the country may be quite different.




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## CHAPTER 4 VOCABULARY

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*Make sure you know the meaning of these important words:*

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- Culture
- Value
- Proverb
- Determination
- Optimism
- Privacy
- Individualism
- Conflict Avoidance
- Character
- Punctuality
- Hygiene
- Altruism

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## TOOLBOX

---

*In this section, we have added some new tools to your growing Toolbox.*

*Be sure to remember:*

---

- Culture as a Tree



- American Values



# CHAPTER 5:

## You and Your Host Family

Now that we have discussed some general information about Americans and their values, we can begin to explore the host family experience. The host family is a very important part of your program, since they will share American life, culture, and values while you're in the United States. You will need to be open to sharing your own values, interests, and beliefs so that your host family can better understand and appreciate you as a new member of the family.

### Reflection on You and Your Own Family

#### You

Take a moment to consider who it is that your host family will be welcoming into their family – that is, you! First, how would your friends and family describe you? How are you seen by the people who know you best already?

### Exercise 5-1: The Real You

Your host family will know you from the information you shared in your application to the program. They learn your interests, your hopes and dreams but they do not yet really know you the way your friends and family know you. List five adjectives that might give your new host family an idea about your personality. Be sure to include the information your family mentioned in your pre-PDO assignment when asked what they hope your host family will learn about you.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Circle any of these descriptions that your host family will NOT be able to know about you right away. For example, if you wrote “creative” or “loyal son/daughter,” your host family may not discover that part of you right away. On the other hand, if you wrote “friendly” or “quiet,” then they probably will learn that about you soon. How could you share these hidden traits with your host family, so they know the full you?

#### Your own family

Next, before finding out more about living in an American family, let's take a look at how your own family works. After all, you have learned most of what you know about families from the ones you grew up in and

around. Families have unwritten rules about who does what, how people should talk to each other, who knows what about whom, who can make demands of whom – all of these (and more). Thinking about your own family now will help you think about how you function as a part of the family you’ve always had and plan for some of the changes you may find when you join a new family – your host family.

Take a moment to think about your natural family along the following dimensions:

- Number of family members in your home (adults, children younger than you, children older than you)
- Does anyone live in your home who is not related to you?
- How often do you spend time with extended family members (grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles)?
- Who in your home earns money by working?
- Who does the housework in your family? Do you ever help with these tasks?
- Who shops for and prepares meals? Do you ever help with these tasks?
- Are there any household tasks that, generally, only women or girls do? Any that only men or boys do?
- Do you eat your meals together as a family?
- When you return home after school, are others home?
- Do you have any responsibilities in the home after school (like caring for others, food preparation)?
- What is a typical Saturday or Sunday like in your home?
- Who in your family are you closest to?
- If you need advice—about school, about friends, about worries—who do you generally go to for advice?
- If you need money for something, how do you get it?
- If you do something unacceptable, who disciplines you?
- What kinds of things are unacceptable in your home?
- Is your home noisy and loud, or peaceful and quiet?
- Do the adults in your home know where you are most of the time?
- Do your parent(s) know how you are doing in school?
- Does your family take holidays together?
- Do you spend much time alone?
- Do you share a bedroom?
- Do you attend religious services as a family?
- Is your home neat and tidy or messy?
- How do you get from place to place in your town?

Now look back at these questions. Imagine what it will be like if any, or many, of these things are different in your host family. Which difference would be easiest to adjust to? Hardest?

## Exercise 5-2: Imagining a New Family

Imagine how it might be if some aspects of your family life changed. Think how each of these situations would change your lifestyle and how you might feel if:

1. You have only younger brothers and sisters.
2. You have one teenage brother or sister your age.
3. You have no brothers and sisters.
4. Your mom works and doesn't get home until 6:00 p.m. each night. You come home to an empty house after school.
5. A different parent disciplines you.
6. You are asked to do a chore that you would never be asked to do by your natural family.
7. You cannot do what you always used to do after dinner.
8. Your host family rule requires you to be home earlier on the weekends than you are used to.
9. You cannot walk to the shops or to visit friends because they are several miles away and there is no public transportation.

Pick the one of these situations that would be most difficult for you, or would require you to change the most. Describe below what would be hard and how you might manage the difference.

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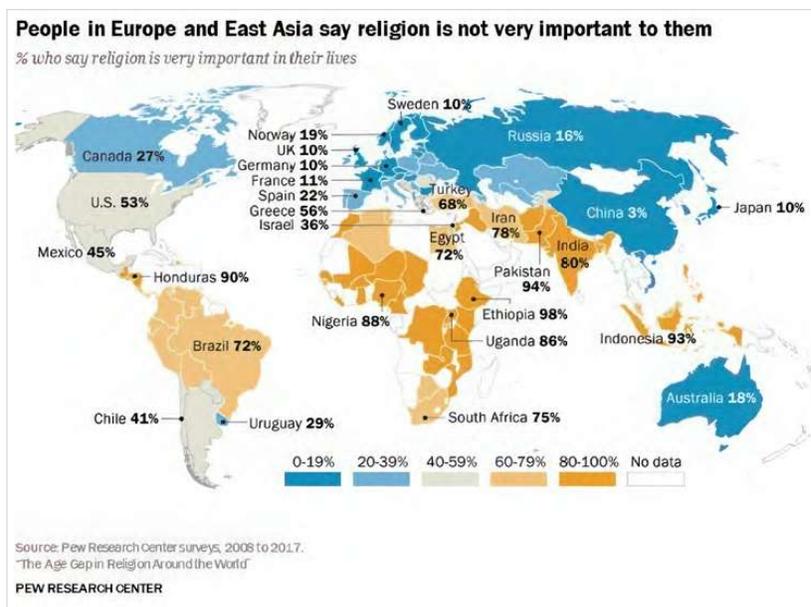
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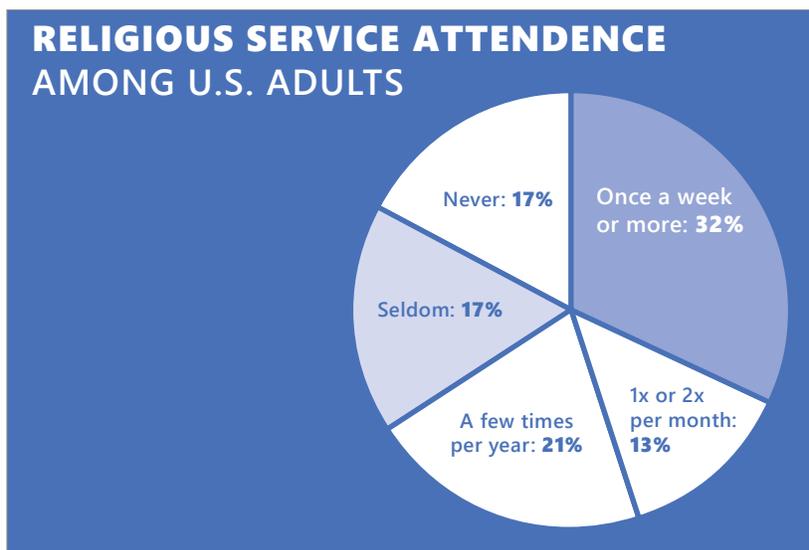
Although each American family is unique, they also have many things in common, such as:

- Most American host families live in **small towns**, or suburbs outside big cities;
- Most American host families live in private homes, not in apartments;
- Utility bills (electricity, gas, water) can be quite expensive, so most American families use them carefully to keep the cost down and **conserve energy** (limit shower time, lower thermostat, etc.);
- Your school, stores and other places most likely will not be within walking distance, so you may have to rely on a school bus, public transportation, or your host family for **transportation**. This means you may have to make compromises to fit your schedule and your host family's schedule;
- American host families will not treat you as a guest, but rather as a family member, which means that you will not be the center of attention and will not receive special 'guest' treatment. You will be expected to follow to the same rules everyone else does about chores, phones, computers, etc.;
- Despite how Americans are often shown in movies and TV shows, not all American families are wealthy, and most families have a strict budget to adhere to and spend money sparingly;
- Americans love their **pets**. Slightly more than two-thirds (68%) of Americans own a pet. The most popular are freshwater fish, cats, and dogs. Dogs are often treated like a member of the family.

This map shows that religion is “very important” to 53% of Americans. How does this compare with people in your country? How do you think this similarity or difference may influence your exchange year?



Here you can see how many Americans attend religious services. How does this compare to people in your country? To your family? To you?



As you can see from this chart, it is common for American families to regularly attend some kind of religious service. Your host family may encourage or require their children to attend, and in that case, you too, may be encouraged to attend some kind of activity. This will not be for the purpose of converting you to a religious point of view, but rather to expose you to one important aspect of American culture. There are usually many non-religious ways to be involved in a faith community—babysitting for children, helping in social service projects, being part of a music program, etc. These activities can provide additional opportunities for friendships and social activities. In many areas of the United States, religious institutions are not only centers of religious life but also musical, recreational, and social life.

It is difficult to anticipate living with a new family. Many of the family routines you thought about above may be different with your host family. It is important to remember that the family is the teacher of culture. It is through our families, mostly, that we develop our beliefs about what is right and wrong and what we value. Since cultures differ, and values differ, we know that family life also will differ. That difference is not right or wrong, it is just a different way of living.

As you learn more and more about your host culture, try to imagine some of the changes you may experience. When you find out about your host family, think about the family members, their interests and hobbies, what they value. How will that change your lifestyle?

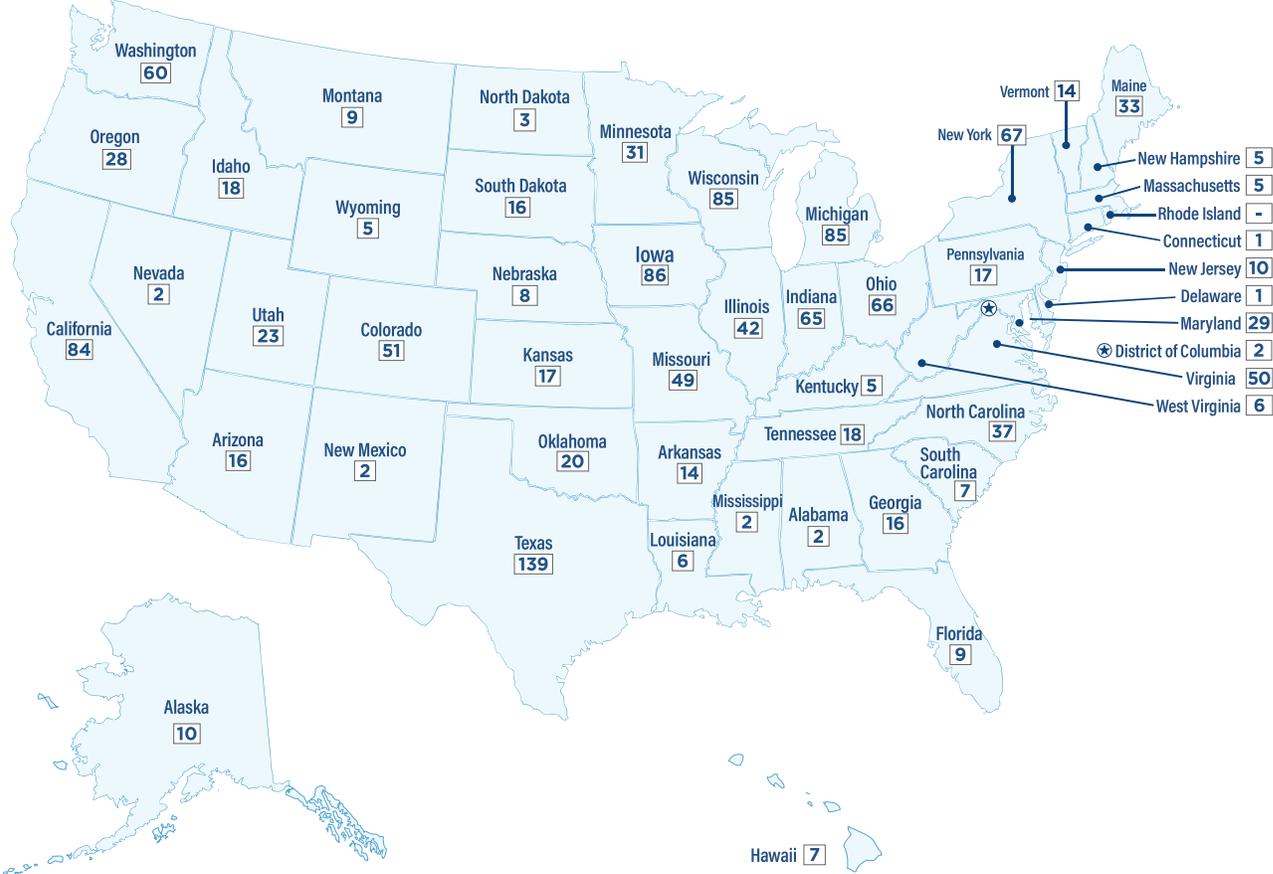
## Exercise 5-3: Family Facts and Figures

Here are some statistics about American families today. Which numbers would be similar to your home country? Which would be different? Discuss the learning opportunities each of these kinds of households might offer you.

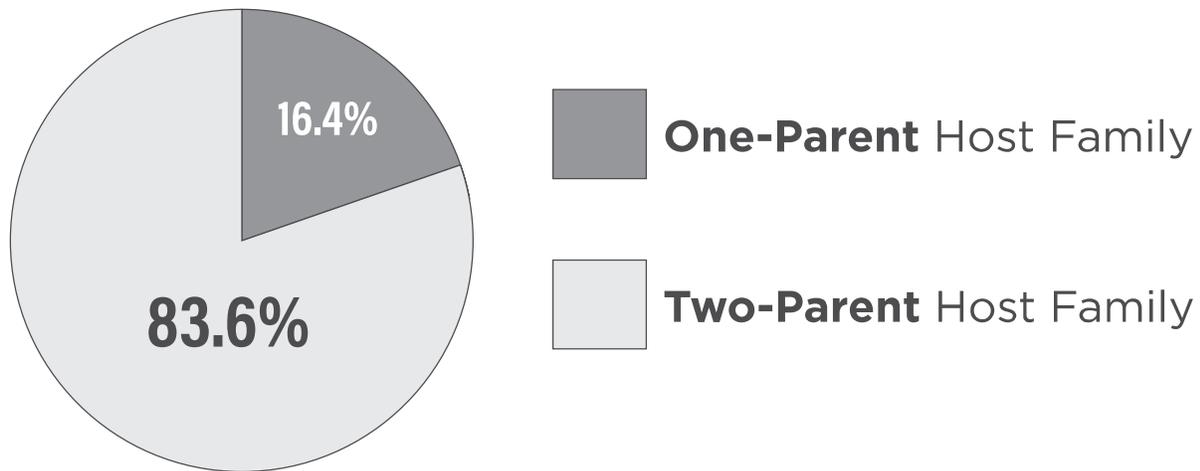
1. The median age at first marriage is now about 30 for men and 28 for women. It may be that your host parents are older than in your home community.
2. Only about 29% of young adults age 18-34 are married. Your host family may have unmarried young adult children.
3. Over half (54%) of young adults age 18-24 live with their parents; 16% of those age 25-34 do so. You may have older host siblings living in your home.
4. 15% of young adults age 25-34 live with an unmarried partner. 9% of those age 18-24 do so. You may have young adult host siblings living with a partner but not married to them.
5. 28% of all households are single-person households. You may be placed in a home with just one other person, your host parent.
6. 27% of American children who live with two married parents have a stay-at-home mother (who does not have a job outside the home); 1% have a stay-at-home father. Your host mother or father may or may not have a job outside your home.
7. 40-50% of marriages end in divorce in the United States. Your host parent may have an ex-spouse involved in your host siblings' lives.

The map on the following page provides some information about where FLEX/YES students are placed in the United States.

# FLEX and YES Student Placements by State, 2024-25



## Exchange Student Host Family Composition (on average)



### Making the Adjustment from One Family to Another

You undoubtedly learned many important life lessons and values from your own family. Now you will have the opportunity to experience living in another family for a year, an experience most people do not have at your age. You will be asked to bring your many strengths, including your openness and flexibility, to your host family. In Exercise 5-4, you can learn from those who have gone before you about how to make a smooth transition into a new family.

#### Exercise 5-4: TOPHAT

Former FLEX and YES students compiled a list of suggestions for making a successful adjustment into a host family. To make them easy to remember, they chose a key word for each. The first letters of the keywords spell out TOP HAT. As you listen to your group discuss what each letter might stand for, write some notes to yourself about important strategies. In the “Stands for” column, write the word chosen by former FLEX/YES students, to help you remember each of these:

	STANDS FOR:	NOTE TO YOURSELF:
T		
O		
P		
H		
A		
T		

## Watching Your Words

---

One way you can show your openness is by the words you use. When you are “watching your words” you are showing that you understand and respect another’s culture, not just their language. Foreigners are often misunderstood, even when they are speaking English correctly, because they may translate word for word and without thinking about culture, from their native language into English. You must realize that what is appropriate to say in a situation in one culture may be inappropriate in another culture. Taking the time to learn about Americans and how they have worked to get along together will help you “watch your words.”

## How to Respond if Others are Disrespectful to You

---

While your Pre-departure Orientation has prepared you for the excitement of living in a new culture, you may find some Americans less welcoming. Perhaps they are misinformed about your culture or your country.

While most exchange students are warmly welcomed into their new communities, you should be prepared ahead of time with a plan, in case you encounter some disrespect. What ideas do you have about how you can respond to uncomfortable situations? Here are some suggestions:

1. Your safety is always the most important thing. Walk away from any potentially uncomfortable situation and find a safe place to report (to a host parent or teacher) what happened.
2. If you feel you can have a safe conversation with the person, try using this as an educational opportunity. Say something like, “I can see how you might have that view of my country, given some of the news and movies you’ve probably seen. But, in fact...”
3. Maintain a sense of calm and avoid arguments. Do not respond in anger and do not make threats or jokes.
4. Find help from a friend or adult to help you manage any kind of situation that may be ongoing and hard to avoid.

## Discussing Difficult Topics

---

It is not uncommon for FLEX/YES students to be asked questions they find uncomfortable or perceive as unfriendly or rude. If any American asks you about difficult topics, you need to remember that the person is probably not trying to insult or make fun of you. The person is probably curious because they don’t know something. Think of this as an opportunity to enlighten or educate someone about what your home is really like.

Some difficult topics and questions reported by past students are:

### **Politics:**

- What do you think of [any current political or social conflict going on in your country]?
- Do you agree with American foreign policy in your country?
- Is your country a democracy?
- Are there terrorists in your country? Why do they hate Americans?

### **Cultural:**

- Where is your country?
- Why is there so much corruption in your country?
- Is everyone in your country poor/rich?

**Personal:**

- Is your family super conservative?
- Will your family let you marry who you want to marry?
- Why do you dress like that?

**Strategies to discuss difficult topics:**

Sometimes you might be in a situation where you may don't feel comfortable answering someone's question or you don't know the answer. In these situations, you can respond by saying:

- a. "That question makes me uncomfortable and I don't want to talk about it."
- b. "That question is difficult because the answer is very complicated and nuanced (lots of small details that are difficult to explain) or personal. It feels too big to go into right now – could we set aside a time to talk about it later?"
- c. "I need to do some research and find out, and then I can explain it better. Maybe I can even prepare a presentation on a topic." (For some topics such as American foreign policy or current political or social issues, you should have factual information that is well-researched.)
- d. "I think you might have a mistaken picture of my country. Here, let me show you a quick YouTube video."
- e. "I am here to observe and learn about all aspects of American culture, not to take sides. It's very complicated, isn't it? What do you think?"
- f. "I love my country very much, just as I expect you love America very much. That doesn't mean we think our countries are perfect in every way, though, right? I have so much to learn."
- g. "Can we agree to disagree?"
- h. "I don't know." [then walk away.]

*You can always ask your teachers, your support system, or your host family for support or help in these situations.*

## Exercise 5-5: Question Challenge

Sometimes, exchange students are on the receiving end of misinformation about their country. Americans may ask you questions that reveal that they hold untrue views. It is important to practice turning these questions into 'teaching opportunities.' Below, pick two or three questions someone might ask you if they were misinformed about your culture. Practice writing an informative, honest and polite reply to each one.

- Do you have internet access in your country?
- Do you have cell phones in your country?
- Do you have cars in your country?
- Are you a communist?
- Do you know any terrorists?
- Does your family have a camel?

Discuss your answers with others in your group. After your group discussion, write down any answers you would like to remember, and/or were the "best" your group discussed. What made those answers best?

Here is some advice given by former exchange students, about how to adjust to your new host family and school. Read each one and mark the ones you think will be especially important for you to remember. Make any notes to the left of their advice about your own particular situation.

*“The advice that I’ll give to future exchange students is that each of them will have a different experience in the United States, and they shouldn’t think of their experience as the same one that somebody had in the U.S. before.”*

– **Dila**

*“I’d advise the students to share their everyday life’s problems or achievements with their host families. That will help them to become more close with the family members. Participating in house chores will by all means help them too.”*

– **Sanda**

*“Before going to the United States, I was expecting my future host family to live in a city, have 3 children of my age, pets & a lot of cars. Imagine my surprise when I finally met my host family, who live on a farm, have cows instead of pets, 6 children (ages 26 to 14), and only 2 cars. However, my host family was great and they became very dear to me.”*

– **Murad**

*“If anyone tells you that there is no homework in the U.S. high schools, don’t believe it. There’s homework and in fact a lot of it (and undoubtedly it has to be done!) The U.S. education system is very different from that of the former Soviet Union’s. I think it is better, some say it is worse. But one of the most definite pluses of that system is that the teachers are always ready to stay after classes to help you if you need it. You just need to tell them about it.”*

– **Kesi**

*“If you want to be successful with your host family, you should take part in as many of their activities as you can. Then you’ll become an important part of their life and you’ll be loved. But if you’ll have any problems with your host family, you better talk to them as soon as possible. And if it won’t help, you should talk to your area coordinator. Don’t try to solve problems on your own, always ask for help.”*

– **Yegor**

*“I guess the only expectation was that I would live in a city. I was surprised to find out that our town has a population of 1000 people and it was hard for me to adapt to the rural environment at first. My advice to the future exchange students would be: “Be flexible, and try to adapt to others, not adapt others to you” and it will make your exchange experience a lot more exciting and rewarding.”*

– **Reem**

*“I was stunned when I realized that no one was rushing towards me to get acquainted. Instead everybody was rushing to their new classes and almost ignored me. I was disappointed to find out that in order to make friends, it wasn’t enough to be an exchange student. It’s better to be active and take the initiative and not get upset if the first few weeks you feel kind of isolated and lonely. Again, it just takes time.”*

– **Natalya**

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# CHAPTER 5 VOCABULARY

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*Make sure you know the meaning of  
these important words:*

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- Host
- TOPHAT
- Customs
- Routines
- Rules

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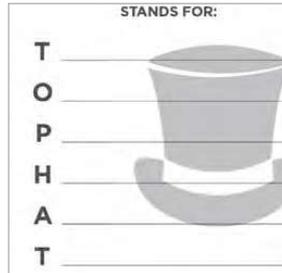
## TOOLBOX

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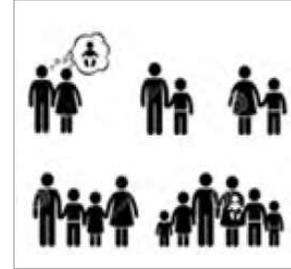
*Here are the new tools gathered in  
this chapter for your Toolbox:*

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- TOPHAT



- Host family differences



- Host family rules

If you open it - close it  
If you turn it on - turn it off  
If you unlock it - lock it  
If you sleep on it - make it  
If you can't fix it - report it  
If you borrow it - return it  
If you spill it - clean it up  
If you use it - use it



# CHAPTER 6:

## Applying What You've Learned

In previous chapters, you have learned a lot about American families and their values. Taking part in the FLEX and YES programs is a wonderful opportunity to learn about the culture from within — to experience family activities and life firsthand. However, it is important for you to keep in mind that challenges and difficulties will occur. Think about your own family, and how from time to time problems occur and are solved. This is a natural part of living in any family, and certainly even more so when two cultures are sharing a home. Keep in mind that cultural differences can be worked out, too, just like in your own family. It will help a lot if you keep an open mind, use your communicative nature and remember to always treat your host family with respect, even if you have different opinions about things. Remember that the important thing is to focus on the solution.

### Culture is Invisible

In order to understand culture a little better, read this text and answer the questions below:

*Imagine, if you will, that in your own country, from the time of the first people, today, and far into the future, everyone that was ever born or will be born was born with two legs, two arms, two eyes, a nose, a mouth and a pair of sunglasses. The color of the lenses in the sunglasses is yellow. No one has ever thought it strange that the sunglasses were there, because they've always been there, and they are part of the human body. Everyone has them.*

*Take the yellow sunglasses off and look at them. What makes them yellow are the values, attitudes, ideas, beliefs, and assumptions that all people in your country have in common. Everything that they have seen, learned, or will experience (past, present, and future) has or will be entered into the brain through the yellow lenses. Everything has been filtered and interpreted through all these values and ideas that have made the lenses yellow. The yellow lenses represent your attitudes, beliefs, values, and cultural background.*

*Thousands of miles away in another country, from the time of the first people, today, and far into the future, everyone that was ever born or will be born was born with two legs, two arms, two eyes, a nose, a mouth, and a pair of sunglasses. The color of the lenses in their sunglasses is blue. No one has ever thought it strange that the sunglasses are there because they've always been there, and they are part of the human body. Everyone has them. Everything that the people see, learn, and experience is filtered through their blue lenses.*

*A traveler who wants to go to that far-away land may have enough sense to realize that to learn about the country and the people more thoroughly, he will have to acquire some blue sunglasses so that he can “see.” When the traveler arrives, he wears the blue sunglasses. He stays for two months. He feels he really is learning about the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the people. He actually “sees” wearing their sunglasses. He comes home to his own country and declares that he is now an “expert” on that country and that the culture is green!*

1. Why did the traveler see green? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. What does it mean that he saw green? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. What could/should a person do to avoid that mistake? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. What could you say is the moral (lesson) of this fable? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Culture is all around us, and if we don't stop to think about it, we might not realize how much our own culture influences us as people. The sunglasses fable shows how this is true: we grow up thinking everything we do is the correct or only way to do something. That is natural as it is our society's duty to pass on our own culture—the values, beliefs, and ideas we are expected to accept — to get along with our neighbors and countrymen. A part of the process of being educated into our own culture is being taught what is right and what is wrong. It should not surprise us then, when we view another society acting differently, that we say they are wrong! Thinking that your own way of behaving is the best way is called ethnocentrism.

When you applied to be an exchange student you decided to go to a new country to live for a year. You will try to learn to not be ethnocentric. You are going to try and understand another culture so that you can say “they do it differently than we do,” not “they are wrong.” That is not always going to be easy, but it can be easier if you keep in mind the phrase “**not better, not worse, just different.**” Can you state some of your values? Most of the time we don't even know our values. We haven't really thought about what they are. It's when we see something or experience something that doesn't feel “right” that we can begin to discover **why** it doesn't seem right. The **why** explains the value, attitude, or belief that is our cultural heritage. Even though it is difficult, try to think of some of your values or beliefs. If you can't think of any, look back at the ideas about American values and beliefs on pages 35-37. Do you feel the same about the things described? If not, try to identify why not – you may find a belief or value you've never stated before.

## When Values are Different

Below are some composites of letters Placement Organizations have received from exchange students. Each student is finding some customs, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors hard to understand. In most cases, the student has forgotten about the sunglasses and is seeing “green.” Read each letter and answer the questions that follow to analyze the situation and consider what you might do under similar circumstances.

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*Every morning before school I see my host mother getting ready for work. We usually talk a little bit before she leaves for work, but we never have breakfast together. Once I asked her about this and she told me not to be shy – that I should look in the refrigerator and kitchen cabinets for cereal and other breakfast foods and that I can make myself breakfast. She also told me that I should take some things from the refrigerator to make a bag lunch to take to school even though the cafeteria at my school has some good hot food that I can buy. I asked my host mom about this, but she told me that if I wanted to have a hot lunch at school that I would have to pay for it myself. I thought my host family was supposed to give me three meals a day. This isn't fair!*

*Sincerely,*  
**Jordana**

1. Explain Jordana's situation. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why does Jordana think the host family doesn't treat her fairly? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. If you were Jordana, what would you do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*I love the group chat full of my friends from PDO and the other exchange students from my host state. My friends at school all use social media to connect and I'm so happy they've added me to their group chats. I also like to send photos to my natural family and send voice memos to my friends back home. My host parents mentioned that I use my phone a lot and maybe I should cut down, but I love sharing my life in the U.S. on socials.*

*One day, I was in my room, messaging my American friends, when my host sister texted me to come join the family for board game night. I sat down at the table with my family and took a picture of the game. I started posting the picture to social media when suddenly, my host mom stood up.*

*"That's it!" my host mom said. "Kids, no more phones for the rest of the week, and only 30 minutes a day after that." I'm shocked, it's such an overreaction! There's no way I can use my phone for only half an hour a day. What should I do?*

*Sincerely,*  
**Klesta**

1. Why is Klesta's host mom so upset? Is she really overreacting? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What would you do differently in Klesta's situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How can she manage her future communication with friends and family back home? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How should Klesta respond to her host mom's change of screentime rules? What can she do in the future to adjust? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*I'm not sure how much longer I can survive in this house – it's freezing! My host parents are always wearing sweaters inside the house, so they must be cold too. One day I was very cold and saw the switch to turn the heat on in the house. I turned the heat up and it felt really good. However, my host father was very surprised and asked me not to do this again without his permission. Later in the week, my host mother told me that I use too much water and that I should spend less time in the shower. These seem like very small issues, so why are these things so serious for my host parents?*

*Sincerely,*

***Nino***

1. What behaviors are different in Nino's host family from what she's used to? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why do you think Nino's host family is concerned with these things? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What should Nino do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Placement Organization,

My American family doesn't treat me equally. I was shocked when they showed me my bedroom. It was in the basement. I told them that I don't want to live underground. I was surprised that in such a nice house, they would want me to live in the basement! Everyone else has his or her own bedroom. It's not fair.

Then, last Sunday night my host mother and host sisters were watching a movie. I said the movie looked interesting so I wanted to watch it too. They said fine, but then they threw a pillow on the floor and asked me to sit on the ground to watch the movie. They could've made room for me to sit on the couch, but they didn't. I want to live with a family that treats me like a member.

Sincerely,  
**Gabriela**

1. Why does Gabriela feel mistreated? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. If you were Gabriela, would you feel the same way? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How do you think Gabriela's host family viewed the situation? Does it really mean they don't view Gabriela equally? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What should Gabriela do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Placement Organization,

I have a serious problem. I am having a hard time making friends at school. I have been trying hard to be communicative and share information about myself and my country, but something's just not right. For example, I met this guy named Jeff last week and we talked for hours about everything! He even introduced me to his parents and other friends. The other day after history class we were talking in the hall and I put my arm on his shoulder while we were discussing something and he gave me a really strange look and stopped talking to me. And yesterday we all got together at Mike's house to watch a movie. We were sitting on the couch and I sat down close to the other guys and our legs were touching. They moved away and looked at me strangely. I don't understand – back home my friends and I always get close together. It shows that we're good friends. Does this mean that they don't really like me?

Sincerely,  
**Ali**

1. Describe Ali's problem. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What do you think his friends thought when he sat close enough to be touching? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Explain what you know about different ways of communicating. What does the distance between people have to do with communicating? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What should Ali do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*It is really important to me and to my teachers at home that I complete some assignments while I am in the United States so I can pass my exams after the exchange year. It's hard to do all the work for my U.S. school and do these assignments, too, so I have to spend all my free time in my room studying. I'm just barely keeping up, and now my host parents tell me there's a problem. I keep my bedroom door closed so I'm not distracted by my host brother and our family dog. I always keep my door closed at home, too. But now my host mom says she thinks I'm not doing a good job of being part of the family, and wants me to do my homework in the living room. Plus, she started complaining that I am always on Kazakh sites and looking at Kazakh content (for my homework there), because she can't tell what they're about. Please help me convince my host family to get off my back and let me do my work in my room.*

*Sincerely,*  
***Daulet***

1. What expectations did Daulet have about managing his time? About his role in his host family? Do you think these are realistic expectations? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why is Daulet upset? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What reasons might Daulet's host family have for insisting that he do his homework in the living room? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What advice would you give Daulet? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*When I first got to my American school, I was shocked – everyone seemed to be wearing such messy clothes. The clothes they wore weren't nice, none of the kids ironed their clothes, and their shoes seemed very old and had dirt on them. I didn't say anything for a few weeks, but I couldn't keep it in any longer and told my host mom about it. And can you believe it – she told me that MY clothes were dirty. She said she noticed that I wore my clothes more than once before washing them and said that I should wash my clothes after each time I wore them. I'm worried that if I wash my clothes more often that they will be ruined! What should I do?*

*Sincerely,*  
**Aida**

1. How are Aida's ideas of cleanliness different from the ideas of her host family and friends? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What American values and behaviors seem strange to Aida? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What should Aida do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*My host family lives about 20 minutes from my school. I am allowed to stay after school while my host sister practices with her soccer team or I can hang out with my friends at the coffee shop. The problem is that my host mom wants me to call her each day after school by 3:30pm to tell her where I will be so that she can plan her schedule to pick both of us up. Once when I didn't call, she thought I was already home, so she had to make a second trip to school to pick me up. Another time she thought I was at the coffee shop, so she drove to the coffee shop after picking up my host sister from school. She only waited 10 minutes at the coffee shop before she drove back to school to get me. Is that really that big a problem?*

*Sincerely,*  
**Farid**

1. What is Farid forgetting to do? How might this be viewed by his host family? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why do you think Farid's host mom was upset when she had to go back to the school to pick him up?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you think the host family is treating Farid fairly? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How can Farid use his toolbox to fix this situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*I am having a lot of difficulty adjusting to food in the United States. In my home country, everywhere we go the food is halal and I don't have to worry about it. Here, I have to always ask my hosts if there is pork or alcohol in the food to make sure I am keeping with my religion. Sometimes I just eat rice or yogurt and I am still hungry. I know my host parents are not required to buy halal meat for me. I rarely see it in the grocery store, and when I do, I see that it is very expensive. My parents at home are very worried that I am not eating enough food. I think my host parents are also worried about my diet, but they seem very busy and I don't want to bother them with my problem. How can I resolve this?*

*Sincerely,*  
**Amina**

1. What issue is Amina facing right now? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who should Amina talk to about this? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What advice would you give Amina if you were in her place? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*I have been in the United States for seven months and so much has changed in my home country since I left. The political system has totally changed and from the news I see online and on TV it looks like there is a lot of conflict. I worry about my family and friends all the time. On my Facebook page, I tell my family and post about how scared I am for them and how much I want to be there. My friends from home often post photos and videos and they tag me in them so I can stay updated with what is going on. My local coordinator told me that my posts are making my host family and friends uncomfortable. Why can't they understand what I am going through?*

*Sincerely,*  
**Waqas**

1. What are the issues Waqas is facing right now? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why might Waqas' host family and friends be concerned about his Facebook posts and the posts he is tagged in? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What are some positive ways Waqas can handle this situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*I'm happy to share my love of sports with my host family. We often go running in the mornings and play frisbee on the weekend.*

*I'm on the swim team at home, and since staying active is important to my host family, I thought it would be easy to stay in shape so I can rejoin the swim team when I return to my country. However, I rarely go to the pool in America. It's on the opposite side of town so my host parents aren't able to drive me there often. Our town buses are limited so I tried walking to the pool once, but my host mom said it isn't safe to walk near the highways. Plus, it's getting cold, so I won't be able to join the family running outside much longer. When I'm home, I don't need to rely on my parents to take me places. I can go to the pool or hang out with friends without arranging transportation with adults. My natural parents don't expect me to come home until much later in the evening because I can take care of myself. I've never had to worry about transportation, my independence, or being able to swim before now. What should I do?*

*Sincerely,*  
**Faysali**

1. Why is Faysali frustrated? How can he deal with this situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How can Faysali deal with feeling less independent in the U.S. than he used to feel at home? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How are cultural lenses important in Faysali's challenge right now? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What should Faysali do next? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thinking back over all the letters, summarize the lessons by answering these questions:

1. What generally caused the problems or confusion between students and their families or friends?

---

---

---

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---

---

2. What are important steps in resolving such problems? \_\_\_\_\_

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## CHAPTER 6 VOCABULARY

---

*Make sure you know the meaning of  
these important words:*

---

- Ethnocentrism
- Cultural Perspective

---

## TOOLBOX

---

*In this section, we have added some  
new tools to your growing Toolbox.  
Be sure to remember:*

---

- “Not better, not worse,  
just different”





# CHAPTER 7:

## Adjusting to Living in Another Culture

---

As you have learned, it is important to remember that there will be challenges and differences which you will face during your time in the United States, but you can solve these and have a successful exchange year. In this section, we are going to discuss one of the most common challenges—homesickness—faced by anyone who lives abroad. More importantly, you will learn multiple skills to cope with this challenge.

