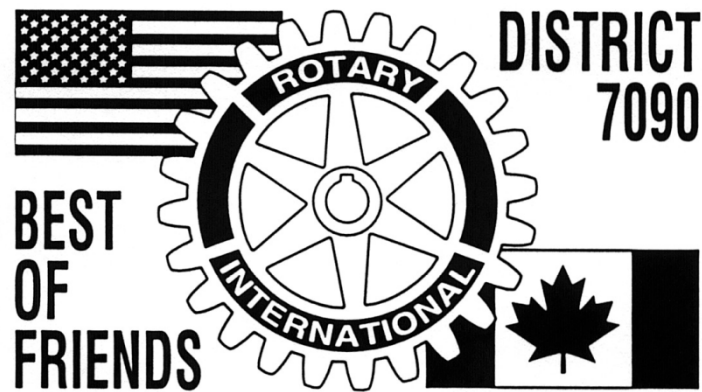


# The Exchange Student Guide:

Surviving and Thriving during Your Year Abroad



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Please remember that we are **all** willing to assist you!

LETTER FROM Jill Norton  
District 7090 YOUTH EXCHANGE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Dear Student,

As Rotarians of District 7090 we welcome you to the Rotary International Youth Exchange Program and wish you the greatest success in this Rotary Youth Exchange year. We will do everything possible to help you have a great year.

Our experience has shown us that no matter what we do for you, the real basis for success is what you do for yourself. It's up to you, but it's not about you. I want; therefore, to outline a few issues that you need to consider.

**First**, you are going abroad to learn another culture. Even if English is the language of that country, you will have a problem of cultural adjustment. After the first two or three weeks, the excitement of your "arrival" will disappear and you will be truly on your own.

The realization of this may be depressing, but the feeling is temporary. It is also part of the youth exchange experience as it is with life. There may be other initial adjustment problems, but every student has them.

How you deal with these feelings and problems will determine the kind of year you have. Talk about them to your host parents or with your counselor. But whatever you do about them, don't hide in your room. Go out and meet your hosts and actively assert yourself in the life of your new community.

If you are going to a country that speaks a foreign language, then you need to commit yourself to learning that language. As an ambassador you need to respect the culture and language of your host country and you cannot expect them to make an exception for you to speak to you in English. You will need to learn the language of your own accord, you can't assume that they will teach you the language. It is up to you to do what is required to learn it.

**Second**, you must obey the rules set for you. A copy of the Rotary rules is included in this manual. During your orientation, these rules will be reviewed. Although these rules are similar to those used elsewhere in the Rotary world, your host district, club and parents may have other rules. These regulations are established to help you experience the youth exchange program to its fullest potential. Please follow them! There is one rule that is occasionally misunderstood and we need you to fully understand it. This concerns travel. You are not going abroad to travel widely in neighboring countries, but to understand the culture of the country you have been placed. Another culture. Many Rotary districts do not allow widespread travel because of local conditions. You may, therefore, be expected to limit or cancel your travel plans according to their wishes.

**Third**, parents. You will soon have a new set of parents, followed by a third or fourth set. This means that communicating and behaving as a member of a family is critical. We expect your writing skills, as well as your verbal skills, will be exercised accordingly! We ask that your natural parents write rather than telephone you, particularly during the first three months after your arrival. If they do write, they should avoid lamenting about your absence or conveying unhappy news.

Some natural parents like to visit their children. We would prefer that your parents stay at home, but if they must visit please encourage them to delay their visit until the end of your year; otherwise, your adjustment to the new culture and to your host families may be delayed.

**Finally**, there are some entry shocks and there are re-entry shocks. We have found that very often the most difficult adjustment occurs when you return home - your dreary, unchanging home! You will have spent a year as the center of attention and all your natural parents will think of when you return is your taking out the garbage! They will also have changed imperceptibly and you will have changed perceptibly. **You** will have to adjust to this. So prepare yourself before coming home. Always remember that change is now a part of your life. Also remember what your parents sacrificed to give you this opportunity.

Lastly, remember that they actually do appreciate the changes you are undergoing – they too have managed huge change in their lives – the only difference being that theirs may have occurred over many years instead of one intense year. None the less, they have comparable life experiences.

While you are abroad, your host club should appoint a counselor to help you. The counselor's duties are described in one of the documents you received with this packet. If the relationship with your counselor isn't what you would like it to be, please advise your host club's Youth Exchange Officer. If there are any ROTEX students in your community, they may be able to help you with any problems you might have.

At any rate, if you have problem, try and work it out. If you can't, don't turn into an ostrich and stick your head in the sand. Ask someone for advice! If you have problems you cannot solve, direct them to the vice-chair. His/her name is listed on your stationery.

In summary, rules and instructions aside, you live in one of the most wonderful areas of North America. We expect you to tell the world about us and represent us as quality ambassadors for both Canada and the United States. As quality ambassadors, we expect you to report back to us for the placement evaluations that our vice-chairs make annually. As a Youth Exchange Student you are required to make these reports as well as report to your host and sponsoring clubs. Work at being a good ambassador and you will have the greatest year of your life! We all wish you the best of luck abroad.

