

# AO Pre-Departure Orientation



Association for Teen-Age  
Diplomats

**Late May or Early June, Sunday**

## **Students:**

1:00-1:20	Students Arrive, Welcome
1:20-1:45	Introductions - Getting Acquainted
1:45-2:15	Realistic Expectations
2:15-2:45	Culture
2:45-3:00	Break
3:00-3:30	Family Living
3:30-3:50	Learning Potential
3:50-4:45	Your Safety and Well-Being
4:45-5:00	Wrap Up, Evaluation

## **Parents:**

3:00-3:15	Parents Arrive
3:15-5:00	Parents Informational Session
5:00	Parents and Students Leave
5:00-5:15	Staff Evaluation
5:15	Staff Leave

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS**

Put key phrases on the wall - flip charts and magic markers will be provided. Leave critical pages on the wall all day. Copies of all handout materials for the students and parents will be provided to you. Use a "Parking Lot" - a sheet from the flip chart with thoughts, concerns, and questions of AOs that will be covered later in the orientation, so nothing gets lost. Some time near the end of the day go over the "Parking Lot" to ensure all has been covered to the students' satisfaction.

The lesson plans are only guides for what to cover. If you have a better plan to present the ideas and concepts, please use it. We only ask that you hit the high points in the lesson plan.

## WELCOME

PURPOSE: To introduce the staff and review the agenda and expectations for the day.

1. Introduce staff, Returnees, and Internationals.
2. Thank AOs for attending. Reinforce that it will be a long afternoon, but it is important to enhance the success of the experience.
3. Review the day's agenda. Mention that Returnees and current International Students will provide specific information about the country they will be going to, travel, and other details they are anxious to hear about.
4. Review any rules or expectations for the day, the facilities. Let everyone know location of restrooms.
5. Assure everyone has a nametag.
6. Make sure country and program length is correct for all students.
7. Distribute ATAD pins and ID cards. Describe the meaning of the pin:

*Prominent on the pin is a high silk hat, as once worn on all special occasions by diplomats around the world. To this was added a jaunty green feather to suggest youth and their soaring aspirations. These combined symbols, to represent a volunteer organization and its growing number of internationally oriented teen-agers, proved to be truly visionary. The ability, accomplishments, and careers of the young participants have indeed been outstanding worldwide.*

*The founders of ATAD, all Eastman Kodak Company men, were Axel Hornos, Jack Debes, Wyatt Brummitt, Dick Gearhart, and David Johnson.*

## GETTING ACQUAINTED

LEADER'S NOTE: The “*Getting Acquainted*” forms are included in the lesson packet. The session should include Internationals and Returnees. The discussion leader should also participate.

PURPOSE: To allow participants to introduce themselves to the group, so that all group members begin to know each other and find common experiences.

### I. The leader explains:

*We will be working together during this orientation to share and help each other. It is useful to know a little about one another before we begin.*

Pass out the “*Getting Acquainted*” form.

*Take a minute to read over the form and think about the questions. You are welcome to make notes on the form. In a minute I will ask you to introduce yourself to the group using the questions on the form, and any other information you would like us to know about you.*

### II. The leader calls the group back together:

The leader begins by introducing himself. Then each participant is asked to introduce himself.

While the participants are introducing themselves, the leader should write down on a flip chart “the most looking forward to” and “the greatest concerns about going overseas” that are mentioned. These may be useful in later sessions.

### IV. To summarize:

The leader should mention some of the common “looking forward to’s” expressed, as well as some of the concerns about the experience. The leader should mention that throughout the orientation we will be learning to think about and planning to deal with the concerns we have about going overseas.

# GETTING ACQUAINTED

Think about the questions below. Be prepared to introduce yourself to the rest of the group. Discuss:

1. Name:

2. School:

3. Country going to:

4. A little about your own family:

Parents

Brothers and Sisters

Jobs

Family Activities

Etc.

5. What are some of the things that most interest you (e.g. sports, hobbies, etc.):

6. What are you most looking forward to:

7. What is your greatest concern about going overseas:

8. How did you find out about ATAD:

## REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

LEADER'S NOTE: Use the Internationals and Returnees in the group to talk about country specific issues; encourage the Americans Overseas to ask questions.

Copies of "*Suggested Gifts to Bring*" and "*Measuring Differences*" will be provided to hand out to the students. "*Topics for Country Specific Discussion*" is attached as resource material.

PURPOSE: To allow American Returnees and current International Students to share what the exchange experience has meant to them, and to relate information on the culture of their country.

- I. Two or three Returnees and Internationals should be selected before the orientation and asked to prepare ideas that reflect their own experiences. They should be provided with "*Topics For Country Specific Discussion*" to give them some ideas on what to talk about. They can be asked to bring pictures and memorabilia from the foreign country to share at the orientation, as appropriate.

The leader should ask the Returnees and ISs to take 5-10 minutes each to discuss what being an exchange student has meant to them. As students speak, the leader should keep them on track and on time. The leader summarizes each students' comments into a few key phrases about the experience.

- II. The leader then opens up the discussion for questions from the Americans Overseas. This should be an open exchange between all participants, to learn more about the specific culture, family living, schools, etc. If the group runs out of questions, suggest the Returnee or IS talk a little about one of the items from "*Topics For Country Specific Discussion*".

One of the topics which is sure to come up is "What gifts should I bring with me". During the discussion that ensues, hand out "*Suggested Gifts to Bring*" and "*Measuring Differences*" to the students, so they can note additional ideas on the sheets during the discussion. It is suggested that students take a gift for each immediate member of the host family. These should be given to the family the day the student arrives, or the next day when the student has time to begin to unpack. Students should also consider bringing ingredients and/or recipes to make a "typical" American dish for their host family. Their host family will be very appreciative of the special effort made to share a small part of America with them.

- III. Thank the Returnees and ISs for their informative discussions. Tell the AOs that the Returnees and ISs will be participating in the rest of the orientation, and will continue to contribute their insights about the exchange experience and host country.

# Topics for Country Specific Discussions



# Association for Teen-Age Diplomats

The following are broad areas that the American students going overseas will probably want to learn about. We would like the International Students and Returnees who will be helping with the orientation to think about these topics and how you might respond. Please be prepared to spend 5-10 minutes talking about what the exchange experience has meant to you and relating information about the culture of the foreign country you visited or are from. We do not expect you to reflect the total picture of the foreign country, nor to be an authority on its culture. We merely ask that you reflect your own exchange experiences.

You may want to consider bringing some pictures or memorabilia from the foreign country to share with the Americans going overseas on the day of the orientation.

## 1. The Family

What is the average family size?

Who in the family works (father, mother, teenager)?

What is a normal daily schedule for each family member? What do they do together?

What are the typical recreational activities and sports for children, teens, adults?

What are the main differences between families there and in the United States?

What host family adjustment problems did you encounter?

How have you and your host family grown/learned from the experience?

## 2. The School System

Are the schools private and/or public? Co-ed? Uniforms?

What subjects are taught?

What are the normal school hours?

What extra activities are there at school?

What rules are there? What is the structure?

What types of exams, homework, etc? What is the study time?

How have your thoughts about further academic work and potential career been influenced by your exchange experience?

## 3. Dating Customs

At what age does dating begin?

How important is dating?

Is dating in large groups or as individual couples?

What are common dating activities?

Are students chaperoned? Are there curfews?

What are acceptable and unacceptable dating behaviors?

Who pays?

#### 4. Money

What is the monetary exchange system?

Can traveler's checks, personal checks, credit cards be easily used?

Give some examples of how much things cost compared to the US: clothing, food, cosmetics, CDs, etc.

#### 5. Food

What is the average meal and size?

When are meal times? When is the big meal of the day eaten?

What types of foods and drinks are there?

Does drinking water need to be purified?

Do fruits need to be peeled?

Are meals important for family time, discussions, etc.?

#### 6. Dress

What is the appropriate dress for school, shopping, going out, etc.?

What will the temperatures be like throughout the year?

What dress is inappropriate?

#### 7. Language and Gestures

What dialects are there?

Do many people speak English?

What gestures carry a message? Which gestures should be avoided?

#### 8. General Attitudes

What are the predominant religious beliefs? What are the attitudes toward these and other religions?

What are the attitudes toward wealth, clothes, and material possessions?

What is the general disposition of people: more or less outgoing, more or less emotional, etc.?

What are the views on time and punctuality?

What are the general attitudes toward youth? Teens? Elderly people?

Have you adopted any new practices and ideas from your host culture? What kinds?

What are the general attitudes toward the United States?

#### 9. The Community

What are the differences and similarities of cities, small towns, and rural areas?

What kind of public transportation is there?

What is the technology in comparison to the US: TV, telephone, appliances, supermarkets, shopping centers, etc.?

10. Visiting

What should and should not be done when visiting a family at their home?

What gifts and flowers would be appropriate?

When and how is it appropriate to give, receive, and open gifts?

11. Holidays

Which holidays are celebrated? What are the specific dates?

How are these holidays celebrated?

12. Adjustment

What were the biggest surprises you had as a foreign student?

What did you find to be helpful in preparing for this experience?

What have you learned about yourself as a result of your experience?

What are the most important skills an exchange student can have?

What new perspectives do you have on your own family, community, and country as a result of your exchange experience?

What has your experience told you about the notion of boundaries of race, culture, and nation among the people of the world?



## Suggested Gifts to Bring to Your Host Family



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1. Photo album with pictures of family, pets, friends, home, community.
2. Cassette tapes of modern singers.
3. Posters.
4. T-shirts, sweatshirts or baseball caps, especially with sayings or college names on them.
5. Memorabilia from a local or a well known college.
7. Maple syrup, peanut butter, Kool-Aid, Jello.
8. Ingredients for chocolate chip cookies. \*
9. Candy - M&Ms, Reeses Pieces.
10. Favorite recipe. \*
11. Book about home town or state (with lots of pictures in it).
12. Country style knick-knack.
13. Pins, especially with US flag or a Rochester logo.
- 14.
- 15.

\* Remember that the country you are going to is on the metric system. Be sure to take a conversion chart.  
If you plan to do a lot of cooking, it may also be a good idea to take plastic measuring cups and spoons.

\*\*\* Remember, it's the thought that counts, not the expense! \*\*\*

Do not take anything with you that you could have difficulty getting through customs. This might include:

alcohol, wine  
new electronic devices

## MEASURING DIFFERENCES

### MEASURES

	U.S.	METRIC
Flour	1/4 cup	35 g
	1/2 cup	70 g
	3/4 cup	110 g
	1 cup	145 g
Icing sugar, Cocoa, Corn flour	1 cup	100 g
Sugar	1/4 cup	60 g
	1/2 cup	115 g
	3/4 cup	170 g
	1 cup	230 g
Butter	2 tablespoons	15 g
	1/4 cup	55 g
	1/2 cup	110 g
	3/4 cup	170 g
	1 cup	225 g
Liquids, Cream, Yogurt	1 teaspoon	5 milliliters
	1 tablespoon	15 mL
	1/4 cup	60 milliliters
	1/2 cup	120 mL
	3/4 cup	180 mL
	1 cup	240 mL
	1 pint (2 cups)	475 mL
Grated cheese, Chopped nuts	1 cup	100 g
Yeast	1 cake, package	15 g

### OVEN TEMPERATURES

	Degrees C	Degrees F
Very cool	110	225
	120	250
Cool	135	275
	150	300
Moderate	160	325
	175	350
Moderate hot	190	375
	205	400
Hot	220	425
	230	450
Very hot	245	475

## CULTURE

LEADER'S NOTE: Please go through Section III using the yellow and blue sunglasses. This is an important analogy!

Handout "*Excerpts from a Summer Journal*" is provided in the lesson packet of each discussion leader. Pass out "*Comments from Former Students*" at the end of the session and discuss if appropriate.

PURPOSE: To arrive at a common, useful definition of culture, to understand that all people are a product of their own culture, and to explore the process of adaptation to a new culture.

