



rotary
youth
exchange
District 6970

Outbound Student Handbook



THE ROTARY SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR OUTBOUND EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Rotary Youth Exchange 6970 Contacts

YOUR COUNTRY COORDINATOR:

Name: _____
Phone: Home _____ Cell _____
Email: _____

YOUR DISTRICT CHAIRPERSON:

Name: _____
Phone: Home _____ Cell _____
Email: _____

YOUR DISTRICT OR SPONSOR CLUB COUNSELOR:

Name: _____
Phone: Home _____ Cell _____
Email: _____

Host Country Contacts

	NAME	E-MAIL
HOST PARENTS # 1	_____	_____
HOST PARENTS # 2	_____	_____
HOST PARENTS # 3	_____	_____
HOST CLUB COUNSELOR	_____	_____
HOST DISTRICT CONTACT	_____	_____

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Objectives of the Program

- **To further international goodwill and understanding** by enabling students to study firsthand some of the problems and accomplishments of people in lands other than their own.
- **To enable students to advance their education** by studying for a year in an environment entirely different from their own and undertaking the study of courses and subjects not normally available to them in their own country.
- **To give students opportunities to broaden their outlook** by learning to live with and meet people of different cultures, creeds, and colors and by having to cope with day-to-day problems in an environment completely different from the one they have experienced at home.
- **To have students act as ambassadors** for their own country by addressing Rotary Clubs, community organizations and youth groups in their host country; by imparting as much knowledge as they can of their own country, its attributes and its problems to the people they meet during their year abroad.
- **To provide sufficient time to study and observe another country's culture** so that upon returning home students can pass on the knowledge they have gained by addressing Rotary clubs and other organizations and assimilate the positive aspects into their everyday living.

BEING AN EXCHANGE STUDENT

- is fantastic

- is meeting hundreds of wonderful people
- is giving speeches and writing letters
- is getting fat and, at times, being poor
- is seeing a new country and experiencing new things
- is being homesick and, at times, miserable
- is getting tired
- is being an ambassador
- is personal growth

THE SUCCESSFUL EXCHANGE STUDENT

- is flexible and adaptable
- wants to learn and have new experiences
- is knowledgeable and well read
- is open to challenge and change
- is sensitive, loyal, and trustworthy
- is involved
- recognizes "Different" from good, bad, wrong, etc.
- communicates with family, Rotary, school, friends
- is introspective

Guidelines and Information for Outbound Exchange Students

Preparing To Be an Exchange Student – What to Expect

Your exchange year will be 10-12 months long, and could begin as early as mid-July, or as late as the beginning of September. However, most exchange students depart for their host country in August and return home the following June. Ask your Country Coordinator or District Counselor about the normal departure date for your country, discuss with him or her your plans for summer school, summer job, etc., and find out if your host country has a specific date you need to arrive by, for language camp or orientation.

You are associated with two Rotary Districts and two Rotary Clubs: your **sponsoring** District here in Florida or Georgia and Rotary Club in your hometown; and the **host** District and Rotary Club in your Host Country. Although the youth exchange programs and rules for each district are similar, the host district and club guidelines take precedence over those of the sponsoring district. The host district, host club, and host family are responsible for each student's cultural, spiritual and physical well-being and may set their own rules and guidelines, which may be more or less restrictive than those we apply to the students we host. You should become familiar with those rules and guidelines before, or immediately upon, your arrival in your host country.

Preparing Yourself

Passport and Visa

Several months before departure, you should apply for a Passport, if you don't already have one. If you do have a valid passport, the expiration date must be no earlier than six months after you expect to return home from your year abroad. A "raised-seal" birth certificate is needed to apply for a passport; if you don't have an original birth certificate, you will need to contact the county clerk in the county and state where you were born. A passport can be applied for at any county clerk's office.

The requirements for a visa (permission granted by the destination country for a non-citizen to enter) vary by country, and our travel agency and Rotary contacts will be able to guide you through the process of securing a visa.

Travel Reservations (Airlines)

Once your departure date and arrival airport (in host country) are known, work with our travel agency to arrange the required **round-trip** air ticket. **You must have a round-trip air ticket, that allows changes to the return date, as a requirement of the exchange program.** Although airline rules and regulations differ, most airlines will issue the return flight tickets for a specific return date (next summer) and allow one change with no-cost or a low-cost change fee (first change is covered by Rotary Youth Exchange). Inform both your District Counselor and those in your host country (Host Club YEO, Host Family, etc.) of your departure/arrival dates and times as soon as the information is known. Be sure to keep the "record locator" information in a readily accessible location.

Finances

Your Host Rotary Club will provide you with a monthly spending allowance, generally equivalent to USD75.00 – USD100.00, depending on the relative cost of living in that country. This may or may not include money to pay for school lunches or for transportation to and from school. Your Host Family will provide lodging and meals. You will need money for personal expenses, travel, clothing, and entertainment. The amount of spending money you will need – and have available will likely depend on your own circumstances as well as the community and families you stay with. Two general guidelines should always be kept in mind:

- Be willing and able to “pay your own way” for travel and entertainment with host family and friends; don’t expect to be treated as a guest at all times. Understand when it is appropriate to offer to pay for meals, entertainment tickets, etc. when offered such opportunities.
- Do not spend money freely or lavishly when those around you do not have the resources to do likewise. Don’t be labeled “the rich American” who throws money around.

You and your parents should check with your bank about setting up an internationally accepted credit card or ATM debit card such as Visa or Mastercard as this will provide you with an easy and inexpensive way to deposit and withdraw funds in your host country. Finding a card with NO foreign exchange fees will also help reduce excessive charges. Ensure your new debit or credit card has a “chip” as most countries will not accept cards without one. Having this card will mean you will not need to travel with a large amount of money. Take extra precautions to protect credit cards, traveler’s checks, and cash from theft, especially when traveling, and make sure you and your parents know what to do in the event you lose these items.

Become familiar with the monetary system of your host country before you depart and understand the exchange rate for conversion to US currency. In many countries, the “buying power” of the US dollar is greater than here, but the cost of some items may also be much greater than at home. Before you leave, you and your parents should establish a budget for your spending money, and you should follow that budget carefully so that you don’t run out of money before you run out of exchange year.

School fees or tuition, if any, will be paid by the host Rotary club. However, if you take a university course or a community program, you may have to pay those costs yourself. School books may or may not be provided free. You will likely have to buy notebooks, pens, pencils etc. You may also have to wear a school uniform. Tutoring and language training is at your expense, and some Districts will require that you attend a Language Camp or program upon your arrival (if such a camp is mandatory, Rotary Youth Exchange covers its cost).

Parents and relatives should not send personal checks to students overseas. They are often difficult to cash, and foreign banks frequently will charge a high fee for accepting checks drawn on a US bank for deposit, while holding the deposit as unavailable while it clears through the international banking system. Urge these generous people to have funds deposited into your bank account instead – it’s a much better and faster way to go.

Many Rotary districts, including those in Florida and Georgia, require exchange students to arrive with an “emergency fund” of about \$300-\$500 USD that is held by the Host Club for safekeeping, and can be used to cover emergency medical expenses, unpaid bills incurred by the student, etc. Your host district will provide you with instructions on this fund if applicable.

Making Contact with Host Club and Host Family

As soon as you are notified of the name of the Rotary club that will be hosting you, you should write to the host club counselor and first host family, giving them information about you, including your interests. Include a photo of yourself, especially if you have changed your appearance at all from your application photo. You should use this note as an opportunity to ask about school, school clothing/uniforms, climate, activities, etc. Every opportunity should be taken to exchange correspondence with the host family before departing, as this helps tremendously in the initial settling-in period in a new environment.

Banners, Business Cards, Pins

Your sponsor Rotary club should give you several small club banners. They can be presented to the host country Rotary clubs which host you for functions. You will usually receive one of their banners in return, to bring back to your sponsor club.

We will provide you with pins and other items to exchange with or give to people you meet during your exchange year. We will also provide you with business cards with your picture and USA address to provide to people you meet. These cards also have the name of the host country and room for you to enter your current host family address.

Picture Album & Slides

We recommend that you take a good set of 30-40 photos (or an equivalent PowerPoint presentation) of your family, your home, your community, and places you have visited in the USA, for use in presentations to Rotary clubs, school classes, community groups, and others in your host country.

You should also put together a good quality photo album (hard copy, in addition to digital) to show host families and other people you visit, such as for dinner and weekend outings. Photo albums are good conversation starters, and your selections should be well thought out, keeping in mind what might be of interest to people in your host country.

Your presentation and photo album should include pictures of:

- Your family, home, school, friends, etc.
- Special interests you have, such as school clubs, sports activities, etc.
- Special local sites in your community, including historic and scenic points of interest near your home.
- National points of interest, including a cross section of Florida/Georgia. Make sure that you know what each of these slides shows, and can describe the location, etc.

Gifts

You should be thinking about gift items for host families and people who will be your host for weekends and other special visits. The gifts need not be expensive, but should be thoughtful and something distinctly American, preferably local to your community. Some gift suggestions are included in this handbook.

You should have a special present to give to each of your host families soon after you arrive. Also remember birthdays and holiday presents for all the members of your host family. You don't necessarily need to take all such gifts with you when you leave home (and often will need time to learn what will make a great gift for members of your host family), and parents back home can help with this. These gifts need not be expensive, but instead selected and given with warm thoughtfulness.

Insurance

All Rotary Youth Exchange 6970 exchange students are covered by a CISI medical/accident insurance policy which meets Rotary International standards. The premium is paid as part of your program fees. Certain host districts will require that the students they host purchase their domestic (host country) insurance. For students going to those countries, Rotary Youth Exchange 6970 will purchase the foreign insurance policy, to ensure that you have proper medical coverage as well as a CISI supplement to ensure maximum coverage.

There are certain limitations and deductibles with all insurance policies. Students are responsible for any medical fees not covered by the insurance. Insurance coverage provided through Rotary Youth Exchange 6970 is effective from your date of departure until you return home. Instructions for filing a claim (for the Rotary Youth Exchange 6970 policy only) are included in this handbook.

Learning Your Target Language

You will be hosted in a country where the native language is not English. **YOU must make a conscientious, disciplined effort to learn your host country's language as quickly as possible.** Speaking and understanding the language is the key to acceptance in any country, even in countries where English is a commonly learned foreign language.

There are several things you can do to help learn the language: download language apps (such as Duolingo, Memorize, Babbel, Mango) and use them daily, change your smart phone into your host country language, enroll in language classes and ask for help from a Rotex. You will learn a language one phrase at a time, so try not to become overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenge. Set small, achievable goals. Ask for help if you are not making progress each week.

Prepare To Be an Ambassador

During your exchange year, you will meet many people who only know the USA through the lens of a movie or TV camera, and who think anywhere in "Florida" is Disney World or Miami Beach, and the only place in Georgia is Atlanta. As an exchange student, one of your roles is to help change these misconceptions. Review the Ambassador Civics Questions in this handbook to increase your knowledge of the of American history, geography, culture, government and politics. Become as knowledgeable as you can on these topics before you begin your exchange year. Review

“Tough Questions” in this handbook for some thought-provoking questions that you are likely to be asked in your host country. Consider these as examples, and think about how you would answer these, and similar questions, about life in the USA.

Locate a good map of the southeast US (roadmaps are good for this purpose) that you can take with you to show friends and host families where you live. You will also need a map of the United States, to show people where you live compared to well-known US cities. Understand travel distances -- in hours -- from your home to other places in the US and relate that to distances between cities in your host country.

You also need to become familiar with your host country **before** you arrive there. As part of your preparation for exchange you will complete a research project on many aspects of your host country and their culture. Be sure to study several sources for your research. You should become familiar with the history, culture, and customs of your host country.

Other Preparation Tips

LUGGAGE--Luggage selection and packing requires good planning, since all airlines impose both weight and quantity restrictions for checked-in luggage as well as size restrictions for carry-on luggage. Find out from our travel agent the specific requirements that you must comply with. Also consider that you may be traveling during your exchange year, very possibly by train or bus, and smaller, lightweight luggage may be more appropriate for those shorter trips.

WHAT TO PACK--While the climate and other factors in your host country will determine what type of clothing you will need, plan from the beginning to limit the quantity of clothing that you take with you. Do not attempt to pack all the clothing that you own; you will soon find that a) they may not be “in style” in your new country; b) they don’t fit because you have gained or lost weight; or c) there is no place in your new room to store them all.

ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE BLAZER--Your Blue Blazer will identify you as an Rotary Youth Exchange student and draw attention to you in a positive way and is always suitable when the occasion calls for “dressing up”. But don’t pack your blazer; wear it when you depart for your host country. Many students report that, by wearing their blazer and Rotary Youth Exchange pins while traveling, their passage through customs and immigration is made easier, officials are happy to offer help, and you become instantly “recognizable” to your hosts on arrival.

MEDICAL RECORDS—If you are taking medications, discuss with your doctor prior to departure how you will refill those prescriptions while on exchange. If you wear glasses or contact lenses, a copy of your lens prescription, or even a spare set of glasses, can help avoid problems in the event your glasses are lost or broken.

Arrival and Settling In

Arrival will be one of the high points of your trip, the fulfillment of all your planning. There will be an inevitable let down when the excitement subsides. We know your hosts will make every effort to welcome you into the family but remember that **YOU** are the one who must adjust. This quality of flexibility was one of the criteria considered in selecting you and you must be prepared to exercise it to the fullest. Communication is critical to establishing an understanding of expectations. Look over the “First Night Questions” now, and several times before you arrive; then make sure you have asked the questions or been provided with the answers as you become part of your first host family.

Facing the Challenges

Know that things will be very different in your host country, and you will be the “outsider” who will have to adjust. This means, for example, tolerating what may seem like silly questions about the USA, or doing things as part of the family which you might not do at home. You may find that people in your host country rely more on public transportation and less on automobiles to go places, and you should be prepared to not rely on your host parents to “get you around”. You may also find it difficult to conform to discipline that is different and perhaps more restrictive than you are used to-

Your Rotary Counselor

The host Rotary club will appoint a counselor to advise and help you. Your host counselor typically will:

- Help select suitable school subjects
- Help coordinate social and Rotary club activities to introduce you in the community
- Help arrange banking and other financial matters and see that you receive a monthly allowance from your host club.
- Help you resolve problems of any kind.

You should make a point of taking the initiative to be in contact with the host Rotary counselor weekly, especially during the early stages of your exchange. If, by chance, problems develop which the counselor is unable to resolve, you should contact the host club Rotary President or your host District Counselor or Youth Exchange Committee Chair. If these channels are unsuccessful, you should contact your Country Coordinator, sponsor District Counselor, or Youth Exchange Chair. You are strongly encouraged to reach out to us if contacts with the hosting Rotary club and District are not successful, but also understand that we will not provide a "second opinion" or attempt to reverse a decision made by the host District simply because you do not like their decision. However, we will help you work through difficulties and problems if you keep us informed. **WE CANNOT HELP YOU IF WE DO NOT KNOW THERE IS A PROBLEM!**

Reports and Journals

As a minimum, we expect to receive from you three status reports (mid-October, January, and April) describing your activities and experiences to your Rotary Youth Exchange team back in the USA. Report forms are provided for that purpose and will be available online on our website as well.

In addition to your Reports, you are also expected to write at least three journals and upload them to our website. Use these journals to document your exchange (a class trip, your first day of school, a family holiday, etc) and please include photos. Journal entries are available publicly on our website. You family and friends, future exchange students, and Rotarians love reading all about your experiences and your adventures.

Host Families

The hosting arrangements are the responsibility of the host Rotary club. The usual arrangement is for you to be hosted by at least 3 different families, for three to four months each. In many cases you will have a room to yourself, but you may share a room with a host sibling of the same gender.

Students: you must remember that it is your responsibility to adjust to the host family environment. The host family is under no obligation to adjust to you, or to treat you as a "special guest". You are expected to accept the normal discipline of the family and settle into their routine, not the routine you have been used to back home.

You are expected to call your host family parents by their name or title - Mom and Dad for example - not Mr. and Mrs. LastName. Discuss this very soon after you first meet your host parents and arrive at something that is comfortable for everyone.

Discuss the household rules and duties with your host family. Some families do not expect much from their children, while others divide household tasks, including kitchen help and house cleaning, among everyone. Accept willingly and cheerfully whatever is assigned to you. You will find that a clear understanding of responsibilities will go a long way in creating smooth sailing.

If problems arise that you cannot resolve with the host family, you should first consult with the host Rotary club counselor, then the host District Counselor, before elevating the problem to your Country Coordinator or District or Club Counselor in Florida or Georgia.

Homesickness

Very few students escape at least one bout of homesickness. Early in your exchange there is the excitement of a new land, people, school, surroundings and being the center of attention. This will change as "normalcy" sets in. You may miss the little things about home. You are being bombarded by a strange language throughout the day. Often unable to communicate as well as you would like, and learning new customs, you may begin to wonder if you will make it through the next 10 or 12 months. Know that this feeling will soon pass.

- **What are the symptoms to look for:**
 - ◆ Feeling lousy for no reason
 - ◆ “Losing your cool” over things you would normally shrug off
 - ◆ Staying in your room where you feel secure
 - ◆ Physical discomfort: headaches, upset stomach, uneven menstrual cycle
- **What to do:**
 - ◆ Talk. Share your problem with a sympathetic host parent, your counselor, or another student
 - ◆ Keep busy. Get involved at school, in your host family activities, in the community
- **What not to do:**
 - ◆ Mope around. Gloominess is highly contagious
 - ◆ Eat your way to “happiness”. You will only gain weight and then feel worse
 - ◆ Decide to “go home”. This is the last resort. You will never grow if, when life gets tough, you “cut and run”. If you talk it out and keep busy, it will soon pass.
 - ◆ Call or e-mail home and “unload” on Mom or Dad. In all likelihood, your feelings will improve in a day or two, while you’ve put your parents on “red-alert”. Don’t do that to them!

Participation

You will gain the most from the exchange if you participate to the fullest. This means sharing family life, school life and the community life. If you play a musical instrument, you can get together with other musicians in the school or community. If you are good at a particular sport, play it if possible, or try a new one. Contribute whatever talents you have, whenever possible. Be willing to take the initiative for finding activities to do and in asking people about their jobs, interests, etc. The best way to get people to be interested in you is to show interest in them. Always say "YES" if anyone asks you to go someplace or do something, even if it is something you dislike. If you say "NO", you may never be asked again. **Use the resourcefulness and creativity which are among the qualities we sought in choosing you as a Rotary Youth Exchange student.**

Be Prepared to Adapt

Though most host families will do their best to make you feel at home, you must adapt to their ways, not the reverse. You will be in a different social and political climate and should be discreet in your social and political observations and statements. You should try to see their point of view even if you do not agree. **Above all, you are expected to be tactful and diplomatic when hosts express views contrary to your own.** You should be particularly diplomatic when expressing opinions on religion, race, or politics. Things may be *different* but that does not make them *wrong*, or *better or worse*.

Language

You will all be hosted in a country where the native language is not English. You must make a conscientious, disciplined effort to learn your host country’s language as quickly as possible by using that language to communicate. Speaking and understanding the language is the key to acceptance in any country, even in countries where English is a commonly-learned “foreign language”. Without language ability, you will always be an outsider.

Everyone is hesitant about saying strange sounding words aloud. If you learn to laugh at your mistakes, you will learn the language more quickly. Everyone will appreciate and applaud your efforts and forgive your mistakes. It is a compliment to your new friends and host family when you speak their language.

Beware of the “English Trap”. Much of the rest of the world learns English as their foreign language, and you may find family and friends willing, and perhaps even eager, to converse with you in English. Do not let this crutch become a barrier to your developing fluency in the new language. And like everyone who has gone before you, the day will come when you suddenly realize that you understand this new language. Or, as an even truer measurement of your new skill, you will awake some morning and realize that you have been dreaming in your hostcountry language!

Written Communications

Exchange students use many types of written communication such as e-mail, text, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, blogs and others. Some provide newsy correspondence to friends, family, and your sponsoring Rotary Club. It is also suggested that you e-mail or send a blog at least twice during your exchange to your school in Florida or Georgia to share your experiences and help with recruiting of future Rotary Youth Exchange students.

Another important type of communication is the handwritten thank-you note for people who invite you to their home or take you to places and events in your host country. **We cannot overemphasize the importance of a little thank-you note.** Take with you a supply of local picture postcards and use these as thank-you notes. Postcards require limited writing and can be sent quickly, providing those who you thank something special from your home country.

Telephone, E-mail, and Social Media

Over the past several years, long distance phone service has become less and less expensive, or even free through online providers such as Skype, WhatsApp, and Facebook. With that and all the electronic access we all enjoy, you might think that it will be easy and advisable to stay in constant contact with family and friends here in the states, right?

Not really. We strongly discourage frequent communications to and from home and recommend that phone calls be limited to a monthly frequency, and for special occasions like holidays and birthdays. And critically, experience has shown that students who contact home often, or are often contacted from home, frequently end up relying too much on “home” and do not “connect” with their host families and host country, thus delaying or even preventing the kind of adaptation and immersion that a successful exchange requires.

The same is true for over-use of texting and e-mail and other social media as a means of excessive communication with family and friends outside of your host community. To get the most from your exchange year, you must be a Participant, not simply a Reporter. Occasional, thoughtful communications home describing some of the more significant places and things you recently experienced will provide parents with keepsakes they will cherish and be able to share with others and show them that you are having the “experience of a lifetime”.

Visiting

One of the Program Rules and Conditions of Exchange you agreed to as part of your application to the Rotary Youth Exchange program relates to visits during your exchange year: visits from family, other relatives, and your friends. While there are few absolutes, common sense and the experiences of the many exchange students who preceded you prove that visits by your family may be disruptive, and if approved, are best limited to the final two or three months of your exchange year. In most districts, this is a firm rule.

We discourage visits by friends at any time during your exchange. These visits often create inconvenience and disruptions for the host family and may re-create the adjustment problems you successfully solved in the beginning of your exchange year. You may find that most host districts do not allow for these visits.

Visits while school is in session will disrupt your school attendance, and during holiday breaks will detract from your experiencing the holiday practices of your host family, especially during the Christmas-New Years and Easter holidays. By delaying any family visit to your host country until near the end of your exchange year, you will have acquired fluency in the language and knowledge of the country. At that time, you may be an excellent tour guide and interpreter, and may be able to introduce them to your host families and new friends. Remember that any visit must have the written pre-approval of both your host club and your host district.

Returning Home

While it may seem like a long way off now, eventually you will find yourself saying goodbye to your host country and returning home. Most exchange students say that this time arrives all too soon, and they aren't ready to leave their new families and friends.

Returning exchange students also tell us that the adjustments they encounter returning to the USA are as challenging, if not more so, than the cultural adjustments they faced just a short year before.

This handbook includes articles written by people that understand what you may go through upon returning home, including former exchange students. Keep these articles in mind as your year comes to an end and read them as part of your return preparations.

It is often said that a one-year exchange program really lasts for three years: one to prepare for your exchange, one

for the exchange year itself, and a third year to fully reflect on the first two and become comfortable with the new bi-cultural you. The officers of Rotary Youth Exchange 6970 and your sponsor district Youth Exchange Officers recognize this and will be here to help you with this return adjustment if needed.

And Finally.....

IF YOU NEED TO DISCUSS SOMETHING, please contact your Rotary Youth Exchange Country Coordinator, District Counselor, or District Youth Exchange Chair. Understand the Rotary Youth Exchange support system that is available to you. This begins with your host family, your Rotary host club Counselor and Club President, and the District Counselor in your host country. Remember that you must comply with the rules and regulations that they establish for the students they host. Your Rotary Youth Exchange contacts cannot change those rules or give you permission to disregard them, but we can help you with other matters and problems that may be impacting on your exchange. We will get in touch with our colleagues in your host country for further information and, if needed, help to solve your problem. **Please do not try to solve problems all by yourself.** Because this is an international program, there may be cultural and/or Rotary subtleties of which you are unaware. There may also be long-term implications affecting future exchanges. Please call or e-mail and give us the opportunity to demonstrate that we are truly concerned about you and want your exchange year to be a great success.

What is Rotary?

The History of Rotary

Rotary was born on February 23, 1905, in Chicago, Illinois, and is now known as the world's first and most international service club. The founder of Rotary was attorney Paul P. Harris (1868-1947), who gathered with three others to discuss his idea of a group of businessmen from different professions getting together periodically to become better acquainted. They decided to limit membership to one representative of each profession and to rotate the meeting site among each member's place of business, to acquaint each other with their various vocations and to promote business. The rotation of meeting places is the source of the name "Rotary".

Club membership grew rapidly. The second Rotary Club was founded in San Francisco in 1908. When clubs were formed in Canada and Great Britain, in 1912, Rotary became an international organization.