You are a very special person and by receiving the program scholarship you have made a commitment to leave your family, friends, school, and community for many months. You have decided to step into a new “world” of people whose values, attitudes, and customs make them different from you. You have agreed to live with a new family, attend a different type of school, and speak a new language—to experience a different way of living.

### Reflecting on Your Goals and Expectations

---

In preparation for your PDO, you were asked to write down your thoughts regarding the following two questions:

- **Why have you made the decision to become a FLEX/YES student?**
- **What do you hope to accomplish?**

You were asked to think about these two questions carefully and to be honest with yourself. What are your reasons for going to the United States? Why are you willing to leave the life you know so well to try something new? Once in the United States, what do you hope to do? What are your goals for your exchange experience?

This composition is for YOU, not for anyone else. In writing about your motivations and goals, we hope you will better understand your own feelings about the upcoming experience in the United States. During your exchange experience, you may wish to reread this composition. At those times when you are homesick or wondering why you ever made that decision; this paper may help you remember why you took the big step into another culture.

After you finish your exchange experience, you may want to read your composition again to see if you accomplished the goals you set for yourself.

## Exercise 7-1: Reflection on Goals

### What might I expect?

What do you think it will be like to live in a different country with a new family? Always fun? Always exciting? Let's explore this idea by doing a short exercise.

Think about something you really wanted—perhaps a possession, or to go on a trip, or to have a younger brother or sister. Take a minute and think very hard about this. It must be something special that you wanted very much. When you decide, write here what it was: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1

Now, think back to how you felt about getting it. Try to imagine yourself at the moment this special event happened or when you received the thing you wanted. How did you feel? Write your feelings here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2

Now try to remember your feelings a little later on—say a month or two later—after the newness and excitement may have gone away. Write some words about your feelings here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3

Did you ever feel really unhappy or disappointed with this special thing you had wanted so much? Think back. If so, what happened? Why did you feel differently? Write your feelings here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4

Over a period of time, did you again feel OK about this thing? Did anything happen to make you feel differently? If so, describe your feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you completed this exercise, you may find that your feelings followed a pattern. The pattern may have looked like this:

1

Excited, happy, enjoyed doing it/using it/  
wearing it

2

OK—it's no longer so special

3

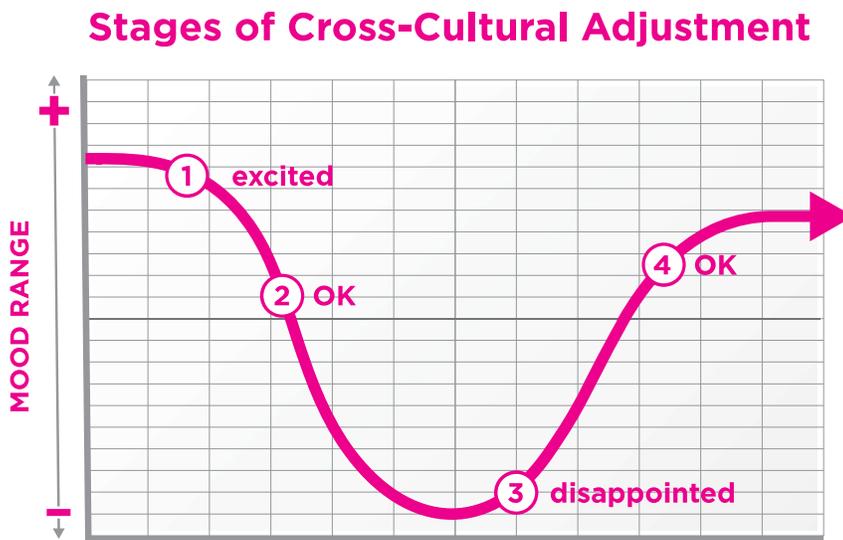
Disappointments or problems: broken or  
worn out, difficult or expensive to keep,  
others wanting to borrow it, not as exciting  
an experience as you might have hoped

4

OK—neither a problem nor  
anything much to think about.

Did you see this sequence of feelings with the thing you chose? Look back at your answers.

If we put this pattern on a graph where “normal feelings” are the main line, it would look like this:



What does this have to do with living in a foreign country? You may be surprised to find out that it is very similar to the kinds of feelings many people experience when they live in a new place. Let’s explore this idea.

How do you feel right now about going to live in a foreign country? It is probably a mixture of feelings—both excited and scared, perhaps. And these feelings may continue and intensify as you get ready to leave and actually arrive in the United States. The excitement and newness of new people, a different time schedule, etc., may continue for a while after you are in the United States.

Then what? Most students say their lives become more routine. They know what time they will get up and how the family prepares to leave in the morning. They know how to get to school, what to say when they meet people, and so on. Life becomes predictable.

Most students also find that they don’t continue to feel OK for the whole time they are living away from home. There are times of sadness, homesickness, or disappointment. There may be a time when everything seems wrong or difficult—not knowing enough English, tired of having to live with so many different customs, feelings of disliking the values of the people with whom they are living.

This period usually passes when students become more involved in activities and try to adjust to the difference. The student then feels OK again.

Do you see the similarities with the graph we drew before? That graph also represents the “common curve of adjustment” to a foreign culture. It is so common that it is important you know about it. Why? Because if not, you might become very worried at point 3. Maybe you would think you should go home, or that you would not ever be happy again. But, as you have read, that usually is not the case.

Since it is important to know about possibly feeling very unhappy for a time, let’s see how those feelings might be expressed.

## Exercise 7-2: Reactions

Read the email from Omar below:

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*This is difficult to write because I HATE the English language. Well, all the time I want to stay in my room and either watch music videos from back home or sleep. So, I sleep all the time. But actually, I think this room is dirty and it will make me sick. I am not sick now, except for stomachaches every morning. But I will be sick soon—especially if I eat this American food my mother cooks. Speaking of my American mother, I have to send this email before she comes home so she doesn't read it.*

*Is anything the matter with me? I never felt this way at home.*

*Sincerely,*

*Omar*

List here the things Omar says he doesn't like, what he is worried about, and what he is doing:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

Omar has some common feelings and worries while going through his adjustment to a foreign country. He is rejecting everything in America and thinking very positively about his own country. He stays away from everyone and does extreme things—like sleeping all the time. He is worried about his health and suspicious that people will be dishonest with him, like reading his private email. These are common indicators of “culture shock,” which is what we call point 3 on the graph.

Remember the list below? You read this list in your Student Handbook.

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

Some of the common physical indicators of culture shock are:

- 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 stomachaches or headaches that I usually do not have.

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 any 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 if you experience some of the signs of culture shock? What should you do?

Culture shock happens to most people. If you experience culture shock, you should not think that you have failed and cannot be a good exchange student. But you do need to talk about it or write down how you feel. Your host family and placement organization representative know about culture shock and may be able to help you understand your feelings. If you write down in a journal what is bothering you, you can help yourself, too.

Practicing your English so you'll be more confident will help. Find enjoyable ways to spend time with your friends and family. Eat and sleep regularly—not too much or too little. Look for the positive. Try not to think about what you don't like. If you get busy, you'll soon be OK again.

We learn the most from periods of difficulty. In many ways, your struggle to understand American ways that are difficult for you will make you reflect on what you believe. In these periods of adjustment, you will learn more, perhaps, about yourself than will students who do not struggle so much to understand what is happening around them. Most exchange students find the challenges of adjustment to be very meaningful in their personal growth.

A tool you can use to notice if you're experiencing culture shock and how to respond to it is mindfulness, which means thinking about how you feel. When you're being mindful, you notice your thoughts, feelings and impulses. We are always thinking and feeling something, and when we are mindful it can help us make better choices about how we react. This is a very important tool to use while you adjust to new foods, daily routines, opportunities, failures, and more. In short, using mindfulness can help you adjust to your new cultural surroundings!

**Mindfulness:** *taking a pause to notice what you're thinking and how you're feeling.*

Below are some letters of advice written by students who have gone before you

*Dear Future Exchange Student:*

*Hi! You know, I'd like to share with you my ideas of what I could have done better this year to make this past year even more fun.*

*First of all, you should know from the very beginning that sometimes it's going to be tough without your family and friends. You might feel that you're all alone and nobody cares about you, but that's not really the way it is. Try to be more optimistic: if it feels bad, it's going to change and be better pretty soon.*

*If it seems to you that your friends, or whoever, don't like you, don't care about you, just let it go easy—that is just a hard time of missing home and it'll go away.*

*Try to have as much fun as you can: participate and be active, because it'll keep you busy and you won't have time for being homesick.*

*Try to take every single opportunity to get busy. Time will pass by really fast.*

*So, don't waste your time. Have fun! Good luck.*

*Sincerely, Sahar*

*P.S. It's great that you have such a chance.*

*Dear Future Exchange Student:*

*I want to tell you that being an exchange student is a lot of fun, despite all of the difficulties and, maybe, even disappointments. During the first weeks, you'll feel very excited. It's understandable: everything is new for you, each minute you learn and learn quite different things in comparison to our country.*

*But then, after two or three months, the exciting moments will reduce and reduce. And the moment will come when you feel that everything is very usual for you, you don't have great interest anymore, and you just want to go home.*

*You'll ask yourself questions: "Why am I here?" "What for?" "What am I doing here?" I think that's an inevitable phase of your experience. It's a very, very important time when you have to show your ability to overcome yourself; not to give up, to continue learning as much as possible about the other culture, the other way of living. I know it's very hard. But it's like you have to do it, there's no choice. And you should have your hope: hope to come back or just hope that everything will be okay.*

*There will also be time when after a few exciting months when everybody is trying to talk to you, to learn about you, your culture, when suddenly you'll realize that there's nobody around you now. The interest about you has already past, and you feel very, very lonely. You shouldn't give up. It takes time to find real friends, and you'll have them, just be patient and don't fall in depression. Open minded, hope in the future, and smiling—these are things which help you to have a great year in the other culture, to make a lot of friends, and just to have a wonderful time!*

**Maksim**

*Dear Future Exchange Student:*

*I'm an exchange student, too. I want to tell you about something that you need to know when you are going to other countries. It will help you to avoid those difficulties that I had staying in the U.S.*

*Yes, it is very good that you decided to be an exchange student, but do you know what you have to do in this case? It seems to be very easy at first, to have a lot of fun during the first couple of weeks after the arrival at your host family, enjoying everything that you'll find here. But sometimes you'll also feel homesick—missing your friends and relatives at home, thinking that you hate this country, this culture, those people. Do not hesitate to talk about it with your coordinators and volunteers—it is a very common and usual feeling, the culture shock.*

*Try to be a kind, open-minded person to everybody—don't forget that you are the representative of your country. Keep your marks high.*

*As a member of your host family, don't make your stay with them as a guest—you must feel yourself (or try) as an already well-known member of the family. It will help to make your exchange experience more perfect.*

*I wish you good luck and a very good year. Be happy.*

*With best regards, **Filip***

Dear Future Exchange Student:

I'm very glad that I can share my experience with you, and I hope some of my advice will help you during your stay in America.

I've been here for half a year, and I had some situations in which I had troubles and difficulties in finding the way out.

When I first came to my host family, I did not know what to do. I was homesick and I could not do anything but cry and think about my Mom and Dad, and I was asking myself: "What am I doing here? I can't be an exchange student, I can't be far away from my Mom and Dad, nobody would like me because I'm not fun, I'm not cool."

This depression lasted for a long time--two weeks or so (for me it was a very long time). But then I decided to stop and I made myself think about the purposes of my experience and that made me feel better.

Don't be afraid to talk to your host family, coordinator, or other exchange students--your friends, or your new American friends -- I am sure they'll understand how lonely you might be, and will make you feel like you are at home.

Then, think about it. It's a GREAT opportunity to HAVE FUN, and enjoy your life in the United States.

So, I told you my own way to avoid a long period of being homesick, and I hope it will help you, too.

Truly yours, **Charity**

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## CHAPTER 7 VOCABULARY

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Make sure you know the meaning of these important words:

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- Culture shock
- Recovery
- Adjustment Cycle

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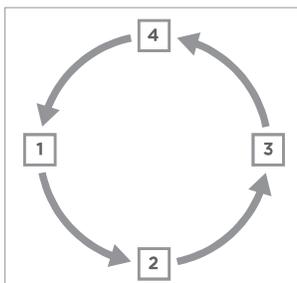
## TOOLBOX

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Here are the new tools gathered in this chapter for your Toolbox:

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- The Adjustment Cycle



- Mindfulness

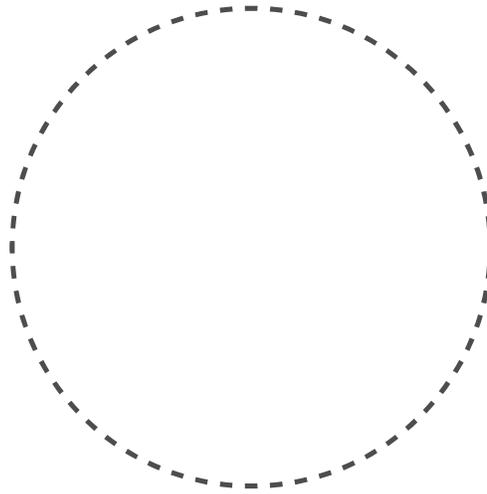


# CHAPTER 8:

## Taking Care of Yourself

### How are you feeling now?

Draw an emoji to show how you feel.



Just like at home, life in the U.S. will have emotional ups and downs. It is important to recognize how you are feeling and to take care of yourself during both the good days and the challenging days.

### **Emotional well-being is the ability to:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ with the stresses of life;
- \_\_\_\_\_ your abilities;
- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ well; and
- \_\_\_\_\_ to your community.

You may not be used to discussing your feelings, but in the U.S., you may be asked to share how you feel, or others may openly tell you how they are feeling. It is common for Americans to share how they feel to give or receive support from their friends or family. If you don't feel comfortable sharing your feelings, that is okay, but keep in mind that trusted adults may want to know how you feel so they can support you. Remember that no one can see inside your head or heart, so sometimes speaking about how you feel is the only way other people will know. Sharing your feelings can help you stay emotionally healthy.

Being emotionally healthy doesn't mean that you never have problems or stress. It does mean that you are confident that you know how to respond to stress or problems when they arise. While living in the U.S. you will have many new experiences, and some of these may cause you stress. This is not always a bad thing. Stress can be positive—it can push you to try harder or do better. Feeling stressed about a presentation coming up may make you work harder, practice more, or reach out to a classmate for support. Those are good things! However, when you experience problems or stress during your exchange year, you will not have the same access to your friend and family support network that you have when you are at home. Therefore, it's important to know how to take care of yourself to stay emotionally healthy.

## Comfort, Stretch, and Panic Zones

The chart below shows three zones—comfort, stretch, and panic. Your comfort zone is where you feel safe, at ease, and in control. Your stretch zone is where you grow by learning new things and having new experiences. Because you are outside your comfort zone, you will feel some stress in the stretch zone, but that’s okay, that’s how you learn and grow! However, if the stress of your stretch zone becomes overwhelming and you feel that you are no longer growing or learning, you may be in the panic zone. If you feel like you are approaching the panic zone, ask a trusted adult for help.



In the following table, put the following experiences in your comfort, stretch or panic zones. You can also add your own examples or examples from your teacher. There are no right or wrong answers; this is about how you feel.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Living in a house with a dog</li> <li>2. Giving a presentation in English</li> <li>3. Volunteering at a food bank</li> <li>4. Hiking with my host family</li> <li>5. Trying new foods</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Riding a bus to school</li> <li>7. Sitting with new friends in the cafeteria</li> <li>8. Trying out for a new activity, such as a sport, drama group, or choir</li> </ol> |
|--|---|

COMFORT	STRETCH	PANIC

Emotional well-being can be divided into 7 factors:

- Closeness to others;
- Feeling optimistic (but not all the time);
- The ability to communicate thoughts and feelings to trusted people;
- The ability to make decisions;
- Healthy sleeping and eating patterns;
- Generally feeling motivated;
- Feeling good about yourself.

Having strong emotional well-being doesn’t mean that you feel 100% of these 100% of the time. Most people do not feel that they have perfect emotional well-being all the time and it’s important you remember this so you have realistic expectations.

# Exercise 8-1: Factors of Emotional Well-Being

Which factor(s) of emotional well-being are most important to you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How do you demonstrate this at home? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How can you demonstrate this in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Know Yourself: Your Baseline, Your Stressors

Everyone has their own average level of emotional well-being. This is how you feel when you are not stressed, anxious, or excited. We call this your baseline. When you are at your **baseline**, you are demonstrating and experiencing your normal behaviors, reactions, thoughts, and feelings. What does your baseline look like? Think about how you feel, what's happening in your body, what you are thinking, and your energy levels on a typical day. Write three descriptions of your baseline.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



When you experience a stressful event, you can think of yourself as the plant in the middle. How does an unhealthy plant return to its baseline? We take care of it by giving it what it needs, like water or sunlight. Just like the plant needs to be taken care of to return its baseline, you also need to take care of yourself during stressful events to return to your baseline. This is what it means to be resilient!

**Resilience** means *springing back or returning to normal after difficulty, failure, or hardship.*

Can you think of a time in your life when you've had to be resilient? Draw a picture or write a few sentences to summarize your resilience below:



One tool you can use to return to your baseline when you are experiencing a stressful event is an **affirmation**. Affirmations are phrases or sayings you can repeat to calm down and focus during stressful situations. Think of an affirmation you can tell yourself and write it below.



High school is an important time in your life. It is a time when you think about and prepare for your future. This causes both good and bad stress, and when you spend a high school year abroad, you may experience even more stressors than usual. A stressor is an internal or external event that sets off a stress response that can push you into the panic zone. It can be something that happens on the outside, like a conversation you have with a friend. It can be something that happens on the inside, like a thought, a dream, or a memory. Understanding your personal stressors will help you be prepared for stressful situations you will face.

What is one stressor you experience as a student in your home country? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is a stressor you may experience in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Understanding your personal stressors and how you react to them can help you know when you need to take a tool from your toolbox to help you **be resilient** and return to your baseline. Sometimes you may not be able to deal with your problem or stressor on your own, and that's when you need to ask for help. Don't be afraid to ask for help! You will have many people who *want* to help you, and asking for help is also an important part of emotional **resilience**. If you are not sure how to ask for help, you can use this guide:

## Exercise 8-2: How to Ask For Help

**I feel** \_\_\_\_\_

*Insert the feeling word here. For example: sad, lonely, mad, afraid, confused, etc.*

**When** \_\_\_\_\_

*Describe the situation that creates the feeling. For example: I feel lonely when I am home with my host family but we are all doing separate things.*

**Because** \_\_\_\_\_

*Explain why you are feeling what you are feeling. Think about why you had this reaction, but do not blame others. For example: I feel lonely when I am home with my host family but we are all doing separate things because at home in my country, I have three siblings and we are always doing something together.*

**I need** \_\_\_\_\_

*Ask for what it is that you need. For example: Can we watch a TV show together, or have a family game night? Can I visit with my friends?*

# The House of Self-Care

In the U.S., you may hear the phrase “self-care.” Self-care simply means taking care of yourself to maintain your physical, mental, and emotional health. You can think of self-care like a house. Just like a regular house needs a strong foundation, your self-care house also needs a strong foundation. The foundation includes activities you do every day to stay healthy in mind and body. The middle floors of the house are your needs in relationships. The top floor of the house includes calming practices to help you maintain or return to your baseline.

What is in your own House of Self-Care? List three self-care activities you do at home that you can also do in the U.S.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What calming practices do you use now? Which do you think will help you in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What comforting items can you bring from home to help maintain your well-being? For example, tea or a favorite stuffed animal. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER 8 VOCABULARY

*Make sure you know the meaning of these important words:*

- Stressor
- Emotional Well-Being
- Baseline
- Resilience
- Self-care
- Calming practice (box breathing, 5 senses)
- Comfort zone
- Stretch zone
- Panic zone
- Affirmation

## TOOLBOX

*Here are the new tools gathered in this chapter for your Toolbox:*

- Resilience



# CHAPTER 9:

## Money Matters and Making a Budget

As you learned earlier, a U.S. State Department FLEX/YES scholar receives a monthly stipend. This stipend allows you to purchase things you will need to participate in American life and to pay for your own personal expenses. In this chapter you will learn some budgeting skills and tips to manage your money so that you can get the most out of your stipend. While on program, you will be living with a host family who will provide your meals and housing, which is the largest portion of your living costs. However, you are expected to pay for your own personal expenses. You will receive a **U.S.\$200 monthly allowance** to pay for these things such as ***school supplies, toiletries*** (shampoo, toothpaste), ***movie tickets, sporting events, mobile data, phone plans, snacks, and meals out with friends.***

An additional U.S.\$300 incidental allowance 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 United States. 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, discuss with your Local Rep.

A few examples of appropriate incidentals allowance expenditures are ***clothes for physical education class, a lock for school locker, sports or music class fees, rental fees for textbooks*** (in some schools), or ***required clothing for school.*** Once your host family has 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.

How to spend a fixed amount of money may be a new experience for you. At home, you probably do not pay for many of these things yourself. In this chapter, there are two exercises to give you some practice with U.S. money and how you will use your allowances. It will give you an idea of how to budget your money and plan for future expenses.

One way to “stretch your dollar” is to find sales. By doing this, you will be able to make your allowance last longer. “Sales,” which are lowered prices for an item, often happen at the end of seasons and at holiday times. Speak with your host family about sales and different types of stores. Something may be cheaper in one store, but still be the same quality. Something less expensive does not necessarily mean poor quality.

You should NOT borrow money from your family or friends. Americans generally do not like to lend money to friends, because if it is not repaid right away, it can spoil a friendship. This may be very different from your own

### Incidentals Allowance Procedure

1. Make a list of what you think you need to purchase.
2. Discuss what you think you need to purchase with your host family.
3. Discuss what you think you need to purchase with your local representative.
4. If approved, purchase the items and SAVE the receipts.
5. Submit the receipts to your placement organization for reimbursement.
6. Get reimbursed by the placement organization.

customs. If you must borrow, remember to repay it quickly.

If you have the time and the opportunity, you might be able to add to your monthly allowance by doing jobs for neighbors, such as cutting the grass or babysitting. You will find that many American teenagers earn some of their own money. These small jobs do not pay a lot, but they help and may allow you to do more things than you thought you could otherwise afford.

## Incidentals Allowance Discussion List

### ESTIMATED COST OF SOME ITEMS WHICH MAY BE APPROPRIATE FOR INCIDENTALS ALLOWANCE

<b>SCHOOL FEES &amp; SUPPLIES</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>SPORTS/INTERESTS</b>	<b>\$</b>
Lock (Hall locker) .....	<b>\$5.00-10.00</b>	Tennis racket .....	<b>\$35.00</b>
Lock (Gym locker).....	<b>\$5.00-10.00</b>	Tennis balls.....	<b>\$10.00</b>
Laboratory fees (Science) .....	<b>\$10.00-20.00</b>	Baseball mitt .....	<b>\$35.00</b>
Class Dues .....	<b>\$10.00-75.00</b>	Sport team fees.....	<b>\$40.00-100.00</b>
Club Dues .....	<b>\$25.00-75.00</b>	Art supplies .....	<b>\$30.00</b>
Yearbook .....	<b>\$50.00-120.00</b>	Music supplies.....	<b>\$20.00</b>
Workbook fee .....	<b>\$10.00-20.00</b>	Musical instrument rental .....	<b>\$50.00-100.00</b>
Physical education clothes .....	<b>\$30.00</b>	(per year)	



## Exercise 9-1: Estimated Budget for my Incidentals Allowance

Look at the list of items in the chart above and write the items below that you think you will need. Fill in the prices and add them up. You can use this worksheet to start thinking of items that the Incidentals Allowance might cover and use this worksheet as a starting point to discuss your needs with your host family.

Once you and your host family agree on the necessary items, you will need to check with your Placement Organization's Local Rep to be sure the items will be reimbursed.

ITEM	WHY DO I NEED THIS?	ESTIMATED COST
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	\$

The cost of public high school in the United States is paid for through the taxes paid by residents. While they do not charge tuition, they may charge fees of between \$5 and \$200 or more per item for textbooks, supplies, physical education, clubs, yearbook, technology, sports or other activities. Total fees can range between \$100 and \$700 per student annually.

# Monthly Allowance

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While on program, you will have to make choices about how, where and when you will spend money. There are three types of spending:

## Fixed Expenses

Some expenses you must expect to pay each month. They include personal hygiene items, monthly cell phone plan, monthly school fees (for sports teams or musical instrument rental), and school supplies. These are called “fixed expenses” and you should budget for them each month. Everyone will not have the same expenses because their interests may be different.

## Savings

You should try to save some money each month for bigger events (someone’s birthday present, a school trip, a special school dance) and for a few gifts to take home. This amount should be between \$5.00 and \$20.00 per month. Any money left over at the end of the month can be added to the savings, but it is good budgeting practice to plan (in advance) what you will save. *Remember, your stipend is provided to assist you in participating in social activities with friends and family. It is **not** intended for you to save this money to take home at the end of the year.*

## Spending Money

The rest of your monthly stipend will allow you to participate in activities with your friends and family and buy the items you want or need during the month. This is referred to as “spending money.” It is the amount left after you subtract your fixed expenses and savings.

# Your Budget

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A **budget**, also called a spending plan, helps you prioritize expenses and save for your future needs or wants. There are many online tools and (free) apps to simplify budgeting like Mint, Wally, and Pocketguard. If this interests you, research available apps.

- The first step to creating a realistic spending plan is **tracking your spending**. Many students find it helpful to write down everything they spend money on for the first few weeks (even small purchases like a soda or pack of gum). At the end of the tracking period, do the math and look for specific spending habits like how much you spend on entertainment or extracurricular activities. These habits form your budget categories. In budgeting, everything you spend money on should fall into a category.
- Next, assess your **income**. Include your monthly stipend and the average amount you think you might make doing odd jobs, if any. It’s important to have a clear picture of what you’re working with so you can create a realistic plan.
- Then, **plan for your expenses**. Expenses are either fixed or variable. Fixed expenses are always the same, like your monthly phone charges. Variable expenses are a little harder to plan for because the amount changes, like entertainment or extracurricular activities. That’s why tracking your expenses is so important; it’s how you determine an accurate estimate of what you spend over time. Also, plan for expenses that don’t happen every month. Anticipate the cost of something in advance so that you can plan for the expense.

# Estimated Cost of Items You May Need to Buy with Your Monthly Allowance

Here is an idea of what things cost in the U.S. in 2025. These are only examples—some prices will vary depending on location and type of store. In addition to these prices, you must add sales tax, which usually varies from 3% to 9% depending on the state. And don't forget: American stores often have sales where you can save money.

<b>PERSONAL ITEMS</b>	<b>\$</b>
Deodorant*	<b>\$4.00-7.00</b>
Shampoo*	<b>\$5.00-15.00</b>
Toothpaste*	<b>\$4.00-10.00</b>
Hair conditioner	<b>\$5.00-10.00</b>
Make-up: Eyeliner, mascara, lipstick (per item)	<b>\$5.00-10.00</b>
Female haircut	<b>\$25.00-75.00</b>
Male haircut	<b>\$20.00-50.00</b>
Cologne/aftershave	<b>\$4.00-10.00</b>
Razor/razorblades*	<b>\$5.00-16.00</b>
Shaving cream*	<b>\$3.00-5.00</b>
Feminine hygiene supplies*	<b>\$5.00-7.00</b>
Cough drops	<b>\$4.00</b>
Running Shoes	<b>\$60.00-150.00</b>

<b>SNACKS / FOOD</b>	<b>\$</b>
Soda / pop	<b>\$1.25-2.50</b>
Ice cream cone	<b>\$3.00-7.00</b>
Lunch at McDonald's	<b>\$8.00-16.00</b>
Snacks at school	<b>\$2.00</b>
Lunch in a restaurant	<b>\$12.00-25.00</b>
Mints, candy, gum	<b>\$1.50-3.00</b>

<b>SOCIAL / RECREATIONAL ITEMS</b>	<b>\$</b>
Magazine	<b>\$4.00-7.00</b>
Movie theater ticket	<b>\$8.00-15.00</b>
Flowers	<b>\$15.00-30.00</b>
Birthday card	<b>\$2.00-6.00</b>
Museum entry fee	<b>\$12.00-20.00</b>
Ticket to music concert	<b>\$40.00-150.00</b>
Ticket to school play	<b>\$10.00-15.00</b>
Roller (or ice) skating	<b>\$10.00-15.00</b>
Bowling (per game)	<b>\$7.00-12.00</b>
Prom dress or tuxedo	<b>\$100.00-150.00</b>
Ticket to school sporting event	<b>\$5.00-7.00</b>
Contribution for gasoline (friend's car)	<b>\$5.00-20.00</b>
Monthly cell phone service*	<b>\$25.00-125.00</b>

<b>SCHOOL FEES AND SUPPLIES</b>	<b>\$</b>
School notebook*	<b>\$3.00-5.00</b>
Paper*	<b>\$3.00</b>
Pen, pencil*	<b>\$2.00-4.00</b>
Post it notes, index cards	<b>\$3.00</b>
Graphing calculator	<b>\$60.00-120.00</b>
Graduation cap/ gown (for senior if permitted)	<b>\$30.00-50.00</b>
School Spirit Wear	<b>\$10.00-60.00</b>

\*fixed expenses

## Exercise 9-2: Budgeting for Your Monthly Allowance

Look at the one-month calendar on the page below. The items in **CAPITAL LETTERS** you **must** buy. The items in **lowercase** are **optional**. You will have opportunities on occasion doing small jobs (babysitting, lawn mowing). Each month you will receive **\$200 dollars**. This money must last all month; you can carry forward some unspent funds to use to purchase a larger item, or to participate in an activity the following month. Remember, the monthly allowance is provided to allow you to participate in activities in your community to fully experience American life and culture. Engage, enjoy, but be smart about your budget.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>You get your monthly allowance of <b>\$200</b></p> <p>After school friends invite you to go to McDonald's. <b>-\$10</b></p>	<p>You saw a cool phone case cover that one of your friends has and you want to get one. <b>-\$8</b></p>	<p><b>YOU HAVE RUN OUT OF DEODORANT: -\$5*</b></p> <p>While at the store, you see a poster perfect for your room. <b>-\$5</b></p>	<p>You find out the entire class is going on a ski trip. If you want to go, it will cost <b>-\$75</b></p>	<p><b>YOU FORGOT YOUR LUNCH AND MUST BUY LUNCH AT SCHOOL: -\$7*</b></p>	<p>All your friends are going to movies.</p> <p>Ticket: <b>-\$12</b> Popcorn &amp; Coke: <b>-\$10</b></p>	<p>You go shopping with friends. You give friend gas money. <b>-\$10</b></p> <p>You see a sale for a hoodie you have wanted. <b>-\$30</b></p>
<p>Your earbuds break so you want to buy a new pair. <b>-\$15</b></p>	<p><b>YOU STAY AT SCHOOL LATE FOR A CLUB MEETING AND MUST TAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION HOME: -\$2*</b></p>	<p>Your friends invite you to go to Starbucks after school. <b>-\$7</b></p>	<p>Snow day, school is closed. Friends invite you bowling <b>-\$12</b>. However, you could stay home as neighbor will pay you <b>\$15</b> to shovel his driveway.</p>	<p><b>YOU HAVE RUN OUT OF SHAMPOO: -\$5*</b></p> <p>While you are at the store, you see your favorite American cookies. <b>-\$3</b></p>	<p>It's Friday night and all your friends are hanging out at the pizza shop.</p> <p>Gas money: <b>-\$5</b> Pizza &amp; Coke: <b>-\$7</b></p>	<p>Big basketball game at school and all your friends are going.</p> <p>Ticket: <b>-\$7</b> You want a school t-shirt: <b>-\$10</b></p>
<p>Your host family wants to take you to a museum, and they offer to pay the entrance fee.</p> <p>You see a souvenir: <b>-\$10</b></p>	<p>You want to send postcards home to your family, and you must pay postage. <b>-\$4</b></p>	<p>You ate the lunch you brought to school from home, but you are still hungry and buy snacks at school. <b>-\$5</b></p>	<p>Your phone runs out of memory and you can't take any more photos. You want to buy backup storage space <b>-\$10</b></p>	<p><b>YOU HAVE RUN OUT OF TOOTHPASTE: -\$5*</b></p> <p>At the store you see your favorite candy. <b>-\$2</b></p>	<p>You've invited friends to come to your house and hangout. You want to buy chips and soda for everyone. <b>-\$7</b></p>	<p>Neighbor asks you to shovel again. <b>+\$10</b></p> <p>But you'd rather go to the mall with friends and pay <b>-\$5</b> for gas money. You resist buying anything, but lunch costs <b>-\$7</b></p>
<p>Your friends invite you to join them for an NBA basketball game. Tickets are <b>-\$65</b></p> <p>A neighbor with kids who adore you, asks if you would babysit all afternoon. <b>+\$30</b></p>	<p><b>YOU MISSED THE SCHOOL BUS AND HAVE TO TAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION HOME FROM SCHOOL: -\$2*</b></p>	<p>You want to try the iced tea drink all the kids seem to buy at school. <b>-\$4</b></p>	<p>It is your host mom's birthday!</p> <p>You can make her a thoughtful card (<b>\$0</b>) or buy one. (<b>-\$3</b>)</p> <p>You could buy her flowers. <b>-\$15</b></p>	<p>You want to go to the school basketball game. Tickets: <b>-\$7</b></p> <p>You will miss dinner, so you want to buy a drink and hot dog at the game. <b>-\$7</b></p>	<p>You want to stay late after school to watch a play, but you need to give your friend who offers to drive you home gas money. <b>-\$5</b></p>	<p>There is a dance at school. Tickets are <b>-\$10</b></p> <p>Your friends invite you to a restaurant afterwards; your host mom says it's OK. Food costs: <b>-\$10</b></p>

Remember this budgeting activity when you are in your host community. Your host family may help you open a bank account in which to save your money until you need to use it. Ask for a form W-8 at the bank. This form allows you to open an individual bank account even though you are not an American citizen. You should be the only person who can get money from your account.