I. Begin the session by saying:

*The purpose of this session is to arrive at a common, useful definition of culture, to understand that all people are a product of their own culture, and to explore the process of adaptation to a new culture. To achieve these aims, we will be doing several different activities.*

II. Ask the students what they think culture is. List their ideas on a flip chart. They will probably include:

music	food	literature	religion	history	traditions
customs	education	museums	values	dance	architecture

Then explain:

*Many people travel abroad, taking with them a camera. During their travels they take many, many photos. When they return home they have pictures of cathedrals, forts, people in unusual costumes, smiling children, quaint streets, and colorful celebrations. Unfortunately, many of these people think they have photographed the "culture" of the place they have visited. But this is impossible. One cannot photograph the culture of people because culture is not a physical thing. What we can see are the reflections or products of a culture.*

Refer back to the list of items the students came up with about culture. Ask them which of those items can be photographed. Underline those items. Ask the students if they can come up with a definition of culture. Write down:

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

III. Here is a simple fable to explore. It helps us to understand more clearly what culture is, and how our own values unconsciously block our real understanding of other cultures.

*Imagine if you will a country like America, where from the time of the first people, until today, and far into the future, everyone who was ever born or will be born, was born with two legs, two arms, two eyes, a nose, a mouth and a pair of sunglasses. The color of the lenses of the sunglasses is yellow. Hold up the yellow sunglasses. No one has ever thought it strange that the sunglasses are there because they've always been there and they are part of the human body. Everyone has them. What makes these sunglasses yellow are the values, attitudes, ideas, beliefs and assumptions that the Americans have in common. Everything they have seen, learned, or experienced (past, present and future) has been filtered and interpreted through all these values and ideas that have made the lenses yellow.*

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

*An American was going to travel to Japan, and while there, wanted to learn everything he possibly could about the Japanese culture. So to more thoroughly learn about Japan he first acquired some Japanese sunglasses. When the traveler arrived in Japan, he put on the Japanese sunglasses (hold up the blue sunglasses over the yellow sunglasses), stayed for two months and felt he really learned about the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the people of Japan. He actually "saw" Japan by wearing their sunglasses. He came home to his own country and declared that he was now an "expert" on Japan and the culture is green!*

Ask what the sunglasses represented. (Values, attitudes, ideas, beliefs, and assumptions of a culture.) Lead a discussion to explain the moral of the story, and how one can minimize the influences of their own American filters of yellow.

*Before we are open and free to learn about another culture (and put on their sunglasses), we have to remove our own so our interpretation of the new culture will not be "colored" or filtered by our own values, attitudes, and beliefs. But one can never fully remove their own sunglasses, because those are the values you have lived by your entire life. Rather, you need to understand that your own views are tinted by your own culture, and to be open to this difference in perspective. By being able to understand and describe the values, attitudes, beliefs, ideas and assumptions of your own culture, the lighter the color of your sunglasses becomes. This will help us develop the ability to see more than one side of an idea. We are not there to judge another culture, but to learn about it.*

#### IV. Make the following points:

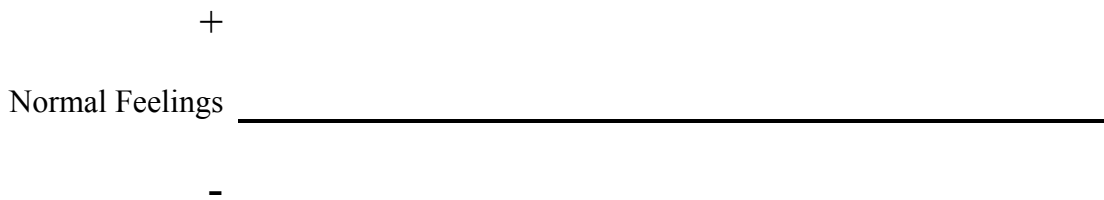
*As you enter into your new country, you will encounter many differences in language, food, dress, customs, and basic attitudes. As we have said, people in each culture have unique traits, and it is normal for them to feel their way of doing things is better than any other. This is called ethnocentrism. Perhaps when you see things being done differently, you will catch yourself thinking "Back home we know how to do this right." If you then ask yourself "But why is it right?" you will probably be forced to say "I don't know, it is just better." This is a normal reaction. We have all been brought up to value certain things, but that is not to say they are right or correct. Getting along in another culture will be easier when you understand that others' traits and attitudes are not necessarily right or wrong, better or worse, they are just different. Try to remember the phrase: Equally logical but different. This will remind you that you are looking at the other through your own sunglasses, so that you may more clearly understand.*

V. Continue into the next section by saying:

*So what will it be like living in another culture? Let's look at someone's experience by reading some letters that Margie wrote home from France.*

Pass out "Excerpts from a Summer Journal" and give the students time to read all the letters.

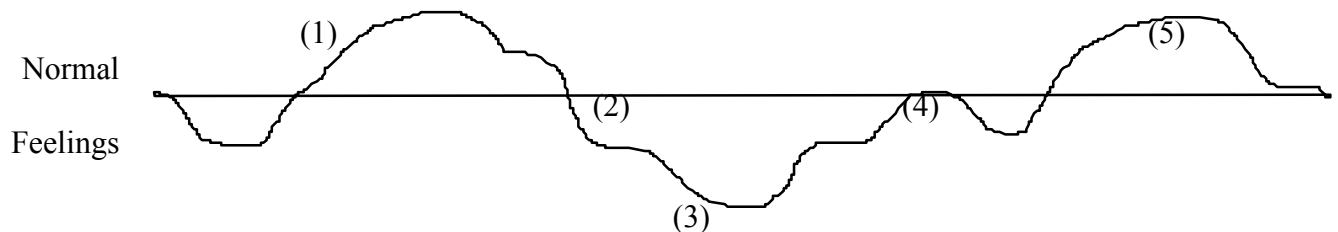
Draw a line on a flip chart to signify normal feelings, with a + above the line to designate happiness, and a - below the line to designate sadness:



Ask the students to think about Margie's first letter and where they would place her feelings relative to the line. Ask them to explain why. Mark the chart where the students would place her feelings.

Go on to Margie's second letter, leading the same discussion, and marking the chart about one-fourth the way across the page with the feelings portrayed in this letter. Continue in this manner until all four of Margie's letters have been discussed.

Next connect the marks designating Margie's feeling from each letter with a curve similar to the one drawn below, and have the students help explain the steps.



The adjustment process typically consists of several phases throughout the exchange experience:

1. The student is excited with their arrival in the host country, and all the new discoveries of the first few weeks.
2. As the student becomes more accustomed to the new life, emotions become more normal.
3. Students may experience depression at some point, after life has become routine, if they are not adjusting well to their new family or culture, or often around holidays. This is when students begin to think a lot about "home" and old friends.
4. Student has adapted and now feels fully "at home" in the host country, going through the normal small ups and downs of daily life.
5. (Implied at the end of Margie's fourth letter.) During the stay there is a lot of excitement with family activities and parties, as well as the excitement of the anticipation of returning home to see one's family and friends again.

Return to talk more about (3), explaining to the students that this phase of their emotions is referred to as “culture shock”. It is a time when the student is overloaded with the new things he or she must know and do in the new culture. It is a time when the lack of a familiar support system, such as the natural family and friends, can cause feelings of loneliness and isolation. All of us feel some “lows” and sadness sometimes, but when students begin to suffer from culture shock, it is very important that they quickly understand their emotions and how to respond to them. Help the students understand how to recognize if their emotions are slipping too far below the line of “normal feelings”. Some indications include:

1. Getting annoyed at host family rules, expectations, behaviors.
2. Don’t communicate; isolate themselves in their room.
3. Unexpected over reaction to situations.
4. A lot of time spent thinking about natural family and friends.
5. Comparing things and events to those at home, thinking everything is so much better at “home”.

There is a tremendous need for students and host families to talk and share their feelings during these times. To overcome the depression these situations can cause, it is essential that the student recognizes what is causing the bad feelings, by recognizing the differences the new culture presents, and making an effort to understand them. If not, the reaction will be anger and a lack of communication. Ask the students what they should do if they feel they are beginning to get depressed. Some ideas include:

1. Go out, get involved, do things - don’t stay in your room.
2. Don’t spend hours writing letters home.
3. Join a club or activity.
4. Talk to your host family and Program Chair.
5. Set small goals that you can accomplish by yourself as: how to travel on your own, how to say a new phrase, identify one new person whom you are going to say “Hi” to.
6. Ask your family for help to accomplish these goals; the whole family can benefit by working on the depression of culture shock.

#### VI. Explain:

*There are two very important concepts taught throughout this session on culture. The first is not to judge the values of another, since those values are usually molded through one’s culture. The second is that if you find yourself having difficulty adjusting to the many differences you will find in your new culture, the most important thing to do is to stay involved and active, to participate in everything you can. This will help in your understanding and immersion into the culture, and enhance every experience.*

## EXCERPTS FROM A SUMMER JOURNAL

### DAY ONE:

My host family is really nice! I was so nervous when I met them at the airport. My host father is a short, dignified man, and seems a little serious and authoritative... maybe that's because he doesn't speak English. My host mother smiles a lot and speaks to me even though she knows I don't understand what she says. My little sister, 3, is darling. My host brother seems nice but seems very stiff - his English is limited but he speaks some!

We left for home by car and I just stared at everything out the windows. I don't know what I expected, but there were roads, cars, stores, and everything just like at home. There were lots of billboards - thank goodness for pictures because I sure can't read them!

My brother took me for a walk around the neighborhood when we got home. The streets are very narrow and there are no sidewalks. There are a number of small shops nearby and even a "McDonalds" and "Kentucky Fried Chicken". Most of the people were walking about, not so many cars as I am used to. There are lots of bicycles though.

We has a meal when we got home, but I was so tired I didn't eat much... it was some type of fish with vegetables and rice. I have a small bedroom of my own with a small closet and a little dresser. I didn't even unpack, I was so tired.

But it is so great to be here!

### TWO WEEKS LATER:

Okasan and I are home alone more now as Atosan goes to work and my host brother is studying for exams. I am beginning to understand the house routine better and have learned to eat rice for breakfast! I have been able to visit a nearby school a few times and have enjoyed talking to their English classes. It still seems weird to stand out so much - it is obvious that people notice me though everyone except the school children are pretty polite. The little kids, especially, call me a gaijin or run up and try out their memorized "good morning". But I am getting used to it and it does not bother me much.

I am getting to know my family a little better, and am even able to help with a few chores around the house. At least it helps to pass the time and make me feel more a part of the family.

## **END OF FIRST MONTH:**

We took my brother to the airport two days ago to leave for the U.S. where he'll be an exchange student this year. What a shock to not have an English speaker around anymore! I guess I did not realize what a comfort it was to know that eventually he would come home and translate for me!

It was really great to get some letters from home. It sure takes a long time for them to get here - it's hard to believe I was reading about things my friends and family were doing several weeks ago. I wonder what they are doing now...

Now that school is out, I am not finding that much to do. I am really glad I brought some tapes of American music and a couple of novels. It is a relief from trying to listen so hard to be able to understand anything. I really should do some jogging again, but my host family is so protective. They don't want me to go anywhere on my own, not even around our own neighborhood. I just don't think I can change their minds, and frankly I don't have the energy to try. I really seem to be tired; it's nice to be able to sleep a lot.

## **TWO WEEKS LATER:**

Well, I am really glad I did make the effort to get my parents to let me start jogging. They really weren't in favor of it (and I actually think Okasan followed me a distance the first day on her bicycle), but maybe by returning right at the agreed upon time reassured them. The exercise is making me feel better and probably is helping me not gain 20 pounds from wolfing down this great food. By jogging around our community I have also met some interesting people. All of the merchants are up cleaning around their stores when I jog, and they now wave as I pass. I have managed to go back and talk a little with some of them later in the day, and I have a much better idea now of what happens in this community. It also is making me practice my language and I am getting better!

I can't believe the summer is almost over. There is so much more I'd like to learn about my community before I go, and I am really beginning to communicate with my family. They have seen my interest in the neighborhood and have arranged for me to visit with some local artisans. I guess I'll just have to see how much I can pack in these last two weeks! It is going to be hard to leave my new home and country.