Since 1905, the ideas of Paul Harris and his friends have become ideals which have been accepted by people of practically all nationalities, and of many political and religious beliefs. Today there are Rotary Clubs in Austria and American Samoa, in Brazil and Brunei, in Italy and India, in Scotland and South Africa - in some 200 countries. The universal acceptance of Rotary principles has been so great that there are now more than 34,000 Rotary clubs, with a membership of over 1.2 million men and women.

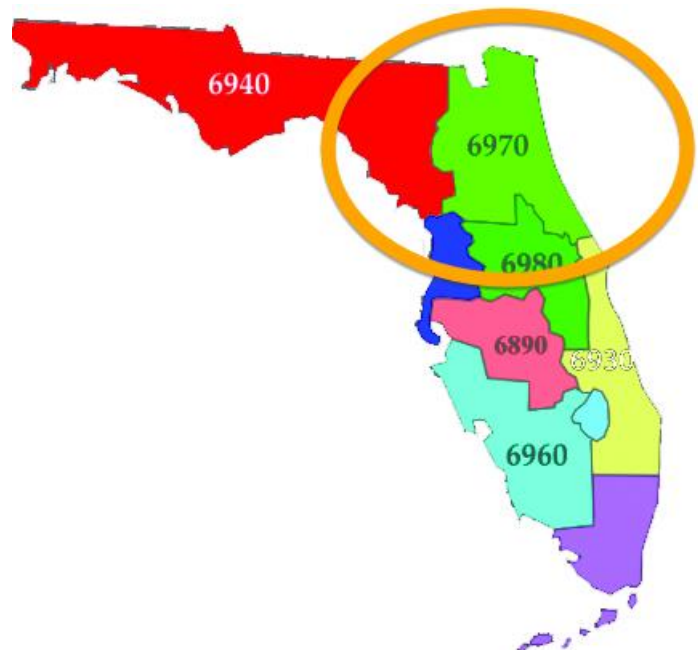
Rotary District 6970

Each of the more than 34,000 Rotary clubs in the world is a member of Rotary International. Rotary is divided into more than 530 Districts, each of which is headed by a District Governor. The first Rotary club in Florida, the Rotary Club of Jacksonville, was organized in 1912, just seven years after Rotary began in Chicago.

In District 6970 there are more than 3,200 members, with 67 Rotary Clubs in 12 countries in northeast Florida.

The District Governor, and all officers of Rotary on the international, district or club level, serve for a Rotary fiscal year that runs from July 1 to June 30.

A number of district-level committees are organized to provide sponsorship or support for Rotary functions and initiatives that involve Rotarians from across our District. The Youth Exchange Committee is an example of a District Committee.



Rotary Motto and Themes

Rotary International has adopted as its motto, "***Service Above Self***".

Rotarians throughout the world quote the Four Way Test of the things we think, say, or do:

1. Is it the TRUTH?
2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?
3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

The Rotary Foundation

In 1917, the Rotary Foundation was born. The Rotary Foundation is a philanthropic trust promoting further understanding and friendly relations between peoples of different nations. The Foundation sponsors the largest scholarship program in the world and is supported purely by voluntary contributions from Rotary clubs and Rotarians.

The Rotary Foundation has eight working programs and a budget of approximately \$45-\$50 million (US) each year. These programs include Ambassadorial Scholarships, Rotary Volunteers, The 3H program (for Health, Hunger and Humanity), Rotary Peace Conferences, World Community Service, Special Grants, and one other that you are almost certain to encounter during your exchange: Polio-Plus, Rotary's plan to eliminate polio from the world, a hugely successful effort undertaken with the United Nations with the great support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Seven Areas of Focus

Rotary is dedicated to seven areas of focus to build international relationships, improve lives, and create a better world to support our peace efforts and to put an end to polio forever. Our seven areas of focus are:

- Promoting Peace
- Fighting Disease
- Providing Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- Saving Mothers and Children
- Supporting Education
- Growing Local Economies
- Protecting the Environment

Rotary at the Local Level -- The Rotary Club

The "personality" of each Rotary club reflects the community it serves and the membership of that club. Even within our own Districts, club size ranges from less than two dozen members to well over four hundred members. Rotary clubs meet weekly throughout the year; some for a breakfast meeting, others during lunch, some in the evening. Some Rotary club meetings are quiet and "serious", staying to a tight schedule so the members can return to work on time, while other club meetings are less formal and structured.

Exchange students often find that the Rotary club **hosting** them will be very different from the Rotary club **sponsoring** them, and both will be very different from other Rotary clubs they may have the opportunity to visit during their exchange year. But Rotarians around the world all share the common philosophy for service to others, and they are happy to help provide a successful exchange experience.

As with most organizations, Rotary clubs are led by officers who are elected by the membership for one-year terms, beginning on July 1, the beginning of the Rotary Year. The officers include the Club President, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice-President and/or President-Elect, and Directors. Rotary clubs participating in the Rotary Youth Exchange program generally appoint a Youth Exchange Officer, or YEO, to oversee that program, and that Rotarian, or another member of the host Rotary club, will be designated as the exchange student's Club Counselor. This Rotarian serves as the primary liaison between the Rotary club, the exchange student and the host families.

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Appendix A: Outbound Program Rules and Conditions of Exchange

As a Youth Exchange student sponsored by a Rotary club or district, you must agree to the following rules and conditions of exchange. Violation of any of these rules may result in dismissal from the program and immediate return home, at student's expense. Please note that districts may edit this document or insert additional rules if needed to account for local conditions.

Rules and Conditions of Exchange

- 1) You must obey the laws of the host country. If found guilty of violating any law, you can expect no assistance from your sponsors or native country. You must return home at your own expense as soon as released by authorities.
- 2) You will be under the host district's authority while you are an exchange student and must abide by the rules and conditions of exchange provided by the host district. Parents or legal guardians must not authorize any extra activities directly to you. Any relatives you may have in the host country will have no authority over you while you are in the program.
- 3) You are not allowed to possess or use illegal drugs. Legal medications that are prescribed to you by a physician are allowed.
- 4) The illegal drinking of alcoholic beverages is expressly forbidden. Students who are of legal age should refrain. If your host family offers you an alcoholic drink, it is permissible to accept it under their supervision in the home. Excessive consumption and drunkenness is forbidden.
- 5) You may not operate a motorized vehicle, including but not limited to cars, trucks, motorcycles, aircraft, all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, boats, and other watercraft, or participate in driver education programs.
- 6) Smoking is discouraged. If you state in your application that you do not smoke, you will be held to that position throughout your exchange. Your acceptance and host family placement is based on your signed statement. Under no circumstances are you to smoke in your host family's bedrooms.
- 7) Body piercing or obtaining a tattoo while on your exchange, without the express written permission of your natural parents, host parents, host club, and host district, is prohibited, for health reasons.
- 8) You must make every effort to learn the language of the host country, and may be responsible for any costs for tutoring, language camps, or other instruction.
- 9) Limit your use of the Internet and mobile phones, as directed by your host district host club, and host family. Excessive or inappropriate use is not acceptable. Accessing or downloading pornographic material is expressly forbidden.
- 10) You must attend school regularly and make an honest attempt to succeed.
- 11) You must have health and accident or travel insurance that provides coverage for accidental injury and illness, death benefits (including repatriation of remains), disability/ dismemberment benefits, emergency medical evacuation, emergency visitation expenses, 24-hour emergency assistance services, and legal services, in amounts satisfactory to the host Rotary club or district in consultation with the sponsor Rotary club or district, with coverage from the time of your departure from your home country until your return.
- 12) You must also have liability coverage through a travel insurance or other applicable policy, in amounts satisfactory to the host Rotary club or district in consultation with the sponsor Rotary club or district.
- 13) You must have sufficient financial support to assure your well-being during your exchange. Your host district may require a contingency fund for emergency situations. Unused funds will be returned to you or to your parents or legal guardians at the end of your exchange.
- 14) You must follow the travel rules of your host district. Travel is permitted with host parents or for Rotary club or district functions authorized by the host Rotary club or district with proper adult chaperones. The host district and club, host family, and your parents or legal guardians must approve any other travel in writing, thus exempting Rotary of responsibility and liability.
- 15) You must return home directly by a route mutually agreeable to your host district and your parents or legal guardians.
- 16) Any costs related to an early return home or any other unusual costs (language tutoring, tours, etc.) are the responsibility of you and your parents or legal guardians.
- 17) Visits by your parents or legal guardians, siblings, or friends while you are on exchange may only take place with the host club's and district's consent and within their guidelines. Typically, visits may be arranged only in the last quarter of the exchange or during school breaks and are not allowed during major holidays.
- 18) Serious romantic activity is to be avoided. Sexual activity is forbidden.
- 19) Talk with your host club counselor, host parents, or other trusted adult if you encounter any form of abuse or harassment.

Recommendations for a Successful Exchange

- 1) You should communicate with your first host family prior to leaving your home country. The family's information will be provided to you by your host club or district prior to your departure.
- 2) Respect your host's wishes. Become an integral part of the host family, assuming duties and responsibilities normal for a student of your age or for children in the family.
- 3) Learn ahead of time as much of the language of your host country as possible and use the language regularly. Teachers, host parents, Rotary club members, and others you meet in the community will appreciate the effort. It will go a long way in your gaining acceptance in the community and with those who will become lifelong friends.
- 4) Attend Rotary-sponsored events and host family events and show an interest in these activities. Volunteer to be involved; do not wait to be asked. Lack of interest on your part is detrimental to your exchange and can have a negative impact on future exchanges.
- 5) Get involved in your school and community activities. Plan your recreation and spare-time activities around your school and community friends. Don't spend all your time with other exchange students. If there is a local Interact club, you are encouraged to join in.
- 6) Choose friends in the community carefully. Ask for and heed the advice of host families, counselors, and school personnel in choosing friends.
- 7) Do not borrow money. Pay any bills promptly. Ask permission to use the family phone or computer, keep track of all calls and time on the Internet, and reimburse your host family each month for the costs you incur.
- 8) If you are offered an opportunity to go on a trip or attend an event, make sure you understand any costs you must pay and your responsibilities before you go.

Appendix B: How To File An Insurance Claim

How to File a Health Insurance Claim - In the event a student requires health care services, the following guides should facilitate the processing of the insurance claim(s) for payment.

- Obtain a detailed bill for the service rendered by the provider.
- Follow instructions for filing a claim found at www.cisi-bolduc.com.
- Complete the health insurance claim form (sample copy follows) as directed.
- Fax or e-mail a scanned copy to the host district Youth Exchange Chairperson.
- Make a copy of the completed claim form, including a copy of the detailed bill from the provider(s).
- Submit claim.

Almost all inbound exchange students are covered by a Rotary-approved medical and liability insurance policy underwritten by AIG, through CISI-Bolduc insurance agency. A sample copy of the claims form follows. The exceptions are students from Belgium, Denmark, Norway, France and Sweden, who are covered by national insurance programs in their home countries, but each have representative offices in the US.

To file a claim, go to www.cisi-bolduc.com, and follow the links to download forms and file claims. The actual form may change from the sample you see on the next page.



Cultural Insurance Services International – Claim Form

- ▶ Program Name:
- ▶ Policy Number:
- ▶ Participant ID Number (from the front of your insurance card):

Mailing Address: 1 High Ridge Park, Stamford, CT 06905 | **E-mail:** Claimhelp@culturalinsurance.com | **Fax:** (203) 399-5596
 For claim submission questions, call (203) 399-5130, or e-mail Claimhelp@culturalinsurance.com

Instructions:

1. Fully complete and sign the medical claim form for each occurrence, indicating whether the Doctor/Hospital has been paid.
2. Attach **itemized bills** for all amounts being claimed. *We recommend you provide us with a copy and keep the originals for yourself.
3. Approved reimbursements will be paid to the provider of the service unless otherwise indicated.
4. **Submit claim form and attachments via mail, e-mail, or by fax (provided above).**

See next page for state specific disclaimers and additional claim submission instructions.

▶ NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION OF THE INSURED

Name of the Insured: _____ Date of Birth: _____ / _____ / _____
 (month/day/year)

*Please indicate which is your home address U.S. Address Address Abroad

U.S. Address: _____
 street address apt/unit # city state zip code

Address Abroad: _____

E-mail Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

▶ IF IN AN ACCIDENT

Date of Accident: _____ / _____ / _____ Place of Accident: _____ Date of Doctor/Hospital Visit: _____ / _____ / _____

Description/Details of Injury (attach additional notes if necessary): _____

▶ IF SICKNESS/ILLNESS

Description of Sickness/Illness (attach additional notes if necessary): _____

*Onset Date of Symptoms: _____ / _____ / _____ *Date of Doctor/Hospital Visit: _____ / _____ / _____

Have you had this Sickness/Illness before? YES NO If yes, when was the last occurrence and/or doctor/hospital visit? _____

▶ REIMBURSEMENT

Have these doctor/hospital bills been paid by you? YES NO

If no, do you authorize payment to the provider of service for medical services claimed? YES NO

If yes, any eligible reimbursements will be made in U.S currency (USD) via check. If you would like your eligible reimbursement in another currency via wire transfer, please contact CISI at 203-399-5130 or claimhelp@culturalinsurance.com for instructions.