Sincerely,  
Jill Norton  
District 7090 Youth Exchange Chairperson

# Introduction - Building a Strong Foundation

## ***Congratulations!***

Welcome to the Rotary International Youth Exchange Program!

You are about to embark on one of the most exciting and challenging years of your life. You will be traveling to a distant country and most of you will be learning a new language. You will be learning a new culture with traditions and customs that are different from what you have come to know.

This will be a special year for you, but it will also be frustrating and stressful. You will be dealing with many challenges and you will find that your emotions are more intense. You will reach a new level of maturity that may surprise even your closest friends and family.

This guide has been developed using a variety of resources, including past manuals, a variety of books, internet web sites, Rotary International publications, past student reports, Rotary member experiences, etc. It is based on the experiences of hundreds of exchange students over several decades.

Your exchange will be unique. You may have to deal with a problem that is not covered here. By seeing how others have coped with various situations, you can learn how to handle your own situations.

Your year abroad will be a life-changing experience. You can be proud that you have undertaken this challenge.

## ***Characteristics of an Exchange Student***

You have completed an extensive selection process that has included interviews and a lengthy application. You have been highly recommended by your local Rotary Club. In addition, the Rotary District 7090 Youth Exchange Committee has carefully screened you to make sure you have the qualities necessary for a successful year abroad.

You have displayed enthusiasm for the program. In addition, you have shown us the self-confidence to make wise decisions on your own. You are flexible enough so that you can adapt to a new culture.

As an exchange student, you likely are naturally sociable. You have shown the ability to communicate well with both adults and fellow students. We are confident that you will do well in situations where teamwork and trust are required. You have the potential to be a leader among your peers.

Most importantly, you have demonstrated a sense of adventure and a desire to try new things. You will take full advantage of the opportunities that you will encounter during the next year.

## ***Your Special Status***

Now that you have been selected as an exchange student, you may find that it becomes your new identity. People may say, “She’s the one who is going to Finland,” or “He’s not going to be around next year.” They may forget all about your other activities and accomplishments.

People will treat you differently. Your family will be excited about helping you plan, but you may feel that they are doing too much (or not enough!). Your friends may be excited for you or they may feel that you are abandoning them for a year.

Of course, you also have new obligations. You will be attending several orientation events, so you may be missing what seemed like important high school activities. You should be visiting your sponsoring Rotary Club so that you can better understand Rotary and express your appreciation for the opportunity being provided to you. You are to be an ambassador so you must learn more about current events and the various perspectives people have toward them.

## ***Motivation and Focus for Your Exchange Year***

The exchange program is a contribution by Rotary to world understanding and peace. This goal is the reason that our many volunteers give their time, energy and enthusiasm to help you succeed in the program.

Differing interests motivated each of you to apply for the Rotary Exchange Program; however, the ultimate aim of your exchange is to become a part of another culture at its most fundamental level. You are to become a member of a family and participate with your peers in school and in the community. It is very important that you know and accept this as the primary goal of your exchange. By living out this goal you will become both student and teacher. You will learn the distinctive features of your new culture and your hosts will learn about your homeland by your demeanor.

## ***Anxiety is Normal!***

Many of you may have concerns about how you will cope with the new situations you will face. This is normal. In fact, your awareness can help you focus on areas of weakness during your preparations.

For instance, if you are worried about public speaking, ask your sponsoring Rotary Club for assistance. They can suggest a mentor who can give you hints and they can give you opportunities to practice in front of a familiar group.

Of course, you don’t want to get carried away with your fears. If you allow yourself to become overwhelmed with doubt, you will not be able to cope with the situations you face. The small problems will seem big and the more serious situations will seem insurmountable. Prepare ahead for the sorts of situations you may face so that you can deal with them as they come up.

If you have no qualms about spending a year in a strange country with a new family and friends, you may be kidding yourself. If you go thinking that everything is going to be just rosy, you won’t be prepared to cope with the uncertainties you will face. Be honest with yourself and become self-aware of your reservations and misgivings.

If you have any concerns that you would like to address, please let your sponsoring Rotary Club know, or speak to anyone at the District orientation activities.

## ***What You Can Expect to Gain***

Over the course of the next year, you can expect to gain much from your experience. Most of you will be learning a new language. More importantly, you will be learning to communicate in a new way, with deeper understanding of the role of communication in culture.

You may currently be quite independent, but your first experiences in the new country will cause you to be dependent on others once again. As you develop your language and communication skills, you will reach a new level – interdependence – where you will be able to see the tremendous advantages of being able to rely on yourself and others to reach common goals.

You will become more adaptable and flexible. You may find that the importance of relationships increases, while material things seem less important to you.

You will also be learning the many facets of your new culture. This will give you a new perspective on your own culture. You will find that your outlook on life will be much broader and you will be more likely to be independent in your thinking.