*All my love,  
Margie*



## **COMMENTS FROM FORMER STUDENTS**

*“In the beginning, ask your family to tell you what their rules are. Ask them to tell you when you do things that are “wrong”. They may be afraid of hurting your feelings, but tell them not to be.”*

*“At the beginning you need so much help with the language and homework and letters.... Because of this, you feel like the youngest child in the family, even if you actually are the oldest. Don’t be afraid. Don’t feel bad about it. Go on asking and you will be amazed how many possibilities are open to you by asking for help. Time will come when you will again feel master of yourself and able to make decisions. Await this moment with patience. Don’t force it to come.”*

*“You have chosen to go abroad to experience something different, so don’t criticize at once because you feel your way to act is better. It is just different. You will understand afterwards.”*

*“Always keep an open mind and never judge things according to your first impression, for your first impression may be wrong. Try to find out why. Try to understand everything.”*

*“I felt that I would never adjust to the mentality of the people.... But I soon found that the challenge resided instead in adjusting to this different way of thinking, understanding it, and not being changed by it.”*

*“I found that within this society there is a great variety of different people. Being confronted with this variety every day, I realized that I had many prejudices. Only after I got rid of them, after having seen that many people have different philosophies and still do well and maybe even better in life than me, only then could I start to enjoy this variety of people, ways of life, and ideas. Only this made me really interested in people. Only then could I start to talk freely with them and accept them for what they were.”*

# FAMILY LIVING

LEADER'S NOTE: There are no handouts for this session.

PURPOSE: To understand the family unit as a source of support, communication and cultural information, to explore in a non-judgmental way differences that students may find in their host families, to explore students' personal values, and to discuss the adjustment required by both students and host families to make the experience successful.

- I. Introduce this session by reminding students that ATAD is a family living program. The primary purpose of the ATAD exchange program is to live with another family in another culture. In this session we will explore what family living means, and the adjustments that both students and host families must make to assure the success of the experience for everyone.
- II. Have the students think about those things in their daily life that are most important to them. These may include:

Daily shower	Family meals	Independence	Music
Own room	Religion	Shopping	Time alone
Use of telephone	TV	Time with friends	Sports

List the items on a flip chart.

Lead a discussion using the following questions:

1. Which of these items are likely to be affected by your living with a host family?
2. What is the "cost" of giving them up?
3. How do you behave when you have to give up something very important to you?
4. What are the compensating factors that will balance having to give up some of these items?

During the discussion it may become obvious that items that are important to some are not important to others. This is a good opportunity to point out the significant differences that exist among people even of the same culture and age.

- III. Continue into the next section by saying:

*In the last session we learned that our beliefs, attitudes, and values determine how we behave. However, we are rarely conscious of how we behave, and seldom think about why we do things the way we do. We just know that "this is how it is done". We behave in ways that are traditional or customary for our family and culture. Suddenly when we have people from two cultures living together we see that everyone does not behave the same way, and our reaction may be that the other person is wrong in the way they do something. It is not even easy to explain why we do things differently, or why we feel this way. You may need to be especially observant because your host family may not realize that many of the habits and customs they taught to their children are things you have never learned. You will need to ask questions and try to understand behaviors and family rules that are new to you.*

*Next we are going to learn how to look at these differences in a non-judgmental way, and to learn what adjustments are necessary for the families and students to live together.*

Present an example on judgmental evaluation using a reference such as:

*Let's look at these two statements (on a flip chart):*

My family treats me like a child.

My family expects me to be home at 11:00 PM.

*What is the difference in these two statements?* Answers should bring out that one affixes a value to the action; it is judgmental. The other just gives a statement without judgment.

*Why is it important not to judge the way something is done?* There is more than one way of doing things. Our host families will have different ways than our natural families. If we make judgments, we are not going to learn about the other culture or fit into it.

Remind the students of the sun glasses analogy where the way we see things are colored by our own culture and value judgments, thus we need to take care not to judge others through our own values.

Suggest the following steps for the students to follow:

1. When a situation arises that is undesirable, first identify your own values. Think of your own behavior and reaction, and why you behave or think that way.
2. Try to understand the other person's point of view. Why do they say what they say or act the way they do? If you don't understand, ask questions.
3. Discuss the differences without making value judgments. Why is this difficult to do? What will help? (For one thing remember that someone else can respond to your way of doing something as being "strange" or "wrong". How would you react to someone who said this to you?)
4. See what kind of adaptation is necessary. When we say adapt, we are changing our behaviors, not our values.

IV. We should all now be aware that our host family living experience is going to require adaptation by both the family and the student. Prepare the following chart:

	Host Family	Student
Values	Keep own, but learn about other's	Keep own, but learn about other's
Behaviors	Keep own (70%) Adapt (30%)	Adapt (70%) Keep own (30%)

Both families and students must adapt some of their behaviors to make the experience successful. But no one need fear that they will lose their own values.

Ask for ideas on what adaptations the family must make. Some ideas include:

1. Adjust to a new personality in the house.
2. Adjust to another person who needs a bedroom, to share the bathroom, meals, etc.
3. Family structure may change - for the first time there may be a teenager, or there may be a new older child. Parents' time will need to be shared with another person.
4. Need to spend time teaching the new person how the family functions, and what is expected.
5. Learn how to "be a family" to someone they don't know or understand very well, i.e., what will make them happy or what they like to do with other members of the family.

Solicit ideas on what adjustments the students have to make. Some may include:

1. Learn to feel they are a member of a family when they are all new people to the student.
2. Learn how to use a new language for everything.
3. Learn how the family functions: rules, regulations, and appropriate behavior in the family.
4. Learn how to function in a totally new school system.

Ask the students what they think their own family would expect of someone living with them. List them on a flip chart. They will include words/ideas that can be arranged to make up an acronym they can remember:

T = Talk, communicate, share

O = Obey, follow family rules

P = Participate, do what the family does, join in

H = Help, do your share of the chores

A = Affection, show affection

T = Trust, show that you respect your parents' judgment

V. Summarize the session with statements as:

*We have talked this session about how to be successful with two different cultures living together. Both students and host families need to be aware of the other's adjustments and needs. By trying to learn why we all act and think as we do, we will learn from each other and be able to understand the other's ideas and ideals. Empathy for the other culture's points of view may be the most important learning possible in the world today - and we are all a part of it!*

## LEARNING POTENTIAL

LEADER'S NOTE: For year students there needs to be some discussion about attending school while overseas. However, this discussion needs to be minimized in an effort to keep the interest of the summer students. Program Chairs are encouraged to get together with the year students at a later date for more discussion on the schooling specific to the country to which they will be going.

Discuss in detail American values using “*The Values Americans Live By*” handout.

PURPOSE: To introduce year students to some of the differences they may encounter in their foreign school, and to provide them with tools to adjust to the new system and language.

To help summer students realize the learning potential offered by an exchange experience.

### I. Introduce the session by saying:

*This session is intended to give you some information about school overseas and some aids on how to adjust to a new school system and foreign language at the same time. You probably will not hear exactly what your school will be like, however, many of the school systems are similar to the ones you will hear about, and you can get more details from your program representatives or other Internationals who are here from the city you will be going to.*

### II. If there are International Students of Returnees who went overseas for a year, ask them to help with this session by answering the following questions. Otherwise the discussion leaders should provide general information about the following:

1. Did the same students stay in class together all day? All year? Did the students stay in the same classroom all day? How many students were there in a class?
2. What did students wear to school? Were they required to wear uniforms?
3. What days and times were students in school? How did you get to school?
4. What did students do for lunch?
5. What courses did you take? Did you have a choice of what you took? What was required?
6. What was the grading system? How often were there tests? What types of tests were given? Did daily work and homework count toward the overall grade?
7. What facilities did your school have (e.g. library, laboratories, auditorium, athletic fields)?
8. What activities were available to the students during the day? Before or after school?

Ask if there are any other questions the students want to ask. When all questions have been answered, summarize this section by noting some of the commonalties among the foreign schools such as more academics, less social activity at school, etc.

### III. Move into a discussion about coping with school and the language by stating something like:

*We noted various differences, one being the requirement to study more subjects. I am sure you are wondering how you will handle that, especially when you will be studying in a foreign language. This session is just as important to the summer students as to those who will be studying abroad. The more you can learn to communicate in the foreign language the better will be your exchange experience and the more you will learn.*

Lead a discussion with the Internationals and Returnees who attended school using the following topics. If there is no one who attended school, the discussion leaders should provide general information.

1. How did you deal with your difficulty with understanding the language in classes?
  - a. Does anyone have any hints on how to learn vocabulary?
  - b. Was there any way to get special help from teachers or others?
  - c. Were tutors a possibility for school subjects? For language?
  - d. Does anyone have any hints for doing homework, e.g. how to read faster, what was expected  
(main ideas, know everything, or only answer certain questions), etc?
2. How did you deal with a heavier (if it was) academic schedule?
  - a. Were you able to keep up with all subjects? If not, what did you do?
  - b. Were there any special things you were able to do at school because you were an exchange student, e.g. help with English class, talk to history class about U.S., etc?
3. Now that you have been through this experience, what additional preparation could you have made that would have really helped with the language and/or school?

Lead a discussion on ways the students can take charge of their learning, noting the ideas on a flip chart. Some “hows” to include are:

host family (ask questions)	library, museums, government buildings
go out and experience, participate	observe everything without judgment

Ask if there is additional information the students would like. When all questions have been answered, summarize by noting some of the things the students can do now to help assure a successful experience.

#### IV. Transition to the next session by saying:

*Now that we have concentrated on what you will learn, let's talk about what your host family/country wants to learn from you.*

Lets ideas on a flip chart and discuss how the students might respond.

Discuss some of the “Tough Questions” listed below and why the students might be asked these questions. Discuss what appropriate responses might be. The “right” answer may simply be “I don't know enough about that situation to comment.” It is important not to be negative or get defensive. Discuss intelligently, not emotionally. Teach others what you've learned about sunglasses, culture, etc.

1. We've heard much about how easy your schools are. How can such a great nation have such a poor system of education?
2. How can such a rich country as America have so many poor people?
4. Why are Americans so ignorant of the world? They do not learn other languages or know what is going on in other countries.
6. Why do so many women work in your country? Do they really believe in that Women's Rights stuff?
7. Yours is such a violent, crime-filled society. Why don't you ban hand guns?

8. The United States is well known to us from TV and movies. How can a country allow such rampant use of drugs and illicit sex?

V. Next ask the students:

*As an exchange student, what do you think you can learn about your own culture?*

Give the students some time to think about and discuss this question. Then hand out “*The Values Americans Live By*” and give the students a chance to scan through the material. Lead a discussion about the highlights of the differences in American culture and beliefs compared to the majority of the world. Conclude the discussion by saying:

*By understanding your own values and how they contrast with the majority of the world, you may better understand your own culture. Remember to learn with an open mind. What you may think is natural and right may only be your own sunglasses tinting your opinion of your host family and host country.*

VI. To summarize this session, re-emphasize that there is a lot that can be learned, and that learning will come through the student’s own experiences and initiatives. Celebrate the present (enjoy what is happening right now) to get the most out of the experience.



## YOUR SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

LEADER'S NOTE: "ATAD Contacts" with phone numbers is included to be passed out to each student. If the students don't know who their Program Chair is, help them find the appropriate information on the handout.

Handouts of "Two Cultures Together in One Home" are included for all of the student situations. Choose several incidents that you think will benefit your group the most, and review them one at a time with the group. This should show how well the students have understood the sessions, and bring to light any unanswered questions, concerns, misunderstandings.

Hand out "Hints and Suggestions" as a summary of the day's activities for the students to take home and read/understand.

ENCOURAGE THE STUDENTS TO SHARE ALL HANDOUTS WITH THEIR PARENTS.

PURPOSE: To learn about ATAD's support system, its policies and procedures, and where to go for help.

I. Explain the purpose of this session as a means to introduce it:

*To learn about ATAD's support system, its policies and procedures, and where to go for help.*

II. Lead into the policies section by saying:

*You have all received, read, and signed the ATAD Americans Overseas Parent/Student Agreement (remind them that this occurred at the meeting in February if they do not remember). In the following few minutes we are going to look at several incidents that are real student issues. We will use what we remember from those rules to determine ways to deal with these situations. By working through these incidents, you will have an idea of types of situations you may encounter and how to best resolve them.*

Pass out "Two Cultures Together in One Home". Choose several of the situations that seem appropriate for your group. Review these situations one at a time, discussing the questions at the end of the scenario before proceeding to the next situation.