Your host family also will be able to advise you on the cost of items and where to shop for the best value.

## Exercise 9-3: Money Matters Quiz

Circle the correct answer to each question.

1. **Your host family will receive how much money for hosting you?**
  - a. \$100 per month
  - b. \$1000 per month
  - c. \$100 total
  - d. None
  
2. **What types of allowances will you receive to help with living costs?**
  - a. None
  - b. 3 – incidentals, tutoring, and living
  - c. 2 – monthly stipend and incidentals allowance
  - d. Only tutoring, to help keep your grades up
  
3. **Your host family pays what proportion of your living costs?**
  - a. None
  - b. All
  - c. Most
  - d. Very little
  
4. **Which allowance will you need to submit receipts for?**
  - a. Incidentals allowance
  - b. Monthly stipend
  - c. Tutoring allowance
  - d. None
  
5. **What is your monthly stipend for?**
  - a. Phone expenses, personal hygiene items, etc.
  - b. Paying your host family for living with them
  - c. Paying for school
  - d. Saving up to buy a phone
  
6. **Your monthly allowance will be**
  - a. \$50
  - b. \$100
  - c. \$125
  - d. \$200
  
7. **What is a budget?**
  - a. A government document about money
  - b. A plan for how to spend an amount of money
  - c. How much your parents send you every month
  - d. The bill your host parents give you every month
  
8. **If you need toothpaste you should**
  - a. Buy it with you monthly stipend
  - b. Ask your host family to buy it for you
  - c. Use your host sister's toothpaste
  - d. Not brush your teeth
  
9. **Your host family must provide you with which of the following?**
  - a. A place to live but no meals
  - b. 1 hot meal a day
  - c. 2 cold meals a day
  - d. 3 meals a day (hot or cold)

**10. Who pays for your cell phone services?**

- a. Your natural family
- b. Your placement organization
- c. You
- d. Your host parents

**11. What kind of jobs can you have in the United States as a FLEX/YES J-1 visa high school student?**

- a. After school jobs like those in the grocery store
- b. Babysitting, mowing grass, and other small occasional jobs
- c. Any full-time work
- d. None at all

**12. Who will pay for the costs of any time you spend on the Internet?**

- a. It varies from host family to host family
- b. Nobody, Internet is free in America
- c. Your host family
- d. Your placement organization

**13. What is the best way to get the best price?**

- a. Look for items on sale
- b. Argue with the cashier for a lower price
- c. Follow a friends advice and buy on black market
- d. Products are priced the same everywhere

**14. How will you get your incidentals allowance?**

- a. You will be given a check before you leave
- b. Your host parents will have a check for you
- c. Your host parents will pay and get reimbursed
- d. You will need to ask your placement organization for the money

**ANSWERS:**

1: D 2: C 3: C 4: A 5: A 6: D 7: B 8: A 9: D 10: C 11: B 12: A 13: A 14: C

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## CHAPTER 9 VOCABULARY

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*Make sure you know the meaning of these important words:*

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- Incidentals Allowance
- Monthly Stipend (allowance)
- Cost Comparison
- Appropriate expenditures
- Receipts
- Balance
- Budget
- Debit card
- Fixed expenses
- Tipping
- Reimburse

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## TOOLBOX

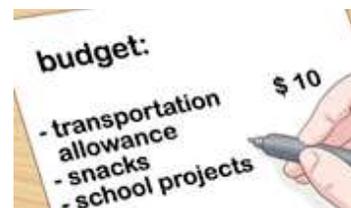
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*In this section, we have added some new tools to your growing Toolbox.*

*Be sure to remember:*

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- Incidentals Allowance Procedure
- Budgeting Skills



# CHAPTER 10:

## High School in America

In the previous sections we have learned about American values and culture. You know that people develop their values and cultural heritage from their family and community. Now we will focus on the education system and how it too reflects the ideas and values of a society.

Going to school in a new country not only means studying what a teacher presents to you in class, it also means understanding a very important institution in your new culture. Below is a letter from a former exchange student. It will give you an introduction to some of the aspects of school life in the United States which may be different than in your country.

*Hi! My name's Marina and I'm an exchange student from Moldova. I live in Ohio and I'm a junior in the high school here. School is different here from back home, and it took me some time to get used to it.*

*Let me describe a typical school day for you. My sister and I leave for school at 7:30 a.m. every day. A yellow school bus picks us up at the corner and drops us off at school 20 minutes later. My friends usually wait for me in front of the library and we chat for a few minutes before homeroom. In homeroom, the homeroom teacher takes attendance and we listen to the daily announcements over the intercom. Although homeroom only lasts ten minutes, it's important to be there on time. If you're absent, the school calls your home to find out if you're sick. If you're late, you have to report to the office and explain why. I learned the hard way that it's always good to be on time for school!*

*My first class is Algebra, and I can only say Algebra is just as boring here as it was in Moldova. The teacher isn't very interesting either. At the end of first period, a bell rings and the students all get up and go to different rooms for their next class. Since American students are allowed some elective subjects as well as the required ones, students go to all different rooms for their second class, and the teachers stay in the same room and wait for the next class. There's lots of activity and confusion in the halls with everybody going in different directions, and in the beginning, I often got lost. Fortunately, there were always friendly students who helped me find my way. I didn't hurry very much, either, and in the beginning I was often late to my next class. There are only five minutes between classes!*

*My second and third periods on Wednesday are U.S. History and Choir. These are subjects I really like. It's awesome to learn the history of this sometimes-confusing country, and it helps me better understand the U.S. Choir is an elective subject for me, and I chose it because I love singing. Singing is fun and learning new songs helps my English, too. Last month we gave a Christmas concert. (Another elective I should take is Home Economics because I could learn how to cook American foods!) Other elective subjects are photography, shop, and ceramics - all sorts of things we don't have at home. Maybe your school will also have such interesting classes to choose from.*

*After Choir, I have lunch period. At my school students eat in the cafeteria. Some students buy a lunch and others bring a "brown bag." (This is funny American slang. It means to bring your*

*lunch from home in a small brown paper bag, even though not everyone who brings lunch from home puts it in a small brown paper bag.)*

*In the afternoon I have American Literature, Physical Education, and Biology, and then school is over. Well, classes are out but the day isn't finished yet. After school, most students go to extracurricular activities. I help out on the school newspaper by typing. Last semester I took a typing class as my elective, and now I can type pretty fast in English. I'm also sewing costumes for the Drama Club's school play. Extracurricular activities are fun, and they're also a great way to meet more kids.*

*I get home from school at 4:30 p.m., and I'm usually "wiped-out." (Wiped-out is more American slang. It means very tired.) After dinner I do my homework, which isn't too difficult but takes time. That's my Wednesday routine. In general, I really like my school because there's so much to do and so many different kinds of people to meet. I hope you'll enjoy American high school and making new friends. Take part in extracurricular activities and talk to people, even if you think your English isn't so good. Guess what—even Americans make mistakes with English grammar! Good luck.*

*Yours, Marina*

Marina shared a lot of information about her school life in Ohio. Some of the vocabulary may be unfamiliar. Appendix 14 in the back of this workbook provides a list of commonly used words and phrases in American high schools. Use it as a resource throughout this chapter and learn these words before you depart the United States.

## Similarities and Differences Between U.S. Schools and Your Home School

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Listed below are a few ways in which American high schools may be different to your home country school. During PDO you discussed how things such as grading systems, exams and classrooms compare to U.S. schools. You were asked to write down student comments from the discussion which were true for you.

When we talk about these differences, it is important to be non-judgmental. Rather than focusing on labeling American high schools "easier," "harder," "better," or "worse" than your home school, think about what these differences may tell you about American culture. Always remember: "**Not better, not worse, just different.**" from your toolbox!

## Exercise 10-1: How Schools May Differ

IN THE U.S.	IN MY SCHOOL
Curriculum varies from school to school because they are administered by local school boards.	
Students choose from a variety of courses—core course requirements as well as “electives”.	
Students have a Guidance Counselor to assist in planning schedules and to discuss concerns/problems.	
Teachers have their own classroom, arrange the furnishings in ways which make sense to them and set up their own “rules” for the classroom.	
Students move from class to class with different students coming together in different classes.	
Grades are determined based on classroom participation, quizzes, and tests	
In addition to individual assignments, projects are often done in small groups and teamwork is encouraged.	
Exams are generally written, multiple choice, true/false, or essay.	
In addition to important tests like mid-terms and final exams, there often are periodic quizzes some of which might be a “pop” or surprise test.	
There are strict rules regarding attendance and tardiness.	
In many schools, students are offered a choice of foreign language classes beginning in middle school.	
Physical education (Gym) and health education classes are generally required each year.	

# U.S. Public Schools: An Overview

## How the American School System is Structured

In order to understand the full public education system, let us look at the different types of schools that your future American classmates have already attended:

3-5 years old:	<b>Nursery school</b> or <b>Pre-School</b> is an optional school where children play together and learn to socialize.
5-6 years old:	<b>Kindergarten</b> is a required grade in most states.
6-12 years old:	<b>Elementary School</b> is also called “grade school.” Students attend grades 1 through 5 or 6 in order to obtain such basic skills as reading, spelling, writing, basic science, arithmetic, and social studies.
12-15 years old:	<b>Junior High School</b> or <b>Middle School</b> covers grades 6 or 7 through grades 8 or 9. It is a school where students are exposed to a wider curriculum, encouraging them to find their own specific interests and developing individual abilities.
15-18 years old:	<b>Senior High School</b> —usually just called “high school” or “secondary school”—is comprehensive in that it offers a wide curriculum to meet various student needs. Students attend high school from 9th to 12th, or 10th to 12th grades. Members of each grade in high school have special names:  9th graders— <b>Freshmen</b> 10th graders— <b>Sophomores</b> 11th graders— <b>Juniors</b> 12th graders— <b>Seniors</b>

When we say “class” or “grade”, we refer to a group of students who are all in a specific year of their school education. All members of the 10th grade are going to school for the tenth year. The word “class” also refers to the school lessons during which a specific subject is taught; the word “grade” also is used to mean the mark that is given on a test or report card. Again, **Appendix 14, High School Vocabulary**, is a great resource for clarification of common words and phrases used in American schools.

The school administration will place you according to your age and scholastic background in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade. You cannot demand to be placed in any specific grade.

The completion of high school is called graduation. In order to “graduate,” students must have accumulated a certain amount of credits during their four years at the school. “Credits” are points given for every subject that is passed successfully. In addition to that, students must have successfully completed specific subjects required by the state or local educational authorities, such as U.S. history, English, mathematics, and physical education (these may vary from state to state).

Exchange students rarely meet the school requirements for graduation and, therefore, usually do not receive diplomas. Sometimes they are given “honorary” graduation diplomas and can participate in the ceremony, however, this decision is made by the local school administration. Many school (but not all) provide, an exchange student with a “Certificate of Attendance,” showing that the student has attended the high school and his/her participation has been successful.

***To learn more about how public schools in the U.S. are managed and funded, see the Supplemental Reading section at the end of this workbook.***

## **Student Life: Extracurricular Activities, Student Organizations, and Clubs**

“Extracurricular activities” are the many club meetings, music or drama rehearsals, and sport practice sessions that take place in an American high school in the afternoon after classes are finished for the day. These meetings are a very important part of high school life, since they are a link between the different groups of students who are placed in the various academic programs. Students who usually would not meet in the classroom get to know each other in areas of common interest. They give students the opportunity to further their specific interests in various fields and to spend their free time together.

Even though they are not mandatory, many students get involved in different extracurricular activities. Since students spend a lot of time participating in various activities, the school becomes the center of social life of students. They not only go to school to study the material presented in class, but they also meet to socialize and to pursue their interests. It can be fun and important aspect of American high school life.

In these afternoon sessions you will probably make many of your friends and spend a lot of your free time! The number of clubs and the kinds of activities offered, once again, depends greatly on the size, structure, and financial capabilities of your specific school. Usually, however, you will find “language clubs” for students who are studying foreign language in school. If there is a club for students who are learning your native language, you certainly should join it!

Many times, there are math and science clubs, a drama club performing plays, a debate club, different clubs preparing students for future careers, and sometimes many more. Larger school often have Model U.N. clubs which sometimes participate on a national level with other schools across the country.

Other important activities in an American high school include the sports teams. Most schools offer a variety of teams for both boys and girls. American football, basketball, baseball and soccer are played in most schools. In addition, you may find tennis, gymnastics, hockey, swimming, golf, volleyball, cross-country, and track and field teams, depending again on the size and financial resources of the school.

Usually schools have varsity teams (for older, more experienced players) and junior varsity teams (younger less experienced players), which compete with other schools and which require intensive training and frequent seasonal practices. Larger schools might also have intramural teams, which play other teams within the school itself and most students are welcome to participate. However, athletic eligibility or participation in varsity team sports is not guaranteed and is subject to authorization by your local school district and the responsible State authority.

Smaller schools may not have some of the above-mentioned teams. But there usually is a variety of choices and if you have any athletic abilities at all, you should certainly try to join one of the teams.

If you are just not athletic, don't worry. You can still go to your school's football or basketball games and cheer for your team. American high schools often have “Cheerleading” teams, a separate sport that plays an important part at the football and basketball games leading the crowd in cheers for their team. But let's not tell you more. You should just go and see for yourself!

In addition to clubs and sports teams, you will find the Student Council and the class officer meetings. Students are elected by their school and classmates to represent them in these bodies and to organize activities for the school.

# Courses, Grading, Scheduling, and Support

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## School Subjects

Students at the secondary level have always had the opportunity to make certain choices of subjects according to their interests. In addition, students can be placed in specific classes depending on their intellectual abilities and achievements. The most rigorous classes are called advanced placement (“AP”) or international baccalaureate (“IB”) courses. Some schools will not allow exchange students to take these courses in order to leave room for American students. Students in these classes can take a national subject specific AP exam and if successful, they accrue course “credits” at the college or university level allowing them to waive entry level courses and even graduate university in less than the traditional four years.

Some exchange students may find their U.S. high schools much bigger than schools at home. Others may find them smaller. For some students, it may be unusual not to have younger children in the same school. In some locations in the U.S., schools from different districts have been consolidated (combined) so they are bigger, and more courses can be offered.

After describing to you all the “fun” you might have in your American high school, it is time to tell you something about the academic subjects you may be able to study during your stay in the United States.

The number of different subjects offered by the school often depends on the size and financial resources of the school district. In most U.S. schools, a student studies between five and seven subjects. Classes may be scheduled differently in each school. The traditional time schedule shows the same subject at the same time every day of the week. Many schools have different systems in which the schedules and subject combinations change every day.

Your choice of subjects will, of course, depend upon the subjects required by the school, your language abilities, and your own scholastic background. We strongly recommend that all exchange students take one course in social studies (American History, Civics, or Government) and one in literature or language arts (preferably American Literature). When given a choice, select subjects that will provide you with some knowledge about the United States.

In almost all schools you will find English, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies Departments. Classes in American Literature and speech are offered in almost every English Department. Speech is a subject that teaches students to speak comfortably to groups and increases the ability to articulate ideas in public. Your English language skills will be constantly challenged, and a speech class can help build confidence for presentations about your country and other leadership activities.

Foreign Language Department courses vary greatly. Many schools offer Spanish and French. Some schools offer German, Russian, Latin, or other languages in their curriculum. Mandarin is becoming increasingly popular in some areas of the country and often online courses are offered if the resources are not available to teach a given language. If your native language is taught, the teacher may ask you to help in class. This would be a great experience for the students studying the language, and exchange students usually enjoy this task.

If you have a choice of subjects in the Math or Science Departments, you should make sure that you have the necessary background from your own school. Mathematics is usually taught in specific areas such as algebra, geometry, or trigonometry, and if you have studied all these areas in your home country, it is sometimes difficult to find the appropriate course for you. Check the textbooks and discuss with your counselor the work you have previously done in these subjects. Science courses usually include laboratory work, giving the students the opportunity to participate by setting up their own experiments. As with

mathematics, the sciences are usually taught as subject matter focused classes: biology, chemistry, and physics. Most exchange students find advanced science classes both interesting and challenging.

The Social Studies Department usually is of special interest to exchange students since it familiarizes them with American society and ideas. Besides American history, world history, and U.S. government (also called civics), classes in sociology, economics, political science, and other subjects may be offered.

In addition to the departments described above, there are others, possibly including Agriculture, Business, Industrial Arts (or “Shop”), Art, Music, and Physical Education.

In her letter included earlier in this chapter, former exchange student Marina strongly encourages you to take one or more of the classes offered in these departments as these may be subjects that you do not find in your country, and they will be a new experience for you.

Finding the right combination of challenging and fun course work will result in a more interesting academic experience.

### Test, Exams, and Grades

Just like every school system, high schools in the U.S. give tests and exams and, unfortunately, there are quite a lot of them. Here is a brief description of them so you will know a little more about what to expect.

In most academic subjects, weekly or biweekly tests or quizzes are given. The tests are either written out and distributed by the teacher in class or taken on the computer.

There are three major forms of questions:

TRUE OR FALSE: The truth of a statement has to be judged. Circle ‘true’ or ‘false’ for each statement.

- 1)  TRUE or FALSE: Marina is an exchange student from Moldova.
- 2) TRUE or  FALSE: Marina is in the 10th grade.

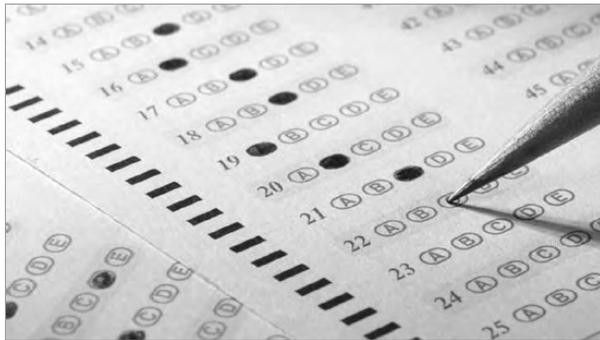
MULTIPLE CHOICE: Several answers are given, and the correct one must be chosen.

- 1) Marina is an exchange student who comes from \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. France
  - B. Italy
  - C. Brazil
  - D. None of the above.

**MATCHING:** Statements that are in two lists must be matched so they form a true combination.

<b>B</b>	1) Generation Z	<b>A.</b>	African country
<b>A</b>	2) Egypt	<b>B.</b>	Americans born between 1995 and 2015
<b>D</b>	3) Deodorant	<b>C.</b>	Important travel document
<b>C</b>	4) Passport	<b>D.</b>	Toiletry item commonly used among high school students and adults in the U.S.

Many schools use a Scantron form, shown in the photo below, for these types of questions.



Tests usually involve a large number of questions and ask for very detailed factual information. They are either graded on a point basis, with letter marks or grades, or on a curve system.

Teachers who grade on a point system will give you a 100% on your test if you have answered all questions correctly. You will receive 75% if you answered three-quarters correctly, and 50% if you answered half of the questions correctly. Generally, you must answer

65% of the questions correctly for a minimum passing grade.

If you are marked on a letter system you will receive the marks A, B, C, D, or F. “A” is the highest and “D” the lowest passing grade. “F”s are given when the test or the course are not passed successfully. Often a plus or minus will be added to distinguish the quality of the work (B+, C-, etc.).

Sometimes percentage marks are translated to letter marks and grade points. Each letter grade is assigned a certain number of points (usually “0” to “4”). The grades for all a student’s classes are then averaged together to provide an overall grade point average (GPA). The chart below shows you how these marks may correspond to each other.

<b>A</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>90%-100%</b>	<b>EXCELLENT</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>80%-89%</b>	<b>VERY GOOD</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>70%-79%</b>	<b>ACCEPTABLE</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>65%-69%</b>	<b>MINIMUM PASSING</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>64% AND LOWER</b>	<b>FAILURE</b>	<b>NO CREDIT</b>

**IMPORTANT:** FLEX/YES students are expected to maintain a **B** average or better.

Teachers only occasionally grade on a curve system. If they do, they take the average of all results of the students who took the test. This average becomes the middle grade and receives a “C.” All tests having above average results receive above average grades, and vice versa.

If you ever miss a test because you were not present for an excused reason on the day the test was given, you have to report to the teacher to make up the test. If you were absent for an unexcused reason, you will receive a failing mark on the test.

Report cards are issued two to three times during a semester. The report card has a grade (letter or percentage) for each subject being studied. Each grade shows the average of the tests and assignments completed.

At the end of the semester or term, examinations (“final exams” or “finals”) covering all of the materials taught during that semester are taken in most schools. The semester or term grade that a student receives generally is the average of all grades on quizzes, tests, and homework, and the semester final exam grade.

Some subjects require a lot of homework, which may involve reading chapters in textbooks, doing written assignments, or completing work begun in class. Homework can be done at home or at school during study hall, which is a time in school when you do not have any classes but instead go to a specific room to do your work under the supervision of a teacher.

**It is essential that homework is done, as the teachers may use the assignments during the lessons and may base their test questions on information learned through homework.**

For some subjects, book reports must be written or given orally about books that are read outside of class. Sometimes papers must be written about a subject closely related to a theme discussed in class. If on a broader subject, they are called term papers and usually must be quite detailed. Be sure you understand all special assignments and start them in time to have them completed by the date required.

Giving someone the answers or looking at another person’s paper to copy answers, is called “cheating.” Cheating during a test is forbidden in a U.S. high school. Of course, some students do cheat. But you should not be one of them. As a U.S. scholarship exchange student, you are held to a higher standard. Do not even try it; it is very embarrassing, and you might be subject to school disciplinary action such as detention or suspension.

Plagiarism, the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own, carries similar consequences. Teachers often will use a software application to screen student essays for sentences, phrases, paragraphs which may have been taken verbatim from another source (reference book, online tools etc.). Many schools in the US consider unauthorized use of AI to be plagiarism, so be sure to check with your teachers about this before using any online software to complete assigned tasks.

### **Your School Guidance Counselor**

American high schools generally have a Guidance Department, staffed by professionals trained to work with students in planning their academic coursework, discussing problems or concerns which may impact their ability to succeed, and preparing them for post-secondary school planning, (whether that means university, technical schools, “gap year” planning, joining the armed forces, or joining the work force).

Your high school will probably assign you a specific counselor or guidance teacher will probably meet with you when you first go to school to help you with your schedule. He/she will probably call you to have a meeting once or twice in the year.

Whenever you have a problem with school, you should go into the guidance office and make an appointment with your counselor. You should stay in touch with this special resource person who is there to help you!

## Common High School Rules and Regulations

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The American high school is structured very strictly, and you sometimes may find it difficult to accept all the different rules and regulations that a student has to observe. Most American students obey these rules and you may not find a lot of sympathy if you do not follow them.

There are different regulations in every high school, and you must familiarize yourself with the restrictions in your school. You will see examples of common rules starting on page 147 in the sample Student Handbook found in Appendix 15. During PDO you discussed a few high school rule violations:

- ✓ **Tardiness**
- ✓ **Missing exams or homework**
- ✓ **Skipping classes**
- ✓ **Leaving school without permission**
- ✓ **Sleeping in class**
- ✓ **Smoking**
- ✓ **Use or possession of drugs or alcohol**
- ✓ **Fighting**
- ✓ **Harassing other students**
- ✓ **Disruptive behavior**
- ✓ **Cheating**
- ✓ **Violating dress code**
- ✓ **Misuse of computers and the Internet**
- ✓ **Plagiarism**

You also learned about common punishments:

- ✓ **Low grade:** Minor behavioral problems can often result in lowering your overall grade.
- ✓ **Failure:** In many schools, cheating on an exam results in immediate failure of the exam and can have more serious consequences as well.
- ✓ **Parent call:** The school will call a student's parents for several reasons such as: breaking school rules, behavior problems, or poor academic performance.
- ✓ **Detention:** Before or after school, students are required to go to a special "detention room" where they are not allowed to talk and must work on homework. Sometimes extra work is assigned.
- ✓ **Suspension:** A student who is suspended from school is not permitted to return to school until the parents have met with school administrators/teachers. A suspension is highly embarrassing for both the student and his/her parents. Being suspended from school could cause you to be sent home.
- ✓ **Expulsion:** A student who has been expelled from school is not allowed to return to the school under any circumstances. U.S. schools will not enroll foreign exchange students who have been expelled from another U.S. school. Expulsion is a great embarrassment and will cause you to be sent home. Examples of violations leading to expulsion include but are not limited to possession or use of drugs or alcohol on campus and fighting.

During PDO, you discussed another letter to a Placement Organization from a former exchange student, Olga, who struggled to understand a rule against plagiarism (taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as your own). Consider what was discussed in this session about plagiarism. Read the letter and answer the questions as you think about what you might do in a similar situation.

*Dear Placement Organization,*

*Last week I was supposed to turn in a paper about the Civil War for my U.S. history class. I’ve been busy with cheerleading and doing my volunteer service and did not have time to prepare the paper. Plus the textbook is really hard to read and I don’t need to know so much about American history. So I found some information on the internet about the Civil War, and put that in my report, plus some of the things I already knew about it. My teacher stopped me after class today and asked me if I wrote the paper. I told her I found some of the information online and she started telling me that what I did was “plagiarism” and not allowed in school, and that I could get detention or suspension for this. She also said she has to call the principal and my host mom about it. I am really upset – what is the big deal if I borrow some things from the internet but still include my own thoughts?*

*Sincerely,*

*Olga*

1. What did Olga do that made her teacher unhappy? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In Olga’s mind, why did she think this was OK? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why do you think Olga’s teacher reacted this way? What do you think will happen to Olga? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What should Olga do now? How can she use her toolbox to improve the situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# CHAPTER 10 VOCABULARY

*Make sure you know the meaning of these important words:*

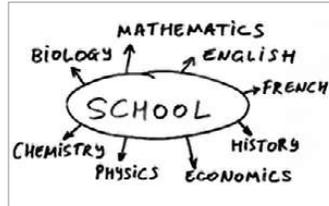
## TOOLBOX

*In this section, we have added some new tools to your growing Toolbox.*

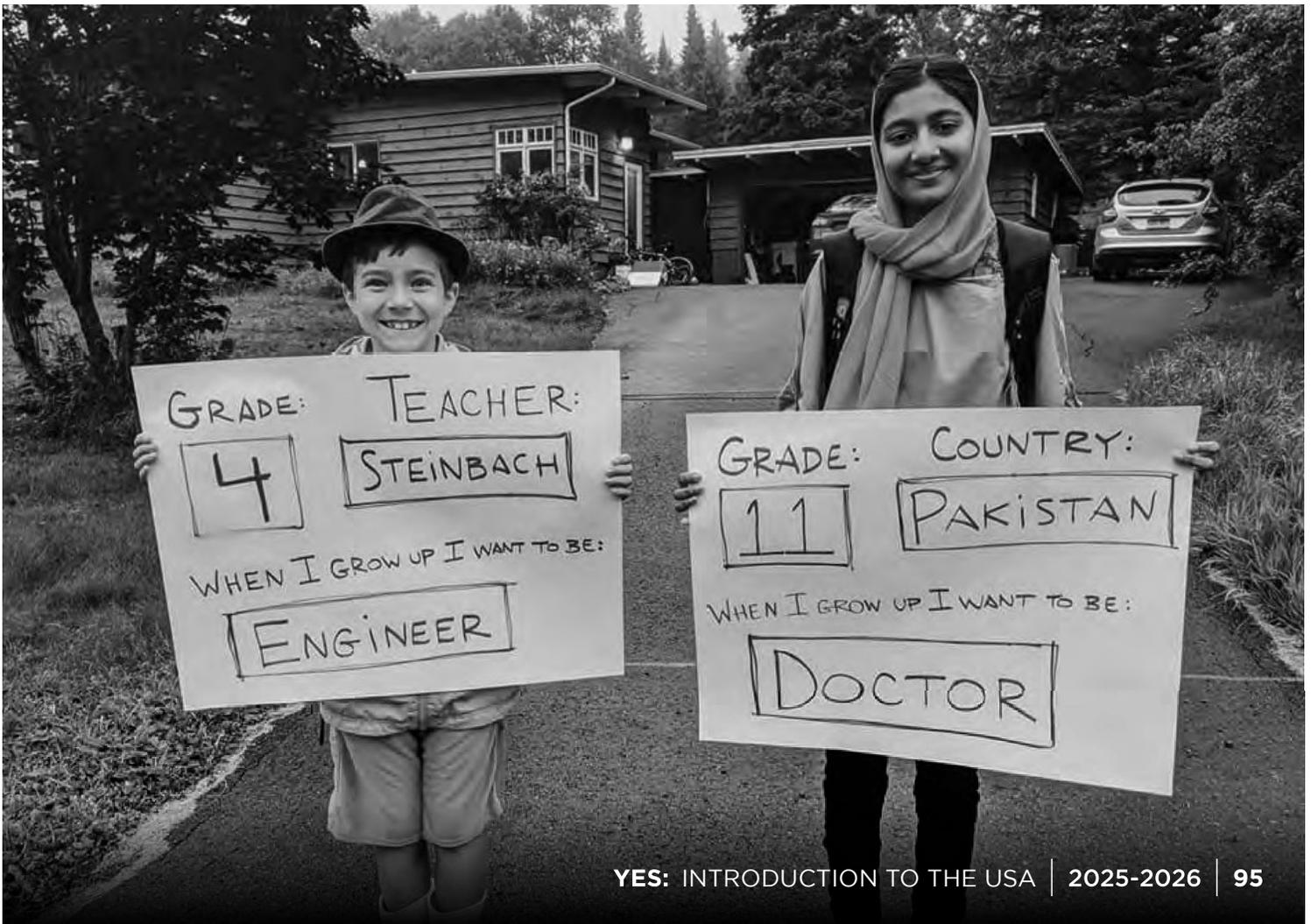
*Be sure to remember:*

- Refer to Appendix 14 for a list of the many vocabulary words you will need to familiarize yourself with before attending an American high school.

- High School Structure



- High School Rules



# CHAPTER 11:

## Concept of Friendships Across Cultures

*“Not Better, Not Worse, Just Different”*

One of the most challenging issues often shared by FLEX/YES alumni focuses on how they were able to develop friendships during their exchange year. This may surprise those who watch American films and television, where the characters appear open and friendly. While Americans do tend to be approachable, instantly on first-name terms and invite people who they know little about into their homes with ease, students need to be aware of the cultural differences in the meanings of friendship. But first, let’s look at what kind of friend you are and how others may assess who you are based on first impressions.

### Exercise 11-1: What Kind of Friend are You?

HOW WOULD YOUR FRIENDS IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY DESCRIBE YOU?	WHAT IMPRESSION WILL AMERICANS HAVE OF YOU?

### Different Meanings of Friendship: Peaches and Coconuts

The *Peach* versus the *Coconut* analogy may be useful in understanding cross-cultural friendships. In some cultures (like the United States), friendships are like a peach—soft and appealing on the outside, but then there’s a hard-to-reach center. Friendships seem easy to get started, but it may feel like you can’t ever get to a really deep relationship. It may feel superficial.

In other cultures, friendships are more like a coconut – hard to get started, but once you’re in the middle—it’s all juice and milk, and it’s a big space there. Once you’ve broken through the hard outer core, you are

now deep friends in all areas—advice, money, secrets, shared activities, etc.

Unlike friendships in other parts of the world, friendship in America can assume various levels of depth and commitment, yet still be deemed as friendship. A person you say hi to occasionally can be labeled a friend, yet you have never had more than a friendly chat.

Most Americans use the word “friend” to mean “a person I know.” The American definition of “friend” may surprise you. Some people refer to you as a friend after meeting you only once! American English has several words for friend—like acquaintance—but most people call everyone they know “friend.” To refer to someone who is very close, Americans must add another word: a good friend, a close friend, a best friend, my oldest friend.

## Characteristics of American Friendships

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As highlighted in earlier chapters, culture is complex. Interpreting the seriousness, irony, or humor in conversations, or the way people interact, can be difficult at first. However, this is an essential element of successfully navigating the concept of American friendships. Here are some characteristics of Americans that you might notice in making friends in the United States.

### PRIVACY

How much and how soon people share things about themselves plays an important role in friendships. You may feel that Americans reveal too much about themselves sometimes, but then be surprised and frustrated that they won't talk about a topic that is important to you. While Americans tend to be very open very quickly, there are certain topics that are off limits to all but the most intimate of friends and family (for example: religion, politics, money, and sex).

When you ask someone “how are you doing?” a typical response might be “great, how are you?” This is a greeting more than an honest question. That person may be going through a difficult time, be ill or struggling in school. You will need to have a deep relationship with a person to get to significant matters of life and family. These won't come to the surface with initial questions.

### DEPENDENCE

To ask for help means to be dependent on a friend. Americans might be willing to accept this dependence if they really needed help, but they usually will try something else first.