Please note if you are submitting a claim for prescription medication, you must submit the prescription receipt. This will include your name, the name of the prescribing physician, name of the medication, dosage, date and amount billed. Cash register receipts will not be considered for reimbursement.

▶ FOR CLAIMS UNRELATED TO A MEDICAL INCIDENT, PLEASE CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX BELOW:

*(Please note: In order to claim monies back related to one of the below benefits, the benefit(s) **MUST** be included in your policy. If you try to make a claim for a benefit which you do not have, the claim will be denied)

TUITION/PROGRAM FEE REFUND RETURN AIRFARE/TRIP INTERRUPTION PERSONAL EFFECTS TRIP DELAY

Please provide us with the relevant details of your incident below or the details and value of your loss. You may attach an additional page if necessary:

STOP! Please see next page for claim submission instructions specific to each of these benefits.

▶ CONSENT TO RELEASE MEDICAL INFORMATION

I hereby authorize any insurance company, Hospital or Physician or other person who has attended or examined me, including those in my home country to furnish to Cultural Insurance Services International or any of their duly appointed representatives, any and all information with respect to any sickness/illness or injury, medical history, consultation, prescriptions or treatment, and copies of all hospital or medical reports. A photo static copy of this authorization shall be considered as effective and valid as the original.

I certify that the information furnished by me in support of this claim is true and correct.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

We expect that your exchange year will be one of the best experiences of your life. However, there is the possibility that you will be the victim of assault or abuse. Your safety is very important to us, and we can only help you if we know that you have a problem.

“Exchange students have the right to adhere to their own standards regarding their bodies. While respecting vast cultural differences, each student has the right to judge how they deal with unwelcome sexual contact or related activity including nudity, exposure, touch, suggestive comments and sexual intercourse.”

For the INBOUND STUDENT or OUTBOUND STUDENT:

If you have been or feel threatened with physical, psychological, or sexual assault or abuse you should follow this procedure:

1. Call the Hotline phone number provided to you. This phone will be answered 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
2. Report the situation and circumstances to your Youth Exchange Officer (YEO) immediately.
3. If you cannot contact your YEO or prefer that the YEO not be informed, report the situation to your sponsor district counselor, sponsor district chairperson, sponsor club counselor, or sponsor club officer. You may call collect from anywhere if you are involved in this type of situation. You may also approach the President of your Host Rotary club or ANY Rotarian.
4. If you cannot report your situation to either your YEO or others as above, then report the situation to any officer of Rotary Youth Exchange.

It is important that you not delay in reporting any incident or threat of assault or abuse. Be sure that someone in the District Exchange Program understands the seriousness of your situation. **WE WANT TO HELP! OUR CONCERN IS YOUR WELLNESS and HEALTH, NOT SENDING YOU HOME.** If

nothing happens when you report the situation, report it again and continue until someone takes it seriously. Make sure we understand that your situation is serious.

Statement of Conduct for Working with Youth

Rotary International and Rotary Youth Exchange District 6970 strive to create and maintain a safe environment for all youth who participate in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotarians, Rotarians' spouse, and partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people they come into contact with and protect them from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

Student Security Procedures

1) Know your area ...

- a) Ask yourself:
 - i) Are there terrorist groups where I am?
 - ii) Do they target Americans?
 - iii) Are they liable to be violent?

2) What you should NOT do ...

- a) Don't "hang out" with groups of other Americans
 - i) Bus stops, nightclubs, bars, etc.
- b) Don't be an obvious American
 - i) Wear US flag pins, t-shirts, caps, etc.
- c) Don't get involved in demonstrations, peace marches or other political gatherings.
- d) Do not take sides
- e) If there is trouble, don't panic. You'll need your wits.

3) What you should do ...

- a) Be aware of your surroundings
- b) Avoid large public gatherings
- c) Try to blend in with your local surroundings. In other words, be a good exchange student.
 - i) Adapt and then assimilate into the culture.
 - ii) Wear clothes that are more of the local culture.
 - iii) Be careful not to spend a lot of money or carry around a lot of money.
 - iv) Understand that in some countries, blending in will be impossible.
- d) Be unpredictable
- e) Don't be the "ugly American". Accept that other ways may be just different.
- f) Remove yourself from confrontational situations.
- g) Upon arrival, contact the American embassy/consulate & tell them:
 - i) Who and where you are.
 - ii) That you are a Rotary Youth Exchange student.
 - iii) That you expect to be there for one year.
- h) In some countries, expect to have to register with the local police - DO IT!
- i) Maintain regular contact with Rotary Counselors in your host country & home.
- j) Know where your passport and return tickets are. DON'T CARRY THEM WITH YOU!
- k) Concentrate on learning the language and culture of your country before you depart.
- l) Follow the rules and laws of your host country, host family and Rotary.
- m) Expect that people you meet may disagree with US policies and actions.
- n) If threatened - tell your support contacts.

4) What to do if there is a crisis there or in the US ...

- a) Check in with your Host District Rotary Youth Exchange Counselor or Chairman.
 - i) Let them know that you are OK.
 - ii) Ask them what the procedures will be during the crisis.
 - iii) Follow the procedures to the letter. If you are told not to go outside after dark, DON'T!
- b) Contact your Sponsor District Rotary Youth Exchange Counselor or Chairman.
 - i) Let them know that you are OK.
 - ii) Let them know what the procedures are for your District.
- c) Contact your parents and let them know that you are OK.

Civics Questions for Rotary Youth Exchange ambassadors

- a. **What is the Declaration of Independence and what did it do?**
- b. **What is the Constitution of the United States of America and when was it written?**
- c. **What is the Bill of Rights?**
- d. **Who was the first president of the United States? What type of government do we have in the United States?**
- e. **We elect a U.S. Senator for how many years?**
- f. **We elect a Congressperson to the U.S. House of Representatives for how many years?**
- g. **We elect a President for how many years?**
- h. **What is the population of the United States?**
- i. **Name the Judicial, Legislative and Executive branches of government:**
- j. **What are the two parts of the US Congress?**
- k. **What is the Supreme Court and how many justices are there?**
- l. **Who was the first woman Supreme Court Justice**
- m. **How many representatives are in the House and why so many?**
- n. **How many U. S. Senators are there?**
- o. **What are the two major political parties in the United States?**
- p. **If the US President and Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President? Who is currently the Speaker of the House?**
- q. **Who was Martin Luther King, Jr.? What happened to him?**
- r. **What was the Emancipation Proclamation?**
- s. **What started the United States Civil War and when did it begin?**

- t. **Who lived in the area now known as the United States of America before the Europeans arrived?**
- u. **Who is Susan B. Anthony and what was she most famous for?**
- v. **What was the women's suffrage movement?**
- w. **What year did World War I begin and why?**
- x. **When did the United States finally enter World War I and why?**
- y. **When did World War II start and what countries were involved?**
- z. **When did the United States enter World War II and why?**
- aa. **What is D-Day?**
- bb. **How old do you have to be to vote in the United States? Name countries where voting is mandatory?**
- cc. **What is the percentage of Americans that voted in the 2020 national election?**
- dd. **What major event happened on September 11, 2001?**
- ee. **What do the 13 stripes and 50 stars on the American flag represent?**
- ff. **What are the capitals of your home state and neighboring states?**
- gg. **Who are the current President and Vice-President of the United States?**
- hh. **When is the next United States Presidential election?**
- ii. **Name a United States Territory. Does a resident of a United States Territory get to vote in a national election?**
- jj. **Where does the USA rank in incarcerations?**
- kk. **Where does the USA rank in population worldwide? Who are the top two countries?**
- ll. **How does the USA rank in size (landmass) with other countries? Who are the top three countries?**

Exchange Student Jitters: *Stress*

It's Time To Board The Plane

You have made the preparations, studied the culture and language, attended the orientations, packed your bags and the day of departure is upon you. Your emotions are peaking and the questions in the back of your mind are forcing themselves out and giving you that queasy feeling in the pit of your stomach. What is it? The experts call it **"travel stress"**.

You have landed in your host country, met your family, traveled to your "home", unpacked in your "new" bedroom and you may not feel just right. You may feel some anxiety, you're tired and may assume it's jet lag. What is it? The experts call it **"travel stress"**.

If you recognize the symptoms, you can deal with them. Jet lag is real and can take a toll on you. Your biological clock has been upset. Day is night and night is day. Your body hormones may also be out of balance.

Emotionally, whether you realize it or not, (and you probably don't) you are under a lot of stress. You have left your family, friends and familiar surroundings behind you. You may have been apprehensive about the flight, your personal safety, will you be met, will you be accepted, can you cope with the new culture, etc. Some of us are secure, some insecure, with most of us in the middle. You may be worried about being able to eat the food, learn the language, adjust to no car, make new friends, attend a new school, how will you get around with no car, adjust to different social and economic standards, accept more restrictive discipline, where is the mall.

Not knowing what to expect next may throw you off balance. All in all, you have a suitcase full of emotionally stressful issues.

Often the jet lag and stress results in physical ailments or discomfort. Indicators include feelings of anxiety, insecurity and fear. You may have trouble sleeping, or you may be extraordinarily tired and sleep for hours. Women often have irregular menstrual cycles. Upset stomach, light headedness, bowel upsets, headache, crying jags or a combination of these is not uncommon. You may find yourself continually thinking of home and homesickness sets in. It's all natural and to be expected. The question is how are you going to deal with this unwanted baggage that seems to have accompanied you. Sure, you remember those Rotarians telling you about travel stress, but you only half listened and thought they were exaggerating for effect. But now you're thinking, maybe they were right. And so now that you have it, that "Travel Stress" thing, let's deal with it.

Dealing with it -

First, recognize it for what it is and remind yourself that 10,000 other exchange students are probably in the same boat. Remember, it is temporary and can be overcome.

Start preparing a day or two before you leave and on the plane and in the car on the way to your host family's home.

- Go to bed earlier if you will be traveling east and later if traveling west to begin your body's internal clock adjustments.
- Avoid alcohol, sleeping pills, and tranquilizers prior to departure.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing and shoes. To help prevent your feet from swelling, get up and walk around the plane occasionally. Massage your limbs, neck and shoulder muscles.
- Avoid stimulants such as tea, coffee and other caffeine products before and during the flight and do not smoke.
- Drink plenty of non-carbonated beverages such as water or juice on the flight to keep yourself well hydrated. This helps overcome the drying effect and the poor quality of the recirculated air.
- Practice deep breathing exercises to get added oxygen. Breathe in through your nose to expand your diaphragm, hold it for 3 seconds, exhale through your mouth. Repeat 10-15 times every hour or so.

Once you've arrived, establish a regimen and daily schedule for your new environment. It's helpful to exercise, whether you've done so at home or not. Walk, jog or run around your new neighborhood. Learning all the new things, especially language is tiring. A nap after school and time to relax is often helpful. Takesome time to read, write in your journal or home, listen to music or take some time to get to know your host family. Consciously establish a day and weekly routine to keep yourself busy, to give your days order and to help you relax.

The time it takes to adjust to your new surroundings will vary with every individual. The initial adjustment may take some people a few days while others will be

up and ready to go in 24-48 hours. Realize that it takes time. Once the initial excitement wears off, you may experience a recurrence. But you can take control and get back on an even keel. Try not to dwell on your situation. Avoid worrying or putting unrealistic expectations on yourself such as "I will beat this feeling by tomorrow". This can cause things to get worse. Let nature take its course.

Summary -

Travel stress is real and can be successfully dealt with. Travel stress includes jet lag, emotional and physical manifestations. Support is available, within yourself, your host family, Rotary Club members, sponsoring district Country Counselor.

Stress reducing suggestions -

- Recognize the symptoms
- Reduce the effects by preparing before and during the trip
- Take time to let your body and mind adjust to your new environment
- Seek out someone you feel comfortable with and talk. Let them know how you feel so that they can be supportive. Remember you are new to them too.
- Establish a regimen for yourself and keep busy.
- Include time for exercise and relaxation in your daily schedule.
- Work off frustrations, "take the dog for a walk". Cool off before you complain.
- Don't blow things out of proportion nor make an issue of small events. Be gracious and good humored.
- Get involved in family, help with dinner preparation and clean-up and household chores.
- Volunteer to take out the garbage. Become a viable, involved member of your new family as quickly as possible.
- Avoid competing with your host siblings. They were there first and may view you as an intruder and resent your presence in their space.
- Quickly learn to say "please", "thank you", "I'm sorry", "I don't understand"
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes and you will. A sense of humor and the ability to laugh at yourself will go along way.