1. BELINDA:

POLICIES:

Alcohol: Students must observe the national laws and the host family guidelines relative to the use of alcohol. These will vary between countries and families. ATAD students should not use alcohol in a manner that is excessive, inappropriate, or embarrassing to the host family or ATAD. Inability to control alcohol use may be indicative of other adjustment problems.

Drugs: ATAD students may not possess or use drugs that are illegal in the U.S. or the host country. Violators of this policy will be considered for dismissal from the program. A verified violation could include physical evidence, student admission, or reliable witnesses. If a student is in a home where illegal drug use is discovered, the student will be removed from that host family.

Violations of the Law: When a student admits to a law violation, is arrested or charged, or reliable information is received that the student has broken a law, the student may be considered for dismissal from the program. All legal representation and fees relative to the violation become the responsibility of the student and his/her natural family.

**ALTERNATIVES:** Belinda should not attend the party because of program and legal complications associated with being around illegal drugs. With regard to drinking, explain to friends how the host family feels about the use of alcohol, and student's desire to adhere to host family wishes. Try to keep friends who are not into the "drug scene".

2. **KAREN:**

**POLICIES:**

Student Travel: ATAD students are to not travel by themselves, for reasons of safety, knowledge of whereabouts, and travel may interfere with school. If a student is to travel alone, he/she must receive written permission from the host family, natural family, Program Chair, and person whom they will be visiting. Student traveling without all of these consents may be considered for dismissal from program.

Extension of Stay: ATAD will not grant extension of stay. Under U.S. immigration laws, ATAD is not empowered to grant waivers or visa extensions, nor will the organization assist in investigating an extension of stay unless there is a medical or special emergency requiring such an extension. If a student decides to extend his or her stay on their own, he/she will be considered off program, and ATAD's responsibilities will end with the departure of the return flight to which the student was scheduled. Unused travel tickets will not be reimbursed.

Visits from Natural Family, Relatives, or Home Country Friends: Natural family, relatives, or friends from home are strongly discouraged from visiting the exchange student during their stay overseas. The interruption breaks the adjustment, bonding with the host family and friends, and may diminish the exchange experience for the student and host family. Meeting the natural family at the end of the stay interferes in the ability of the host family and exchange student to properly say good-bye, a bonding experience which can affect the depth of their future relationship.

**ALTERNATIVES:** Try to travel with host family. Plan travel during vacations when it does not interfere with school, and make sure it does not interfere with host family plans for that time. In this case, having to purchase her own airline ticket and not having a valid visa just to get to see her father 10 days before she would see him anyway is probably not worth it.

3. **BILL:**

**POLICIES:**

Dangerous Activities: A student is not permitted to participate in activities deemed by ATAD to be hazardous. The following activities are strictly forbidden: hang gliding, hitchhiking, parachuting, bungee jumping, piloting a plane, driving a car or motorcycle. Other activities that involve some element of danger (e.g. hunting) may be permitted if permission is given in writing by both the natural family and host parents to authorize the student to participate. This permission must release ATAD and the host family from all responsibility during the time the student is engaged in that activity. Further, it is the responsibility of the student and natural family to determine if the activity is covered by the student's insurance policy, or if additional insurance is required.

Placement: Every effort is made to find families that are a good placement for the student. In the process of becoming acquainted, both family and student may need to modify expectations and behaviors. Do not expect to change host families simply because of normal adjustment problems. You and your host family need to work out the small differences and problem areas together. The local program rep is there to assist both the student and family resolve difficulties. Under special circumstances, after discussions with the program rep and host family, it may be in the best interest for everyone involved to change host families. If this is the case, then ATAD will arrange for the new host family and the move; in no case will a student be permitted to choose their own new host family. If this were permitted, then students could purposely make trouble for the current host family just to be permitted to move to another home they had already selected for themselves.

ALTERNATIVES: Get permission of natural parents. Have friend's parents explain precautions that will be taken when hunting. In general, try to work out a compromise to invite your host family to join you in some activities you enjoy. This may make your family seem just as exciting as your friend's family.

4. CHRISTINE:  
POLICIES:

Contact with Home: Contact with home, whether be phone calls, e-mail or excessive letter writing, should be minimized. Too frequent telephone or E-mail conversations with natural family and home country friends may cause difficulties in the student's adjustment to the Host Family and school, and only acts to enhance one's loneliness. Students should also understand that when they conduct conversations in English, it may cause distrust or discomfort in the Host Family.

ALTERNATIVES: Christine should find new friends and activities to get involved with, to keep her busy and to enhance her exchange experience. When Christine does talk to her natural family, she could tell her host parents a little about what she talked about to make them feel more involved and that she is not trying to hide anything from them.

5. BOB:  
POLICIES:

School Performance: Students are expected to do their best in school, go to school each school day, do homework on time, take all tests, and participate in class.

Supervision: The Host Family is responsible for the health and safety of the student. To assist in safety, all ATAD students must have adult supervision for overnight stays.

ALTERNATIVES: If after a reasonable adjustment period a student is still having difficulty with school or the language, he/she should seek additional help or tutoring. Getting involved in school activities like plays or clubs will enhance one's language skills and make one feel more involved with the other students.

A student is expected to obey the rules of the host family. If the host family feels an activity is dangerous or undesirable, the student must respect the family's opinion. Alternate activities should be sought that will satisfy both the host parents and the student's desires.

The leader closes this section with an explanation that policies and procedures are there to protect the student's rights and safety, as well as outline their responsibilities and expectations.

III. Hand out the "ATAD Contacts" and explain:

*As we saw in the previous activity, there is a system of support and communication flow in all ATAD countries. The student should use this support system for any problems or information needed, along with observing its expectations. Students are most closely supported by the Program Chair person for the country to which they will be going. Once overseas, each Program Chair has a counterpart in the foreign country, who then becomes the student's primary contact. This Program Advisor in the foreign country knows (and may have selected) the host families and schools. They are the first persons to seek out if there are questions or issues to be resolved. The Program Advisor should meet the student at the airport, then contact the student and host family on a monthly basis to find out how everyone is doing, and to assure a successful adjustment. Students should receive the name, address and phone number of the overseas Program Advisor before going overseas, then keep it handy at all times while overseas.*

*The Program Chair in the United States remains the contact person for the student's parents while he or she is overseas. If the student's or family's primary contact person is not available, any of the ATAD officers may be contacted at any time for assistance.*

Help the students understand that if they have a problem or concern, it is critical that they talk to their Program Advisor, and not try to call or write to their natural parents. Lead a discussion on why this is so important. Be sure to highlight the following points:

1. The Program Advisor in the foreign country knows the country and the culture. Often problems that students have are a result of a cultural misunderstanding, and can easily be resolved through discussions with the Program Advisor and host family.
2. There is nothing Mom and Dad can do from home, other than feel bad and make you feel homesick.
3. If you write a letter, often by the time it arrives home you are over the problem but your parents do not know that. Instead, they get worried about an issue that no longer exists. If you have a problem or concern you really want to communicate to their parents, write a letter to them, then rather than mailing it, tear it up, then talk to their host family or Program Advisor. You will be surprised how much being able to put their feelings into writing and then into words with someone who cares about you will help you understand and deal with the situation.
4. It is much more complex and time consuming for everyone if the correct chain of communication is not used. If someone called or wrote to their parents (i.e. *"I am unhappy and don't like my host family."*) instead of talking to their Program Advisor, trace all the steps on how that information would need to go to finally reach the student's own rep, and then to ease the natural family that the situation has been addressed:

Correct Line of Communication:

AO ---> Program Advisor ---> problem addressed

Complex Line of Communications:

AO ---> Natural Family ---> U.S. Program Chair or ATAD AO Vice President --->  
U.S. Program Chair ---> Program in Foreign Country ---> Program Advisor  
---> AO and Host Family (problem addressed) ---> Program in Foreign Country  
---> U.S. Program Chair ---> Natural Family (family concerns eased)

- IV. During the next topic on sexual abuse and misconduct it is important to be open and sensitive to the students. The students (and maybe you) will probably feel uncomfortable with this subject, and thus may react inappropriately such as laughing. You need to encourage dialogue, and as such, should allow behaviors as giggling and whispering.

Begin the session by saying:

*The next topic we are going to discuss might make some of you feel uncomfortable, and that is normal. We need to discuss it so that you will all know that ATAD's priority is your safety and well being. The topic is sexual abuse. Although sexual abuse is rare in an exchange program, we want to tell you how to identify sexual abuse so you will not be a victim.*

*We have spoken a lot about the student's responsibility to adapt to the host family and culture. However, there can be extremes.*

Using a flip chart, have the students define the following:

Resistance: behavior that goes against socially accepted standards

Adapting: behavior that matches socially accepted standards, flexibility that will contribute to a successful exchange experience

Submission: doing everything with no questions asked

*In some situations, however, there are concrete limits where one should not be flexible or submissive. These include sexual abuse, assault, and sexual misconduct. These go against the very core values of each person's personal rights and safety. Sometimes, as on TV, it can be easy to identify when a person's limits are being tested. But it is much harder to identify these situations when they are happening to you. The goal of this session is to help you identify what behaviors are not right or acceptable, and to develop a plan in case you may feel threatened. Sometimes things are more acceptable in one culture and less acceptable in another culture. We are going to talk about what is or is not generally acceptable in most cultures.*

*Here are some examples:*

*A hug to a girl from a host father- that is OK*

*A comment like "Wow you look really great!"- that is OK*

*A comment like "You look really hot or sexy." - that is NOT OK*

*Telling a joke with a sexual word in it - not very good but it is still OK*

*Telling a story that has sexual references or details in it – that is NOT OK*

*Some of these things might make you feel uncomfortable. If it doesn't feel right, you should discuss it with your Host Family or with your Program Chair. The things I just described are not sexual abuse but you should let someone know if anything is happening that you are uncomfortable with. We can help you figure out if it is a cultural difference or if it is something that should not be happening. If it is something that should not be happening, we will find a way to address it tactfully with whoever is doing it. Trust your instincts. Even if you are very happy in your family, we can help to make things better.*

*It is very rare, but it has happened, that an exchange student is in a situation where there is some kind of sexual abuse or misconduct. Some of the things that would come under this category are:*

*An adult touching a child or teenager or asking to be touched in a personal way*

*An adult asking to take pictures or movies of someone without clothes on, or asking a child or teenager to look at them without clothes on*

*An adult asking someone to do sexual things, or doing them without asking*

*An adult telling a story describing a sexual act*

Ask the students if they can think of other examples of behaviors, language, or warning signs that would be unacceptable. Warning signs might include a relationship becoming too intense, inappropriate gift giving, or someone asking you not to tell anyone about a relationship. Ask the students if they can think of any behaviors or language that they are unsure if they would be acceptable in the country to which they are going.

Discuss that some people may feel OK in a certain situation whereas others may be uncomfortable. If the situation is not a case of abuse or misconduct, it is OK for people to feel differently. Discuss ways a person who feels uncomfortable in a situation may handle it. This might include:

- leaving
- changing the subject
- politely telling the other person to stop
- talk to your Host Family or Program Chair

Continue the discussion by saying:

*However, if it is a case of abuse or misconduct, than no one should accept the situation. It is important to recognize a situation, and be ready to say “No.” Trust your feelings.*

Lead a discussion on ways the student can say “stop” or “no” if they are in a threatening situation.

Choose several of the following scenarios that seem appropriate for your group. Read one at a time, discussing it before proceeding to the next scenario.

### 1. FIGHT

The host family (mom, dad, son, and exchange student Carl) are watching TV when the mom and dad begin to have a fight. Carl feels very uncomfortable. Later the host mother comes to Carl’s room to say she was sorry about the argument. She says that nobody understands her, that she is unhappy with her husband and that she is happy that Carl understands her.

**WARNING SIGN:** It is not normal for an adult to share personal emotions with or to confide in a teenager.

**DISCUSSION:** The mother is attempting to gain Carl’s friendship and become emotionally close to him. This is a common first step toward developing an inappropriate relationship. Carl should tell his host mother he is very sorry about the situation, but he isn’t comfortable talking about it. He should also talk to his Program Chair.

### 2. INTERNET USE

Valerie, an exchange student, likes her host family but feels lonely because there are no other children in the home. She has found that a good way to practice her Spanish and to interact with other teen-agers in Peru is through internet chat rooms. Though Valerie doesn’t spend a lot of time on the computer, she is happy to know a Peruvian boy online and is planning to meet him in person.