American adults often turn to outsiders for help while people from other cultures turn to friends and family. They read books and magazines for help in raising children. They ask lawyers and accountants to organize their money. They hire tutors to help their children with homework. They turn to therapists to discuss problems. Perhaps Americans do this because their family and friends may be in other parts of the country. But it has also become part of the American way of doing things.

### INDEPENDENCE

Relationships and friendships are often compartmentalized: “family friends,” “work friends,” “football buddies,” “church friends,” or “neighbors”. Your American friends may invite you to take part in some activities but may not invite you to other activities which involve other groups of friends.

Additionally, Americans tend to keep relationships even; for example, if you give a gift, many feel they need

to reciprocate. If you are invited to dinner, you will invite them to dinner next. If one person helps another, one hopes that person will be there for him/her when they need help.

### **INFORMALITY**

They use first names with each other, even when the age or role status is very different. This informality is also built into the structure of the language. English, unlike many other languages, does not have a formal and informal form of address, such as *tu* and *vous* in French, or *tu* and *usted* in Spanish.

## **Where FLEX/YES Students Sometimes Have Difficulty**

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Depending on what culture you are from, you may see Americans as either too direct or too indirect. You may become frustrated or confused by American “small talk” and politeness (rather than getting to the point), or if a person is too direct, you may think they were being rude.

Part of the confusion you face may stem from taking Americans’ language too literally. When a fellow student says, “see you later,” or a neighbor says, “Stop by sometime!” You might find that this was not a literal invitation to meet after school or drop by a neighbor’s home for an impromptu chat. Rather, just as “Hello, how are you?” is not a real question about your health but rather a ritual greeting, “Stop by sometime” may mean “It would be nice to see each other again.” If an American says that to you, after some time has passed, suggest a specific time to get together.

Money is a sensitive issue with Americans, even among friends. American friends usually don’t lend other friends’ money, and if they do, they expect you to pay it back immediately. Also remember that if your American friends are nice and drive you places, you should offer some money for gas. Even if they don’t accept it, it’s polite to offer. If they don’t take your money, you should remember your polite phrases and show them gratitude. In general, you should always use polite phrases such as “please” and “thank you,” since Americans often use these phrases even among close friends.

Americans do have long-term, close friends. They share problems with each other. They ask each other for help and accept help from them. Their friends may even replace their family in some ways, because their families may live quite far away. Making connections and building friendships across cultures may not be easy but it comes with a unique set of rewards as you learn different ways to connect with each other.

## **Tips for Making Friends**

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Think back to the program goals listed in Chapter 1. By making many friends in the U.S., you’re not only “interacting with Americans and generating enduring ties” but also “teaching Americans about your home country and culture.” Therefore, it is very important that you take the initiative to make friends while on the program. To help you make friends while you’re in the U.S., consider the following acronym **FRIEND**:

**First step:** Don’t wait for others to approach you, but rather approach others with whom you want to become friends.

**Reach out:** Show an interest in Americans' culture, country, lives. Be inquisitive and try to learn about this new culture through interacting with people and asking questions. Americans, as do most people, love to talk about themselves. Talk to people around you to get involved in different activities, and to let them know you're interested in getting to know them.

**Invite others:** Go ahead and invite someone to get something to eat or go to a movie if you want to get to know him or her. Remember when Americans say, "let's get together sometime," this is often just a friendly formality, rather than an invitation. If you are really interested, you need to agree on a time and place.

**Expect challenges:** Don't give up if your first attempt to make a friend ends up in failure. With time and advice from others, it will get easier.

**Be natural:** Just like at home, the best way to find friends is by finding people who have common interests. Become active in those activities you truly enjoy and don't try to be someone you're not.

**Do:** Join school clubs or sports, participate in community service activities, go to church, go to concerts and other school events. Even if it's an activity you've never tried before, or there are people whom you don't yet know, be active and participate.

## School as a Social Center

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For many U.S. high school students, school is where they spend most of their time. In addition to attending school clubs after the regular school day, many school activities take place in the afternoons, evenings, or weekends. Schools have dances, sporting events, fund-raising activities, concerts, and theatrical productions, and sometimes sponsor or participate in community activities.

Sports teams are generally organized through the schools. Practicing sports after school and competing on weekends is an activity that occupies many students' free time. Sports teams are taken very seriously by American students and are often very competitive.

Unlike in your home school, in the United States you will be moving about from classroom to classroom all day, often with different students attending different subjects. You may find that you often sit in a different seat as a teacher may or may not assign seating. This will be a significant change for you in terms of friendship opportunities. In your home country school, you might sit next to the same people throughout the day, thus making it a natural opportunity to develop friendships. While you may be exposed to more opportunities for friendships in the United States as you move about your new high school, you may miss

the comfort and friendship of learning with the same group of students which you had in your home school.

A discussion of American high school friendships would not be complete without recognizing the impact of social cliques. Cliques are not uniquely American, but films like *Mean Girls* and *High School Musical* suggest that they play a significant role in the social hierarchy of high schools in the United States. There may be as many as a dozen “peer crowds” or cliques in a high school ranging from the “popular kids” at the top, to the “loners” at the bottom. Don’t worry about being labeled! Focus on being open to accepting differences, kind, and a great representative of your country.

## Forming Positive Relationships

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We talked a lot about being polite throughout the PDO, because this is very important for Americans. Don’t forget to use polite phrases, even with people your own age. It’s better to sound too polite instead of not polite enough.

It may seem odd to you to say, “May I please borrow a pen from you?” or “Thanks for the candy bar!” However, if you don’t use polite words when you are speaking English with your American friends, they may think you sound demanding or rude. Even if your behavior is polite, if you forget to say “please,” “thank you,” etc., you may appear rude to Americans. For Americans, saying these things is normal and they often do it without even thinking about it. However, Americans will notice if you don’t use these words in your speech.

Be careful never to use profanity—often called “swear words,” “curse words,” or “four-letter words” –even though you may hear it a lot in American movies and TV programs. It might seem funny to use profanity in English, but if you use these words, other students will have a negative impression of you. It will be even more difficult to make friends, or you may find people approaching you to be friends who are inappropriate. Remember, you are a member of the FLEX/YES program and a citizen ambassador for your country. You are expected to act respectfully and while others around you may use profanity, you quite simply should not.

Because profane words are very culturally specific, it is hard to understand how they sound to a native speaker. Usually there are serious consequences if you are caught using profane words in school. When writing emails or posting messages on websites, you should never use these words. Anything you post on a website might be seen by your host family, your local coordinator, or anyone else and you may be punished for breaking a rule (i.e., no bad language).

## More Friendship Advice

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### **Be Yourself**

You’re from a different country with a different culture. Don’t be embarrassed about being different. While your habits may sometimes appear strange, Americans value the display of true personality, opinions, and unique interests. Too often, international students hold back their true personalities since they lack confidence when speaking English. However, Americans won’t judge you on what you say, but instead how you act. Therefore, it’s very important to be yourself.

### **‘Break the Ice’**

The definition of this phrase is “to do or say something that makes people feel less shy or nervous in a social

situation.” Try to get out and meet new people and make new friends. That’s the best way to improve your English and experience American culture. Americans value people taking the lead, so introduce yourself to students in your classes as an international student getting to know the culture. Ask questions instead of waiting for them to offer information and suggest studying or work on a project together.

### **Get Involved**

What do you love doing? What are your hobbies? The best and most efficient way to bond with people is through group activities. As discussed in Chapter 10, schools offer a large collection of interest and activity groups, organizations, clubs, and sports teams. These are great opportunities to meet others who share your interests. You will be surrounded by like-minded people which will make it easier to bond.

### **Understand Body Language**

- Although Americans are generally friendly and open, keep in mind that they usually have larger personal space boundaries than people from other cultures. If you notice people backing up a little while talking to you, don’t step toward them as they most likely feel uncomfortable with the lack of distance between you.
- The most common form of greeting between acquaintances in the U.S. is a handshake. If you get to know someone well enough, a handshake can sometimes turn into a hug or brief pat on the back or shoulder. High school students tend to say “hey” for “hi” or “what’s up?” When passing one another; fist-bumps and high-fives are common greetings as well.
- If you attend a school sporting event, don’t sit quietly off to yourself. Wear clothes showing your school pride and have a good time. Hold up your hands and offer high fives to others around you when the crowd cheers.

### **Don’t Give Up**

- Don’t rush the friendship process.
- Don’t come on too strong in the early stages.
- While Americans are usually friendly, making meaningful friendships can be difficult. Be patient, be open-minded and be confident!





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## CHAPTER 11 VOCABULARY

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*Make sure you know the meaning of these important words:*

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- Acquaintance
- Analogy
- Superficial
- Cliques

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## TOOLBOX

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*In this section, we have added some new tools to your growing Toolbox.*

*Be sure to remember:*

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- Tips for Making Friends
- American Ideas of Friendship



# CHAPTER 12:

## Succeeding in Your New Environment

During your PDO and throughout this workbook, you have explored some differences you may encounter in the U.S. As students and host families live together, each will become aware of different customs and attitudes in the other. It's important for you to remember when you observe others doing things differently than you are used to, that it's **“not better, not worse, just different.”**

As a student moving into a new culture, you will be making the most adjustments. Everyone else will behave according to their norms and you will be trying to learn about their lifestyle and share it. Sometimes you may forget that you need to do as your American family and friends do. Sometimes you may prefer that people “do it your way.”

An exchange student who took part in a U.S. government exchange program advises:

*“Being an exchange student, living with the American family, and going to school, I realize how difficult it is to become a part of the American culture, of American society. And it's not about me or my host family. It's more about how different our countries, our cultures, and the values the people live by are. We're (exchange students) like little drops of water which face a huge strange ocean and must become a part of it. The American people, of course, want to know a lot about our country, about personal life, but they still want you to change your habits, your views, so that you can easily fit into their family, into their life (while you are living with them). And, you must realize that it's really you who has to change, not the people surrounding you.”*

To help prepare you for the kinds of differences you may experience, you worked in groups during PDO to analyze a few family situations that former students have experienced. These case studies are listed below. After each description of the situation are some questions to answer. These should help you focus on the specific issues you may encounter and need to resolve. Try to remember all the different problem-solving tools and advice you've already learned and try to apply them to these situations.

# Abdul

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Abdul has been living with the O’Connors for several months. He feels comfortable in their house. His English is improving, and he is enjoying talking with his host father now that they can communicate better. However, he always seems to have to study or to meet friends when there are household chores to do. Maureen O’Connor, his American mother, is beginning to get irritated with Abdul. He expects her to fix his breakfast, serve it to him, and put the dirty dishes in the dishwasher even though she is hurrying to leave for work in the morning just like everyone else. She constantly has to remind him to pick up his dirty clothes.

Abdul was sitting watching TV one evening about 6:30 PM when his older sister Betsy returned home late from work. The door shut noisily as Betsy said, “What a tough day!” As she kicked off her shoes and walked across the room, Abdul called out, “Hey, can you get me a coke?” Betsy turned toward him and shouted angrily, “I’m not here to serve you! You never do anything; we do your dishes, laundry – everything, and you can’t even get yourself a soda. You need to pull your own weight; we all work hard in this house!” Abdul answered, “That’s all women’s work! Men have better things to do than housework!”

1. Describe Abdul’s view of the roles of men and women in the house. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How does Abdul’s view differ from the expectations the O’Connors have of each family member?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How might Abdul’s behavior be viewed by the O’Connors? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If you were Abdul, what might you do to resolve this type of conflict? What tools from the toolbox can he use? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Razan

It was Saturday night and Razan was going out with some new friends from school. When they came to pick her up, one of the boys came to the door and introduced himself to Razan’s host parents. Razan’s host father reminded her and her friend that she had to be home by 11:30 PM. Since this wasn’t Razan’s first time out at night, she already knew about the curfew and had never come home late.

After seeing a movie, Razan and her friends went to a local McDonald’s, where they met other friends of theirs from school. The others invited them back to one of the girl’s house to listen to some music and, although it was almost 11:00 PM already, Razan decided to go along.

Razan figured since she’d never been late before, being late one time wouldn’t matter. In fact her 16-year-old brother often stayed out even later. She also knew that the girl’s parents were home and that they wouldn’t be alone in the house.

When Razan’s friends dropped her off at home it was 12:15 AM. Razan’s host father was sitting in the living room watching TV, and when she walked in, she could see he was very upset. He started yelling at Razan and told her she was “grounded”—that she couldn’t go out at all in the evenings for one week. Razan started to cry and, later, felt her host father was very unfair and treated her like a child instead of an adult 17-year-old.

1. Explain how you think Razan’s host father felt and why. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. In Razan’s mind, why was it OK to do what she did? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Looking back, what tool could Razan have pulled from her toolbox during the evening to avoid making her host father so angry? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. At this point, how can Razan use her toolbox to improve her relationship with her host father? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Gulnara

Gulnara enjoys spending time with her host parents and they share many of the same interests. However, she is having a hard time adjusting to the eating habits of Americans. At home, Gulnara usually has a large hot breakfast; however, her host family just grabs a muffin and coffee on the way out the door to work. They told Gulnara to help herself to anything for breakfast. The first day she made herself a hot dog with noodles and her host mom said, “You’re having that for breakfast?” Another time she was about to help herself to some rolls but her host mother quickly said “Wait! Those are for dinner tonight!” After that she felt worried about helping herself, so she decided it would be best to just take a piece of fruit or to skip breakfast. Besides, she is worried about gaining weight.

On most days Gulnara brings her lunch to school. Her host parents explained that this is healthier and more economical than buying lunch at school. After seeing the cafeteria food, Gulnara agrees that bringing lunch is healthier. However, she misses having a hot lunch and is getting tired of cold sandwiches. Sometimes she forgets to bring her lunch from home, so she skips lunch.

When she gets home from school after swim practice, Gulnara is often tired and hungry. She usually snacks on chips or pretzels until her host parents get home. Gulnara’s host parents like to eat dinner together as a family and always cook a large balanced meal. Gulnara enjoys this time when they can all share about their days. However, by dinnertime, Gulnara isn’t that hungry anymore, and her host mother has noticed that she doesn’t eat all of her dinner. Gulnara doesn’t see how she can eat healthily and stick to her weight while in the U.S., and is beginning to feel really frustrated—why is a simple thing like food causing her such problems?

1. Why is Gulnara so hungry after school and eating less at dinner? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What can Gulnara do if she is worried about eating food that her host family plans to use for a later meal? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How are Gulnara’s eating habits affecting her? What can she do to feel healthier? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What tools from her toolbox could Gulnara have used to prevent this situation? What tools can she use now to fix this situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Tatiana

It was Saturday, and as Tatiana walked home from the football game her thoughts were on her natural family and hometown. Today was a national holiday back home and everyone would be celebrating.

When she opened the front door, Tatiana was shocked. In the living room, a large flag of her country was hanging over the fireplace. The dining room was decorated with flowers the color of her native flag and from the kitchen came the vaguely familiar smells of home. Tatiana was so surprised she didn't know what to say.

Tatiana's host family consisted of her host mother and a brother and sister. As the family sat down to dinner she started talking. Her American mother's attempt to cook a national dish from Tatiana's home wasn't entirely successful. There weren't enough appetizers. The dumplings fell apart, and the sour cream was store bought, not homemade. Tatiana told her host family about her natural mother: where and how she shopped, what a wonderful cook she was, and what a good housekeeper she was. She talked and talked about home.

Suddenly, her American mother started crying and quickly got up and left the table. Tatiana didn't understand why she was upset. Had Tatiana talked too much about home? Weren't they interested in learning about her country?

1. Why was Tatiana's host mother upset? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What feelings of Tatiana's were stronger than those of appreciation for what her host mother had done? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. If you could change one thing Tatiana did before dinner, what would it be? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If this situation had happened to you, what would you do? How can Tatiana's toolbox help her now? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Ana

Ana is fitting in well at her new school in the U.S., but her host family doesn't seem as outgoing as the host families of her friends from PDO. Her host family likes board game nights on the weekend. After school on Fridays, they take turns listening to music and helping Ana's host dad make pizza, pasta, or tacos for the whole family to enjoy for family dinners.

During the week, Ana feels a bit lonely – the family doesn't eat meals together and everyone seems to be on a different schedule. She always eats breakfast by herself, and her host mom says Ana needs to pack her own lunch for school.

Ana likes game nights and Friday family dinners but is a little upset she hasn't eaten at any new restaurants since coming to the U.S. like many of her friends – her social media feeds are full of pictures of other exchange students at restaurants, or on vacations with their host families. Ana hasn't even been on any trips outside of their small town because her host family likes to stay at home. She's thinking of calling her coordinator to ask for a new host family – what's the point of being in the U.S. if she isn't seeing more of it?

1. What is making Ana upset? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. How can Ana's toolbox help her in the future? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What should Ana do next? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Shukhrat

Shukhrat has been in America for several months now, and his adjustment to life in the U.S. has gone well. He feels at home with his host family and they seem to accept him as a member of their family. He is doing well in school, has made new friends and is on the track and field team. His English is now fluent enough that he can understand and speak clearly in most situations. The only issue he is facing is attending church every Sunday with his host family.

Shukhrat attends Muslim religious services back home, and his host family belongs to a Protestant church. He goes to church with them because he understands that it is important to his host parents that all members of their family, including him, do this together. The church his host family attends has a basketball team, but since he already plays at school, he chose not to join the church team. The church also needs help in the children’s room, but Shukhrat thinks it would be boring to babysit.

Shukhrat is starting to resent what he sees as an obligation. It is not, after all, his faith, and to be honest, he wouldn’t mind sleeping in on Sunday mornings. At dinner the other night, he very diplomatically brought up the subject with his host parents and asked if they would mind if he went to church with them only occasionally or on special religious holidays. His host brother, who is 12 years old, then called out, “Me too! I’ll stay at home Sundays with Shukhrat!”

His host father looked directly at Shukhrat and said, “No. We all lead busy lives in this family, and going to church is the one thing we can do together. As long as you live under my roof, you will not be sleeping in on Sunday mornings.”

Shukhrat was surprised at his host father’s answer and at how harshly he worded it. He thought he and his host dad had a solid relationship. Shukhrat thought he had made a reasonable request, but now it seems to him that he has made his host dad angry, and Shukhrat himself is upset that his host dad is “making” him go to church.

1. Why do you think Shukhrat’s host father reacted so strongly? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What would you have done differently? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What should Shukhrat do now? How can his toolbox help? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Marija

Marija has enjoyed living with her host family, the Flemings. They are an older couple and enjoy taking Marija to different places in her host state of Nebraska as well as on trips to other neighboring states. Marija has been pleasantly surprised that she has had such a good time living with a retired couple whose children are grown and living far away. The Flemings seem to enjoy Marija as well and have been very supportive of her adjustment to the U.S. and are as proud of her good grades as her natural parents are.

The Flemings are also devoutly religious Christians and attend church three times a week: once on Tuesday evening, once on Thursday evening, and for half of the day on Sunday. Her choir practice sometimes conflicts with weekday church, but the Flemings say it's important to attend as a family, so she often skips choir to join services. Additionally, the Flemings' branch of Christianity frowns upon drinking coffee and tea, and they don't keep either in the house. Marija misses her morning cup with breakfast, so she usually gets something caffeinated from the kiosk at school between her first and second classes, although it's a bit expensive. She'd really like to keep coffee in the house to drink before school.

Marija did not frequently attend church back home. Although she feels that she is Christian, she is not comfortable with such frequent church attendance, and she wishes it did not interfere with her extracurricular activities. Marija does not want to hurt the Flemings' feelings because she truly cares for them, but in fact the choir director has told Marija that if she misses any more practices, she won't be able to compete with the group at the regional contest. Marija feels helpless and does not see a way out of the situation.

1. What are the difficulties Marija is facing? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How do Marija's views on this situation differ from those of her host family? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What are some possible solutions to Marija's problem? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What should Marija do now? How can her toolbox help? \_\_\_\_\_

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# Tariq

Tariq has been living with his host family for six weeks now. He likes his school, his host family, and has a good relationship with his local coordinator. The one thing that Tariq is having difficulty getting used to is his host family's pets. In Tariq's placement there are three dogs. In his home country, most people do not keep pets in their homes. The dogs that live on the street in his home country look dirty and seem aggressive. His host family's pets are not like the dogs he's used to seeing, but he's still uncomfortable being near them and thinks it's dirty to let dogs in the house.

Buster, Sam, and Bear are the dogs' names. Tariq's host parents buy toys for them and give them baths. His host mom talks to the dogs all the time. She's always saying things like, "Buster, do you want to go for a walk? Sam! Would you like a treat?" First thing every morning, Tariq's host dad even gives Bear medicine. Tariq has never seen anyone treat animals this way. It's as if Buster, Sam and Bear were his host parents' very own children.

Tariq's room is the only place in the home where the dogs are not allowed to go. After school, he avoids the dogs by going to his room to do his homework and staying in there until he is called for dinner. After dinner he goes back to his room. Even though he likes his host family, Tariq is thinking about asking his local coordinator to change families. It's really boring stay in his room all the time, but it's the only way to stay away from the dogs.

1. Why does Tariq want to change host families? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Which tool in the toolbox would be most helpful Tariq? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What can Tariq do to improve this situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Polina

Polina loves her host family, but she also doesn't understand them sometimes. Her host mom always buys groceries and household products in bulk at the biggest store in town. When they go shopping at the "regular" grocery store, her host mom makes sure she has coupons ready to scan on her phone so she can get a discount. If Polina's host siblings ask their parents to buy a certain kind of food or snack, her host parents always tell them to check the app for coupons. Their family doesn't eat outside their home very often, and while Polina always has something to eat at mealtime she really wants to try all the popular American restaurants and fast-food places she's seen on social media.

Polina's birthday is coming up, and her host mom offers to throw her a birthday party for some of her friends from school. "We can do it at home just the way we did for your host sister's birthday last month," says her host mom. "It'll be so fun!"

Polina declines and asks to have the party at one of the restaurants downtown. Her host mom offers to bring decorations and a cake from home but says a party outside the house isn't in their budget for the month. Polina is frustrated and confused. Isn't going out to restaurants, at least for special occasions like birthdays, part of the American experience?

1. What happened? Why is Polina's host mom responding this way? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What could Polina do differently? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What tools or tips from PDO could Polina use to deal with the situation? \_\_\_\_\_

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# Dominik

Dominik was always a good student back at home in Hungary, but he's having trouble balancing his sports practices, his homework online for his Hungarian school, and U.S. school homework. He also recently joined his U.S. school's art club to meet new people and try something new.

His host mom keeps reminding him to spend time on his U.S. homework and make sure that he keeps his grades up. He asked about skipping volunteering at the local food bank with his host family on Sundays to have some extra time for homework. His host mom said volunteering is a family priority and allows them to spend time together during the busy week. She will let him miss volunteering if he really needs extra time for homework, but she wants him to join the family when he can.

To keep his host mom happy and also finish his Hungarian and U.S. schoolwork, Dominik started using some AI tools to write his English essays that are due every Friday. He thought it wasn't a big deal since he was editing the essays and making them his own after getting AI help, but his English teacher noticed his AI usage and is considering putting Dominik on academic probation. Both his teacher and host mom are really upset with Dominik for cheating. What should Dominik do to repair the situation?

1. What are at least two reasons Dominik is not doing well in school? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Dominik is not giving his full attention to his U.S. schoolwork. Why is this unacceptable? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the problem with Dominik using AI for his homework? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If you were Dominik, how would you change the situation? Which tools from your toolbox could you use? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# SOURCES

U.S. Census Bureau: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

American Community Survey: [www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs)

Pew Research Center: [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

Centers for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Bureau of Labor Statistics: [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

National Center for Education Statistics: [nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov)

Giving USA: [givingusa.org](http://givingusa.org)

Charity Navigator: [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)

## Links to Specific Statistics

### Schools

- [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12\\_098.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_098.asp)
- <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/average-school-size-stats/national-data>
- <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/average-student-teacher-ratio-stats/national-data>
- <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>



# APPENDIX 1:

## Department of State Secondary School Student Participant Welcome Letter



**U.S. Department of State**  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
Private Sector Exchange



January 3, 2025

Dear Secondary School Student:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program! This is the beginning of an exciting adventures in your life. During your time in the United States, you will obtain an American high school education and experience life as part of an American family. You will make friendships that will last a lifetime, get lots of practice in speaking English, and partake in family traditions. Since 1949, thousands of students from around the world have come to share their language, culture, and customs with their American host families, American schools, and the broader local community. Your participation in this exchange program fosters a greater understanding between our two countries and works towards peaceful relations throughout the world.

We want you to have a meaningful and successful experience. Your new school and host family may have different rules and ways of life from what you are used to, so keeping an open mind will be very important to your success. Your goal should be to learn as much as you can about American customs, values, and culture and to build strong relationships with your host family, classmates, and friends.

Your U.S. sponsor is your first point of contact throughout your stay in the United States. Their information is identified on your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Program (J-1) Status. If you have any questions about your exchange program or need assistance of any kind while you are here, immediately contact your U.S. sponsor. It is their responsibility to help you with any problems, needs, or concerns you may have. Their emergency telephone contact number can be found in your program orientation materials and identification card, and is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Add this phone number to your contact list.

If you have concerns and/or issues that your U.S. sponsor has not resolved, or you find you cannot reach your sponsor, please contact the Department of State through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline 1-866-283-9090, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at [JVisas@state.gov](mailto:JVisas@state.gov). Please add the helpline number and the email address to your contacts to ensure you receive important communications from the Department. Your sponsor and the Department of State are here to ensure your success and safety on the program.

We are pleased that you made the decision to study in the United States and hope you enjoy your stay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca A. Pasini".

Rebecca A. Pasini  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Private Sector Exchange

# APPENDIX 2:

## Exchange Visitor Program Welcome Brochure

*Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs United States Department of State*

The Department of State welcomes you to the United States. We are pleased to receive you as an exchange visitor. As an Exchange Visitor Program participant, you will acquire an experience in the United States, and as an ambassador of your country you will help educate the American people about your home country and culture.

This brochure will help you understand the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program, provide you with information on contacting the Department of State, and introduce you to some of the major requirements of the Exchange Visitor Program regulations.

### THE EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

**THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE** administers the Exchange Visitor Program under the provisions of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. The Act promotes mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The Exchange Visitor Program provides foreign nationals opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the United States with the expectation that on completion of their exchange program, they will return home to share their experiences.

### Sponsors

The U.S. Department of State designates U.S. organizations such as government agencies, academic institutions, educational and cultural organizations, and corporations to administer exchange visitor programs. These organizations are known as sponsors. Sponsors screen and select exchange visitors to participate in their programs based on the regulations governing the exchange activity and stated in 22 CFR Part 62. Sponsors provide exchange visitors pre-arrival information, an orientation, and monitor activities throughout their exchange program. Sponsors offer or identify cross-cultural activities that will expose exchange visitors to American society, culture, and institutions. You are encouraged to participate in activities that provide them with an opportunity to share their language, culture, and history with Americans.

### Responsible Officers

Sponsors appoint individuals as responsible officers and alternate responsible officers to advise and assist exchange visitors. These officers issue the Certificate of Eligibility (Form DS-2019), and conduct official communications with the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on your behalf. Your sponsor's role is to help you manage your program. If problems arise or you have questions, your sponsor is there to help you. Should you have any questions about the regulations or any aspect of your exchange program, your initial and primary contact is your sponsor. Unless provided specific contact information by your sponsor you should contact the person whose name and telephone number can be found on your Form DS-2019.

### Exchange Visitor

An exchange visitor is a foreign national selected by a sponsor to participate in an exchange visitor program and who is seeking to enter or has entered the United States temporarily on a J-1 visa.

Spouse and dependents - Some categories of the Exchange Visitor Program permit a spouse and/or unmarried children, under 21 years of age, to accompany an exchange visitor to the United States. These individuals may apply for J-2 visas with the permission of your sponsor.

## REGULATIONS AND RULES

**It is important that you** understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws and sponsor rules. Regular contact with your sponsor will help you keep current with any change which may affect your J-1 visa status. Some requirements of the Federal regulations and where to find them are indicated below.

### Register with your sponsor

Your Form DS-2019 was created in a computerized system known as the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This System is administered by the Department of Homeland Security and is used to collect and maintain information on the current status of non-immigrants and their dependents in the sponsor's program during their stay in the United States.

***When you arrive in the United States, you must contact your sponsor to ensure that your data in SEVIS is accurate and updated. Failing to maintain your status could result in serious consequences and may affect your ability to remain in or return to the United States.***

**Activities and Program Provisions** - You entered the United States in a specific program category, and are required to engage in that category and the activity listed on your Form DS-2019. You must comply with the specific program provisions of the regulations relating to your exchange category.

**Insurance** - You are required to have medical insurance in effect for yourself (J-1), your spouse and any dependents (J-2) for the duration of your program. Some sponsors provide the required insurance for their exchange visitors.

Other sponsors may allow you to make your own arrangements or may help to identify insurance carriers. Consult with your responsible officer before the start of your program.

1. (a) **Minimum Insurance Coverage:** Insurance shall cover: (1) medical benefits of at least \$100,000 per person per accident or illness; (2) repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000; and (3) expenses associated with medical evacuation in the amount of \$50,000.
2. (b) **Additional Terms:** A policy secured to fulfill the insurance requirements shall not have a deductible that exceeds \$500 per accident or illness, and must meet other standards specified in the regulations.
3. (c) **Maintenance of Insurance - Willful failure on your part to maintain the required insurance throughout your stay in the United States will result in the termination of your exchange program.**

**Maintenance of Valid Program Status** - You are required to have a valid and unexpired Form DS-2019. Sponsors may terminate an exchange visitor's program for violating U.S. laws, Exchange Visitor Program regulations, or the sponsor's rules governing their particular program.

**Required Notifications to Sponsors** - You must immediately inform your sponsor if you change your address (residence) or telephone number, or complete or withdraw from your exchange visitor program early. Doing so assists your sponsor in complying with their notification and reporting requirements to the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security. Failure to keep your sponsor informed could result in the termination of your program status.

**Current Regulations** - The Exchange Visitor Program regulations are located in the Code of Federal Regulations, (22 CFR, Part 62) and can be found at the J-1 Visa website: <http://j1visa.state.gov/sponsors/current/regulations-compliance/>.

**Contacting the Department of State** - The Exchange Visitor Program is administered under the oversight of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

**REPORT ABUSE OR EXPLOITATION:**

If you are mistreated and/or your rights are violated, and your sponsor is not providing the help you need, contact the Department of State for assistance:

**J-1 VISA EMERGENCY HOTLINE: 1-866-283-9090.\***

This line is for use by exchange visitors and third parties in the case of urgent situations.

\*A Department of State representative is available 24 hours a day.

**REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS OR QUESTIONS: [jvisas@state.gov](mailto:jvisas@state.gov).**

This e-mail address is to communicate non-emergency issues, questions, and concerns.

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs U.S. Department of State  
Annex SA-5, Fifth Floor Washington, DC 20522-05

# APPENDIX 3:

## International Education Week

The following are some tips for preparing to give country presentations during IEW and throughout your program year.

Ask exchange alumni from your home country what their presentations were like. You want your presentations to be unique and creative, but the more ideas you have before traveling to the United States, the better!

After PDO and before you leave for the U.S., gather materials which you will need for your presentations. Some suggestions include:

**MUSIC:** Bring recordings of music from your home country. It can be pop music, traditional music, or a combination (even better!). If you play a traditional instrument, bring a recording of yourself playing the instrument.

**TRADITIONAL DANCES:** If you know traditional dances, consider performing one, and bring the music and costume with you. You can also bring video clips of traditional dances being performed on a CD or flash drive. Teach your classmates some dance moves!

**PHOTOGRAPHS:** Bring photos that show what life in your country is like. Include photos of traditional life and modern life, food, people, buildings, clothing, holidays, toys, houses – anything you think a foreigner will find interesting.

**FOOD:** Bring recipes (not actual food!) that you can translate into English and share with others. If you want to make a traditional dish to share, practice it once at home. This works best if you are presenting to a smaller group. Check with your U.S. high school to make sure they allow home-cooked food at school. If it is a traditional dish, explain its significance. Bring pictures of traditional dishes, and let people know the different customs, rituals or holidays that are associated with that dish.

**CLOTHING:** If you have a traditional costume or item of clothing to wear, bring it and wear it to your presentations! Even just a hat or a traditional shirt can add a lot to your presentation. You can also include photos of traditional clothing.

**SPORTS, GAMES AND TOYS:** Consider doing a demonstration or showing a video of a traditional game being played. Lead a group of children in typical games or activities that children in your country play.

**LANGUAGE:** People of all ages like seeing their name written in a foreign alphabet! You can write people's names in your language or teach them some useful and fun phrases.

**HISTORY:** If you like history, choose a historical person to feature in your presentation and do a little research before you come to the U.S.

Ask your teachers to allow you five to ten minutes of their class time to present to their students about your country. Keep in mind you will have to get permission from your own teachers to miss class that day! For a short presentation like this, it's easiest to focus on one or two things about your country and go in depth, rather than trying to tell them the whole history.

Be sure to mention you are a FLEX/YES student and that these programs are U.S. Department of State programs.

Mention that the U.S. State Department also provides study abroad scholarships to U.S. students and encourage your peers to apply.

# APPENDIX 4:

## Important Contact Information

Knowing the program rules and understanding your rights as a scholarship student are essential for a successful exchange year. This knowledge will equip you to advocate for yourself should you have any concerns. Follow the Chain of Communication described in Chapter 2. Know that you are empowered to **speak up** if something does not feel right

American Councils and your Placement Organization will each provide you with an identification card, listing your host family, their address, and telephone contact information. In addition, it will provide contact information for both your Local Rep and the main number for your Placement Organization. Lastly, this card will include the Department of State's 24-hour toll-free number and email address. You are always encouraged to keep this card with you.

<b>ACES</b> ..... 1-855-767-2237	<b>AYUSA</b> ..... 1-800-727-4540	<b>IRIS</b> .....1-866-333-6944
<b>AFS</b> ..... 1-800-237-4636	<b>AYA/AIFS</b> ..... 1-877-240-5225	<b>PAX</b> ..... 1-800-555-6211
<b>American Councils</b> ..... 1-800-621-9559	<b>BFF</b> ..... 1-919-285-2693	<b>Pan Atlantic</b> ..... 1-866-227-5335
<b>Aspect</b> ..... 1-800-879-6884	<b>CIEE</b> ..... 1-800-448-9944	<b>STS Foundation</b> .. 1-800-522-4678
<b>ASSE</b> ..... 1-800-333-3802	<b>Greenheart</b> ... 1-888-301-9868	<b>World Link</b> ..... 1-877-656-4590
	<b>HSUSA/GCE</b> .. 1-866-496-4313	<b>YFU</b> ..... 1-800-424-3691

However, there may be times when you don't feel comfortable turning to the people in the chain of communication. Or you may feel you have tried to communicate your problems, and no one is listening. If you feel that you are in danger, or you have a problem that you cannot resolve by contacting someone in the list/chain above, you can contact:



**1-800-621-9559**

This is the American Councils FLEX and YES program administrative office. The phone is answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by American Councils staff. You can ask to speak to a FLEX or YES representative at American Councils. The State Department has given American Councils the responsibility of working specifically with students who are having trouble resolving their problems through the normal chain of communication.