How to Cope with Culture Shock

by Arthur Gordon

As the world grows smaller, as ever-increasing numbers of people travel, work or study abroad, more attention is being focused on a kind of silent sickness that often afflicts the inexperienced traveler or the unwary expatriate. It's the loss of emotional equilibrium that a person suffers when he moves from a familiar environment where he has learned to function easily and successfully to one where he has not. The term used to describe this malady is "culture shock".

The effects of culture shock may range from mild uneasiness or temporary homesickness to acute unhappiness or even, in extreme cases, psychological panic, irritability, hyper-sensitivity and loss of perspective are common symptoms. Often the victim doesn't know what's the matter with him. He just knows that something's wrong -- and he feels miserable.

Most experts in inter-cultural communication agree that the basic cause of culture shock is the abrupt loss of the familiar, which in turn causes a sense of isolation and diminished self-importance. "Culture shock", says anthropologist Kalvero Oberg, "is brought on by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. these signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not."

According to Dr. Oberg, these cues, which may be words, gestures, facial expressions or customs, are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind on hundreds of these cues, even though we may not be consciously aware of them. "When an individual enters a strange culture," Dr. Oberg says, "all or most of these familiar cues are removed. he or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broad-minded or full of goodwill he may be, a series of props has been knocked out from under him."

Sometimes the transition to an alien culture has an immediate impact. A short term American visitor to

certain Eastern European countries may find himself dismayed or depressed by living conditions that seem perfectly normal and acceptable to the people of that country - toilets with no seats, for example, or even more primitive bathroom facilities. It may come as a real shock to a teenager from Texas to find that hamburgers are non-existent, or, that local hairdressers never heard of plastic curlers.

More insidious is what might be termed delayed culture shock. Often when a person takes up residence in a foreign country there's a period of excitement and exhilaration when everything seems new and challenging and fascinating. If one has friends of business connections one may be asked to dinner, taken sight-seeing, made much of -- at first. Also, in the beginning similarities between cultures are more apparent than differences. Almost everywhere people live in houses, go to work, relax on week-ends, do the shopping, eat three meals a day and so on. All this seems reassuring.

It's not until this honeymoon period ends that the newcomer begins to realize that there are endless subtle differences that leave him facing a host of perplexing problems. Many of these problems never bothered him at home, because they solved themselves almost automatically. Now, to his increased dismay, he finds that he has language troubles, housing troubles, money troubles, transportation troubles, food troubles, recreation troubles, perhaps even health troubles. All of these things drain away his reservoir of good-humor and equanimity. Having his laundry done may become a major struggle. Making a telephone call may be a small crisis. It may seem to him that people say yes when they mean no and promise to do things which they never do. Time may be regarded quite differently by the people among whom he finds himself. So may space, in some countries people like to stand very close together when they converse, in others this violates a deep-rooted sense of privacy.

Underlying all these difficulties is the uncomfortable feeling of not really belonging, of being an outsider. In changing cultures, the newcomer has inevitably changed his own status. At home he was "somebody", or at least his place in society was established and recognized, here he is relatively "nobody". As a foreigner, he is a member of a minority whose voice counts for little or nothing. He

may find that his homeland, so important to him, is regarded with suspicion or dismissed as unimportant. In short, as one observer put it, he finds himself in "circumstances of beleaguered self-esteem".

A mature, confident person may be able to shrug off these circumstances. But if the newcomer is insecure or sensitive or shy, they may seem over-whelming. Furthermore, as troubles pile up and he begins to look around for help, he may conclude that the natives of the country in which he finds himself are either incapable of understanding his plight or are indifferent to it. This in turn triggers the emotion that is one of the surest signs of culture shock: hostility to the new environment. The victim says to himself, "These people don't seem to know or care what I'm going through. Therefore they must be selfish, insensitive people. Therefore I don't like them."

Inevitably this reaction tends to increase the isolation of the unhappy visitor because people sense his antagonism and begin to avoid him. When this happens, he may seek out other disgruntled souls, usually expatriates like himself, and find melancholy relief in criticizing all aspects of the host country. These discussions almost never lead to any honest evaluation of the situation or awareness that the difficulty may lie in the attitude of the critics themselves. They are simply gripe-sessions in which the virtues of the home country are exaggerated almost as much as the alleged failing of the country being visited. As Dr. Oberg says, "When Americans or other foreigners get together to grouse about the host country and its people, you can be sure they are suffering from culture shock."

Sometimes the victim of culture shock may go to the other extreme, surrendering his own identity and trying to imitate all the customs and attitudes of the alien culture. Or he may try to solve the problem by withdrawing into himself, refusing to learn the native language, making no effort to find friends among the local people, taking no interest in their history, art, architecture, or any other aspect of their culture. While in this state of mind he may display a variety of unattractive symptoms. One is a tendency to over-react to minor frustrations or delays or inconveniences with irritation or anger out of all proportion to the cause. Another is to be unduly suspicious, to think that people are out to cheat or swindle him because he is a foreigner. Yet another is over-concern about cleanliness, an unwarranted conviction that water, food or dishes are unsanitary when in fact they are not. Often the person is

unaware of the extent to which he is displaying these symptoms.

He does know, however, that he is miserable and that the casual remedies recommended to him --- patience, hard work, mastery of the language and so on -- don't seem to do much good. Sometimes he will develop a marked degree of over-dependence on people from his own country who have passed through their own period of culture shock and are residing successfully and happily in the host country. If they in turn can display wisdom, patience and understanding of his symptoms, they often are able to shorten the span of his misery.

One reason the unhappy expatriate gravitates toward his own countrymen is that in their company he can at least feel sure of being understood. Underlying much of his confusion is the fact that even if he speaks the language of the country there remain endless opportunities for misunderstanding. All experts in communication emphasize the fact that language and voice are by no means our only form of communication, they are supported by hundreds of gestures and facial expressions that are easily misinterpreted.

Yet another stumbling block that compounds the problems of culture shock is the tendency of many people to think of members of other cultures in terms of stereotypes. The excitable Arabs. The amorous French. The touchy Italians. The lazy Latinos. The volatile Hungarians. The materialistic Americans. Some psychologists think that anxiety-prone people cling to stereotypes because it lessens the threat of the unknown by making the world predictable ... and what the victim of culture shock needs desperately is a familiar, predictable world.

Almost always, fortunately, symptoms of culture shock subside with the passage of time. The first sign of recovery may well be the reappearance of the victim's sense of humor; he begins to smile or even laugh at some of the things that irritated him as much at first. As familiarity with local language and customs increases, his self-confidence and self-esteem begin to return. He comes out of his shell and makes tentative overtures to the people around him -- and as soon as he starts being friendly, they stop seeming hostile. Slowly he progresses from a grudging acceptance of his surroundings to a genuine fondness for them and becomes proud of his growing ability to function in them. In the end, he wonders what he was so unhappy about in the beginning.

Is it possible to shorten the duration of culture shock or minimize its impact? The experts think so. Here are three suggestions they offer to anyone planning a stay in a foreign land.

- First, be aware that such a thing as culture shock exists, that it will probably affect you one way or another, but that it doesn't last forever.
- Next, try to remember, if and when you become thoroughly disenchanted with your surroundings, that the problem probably isn't so much in them as it is in you.
- Third, accept the idea that while it may be somewhat painful, culture shock can be a very valuable experience, a mind-stretching process that will leave you with broader perspectives, deeper insight into yourself and wider tolerance for other people.

If it happens to you, don't think that you're strange or abnormal. If you had a happy life back home, why shouldn't you miss some aspects of it or feel a sense of loss? You'd be abnormal if you didn't.

If it happens to you, don't sit around being negative and critical, this just prolong and deepens your gloom. Try to keep busy. Arrange something pleasant to look forward to. Set goals for yourself -- learning ten new foreign phrases each day, for example-- and stick to them.

If it happens to you, try not to be judgmental. Everyone has an ethnocentric tendency to think that his own culture is superior to all others. Actually, any culture is a good culture if it provides an environment that meets basic human needs.

If it happens to you, force yourself to look for the best, not the worst, in your situation. People who go around looking for trouble usually manage to find it. Train yourself to enjoy the diversity of people and cultures, not fear it or shy away from it.

Recently in Russia two members of an American tour-group at different times during the day bought a candy bar from a booth in a railroad station. Each was given his change in the form of chocolate wafers. One American, disturbed by this departure from the familiar, felt that he was being victimized and protested vehemently. The other, charmed by what seemed to him a quaint and delightful custom, regarded it as a novel and refreshing experience and

even bragged about it to his fellow tourists. The first American, it seems reasonable to say, was far more a prisoner of his own culture, than the second.

In sum, before he leaves home the visitor to a foreign land should make up his mind neither to resist the culture in which he finds himself nor surrender to it. What he needs to do is fight or grope or inch his way toward a new and flexible personality, a personality that retains its own cultural identity but recognizes the right of members of other cultures to retain theirs.

If that new personality can help him toward a better understanding of himself and of others, if it can enable him to communicate easily and convey warmth and understanding and goodwill across the culture barricades, then the pain of culture shock will have served its purpose, and the recovered victim will truly have the best of two worlds.

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"First Night" Questions with Your Host Family

Note: You can obtain a set of "First Night Questions" in any combination of languages through the interactive NAYEN page at <http://fnq.yeoresources.org/>

1. What do I call you? "Mom", "Dad", or given (first) name?
2. What am I expected to do daily other than:
 - a. Make my bed
 - b. Keep my room tidy
 - c. Clean the bathroom up after I use it?
3. What is the procedure about dirty clothes? Where do I keep them until wash day?
4. Should I wash my own clothes?
5. What is the procedure if I need to iron my clothes?
6. May I use the iron, washing machine, sewing machine, etc.?
7. Where can I keep my bathroom accessories?
8. When is the most convenient time for me to use the bathroom on weekday mornings?
9. When is the best time for me to shower or bathe?
10. When are mealtimes?
11. Do I have a regular job at mealtimes? Set, clear, wash, dry the dishes; the garbage?
12. May I help myself to food and drinks (non-alcoholic) at any time or must I ask first?
13. What areas are strictly private e.g. your study, bedroom, pantry, etc.?
14. May I put posters and pictures in my room? On the wall? How do you want things hung?
15. What are your feelings about my drinking alcohol if offered by you?
16. Do you object to my having wine at the table with you or an occasional beer?
17. What time must I get up weekday mornings?
18. What time should I get up weekends and holidays?
19. What time must I go to bed weekdays? Weekends?
20. What time must I be in on school nights if I go out? (Exceptions by special arrangement).
21. What time must I be in on weekends if I go out?

22. What dates are the birthdays of family members?
23. May I have friends stay overnight?
24. What is your rule on entertaining friends in my room with the door closed?
25. Can I invite friends over during the day? After school? When no one else is home?
26. What are the rules about phone calls? Local?, Long Distance?, Overseas? How and when may I pay for calls I make? How do you want me to keep track of my pay telephone calls?
27. What are the rules about access to the Internet and e-mail if there is a computer in the house? Are there time limits or time periods that use is permitted or prohibited?
28. May my friends call me? What times are not good?
29. What is the procedure about posting mail?
30. Do any of you have any pet dislikes? e.g.. chewing gum, music types, being late, wearing curlers or a hat at the table, being interrupted while reading, etc.
31. How do I get around? bus, bicycle, be driven, riding with friends, etc.
32. What about transportation to the mall or movies?
33. May I play the stereo or TV?
34. May I use kitchen appliances? Microwave? Dishwasher? Stove?
35. What are the rules about going to church?
36. May I smoke? Where? (Rotary discourages smoking in general and forbids smoking in bedrooms)
37. If I have something bugging me, how do you want me to handle it?
 - a. Write a note explaining it
 - b. Ask for a heart-to-heart discussion
 - c. Tell my counselor
 - d. Keep it to myself and live with it
38. How often can I go out each week?
39. Who pays for "event" expenses? me? you? Rotary? (movies, sports events, concerts/shows)
40. Can I use the shampoo and tooth paste or buy my own?
41. What do I do about school lunch? Buy- who pays- me, you, Rotary? Bring from home?
42. Are there any eating habits or foods I need to discuss? I don't like _____

In general, ask about those things you feel are most important the first night, and then go over the other questions the next couple of nights. Try to always keep an open and honest communication with your Host Family and Rotary.