**WARNING SIGN:** There have been many incidences where sexual predators have solicited teenagers online, misrepresenting themselves as a teenager, then meeting them in person and sexually abusing them.

**DISCUSSION:** All students should be warned never to meet an internet acquaintance in person. They should never give any information that can identify their location or them personally.

### 3. DRIVING TO SCHOOL

Marie, an exchange student, often rides to school with her host brother Steve. Steve often picks up 2 of his friends on the way to school. The friends often tease Marie, but Marie just laughs and brushes off their comments. Today, one of Steve’s friends says “Marie, I really like what you are wearing today.” The second friend says “Yes, me too. But your T-shirt should be tighter.” Steve laughs and asks Marie “What size bra do you wear?”

**WARNING SIGN:** It is not appropriate to talk about one’s body parts or under garments. This is harassment.

DISCUSSION: The boys in this scenario are harassing Marie. Although they are not physically harming her, their language is threatening. This type of behavior may never develop into physical assault, but it could escalate into more serious verbal assault. Marie should tell the boys not to talk to her in that way, and tell her host parents or Program Chair.

#### 4. SOCCER TEAM

Bess, an exchange student, is not a good soccer player, but she is on the soccer team. The coach often tells Bess what a great player she is, and Bess gets to play often. After practice the coach calls Bess into his office and gives her a box of chocolates. Bess happily thanks him. The next week the coach gives Bess a new sweater and says “You are a special person. Don’t tell anyone about the gifts. They may get jealous, cause problems for you, and you could be sent home early.”

WARNING SIGN: Students should never secretly accept gifts from anyone. If the gift giver has good intentions, there is never a risk of telling others about praise, being treated well, or gifts that you receive.

DISCUSSION: This type of gift giving is in the form of seduction. The coach should not be offering any gifts to Bess behind closed doors. His recognition of her efforts would be more appropriately displayed in front of others. Also, the coach is attempting to silence Bess by insinuating that she would be sent home early if others found out.

#### 5. TRIP WITH FATHER

Dan lives with his host family in a small town, but would like to see some of the big cities in his host country. Dan’s host father will be going to the capitol on a business trip and invites Dan to go with him. Dan’s host father reserved one hotel room for safety and financial reasons, but when they get to their room in the hotel there is only one bed to share.

WARNING SIGN: A student never has to share a bed with another person.

DISCUSSION: This could be a situation of an unspoken invitation by a possible predator. The key element of this scenario is isolation. While sharing a bed when staying in a hotel is not in and of itself inappropriate, in this case the student has been isolated from others. Thus Dan must make a judgment whether this is a mistake or an inappropriate invitation by his host father. If Dan feels it is a mistake, he should suggest they go to the hotel desk to explain the mistake, and ask for either a new room with 2 beds, or for a cot for Dan to sleep on. Regardless of where you are, there is always an option to request another room, an extra bed or cot, or to even to sleep on the floor. If, however, Dan feels this is an inappropriate invitation by his host father, then he should request a separate room and immediately contact his Program Chair.

Wrap up the session by saying:

*In all situations there are warning signs. The student should be aware of them, and never hesitate to tell an adult. Our priority is always your safety and welfare. If there is anything happening that you feel isn't right, please come to us and let us help you. If it truly a case of sexual abuse or exploitation, your Program Chair will deal with it quickly and effectively, so you will not be in danger.*

Ask if there are any questions about this topic, what to do, or anything else.

V. Discuss with the students how to manage in the airport, and what to do if they have a problem. Cover the following topics:

1. Call the airlines to obtain information about luggage restrictions.
2. How soon before the flight to be at the airport.
3. How to find the next plane and how to go from a domestic to an international terminal.
4. How to read an airport monitor for information.
5. What to expect when they go through immigration and customs.
6. Who to ask for help.
7. What to do if lost.
8. What to do if flight is missed or cancelled.
9. How to make an international phone call, using the country code and city code.
10. What to do if their luggage is lost.

Assure the students carry with them the phone number of their overseas contact person and Host Family. Explain how to make an international phone call, using the country code and city code. It is a good idea for students to carry a phone card or pre-paid cell phone with them in case there is a delay or travel problems, so they can make any necessary phone calls.

VI. Finish this session with a discussion about money:

For a summer program, \$400 is an appropriate amount of money to take for incidental expenses and gifts. However, due to fluctuation in the value of the dollar, \$500 might be a more realistic amount. Students traveling abroad for a year should take \$800-1000 in traveler's checks so they can establish a bank account in the country in which they will be living. A larger amount of money may be needed later in the year if the student plans to participate in school or local trips. Both summer and year students should find out from a bank in their locality about facilities to transfer funds from the U.S. to the foreign country. If you are in a small town, the bank that will probably be able to receive the transfer of funds will be located in the nearest big city. Tell the students that their parents will be receiving more information on this subject.

VII. Summarize by saying:

*Throughout the day we have tried to give each of you the tools you will need to make this experience most successful and memorable. We hope we have been successful. Take everything you have heard today to heart. Read and re-read all of the materials. Learn and understand. And most importantly, remember that ATAD is here and overseas to help you.*

Hand out "Hint and Suggestions". Tell the students to be sure to read this and to share this and all handouts of the day with their parents. Review the "Parking Lot" to be sure all of the issues on the flip charts have been addressed. Ask the students if there are any other questions they have, or concerns that have not been addressed.



## TWO CULTURES TOGETHER IN ONE HOME

You have already anticipated some differences you may find in your host country. As students and host families live together, each will see different customs and attitudes in the other. To get along as a family, adjustments will have to be made, most of which will need to be made by you. Everyone else will be behaving according to their norms and you will be trying to live and learn their lifestyle. Sometimes it is easy to forget that. Let's analyze a few situations students have experienced. After each incident are some questions to address specific issues.

### **BELINDA**

Belinda is an AO in Germany. Her class at school is small and the students stay in the same room together all day, so they have gotten close. Often, after class, the students go to a pub to discuss the day's events over something to drink. As the group chatted one day, Belinda heard one of her friends offer to sell some drugs to another student, for a party they were going to that weekend. That evening Belinda explained the incident to her host mother and asked what she should do to stay out of trouble but not lose her friends.

1. Should Belinda attend the party?
2. What should she tell her friends?
3. Should Belinda be going to the pub at all?

### **KAREN**

Karen is very excited. She's been in Peru all semester and has just found out that her natural father will be coming to Lima for a conference at the end of July. Her ATAD flight back to the U.S. is scheduled for the week before he comes, so Karen is going to call her program representative to see if she can stay an extra 10 days and fly home with her father. This will also give her a chance to travel to the capital on her own and stay with some family friends until her Dad arrives.

1. Will Karen be permitted to visit her Dad?
2. What alternative does her father have to see her?
3. How can Karen get to travel and see other parts of Peru?

### **BILL**

Bill is an AO in Poland who is living with a family who likes him very much. He has recently been invited to go hunting with his best friend Mark's family. His own family doesn't want him to go because they think hunting is dangerous. Bill loves excitement and adventure. He really wants to try hunting. In fact, he would prefer to change families and move into Mark's home, since they seem more exciting than his current host family. Bill calls the program rep to tell him about the hunting trip and asks if he can move to Mark's family if Mark's parents say if it is all right.

1. Should Bill be permitted to hunt?
2. How could Bill resolve his problem without asking to move?
3. What are some reasons why Bill should not be moved?

### **CHRISTINE**

Christine's natural parents call every week. Christine talks with them for different lengths of time in English about what she has been doing. Since her host parents can't speak English, they never talk to her natural parents. She enjoys these phone calls and waits anxiously every Sunday even though she frequently gets homesick afterward; then she goes to her room and writes a letter home. One day Christine's parents tell her they do not want her to continue these weekly phone calls. Christine is hurt by this request because she feels her host parents want to separate her from her natural parents.

1. How well do you think Christine is adjusting to her host family? Why?
2. What are three possible reasons her host family acted as they did?
3. How can frequent phone calls affect adjustment?

### **BOB**

Bob has decided he's not so sure about the exchange any more. He feels he has really made an effort to adjust to his new family and very different customs and food. As he sees it, there is practically nothing that he has not tried, and he is sure his family is really pleased with his efforts. He is studying harder than he ever has before, and that includes struggling through a new language.

At school he's getting frustrated being around kids who speak so fast and laugh at stuff he can't even follow. School classes are a drag, except English class, and maybe math where the numbers at least are the same. Bob thinks he needs some language pills, or maybe to find an English speaking school.

With all this adjusting he is doing, he thinks he should be allowed to continue to do one or two things that are really important to him. One thing he feels he just cannot give up is a morning run each day. As Bob describes it, he just can't live without it to get him started for the day and to keep him in shape. He can't understand why it is such a big deal. His host parents have both tried to get him to stop doing it, but he doesn't know why. If his host family prefers a leisurely stroll before dinner, that's OK with him. But that won't give him the exercise he needs, and they certainly could use more exercise looking at the family.

1. What do you know about Bob's relationship with his host family?
2. What might his host family's view of things be?
3. What might Bob do to find out how to deal with these differences?
4. What aspects of school frustrate him?
5. What could Bob do to improve in school?



## 11 STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

### 1. Finding Your Place in Your Family

At first your family may seem confusing to you: each member plays his own role in the family and communicates in a different way. Different family members have different expectations of each other, just as in your own family. Observe these different ways; you will soon notice some patterns. Determine how you best fit in.

In the beginning it is important that you participate in whatever the family does together and whatever you are encouraged to do. Help your mother around the house, go to a concert with your sister, or play a sport with your brother. This way you will get to know each member and be a part of the family.

### 2. Communicating With Your Host Family

To build a close, honest relationship, you must communicate with all family members, and not just verbally. You must show them who you are and share your feelings and experiences. Remember, they do not know you or are they as familiar with you as with their own children. Here are some ways you can communicate with your family:

- A. **Share Yourself.** Talk to each member of your family. Ask them what they did during the day. Take a few minutes to read to or play with a younger sibling. Share all your feelings with your family, both good and bad.
- B. **Be Curious.** Curiosity shows you are interested in them, and is a good way to show your appreciation. Do you know exactly what your parent's jobs are? Ask all family members about their childhood, hobbies, beliefs. Ask to try one of their hobbies with them. Show interest in their friends. Ask questions in areas where they are particularly knowledgeable.
- C. **Show Your Appreciation.** The most important thing you can do to make your host family feel good is to say thank you, and mean it. You cannot say it enough, or in enough different ways. You show it by talking enthusiastically about some place they have taken you. Leaving a note on the counter when you leave for school will brighten their whole day. Buy some flowers or make something yourself. Cook a meal, set the table, or bake a cake.
- D. **Help Around the House.** If you are asked to help and you do it willingly, you are doing your duty as a family member. But if you help without being asked, you are giving a gift. If you do not know what to do, ask. If you already know what is expected, do it before you are asked. Never stop asking "What can I do?", and watch the smile on your parent's face.
- E. **Talk With Them About Your Problems.** Make it a rule to talk to your family about things you find strange or bother you, and ask them to do the same with you. You sometimes may hear things about yourself that do not make you feel good, but at least you will know they are being honest and are giving you knowledge about their cultural ways.

### 3. Family Rules

Make sure you understand and follow your family rules concerning curfews, your responsibilities at home, dating, bedtime, etc. Even if these are very different from the rules you are used to, you should not expect special favors or exceptions from the rules your brothers and sisters have to follow. Don't question or argue with the rules. In many foreign countries, parents are more authoritative than in the U.S.. Your host parents could get very angry if you disregard their rules.

Two rules are common almost everywhere: "Always tell your parents where you are going", and "Keep your curfew". Host parents are protective of their exchange students, but you can help them feel more at ease by always following these two rules, which you probably have to follow in your own home anyway.

### 4. Having New Brothers and Sisters

You may or may not have brothers or sisters of the same age. If you do, they should play a major part in your plans. In the beginning, your brothers or sisters will be your main help in getting to know other people. They will introduce you to their friends, some of which will become your friends too. They will help you find your way around the community and school, and get you involved in activities or sports. Be appreciative of this help, and let them know you are grateful.