**FLEX: [ops@americancouncils.org](mailto:ops@americancouncils.org) YES: [yessupport@americancouncils.org](mailto:yessupport@americancouncils.org)**  
American Councils FLEX or YES staff will respond to you.



**WhatsApp**

**FLEX: +1-202-845-3018 YES: +1-202-845-3144**

**NOTE:** WhatsApp is meant for **non-urgent** situations. These lines will only be monitored Monday-Friday from 9:00 AM-5:00 PM Washington, DC (Eastern) time, from August through June. If you message these numbers, someone will respond to you during working hours. If you send a message **outside** of these hours and you actually have an emergency, an automated message will direct you to call **1-800-621-9559** for immediate assistance.

The primary concern is that you should reach out for help if you are scared, in danger, something is wrong, or you just aren't sure if something is wrong. Please call or email someone who can help you right away. You will NOT get in trouble for doing this. Please keep this safety information with you, and be assured that many people are eagerly waiting to meet you and support you during the very exciting experience of spending a year in the U.S. We wish you a wonderful year!

# APPENDIX 5:

## FLEX Parent/Student Agreement

### A. PURPOSE

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study program (referred to below as “the Program”), sponsored by the U.S. Government, promotes friendship between the United States and your country, and provides participants personal development through living with a U.S. host family and studying in the United States.

The U.S. Department of State implements the Program with the assistance of private, not-for-profit organizations (referred to as “Program Organizations”). While in the United States, participants are in the care of “Placement Organizations” that identify and arrange host families and schools and provide support and guidance for them during the exchange Program. Participants attend a U.S. school, share in American family life, learn about the United States, increase their sensitivity to cultural differences and similarities, and develop a deepened awareness of shared human values and interests. Participants are required to return to their home country after their Program, where they are expected to share their experiences in the United States.

This document must be signed by a natural parent or legal guardian of the participating student (referred to as the “Parent”).

### B. PARENT AGREEMENT

#### General Program Policies

1. I give my child permission to participate in this Program. I and my child will obey the policies described in the Program Handbook and Program Organization guidelines. I understand that the original English-language version of this document represents the final authoritative wording of policies and guidelines.
2. I understand that if I or any other immediate family member has applied at any time to emigrate to the United States or if I or any other immediate adult family member (whether estranged or not) is a U.S. citizen or green card holder, it may negatively affect my child’s eligibility for the Program.
3. I understand that if another member of my immediate family will be living in the United States at the same time my child would be participating in the Program, it may affect my child’s eligibility for the Program.
4. I affirm that my child has not stayed in the United States for more than ninety (90) days in total during the past five (5) years.
5. I understand that my child must meet the Program age and grade (class) country eligibility requirements, be a citizen of the country in which they are applying, be able to obtain a passport from their country of citizenship, and be able to obtain a J-1 visa for entry into the United States.

6. I understand that participants in an exchange visitor program funded by the U.S. Government are required, under Section 212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, to reside in their home country for a minimum of two (2) years after completing their exchange program in the United States before they are eligible for an immigrant visa, U.S. permanent residence, or a non-immigrant H or L visa.
7. I understand that if my child is selected to receive a scholarship, final acceptance will depend on fulfillment of the medical, placement, and academic requirements of the Program, and on the ability of the placement partner to secure an appropriate family and school placement.
8. I understand that I may not visit my child during their time on Program in the United States unless I obtain prior written approval from the Placement Organization.
9. I agree to release and discharge the Program Organizations and their employees and agents; host families; Program representatives; school representatives; and the U. S. Department of State and its employees, agents, and instrumentalities from any legal liability, claim, or demand in connection with:
  - a. any emergency, accident, illness, injury, or other consequences or events arising from the actions or participation of my child in the Program.
  - b. any cause, event, or occurrence beyond the control of the Program Organizations or the Department of State, including, but not limited to, natural disasters, war, terrorism, civil disturbances, and the negligence of parties not subject to the control of the Program Organizations.
  - c. any actions or negligence of commercial airlines, trains, buses, restaurants, hotels, and other entities engaged for travel-related services, including, but not limited to, lost baggage, uncomfortable accommodations, and travel delays.

#### Travel Policies

10. I agree that my child will travel to and from the United States in strict accordance with the travel plans made by the Program.
11. I will not encourage or permit my child to travel outside the host community during participation in the Program except in strict accordance with the following requirements:
  - a. If my child desires to travel outside the host community **with and under the supervision** of their host parent(s), school official, or other responsible adult, my child must first obtain written approval from the Placement Organization.
  - b. If my child desires to travel outside the host community unaccompanied by their host parent(s), school official, or other responsible adult, my child must first obtain

written approval from the Placement Organization and me, the child's Parent. Some Placement Organizations may not allow such travel.

- c. My child's safety must be assured to the greatest extent possible.
  - d. The travel must not interfere with school attendance.
  - e. *International* travel requires prior authorization by the U.S. Department of State, and the participant must have a multiple-entry U.S. visa.
  - f. I understand that many Placement Organizations limit, discourage, or do not allow visits with natural family members or friends from the home country even if they live in the United States. 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. I agree to follow all Placement Organization's rules concerning visits.
  - g. I understand that visits to my child's home country while on program are not allowed. Exceptions may be made in the case of the death or imminent death of an immediate family member (mother, father, brother, sister) contingent upon identification of funding to cover the costs and Program approval. An unauthorized visit will result in my child's 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 the Placement Organization and approved by the U.S. Department of State.
12. I understand that my child will be responsible for paying any fees incurred for carrying baggage in excess of the baggage limits set by the airlines used for Program travel. I understand that this provision applies to both international and domestic travel within both the United States and our country.
13. I understand that in making travel arrangements for my child, the Program Organizations contract with or use commercial airlines, trains, buses, restaurants, hotels, and other entities whose performance and services cannot be controlled by the Program. I agree that the Program Organizations reserve the right to change or alter travel, lodging, or other arrangements if they believe such change or alteration to be in the best interest of the participants.
14. I understand that my child must return home at the end of the Program on the date assigned by the Program Organization. Participants will not be allowed to remain in the United States after their assigned return-travel date. After which time, they will no longer be supported by the Program, will not have health benefits, and may be reported to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Changes to the assigned departure date will not be made to accommodate graduation, prom, or other special school or family events that occur after the assigned date.

### **School and Host Family Placement**

15. I authorize the Placement Organizations and their employees and representatives to change the place of residence or school designated for my child when they believe such change to be in our child's best interest. I

understand that I will be notified of any such changes.

16. I recognize that schools in the United States may impose academic standards or other requirements in determining grade level placement that differ from those at the school my child now attends. I acknowledge and accept that participation in the Program does not guarantee credit or graduation from the school my child now attends or from the U.S. school my child will attend while participating in the Program. I and my child will accept the grade placement assigned by the U.S. school. I understand that it is my responsibility to arrange with the school my child now attends to receive credit or to take exams upon completion of the Program; or to arrange for permission for academic absence from any institute or university to be attended upon return.
17. I understand that my child must attend school and complete required coursework. Non-attendance may result in dismissal from the Program. Allowing for an initial period of adjustment, participants must achieve and maintain adequate academic results. After a reasonable period of time, poor motivation, under-achievement, or inappropriate behavior may be cause for dismissal from the Program. If a student is expelled from school, it will likely result in Program dismissal.
18. I am aware that there is no single living experience that is typical in the United States. I understand that placements are made based on criteria designed to determine suitability of host families.
19. I understand that participants and parents cannot choose host families, school, grade placement, or location of placement. Placement organizations will request participant and parent agreement if your child will be 1) placed in a home with another exchange student [a double placement]; 2) placed with a single host parent without children in the home; or 3) enrolled in a school run by a religious organization. I understand that if I or my child decline a valid placement, my child may be disqualified from the program.
20. I understand that my child cannot be hosted by our family members.
21. I understand there are strict laws restricting smoking and vaping by people under the age of 21 in the United States. I understand that the host family may have objections to smoking and vaping in their home and that schools forbid smoking and vaping or the possession of tobacco and e-cigarette products. I and my child agree to honor all U.S. laws and host family, school, and Placement Organization restrictions.
22. I understand that the programs prohibit students from recruiting their own host families via social media or other online means due to the dangers of sharing personal information online, with strangers, or otherwise outside of the host family vetting process.

### **Health/Medical Issues**

23. I understand that before a participant arrives in the United States, the Program must receive written permission from Parents to obtain emergency medical attention if needed (see Permission for Care of My Child). My child will receive

medical attention in case of an accident or emergency. The insurance provider is determined by each Placement Organization. Each insurance provider has specific policies and restrictions governing the types of expenses it will reimburse. Placement Organizations, their representatives and host families are not responsible for any medical bills not covered by insurance regardless of who signs the hospital admission form. The Program is not responsible for any negative results because of medical treatment.

24. I confirm the information stated in the Student Health Certificate is accurate and contains no material omissions of which I am aware. **I understand that omitting information on the Student Health Certificate could endanger the health of my child and may be grounds for dismissal from the Program.** I will immediately inform the Program Organization of any change in information. I understand that any physical or mental health condition requiring a significant and sustained level of care or monitoring of my child may require reconsideration of my child's participation in the Program. In the event my child has a recurrence of any previous illness or any condition contracted before leaving home or in the United States that is not covered by insurance provided by the Program, I authorize the Program Organization to release my child to my care in our home country. I will not hold the Program Organizations and their employees and agents; host families; Program representatives; school representatives; or the U.S. Department of State and its employees, agents, and instrumentalities responsible for any debts incurred in connection with this permission. I understand that treatment will be provided for injuries sustained by my child while on Program, but the extent of coverage is subject to the Program's insurance or health benefits providers' rules and policies.
25. I confirm I have provided a full and complete medical and immunization history for my child. I understand that U.S. schools require immunizations and I agree to allow the Program Organizations to arrange for all immunizations required for my child. I understand that such immunizations will be administered according to U.S. medical standards and at no expense to me or my child.

## GENERAL POLICIES

26. **Internet:** Participants are required to follow all rules regarding use of computers, tablets, cell phones, and the Internet as determined by their Placement Organization, host family, and/or host school. Participants who place private (contact information, pictures, etc.) or other information on the Internet in violation of the rules established by their Placement Organization, host family, and/or host school may be dismissed from the Program. These Placement Organization rules are intended to protect students' safety. Students who in any way put the safety of themselves or others at risk by misusing the Internet may be dismissed from the Program and may be subject to prosecution for any violation of law.
27. **Dangerous/Risky Activities:** Health benefit or insurance plans may consider certain activities risky and not cover treatment for injuries sustained while participating in

them. Such activities *may* include, but are not limited to, the following:

- bungee jumping
- downhill skiing
- handling or using a firearm or other weapon
- horseback riding
- jet skiing (operation or passenger of)
- motorcycle/motor scooter riding (operation or passenger of)
- operation or passenger of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) or motocross bike
- parachuting
- parasailing
- rock climbing (indoor/outdoor)
- scuba diving
- skateboarding
- snowboarding
- snowmobiling (operation or passenger of)
- spelunking
- wakeboard riding
- water skiing
- windsurfing
- zip lining

Participants are not permitted to engage in any activities not covered by a health benefit plan or insurance. In addition, participants are not permitted to engage in any activities prohibited by their Placement Organization even if the activity is covered by insurance.

28. **Driving Motorized Vehicles:** Participants are not permitted to drive any motorized vehicle (such as a car, motorcycle, all-terrain vehicle, etc.) or pilot any aircraft under any circumstances while in the United States. Violators of this policy will be considered for Program dismissal. Exceptions may be granted for farm equipment if allowed by the participant's Parent and Placement Organization. If authorized, the participant must observe precautions regarding safety and legal limitations.
29. **Employment:** The J-1 visa status permitting participants to stay in the United States restricts employment. Participants may not be employed on either a full or part-time basis but may accept informal employment such as babysitting or yard work.
30. **Marriage and Pregnancy:** Participants who marry either while a participant or prior to the becoming a participant will be considered for dismissal from the Program. Participants who are discovered to be pregnant or to have caused a pregnancy must return home.
31. **Participant Expenses:** The Program provides orientations, travel arrangements, host family and school placements, allowances, and insurance. In addition, the Program provides the Form DS-2019 required to apply for a J-1 visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate. 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 providing three meals a day for the participant and must provide either lunch money or a bag lunch. All other expenses, such as extra school fees or activities, social activities, personal and hygienic supplies, postage, and telephone calls, are paid by the participant using Program allowances.
32. **Illegal Activity:** Students may be subject to prosecution by the U.S. legal system and may be dismissed from the program if they engage in illegal activity, including but not

limited to:

- **Alcohol:** Participants are required to observe all U.S. laws with regard to the minimum drinking age in the United States, which is 21.
- **Drugs:** Participants are prohibited from selling, using, distributing, sharing, or possessing any drugs that are illegal under federal, state, or local law, including, but not limited to, marijuana and unauthorized use of prescription drugs. Any infraction is considered a grave violation of policy and may result in dismissal from the program.
- **Smoking:** There are strict laws restricting smoking in the United States. The legal age to buy tobacco in the United States is 21 years old. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), tobacco includes cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, hookah tobacco, cigars, pipe tobacco, electronic nicotine delivery systems including e-cigarettes (vapes) and e-liquids.
- **Theft or shoplifting**
- **Any other activity that is against U.S. law** or that results in the participant being arrested or charged with a crime.

Neither the Program Organizations nor the Department of State is obligated to provide legal counsel or defray representation expenses or fines of any sort should a participant be charged with any crime or do something that attracts the attention of law enforcement officials. In such cases, the participant is subject to all local, state, and federal laws.

### TERMINATION FROM THE PROGRAM

33. I understand that my child may be dismissed from the program for behavior that the Program Organizations with the concurrence of the U.S. Department of State, consider inappropriate or detrimental to my child or to the program. Inappropriate or detrimental behavior may include, but is not limited to, misrepresenting themselves or impersonating someone else to any program organization (including prior to coming on the Program), not following

the proper chain of communication during the placement process, violating host family or school rules, academic under-performance, or failure to participate in program activities. Inappropriate sexual behavior, including but not limited to the viewing and/or sharing of sexually explicit material, verbal or physical harassment, and any violation of U.S. law are also grounds for dismissal.

34. I agree that if I violate any provision of this Agreement, or if my child, while in the United States, does any of the following, then it may be determined that my child has voluntarily withdrawn from the Program:
- a. is absent without authorization from the host school or the place of residence designated by the Placement Organization without obtaining the advance written approval of the Program. The Program may determine that the student has left the Program through their own voluntary action. In this case, the Program is absolved from all obligations, legal or otherwise, to the student or their Parents 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 U.S. Department of Homeland Security in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) database. The participant's medical insurance and health benefits will be canceled; or
  - b. travels without their Placement Organizations authorization; or
  - c. has misrepresented themselves in the Program application.
35. If my child voluntarily withdraws or is dismissed from the Program at any time after departure from our country, I understand that their scholarship, Program status as a J-visa holder, and health insurance/benefits coverage will be canceled.

### C. NATURAL PARENT DECLARATION AND AGREEMENT

I have discussed the Program and this Agreement with my child, and each of us fully understands the obligations imposed on us. I confirm that all information provided in my child's application materials and this Agreement is truthful. **We understand that any misrepresentation or false answer in this application can be grounds for my child's termination from the Program.**

### D. STUDENT DECLARATION AND AGREEMENT

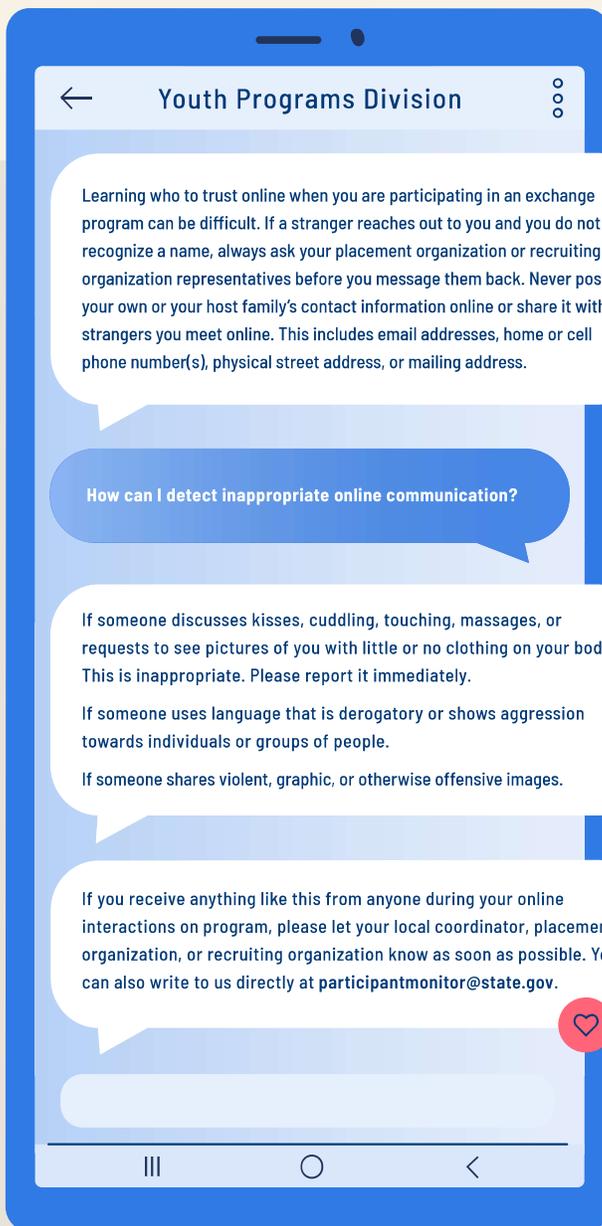
I have read this Agreement and discussed with my parent(s) or guardians its terms and conditions. I agree with the purpose of the Program and fully accept all terms and conditions of this Agreement, and all other rules, regulations and conditions set forth concerning the Program. In particular I will do my best to become an integral part of my host family, school and community; will travel only in accordance with the Travel Policies Section of this Agreement; and will attend the school designated for me on a regular basis and complete all work to the best of my ability. I hereby certify that the information provided in all parts of this application is truthful. I understand that any misrepresentation or false answer can be grounds for my dismissal from this Program.

# APPENDIX 6:

## Online Safety for High School Students

The United States Department of State  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

### Online Safety for High School Students



#### Apps & Texting Guidance

Apps and texting make it easy to stay in touch with people at home and your new friends and family. Students' use of mobile devices, laptops, computers, and general online activity may be monitored by your school, host family, Internet Service Provider, and law enforcement. Below are some best practices:

**Be careful about what you write and post. Do not send, post, text, or store pictures of yourself or anyone else (such as another student) if the person in the picture is naked or not fully clothed.**

**If you create, send, or receive sexually explicit images of a minor, under current federal and U.S. state laws, it could be considered child pornography and is illegal.**

**Sexting is strictly prohibited on program. Sexting is "the sending of sexually explicit photographs, videos or messages via mobile or digital device." Participating in sexting can lead to serious legal consequences including prosecution.**

**For further assistance or more information, contact:  
[participantmonitor@state.gov](mailto:participantmonitor@state.gov)**



# APPENDIX 7:

## Texting, Messaging Apps, and Social Media

### I. RESPONSIBLE ONLINE COMMUNICATION

Apps like Viber and WhatsApp and texting make it easy to stay in touch with people at home and your new U.S. friends and family. In the United States, student use of mobile devices, laptops, computers, and general online activity may be monitored by your school, host family, Internet Service Provider, and law enforcement. Activity that is tolerated in your country may lead to problems in the U.S. To help you avoid problems, we have made the following list of program rules and U.S. laws. In addition, you must follow the rules of your host family, placement organization, and host school.

#### Texting and messaging apps

You need to be careful about what you write and post. It is against U.S. law to send, post, text or store pictures of yourself or anyone else (such as another student) if the person in the picture is naked or not fully clothed. If a person in the picture is **under 18**, this could be considered possession or distribution of child pornography and is illegal, and you could be arrested.

Most states have severe penalties for storing or sending nude pictures (“sexting”). These laws are meant to protect children under the age of 18 from exploitation (being abused or manipulated). Exploitation can mean people selling nude pictures of children for profit or **asking for money in exchange for not sharing the picture with others**. If you are under 18 and you create, send, or receive sexually explicit images of another minor, under current federal laws, it could be considered child pornography. This includes taking a sexually explicit picture of yourself. Whether it makes sense or not, people under 18 who choose to share such pictures with each other face the same punishment as those who maliciously send naked pictures of minors. Even people who receive a picture of a minor, even if they did not ask for it, can be charged with a crime. They might face felony charges, prison time, and mandatory sex offender registration. **If you ever receive a nude picture you should delete it immediately.**

**Remember that once an image or picture is sent, it can never be retrieved or completely deleted. Think about how you would feel if your classmates, teachers or parents saw a nude picture of you. You may think that a video chat is safe, but it is possible for the person you are chatting with to record the chat or take pictures of the chat.**

If you are asked for a nude picture of yourself, remember: ***your body is yours and you do not have to do anything you do not want to do.*** Also, ask yourself: Is it really worth it? Do I want to take that chance?

Here are some strategies for saying NO:

- Use humor. For example, mention the latest movie star drama and say you wouldn’t mind being as famous as that person, but not by having your nude photos accidentally leaked.

- If someone’s argument is that they have already seen you exposed offline, remind them that you like to have control over who sees your image and how they see it.
- Don’t fall for “I’ll show you mine if you show me yours.” There is a double standard when it comes to boys sharing nudes and girls sharing nudes. The consequences for girls of sharing naked pictures are often worse than the consequences for boys. While many teens say they have sent a random picture from online, that is also against the law as noted above.

## Posting on social media

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1. **Never post your own or your host family’s contact information online or share it with strangers you meet online.** This includes email addresses, home or cell phone number(s), physical street address, or mailing address.
2. **Do not “friend” people if you do not know them personally—this is not a safe way to meet people.** Some people you could “friend” include:
  - a. Your host family and your natural family
  - b. Your friends at your U.S. school and your friends at your school at home
  - c. Other exchange students in your organization or other FLEX or YES students
3. **Never agree to meet someone in person if you only know him or her from online contact.** Do not give anyone online your phone number or address, and do not call anyone who gives you theirs.

Do not post photos online that your host family, school, placement organization, FLEX or YES program organization, or your friends and family at home may find inappropriate. This includes but is not limited to:

- Photos or videos of you in a bathing suit or otherwise partially dressed, or where you are wearing tight, revealing, or very few clothes, or where you are in a “sexy” pose.
    - Photographs like these often attract Internet predators. Also, your host family may find them inappropriate and decide not to host you.
  - Photos or videos of you “partying,” in possession of or using cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs.
    - It is against program rules for you to engage in such activity, but even if you post a staged photo as a “joke,” it will be treated seriously and may be misunderstood by your host family and placement organization. Posting such photos is inappropriate and could result in your early return home.
  - Photos or videos of you with weapons.
    - Photos of this nature could raise concerns with school friends and members of your host community, and they may report you to the police.
  - 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
  - Graphic, violent or otherwise potentially offensive images
4. **Remember that anything you post on your website page, or anywhere on the Internet, could be viewed by people you did not intend to see these things – people tend to forward photos, posts, and links widely.** They may also cut and paste photos and posts. There are MANY ways that your personal comments and pictures can find their way into strangers’ hands. **To be absolutely safe, do not post anything on the Internet you would not want everyone else to read.** The Internet is a public place, even if you think you are limiting who can see your posts.

5. **The practice of sexting is strictly prohibited in U.S. high schools and on Program.** Sexting is “the sending of sexually explicit photographs, videos or messages via a mobile device.” Participating in sexting is dangerous and can lead to very serious legal consequences including prosecution.

## Social media etiquette

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In the U.S., we believe in freedom of speech, and the FLEX and YES programs will not restrict your right to your opinions, but while you are in the United States, you represent your home country, your family, your school, your placement organization, your host family, and your program, and you are obligated to do so responsibly. If you say or represent something offensive, threatening, or illegal, it will reflect poorly on your program and all of these people. You are doing a disservice to yourself, your country, and the program, and may be in violation of the law. Students who have insulted or threatened other people on the Internet have been sent home early.

There are many kinds of people, and many different opinions. Remember: “not better, not worse, just different!” Here are some rules to follow when you make comments on other people’s profiles, “walls,” or websites:

1. Be nice. Do not insult or threaten anyone. Do not tell them they are stupid, or that their ideas are stupid. Don’t make fun of their country, ethnicity, religion, nationality, school, family, friends, or opinions. Do not threaten to harm anyone or even wish harm on anyone. Posting hateful speech directed at an individual or group could lead to a police investigation of a hate crime.
2. Do not post overtly political or provocative messages. They may be misunderstood.
3. Do not form groups or make websites with the purpose of insulting or hurting another person or group of people, regardless of your personal views. When you make this information public in such a manner, you make yourself and your country look bad and you may face serious consequences.
4. If someone insults you, do not answer back. If you are angry, just turn off your computer and walk away. Even if you post a statement in your native language, many apps can translate your statement into English.

## Inappropriate Computer, Smartphone and Tablet Use

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### Websites

There are certain types of websites that are NOT appropriate for you to visit. These include sites with pornographic, terroristic, or other objectionable content. If you do visit such a site, your host family and placement organization will probably take away your computer (Internet) privileges and you will be given a warning letter. If you do this on your host family’s WiFi, the Internet Service Provider could shut down your host family’s Internet connection while they are investigating this activity. If you do this on a school computer, you could be suspended or expelled from school. You could also be sent home early from the FLEX and YES program. If you are not sure if a website is acceptable, ask your host family, local coordinator, or teacher before you access the site. If you are afraid to ask anyone, then it is probably unacceptable.

## DOWNLOADING CONTENT

Copyright law in the United States is extremely strict. Original copyrighted material, such as movies and music, is protected by law from being accessed for free and from being shared with others for free. Downloading “pirated” material, or sharing material that you do not own the rights to, whether pirated or purchased legally, via file sharing sites such as BitTorrent is a crime in the United States that is punishable by fines from \$750 – \$300,000. Many such file sharing sites operate by automatically uploading files from the user’s computer; this also is illegal if you do not own the rights to the material. Downloading and uploading content illegally can cause you and/or your host family to be the subject of a police investigation. Watching the latest action or comedy movie for free is not worth the damage you risk doing to your host family and yourself. If you illegally download material in the United States, your participation on the FLEX, and YES program will be terminated.

## Consequences

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**Remember that the Internet is a public space.** If you write or show something inappropriate on your website, webpage or somewhere else on the Internet, you put yourself and your safety at serious risk and you will be held responsible and punished for these actions. If you write or show something illegal on your website, webpage, or somewhere else on the Internet, you could be prosecuted to the full extent of U.S. law.

## II. ONLINE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR HOST FAMILY

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As you learned when you were notified of your finalist status, your relationship with your host family, PO and LC 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 hub about your host family and LC. As soon as this information is available, many exchange students immediately contact their new host family by emailing them, contacting via communications apps, or friending them on social networks (Facebook, vkontakte).

Up until this time, your host family and LC will have seen only the very best side of you, from what is in your application – your host family letter, your list of activities and interests, and of course your smiling photos 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 Facebook/vkontakte 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 and LC in appropriate ways that will encourage their positive impressions of you. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your American Councils representative – we 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 curse/swear words, or questionable words, is NOT appropriate and should NOT be used. Open a new email account and use only this new account to communicate with your new host family. A safe format to follow is firstname.lastname@gmail.com
- If your emails end with an automatic signature, make sure that this signature is appropriate. Violent or sexually explicit song lyrics, for example, are NOT appropriate for an email signature.

## SOCIAL MEDIA SITES (like Instagram, Snapchat, Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki)

Social media can be a great way to casually get acquainted, share photographs, and feel connected. However, if you choose to “friend” your LC or any members of your host family or host community on one of these platforms, first review your 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.)

We hope that you do not have any content of this nature on your social media pages. 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 see content posted by your friends. If your LC 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 American Councils to inform your natural family about it.

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 non-English sites! Review all of your accounts for content that may be inappropriate or inoffensive (as described above).

## MESSAGING AND COMMUNICATIONS APPS

- Make sure that your user 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 any calls!

## GENERAL TIPS

In all communication with your LC 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 American Councils office 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.

# APPENDIX 8:

## Ask Your Host Family...

The following is a suggested list of questions you should ask your host family in order to learn about their routines, rules and customs. These questions will help you learn about your new lifestyle in the U.S. and to learn something about your host culture's beliefs and values.

### EMERGENCIES

Where do you keep emergency numbers? \_\_\_\_\_

Who should I call in an emergency? \_\_\_\_\_

What should I do if I get locked out of the house? \_\_\_\_\_

### PHONE/INTERNET/COMPUTER

Are there any rules for talking on the phone? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any rules for using the computer? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any rules for using my own mobile phone? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any rules for my own laptop computer? \_\_\_\_\_

### SCHOOL AND TRANSPORTATION

What is considered appropriate dress for school? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I need to call you if I stay late at school? \_\_\_\_\_

What means of transportation are available to me? \_\_\_\_\_

### FOOD AND MEALS

What is your usual time for dinner? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the family eat meals together? \_\_\_\_\_

Can I prepare my own meals? Snacks? \_\_\_\_\_

### HOUSE RULES

Do you have a list of "family rules"? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there family chores I can help with? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the rules for keeping my room clean? \_\_\_\_\_

Should I make my bed each morning? \_\_\_\_\_

Who takes a shower first? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a limit to the amount of time I can spend in the shower? \_\_\_\_\_

Where do I put my dirty clothes? \_\_\_\_\_

Should I do my own laundry? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I have a "bedtime"; a time I need to be in my room? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any rules about playing or listening to music? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any rules about watching TV? \_\_\_\_\_

What does it mean in your family to be on time? \_\_\_\_\_

What is a reasonable time to come home during the week? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there ("curfew") during the week or on weekends? \_\_\_\_\_

How does the family plan weekend time? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any regular or occasional family activities that you would expect me to attend? \_\_\_\_\_

May I make my own plans with friends? \_\_\_\_\_

Is it OK to invite a friend over to the house (do I need to ask permission?) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any other rules that I should be aware of? \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX 9:

## Common School Rules and Consequences of Breaking Them

Following are some general school policies regarding inappropriate behavior and activities in school and how it will be punished. Your school may have slightly different versions of these policies, which you will find out about when you receive a student handbook, but in general no U.S. school will tolerate the following behaviors. Schools are responsible for ensuring a safe environment for all students, and these rules are in place for that reason. This is only a handful of the types of policies U.S. schools have—your handbook will address these and many more.

### **FIGHTING**

All students, no matter what the circumstances, should make every effort to avoid fighting. Instead, students should seek help from staff members of the school. Another option for students may be to engage in conflict mediation. Any student who engages in fighting may be suspended from school. In cases when it is possible to determine the identity of the aggressor, a more severe penalty may be issued to that student. An aggressor is defined as the student who makes the initial physical contact, escalates the situation, or retaliates. Verbal harassment is not an excuse to initiate physical contact. Both students may be suspended for fighting. In addition, students may lose all school privileges and formal charges may be filed with the appropriate authorities. In severe cases or in the case of a repetitious offender, a hearing before the Board for expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement authorities may be initiated.

### **VANDALISM**

Vandalism causing damage or defacement to any type of educational property and/or facility, grounds surrounding such facilities, school-sponsored and/or operated property, and/or personal property located within such facilities, is an offense now punishable as a felony of the third degree—if the offender knows that the damage will outrage persons who observe it, or if the repair/replacement or other costs exceed \$5,000.00. Otherwise, the offense is a second-degree misdemeanor. These offenses will be referred to the proper authorities and result in discipline of the student, which could include expulsion.

### **DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY**

Students shall attempt to keep the school campus, buildings and furnishings clean and in good order. Students who are apprehended for defacing the building, grounds, or equipment or willfully destroying school property or the property of school district employees or other students in any way will be suspended from school for a period of up to ten (10) days and may be recommended for expulsion. The student and parent(s)/guardian(s) will receive a bill for all damages. In extreme cases or in the case of a repetitious offender, a request for a hearing before the School Board for expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement authorities may be initiated.

### **CHEATING/PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is the use or close imitation of the language and ideas of another author and representation of them as one's own original work. Plagiarism by students is considered academic dishonesty or academic

fraud. Cheating or plagiarism of any type can result in failure of the evaluation, assignment or paper/project of the person cheating and possibly the person providing the information if done voluntarily or knowingly. Failure of the course for the marking period is also possible. Suspension can also occur depending on the severity of the offense. Forgery, under any circumstances, will not be tolerated and disciplinary consequences, including suspension or a recommendation for expulsion, can occur depending on the severity and/or repetitive nature of the offense(s). In extreme cases, failure of the course for the year with no chance for make-up in summer school/tutorial may also result.

### **UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT**

All forms of unlawful harassment of students and/ or third parties by all students are prohibited. Harassment consists of: verbal, written, graphic or physical conduct relating to an individual's race, color, national origin/ethnicity, sex, age, disability, or religion.

### **THREATENING BEHAVIOR**

Threatening behavior against anyone, including the offending individual, is taken very seriously by the school district. If the school district believes that a child has made a credible threat to harm himself/herself, or someone else, the parents/guardians will be contacted as soon as possible. The school district will then require that the parents/guardians complete a Waiver Form. Please note that part of the process for completing the waiver requires a signed statement from a psychiatrist or psychologist stating that the child is not a threat to him/herself or to others. A guidance counselor can provide the name(s) and telephone number(s) of health professionals who can evaluate the situation. The student will not be permitted to attend school until the appropriate paperwork is completed.

### **LEAVING THE SCHOOL BUILDING/PREMISES WITHOUT PERMISSION**

No student, for illness or any other reason, is permitted to leave the school building/premises without proper permission from administration/school personnel. Violators may be suspended and driving privileges (at the secondary level) may be suspended temporarily or permanently.

### **DRUGS/ALCOHOL/DRUG PARAPHERNALIA**

For purposes of this policy, "drugs" shall mean all controlled substances prohibited by law;

- a. Any prescription or patent drug;
- b. Any over-the-counter medication;<sup>1</sup>
- c. Any steroid or other substance intended to enhance physical or athletic performance, except those for which permission for use in school has been granted pursuant to board policy;
- d. Any volatile solvents or inhalants, such as, but not limited to, glue and aerosol products;
- e. All "look-alike drugs; and
- f. All alcoholic beverages.