Tough Questions

Many exchange students report being put "on the spot" by their peers, host parents, family members, and Rotarians during their year when they are asked questions about the United States' politics, environment, economy, society, etc.. They are often caught off guard and often feel that they disappoint their questioners and in turn show their lack of knowledge. We have listed here some tough questions that have been asked of prior students. We leave it to you to search out the answers before you leave.

It is your responsibility as a Rotary Youth Exchange student "ambassador" to be knowledgeable of what is "going on at home". Read your local newspapers and become familiar with national/international ones as well, watch a variety of news programs on TV, search deeper on topics that you find interesting, and don't limit your source of news to what you see on Twitter.

Your hosts and others you meet abroad have an honest interest in knowing and learning more about the USA. Few ask questions to criticize (although it may sound that way), and few ask questions to make you uncomfortable or to test you (although that also may be your impression, especially if you are not prepared). These questions are meant to start you thinking and learning about USA culture BEFORE you go. You might want to dig out your American History book to brush up on our own country, and as you discover more about your host country and culture, you just might learn more about your own. If you take the time you will:

- learn things about your culture and why you do some things that you never knew
- be better able to compare your new culture with your own and appreciate the similarities and difference
- find yourself able to converse easily with adults and peers you come in contact with abroad without having to worry about what you are saying or their drawing the conclusion that "here is another uninformed American".

The Questions:

1. What is your family life like? Is it true that your mother rules the house and that you never eat together as a family? What are your family values?
2. Why do Americans put their old people in nursing homes rather than take care of them at home like we do? Isn't this another example of the poor value Americans put on families?
3. Are Americans really happy? All we see on TV and in your movies is divorce, husbands and wives cheating on each other, killing and crime, drugs, cults. Is it really not safe to walk downtown at night? Is that why you built all those shopping malls?
4. Why do the different races in America all distrust and hate one another? Why do the white people treat the blacks so badly? Why do you keep the Native Americans on reservations in such poverty?
5. We have a lot of American exchange students and most of them are not well informed. Some can't even tell us where they live in relation to cities that we have visited in the US. Why is that?
6. Your election has recently taken place (or is coming up). Tell us a little about each of the candidates.
7. Did you read about our country before you came? Tell me some of the things you learned about our government and how we handle health care. What are some things you'd like to know more about?
8. We are going to take you to our capital next weekend. Do you know anything about it?
9. This summer, my wife and I are going to visit the US. What should we see and do? How far is it to Key West from Orlando? From Atlanta to Miami? Is it easy to get there? Can we go by train or should we drive? Will we be able to visit your legislature, see your governor? What is his name?
10. What's your school like? You've been here a few months now, compare your school with ours. Which one do you like better? We have been told that our schools are more difficult because we give our students more responsibility to learn. You have to attend but you don't have any national exam to get into university like we do.

11. Why don't you have a national health care program like we do? We read about your government having arguments about health care reform but it seems like they are arguing over political issues rather than about taking care of Americans. Can you help us understand that?
12. The USA is known as the richest nation in history. Why do you have such poverty in the midst of plenty? US scientists are among the best in the world and yet you have all these problems? Why?
13. You Americans seem to waste a lot of energy and we have to pay more for gas and oil because you waste it. You all drive big cars, have lots of appliances, live in your own homes, and you don't seem to care about the rest of us on a day-to-day basis. How would you change things to make Americans more energy conscious?
14. What is the Peace Corps? What do they do nowadays? Are they really just young people trained to be government agents and spies?
15. Many of my friends say that the human rights position you take with other countries is hypocritical. It seems that way when I look at how you discriminate against minorities. Do you think your country is being fair and just?
16. And, of course, anything and everything about Iraq, Afghanistan, the War on Terrorism, North Korea, the Middle East, etc., etc., etc.

Responding:

There are many more questions that may be asked. In addition to being knowledgeable, you also need to consider how best to respond when asked. The following are a few recommendations to help you avoid confrontation and argument. Remember, no one ever really wins an argument. Avoid getting drawn into one.

Start out your response with "I'm not sure I understand your question, but I think.....", or say "yes, but I think...". You could also say "you may be right, but another way to look at it is.....".

Avoid these discussions when you are in a hurry. You need time to think out your responses.

Use examples whenever you can as they help to illustrate a point and usually are more easily understood, especially when there is a language barrier

Remind them that what they see and hear on TV, radio and in the newspapers may be a distortion of American life just as what we see may be a distortion of their country, and that both of you need to learn from each other what the truth is from your respective perceptions.

Give your questioners time to explain themselves and try to have an open discussion. Remember that each of your cultures and backgrounds are DIFFERENT and neither is right or wrong, black or white. Chances are you can reach a mutual understanding.

It's OK

It's okay to be afraid
of things we don't understand

It's okay to feel anxious
when things aren't working our way.

It's okay to feel lonely.....
even when you're with other people

It's okay to feel unfulfilled
because you know something is missing
(even if you're not sure what it is)

It's okay to think and worry and cry.

It's okay to do
whatever you have to do, but

Just remember too....

That eventually you're going to
adjust to the changes life brings your way.
and you'll realize that,

It's okay to get to love again and laugh again,

It's okay to get to the point where
the life you live is full and satisfying and good to you...

And it will be that way
because you made it that way.

It's Time to Go Home

Traci Fordham, M.A.

Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Context

You're sitting in "your" room. In any case, it's the room that you've come to know as your own. You have, after several months, adjusted to your host culture. You probably feel as if you have finally become a member of this new culture. You have made friends, gone to school, become a member of a family. Many people don't even believe that you are American.



Remember how you felt when you first arrived in this new place? You knew that you would experience "culture shock," but you had no idea just how intense those feelings would be. For the first part of your year you had moments where you wanted nothing but to go home. But you stuck it out. You don't know when it happened, but one day you realized that you had made it. You woke up from a dream in another language. You were mistaken for a "native" in a restaurant. You forgot certain things about the United States. You changed.

Now it's almost time to go home. Once again, you are on a roller coaster of emotions. You are excited to see your American family and friends again, but at the same time you are filled with feelings of anxiety and fear. You are starting to experience the initial phase of "re-entry shock."

What to Expect

Because no two people are exactly alike, it's hard to predict exactly what you will go through when you return home. It's important, however, to anticipate and to prepare yourself for the possibilities. If you feel that you have adjusted well to your host culture, if you feel that, in many ways, you have "become" French, or Belgian, or German, or Mexican, etc., you will most likely have a more challenging time coming home. It is ironic that the more "successful" you have been as an exchange student, the more difficult it will be for you to adjust to being American again. Just as you survived and indeed excelled as an exchange student, so too will you re-adjust to being back home.

This isn't Home!

You have probably constructed all kinds of mental pictures about what coming home will be like. You know that you have changed. Be prepared for things at home to have changed as well. Your siblings have grown, your friends have moved on, your parents may have renovated the house. The home that you return to can never really measure up to the "home" that has existed in a dream-like quality in your head for all of these months.

A valuable aspect of living in another culture



is that it provides you with another perspective of the United States. What you have learned about the U.S. while you have lived abroad may, in fact, be negative. You may find, especially for the first month or so back home, that nothing is as you remembered and nothing is as wonderful as it was in your host country. You may find that most Americans are too consumer-oriented, too fast-paced, too overtly friendly, insincere, or too whatever. You may feel as if you just want to withdraw and day dream about your host country. Don't.

Know that, in time, you will readjust. Try not to constantly complain to your friends and family. Remind yourself how you felt the first month or so of your exchange. Reread your journal. It may help keep your perspective.

You're a Different Person

Be prepared. Your parents may not recognize you at the airport. You may have put on weight, changed your hairstyle. You have physically matured. You have adopted the fashions of your host culture. For the past few months, you probably didn't want to "look" like an American. And now you don't. You may want to send a current photo of yourself to your family. That way how you look when you come home won't be a tremendous shock for them!



You have changed inside as well. You are not the same person you were before you left. You have experienced many things. You have learned so much about others and about yourself. Your insights have been challenged and broadened. You will now see the world from another perspective, and you won't even realize how much your insights and values have changed until you come home. It is important that you understand that those back home have not experienced what you have. Your friends and family will not necessarily appreciate

being told that they have silly habits, or that what they eat is disgusting, or that you disapprove of how they do or see things. You must remember to be diplomatic and not negative.

It is true that sometimes you will feel isolated and misunderstood. Your friends and family will tire of hearing about your year abroad. They will become exasperated every time you bring up your host country. They may tune you out. Try not to wallow in self-pity. Don't withdraw. Keep the lines of communication open with your family and friends. They can't understand what you're feeling if you don't tell them. Keep in touch with your friends and family in your host country. Try to make contacts with other exchange students. They will be valuable resources and provide support for you.

Readjusting Socially

When you first arrived in your host culture, you probably stood out. Everyone recognized you as American. You dressed funny, your accent was strange, or you could hardly speak the language at all. Sometimes you may have felt like a freak. It took some time, but you were finally accepted by your peers in your host culture.

Friends back home have kept you informed about what's going on back home. There is no way that you could possibly know everything, and you will find that you are a bit behind on the social scene back home.

Styles will have changed, different music will be on the radio, slang expressions will be different, new people will be popular. Once again, you may find yourself feeling like an outsider. Some people will think that



you're really cool, while others may make fun of you. In fact, you may find that you don't have a lot in common with the people who were your best friends before you left. Prepare yourself for this; readjusting to social life can be a difficult process for you. Realize that, in some ways, you can reinvent yourself. You have developed a different personality as a result of your year abroad. Embrace the new "you." You have gained valuable insight and maturity--others will surely come to appreciate this about you, especially if you appreciate it about yourself.

Is That English You're Speaking?

If you have been immersed in a language other than English, you may have difficulty expressing yourself appropriately, at least for the first few weeks back home. You will have forgotten words, expressions, slang. You may "go blank" when trying to communicate. It may be frustrating sometimes. Sometimes, though, it will be amusing to you and to your loved ones. Utilize the process of re-learning English as a way to re-establish relationships. This way, others will feel as if they are contributing to your successful readjustment.

If you have lived in a country where English is spoken, you have most likely developed an accent that is unique to that country. You have learned different terms, different slang, new expressions. Some people back home may find your new way of speaking to be interesting and unique. Others may think that you're "faking it" or that you have a superior attitude. Don't be discouraged. Others will adjust to your new language mannerisms, and you will soon fall back into an American accent. Remember, all of these adjustment processes require time and patience.

It's important to note that you have developed different non-verbal habits as well. How closely (or not) you stand to someone, the gestures that you use while

speaking, how you move your eyes, whether-or-not you make eye contact and with whom, how frequently you touch others, all of these patterns of non-verbal communication may be different for you now. Americans generally maintain a greater spatial distance when interacting than do Western Europeans and South Americans, for instance. Females in Japan do not maintain eye contact with males in the same ways as American females do. You may find that your patterns of non-verbal communication send different "messages" back home. Be aware of this. You will soon re-adjust your movements to your surroundings.

What to Do

Expect the Unexpected

As soon as you realize that coming home will be different from what you had imagined, you will have made an important step. Most likely, by now, you are an expert on change. You have experienced many ups and downs and felt like you were on a roller coaster. You have adapted to many kinds of changes and you have succeeded. Realize that change is inevitable and can ultimately be beneficial to you and to your life. See change as a teacher, as yet another adventure for you to experience.



Your Health Matters

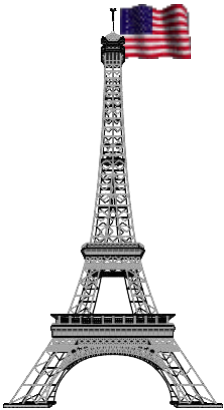
For the first two weeks back home, you will be exhausted, both physically and emotionally. It may be tempting for you to jump into a busy schedule of parties, get-togethers and reunions. Try to "take it slow" for awhile to give yourself time to readjust. You may also feel depressed and anxious from time to time. These feelings are inevitable results of re-entry. They are also temporary.

In time you will feel more comfortable with and relaxed in your surroundings.

Be Open in Your Communication

Some of the frustrations that you will feel as a result of your re-entry can be remedied with thoughtful and open communication. You will occasionally feel out-of-place and misunderstood by your friends and family. Discussing how you feel in a loving way will better ensure that you receive the support you need. Being constantly critical and negative will only serve to further alienate you from your loved ones.