Quite soon, however, you will become more independent. Your brothers and sisters will lose interest in you if you follow them around the entire time you are overseas. Make your own friends, do the things you enjoy. Because you are from the U.S., people will be excited to meet you and involve you in special activities. But also consider if your brother or sister would like to come along or participate. It is now your turn to ask them if they want to be involved in one of your activities. Especially if your brother or sister is less outgoing, nothing is more discouraging than their sitting at home while you are having fun just because you are an exchange student.

You may have younger brothers or sisters. Give them a lot of your time. Play with them, teach them songs and words in your language, and tell them stories. Baby-sit them on occasion if your parents want to do something on their own. If you pay attention to your little brothers and sisters, you will win theirs and your parents' hearts.

Don't be surprised if your host brothers or sisters are a little jealous of you. You may get more attention, and they may resent it. Don't put yourself too much in the center of attention, or do anything that would hurt your host siblings' feelings. Do things with them, share with them, but never compete against them.

### 5. Spending Your Free Time.

How to spend free time is a problem for many exchange students. Many times while abroad you may feel bored, out of place, or homesick. To overcome these feelings, you should keep busy.

- A. Family Activities. You should participate in all activities your family plans. You are there to live with this family, so their activities should take first priority.
- B. Friendship Activities. Just like in the U.S., you will spend a lot of time visiting your friends, talking with them, and doing nothing in particular. Try to have many different friends and see them often. Always introduce your friends to your parents.

- C. **Being Together With Other Exchange Students.** You are told not to withdraw from your host family or host country. This is easily done by spending too much time with other American exchange students. It is tempting to meet with them since they share the same situation and many of the same problems. Too much time with the other students will not give you the opportunity to speak the language of your host country, learn about its peoples and customs, or make host country friends. These are the reasons you are there in the first place. When you do meet with other Americans in your home, try to speak to them in the host country language. Speaking in English can make you host family feel excluded.
- D. **Your Community.** You may find people taking a special interest in you because you are an exchange student and because you are from the U.S. You may be invited to homes or to talk at special functions. As soon as your language is good enough, take every opportunity to accept these invitations. This is a great chance to be an ambassador and to share pictures and stories from home. But be careful in comparing the U.S. and your host country; do not make value judgments. If you are invited to a dinner, party, or other occasion where people make a special effort for you, write a thank you note afterwards. Bring postcards from home to send with a few lines of appreciation.
- E. **Contact From Home.** You should stay in contact with you parents and friends, but spending too much time on the phone or writing letters can withdraw you from your environment. Share your letters from home with your host family, and encourage them to write to your parents. This will ease your parents' concerns about not knowing the family to which they have entrusted you.

## 6. Successful Cultural Adjustment

Adjusting to a new culture can be a powerful learning tool. Although you may suffer temporary frustration, discomfort, and anxiety, these feelings can facilitate self-understanding and personal development. Half the battle is won by understanding your feelings, and the other half won by using your cultural sensitivities to make the adjust a positive experience. The following characteristics will help you adapt readily to a new culture:

- A. **Awareness of Self.** You need a positive self-image and an ability to adapt. You need to be emotionally stable in situations that challenge personal feelings. Self-awareness allows you to act positively rather than react negatively to a strange environment.
- B. **Awareness of Others.** A tolerance of differences makes it easier to understand others.
- C. **Awareness of Circumstances.** If you look, listen, and appropriately imitate, you will be able to pick up behavior patterns more quickly, communicate more effectively, and establish good relationships.

## 7. Coping With a New Language

Being an exchange student is one of the easiest ways to learn a new language. Do not be embarrassed about what you don't know; be proud of what you can say even if it is only a few words. Think of the foreign students you have known. You have not been embarrassed for them trying to speak English, but rather have wanted to help them learn. People will love you for trying their language. Learn a few new words every day, repeating them several times out loud and trying to use them. Ask people to speak slowly and clearly for you. Keep a foreign language/English dictionary handy. Don't be afraid to ask people to repeat what they said; that is better than misunderstanding them.

## 8. Your Money and Your Budget

Discuss your money situation with your family openly. They can help suggest if a bank account is appropriate, help you understand the relative cost of items, and help budget your spending. It is a good idea to keep track of how you spend your money, and, if you are there for 11 months, that you do not spend more than 1/11th of your funds each month. Jobs are often scarce overseas, so don't go with the expectation that you can earn extra cash by baby-sitting, yard work, etc. Keep in mind that your host family does not receive any money for inviting you into their home, and hosting can lead to significant additional expenses. So if they want to restrict the amount of milk you drink, and your host sibling can't afford to go the movies with you every weekend, respect their financial limitations.

## 9. Religious Choice

We hope that if your host family attends religious services, that you will consider attending with them as part of your learning and living experience. If you are of a different faith, you may prefer to go to a church of your own following. However, remember that families are not trying to change student's beliefs, only expose them to new experiences. Try to be sensitive to your host family's religious feelings. Your family may want to introduce you to youth groups within their church even if you attend another. Consider this an excellent opportunity for new friends and activities.

## 10. Seeking Help and Advise

You are encouraged to contact your program representative in the host country for advice, as a sounding board, as a mediator, or as a decision maker. Be open and candid with communications with your representative, expressing small problems or concerns before they become big ones. In this way your representative can keep abreast of you and your family, and help avoid possible areas of misunderstanding. It is important to identify exact problems, determine the causes, and develop alternatives. Representatives are trained to help you do this, since this can be hard to do when you are in the middle of the situation.

Moving a student is a last resort after student, family, and representative have tried all other channels to work out the problem. It is important to understand that most moves are made because the family and student are not a good match. The family is not "bad", nor is the student. If a student needs to move, they almost always make excellent adjustments in their new home, often because they have already learned a lot from the first experience. If a move is made, it is critical that the student and host family not discuss the situation with anyone outside of the immediate ATAD support staff.

## 11. TOPHAT

T = Talk, communicate, share

O = Obey, follow family rules

P = Participate, do what the family does, join in

H = Help, do your share of the chores

A = Affection, show affection

T = Trust, show that you respect your parents' judgment

## **WRAP-UP AND EVALUATION**

Have students fill in an “*Evaluation Form*” and leave them with you before leaving. Have discussion leaders, Returnees, and Internationals fill in a “*Staff Evaluation*”.

HAVE THE STUDENTS STRAIGHTEN UP THE ROOM BEFORE THEY LEAVE.

Thank the students, Internationals and Returnees for coming, and for their attention and participation throughout the day. Reinforce the availability of their Program Chair if they have any further questions.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP THROUGHOUT THIS ORIENTATION!**

## STUDENT EVALUATION

Group discussions were: helpful \_\_\_\_, some value \_\_\_\_, no value \_\_\_\_, boring \_\_\_\_, exciting \_\_\_\_, interesting \_\_\_\_, other:

Discussion leader was: helpful \_\_\_\_, no help \_\_\_\_, friendly \_\_\_\_, too serious \_\_\_\_, informative \_\_\_\_, fun \_\_\_\_, other:

Internationals/Returnees were: helpful \_\_\_\_, no help \_\_\_\_, friendly \_\_\_\_, informative \_\_\_\_, detached \_\_\_\_, fun \_\_\_\_, other:

Accommodations were: good \_\_\_\_, OK \_\_\_\_, poor (why):

The most important thing I learned was:

The least useful part of orientation was:

Additional comments:



## STAFF EVALUATION

Discussions were: successful \_\_\_\_, boring \_\_\_\_, too long \_\_\_\_, answered questions \_\_\_\_,  
got students thinking \_\_\_\_, not enough adult help \_\_\_\_, too structured \_\_\_\_,  
students didn't pay attention \_\_\_\_, other:

Students were: enthusiastic \_\_\_\_, OK \_\_\_\_, trouble \_\_\_\_, interested \_\_\_\_, bored \_\_\_\_,  
other:

Structure / organization was: too structured \_\_\_\_, disorganized \_\_\_\_, knew my expectations \_\_\_\_,  
uncertain of responsibilities \_\_\_\_, material well organized \_\_\_\_, material hard to follow \_\_\_\_,  
other:

Accommodations were: good \_\_\_\_, OK \_\_\_\_, poor (why?):

Additional comments and suggestions for improvement:

# PARENTS SESSION

## AO PARENTS INFORMATIONAL SESSION

LEADER'S NOTE: Handouts are included for and “*Two Cultures Together*”, “*General Information*”, “*What to Pack*”, and “*Sending Money Overseas*”. Encourage the parents to ask their students to see all the material they have received during the day, and to read this material.

PURPOSE: To provide parents with specific information from the Program Chairs about their child's travel arrangements, overseas contacts, and possibly about host families. To also provide parents with general information about the exchange program and the adjustments their child will go through, and to help them learn how to let go so their child can fully enjoy the experience.

I. Welcome the parents and introduce yourself and any staff. Introduce the session by saying:

*Orientation is part of the educational support offered by ATAD to students and parents prior to and during the exchange experience. The purpose of this session is to give you a better understanding of the program, answer your questions, and talk about how to “let your child go” on the exchange program.*

If there is an International or Returnee available in your group, have them relate some information about the country the students are going to, using the Realistic Expectations Session as a reference.

Using the orientation schedule, briefly review the sessions and their content. Highlight any items that may be of impact to the parents. You may want the IS or Returnee to participate here and discuss comments or concerns raised by the students throughout the day.

Hand out and review “*Two Cultures Together*” as a synopsis of the day's orientation.

II. Not all Americans going overseas will have been placed in a host family at the time of this orientation. The parents of those students which have not been placed may be getting anxious and concerned. Tell the parents that:

*Every attempt is made to place your son or daughter with a host family in a timely manner. As soon as placement is made, the overseas coordinator will contact our Program Chair with the details of the host family, address, and phone number. One must remember that not all cultures are as “time oriented” as the United States, so it may not be as important in some areas to have the final placement of our students as early as some parents would like to see. Also, it is a difficult process to find just the right host family for a student, a process ATAD has been struggling with in Rochester since we do not have an over abundance of families wanting to host. So finding that right family does take some time.*

Reassure the parents that ALL STUDENTS WILL HAVE A HOST FAMILY PRIOR TO THEIR DEPARTURE.

Have the parents break apart into groups with their Program Chairs. For those parents whom the Program Chair is not present, the leader will discuss similar, but more generic, information with these parents in a separate group. Each group will review flight schedules and dates, overseas contacts, assigned host families, and other country specific information.

After about 15 minutes, call the group back together. Assure that all students have their passports and visas. Have the parents make a copy of these documents and keep them at home. If for some reason one of the students does not have a passport, or cannot locate their passport, they can receive one in a few days by calling Travel Agenda at 221-265-7887. This organization will stand in the lines in New York City to obtain a passport within 3 days for a fee of approximately \$75.

Ask if there are other questions the parents have about the country to which their child will be going. At the end of the discussion, give the Program Chairs an opportunity to return to the student discussion groups, leave, or remain with the parents' group. Assure all parents have the telephone number of their Program Chair before they leave.

### III. Recognize how the parents might feel as their child departs by saying:

*It can sometimes be difficult to let our children grow up and make decisions for themselves. Letting go of a child is hard and a little frightening/worrisome. This is an opportunity for you to let your child know that you believe in them and trust their ability to make good judgments.*

Discuss with the parent what their role can be in this experience:

1. Communicate with your son/daughter before leaving and after returning home. There should only be 2-3 phone calls during a summer stay overseas: 1 when the student arrives, 1 in the middle of the stay, and 1 before returning home. Phone calls to year/semester students should be no more frequent than every 3 weeks. Too frequent of phone calls leave the student homesick and too dependent on the natural family; it interferes in the adjustment process to their new family. Write letters instead to stay in touch.
2. Support the positive, be positive about the negative. The experience is tough at times, so is growing up and being a teenager at home.

Be positive in your letters. Let your child know what is happening at home, both positive and negative. Do not overreact to the initial letters of homesickness, and when answering such letters, encourage your child to deal with it by relying on their own resourcefulness. As the exchange experience proceeds, usually the frequency of letters diminishes. During a year or semester exchange, there may be several letters the first month, and then a decrease by one letter every month after that. Consider that as an encouraging sign that your child has adjusted well and is having fun.

3. Communicate with ATAD if you have concerns. Parents cannot help the student by communicating directly with them. Let the program representatives overseas who understand the culture help the student. Let us who understand the exchange experience help you. Trust us.