The Board prohibits: (a) the use or ingestion, possession, distribution or transmission of drugs; (b) being under the influence of drugs; (c) attempts to use or ingest, possess, distribute or transmit drugs; and/or, (d) assisting, aiding or participating in the use or ingestion, possession, distribution or transmission of any drug during school hours, on school district owned or leased property or vehicles, or at any school-sponsored activities whether on or off school premises, or during the time spent traveling to and from school and school-sponsored activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Over-the-counter medication includes homeopathic remedies such as Valerian and Chamomile in ANY FORM (i.e., pills, drops and/or tinctures). Students are not allowed to bring homeopathic remedies into school.

The Board also prohibits (a) the possession, use, or distribution or transmission, (b) attempts to possess, use, or distribute or transmit, and/or (c) assisting, aiding or participating in the possession, use or distribution or transmission of drug paraphernalia.

Violation of this policy will result in suspension from school and all school activities. A formal Board hearing may be held which may result in the student being expelled from the school district. Students in violation of this policy will be reported to civil authorities for appropriate legal action. In each case, questionable substances found in the possession of any student will be forwarded to the State Police for analysis.

### **ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR COMPUTERS AND RELATED TECHNOLOGY**

Users of individual computers, computer networks and related equipment, subsequently referred to as hardware, in this School District must understand that this equipment as well as the programs and data that reside on the equipment, subsequently referred to as software, is the property of the School District. District hardware and software is available for its students and staff to be used for educational purposes. Any other uses must receive permission from the administration. This use is a privilege and may be revoked at any time for disruptive or improper use of the hardware and/or software.

Students are expected to exercise responsible behavior and to abide by school policies and local, federal and state laws when using computers, networks, and Internet/telecommunications systems of the School District. Demonstrating unacceptable behavior in using this equipment is considered a serious offense. Offenders will be subject to loss of computer, network and Internet/ telecommunications usage and any other appropriate disciplinary options, including criminal prosecution, suspension and expulsion.

### **USE OF CELLULAR TELEPHONES AND OTHER DEVICES**

Student use of communication devices including cellular phones is prohibited from the time the student enters the school facility until the time the student exits the school facility and, while in the school facility, such devices shall be turned off or made inoperable. No use of a cell phone or communication device will be permitted, including the taking of photographs and/or audio and/or video recording. Violation of this rule will result in confiscation of the phone and/or suspension from school.

# APPENDIX 10:

## Rights and Privileges Answer Key

QUESTION	RIGHT?	PRIVILEGE?
Host family	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Host school	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Money to buy lunch at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Three meals a day	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your own room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Your own bed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monthly communication with your local representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reasonable access to natural parents by telephone and email	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of mobile phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Monthly stipend	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decision to accept double placement with another exchange student	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using host family or school computer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Medical insurance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placement in grade (10, 11, or 12) level of student's choice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Driver's education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Round trip travel from home to the United States	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking trips with host family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

# APPENDIX 11:

## Basic Program Provisions for Students

As you know, there are rules that participants in United States government funded scholarship programs must follow. There are also some things that you are provided routinely as a part of the program. Some of these are listed below. Here's some advice to make your experience a positive one.

You will likely face some of the adjustment issues that exchange students routinely encounter, such as getting used to a new family, new routines, and a new culture. The majority of these issues are completely normal, and while they may seem challenging, they do not present any danger to you and you will be able to work through them with your host family and local coordinator. It is rare, but possible, that something may not be going the way it should. In those cases, you should speak up and reach out to someone from your program to get help. There are many people to whom you can reach out for help.

<b>YOU SHOULD:</b>	<b>IN CASE YOUR SITUATION IS DIFFERENT:</b>
<b>...be enrolled in and attending on a full-time basis an accredited secondary school (high school)</b>	Sometimes students change host families. If the change involves moving to another city or state, the student might be out of school for several days during this transition. This is an acceptable situation. If you are out of school for more than one week and do not know when you will attend school again, contact your placement organization's main office, American Councils, or Department of State.
<b>...have a local or area representative who is not a member of your host family.</b>	An area or local representatives can host you, but they cannot act at the same time as your local or area representative. Your placement organization must assign you a different local or area representative. If your area or local representative is also acting as your host family on more than a temporary basis, contact your placement organization's main office or American Councils.
<b>...be in monthly (at least) personal contact with your local representative</b>	If you do not speak to your local representative at least once per month, or do not know who your local representative is, contact your placement organization's main office or American Councils.
<b>...be informed about how to identify and report sexual abuse or exploitation.</b>	You will receive this information at your Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO). If you EVER have ANY questions about harassment or suspect you are being harassed, contact the placement organization's main office or American Councils. You have the right to a harassment-free exchange experience. No one will be punished for reporting such situations. Regardless of whether you made any mistakes, you can receive help.
<b>...receive a detailed profile of the host family in which you are placed including a list of everyone who lives in the host family home.</b>	If there is anyone in your host family who was not listed on the Placement Report that you received from program staff in your home country, notify your placement organization's main office or American Councils immediately.

**YOU SHOULD:****IN CASE YOUR SITUATION IS DIFFERENT:**

<p><b>...receive an identification card with important contact information</b></p>	<p>You will receive an identification card at PDO and when you arrive to Washington-Dulles airport. It will contain:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. your name</li> <li>2. your host family's address and telephone number</li> <li>3. telephone number for your placement organization's national office</li> <li>4. telephone number for American Councils main office in Washington</li> <li>5. the telephone number for the Department of State</li> </ol> <p>If you lose this card, contact your local representative or American Councils for a replacement copy.</p>
<p><b>...have your own bed, whether in a shared room or private room.</b></p>	<p>If you are expected to share a bed in your host family's home, contact your placement organization's main office or American Councils <b>immediately</b>.</p>
<p><b>...not share a room with more than one person or with someone who is not of the same sex as you.</b></p>	<p>If you have been told to share a room with more than one person, or with a person the opposite sex, contact your placement organization's main office or American Councils <b>immediately</b>. There should never be more than two exchange students living in the same home.</p>
<p><b>...have three meals a day provided to you by your host family.</b></p>	<p>If your host family does not provide you with three meals per day, contact your placement organization's main office or American Councils <b>immediately</b>. Remember, lunch can be either a bag lunch from home OR money to buy hot lunch at school - your host family decides which.</p>
<p><b>...be placed in a host family who provides a comfortable and nurturing home environment.</b></p>	<p>If you are concerned that your host family home is <u>unsanitary</u> or <u>unhygienic</u>, or if someone in your host family is abusing drugs or alcohol, contact your placement organization's main office or American Councils You will NOT be punished for reporting such circumstances.</p>
<p><b>...be offered the choice of accepting or declining a double placement, if this is the type of placement your placement organization intends for you.</b></p>	<p>If you are moved into a home where there is another exchange student, or another exchange student moves in with your host family, and you and your parents did not agree to this, contact your placement organization's main office or American Councils.</p>

# APPENDIX 12:

## Your Safety and Security Online: Safety Tips

**The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs** takes your online safety and security very seriously. As you use social networks, e-mail, and the Internet, please consider the following **Safety Tips**:

1. Never broadcast private contact information. Never list your e-mail address or phone number in any public space, such as your profile page, a blog, forums, or photo caption.
2. If you are a member of a social network, pay close attention to your privacy settings, which allow you to choose how much personal information you reveal and to whom.
3. Carefully consider what you publish on social networks. Before you post photos, videos, or text, ask yourself if it would embarrass you if your family or employer saw them.
4. Before you add a widget (an application that can be shared with others electronically) to your profile, think about whether you want the creators of the widget to be able to access your profile page and information about your activity on the social network. Keep in mind that the social network generally has no control over these widgets, so exercise discretion when using these tools.
5. Report any abuses of a website’s Terms of Use to the website’s administrators. Any reputable website or social network will have a way for you to report abuses.
6. E-mail can be used to spread malicious software or obtain your personal information in order to commit fraud.

**To protect yourself and the computers that you use, follow the guidelines below:**

- Be suspicious of unsolicited e-mail messages or phone calls from individuals asking for personal information. If an unknown individual claims to be from a legitimate organization, try to verify his or her identity directly with that organization.
- Never provide personal or financial information (credit card numbers, PIN numbers, identification numbers) in response to e-mails or telephone calls that you did not initiate.
- Do not send personal or financial information over the Internet before checking the website’s security. (Secure website addresses begin with “<https://>”)
- Pay attention to the address of a website, located at the top of the screen. Malicious web sites may look identical to a legitimate site, but the address may use a variation in spelling or a different domain (e.g., “.com” vs. “.net”).
- Protect your computer and other computers that you use by scanning all removable media, such as a flash drive, CD, or DVD, for viruses before opening files that are contained on the media and by scanning all attachments that you receive via e-mail prior to opening them.
- Do not accept or open executable files (indicated by a file name ending in “.exe”) that you receive via e-mail. Such files can be dangerous.

# APPENDIX 13:

## Budgeting Quiz

answers on Page page 172

	TRUE	FALSE	
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My host family will receive money for hosting me.
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My host family pays the largest portion of my living costs.
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I will receive two types of allowances to help me with living costs.
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not need to submit receipts for my incidentals allowance.
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The monthly allowance is for the expenses that I will have throughout the year.
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I will receive \$200 every month (or I will receive \$400 bi-monthly).
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A budget is a plan for how to spend an amount of money.
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My host family must buy me a hot lunch if I request it.
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If I need toothpaste, I should ask my family to buy it for me.
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My family will pay for my phone calls.
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am allowed to have an official job while I am in the U.S.
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If I go to McDonald's with my friends, I should expect them to pay for me.
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My host family will pay all costs related to my internet usage.
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is good to find "SALES" on the items I need.
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All stores are very expensive in the U.S.
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If I have any questions about my budget, I should ask my host family.
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is good to save my stipend money to take home with me at the end of the year.
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The "incidentals allowance" is given to me by check when I arrive in the United States.

# APPENDIX 14:

## High School Vocabulary

<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>	A secondary school in the U.S. (usually grades 9-12).
<b>PRINCIPAL</b>	The director of the school.
<b>GUIDANCE COUNSELOR</b>	Person who advises students on which courses to take, gives information on career options, and helps students adjust socially.
<b>FRESHMAN</b>	Student in the 9th grade.
<b>SOPHOMORE</b>	Student in the 10th grade.
<b>JUNIOR</b>	Student in the 11th grade.
<b>SENIOR</b>	Student in the 12th grade.
<b>SEMESTER</b>	Half of the school year.
<b>CURRICULUM</b>	All the courses of study offered by an educational institution.
<b>MULTIPLE CHOICE TEST</b>	Exam where several answers are given and the correct one must be chosen.
<b>MID-TERM EXAM</b>	An exam, usually written, that comes in the middle of the semester.
<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	An exam, usually written, that comes at the end of each semester.
<b>POP QUIZ</b>	A short, unannounced test given by the teacher.
<b>ELECTIVES</b>	Classes you choose to take.
<b>REQUIRED SUBJECTS/COURSES</b>	Classes you must take.
<b>ACCELERATED COURSES</b>	Classes which are taught at a faster pace.
<b>ADVANCE PLACEMENT COURSES</b>	Classes for which students may receive college credit.
<b>ASSEMBLY</b>	A meeting of some or all students and teachers in the school.
<b>STUDY HALL</b>	A time during the school day for students to do their homework.
<b>HOMEROOM</b>	A short period, usually at the beginning of the day, in which attendance is taken and announcements are given.
<b>DETENTION</b>	A punishment for misbehavior; students are required to stay after school.
<b>PERIOD</b>	A block of time, usually one hour or less, in which each class is given.
<b>TO FLUNK</b>	To fail a test, class or grade.
<b>TO DROP A CLASS</b>	To officially stop taking a class shortly after the beginning of the school year.
<b>EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/ CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES</b>	Sports or clubs that students participate in after school.
<b>INTRAMURAL TEAMS</b>	Teams which play with other teams within the school itself.
<b>VARSITY TEAMS</b>	Sports teams which represents the school and compete with other schools. Teams usually train intensively.

<b>STUDENT COUNCIL/GOVERNMENT</b>	Student-elected governing organization.
<b>PEP RALLY</b>	A gathering of students to rally school spirit and support before a sports competition.
<b>GRADES</b>	Evaluation of school performance, based on participation in class, projects, term papers and quizzes.
<b>REPORT CARD</b>	Official document given to students at the end of each term where grades and credit received are listed.
<b>GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)</b>	The numerical average of all grades received.
<b>TO CUT CLASS/TO DITCH</b>	To be absent from class without permission.
<b>TO SKIP SCHOOL</b>	To skip school To be absent from school without a reason.
<b>TO BE SUSPENDED</b>	To be told by school officials to leave school temporarily because of breaking a rule.
<b>TO BE EXPELLED</b>	To be told to leave school permanently by school officials because of breaking rules.
<b>TO TRY OUT</b>	To audition for a sports team or for a theatre or musical production; based on your ability, you may or may not be accepted.
<b>PROM</b>	A dance usually held at the end of junior and senior year; often formal ticket purchase is required.
<b>HOMECOMING</b>	Usually in the fall, a weekend of activities—often a football game, parade, and school dance. Both current students and alumni participate.
<b>SPECIAL ED</b>	Special education classes for students with learning disabilities.
<b>HOME EC</b>	Home economics; classes that teach cooking, sewing, consumer education and child development. It is common for both boys and girls to take these classes.
<b>OPEN CAMPUS</b>	Students may leave the school and grounds when they have no classes.
<b>CLOSED CAMPUS</b>	Students are not allowed to leave the school and grounds when they have no classes.
<b>HALL PASS</b>	Written permission to leave class to go elsewhere.
<b>CHEATING</b>	Sharing answers or copying another's work.
<b>SENIOR PICTURES</b>	Pictures for the school yearbook; usually taken early in the school year and available for purchase.
<b>SCHOOL YEARBOOK</b>	A record of the school year which you may purchase to take home with you as a memory of your year.
<b>LOCKERS</b>	Storage area with combination lock for your coat and books.
<b>SCHOOL LUNCH</b>	Cafeteria-style food offered at school.
<b>PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE</b>	An oath of loyalty to the U.S., taken while facing the American flag and with hand over heart.
<b>CAR POOL</b>	Several people with a common destination riding together in a car; often everyone shares the cost of gas.
<b>HONOR ROLL</b>	List of students who receive good to excellent marks.

# APPENDIX 15:

## Sample High School Handbook

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Many high schools provide students with a High School Handbook. The handbook is a guide to students which provides the school calendar, rules and regulations, course requirements, the grading system, courses offered, and clubs and activities. Of course, each school's handbook will be different because it must reflect its own policies. In very large schools, the courses offered may be in another publication called Course of Studies.

You may receive a high school handbook when you arrive at your school in the U.S. You may even be able to read it online in advance. You will be expected to read it and understand the school's rules, grading system, and course requirements for your grade level. You also will need to use it to choose elective classes and club activities.

To help you prepare to use a high school handbook, there is a sample one on the next few pages. This is a sample because it is not really from any one school, nor is it complete. Rather, there are parts of several different schools' handbooks put together so that you can see what a high school handbook might contain.

# **WELCOME TO CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL!**

We hope the time you spend here will be meaningful and rewarding. Your progress in each subject will depend upon your interest, desire, effort and ability. Success depends on you. Practicing the following will help you achieve your goals:

1. Be on time and be prepared to succeed.
2. Tell the truth; get beyond denying and lying.
3. Treat others as you would like to be treated by them.
4. Be appropriate; know when to do what and where.
5. Respect and encourage the right to teach and the right to learn at all times.
6. Be responsible for your choices. Expect to be held accountable for them.
7. Be focused; ask questions and seek solutions.
8. Be young, have fun, and be responsible.

This handbook will provide important information regarding some of your privileges and responsibilities.

This by no means is to be interpreted as being a complete list of services, rules, and regulations of the school. It should help you to know your school better. Please remember that Central High School can only be as good as you make it! HAVE A GREAT YEAR!

## **Central High School MISSION STATEMENT**

*Central High School exists to teach all students new knowledge and foster a culture of learning where students, parents, community and staff take responsibility for continuous and annual improvement of student learning as measured by local, state and federal standards; a place where each student's intellectual, aesthetic, social and physical skills are nurtured in a positive environment.*

# **Annual Events Schedule**

## **SEPTEMBER**

- 6 *Labor Day Holiday*
- 7 *Classes begin: for 9th grade*
- 8 *Classes begin for ALL STUDENTS*
- 10 *Back-to-School Night*
- 11 *Boosters' Golf Tournament*

## **OCTOBER**

- 8 *Early Release - Homecoming Football Game*
- 11 *State In-Service Day*
- 15 *Homecoming Dance*
- 29 *End of First Quarter*
- 31 *Sock Hop*  
*Halloween Bake Sale*

## **NOVEMBER**

- 1 *Early Release - Parent Conferences*
- 2 *Early Release - Parent Conferences*
- 11 *Veterans' Day*
- 18-19 *Fall Play: Pippin*
- 25-26 *Thanksgiving Holidays*

## **DECEMBER**

- 20 *Winter Break Begins*

## **JANUARY**

- 3 *Winter Break Ends*  
*Teacher In-Service Day*
- 4 *Classes resume*
- 17 *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day*
- 28 *End of Second Quarter*
- 31 *Grading Day*

## **FEBRUARY**

- 11 *Teacher In-Service*
- 14 *Valentine's Day Dance*
- 21 *Presidents' Day*

## **MARCH**

- 18 *Bloodmobile*
- 21-25 *Spring Break*

- 28 *Classes Resume*

## **APRIL**

- 4 *Booster Auction*
- 15 *Early Release - End of Third Quarter*
- 1 *Grading Day*
- 23 *Jazz Festival*

## **MAY**

- 6 *Cinco de Mayo Cultural Assembly*
- 20 *Prom Night*
- 30 *Memorial Day*

## **JUNE**

- 3 *Seniors' Last Day*  
*Awards Night*
- 6 *Baccalaureate*
- 7 *Graduation Ceremonies*
- 9 *Early Release - Exams*
- 10 *Early Release - Last Day of Classes*
- 13 *End of Fourth Quarter - Teacher Work Day*

NOTE: Other events may be added to calendar.

# **Responsibilities and Rights of Students**

## **EDUCATION**

Rights: The rights of all students, including those guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, and all state, county and local laws, and the right to an education are and shall be recognized without regard to race, religion, sex, creed, ability to pay, national origin, handicapping condition, or intellectual ability. Students have a right to a public education beginning with kindergarten and extending through the twelfth grade.

Responsibilities: Student responsibilities include regular school attendance, conscientious effort in classroom work, conformance to school rules and regulations, and the responsibility not to interfere with the education of fellow students or the orderly operation of the school.

## **RESPECT**

Rights: Students have a right to expect courtesy, fairness, and respect from members of the school staff and other students.

Responsibilities: Students have the responsibility to respect the rights and authority of teachers, students, administrators, and all others included in the education process.

## **COMPLAIN**

Rights: Students have the right to complain to school staff regarding decisions made by staff members that are considered not to be in the students' best interest.

Responsibilities: Students have the responsibility to follow the established complaint process.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Rights: Students have the right to expect a safe school environment in which to learn and that is conducive to learning.

Responsibilities: Students have a responsibility to help the school staff in operating a safe school by abiding at all times by the laws of the United States, all state and local laws and the regulations of the County School Board and the individual school.

## **PARTICIPATION**

Rights: Students have a right to participate in school activities.

Responsibilities: Students have a responsibility to comply with all rules and regulations for student behavior at all school functions.

## **PROPERTY**

Rights: Students have a right to expect that other students and school personnel will respect their personal property.

Responsibilities: Students have the responsibility to respect personal property rights of other students, teachers, and administrators, as well as the public's property, including equipment and school buildings.

## **EXPRESSION**

Rights: Students have the right to exercise freedom of expression, to address policies publicly, privately, in writing, or orally. Students may advocate change in any law, policy, or regulation.

Responsibilities: Students have a responsibility to see that expressions do not interfere with the education process. Students have a responsibility not to use obscene, slanderous, or libelous statements; not to use disruptive tactics; not to advocate violation of the law or school regulations.

## **School Policies and Rules**

### **ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION FEE**

The participation fee is necessary to offset the cost of the sports programs. Payment of the fee is a requirement for eligibility but is not a guarantee of playing time. Students whose financial circumstances prevent them from paying this fee may obtain a Waiver Request form from the office. Refunds may be requested if the student's participation ends prior to the first competition. Refund Request forms are available in the school office.

### **CELLULAR PHONE USE**

Student use of communication devices is prohibited from the time the student enters the school facility until the time the student exits the school facility and, while in the school facility, such devices shall be turned off or made inoperable. Exceptions to this rule can be made only upon the approval of the building principal or designee. No other use of a cell phone or communication device will be permitted, including the taking of photographs and/or audio and/or video recording. Offenses will result in phone confiscation and/or suspension.

### **CHEATING/PLAGIARISM**

Central High requires that students are honest and honorable in all their academic efforts.

Plagiarism is defined as the use of information from another source without attribution. Plagiarism may take many forms:

- Copying directly from another source without using quotation marks.
- Paraphrasing source material without citing work.
- Submitting someone else's work as your own.

Information that is common knowledge need not be cited. For example, Bill Clinton was elected to his first term as President in 1992. However, the author of information that is not common knowledge must be acknowledged.

The penalty for plagiarism is detention or suspension.

### **BUS CONDUCT**

Student conduct is a matter of individual responsibility. Every student is expected to act in such a manner that the bus driver is able to operate the vehicle safely. Violations of discipline policy on the bus will be dealt with by parent conferences, disciplinary actions, and/or suspension of the privilege to ride the bus.

### **CLOSED CAMPUS**

For the safety of the students and to fulfill the district's supervisory responsibilities, the Central High School Board has designated the high school as a closed campus. All students are prohibited from leaving the school grounds during instructional hours and breaks without the expressed permission of their parents and a school administrator. Violations of the school's closed campus policies are subject to the same disciplinary actions.

### **COMPUTER USE**

The appropriate use of computers and computerized technology is encouraged to promote the knowledge and skills of students and staff. All use of technology by students and staff is intended to support the approved curriculum. Any other use or any computer activity that disrupts the ability of teachers to teach or students to learn is prohibited. Computer use that violates district policies or state law will be subject to school discipline or referred to the proper civil authorities.

### **COUNSELING OFFICES**

The school guidance service provides opportunity for students to have conferences with the counselor. The counselor helps students with personal and social problems, planning their high school programs, class schedule changes, post high school education, and careers. Informational material about professional training, scholarships, colleges, college entrance examinations, aptitude tests, achievement tests, part time work, and military services are available.

### **CREDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADE LEVEL**

The minimum semester hours for individual grade classification (as of September each year) are as follows:

9th grade.....0-4 credits

10th grade.....5-10 credits

11th grade.....11-16 credits

12th grade.....17+ credits

### **DRESS CODE**

As many employers expect their employees to dress and comport themselves in manners acceptable to their employment, the student dress code is intended to provide standards of dress which are desirable and to discourage dress that is undesirable.

Students are expected to groom and dress themselves in an appropriate manner. Students must be dressed in designated clothing and protective equipment for physical education classes, science laboratories, and foods courses.

The following are considered to be inappropriate and constitute a disruption to the educational process:

1. Any dress or appearance which is vulgar, lewd, obscene, indecent, profane or exposes to sight the private parts of the body, e.g.,
  - See-through garments
  - Revealing plunging necklines or waistlines
  - Tank tops or undershirts worn as outer garments
  - Fishnet shirts
  - Halter tops, spaghetti straps, strapless garments or bare backs
2. Any dress or appearance, which constitutes a threat or danger to the health and safety of students, e.g.,
  - Heavy jewelry or jewelry with spikes

- Cleats, chains, pins or certain types of rings
  - Flip flops, open toed shoes or sandals in science labs, PE classes or foods courses
3. Any dress or appearance which encourages or advocates the use of illegal drugs, alcohol or tobacco.
  4. Any dress or appearance which advocates or encourages illegal or violent activities.
  5. Any dress or appearance which advocates discrimination or denigrates others based upon race, color, creed, religion, national origin, or disability.
  6. Cleated footwear/spikes or similar footwear.
  7. Hats, bandannas, etc. are not to be worn or carried during the school day. They must be in lockers prior to first period.
  8. Sunglasses are not to be worn in the building.
  9. Outerwear cannot be worn during school hours. Administration discretion can waive this rule based on extenuating circumstances.
  10. Gang colors or gang related clothing or items which could be considered offensive to certain groups of people.
  11. Top garments should meet bottom garments at top of pants/shorts or skirt line. That is to say, no exposed midriffs.
  12. Length of skirts or shorts, when standing, must be at least as long as your extended fingertips.

Violation of the rules listed above will result in the student's parent/guardian being required to provide appropriate attire, and other action may be taken as deemed appropriate by the administration.

## **DRUGS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICIES**

The possession, distribution or use of illegal drugs, intoxicants, look-alikes (placebos), or drug paraphernalia while under the jurisdiction of the school is expressly forbidden, and may constitute grounds for expulsion from school. This includes the regular school day, field trips, school activities, or whenever the student is on school property.

A five-day suspension from school is mandatory for any student in possession of, or under the influence of, illegal drugs, intoxicants, or drug paraphernalia. Any student involved in the illegal sale or attempted sale of drugs or alcohol on school property, at school functions, or going to or from school shall be recommended for expulsion from school. Any illegal drugs, intoxicants, or drug paraphernalia will be turned over to the police who may bring charges against any involved student(s).

## **EXPULSION**

A student may be expelled for severe or repeated violations of the School Policies and Rules. No student may be expelled without a hearing unless the student's parent or the student, if 18 years of age, waives the right to a hearing, either in writing or by failure to appear at a scheduled hearing. An expulsion may extend to one calendar year.

## **FIGHTING**

All students, no matter what the circumstances, should make every effort to avoid fighting.

Instead, students should seek help from staff members of the school. Another option for students may be to engage in conflict mediation. Any student who engages in fighting may be suspended from school. In cases when it is possible to determine the identity of the aggressor, a more severe penalty may be issued to that student. An aggressor is defined as the student who makes the initial physical contact, escalates the situation, or retaliates. Verbal harassment is not an excuse to initiate physical contact. Both students may be suspended for fighting. In addition, students may lose all school privileges and formal charges may be filed with the appropriate authorities. In severe cases or in the case of a repetitious offender, a hearing before the Board for expulsion and/or

referral to law enforcement authorities may be initiated.

## **HARASSMENT/BULLYING/HAZING/SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Bullying, hazing, physical or verbal intimidation, threats, menacing behavior or harassment of any kind by students, staff, or others will not be tolerated and is strictly prohibited at all school activities and events.

Harassment/bullying includes but is not limited to any act which subjects an individual or group to unwanted, abusive behavior of a nonverbal, oral, written, or physical nature on the basis of age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, physical characteristic, cultural background, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.

Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to any act which subjects an individual or group to unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or any other nonverbal, oral, written, or physical behavior of a sexual nature. Intimidation/threats includes but is not limited to any threat or act intended to tamper, damage, or interfere with another's property, cause substantial inconvenience, subject another to offensive physical contact, or inflict serious injury on the basis of age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, physical characteristic, cultural background, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.

Menacing includes but is not limited to any act which does or is intended to place a school employee, student, or third party in fear of imminent serious physical injury.

## **PHONES AND TECH**

Phones and tablets are allowed on campus, but should only be in use during designated times and spaces. Laptops may be used for school-related work in the library, study spaces, or with express permission of a teacher. Students who bring tech to school must take full responsibility for the security and use of their devices.

## **HEALTH SERVICES**

First Aid and Emergency Care for injuries and illness: Staff members at each school have been trained in First Aid, CPR, and Epinephrine

injection administration. The nurse will be called for serious injuries. Every attempt is made to contact parents or the Emergency Contact person listed on the Emergency Card and Registration form. Our ability to contact a responsible adult depends on the accuracy of the provided phone numbers.

School Nurse: A part time registered professional nurse with special training in the field of public and school health is assigned to the Central High School District.

### **IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION**

In-school suspension is a supervised detention in which the student is required to quietly work alone in a specified location (usually the office) during the school day.

### **LOCKERS**

Lockers are available to students and are assigned at the beginning of the school year. Two students are assigned to each locker. The school assumes no responsibility for the safeguard of articles left in the lockers.

The lockers are not designed for maximum security. Students are urged to avoid placing any valuables in their lockers. Students are responsible for keeping their lockers clean and in good working condition. Fines will be assessed where damage occurs. Decorating of lockers is limited to taped-on pictures (using masking tape only), detachable locker organizers and magnet mirrors. Stickers, contact paper, plastic tape, inappropriate pictures, and permanent marking pens are prohibited for use in or on the lockers.

### **LUNCHES**

Students may eat lunch in the General Purpose Room, the student court, and the outside breezeways. Lunch may be eaten in the classrooms if the teacher is present.

### **MEDICATION POLICIES**

The Central High School District recognizes that administering medication to students or self medication may be necessary when the failure to take such medication would jeopardize the health or attendance of the student. Consequently, students may be permitted to take non-injectable prescription

or non prescription medication at school, on a temporary or regular basis.

All requests for the District to administer medication to a student or to allow a student to self-medicate shall be made by the parent or guardian in writing, to the School Nurse or School Administrator. Forms are available at each school office. "Student self medication" means a student must be able to demonstrate the ability, developmentally and behaviorally, to administer the medication safely and responsibly.

### **PHYSICALS FOR ATHLETICS/ACTIVITIES**

Students are required to have a physical the first time they participate in high school athletics. Thereafter, they must have a physical every two years and after any debilitating illness or injury.

### **SKATEBOARDS AND ROLLERBLADES**

For the protection of students and school property, the district liability insurance specifically requires that skateboarding and roller blading be prohibited from school property. Students who bring skateboards or rollerblades to school will be requested to leave the items in the office.

### **STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR**

The expectations for student behavior are part of the school's system of Positive Behavior Support:

- Punctually attending all classes
- Following the instructions of faculty and staff
- Being truthful with parents, teachers and staff
- Treating students and staff with kindness and respect
- Respecting the opinions and heritage of others
- Striving for academic excellence
- Being sincere in written and spoken communications
- Resolving conflicts without violence or threats
- Avoiding tobacco products, alcohol and illegal drugs
- Following athletic team rules and displaying

good sportsmanship

- Respecting the property of others
- Alerting responsible adults if students are a threat to themselves
- Keeping the school in a clean and attractive condition
- Volunteering service to the school and the community
- Being ethical in all academic activities
- Obeying all driving, parking and bus rules

### **STUDENT GOVERNMENT**

Central High School's student government is organized to have an influential voice in the operation of the school as well as to give students knowledge and experience in a working democracy. All students are encouraged to attend Student Council meetings and work through the class and ASB officers to effect positive changes in the school.

### **STUDENT AWARDS AND INCENTIVE PROGRAMS**

Central High School has a proud tradition of recognizing outstanding student achievement in all areas and practices Positive Behavior Support. The faculty, staff and student council welcome suggestions for additional opportunities to award meritorious achievements and behavior. The programs listed below are the prime examples of this tradition.

- Students of the Month - recognized by local and regional newspapers
- Athletic Awards - team and league honors
- Visual Displays of Student Awards and Works
- Awards Night - the annual recognition program at the end of the school year
- Honor Roll and Honor Society
- Department Awards - various programs

recognize especially successful students

- Scholarships - the ultimate recognition
- Club Competition – each year a club earns the Club of the Year Award
- Spirit Cup Competition - Classes compete to display their spirit and service

### **SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY**

A student shall not knowingly possess, use, transmit, traffic in, be in the environment of, or be under the influence of such unlawful substances as amphetamines, barbiturates, marijuana, narcotics, hallucinogenic drugs, unauthorized medications, alcohol, or intoxicants of any kind on or near the school grounds, or off the school grounds while attending a school activity, function or event.

If a student violates this rule, the administration will follow the procedures established in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook and will notify the parents. If there has been a violation of the law, the appropriate law enforcement agencies may be notified.

### **TARDY POLICY**

Students are expected in class on time to maximize their own learning and to avoid interrupting the teaching of others. Students who are not in the classroom and prepared to learn at the beginning of the class are considered tardy and are subject to disciplinary action by the teacher or by the administration. Every appropriate effort will be made to change the behavior of repeatedly tardy students, but recalcitrant students are subject to suspension or removal from the class. Students who are more than 10 minutes late to class will be considered absent and must obtain an admit slip from the office before being admitted to class. Students are never permitted to linger in the halls or by their lockers when classes are in session.

### **TOBACCO POSSESSION OR USE**

Use of tobacco products is prohibited on all school district property. The prohibition includes implements used for smoking, such as lighters and pipes. This applies to students, staff, patrons and visitors.

State law now prohibits the possession of tobacco products by people under 18. In compliance with this statute and a concern for the well-being of all students, the school district will enforce the following for students who possess or use tobacco.

1. The visitor is a student who may soon attend Central High.
2. The visitor is an out-of-district guest of a Central High student and their parents provide written permission to the office two days before the visit
3. The hosting student obtains a signed consent from each teacher to be visited.
4. The visit is for one day only.

The administration reserves the right to deny visiting privileges at any time.

### **VANDALISM**

Vandalism causing damage or defacement to any type of educational property and/or facility, grounds surrounding such facilities, schools-sponsored and/or operated property, and/or personal property located within such facilities, is an offense now punishable as a felony of the third degree - if the offender knows that the damage will outrage persons who observe it, or if the repair/replacement or other costs exceed \$5,000.00. Otherwise, the offense is a second degree misdemeanor. These offenses will be referred to the proper authorities and result in discipline of the student, which could include expulsion.

### **WEAPONS POSSESSION**

The possession of any weapon on school grounds will result in a five day suspension and a recommendation for expulsion from school. Any weapons will be turned over to the police who may bring charges against any involved student(s).

### **VISITORS**

Central High School's student government is organized to have an influential voice in the operation of the school as well as to give students knowledge and experience in a working democracy. All students are encouraged to attend Student Council meetings and work through the class and ASB officers to effect positive changes in the school.

To minimize disruptions to classroom instruction and learning, student visitors are generally not permitted. Under no circumstances are Central High students permitted to host students from local high schools. Visits are never granted during the first three weeks or last three weeks of the semesters.

Exceptions may be made under the following guidelines:

## **General Information**

### **ATTENDANCE REGULATIONS**

The Board of Education has an obligation to require that the students of this district be present in school to receive an education.

This policy is for the benefit of the students, their parents, and the community at large.