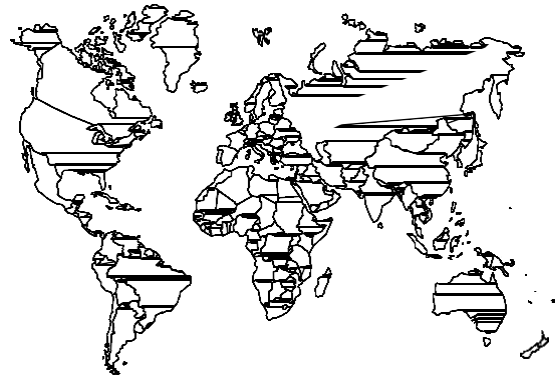
Create a Balance



You now have a dual identity, a bi-nationality. You are American, but in very real ways, you are also French, German, Austrian, Mexican, etc. Realize how wonderful that is. You will never be "just" American again.

You have been exposed to a whole new world of being and seeing.

YOUR NEW WORLD



Take a mental inventory of those things about being American that are important to you and combine them with those things that you value about your "new" cultural identity. Be proud of who you are. The experiences that you have had will make you a more well-rounded person and a more sensitive member of our global community. **Welcome home.**

So You Think You're Home Again

Some Thoughts for Exchange Students Returning "Home"

By Dennis White, Ph.D.

Initial Culture Shock

Remember what it was like those first few weeks and months going abroad? It was new, exciting, often confusing, and always changing. And while your whole year may have been exciting, it wasn't always pleasant. You probably became irritated with, and even hostile to, your host culture when the deeper differences between your culture and their culture became apparent. As you began to develop real language skills, and you better understood fundamentally different cultural values, you began the slow process of adapting. Eventually, maybe only at the end of your stay, you began to realize how you could really fit in – adapting fairly well to your adopted culture, while maintaining your own native cultural identity. You became bicultural. And then, just when it was getting good, the year was over and you had to go “home”.

Most people who live abroad for an extended time go through similar successive stages of culture shock. These stages are generally recognized as being:

1. Initial Excitement or Euphoria
2. Irritability and Hostility
3. Slow and Gradual Adaptation
4. Eventual Adjustment to Biculturalism

If your experience was anything like this, you learned that culture shock is not just adjusting to jet lag and different food. It is an on-going process of developing increased cultural competence, by being “shocked” by differences, adjusting to them, learning new skills and eventually adapting. And when you prepared for going abroad, you had some expectation that you would experience culture shock. It is not possible (or even desirable) to avoid culture shock, but at least anticipating it made it somewhat easier –and kept you from thinking it was all your fault, or all the new culture's fault.

Reverse Culture Shock

As you return home, you are likely to experience some very similar, but possibly surprising reactions that are part of what is known as reverse culture shock, or re-entry shock. In the first few weeks back, many people feel the effects of jet lag, general exhaustion from lots of changes, fatigue from an overdose of “welcome home” parties and trying to do and see everything and everyone at once. This flurry of activity can cause a significant degree of disorientation, making it difficult to tell exactly what thoughts and feelings you are having.

But mixed in with all of this are two distinct and often conflicting reactions. One is the same excitement stage as in initial culture shock. It may be very exciting to be back, to see family and friends, to tell about your adventures and to do things you have missed for a year. If this reaction occurs, it fairly quickly wears off, and is replaced by the second stage of culture shock - irritability and hostility. This stage often comes much more quickly than in initial culture shock, and can be much more severe and disturbing. It also may be the first reaction you have to coming home, with no excitement stage at all.

There are several reasons that you may not feel excitement at all, or for very long. Remember, when you went abroad initially:

1. You wanted to go.
2. You expected and looked forward to learning about different things.
3. You were warned to expect culture shock.
4. Though you may have been sad to leave family and friends, you knew it would not be forever –you knew you were coming back.

Now that you are returning at the end of your exchange year:

1. You may not want to come home.
2. You may expect things to be just like they were when you left (or at least that things will be very familiar)
3. You may not have been sufficiently warned about reverse culture shock (or you didn't think it would happen to you).
4. You may be very sad to leave friends and "family" in your host culture because you know there is a possibility that you may never see them again.

If reverse culture shock is so unpleasant, why not try to avoid it? Because it is impossible if your exchange year was successful. In fact, the extent to which you immersed yourself in your host culture, and truly adapted, is probably the best indicator of how much reverse culture shock you will experience. People who don't have much trouble re-adapting to their native culture probably didn't get very involved in their host culture. They didn't change much, so they don't have to readjust much.

The Extent of Change

If your exchange year was a success, you have changed in ways that you probably cannot describe, or completely understand yet. You have become a skilled world traveler. You are a skilled bicultural person. You can actually get along quite well, not just be a tourist, in another culture. You have learned to think of things differently by looking at the world from someone else's point of view long enough to really understand it. In a sense, you have become a citizen of the world, so it may be more than a little confusing to think of where "home" is.

Some of these things will probably happen to you. You will find yourself thinking or dreaming in your new language. You will try to explain something to someone back home and not be able to give a precise translation of what you are talking about. You will talk to your parents about one of your host parents, calling the host parent "mom" or "dad". You will think your hometown is very small, or that your friends think in "small" ways.

So don't be too surprised if your family and friends seem a bit uncomfortable with you. They probably are, because you aren't the same person who left them a year ago. Don't underestimate how much you have changed and how strange you may seem to those who knew you before. You may be very proud of your independence, self-confidence and internationalism. But they may see you as self-absorbed, critical of everything and not interested in fitting in.

Remember that those around you may have changed as well, if not in the same ways you have. If you are expecting things to be the same, you will have more of a shock than if you are looking for changes. Your friends have had a year of growing and maturing, and your family situation may have changed (deaths, divorces, moves, job changes). You missed some important events in their lives, just as they missed some important ones in yours. Even those things that haven't really changed may seem quite different, because you see them differently. Though you may love your native country more than ever, you are also much more likely to be critical of it, and question common cultural practices that you took for granted before you left.

Ways To Deal with Reverse Culture Shock

The single best thing you can do is to anticipate and accept that you will experience some degree of reverse culture shock. The worst thing you can do is to deny it, or try to avoid it. People often try to deny it because they think there might be something wrong with them if they admit it. It is, in fact, very normal, and you will have more problems than necessary if you try to deny it.

More than anticipating and accepting reverse culture shock, you can actually view it as a positive, if sometimes painful, growth experience. It is, and can be, the completion of the circle of change in an intercultural experience. I like to think of it as the third year of your exchange. The first was the year preparing to go abroad. The second was the actual exchange. The third is the year when you can more completely appreciate the changes you have made, the readjustment to your native culture, and the fact that you will be bicultural for the rest of your life. In subsequent years you will have times when you re-experience reverse culture shock, and when you feel like you just got home again; but it will never be as shocking an experience as that first year back.

You can also help yourself by talking about your feelings as often as you can. You may wear out lots of initially sympathetic ears doing this. You may notice that you seem to have an almost incessant need to talk about your experiences. Your friends, especially, may get impatient with you, so you may need to learn to be selective with whom you share your experiences. There is often a conflicting urge to keep it all to yourself,

because you think people won't understand or don't care, or because you think that talking about it in the past tense confirms that it is over - and you don't want to accept that. (Many students don't completely unpack for months, for the same reason - they don't want to admit that it is over.) Of course, that's the issue - it's over and it isn't. The experience is over, but not the memories and the impact on your life.

Sometimes it's best to find other recently returned students, or even people who have been back for years. You can tell how this feeling lingers when exchange students, Peace Corps Volunteers or missionaries start talking about their experiences, even if many years ago. They get excited, they can't stop talking, and they get a glassy, far-off look on their faces. And don't underestimate your parents as listeners. Sometimes they are the only ones who will politely listen as you tell a story for the hundredth time. But however you do it, talk. It is in this way that you can help others understand you, and more importantly, learn to clarify your thoughts and feelings and better understand yourself.

You can also make things easier for yourself by trying not to make too many big decisions, unless you absolutely have to. Don't be impatient with yourself if you have trouble making decisions. Your goals in life may have changed. Because you have a new perspective, some of the plans you made a year or more ago may not seem as relevant now. Remind yourself, your family and friends that you are going through a period of adjustment; and it may take time for you to sort things out.

Finally, don't be too concerned if the course of your reverse culture shock doesn't seem to follow the pattern described here. Each of your experiences abroad was unique, and so will be your re-entry. While your year abroad was probably of great value to you, you may not have had the same emotional attachment to people that other students describe. So you may not have as much trouble letting go of those attachments and getting on in life with new and renewed friends. Going on to college or university is also quite different than returning to high school, and some of the issues are different for these two situations.

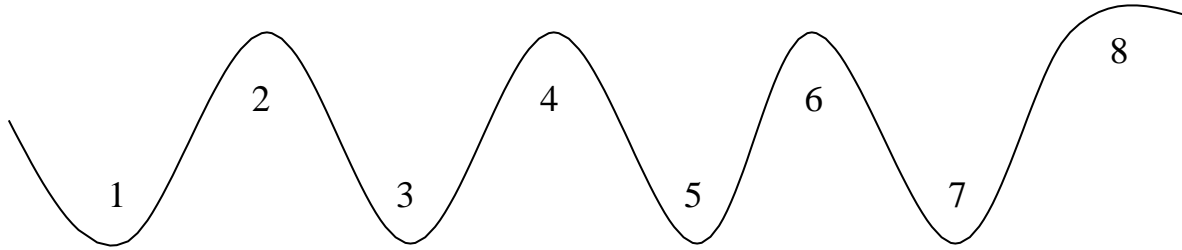
Feeling "At Home"

Reverse culture shock subsides, though it never disappears. Eventually you will come to terms with yourself and your "new" native culture, incorporating the fact that you are now a member of another culture as well. You can learn to be at peace with true biculturalism. This is the ability to move from cultural practice to cultural practice, with skill, as the situation calls for it. And while you may somewhat sadly come to accept that you can never truly come "home" again, you can learn to feel "at home" in the world at large.

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The Exchange Cycle



1. Application Anxiety

2. Selection/Arrival Fascination

*Elation
Expectation*

3. Initial Culture Shock: 1-6 Months

*Novelty wears off
Characteristics:
Sleeping Habits
Disorientation
Language difficulties
Fatigue (Mental/Physical)
Eating*

4. Surface Adjustments

*After initial "down"
Settle in:
Language improves
Navigate culture
Friends
Social Life*

5. Mental Isolation

*Frustration increases
New sense of isolation
Boredom
Lack of motivation
Unresolved problems
Language problems*

6. Integration/Acceptance

*Begin to examine society
Accept surroundings/self*

7. Return Anxiety

*Preparation for departure
Realize changes
Desire to stay
Results:*

*Confusion/Pain
Breaking of bonds
No promise of renewal in future*

8. Shock/Reintegration

*Contrast of old and new
Family/friends
Difficulty to accept change
Not the center of attention
Others not interested in experience details
Reorientation*

All exchange students experience phases of elation, anxiety, and depression. One or more of these phases will be experienced near the time of application processing. Various phases will then continue even after the student returns home. It is important that this be anticipated, and calmly accepted and dealt with.

The best method to resolve each occurrence is to keep busy and remember that all the exchange students before you, with you, and who follow you, will experience similar circumstances.

Parents and host families need to know that exchange students will experience these phases and should not be alarmed. They should be ready to help the student work their way out of the down cycles.

The time necessary to work through each phase is not predictable and will depend on the student and the circumstances.

Desiderata

Go placidly amid the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly and listen to others. Even the dull and ignorant; they, too, have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons. They are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself to others, you may become vain and bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Keep interested in your own career, however humble. It is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is. Many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love, for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe. No less than the trees and the stars, you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul. With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be careful. Strive to be happy.

- Author Unknown

Rotary Support System

RESOURCE	WHEN NEEDED	CONTACT FREQUENCY	COMMENTS
Host Family	Every day	Daily	Your first point of contact with most simple needs. For problems you will need to use your Host Club YEO in conjunction with your host family.
Host Club YEO	Problems, Successes, Social Occasions, Club Meetings	Bi-Weekly / Monthly	This is your main Rotary contact for your day-to-day problems and well being.
Host District Counselor	Most problems, travel permission, routine reporting	Monthly Minimum	If reports are required, make sure you complete them.
Host District Chair	Serious Problems or Routine Reporting		
Sponsor District Counselor	Serious Problems and Routine Reporting	Monthly / Bi-Monthly	Will review your Quarterly Reports, but don't wait for that if there's something important to talk about.
Sponsor District Chair	Serious Problems	As needed	
Rotary Youth Exchange Country Coordinator	Serious Problems and Routine Reporting	As needed and requested	Will also review your Quarterly Reports. Your CC and Sponsor District Counselor/Chair are primary resources for you.
ROTEX	Emotional and YE Support	As often as needed but monthly at a minimum	Rotex will not be able to help you with technical Rotary Youth Exchange problems. They are for your emotional support and mentoring only.
Sponsor Club YEO	Preparation and then report about your experience	Monthly	You should write to your club regularly telling of your experiences.
Parents	Routine, non-Rotary Youth Exchange problems, health emergencies	REGULARLY	LIMIT E-MAIL, ONLINE AND PHONE CONTACT. Don't rely on parents to solve your problems for you. Use the resources above.