4. Let ATAD or the person you designated as your emergency contact know when you will be out of town. In case of an emergency we assure contact within 24 hours. Students overseas also let their representatives know when they will be gone.
5. Inform yourselves by reading all ATAD materials.

Conclude by saying that a good way to understand both sides of the experience is to host an International Student. In that way you can live and enjoy the same experiences as your son or daughter through the experiences of your International Student.

IV. Move into the next session by saying:

*As we sit here today and talk about how to prepare our child and ourselves for this upcoming exchange experience, it may seem a little premature to talk about how to adjust to their return home. But re-entry adjustment is just as important as the adjustment process overseas, and sometimes can be more difficult.*

Continue by saying:

*You will be giving your child a unique opportunity to live with another family, learn about a new way of life, and accept new and different customs. The result is a different child will return: self-reliant, more mature, broader outlook on life, able to speak another language. One of the returned student's complaints is "My family doesn't understand me".*

*When a person lives in another country for a significant amount of time, attitudes and outlook usually change. Many aspects of his home country will also change, such as the attitudes of family and friends, and the physical environment as it is remembered. A student who is successful in adjusting to a new culture may have difficulties readjusting to the home culture, often because it was not anticipated that this would require an adjustment.*

Discuss some of the concerns an exchange student may have when they return home.

1. Reactions of friends to the "new me"
2. Fitting back into the family
3. Being treated like a child after having experienced more independence
4. Missing the host country, host family, and new friends

Parents need to be aware of re-entry, treat it as a normal part of the adjustment process, and be prepared to help their child. The most important part is to just be there to listen and empathize.

V. Review with the parents some rules and expectations of the ATAD exchange program. Remind them:

*Each of you have signed a Parent/Student Agreement for your son or daughter to participate in this exchange program. We would like to briefly review some of the expectations over which the parents have some control, and which tend to cause the most difficulty for ATAD and its students.*

1. Visits by Natural Family and Friends are Discouraged. Such a visit can create a difficult situation for your son or daughter and for the host family. The adjustment process is a delicate and complex one. A visit could put strain on your child and interrupt adjustment to the new family and culture. Even at the end of the stay is a difficult time to visit and “take your child away” from the host family. The process of saying good-bye is as delicate as the bonding process. Your child needs the opportunity to say their good-byes to their family by themselves, which is critical to future relationships with this second family that has become very important to them.
2. Student Travel. For their own safety, students are not permitted to travel by themselves. If for some reason students will be traveling without their host family, there are several people within the organization that must give permission for such travel. Please be sure to refer the Parent/Student Agreement if such an occasion should arise.

V. This section will cover questions parents will have about preparing their child for departure. Pass out “*General Information*” and discuss each topic area.

Parents will also have questions about other topics, which will have been reviewed with their students. Spend a short amount of time discussing these topics with the parents, but let them know that their child has more details and handouts to share with them:

1. Gifts. It is suggested that the students take a small gift for the immediate members of their host family. These do not need to be costly items. The students have been given a list of suggested items to take. Students should also consider bringing ingredients and/or recipes to make a “typical” American dish for their host family. Their host family will be very appreciative of the special effort made by the student to share a small part of America with them. So parents may need to give their son or daughter a brief cooking lesson before they leave!
2. ATAD Contacts and Phone Numbers. Students have been provided a list of phone numbers of ATAD contacts. Be sure to keep a copy of this list at home if you do not already have these phone numbers.

In addition, a handout is provided for “*Sending Money Overseas*”. Distribute this handout and discuss.

VI. Ask the parents if there are any other questions, concerns, or advice that any parents can provide to the group. Make a note any issues discussed so these can be included in future orientations.

Conclude this session by saying:

*Hopefully we have been able to answer many of the questions you had, as well as provide you with information that will make you feel more comfortable in letting your child go on the program. We trust this will be an exciting and rewarding experience for your child as well as for everyone in your family. We hope you will remember ATAD with fond memories, keep in touch, and consider continuing your relationship with our international family through hosting an exchange student in the future.*

Thank the parents for coming, and tell them that ATAD staff will be available to address any other questions or concerns they may have.

# Two Cultures Together



# Association for Teen-Age Diplomats

## **Adjustment: A Process of Learning**

For exchange students, adjusting to a new family in a new culture is often a process of ups and downs. It is both an exciting adventure and hard work, at times with discouraging moments. But it is a unique opportunity that will stay with and shape the future life of your child.

Like the anticipation of any important event in life, exchange students and their families usually begin with great excitement and expectations. After a time, these feelings give way to more normal and routine acceptance of daily life. Sometimes this adjustment process is smooth flowing and natural, and sometimes rather bumpy. There may be periods of frustration, confusion, homesickness, and loneliness. Sometimes these periods last for hours, sometimes for days, and in a few instances for weeks. A letter from home, a birthday, or a special holiday can all unlock unexpected feelings in the adjustment process.

High and low points are a part of everyone's life. But the feelings may be deepened if they take place while one is in strange surroundings. Adjustment to life in a different culture is not easy, but it is the learning about oneself in a new culture that the greatest personal growth of an exchange student takes place. One former exchange student summarized his skills and personal development this way: "I have learned to solve differences with other people, to appreciate my own family, as well as my host family, to behave around different kinds of people, to look at my own ideas in relation to others. Now I am more sure of myself, knowing how to make better decisions."

Attitude is the most important factor in the adjustment process for both students and families. For students, cross-cultural living is often seen as an adventure. As students adjust, they often see that the environment is not changing, but rather their own attitudes are as they learn to get along under a new set of living conditions.

## **Steps in the Learning Process**

There are three major steps one must take to learn while going through the adjustment process. The first is having the self-confidence to try something new. It means risking one's behavior and beliefs. It also means opening oneself up to feeling inadequate and silly. One student put it like this: "When you get there, you have to be friends. Don't be afraid to ask questions, to make mistakes. You have to talk even if you talk wrong because in saying wrong things you will learn." It is not easy to take the risk; it is uncomfortable, but the reward is worth the effort.

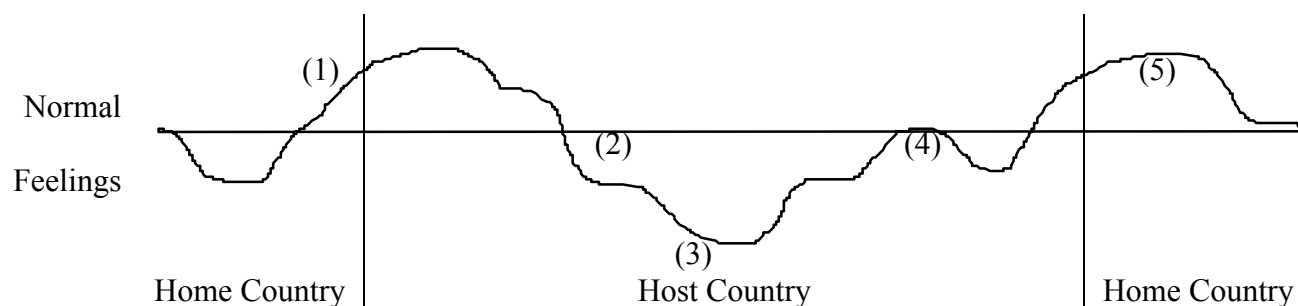
The second step is actually learning from what one sees and hears and tries. It means that the strange customs a student first sees eventually become logical through the understanding of values and beliefs in the host culture. Exchange students can understand another culture by learning to see events through the eyes of their hosts. One student says: "I am giving value to things that didn't have any value for me before."

The third step is, in the words of another student, “to learn to open up your mind and keep it open”. Keeping one’s mind open is one of the most frequent pieces of advice from former exchange students and host families. It means having an attitude that behaviors and ways of thinking are logical in the culture where they are practiced. To get along with another culture, one must put aside one’s own value judgments. It is the goal of ATAD to foster greater international understanding among people.

## Ups and Downs of Adjustment

The adjustment cycle can be thought of as a process of ups and downs throughout the exchange experience:

1. The student is excited with the thought of departure from home and arrival in the host country, and all the new discoveries of the first few weeks.
2. As the student becomes more accustomed to the new life, emotions become more normal.
3. Students may experience depression at some point, after life has become routine, if they are not adjusting well to their new family or culture, or often around holidays. This is when students begin to think a lot about “home” and old friends.
4. Student has adapted and now feels fully “at home” in the host country, going through the normal small ups and downs of daily life.
5. During the end of the school year or the end of the stay there is a lot of excitement with school activities and parties, as well as the excitement of the anticipation of returning home to see one’s family and friends again.



Returning to step 3, this phase of the student’s emotions is referred to as “culture shock”. It is a time when the student is overloaded with the new things he or she must know and do in the new culture. It is a time when the lack of a familiar support system, such as the natural family and friends, can cause feelings of loneliness and isolation. All of us feel some “lows” and sadness at some times, but when students begin to suffer from culture shock, it is very important that they quickly understand their emotions and how to respond to them. Some indications of culture shock include:

1. Getting annoyed at host family rules, expectations, behaviors.
2. Don’t communicate; isolate themselves in their room.
3. Unexpected over reaction to situations.
4. A lot of time spent thinking about natural family and friends.
5. Comparing things and events to those in home country, thinking that everything is better at “home”.

This is the time when students must talk to and share their feelings with their host families and host country friends. To overcome the depression these situations can cause, the student needs to recognize what is causing the bad feelings. If not, the reaction could be anger and a lack of communication. Some ways to overcome and minimize these feelings include:

1. Go out, get involved, do things - don't stay in your room.
2. Don't spend hours writing letters home.
3. Join a club or activity.
4. Talk to host family and Program Chair.
5. Set small goals that you can accomplish by yourself as: how to travel on your own, how to say a new phrase, identify one new person whom you are going to say "Hi" to.
6. Ask your host family for help to accomplish these goals; the whole family can benefit by working through the depression of culture shock.

### **Advice for Natural Families**

You, like parents of all other exchange students before you, will receive letters from your child, and will have a unique opportunity to offer positive support. The most important advice to keep in mind is to not overreact to a letter when your child is discouraged or homesick. By the time you receive the letter, your teenager will probably have worked out those feelings and be involved in a new adventure, full of enthusiasm and good feelings.

As hard as it may be to let go of your child, it is important to let the cultural or adjustment problems that arise be worked out independently. You can offer valuable support by helping your child build on the strengths you have given him. It is not helpful to your child to try to solve the problems for him. Write back to your child ways to analyze and handle such situations. Reassure him with your confidence in his ability to solve problems. Encourage the use of the host family and ATAD support systems overseas.

The teenage years are ones of rapid growth and change for youths. Gaining independence, learning to make good decisions, and problem solving are all skills that young people need for their adult lives. Growing up at home is not always easy, nor is it painless. Neither will it be in another country when they are also adjusting to an entirely new cultural environment. You indeed should be proud of your teenager for taking the challenge of tackling so many things at once, and continue to encourage through your love and support.

Understanding the factors involved in cultural adjustment should reassure you that your son or daughter is going through a normal process of learning and growth. Like your child, you saw in the challenge of being an exchange student a wonderful opportunity for growth and independence. Throughout the experience you will have the unique opportunity to view that maturation process through letters filled with ever increasing insights and valuable observations. As parents, your skills in interpreting, understanding, giving perspective, showing support, and encouraging independent problem solving will help your entire family through this exciting growth process.



# General Information



# Association for Teen-Age Diplomats

## PACKING AND LUGGAGE

Specific information on luggage can be obtained from the airline after you receive your flight information. In general, you will be allowed two pieces of "check-in" luggage (luggage that the airline carries in the cargo area) and one piece of "carry-on" luggage that should fit under the seat. Weight and dimension restrictions may be imposed on both "check-in" and "carry-on" luggage. However, luggage information and restrictions vary from airline to airline and as a function of country, so you should contact the specific airline you will be flying. Be sure to let the airline know the final country of destination when talking with them.