Student participation in all regularly scheduled classroom learning activities in each area of study is essential in order for each student to receive the maximum benefits of a thorough educational program. The entire process of education requires regular continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences, and study.

The regular contact of students with one another in the classroom and their participation in a well-planned instructional activity under the tutelage of a competent teacher are vital to this purpose. Therefore, we cannot condone, excuse, or encourage any absence by students. Students who miss class for any reason must complete assignments missed because of their absence. The Board, however, recognizes that the schools are run for the benefit of the pupils and every effort shall be made, therefore, to identify the habitual truant, investigate the cause(s) of the behavior, and consider modification of his/her educational program to meet the particular needs and interests of the student.

*ABSENCES* are defined as either cumulative or non-cumulative.

1. Students accumulating more than sixteen (16) absences in a full-year course or more than eight (8) absences in a one semester course shall face a loss of credit situation.
2. The following absences will not accumulate toward the student's absentee record:
  - a. School sponsored activities
  - b. Out-of-school suspensions
  - c. Religious holidays as defined by State Department of Education

- d. Death in the family
  - e. Up to 3 days for college visitations with verification limited to Juniors/Seniors
  - f. Court subpoena, driver's test/permit with verification (limited to one excused absence)
  - g. All absences covered by a doctor's note will be excused if submitted within three days of the student's return to school.

All notes must be an original document, on letterhead and signed by the doctor. FAXs are not acceptable.
  - h. Chronic notes must be renewed annually and documented with a 504 Plan.
3. Parents will be notified in writing if a student is in danger of losing credit due to excessive absenteeism.

### **STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND CLUBS**

Welcome to a wide variety of activities and opportunities! We have many clubs and activities that can provide each of you opportunity to participate in high school life. The daily bulletin will inform you of meeting times and locations and all activities that are happening.

*ART CLUB*: attached to the Art Department.

*ANNUAL*: Attached to the Journalism class to construct the school annual

*A.S.B.* (Associated Student Body) Student government

Freshman Class      Junior Class

Sophomore Class      Senior Class

*CAB (CHOIR AND BAND)*: attached to the Music Department.

*CHEERLEADING*: a seasonal commitment with members chosen competitively in the spring of the preceding year.

*CLUB SHRED*: ski club that meets and skis on the weekends.

*DEBATE*: (Inactive)

*DRAMA:* students involved with live productions in collaboration with the Theater/Tech class and many community groups.

*F.B.L.A.* (Future Business Leaders of America): attached to the Business Department, and involved at local, regional, state and national levels.

*F.F.A.:* attached to the Agriculture Department, and involved at Local, Regional, State and National levels.

*F.C.C.L.A.* (Family Career and Community Leaders of America): attached to the Family and Consumer Sciences Dept., involved at local, regional, state and national levels.

*HONOR SOCIETY:* composed of students who maintain a 3.75 GPA or higher, and are involved in other school and community activities.

*INTERNATIONAL CLUB:* attached to the World Language Department and devoted to the understanding of languages and cultures.

*KEY CLUB:* Students community service club associated with local Kiwanis association.

*KNOWLEDGE BOWL:* quiz show style academic competition for students interested in local, regional and state competition.

*LETTERMAN'S CLUB:* composed of student athletes who have earned varsity letter awards.

*LINK CREW:* Open to selected upper classmen by application. Students interested in helping transition students from the middle school to the high school

*PADDLING CLUB:* Attached to the building trades course – build and utilize a canoe

*POETRY CLUB:* (Inactive)

*RODEO CLUB:* (Inactive)

*S.A.D.D./T.A.T.U.:* (Students Against Drunk Driving/ Teens Against Tobacco Use)

*TRAVEL CLUB:* Open to students interested in traveling to other countries for a portion of their education.

## **GRADING SYSTEM**

The following grading system has been adopted by the Board of Education:

<b>A+</b>	95-100
<b>A</b>	90-94
<b>B+</b>	85-89
<b>B</b>	80-84
<b>C+</b>	75-79
<b>C</b>	70-74
<b>D</b>	65-69
<b>F</b>	64 or below
<b>I</b>	Incomplete
<b>W</b>	Withdrawn
<b>NC</b>	No Credit
<b>NM</b>	No Mark

## **APPLIED ARTS**

### **Business**

*COURSE TITLE: Introduction to Technology/Microcomputer Applications*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*This course provides information and extensive hands-on computer experiences that develop an understanding of computers and their utilization in the business world and for personal use. Students learn word processing, database, spreadsheet, graphics, and telecommunications. Students may work for Microsoft Certification.*

### **Computer Science**

*COURSE TITLE: Coding/CompSci*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This course is designed for student with little or no previous background in coding, computer science, or programming. Students will learn intro to at least one coding language.*

### **Industrial Arts**

*COURSE TITLE: Drafting 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*In this introductory course,*

*students acquire knowledge and skills in the use of LT98 AutoCAD software. Through the drawing of mechanical parts, students learn technical sketching, drawing setup, dimensioning, LT98 commands, printing and plotting. The second semester covers the study of architectural drawing and model building. Six basic drawings for home design are completed.*

*COURSE TITLE: Drafting, Advanced*  
*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*This course is a continuation of Drafting 1-2. The same types of drawings are covered in more detail with additional work in assembly and detail drawings, two-point mechanical perspective, revisions, and dimensioning. Engineering specialization such as electrical, mechanical, computer drafting, aerodynamics, and 3-D modeling are explored. All work in this class is done using auto CAD computer aided drafting.*

*Prerequisite: Drafting 1-2*

### **Project Lead the Way**

*COURSE TITLE: Introduction to Engineering Design*

*Grade Levels: 9-11*

*This course introduces students to the elements of design in engineering fields. Students use a problem-solving model to improve existing products and invent new ones. The student learns how to apply this model to solve problems in and out of the classroom. Using sophisticated three-dimensional modeling software, students communicate the details of the products. Emphasis is placed on analyzing potential solutions and communicating ideas to others.*

*COURSE TITLE: Principles of Engineering*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*This introductory course explores the wide variety of careers in Engineering and Technology and covers various technology systems and manufacturing processes.*

Using activities, projects, and problems, the student learns first hand how engineers and technicians use math, science, and technology in an engineering problem-solving process to benefit people. The course also addresses concerns about social and political consequences of technological change.

**COURSE TITLE:** Digital Electronics  
**Grade Levels:** 10-12

This course in applied logic encompasses the application of electronic circuits and devices. The student uses computer simulation software to design and test digital circuitry prior to the actual construction of circuits and devices.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT (ELD)**

**COURSE TITLE:** English ELD 1-2  
**Grade Levels:** 9-12

This two-period ELD Language Arts course is designed as an intensive introduction to English. Emphasis is placed on the acquisition of basic communication skills and vocabulary development. Students acquire these skills through the use of materials and instructional strategies that incorporate listening, speaking, reading and writing. The second period of this course is Reading ELD 1-2.

**COURSE TITLE:** English ELD 3-4  
**Grade Levels:** 9-12

This two-period ELD Language Arts course is designed for students whose proficiency level is at the Beginning/Early Intermediate level as measured by the CELDT. Students continue to develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through the use of a variety of instructional materials and strategies. The second period of this course is Reading ELD 3-4.

**Prerequisite:** English ELD 1-2 or a placement exam.

**COURSE TITLE:** Transitional English 1-2

**Grade Levels:** 9-12

Transitional English is an ELD standards-based course for advanced ELL students nearing reclassification. The focus for the course is academic vocabulary building, academic writing, grammar and mechanics, and expository or content reading. This course assists students in developing critical thinking, reading and writing skills in conjunction with their mainstream English classrooms and preparation for the State High School Exit Exam. The types of writing tested in the CAHSEE writing exam will be emphasized.

**Prerequisite:** Concurrent enrollment in English ELD 1-8.

**COURSE TITLE:** Social Studies ELD 1-2

**Grade Levels:** 9-12

This two-period ELD Language Arts This course is intended for beginning level English Learners and provides content-based Social Studies instruction in English. Students develop vocabulary, concepts and knowledge connected with a broad Social Science curriculum that includes the study of geography, history and cultures.

**Prerequisite:** Concurrent enrollment in English ELD 1-2

**COURSE TITLE:** Science ELD 1-2  
**Grade Levels:** 9-12

Science ELD 1-2 is a beginning Science course for students who have been identified as English Language Learners. Emphasis is placed on selected Beginning and Early Intermediate ELD standards through the study of science vocabulary and key concepts.

**Prerequisite:** Concurrent enrollment in English ELD 1-2 or ELD 3-4

### **ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS ENGLISH**

**COURSE TITLE:** English 3-4  
**Grade Levels:** 10

English 3-4 is a standards-based course designed to enhance skills in listening, speaking, reading comprehension, language usage and writing, literary analysis, and critical thinking. Students further develop those skills that enable them to demonstrate their understanding and appreciation of literary works through the use of several writing forms. The school's core literature selections for this course include a Shakespearean play and To Kill a Mockingbird or Like Water for Chocolate. The course is designed to help students develop communicative skills in preparation for English 5-6.

**COURSE TITLE:** AP English Language and Composition

**Grade Levels:** 11

This course is designed for recommended juniors who are ready for college level reading and writing. The course emphasizes developing analytical reading skills and the rhetorical style. The AP English Language course focuses on rhetorical strategies and stylistic choices of exemplary prose writers from American and other literary traditions in preparation for the American College Board Advanced Placement Examination in English Language and Composition. The student will read and analyze selected prose works and practice rhetorical analysis skills, with work as needed on vocabulary, grammar, and usage to supplement writing skills.

**COURSE TITLE:** AP English Literature and Composition

**Grade Levels:** 12

AP English Literature and Composition is an intensive full year course designed for seniors who are ready for college level reading and writing. The course emphasizes the development

of skills in literary analysis in preparation for the Advanced Placement Examination in English Literature.

COURSE TITLE: Journalism 1-2

Grade Levels: 9-12

This course prepares the student for work on a school newspaper. The student learns interviewing skills and news writing techniques, and explores different types of feature stories and editorials. The course emphasizes writing skills, layout and design. It also includes instruction in investigative reporting and discussion of the ethics and law.

COURSE TITLE: Journalism, Advanced

Grade Levels: 10-12

This class includes an active hands-on role in design, production, and publication of the school newspaper. Editing, layout, design and desktop publishing skills are emphasized. It may also include business aspects of a school newspaper (marketing, circulation), photography and graphic arts. The course requires strong writing skills, leadership skills and the ability to work independently and responsibly.

Prerequisite: Completion of Journalism 1-2 or equivalent

## **FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

### **French**

COURSE TITLE: French 1-2

Grade Levels: 9-12

This course introduces and develops basic skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Common traditions and customs of French-speaking people are also introduced.

COURSE TITLE: French 3-4

Grade Levels: 10-12

Students continue to develop the skills learned in French 1-2, while

the level of work advances. More emphasis is placed on reading and writing in this second year. Students continue to learn about the cultures in the French speaking world.

Prerequisite: French 1-2

### **Latin**

COURSE TITLE: Latin 3-4

Grade Levels: 10-12

This course reinforces and expands the skills learned in Latin 1-2. More complex structures and forms, and more extensive vocabulary are covered. Students begin lengthy passages for translation and comprehension.

Prerequisite: Latin 1-2

COURSE TITLE: Latin 5-6

Grade Levels: 11-12

This course reinforces and expands skills learned in Latin 1-4. More complex structures are taught. Students continue to learn about Roman culture, especially as portrayed in Latin literature. Students study a variety of Latin works from Plautus to Medieval Latin.

Prerequisite: Latin 3-4

### **Spanish**

COURSE TITLE: Spanish 1-2

Grade Levels: 9-10

This first year Spanish college preparatory course provides students the opportunity to learn to speak, listen, read and write in the target language in order to develop basic language skills and knowledge needed to be successful if further study of Spanish is desired. Students are introduced to the five goals for foreign language instruction: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. These goals are emphasized throughout the course as students learn basic vocabulary related to everyday needs and activities as well as grammatical forms and functions. Accuracy in speaking and writing

are emphasized in order to foster a high standard of oral and written communication.

COURSE TITLE: Spanish 3-4

Grade Levels: 10-12

The second year Spanish college preparatory course continues to provide students the opportunity to increase their ability to speak, listen, read and write in the target language in order to complete the School District graduation requirement for foreign language and to continue to develop language skills and knowledge needed to be successful if further study of Spanish is desired. Students continue to be reminded of the five goals for foreign language instruction: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. The goals are emphasized throughout the course as students increase their vocabulary development and understanding of the grammatical forms and functions. Accuracy in speaking and writing is emphasized in order to continue to foster high standards of oral and written communication.

Prerequisite: Spanish 1-2

## **MATHEMATICS**

COURSE TITLE: Geometry

Grade Levels: 9-12

In this course students learn to apply the relationship of similarity, congruence and transformations on angles, triangles, polygons, circles, space figures, and coordinate geometry. In addition students will gain an understanding of the basic properties of geometric figures and angles. The course content emphasizes the use of logic and mathematical proofs. This course covers all State standards for Geometry.

Prerequisite: High School Algebra I or Algebra I (HE) with Passing Score on Algebra I Exit Exam at the Middle School

*COURSE TITLE: Algebra II*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*In this course students expand their knowledge of first year algebra concepts. Students also learn to: solve absolute value equations and inequalities, calculate and solve with complex numbers, use sequences and series, calculate binomial probability, identify and graph conic sections, and solve exponential and logarithmic functions. Students continue to develop advanced skills in critical thinking and problem solving. This course covers all State standards for Algebra II.*

*Prerequisite: Algebra I and Geometry*

*COURSE TITLE: Algebra II with Trig*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*In this course students expand in depth all topics listed under Algebra II and additional material on trigonometric relationships including graphs and properties of trigonometric functions and their inverses. Students who intend to take Calculus or IB Math Methods in high school or college should take this course. All State standards for Algebra II are covered in this course.*

*Recommended: Algebra I with a grade of "B" or better*

*COURSE TITLE: Pre Calculus*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*In this course, the student uses previously learned math concepts to analyze and solve real-world problems. Topics included are polynomial functions, theory of equations, trigonometric functions, sequences and series, exponential and logarithmic functions, parametric equations, vectors and polar coordinates. Special focus is placed on using computers and graphing calculators as problem-solving tools.*

*Prerequisite: Geometry and Algebra II or Algebra II with Trig  
Recommended: Algebra II or*

*Algebra II with Trig with a grade of "C" or better*

*COURSE TITLE: Pre Calculus Honors*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This honors course is the gateway to college-level mathematics. It covers the same topics as Pre Calculus, advanced trigonometry, and analytical geometry. Students begin their study of calculus by learning about limits, derivatives, maximum and minimum graphing, optimization, and rates of change applications. Special focus is placed on using computers and graphing calculators as problem-solving tools.*

*Recommended: Geometry and Algebra II with Trig with a grade of "B" or better*

*COURSE TITLE: AP Statistics*

*Grade Levels: 11-12*

*This is a college-level course in the statistics used to describe and make inferences from data. Numerical data and statistics are used in almost every discipline, especially in the social sciences, business, and engineering. Students who take and pass the Advanced Placement Statistics exam may earn college credit. A graphing calculator is required.*

*Recommended: Algebra II with a grade of "C" or better*

*COURSE TITLE: AP Calculus AB*

*Grade Levels: 11-12*

*In this course students cover one semester of college Calculus. The College Board determines topics covered. Students who take and pass the Advanced Placement Calculus AB exam may earn college credit. A graphing calculator is required.*

*Recommended: Pre Calculus or Pre-Calculus Honors with a grade of "B" or better*

*COURSE TITLE: Computer Programming, Advanced*

*Grade Levels: 11-12*

*In this course students will construct flow charts for the solution of mathematical problems, learn to operate a teletype terminal connected to a minicomputer, and run programs in "computer basic" in the classroom. Individual projects will also be completed.*

*Prerequisite: Computer Programming 1-2*

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

*COURSE TITLE: Physical Education: Course 2*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*This course continues the foundation for lifelong physical activity. Students develop proficient movement skills in each area of physical education; they expand their capabilities for independent learning; and they examine practices that allow for sound decision making to enhance successful participation in movement skills. This course includes combative, gymnastics/tumbling and team sports.*

*COURSE TITLE: Physical Education Bowling*

*Grade Levels: 12*

*This course meets at Oakridge Lanes for 1 1/2 hours twice weekly. Students meet on campus on Mondays for 45 minutes. The program includes scoring, basic bowling skills and a league tournament. Students are required to maintain a permanent record sheet. The grade is based on regular attendance and the record sheet.*

*COURSE TITLE: Weight Lifting*

*Grade Levels: 11-12*

*This course deals with body development through the lifting of weights. It also covers knowledge of the human body as it relates to lifting, diet, and body physiology.*

*COURSE TITLE: Aerobic Dance*

*Grade Levels: 11-12*

*This course deals with synchronized exercise through body movement performed to music. Aerobic dance emphasizes cardiovascular conditioning through dance and exercise.*

*Prerequisite: Audition*

*COURSE TITLE: Dance*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This course is a combination of aerobic, modern, and jazz dance. It is designed to teach physical conditioning, the basic elements of dance, and specific modern and jazz techniques. Students learn dance sequences choreographed by the teacher and have an opportunity to create their own dances.*

*COURSE TITLE: Dance Advanced*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*Elective 9-10*

*This class is a faster paced program than the beginning dance course. Combinations in ballet, jazz, and modern dance are taught with an emphasis on perfecting technique. The course includes a study of historical dance forms and the place of dance in traditional cultures. Students accepted for dance performance meet for class daily, and in addition, are required to rehearse a variety of dance routines for a minimum of 10 hours per week. Performance is a major component of this course.*

*Prerequisite: Audition*

## **SCIENCE**

*COURSE TITLE: Biology 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*In this first-year course students earn the fundamental concepts and principles of biology. Students investigate living systems: their structures, functions and processes, relationships, continuity and changes. Topics include the chemistry of life, cell biology, matter and energy in living systems, genetics and genetic engineering, evolution, ecology, human physiology and health. Laboratory activities reinforce science concepts and develop scientific investigation and experimentation skills. This course provides foundational knowledge and skills that may be prerequisite for subsequent science courses.*

*Prerequisite: Algebra I*

*COURSE TITLE: Earth Science 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This one-year course covers the physical processes which shape the earth. The subject matter includes crystallography, mineral and rock classification, weathering, erosion, plate tectonics, the structure and composition of the atmosphere, heat transfer, temperature and pressure belts, humidity, cloud formation, the star life cycle, the solar system, environments of the planets, and the moon as it affects the earth.*

*COURSE TITLE: Cell Biology 1-2  
Honors*

*Grade Levels: 11-12*

*In this advanced biology course students build upon concepts learned in previous biology and chemistry courses to develop an in-depth understanding of cellular structure, function and processes. Students learn and apply the concepts of cell chemistry, regulation, manipulation of cellular processes, and cell-to-cell interactions to genetics, medicine, forensics and agriculture. Areas of study include: cellular organelles,*

*historical experiments in cell biology and DNA science, cell chemistry and protein synthesis, gene regulation, advanced genetics, cell development in human systems, microbiology, human genetics, aging, cancer and disease. Laboratory investigations incorporate advanced procedures and develop the ability to analyze complex information and results. Students present findings of laboratory studies in a public forum. Students research current advances in cell biology from original sources and consider their related ethical issues. This course will prepare students who intend to choose science as a major in college.*

*Prerequisite: Biology 1-2, Chemistry 1-2, and concurrent enrollment in or completion of Algebra II or higher*

*COURSE TITLE: AP Biology*

*Grade Levels: 11-12*

*Advanced Placement Biology is an academically challenging class taught at the college level and is equivalent to the first year biology class (for majors) offered at most universities. Students use a college level text, complete college level units, including labs, as they explore the exciting world of biology. At the end of the year students can choose to take the Advanced Placement Exam in biology, and if they pass, may earn up to one full year of college credit in biology.*

*\* Offered in alternate years  
Prerequisite: Academic "Full Year" course in Biology 1-2 and Chemistry 1-2*

*COURSE TITLE: Physiology 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 11-12*

*In this laboratory science course, students study the anatomy and physiology of the human body. Students also develop an understanding of the structure, function, and relationships of body systems. Topics include cell physiology and the structural and*

functional organization of the human body systems: skeletal and muscular systems, nervous system and senses, circulatory system, respiratory system, endocrine system, integumentary system, digestive system, and the reproductive system. The study of other organisms is often included to complement student understanding of the human body. Laboratory investigations include dissection, microscopic observation, and testing the capabilities of the various body systems.

*Prerequisite: Algebra I and one year laboratory science course. Biology recommended.*

**COURSE TITLE:** Chemistry 1-2

**Grade Levels:** 10-12

*In this course students learn and apply the fundamental concepts and principles of chemistry. Areas of study include: changes in matter and energy, atomic theory and molecular structure, chemical bonding, chemical reactions, conservation of matter and stoichiometry, states of matter, gases and their properties, solutions, acids and bases, reaction rates, chemical equilibrium, organic chemistry, and nuclear processes. Students conduct laboratory investigations to test and apply their understanding of chemical principles and solve problems related to chemical systems. Students develop skills for using scientific tools, techniques, and the investigative processes of science. This course prepares students for advanced high school science courses and for a concentration in science at the college level.*

*Prerequisite: One year laboratory science and concurrent enrollment in or completion of Geometry or higher*

**COURSE TITLE:** Chemistry Honors 1-2

**Grade Levels:** 11-12

*This is a rigorous first-year course that addresses the concepts and principles of chemistry in greater depth than the Chemistry 1-2 course. Emphasis is placed on quantitative analysis of complex problems in chemical systems. Areas of study include: matter and energy, atomic theory, molecular structure, periodic law, chemical bonding, chemical reactions, stoichiometry, kinetics, gases and their properties, solutions, acids and bases, thermochemistry, reaction rates, chemical equilibrium, organic and biochemistry, and nuclear processes. Students conduct laboratory investigations to test and apply chemical principles and to develop investigation and experimentation skills. This course prepares students for advanced high school science courses and for a concentration in science at the college level.*

*Prerequisite: Biology 1-2, Algebra I and concurrent enrollment in Geometry or higher level math*

**COURSE TITLE:** Conceptual Physics 1-2

**Grade Levels:** 10-12

*This introductory course is a qualitative study of the central concepts of physics. Students build conceptual understanding of physics in terms that are practical and relevant to the world around them. Topics include: matter and energy, mechanical forces, fluid and thermodynamics, electromagnetism, nuclear physics, and relativity. Student activities emphasize visualization, comprehension, and application of concepts before introducing mathematical descriptions and problems. Laboratory work develops proficiency in scientific investigation and problem-solving skills. This course prepares students for more advanced and quantitative college preparatory physics courses. It is also*

*recommended for students who will elect a non-science major in college.*

*Prerequisite: Algebra I*

**COURSE TITLE:** Physics 1-2

**Grade Levels:** 11-12

*This is an introductory course in which students learn the fundamental concepts and principles of physics. Areas of study include motion and forces, matter and energy, heat and thermodynamics, wave energy, electricity and magnetism, and atomic and nuclear physics. Through laboratory investigations students observe, test and apply physical principles and develop skills for using scientific tools and techniques. Students apply mathematics to measuring, collecting and analyzing data, and solving problems related to physical phenomenon. Students develop a practical understanding of physical events and how their occurrence can be predicted. This course will prepare students for advanced high school physics courses and for a concentration in science at the college level.*

*Prerequisite: Biology 1-2, Chemistry 1-2, and concurrent enrollment in Pre Calculus or higher*

**COURSE TITLE:** Physics 1-2 Honors

**Grade Levels:** 11-12

*This is a laboratory-intensive science course dealing with mechanics/heat, waves, electricity/magnetism, and nuclear physics. This course requires a high level of mathematical reasoning skills. An original research project to be entered in the Santa Clara Valley Science and Engineering Fair is a requirement of the course. The course is particularly recommended for students considering a science or engineering major in college.*

*Prerequisite: Biology 1-2, Chemistry 1-2, and concurrent enrollment in Pre Calculus or higher*

*COURSE TITLE: Engineering*

*Science Technology 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*Engineering Science Technology prepares a student for the technological world. It is a Tech Prep course. Mechanical, Fluid, Electrical and Thermal systems are studied primarily through hands-on student labs. Computer usage and problem solving are emphasized. This is a practical course that relates the principles of applied physics to the real world.*

*Prerequisite: One year of laboratory science course and Algebra I*

*COURSE TITLE: Robotics and Technology*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*In this yearlong laboratory science course, students learn and apply physical science concepts to the design and construction of a variety of mechanical, electrical and robotic devices. The principles of motion, mechanics, work, energy, power, electricity, and computer control of electrical circuits are investigated and tested. Students learn to think scientifically as they identify problems, propose and test solutions, and gather, interpret and analyze data.*

*Working on engineering teams, students construct a competition robot that successfully completes several specified tasks. Through this hands-on study of robotics and technology, students gain experience in the engineering process and learn about related careers. Issues related to how science and technology have impacted society and the environment are also investigated.*

*Prerequisite: A one-year laboratory science course and Algebra I*

## **SOCIAL SCIENCE**

*COURSE TITLE: World History/ Cultures 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-10*

*This one-year course provides an introduction to the geography, history, and the cultures of the world. The focus of the course is a study of major turning points in the shaping of the modern world. Activities in this course, such as map reading and the use of charts and diagrams, are skill-oriented and help the student develop a global awareness.*

*COURSE TITLE: World History/ Cultures 3-4*

*Grade Levels: 10*

*This course for tenth graders focuses on the study of major turning points in the shaping of the modern world from the late eighteenth century to the present. Activities in this course are skill-oriented and help the student to understand the growing interdependence of people and cultures throughout the world.*

*COURSE TITLE: AP World History*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*AP World History is an academic yearlong course with an emphasis on non-Western history. The course relies heavily on college level texts, primary source documents, and outside readings. The course traces the development of world history from the emergence of cities to the present, focusing on the period after 1000 C.E., and emphasizes the analytical and writing skills necessary for success in a college-level history course. Considerable time will be given to the critical evaluation of primary and secondary sources, analysis of historiography, oral presentations, short essays, a major research paper, and the development of a document-based question.*

*COURSE TITLE: U.S. History 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 11*

*This course offers a study of the political, institutional, social, economic, and cultural development of the United States with primary emphasis on concepts, movements, and cultural pluralism. In this course, students examine major turning points in American history in the twentieth century. The course stresses American institutions, ideals, and critical thinking.*

*COURSE TITLE: AP United States History*

*Grade Levels: 11*

*This U.S. History Advanced Placement course begins with the colonial period of American history and continues chronologically through the present. This course focuses on research, analysis, and writing with the aim of preparing students for the College Board's Advanced Placement Exam in American History.*

*COURSE TITLE: AP European History*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*This course presents an intensive thematic study of European civilization from the early 15th century to the present. The development of European civilization is described and analyzed with special emphasis on preparation for the Advanced Placement Examination. European History Advanced Placement is a broad study of the political, intellectual, economic, social, cultural, and diplomatic factors involved in the development of European civilization.*

*COURSE TITLE: Economics 1*

*Grade Levels: 12*

*In this one semester course, students deepen their understanding of the economics problems and institutions of the nation and the world. They learn to make reasoned decisions on economic issues as citizens, workers, consumers, business owners, and members of civic*

groups. Throughout this course, measurement concepts and methods such as tables, charts, graphs, ratios, and index numbers are used. Topics covered include the basic concepts of scarcity, choices, economic efficiency, comparative economic systems, microeconomics, macroeconomics, and international economics.

**COURSE TITLE:** Economics Honors  
**Grade Levels:** 12

Through this course, students learn the basic concepts of production, distribution, and consumption as they study the relationships between scarcity, choice, and costs. With that foundation, students investigate and examine the nature and functions of product and factor markets as well as government intervention in a competitive market. Lastly, students become familiar with economic performance measures, economic growth, fiscal and monetary policies, and international economics.

**COURSE TITLE:** American Government

**Grade Levels:** 12

This one semester course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the American governmental system. Basic philosophic principles and ideals of democracy, representative government, civil liberties, and civil rights are studied and analyzed. The United States federal government, state government, county government, and city government are studied with special attention directed to the structure, powers, and problems of each.

**COURSE TITLE:** American Government Honors

**Grade Levels:** 12

This semester course outlines America's system of government, its historical roots, and its current challenges. It includes an in-depth study of the functions and power

relationships of governments at the federal and state levels. Students are expected to share their research and findings with the class.

**COURSE TITLE:** AP United States Government and Politics

**Grade Levels:** 12

This semester course is a study of the basic beliefs and ideals that underlie American democracy; its historical roots; and how its legal, governmental, and economic institutions affect public policy at the local, state, national, and international levels. Special emphasis is given to preparing the student for the College Board's Advanced Placement Test in American Government.

**COURSE TITLE:** Psychology 1-2

**Grade Levels:** 11-12

This course is a study of the factors influencing human behavior including heredity, environment, learning, perception, motivation, communication, and group dynamics.

**COURSE TITLE:** American Justice System

**Grade Levels:** 9-12

This course is designed to teach students the foundation for and processes of the American Justice system. The students examine the rights of the individual balancing collective rights with social responsibility. The students analyze cases that have contemporary significance to facilitate their understanding of the dynamics and impact of law. The in-depth analysis includes student portrayal of counsel, witnesses, court clerks and bailiffs as they study a hypothetical case produced and sponsored by the Constitutional Rights Foundation and the State Department of Education. The State Young Lawyers Association, and the Daily Journal Corporation program sponsor this program. Students conduct legal research and receive guidance from

volunteer attorneys in courtroom procedure and trial preparation. Through the study and application of basic law, students will develop critical thinking, oral and written skills.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art**

**COURSE TITLE:** Ceramics, Advanced

**Grade Levels:** 10-12

This course extends the skills developed in first-year ceramics with increasing emphasis in the areas of wheel throwing (pots, closed-forms, sectionals, repeated forms, mound throwing, lid-forms, sculptured pottery, amphoras, vases and bowls), firing techniques (raku, kiln loading and unloading for bisque and glaze firing), glazing techniques, and sculpture forms from clay.

**Prerequisite:** Ceramics 1-2

**COURSE TITLE:** Sculpture and Three Dimensional Design 1-2

**Grade Levels:** 9-12

This course teaches students the design elements with which the sculptor is concerned: relationships of volume and mass, line and plane movement, contour, light and shadow, and texture. Various media, such as clay, metal and wood, are used. The students gain an appreciation for artwork and develop a cultural and historical awareness related to three-dimensional design. Students will learn the relationship of three-dimensional art to other art forms and receive an overview of careers in art and related fields. In addition, they will develop evaluative skills by applying what they learn to self and peer evaluation of three-dimensional projects.

*COURSE TITLE: Drawing, Painting and Design 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This course is an introduction to design and composition; students use a variety of art media such as pencil, charcoal, conte crayon, pen and ink, tempera, watercolor, and acrylic. Introductory material covers theory of line, color, texture, the elements of design, and the principles of composition. Student projects include drawing, painting, printmaking, and design. Various schools of art, styles, and artists, past and present, are discussed. Students are encouraged to exercise self-expression in their art.*

*COURSE TITLE: Media Arts 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*In Media Arts 1-2, students will study the historical development of television, video, theater, film and radio. By evaluating and analyzing programs for their meta-messages and communication value, students will develop an appreciation of media as an art form. By producing and creating a variety of multimedia projects, students will connect and apply their study of media arts to their own creative endeavors. Students will also become aware of the many career paths available in media arts.*

*COURSE TITLE: Photography 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*This course is an introductory course that explores photography as a method of creative, visual communication. This course develops an understanding of art principles and technical skills necessary to communicate effectively in the medium of photography. This beginning course is designed to teach the basic technical skills of photography. Students learn how to use 35mm cameras and enlargers. Students also learn how to expose, process, and print film. Students learn the relationship of photography to other art forms*

*and receive an overview of careers in photography, photojournalism and related fields.*

*COURSE TITLE: Digital Photography 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*In this yearlong course, students cover the basic theories and skills of black and white and color photography. Photographic history is covered and the introduction of technology within the photographic field is presented. Students learn how to use a Macintosh Power PC, Adobe Photoshop software and alternative digital equipment to produce a photographic portfolio. Students also have the opportunity to work on outside projects in coordination with the district and the community.*

*COURSE TITLE: Computer Graphics 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*In this course, students develop the skills and knowledge necessary to produce art and illustrations directly from a Macintosh computer, using the latest graphics software. An introduction to photo imaging and multimedia presentations are also included.*

*COURSE TITLE: Computer Video Production*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*This course is designed to train students to shoot, process, and edit digital video individually and in a teamwork environment. Students will learn to operate a digital camcorder, download their video clips, use Adobe Premier video processing software to edit and refine their clips into completed projects, prepare graphics and soundtracks, prepare original scripts and production schedules, and use QuickTime video. Students will work on tutorial assignments and original projects using these skills.*

*Prerequisite: Computer Graphics*

**Drama, Theater, Radio, Television**

*COURSE TITLE: Drama 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This full-year, activity-oriented course serves as an introduction to theater. Students study basic principles and techniques in acting, theater history, staging, voice and diction, pantomime, improvisation, choral reading, readers' theater, storytelling, and oral interpretation. Students are also introduced to stage makeup, stage lighting, and technical production techniques. Students will learn the relationship of drama to literature and other art forms. Students will receive an overview of careers in theater and related fields.*

*COURSE TITLE: Drama Intermediate 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*In this yearlong intermediate course, basic principles of theater arts are reinforced and advanced techniques are developed. All productions are student run. In addition to refining skills taught in beginning drama, intermediate students work toward developing their acting and improvisational skills, scene analysis, directing skills, and preparation for auditions at the community theater and professional level. Projects include, but are not limited to, a student directed one-act play festival, contemporary and classical monologue and scene preparation, reviewing for professional and community theater productions, a research project covering a major playwright, and written reviews of live theater.*

*Prerequisite: Beginning Drama and/or placement audition*

## **Music**

*COURSE TITLE: Beginning Band 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*Beginning Band is designed for the student who has never played a band instrument or wants to learn a new one. There is no prerequisite for this class. Instruments taught will include: flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, baritone horn, French horn, trombone, tuba, bass guitar and percussion. An end-of-the-year concert will be given and attendance is mandatory.*

*COURSE TITLE: Concert Band*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This course is offered to the serious music student who is considering music as a major or minor in college. The goal of the course is to build a strong foundation of musical comprehension and competence as an individual within a group. Its focus will be performance of standard concert band literature. Students should have a high degree of technical skill on their musical instruments. Performances are an integral part of this course.*

*Prerequisite: Audition by instructor. Students must be able to sight read reasonably well, demonstrate good wind instrumental techniques with regard to resonance, blend, balance, and breath control, and pass a basic music theory examination. Instrumentalists will be expected to maintain concurrent enrollment in Wind Ensemble.*

*COURSE TITLE: Performing Band*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This performance-oriented course emphasizes the study of symphonic transcriptions as well as standard band music. Students improve their sight-reading and musicianship skills through various class exercises. The performing band performs in concerts and festivals both on and off campus. Attendance is required at all performances.*

*Prerequisite: Ability to play a band instrument*

*COURSE TITLE: Jazz Band*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This performance course teaches techniques and skills characteristic to jazz. The student plays many different styles of jazz from big band to modern progressive swing.*

*Prerequisite: Audition*

*COURSE TITLE: String Ensemble*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This class for string musicians has been designed to develop musicianship, proper string instrument techniques, familiarity with standard string repertory, and performance. It is a participation class for string instruments: violin, viola, cello, and bass.*

*Prerequisite: Ability to play a string instrument*

*COURSE TITLE: Chorus 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This introductory course teaches choral part singing (soprano, alto, tenor, bass). Vocal ensemble techniques, the interpretation of musical symbols, following and reading vocal lines, singing skills, and responding to choral direction are also taught.*

*COURSE TITLE: Choir 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*This course is designed for students interested in vocal music and performance activities. Instruction in sight reading, tone production, listening skills, body movement, and performance skills is part of the course.*

*COURSE TITLE: Music Appreciation 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 10-12*

*This course covers the elements that make up music, from Bach to Rock. The student is involved in an in-depth study of what to listen for and how to listen to music.*

*Students are required to attend and review a number of concerts each semester in addition to daily listening.*

*COURSE TITLE: Electronic Music 1-2*

*Grade Levels: 9-12*

*Students will learn practical techniques in music composition, sound design, and music technology in addition to piano fundamentals. Working in the music computer lab, students will use a variety of software applications to attain music literacy, sequence given melodies using MIDI (musical instrument digital interface), compose original melodies, harmonize original melodies, and finally compose music soundtracks for multimedia productions.*



# APPENDIX 16:

## Travel Guidelines

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The following guidelines are designed to help make your travel easier, safer and possibly faster. You will receive more detailed information at your Gateway Travel Orientation meeting, on the day before you depart for the U.S.