Outbound Student Calendar

MONTH	PHASE	WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING	REMINDERS
JULY- AUGUST	TRAVEL & HONEYMOON	Get busy. Remember that these first few weeks are your chance to make life-long friends. It is not the time to be shy. Take it all in and get to know your surroundings. Meet your Rotary Club members. Find your routine. Work on your language skills. Identify your cultural mentor.	Watch the phonecalls and e-mail
SEPTEMBER	END OF HONEYMOON /START OF ADAPTATION	Start with good habits. Write in your journal every night. Mark on a calendar what you did every day. Answer the phone from time to time. Get to know your host parents. Learning the language is your priority. Watch for homesickness. Use your support system. Keep busy. Cookan “American meal” for your host family.	Write home
OCTOBER	ADAPTATION	Homesick? Don’t call home! Talk to your Rotary or Rotex support people. Don’t dump it on your parents. Get out of that funk. Break the routine a little every day to keep things fresh. Avoid spending long amounts of time by yourself. Having trouble with the language? Find someone to talk to; a host sibling, a “cultural mentor”, or even your Rotary Counselor. Give and take. Make a trade; host language for English.	First Quarterly Report will be due –you’ll get an e-mailnotification.
NOVEMBER	ADAPTATION	Have you made many friends yet? If not, get out there and mingle. Remember, you want to make as many people miss you as you can when you leave. There is nothing better to make you stop thinking about yourself than to help someone else. If you are feeling a little lost, find someone in need and give him/her a hand. You will get it back 10X. You might hit a language plateau here. Keep working the language. Try something new. Speak at your Rotary Club. If you move host families, you might have another challenge. Make the best of it. Teach them about Thanksgiving.	Send Holiday gifts home early - By November 15 th
DECEMBER	ADAPATION/ ASSIMILATION TRANSITION – HOLIDAY BLUES	Time to stay focused. You need to get through the period from the end of November until January 1 st strong. Don’t gethung up with missing the holidays at home. Keep Rotex in mind here. They will help. The more you contact “home” though, the worse it will be. Tell your host family how you celebrate the holidays.	Keep phone calls and e-mails “home”down.
JANUARY	ADAPTATION/ ASSIMILATION	Now for the good stuff. You should feel good speaking the language and you should have made some friends. Make the most of it. From now on, you are on a roll. Hey! Where’s my report!	Second QuarterlyReport will be due.
FEBRUARY	ADAPTATION/ ASSIMILATION	You should be busy now. Friends, school (for most of you) and lots of activities. Don’t forget host families (including the first one).	<u>Make your flight reservations home.</u> Don’t rush home, but don’t stay too long. Check the rules on your return date.
MARCH	ASSIMILATION	Are you giving as well as taking? Don’t just be doing your own thing. You speak the language and you know some people. You fit in. Use it to help other people. Speak to little kids in schools, volunteer in your community, teach someone English, help with your Rotary Club’s projects. Thisis the part of the roller coaster ride when you get to let go of that safety bar, put your hands in the air and scream as loud as you can. This is “The Monster Hill” of your exchange.	Call your host counselor and check in with him/her

APRIL	ASSIMILATION	Are your parents visiting? Plan it out for them. Remember, you are the one who is in charge of their having a good experience. Let them into “your world”. Introduce them to your host family, your host Rotary Club, your friends and your town. Let them see you as the mature tour guide, master of the language. They aren’t coming? No problem - you have a lot going on. Dig in and make the most of it because this time is fleeting! Hey, don’t you owe someone a report?!!	Third Quarterly Report will be due.
MAY	ASSIMILATION & RE-ENTRY ANXIETY	This should be as good as it gets; you love your host country and you are starting to get that dreaded re-entry anxiety. It has to happen, you know that. Don’t waste one second wishing it won’t. Spend as much time as you can with friends, host families and the people you will miss most. You can spend time with Americans and other exchange students when you get home so spend what little time you have with people who you won’t see for a while.	Make time for your host families!
JUNE	ASSIMILATION & RE-ENTRY ANXIETY	Get ready to leave. Make sure that you are not putting off spending time with people. If you want to buy things to take with you, start early. Don’t go rushing around the night before you leave. You will be cheating your friends and family out of your time. Leave gracefully. Don’t leave a mess. Pay your obligations. Return what you’ve borrowed. Say “thank you” as many times as you can.	Read “So You Think You’re Home Now”
JULY	RE-ENTRY & REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK	Pack early. Get rid of things that are just clutter. Make sure you have your passport, tickets and that your bank account is closed (if you had one). Exchange money. Don’t come home with a lot of foreign money you might not need for a while. Have some local currency with you in case you need it at the airport. Have some US\$ with you for when you land in the US. Enough to get a meal or two. Remember, the success of an exchange is measured in the number of tears when you leave; yours and theirs. Smile when you get back to the US. Thank your parents for your year. Spend some time with them before you go running around finding your friends. Spend at least two days home before connecting with your friends.	START WORKING ON YOUR ROTARY WELCOME HOME EVENT SPEECH.
AUGUST	REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK	Get into your new life here. Listen to what you are saying. Are you being critical about “home”? Are you telling everyone you can find about your year or are you keeping it to yourself? Have you referred to your friends as “Those stupid kids?” or “Those stupid Americans” at all? Are you keeping busy or are you moping around the house missing “home”? Was it really easy for you to come back? Do you not miss your host country? Think about why that is so. Get ready for school to start. Make little steps each day to get back into this culture. Talk to Rotex and to your District and Club Counselors about what you did and what you are doing now. Remember that the deeper you were able to assimilate into your host culture, the longer it will take you to find that “bi-cultural balance” between your host country “self” and your American “self”. This is the start of your third year as an exchange student.	Contact your Sponsoring Club and offer to do a program on your exchange. Let your District Counselor know what your plans are for the following year. Help us continue to build the program!

Gift Suggestions

- Florida or Georgia-related pins and trinkets
- Sports logo items
- US Stamps, stamp pins
- Balloons, specialty types (not inflated!)
- T-shirts, all kinds
- Notepaper with American art scenes, etc.
- Picture post cards (ideal for your thank-you notes)
- Craft show items
- American flags, buttons, pins
- Jacket patches – USA, regional, local
- Books or magazines
- Christmas stockings and ornaments
- Calendars with American scenes
- Commemorative spoons, plates, etc.
- Small children's toys
- Bumper stickers
- Posters
- Coins (perhaps with red, white, & blue ribbons)
- Advertising and commercial freebies (from local industry, chamber of commerce)
- Items from locally focused industries
- Items from local tourist locations
- Playing cards with American scenes

And especially ...

- Banners from your sponsoring Rotary Club

Conversion Tables

Height		
Feet	Inches	Cm
5	0	152
5	1	155
5	2	157
5	3	160
5	4	163
5	5	165
5	6	168
5	7	170
5	8	173
5	9	175
5	10	178
5	11	180
6	0	183
6	1	185
6	2	188
6	3	191
6	4	193
6	5	196
6	6	198

Weight	
Pounds	Kgs
100	45
105	48
110	50
115	52
120	55
125	57
130	59
135	61
140	64
145	66
150	68
155	70
160	73
165	75
170	77
175	80
180	82
185	84
190	86
195	89
200	91
205	93
210	95
215	98
220	100
225	102
230	105
235	107
240	109

Temperature	
°F.	°C.
15	-9
20	-7
25	-4
30	-1
32	0
35	2
40	4
45	7
50	10
55	13
60	16
65	18
70	21
75	24
80	27
85	29
90	32
95	35
98.6	37
100	38

Distance	
Miles	Kms
0.6	1
2	3
3	5
6	10
9	15
12	20
19	30
25	40
31	50
47	75
62	100
93	150
124	200
155	250
186	300
311	500
621	1000

Youth Exchange Glossary

Inbound - A student sent overseas by the local sponsor district.

Outbound - A foreign student hosted in the local area. When you travel to your destination country, hosts there will consider you an “inbound” student.

Rebound – A former outbound student who has completed his/her year overseas

ROTEX – A Rotary Alumni organization of former Rotary Youth Exchange students. In some districts, Rotex organizes activities for inbound students, provides mentoring services, assists with interviews and orientations, and more.

Sponsor – Term applied to the district or Rotary club that endorses the application of an outbound candidate.

Host – Term applied to the district, Rotary club, or family that accepts an inbound student.

Club – The local Rotary entity, made up of business and community leaders, that meets each week and gets involved in community and international service projects. There are more than 32,000 Rotary Clubs in the world, and over 400 in Florida and Georgia.

District – A geographic collection of Rotary clubs. The number of clubs in a district will generally range from 40 to 70. The district is headed by a District Governor, who will appoint many committees, including a Rotary Youth Exchange committee. It is that committee that manages the Rotary Youth Exchange program in their area, interviewing candidates and offering outbound opportunities for local students, identifying Rotary clubs and host families to welcome inbound students, arranging activities for both, etc.

Multi-District – In many parts of the world, groups of districts have combined their Rotary Youth Exchange efforts into multi-district organizations. Rotary Youth Exchange is one such entity, managing all long-term exchanges for its member districts.

Youth Exchange Officer (YEO) – A Rotarian designated by a club to manage the club’s Rotary Youth Exchange program. This term is also sometimes used for the district Youth Exchange chairperson as well.

Counselor – A Rotarian designated by a club (or district) to act as the liaison for an exchange student. At the club level, the Counselor is sometimes also the YEO. A Counselor may not simultaneously be a host parent; if the Counselor decides to host a student, an alternate Counselor must be appointed.

District Governor – A Rotarian elected by all the clubs in the district to serve a one-year term as the district’s leader. The term coincides with the Rotary year of July 1 through June 30.

District Conference – An annual event which brings together Rotarians from every club in the district, for education and entertainment.

Rotary International Convention – An annual event put on by Rotary International, at which tens of thousands of Rotarians will gather at locations that change year to year.

Passport – A document issued by the government of the country of which you are a citizen, identifying you as a citizen of that country and allowing you to travel to other countries.

Visa – A document or an endorsement in a passport issued by the government of a country you wish to visit, authorizing you to enter and remain there for a specified purpose and for a specified period.

Guarantee Form – A document signed and endorsed by a Rotary exchange student, his/her parents, the host Rotary Club, and the school the student will attend. This document is submitted with your visa application to demonstrate to the destination country that you are properly authorized to obtain a student visa.

Are You Really Ready To Go?

- _____ 1. Do you have your passport and visa?
- _____ 2. Do you have your travel plans completed?
- _____ 3. Have you corresponded with your first host family and your host Rotary club? Have you provided them with your departure and arrival information?
- _____ 4. What language preparations have you made? Do you have a dictionary for your new language? Can you carry on basic conversations in your new language? Can you pronounce your host family's name, ask for directions or assistance, etc.?
- _____ 5. Do you have a set of photos or a PowerPoint presentation, along with a photo album with 20-30 good pictures of you, your family, your home, your school, your town, and interesting places you have visited? Have you rehearsed for making a presentation?
- _____ 6. Have you made arrangements with your parents for transferring money to you, and have you established a budget? Have you become familiar with the monetary system and US \$ exchange rate for your country?
- _____ 7. Have you thought about how you will handle the inevitable homesickness and loneliness that you will experience?
- _____ 8. Have you selected appropriate gifts for your host families? Do you have some small tokens of appreciation to give those who invite you to their homes or to other events? Do you have thank-you notes or postcards to say "Thank You"?
- _____ 9. Do you have your Rotary Youth Exchange business cards and your Rotary Blazer?
- _____ 10. Do you have several Club Banners from your Sponsor Rotary club to present to the Rotary clubs you visit?
- _____ 11. Have you done your "homework" on your host country, and have you become familiar with its culture, history, politics, geography, and where it is located?
- _____ 12. Have you prepared yourself to ask the most important questions of your new host family upon your arrival in their home?

If your answers to these questions are "yes" ---- you are ready to go!