The clothing students take depends upon the length of stay and the climate of the host country. A good rule of thumb is to pack what you think you will need, then take out half of what you packed! **YOU WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO DEAL WITH YOUR OWN LUGGAGE AT SOME POINT....** perhaps at an airport, train, or bus station. Be sure they are light enough to handle all bags by yourself. For students going for a year, it might be necessary for parents to ship winter clothing at a future date. A box containing a coat, gloves, and sweaters can normally be shipped for \$30, but will take 6 weeks to get there. So plan ahead. ATAD has prepared a check list to use when packing, which is attached. Use it so you don't forget that one essential item that you really wanted to take! If you have anything to add to the list, let us know for future students.

Be sure that your bags are well marked with your name, U.S. address, and the name and address of your host family. Students generally find that on returning to the U.S. that they are over the luggage weight limit due to purchased items, gifts, souvenirs, etc. Plan to sort out what you won't need immediately upon returning home and send it back home by surface mail. Year students who must contend with seasonal changes should plan to use surface mail.

It is important to make sure your luggage is properly checked. Airline clerks are human and make mistakes. It is your responsibility, and do not be embarrassed to do so, to check that the flight number and destination are properly shown on the baggage tag. You will receive a claim check which you must keep until you have claimed your luggage. Some airports require checking and surrender of the luggage claim ticket before you can leave the baggage claim area.

Unfortunately, luggage does get lost or delayed. You should include in your carry-on bag: a change of clothes, toiletries, a small amount of money, and any medication you are taking with you.

A word of caution when going or coming.... do not under any circumstances agree to carry anything through customs for anyone else, especially a stranger. Narcotics, gems, and other contraband are sometimes smuggled by using this ruse. Do not take the risk of becoming involved in such an operation.

## **TRAVEL**

Plane tickets and your passport should be carried in a very safe place such as an inside pocket or pouch around the neck. Never carry them in your luggage. You can be asked for them at any time by government or airline personnel. Money and travelers checks should be separated into a couple of different areas as a pocket and a pouch.

Before departure, be sure you have a written record of the name and address of your contacts, here and abroad, and the places and times of encounter. Your contact in the country where you will reside should be contacted if you have a question or problem after you depart the U.S.

If you have a flight ticket for your return to the U.S., store it in a very secure place (often the program chair person overseas will take your airline ticket at the airport and keep it for you until your return). Do not take the risk of losing it. On the other hand, your passport must be carried on your person at all times, except obvious impractical occasions such as swimming.

## **PURCHASES OVERSEAS**

According to the U.S. Customs Law, persons traveling outside of North America may bring back \$400 worth of goods duty free to the United States. Therefore, given the amount of money you are taking with you, no one should have customs problems upon their return. Additionally, if you think your baggage will be overweight and wish to send gifts home instead of carrying them back, you may send gifts up to \$25 in value home duty free, provided you write on the outside of the package "Unsolicited gift - Value under \$25.00". All items purchased in a foreign country, even if used as clothing or a radio, are subject to U.S. customs upon your return. Some foreign countries have a law against exporting certain items as electronics, furs, or crystal, whether for personal use or as gifts. Be sure to check the local laws before purchasing such items.

## **MEDICAL AND INSURANCE**

If any inoculations are needed for the country you are going to, you will be notified. Be sure, however, no matter what program you are on that your tetanus inoculation is up to date. All inoculations should be recorded in the International Certificate of Vaccination, a yellow booklet that may be obtained from the Monroe County Department of Health or passport office.

Dental work and eyeglasses prescriptions should be taken care of before leaving. If you will be carrying a medical prescription with you when going overseas, obtain a letter from your doctor giving permission to carry and self-administer this prescription. Carry this permission letter with the medication.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield under your parent's family plan is world wide. Ordinarily doctors abroad will not be willing to file insurance claims. So if you require medical attention while overseas, you should pay the bill, have it acknowledged in writing by the doctor, and then submit it through your insurance at home. The doctor's acknowledgment can be a receipted bill or a statement on letterhead stationary explaining the diagnosis, the treatment rendered, and the type of currency and date it is settled.... ALL IN ENGLISH.

Student coverage under Blue Cross and Blue Shield family plan terminates on a child's nineteenth birthday. Continuous coverage can be maintained, however, if the student expresses their desire for single coverage within 120 days of their nineteenth birthday.

## **LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

Students in both summer and year programs report that the lack of fluency in the host country's language is the biggest obstacle faced during the stay abroad. Between now and your departure do whatever you can to become familiar with the language. Tapes are available in many languages for self instruction. They can be a very good investment, or borrow tapes from your local library. A phrase book will also prove useful, especially for common place matters such as the time of day, location of city hall, etc. We urge you to take along a small pocket dictionary and don't hesitate to use it. Don't be embarrassed as your hosts will admire you all the more for trying to learn.

Take the time before you go to brush up on the geography, economics, politics, history, ethnic background, art, literature, and music of your host country. No one expects you to be a walking encyclopedia, but some appreciation of the interesting or unique aspects of the host country's culture will earn you high praise.

Brush up on current events here in the U.S. so you can talk intelligently about them. Have opinions of your own and don't hesitate defending them, but refrain from being a critic of government and politics. Smoking and drinking are much more liberal in foreign countries, so some of the attitudes reinforced by SADD or non-smoking alliances may not be appropriate to strongly voice. Remember you are a Teen-Age Diplomat.

## **CUSTOMS AND BEHAVIOR**

You have been chosen as a teen-age diplomat because you exhibit certain characteristics and traits.

1. You have maturity and therefore are able to give up little things to make big things successful.
2. You are able to discipline yourself and we are confident that once knowing, you will do what is right.
3. You have tact and therefore will think before speaking.

Let these attributes continue to guide your behavior during your stay overseas. Observe the customs of your host family and adapt to them as quickly as possible. In some countries, for example, formal greeting with a handshake is customary first thing in the morning, especially with regard to the parents and older family members. Likewise on retiring, a good night greeting all around may be expected.

Make yourself a part of the family even though the language may be new to you and strange at first. Make a determined effort to take part in conversation, particularly at meal time. In many countries, meal times are important family times, and it is here that you will begin to really know your family.

Limit your letter writing home to avoid giving the impression that you are trying to withdraw from the family and its activities. As a suggestion, you might write a single letter home and then have your parents distribute copies to your friends and relatives. Make an effort to read the magazines and newspapers in the home. At first it may simply mean looking at the pictures, but when you find something interesting ask someone to help you with the words. They will love you the more for it, particularly if it is a younger family member.

In dress - be yourself. At the same time don't deviate so far from the mode of the area that you embarrass your family or offend local customs. If you are asked to avoid certain styles of dress or manner, try to adjust as graciously as possible. Avoid making a big issue of it.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

You will probably want to take pictures of your host family and area while overseas. You don't need an elaborate camera for this purpose, but if you plan to take a brand new camera, put it through a test roll before you leave. This will ensure that the camera is working properly and that you know how to use it.

Film is readily available around the world, but tends to be fairly expensive in more underdeveloped countries. If you carry unprocessed film in your luggage, be alert at airport security checks to make sure that your film is not exposed to X-rays that fog film. Carrying the film in a carry-on bag, and handing it to the inspection agents over the X-ray machine is often acceptable.

If you plan to take a foreign made camera overseas, it is advisable to register this camera with customs agents in the city from which your international flight begins. By registering the foreign camera, you will have no problem when you return as to whether or not the camera was purchased while you were overseas.

## **SPENDING MONEY**

For a summer program, \$400 is an appropriate amount of money to take for incidental expenses and gifts. However, due to fluctuation in the value of the dollar, \$500 might be a more realistic amount. Students traveling abroad for a year should take about \$800 in traveler's checks so they can establish a bank account in the country in which they will be living. A larger amount of money will be needed later in the year if the student plans to participate in school or local trips. Both summer and year students should find out from a bank in their locality about facilities to transfer funds from the U.S. to the foreign country of residence. If you are in a small town, the bank that will probably be able to arrange a transfer of funds will be located in the nearest big city.

Depending on the country in which you live, some can manage with less money, and some will need more. It is strongly recommended that you carry only a modest amount of cash and have the rest in traveler's checks. The service charge for traveler's checks is 1% and complete protection is provided against loss and theft. Some banks offer this service free of charge. You should carry a small amount of foreign currency for use en route. Chase Lincoln Bank offers Trip Packs for many countries, priced at about \$21.00, which contains approximately \$20.00 worth of small denomination notes and coins, currency conversion card, and information on tipping customs. Currency exchange can also be made at any international airport.

Quantities of any foreign currency, or some foreign traveler's checks can be ordered from International Departments at Chase Lincoln, Marine Midland, or Norstar. Remember that each time you convert to a foreign currency or back again, there is a shrinkage of approximately 5%. If you place a special order for foreign currency, you should allow at least two weeks for the bank to obtain the money.

# WHAT TO PACK

USE THIS LIST when you pack. Check off each item ONLY AFTER it is in your suitcase.

pouch containing:

- passport, visa, immunization certificate
- plane tickets
- travel itinerary
- copy of medical insurance card
- host family names, phone number, and address
- money, travelers checks, credit card

carry-on bag containing:

- phone numbers of contact people in host country
- luggage keys
- walkman, tapes, CDs, head phones, extra batteries
- magazine, book
- travel or hand held electronic game
- gum, candy, snacks
- medication (with doctor's permission to carry)
- change of clothes
- essential toiletries

wallet

- copy of passport and visa
- copy of airplane ticket numbers
- addresses and birthdates of friends and relatives
- ATAD contact list and materials
- natural family's agenda for summer vacations
- time changes
- stationary, envelopes, pen
- post cards for thank you notes
- foreign language dictionary
- journal
- camera, film, and extra batteries
- gifts for host family
- recipe, ingredients, measuring cups/spoons to make meal or treat for host family
- pictures of family, home, friends, etc.
- foreign power converter
- musical instrument
- sports equipment

- jeans, 1-2 pairs dress slacks
- shorts
- T-shirts, sweatshirts, sweaters
- 2-3 good shirts, blouses, tops
- jacket (light and heavy weight), gloves, hat
- dress, slip, stockings
- sneakers, boots, sandals, 1 pair nice shoes
- underwear, socks
- pajamas, nightgown, robe, slippers
- sports cup, jock strap
- swim suits
- baseball cap
- jewelry, watch
- belts
- case for toiletries
- glasses, contacts, sunglasses
- contact lens cup and chemicals
- suntan lotion, moisturizer, body powder
- hair ties, barrettes
- perfume, after shave lotion
- make-up, acne medicine, soap
- face towel
- deodorant
- shampoo, rinse, hair spray, moose
- comb, pick, brush
- curling iron
- tooth brush and paste
- aspirin
- tampons, napkins
- nail file, clippers, scissors, tweezers
- nail polish and remover
- razor, shaving lotion
- Q-Tips
- Chap Stick
- cotton balls
- insect repellent
- Unguentine, Bactine

Hair Dryer - There is not enough power in most foreign power converters to run hair blow dryers. It is recommended one be purchased overseas, or perhaps the host family has one to use if only needed occasionally.

## SENDING MONEY OVERSEAS

<b>Method</b>	<b>Relative Expense</b>	<b>Waiting Period</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Send traveler's checks with student	Inexpensive (purchasing fee)	None	HIGHLY RECOMMENDED
Send cash with student or by mail	None	Time for mail and collection period	DO NOT ATTEMPT - very risky, and sending cash by mail is illegal in many countries
Send personal check by mail	None	3-5 weeks	Not recommended - Bank can impose high collection and service fee. Long processing time since check has to be returned to U.S. for collection.
Send traveler's checks by mail	Inexpensive (purchasing fee)	Time for mail	Recommended - Traveler's checks should be made payable to student or host family. Sign and countersign before mailing. Recipient then endorses them upon cashing. SEND BY REGISTERED MAIL ONLY.
International postal money order	Inexpensive (servicing fee)	Time for mail	Recommended for Europe. Not recommended for South America.
Send cashier's check by mail	Inexpensive (servicing fee)	Time for mail	Recommended for Europe if check is drawn on international bank. Not recommended for South America.
Credit card for student	\$25-\$50 for card	None	Reservations - Even though student may be highly responsible, it becomes very easy to spend a lot of money in a foreign currency when it is readily available.
Western Union	\$25-\$50	None to 2 days depending on country	Recommended but more expensive and less convenient since student must go to Western Union office to receive funds.
Bank-to-bank transfers	\$10-\$30	Minimum of 3-5 business days	Need existing account with international bank (Chase Lincoln).