### 1: Checked Baggage Policies

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All major airlines charge international passengers for their second piece of checked baggage. American Councils will not pay any baggage fees when you travel to the U.S. If you bring a second bag, you are responsible for contacting the airline to find out how much this will cost, and you are responsible for paying that cost. American Councils will not pay for:

- A first checked bag that exceeds the airlines' weight and size requirements;
- A second checked bag

If your single checked bag goes over the airline's weight or size limits, YOU must pay the overweight charges. When you arrive to DC you will be met by American Councils staff and taken to a nearby hotel where you will have dinner and spend the night, and return to Dulles the following morning to board a flight to your host community. American Councils staff will help you with the check-in process. If Washington-Dulles airport is your final destination, your host family will meet you at the airport on the day you arrive and take you home then (you will not overnight at the nearby hotel).

### 2: Security

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#### a. YOU

All travelers, including you, will go through many metal detectors, body scans, bag searches and security questions before you get on any airplane.

DO NOT make jokes about violence or terrorism, or other things that will upset someone who overhears you. You could be reported to an airport security officer, detained by the police, miss your flight and be returned back to your home country.

#### b. YOUR BAGGAGE

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) of the U.S. prohibits passengers from bringing certain items in their carry-on luggage. Check the TSA website at [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov) shortly before you travel. The list of allowed and prohibited carry-on items, below, change frequently:

**DO NOT BRING IN YOUR CARRY-ON:** Liquids over 3.4 ounces (100 ml); any type of knives or swords; anything that even looks like a gun or weapon; anything with a sharp point or tip; metal scissors with pointed tip; loose razor blades; lighters; martial arts weapons; alcohol (no one under 18 is allowed to possess alcohol in the United States.)

**OK TO BRING IN YOUR CARRY-ON:** Insulin syringes if unused and accompanied by insulin; nail clippers; knitting needles.

If you pack a prohibited item in your carry-on bag, security screeners in your transit airport will take it away from you, **and** may detain you. Pack such items in your checked baggage only. If you have any doubt about whether or not a specific item is permissible for carry-on baggage, you should pack it in your checked luggage or leave it at home.

Carry-ons must meet the airline's size requirements. If they do not, they will be taken away from you as you are walking onto the plane, and will be returned to you when you exit the plane (NOT at baggage claim).

**NOTE: Do not leave any of your baggage, including your carry-on or purse, alone.** Do not walk away from your belongings. Unattended bags can be reported to airport security. Your bag could be confiscated and destroyed and you could be detained. **Stay with your bags at all times.**

### 3: Guidelines For Packing Liquids, Gels And Aerosols In Carry-On Bag

TSA currently employs the following “3-1-1” policy for bringing liquids in your carry-on. Be sure to check [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov) before you leave home.

**3-1-1** : 3.4 ounce (100ml) bottle or less (by volume); 1 quart-sized, clear plastic, zip-top bag; 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin.

Liquids, gels, and aerosols include but are not limited to products such as:

- eye drops
- contact lens solution
- perfume deodorants
- creams and lotions
- lipstick or lip gloss
- liquid mascara
- liquid foundations
- hair spray
- hair styling gels toothpaste
- cough syrup
- gel tablets
- MANY OTHERS



There are certain exceptions for prescription and over-the-counter medicines. Students are responsible for checking with their airline prior to international travel.

Typically any liquid, gel, or aerosol (such as water or soda) purchased in the secure area after you go through a security checkpoint is allowed aboard your lane. However, liquids you purchase in your home country airport, will not be allowed through security in your transit airport (Frankfurt, Munich or Vienna), and you will be required to throw them away.

### 4: How To Dress For Travel

Security lines are often long and slow. If you are prepared when it is your turn, everything will go more smoothly and quickly.

- **DON'T** wear shoes, clothing, jewelry, belts and other accessories that contain metal. These may set off

the alarm on the metal detector at the security checkpoint and you will be asked to remove them and go through security again. This can take a lot of time and make you late for your flight.

- **BE PREPARED** to remove your outer clothing including coats and scarves as well as shoes; these go in the plastic bins provided by security screeners.
- **BE PREPARED** to remove your mobile devices (tablet, iPad) and laptops or netbooks from your carry-on bag and place it/them in a plastic bin provided by security screeners.

## 5: Other Packing Tips

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### **LOCKS:**

TSA screeners may open your baggage as part of the screening process. If your bag is unlocked, then TSA will simply open and inspect the items inside. If you decide to lock your checked baggage and TSA cannot open your suitcases, they will break the locks. TSA is not liable for damage to your locks or luggage in this case. If you must lock your suitcase, use a TSA-approved lock.

### **MEDICINE:**

If you bring medicine with you, it must be in its original container with a professionally printed pharmacy label in your name.

### **CARRY-ON:**

You may carry only one bag and one personal item on the plane with you. All other bags must be checked.

### **LUGGAGE TAGS:**

Make sure that each piece of your checked baggage has your program's luggage tag with your name on it. Try leaving space in your bags so that carry-ons and checked suitcases can be easily inspected by airport security.

# APPENDIX 17:

## Pre-Departure Orientation Student Agreement

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ HUB CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

PDO DATES: \_\_\_\_\_ PLACEMENT ORG: \_\_\_\_\_

- I will have completed my secondary education by the time I arrive to the U.S.
- I will **NOT** have completed my secondary education by the time I arrive to the U.S.

1. I confirm that I attended every session of the PDO in its entirety.
2. I understand that my placement organization will designate the city and state where I will be placed. I understand that I will not be relocated to another area at my request. I understand that my placement organization makes the final decision about changes in placement. I also understand that program policy prohibits me from being hosted by any natural family relatives.
3. I understand that the programs prohibit students from recruiting their own host families due to the dangers of sharing personal information online, with strangers, or otherwise outside of the host family vetting process.
4. I understand that if I misrepresent myself to **any** program organization (including prior to coming on the Program), I may be disqualified from the program.
5. I understand that declining a valid placement may be grounds for my disqualification from the program.
6. I understand that my U.S. high school makes the final decision about the grade level in which I will study (i.e. 10th, 11th, 12th grade). Furthermore, I understand that most U.S. high schools **will not** give diplomas to exchange students and that I must respect my host school's rules and policies.
7. I understand that my athletic eligibility or participation in school sports teams is **not** guaranteed and is subject to authorization by my local school district and the responsible State authority.
8. I have been instructed at the PDO to describe my previous two years of coursework in writing. I understand that I am responsible for bringing this self-made transcript with me to the U.S. to show to my high school counselor.
9. I understand that my host parents are not obligated to provide lunch money for me to buy lunch at school. My host family is, however, obligated to provide lunch for me, and I understand that it is my host parent's choice whether to provide lunch money or food with which to make a (usually cold) school lunch.
10. If my host family has a computer, I understand that it is the host family's private property and they have the right to not permit me to use their computer. I understand that my host family has the right to make rules about computer and Internet usage even if the computer I use belongs to me. I understand that it is against program rules and U.S. law to view pornographic, terroristic or other objectionable content online, and that downloading copyrighted material (movies and music) is illegal and punishable by fines of \$150,000 or more.
11. I understand that incidentals allowance purchases are made by me, together with my host family, after my arrival. I have been instructed to discuss the items I may purchase with my placement organization representative after I arrive in the U.S., and before I make purchases. Furthermore, I understand my placement organization confirms which items may be purchased on my behalf. Finally, I understand that my host family and I will not simply receive a check or money for these purchases, but must submit receipts for reimbursement.
12. I understand that shoplifting is illegal in the U.S. and physical violence is not tolerated. I understand that if I am charged with shoplifting or assault, I am subject to the legal consequences including possible arrest and trial, and that neither American Councils nor my placement organization will be able to intervene on my behalf, and that I may also be sent home.
13. I understand that I may not return home **before** May 15 to take examinations in my home country.
14. I understand that I must return to my home country at the end of the program on the date assigned by the responsible FLEX/YES program organization. I will not be allowed to remain in the U.S. after my assigned return travel date. My U.S. visa will not be amended or extended beyond the program end date.
15. I have received information regarding sexual harassment, and have a better understanding of this concept, including how to recognize sexual harassment and what to do if I feel I am being harassed.
16. I have received a copy of the Department of State's Secondary School Student Participant Welcome Letter which includes the Department's toll-free telephone number.
17. I acknowledge that I have received the "Your Safety and Security Online: Safety Tips" document from the Department of State with information regarding my safety and security online.
18. I have read and signed the parent/student agreement (Form 8 of the application), and agree to abide by all of the terms and conditions in this agreement.

STUDENT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX 18:

## The Toolbox

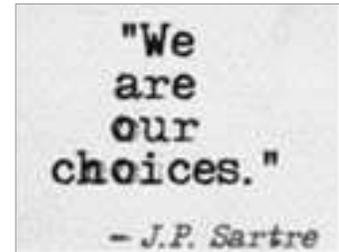
**Power tool:**  
Communicative nature



**Power tool:**  
flexibility



**Responsibility**



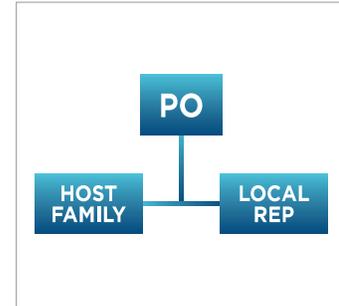
**Initiative**



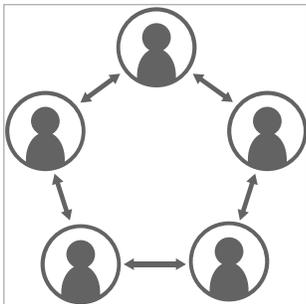
**Polite phrases**



**Structure of POs**



**Chain of communication**



**Rights and privileges**



**Different Types of Rules**



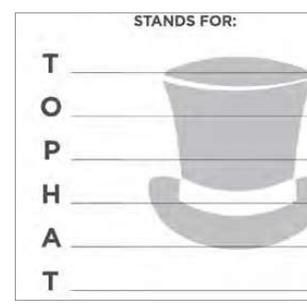
**Culture as a tree**



**American values**



**T.O.P.H.A.T.**



# APPENDIX 18:

## The Toolbox, continued

Host Family Differences



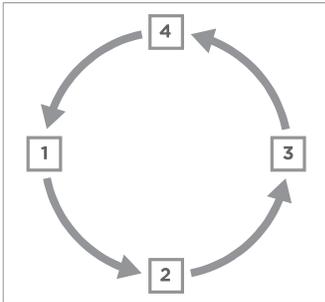
Host Family Rules

If you open it - close it  
 If you turn it on - turn it off  
 If you unlock it - lock it  
 If you sleep on it - make it  
 If you can't fix it - report it  
 If you borrow it - return it  
 If you spill it - clean it up

Not Better, Not Worse, Just Different



Adjustment cycle



Mindfulness



Resiliency



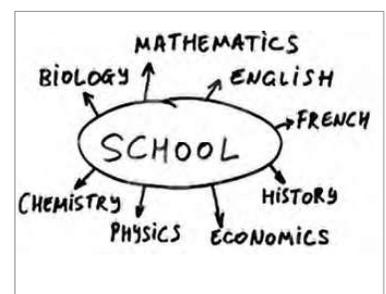
Incidentals Allowance Procedure



Budgeting Skills



U.S. High School Structure



High School Rules



Tips for Making friends



American ideas of friendship



## Appendix 13: Budgeting Quiz answers

<b>1</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	Your host family does not receive any money for hosting you.
<b>2</b>	<b>TRUE</b>	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.
<b>3</b>	<b>TRUE</b>	The monthly stipend and the incidentals allowance are to assist with living costs.
<b>4</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	You and your host family will not receive the incidentals allowance prior to making any purchases. You and your family will have to submit receipts to your placement organization for reimbursement of approved purchases.
<b>5</b>	<b>TRUE</b>	The monthly allowance is provided so that you can take part in social activities and purchase basic toiletries.
<b>6</b>	<b>TRUE</b>	You may receive \$200 monthly or \$400 every other month, depending on your placement organization's policies.
<b>7</b>	<b>TRUE</b>	By carefully planning how you will spend your money, you can be sure you will have the money when you need it.
<b>8</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	Your host family is required to provide you with 3 meals a day. They may choose to give you money for hot lunch, but they are not required to do so. If they do not, they are required to provide with things to make a lunch you can take to school (such as sandwich, bag of chips, and piece of fruit).
<b>9</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	Demanding others to buy things for you will create problems for you. You should take responsibility for buying the things you need.
<b>10</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	You are responsible for the cost of any phone calls you make, whether they are international or long-distance within the United States.
<b>11</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	Legally, you are not permitted to work in the U.S. in any job that would require you to pay taxes. You may be able to earn extra money doing work like shoveling snow, raking leaves, or babysitting.
<b>12</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	Even if your friends invite you to go somewhere, you should always expect to pay for yourself. In the United States, when someone invites you to go out to eat or see a movie, the invitation does not usually imply that they will pay for you.
<b>13</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	If your family has a computer and allows you to use it for e-mail or Internet access, you may be responsible for any costs that are incurred. If your family has to pay for Internet access, they may expect you to pay your portion of the bill.
<b>14</b>	<b>TRUE</b>	Sales are a great way to buy needed items at a lower than usual cost. This can help you "stretch" your budget.
<b>15</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	The cost of items at stores often depends on the location of the store. Certain regions of the city, state, and country may be more expensive than others. It is also possible to find sales, discount stores, and second-hand stores where you can find less expensive items.
<b>16</b>	<b>TRUE</b>	Your host family likely has their own budget and can be a great resource for any questions you have.
<b>17</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	Your stipend money is for your day-to-day expenses. If you save it all for expensive items, you will miss out on a lot of opportunities. Saving, or 'hoarding,' your money can also cause problems with friends and your host family if you are declining to participate in activities because of the cost.
<b>18</b>	<b>FALSE</b>	You and your host family will be reimbursed for the approved purchases that you make. In order to receive reimbursement, you must submit receipts to your placement organization.

# SUPPLEMENTAL READING 1:

## A Historical Background of U.S. Public Schools and How they are Administered

Each state is responsible for administering its schools and most states delegate this right to local school districts. According to the American Constitution, the federal government does not determine the school system for the entire country.

In each state there are various school districts (about ~13,500 nationwide). Usually urban areas have their own school districts. In rural America, large geographical areas may be combined into “unified school districts.” Students in these areas may travel by bus many miles to get to school.

Nationally there are about 30,000 public high schools and the student population ranges from very small, 60 students, to very large, 8,000 students, with the average number of students approximately 520.

The residents of every school district elect a school board. Members of the school board work at different jobs and perform their school board responsibilities on a volunteer basis. Their responsibilities are to define the curricula of each school, approve the budget, and define the policies for the administration of the school district. The Superintendent of Schools (or in some states, Chancellor) is the highest professional educator in the school district. He/she is appointed by the school board and supervises the different schools and enforces the policies set by the board.

The top official in each school is called a principal (or in some states, headmaster or director). The principal is usually hired by the superintendent. He/she oversees administering a specific school in the district.

Teachers are hired on contracts for a limited number of years. To renew a contract, a teacher usually must take additional educational courses. This is a way to be sure teachers improve their knowledge and skills. Nationally the student to teacher ratio is 16:1.

The financing of the schools within the districts is regulated very differently in each state. In some states, for example, the property owners living in the school district must pay taxes to support the schools. In addition to these local taxes, there are federal allowances and state grants that are given to schools that meet certain requirements set by the state and federal government. Across the United States, school districts spend an average of about \$13,500 on each student annually.

The school is often the center of community life. It is one of the major concerns of the local residents, who have a voice in the decision-making process. They elect the school board, and they are called to vote at different times about major projects, such as building a new gymnasium or a swimming pool, which would result in higher taxes for themselves.

Many American high schools are also centers of learning for adult citizens. They offer various courses, both academic and practical, usually through evening and summer programs.

This close relationship to “their school” is also strongly reflected in the residents’ attitude toward exchange students. They may be welcome in the school, but citizens are aware that it costs the district money to have the exchange student participate in the school life of the community.

Accepting a foreign exchange student is a “special” project that is done for the benefit of both the foreign students and their American classmates to make them more aware of other cultures, ideas, and countries.

The authority of local school districts explains why it is possible to have differences among public schools in the United States. While there are national exams (PSAT, SAT, ACT) for most university admissions, and periodic achievement tests imposed by individual states, most of the decision-making is left to the school board, which makes its decisions according to local needs and individual ideas.

Much of the current public school education system evolved from a belief in the importance of free, compulsory school for every child in the nation. Hundreds of years ago, most learning happened at home. Parents taught their children or, if their families could afford it, private tutors were hired.

While a “comprehensive” public school education is still important to most Americans, the last 25 years has seen increased interest in adopting more differentiated opportunities within the existing high school structure. Examples include special classes for “gifted and talented” students and “magnet schools” for students who wish to focus on particular fields of study, such as mathematics and science, or languages.

# SUPPLEMENTAL READING 2:

## Family Life in the United States

### Population

The population of the United States is both immense and varied. About 339 million people live in the United States, making it the third largest nation in the world after China and India. The majority of people in the United States have descended from people who arrived in North America within the last 400 years. The highly varied population has cultural, social, and economic origins that stem from nearly all of the world's countries, nationalities, and races.

The population figure of approximately 339 million includes the resident population of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. It does not include U.S. citizens who reside outside the United States, or the people living in areas connected to the United States, such as Puerto Rico, the U.S. Territories (American Samoa, Marianas, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam) and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The states with the largest populations are California, Texas, New York, Florida and Illinois. The smallest states in terms of population are Wyoming, Vermont and North Dakota, which have a total combined population of that about equals the population of Houston, Texas.

A century ago, the major proportion of the U.S. population lived in rural areas. Now, only about 19% of Americans lived in rural and farm areas.

**URBAN:** Areas with a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile and surrounding environs that have an overall density of at least 500 people per square mile.

**SUBURBAN:** A residential area existing as a separate residential community within commuting distance of a city.

**RURAL:** A geographic area that is located outside of cities or towns.

Urbanization has been a clear trend for most of the last century. However, during the last few years, and especially during the pandemic, the number of people in rural areas and small towns increased slightly more in percentage than in large urban areas. Even so, about 81% of the U.S. population lives in urban and suburban areas, including large cities such as New York, New York, Los Angeles, California, Chicago, Illinois and Houston, Texas. An even more remarkable trend is the population shift to the suburbs. For example, there are over 8 million residents of New York City; however, there are an additional 15 million residents of the New York City suburban and urban area, which includes parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Most families who host exchange students live in rural or suburban settings – not in large or capital cities. Less than 10% of students lived in a state's largest or capital city. One recent exchange student who spent his academic year in Klamath Falls, Oregon (population 20,000), said:

*“I actually imagined a big city like New York with skyscrapers, wide streets, traffic, and shopping malls everywhere. But in reality, my town is just a regular town with 20,000 people. People here are really nice, my family and my school are great. I’ve met a lot of people and learned a lot about American culture and the way Americans live.”*

There are lots of reasons for this. Large cities typically have a large number of international visitors, whereas people living in smaller, more remote cities and towns have fewer opportunities to learn firsthand about other cultures and countries. Therefore, they are interested in hosting an exchange student. The cost of living in large cities is significantly higher, and homes are smaller. These are important considerations when deciding to host an exchange student for a year.

## Lifestyle

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**WORK ETHIC.** America was founded on the Puritan work ethic: “a belief in and devotion to hard work, duty, thrift, self-discipline, and responsibility.” This motto embraces frugality, conservation and self-control—values that serve as America’s cultural roots, and still strongly influence contemporary life in the United States. Many senior citizens in America can recollect how these values and work ethic helped them to survive the Great Depression of the 1930s. But historical, social and economic forces in the second half of the 20th century in the United States and brought America unprecedented prosperity, material wealth, and influence in the global marketplace and greatly changed household consumer habits, leading to a national rise in consumerism.

**CONSUMERISM** is “the theory that an increasing consumption of goods is economically desirable,” and/or “a preoccupation with...buying of consumer goods.” Citizens “want” more and have come to expect much more than the basic “necessities” of life. The United States is a country with only about 4% of the world’s population, but that makes, buys, and uses more than one third of the world’s goods and services. There are a few explanations for this phenomenon and how it came to be.

Starting from the late 1940s and into the 1970s, many Americans shared a vision of what they wanted for their lives, their families, and their country. According to researcher Daniel Yankelovich, “The growth of the machine accomplished something the world has never seen before: the combination of human striving, technology, organization, and cheap energy moved a mass population from want and scarcity to middle-class status.” For three decades, the U.S. economy was marked by dynamism, rapid growth, and expanding opportunities. The economy encouraged upward mobility: people began to expect ever-increasing levels of material well-being. Between 1953 and 1973, the median family income increased by approximately 75%, moving masses of Americans from relative poverty to modest material comfort.

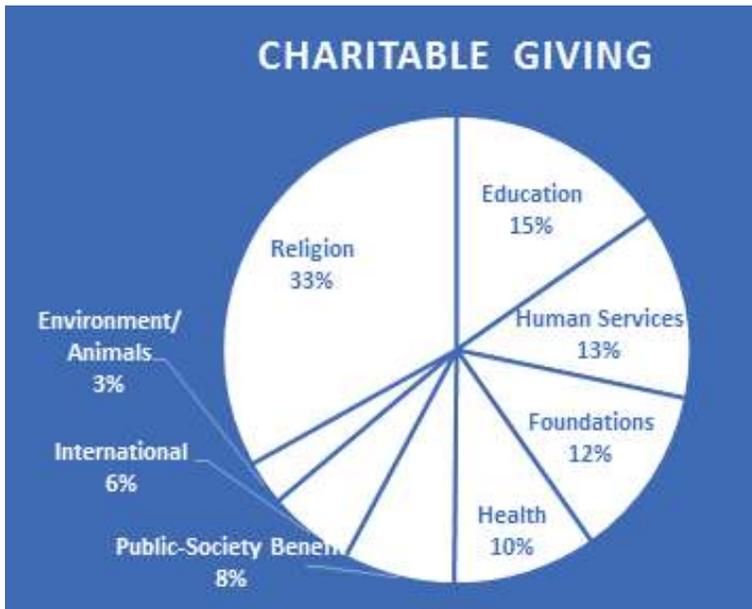
Since that time, however, the purchasing power of most Americans (their income adjusted for inflation) has not increased very much. While the country has seen overall wage growth, almost all of that has gone to the top-earning 10%. Income inequality is a topic of intense national conversation now.

Other influences on U.S. consumerism include the extravagantly calculated advertising campaigns that target consumers with compelling reasons to buy the latest, newest, and best product, even if the old model functions well. Why? Americans, like people in many countries, have a strong desire for fun and useful items like the latest phone model, or cool cars, or” labor-saving devices for home, kitchen, workshop, and yard. The family shares the work around the home and technology makes chores go faster, thus making time for enjoyable activities. Finally, Americans like “do-it-yourself” projects and the sense of personal satisfaction that they bring.

Americans may appear materialistic, but they are also idealistic. They believe in the significance of work beyond the earning of a salary. Americans are also very generous, especially to the less fortunate and those whom disaster strikes. Americans give nearly \$500 billion each year in charitable gifts.

**ECONOMIC STRAINS.** Today, families identify the high cost of living as one of their most difficult problems. During the 1940s through 1960s, Americans grew accustomed to a fast-growing economy, but

today's economic realities are different. Reckless or excessive spending can lead to high debt for individuals and families. The U.S. housing crisis in 2008 was partly caused by banks giving loans to people who were not able to pay off what they were spending; the financial crisis resulted from excessive levels of consumption.



In recent years, many voices in American society question the costs associated with heavy levels of consumption: financial debt, time and stress associated with working to support high consumption, and harm to the environment. Many environmentally friendly movements have developed in reaction to what is viewed as excessive consumption; these movements encourage many Americans to think about conservation and their environment as they make everyday decisions.

**SUSTAINABILITY.** Farmers' markets, farmed goods sold through the community cooperatives (or 'co-ops'), urban gardens, and even school programs in community agriculture have become increasingly popular. The community-based movements allow people to buy local products. Environmental protection and ecological groups have popularized the slogan "think globally, act locally," which urges people to consider the health of the entire planet and to take action in their own communities and cities. Thanks to these movements, the recycling of glass, aluminum and plastics and the use of 'eco-friendly' (low harm to the environment) electrical products and technologies are common across the United States.

## Family Life and Roles

Families today look quite different from the way they looked at the beginning of the 19th century. At that time American families were large and unplanned. Women gave birth to about seven children on average, although high mortality rates resulted in a smaller number of surviving children. As the United States modernized and mortality levels dropped, women began to have fewer children. In fact, fertility rates have decreased steadily from the year 1800 until the present, with the exception of a "baby boom" after World War II from about 1947 to 1965. The current birthrate is 1.6 births/woman.

**MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.** Family structure in the United States has changed radically in the last 50 years. In 1970, 70% of all households consisted of married couples. Now, married couples make up approximately 46% of households.

65% of children live in households with two parents. In the early 1990s, the United States had the world's highest divorce rate, with nearly 5 divorces per 1,000 people, but in recent years, the divorce rate has steadily declined to about 3.2%. A possible factor in this trend is that young Americans are waiting longer before marrying for the first time. The median age for marriage is now about 30 for men and 28 for women.

In spite of the trend of fewer marriages overall, most family scholars believe that divorce stems from dissatisfaction with a specific spouse and does not represent skepticism about marriage as an institution. Many divorced people remarry, and many of these remarriages occur fairly soon after divorce. Men are consistently more likely to remarry after a divorce than women are.

The “blended families” created by divorce and remarriage can be a source of additional support and family interaction. But they add family responsibilities as well, and can bring new conflicts and tensions, particularly for children, who are the chief links between former spouses and their current families.

## Family Compositions

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About 29% of all households are single person households. A considerable percentage of the U.S. population is now over 65 years old and this group comprises the largest number of people living alone. At the same time, there has also been an increase in the number of young people who live at home with their parents as a cost-saving measure while they finish their education or get started on their careers. This generation of young adults has sometimes been labeled the “boomerang generation” because they move out of the family home for a time and then boomerang right back. The Great Recession of 2008 seems to have accelerated this tendency. A Pew Research survey found that among all adults ages 18 to 34, 33% moved back home with their parents in recent years after living on their own because of economic conditions.



*The painting above is called “American Gothic.” It is by Grant Wood and symbolizes the austerity of colonial America.*

The number of households that have taken in an elderly family member, such as a grandparent who can no longer care for themselves and live independently, have also increased. It is becoming more common for a household to include at least one parent and one grandparent. The life expectancy for Americans is now about 76 years for men, and about 81 years for women, and there are now more Americans over the age of 65 (often referred to as “senior citizens”) than at any point in U.S. history. Senior citizens account for 15% of the population. It is estimated that senior citizens will be about 25% of the population by the year 2060.

Some exchange students are surprised to learn that their host family consists of single parent, but in fact such families are common in the United States today, and are very excited to be hosts. Exchange students may also live with “traditional” host families (with a mother and father who are married), in “multi- generational” host families, or in interracial families. Families of all kinds are interested in opening their homes and hosting an exchange student to learn more about other people and the world.

## Women in the Workplace

The industrialization of America in the late 1800s and early 1900s shifted employment from the household to the marketplace, reducing women's option to combine employment with care of the home. At the same time, the increase in income made it possible for most women to devote their time solely to housekeeping. In 1940, only about 25% of all women aged 16 and over and about 15% of married women worked outside of the home.



*The iconic “Rosie the Riveter” posters were used to promote American patriotism and the contribution women could make to the war effort.*

Then starting in the 1940s and going through the 1960s, dramatic social change and economic growth in America caused many changes for family life. Women moved into the workforce as part of the war effort in the 1940s when it was vital that manufacturing jobs (traditionally held by men now serving in the military) continue. After the war, most women left their jobs and returned home. However, there were lasting effects. Women had proven that they could do the job, and within a few decades women in the workforce became a common sight. These women had saved much of their wages since there was little to buy during war time. This money helped families purchase new homes and launched the prosperity of 1950s America. In the 1970s, a “women’s liberation” movement advocated for equal rights and equal pay for women.

Some people tried, with limited success, to get laws passed to guarantee these rights. In any case, women flooded into the job market as a rejection of the assumption that their only path in life was to be stay-at-home mothers.

American women currently receive more bachelor's degrees than men. Today, 39% of women and 36% of men earn a bachelor's degree by the age of 31. Fifty years ago, 40% of American women who received a bachelor's degree specialized in education and 2% specialized in business and management; the figures now are about 7% and 16%, respectively. Also, 50 years ago only 10% of law school enrollment consisted of women, but now, about 56% of law students are women. Still, the percentage of female law partners, although steadily increasing, is even now only about 28%. More than half of all women aged 16 and over are now in the labor force, compared with 70% of men. And currently, 28% of the 100 U.S. Senators are women.

Women's average pay is only about 81% of men's. This means that if a man and a woman have exactly the same experience and exactly the same job, for every \$1 the man earns, the woman on average only earns \$0.81. The gap is smaller for younger women, who earn 89 cents compared to men's \$1. Women do run some of the world's top companies. On the other hand, less than 4% of the bosses of Fortune 500 companies are women, and the upper ranks of management consultancies and banks are dominated by men.

About 70% of women with children work outside the home. About 82% were working full-time jobs. Roughly 95.6% of men with children who are employed work full-time. This is driven primarily by economic necessity, in order to keep pace with the high cost of living and to maintain living standards. In families with two

parents, most of the time both parents work (outside of the home) due again to these factors. Although both women and men find satisfaction and fulfillment in having a job, everyone struggles to balance work and home responsibilities.

In the last 30 years, men have taken on an increased role in childrearing, a relatively new development that has changed what American families look like and how they function. Some fathers stay home to raise their children while their wives work. Sample surveys showed that many working families reported feeling rushed and stressed, but overall were happy.

## Teenagers in the U.S.

It is very common for U.S. teenagers to work. They are eager to save up money for college or a big purchase such as a car or computer, or simply earn “spending money” for more every-day things. Research reveals that most of their money is spent on entertainment (movies, concerts, sports events), clothing, and technology such as smart phones, tablets and media players. Although exchange students can’t join the “teenage workforce,” they can make some spending money by doing small or “odd” jobs, such as yard work (raking leaves, shoveling snow, mowing lawns) or babysitting.

Many American teenagers are also involved in a variety of extracurricular activities, such as sports, theater, and community service or some form of volunteering. Many exchange students are surprised to see how important the automobile is in U.S. teenage social/cultural life. Despite this, FLEX and YES exchange students are not permitted to drive in the United States, under any circumstance.

In most of the United States, teenagers can get their driver’s license while still in high school. They may take driver education in school or to be taught to drive by a licensed driver at age 15 or 16, depending on the laws in their state. Most teens learn to drive as soon as they are old enough, and they are often allowed to drive their family’s car once they have their license. Because teen drivers have more accidents than older drivers, states have strict laws about teen driving. Laws may prohibit teens from driving with friends in the car, and require driving classes before a teen can get a driver’s license. Some teens are very eager to own a car and are willing to work to earn money not only to buy a car, but to pay the very high insurance rates for teenagers. Some teens drive their own cars to high school.

Why should Americans drive at such a young age? The need probably first started when many people lived in rural areas where there was no public transportation. Today, public transportation is not adequate in most of the suburban areas where Americans live. While school buses transport students to and from school, most Americans drive to work, to buy groceries and do other shopping, to go to lessons and sports practices, and to go to movies and



*McDonald's, and restaurants like it, make buying food fast, easy, and inexpensive. This appeals to many consumers and shows how American values and lifestyles have changed over time.*

other social / cultural activities.

Even though it is helpful for the family to have teenage drivers, especially in an active American family, the number of traffic accidents and deaths among teenage drivers is very high. This is the reason car insurance for young drivers is extremely expensive, and this is one reason why Placement Organizations do NOT permit their exchange students to drive.

## In Conclusion

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As you've learned at your orientation, America is a varied country and American families come in all sizes and shapes. Immigration has a significant impact on America's population growth and creates a rich cultural tapestry but it also inspires a lot of debate and disagreement. The roles of men and women in the United States have changed dramatically over the decades and may be different from in your home country. Some of these characteristics may be familiar to you, and some might not be. It's also likely that some of this won't make a lot of sense to you until you arrive to the United States and start experiencing it for yourself.

Think about the similarities and differences and the tools you have that can help you adapt and appreciate things from a different point of view. Remember: not better, not worse – just different.

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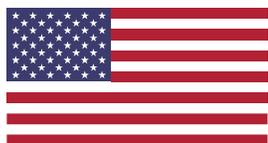
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