As Bettina Hansel said in The Exchange Student Survival Kit, “Your exchange year is likely to be a very intense, very emotional time. Your reward will be the relationships you build that can last a lifetime.”



## **From Past Exchange Students**

*“I brought a file with me that has all of the letters and information that we received before departing, and I read through them every so often. Everything that we were told about the exchange is true.”*

*“I realize how fortunate I was to receive the type of preparation I did. Everything that we were told of and taught about has been used many times in situations that we were told we might encounter. It made a lot of difficult situations easier to resolve because I had been told what to expect and how I should handle it.”*

*“What I've experienced here is incredible. I've learned things about myself and the world that no book or person could have ever taught me. Sure I've had times when I thought the world would end, but the bond of love, joy and happiness between friends, family and myself makes every minute of it worth it. I wouldn't trade this experience for the world and I would strongly recommend the program to all.”*

*“I realize how much this opportunity is going to affect me for the rest of my life. I can't imagine how anyone could live their life without such an experience. It is by far the best thing that has ever happened to me, and I want to share it with everyone.”*

*“From the moment I stepped off the plane, I knew this was the craziest thing I had ever done.”*

# Fitting In With Your New Family

Living with a host family gives you a tremendous advantage in learning your new culture. You will be able to learn your new language in a home setting and you will be able to absorb the way of life of your new country in a very natural way.

Unlike students in most exchange programs, Rotary Exchange Students typically stay with more than one family during their year abroad. No family is alike, so you will be able to experience the new culture from several points of view. Some families will have children while others may not. The hosting arrangements are entirely the responsibility of the host club. The usual arrangement is for you to be hosted by three or four different families, each for a three- or four-month period, but the host club may vary this at its discretion.

Families host students for many reasons. Some will be Rotary members while others will have an interest in international cultures. Some will have hosted many times before and others will be new to the program. No matter why your family is hosting, remember that they are opening their home to you and welcoming you into their family. You will learn far more about your new culture in a family setting than you could ever learn in any other way.

Occasionally, you may be hosted by a family that is trying to fulfill an obligation to Rotary. Some districts require the parents of exchange students to host an incoming student. In other cases, a Rotarian may feel it is his or her turn to host. Usually a family in this circumstance will warm up to you once they recognize the joys of hosting.

## ***Before You Go – Setting A Good Tone***

**Make Contact** - As soon as you have been notified of your acceptance and the name of your host Rotary Club, you should write to your host club counselor and first host family (usually identified on your Guarantee Form). Try to give them some personal and family details. Tell them about your interests and your activities in school. You may also want to ask about things like dress, school, climate and activities.

Try using your new language for part of your letters. Nobody will mind if you make mistakes. If you only use English, your hosts may think you aren't really trying to prepare.

While mail is the traditional form of communication, feel free to use e-mail or social media. If you are brave, there's no reason not to use the phone. Every opportunity should be taken to correspond often before departure as this helps tremendously in the initial settling in a new environment.

## ***Meeting Your Hosts***

Traveling to your host country is an exciting event. Of course, every student reacts differently to the tension of the flight – some cry, some sleep, some worry, some read (perhaps this guide!). However you deal with it, you will likely be tired and anxious when you get off the plane.

Some of you will be met by large committees with banners and flags. Rotarians might come to the airport, with all your host families. This may seem overwhelming, especially if you don't understand the language.

Others will be met only by your host family or even just your counselor. Don't be offended if only one or two people meet you. It will actually be easier for you to meet a few people at a time.

You may find that there is an uncomfortable silence after you have met everyone. This is normal. Everyone is nervous. Try to ask some simple questions to keep the conversation going (even if you don't really understand the answers).

Remember that it takes time to develop new relationships so don't expect instant warmth. Everything will come together for you – just relax and do your best during those awkward moments.

## ***Arrival and Settling Down***

The first few days may be filled with excitement for you or you may start to question whether you should have come. You are in a totally new situation with very little that is familiar. Take your time settling down. Arrange your room so that it is comfortable for you. Take time to talk with each of the members of your new family even if it is difficult with the new language.

What do you call your new host parents? You can call them "Mom" and "Dad" if it's comfortable for you, either in English or in your new language. Some parents will want you to use their first names. But call them something – ANYTHING! If you are unsure, simply ask. Settle this right away as communication is the key to all successful relationships!

Arrival will be the fulfillment of all your planning, and there will be an inevitable letdown when the excitement subsides. Your hosts will make every effort to welcome you into the family *but never forget that you are the one who must adjust*. This quality of flexibility was one of the criteria considered in selecting you to be an exchange student and you must be prepared to exercise it to the fullest. This means, for example, tolerating what may appear to be silly questions about your country or doing things as part of the family that you might not expect to do at home.

## ***Travel Fatigue***

You will likely find that you are unusually tired either upon arrival or soon after the excitement dies down. This is to be expected. Trying to speak a new language is very demanding and listening is even more exhausting. Your host family may have activities planned – sightseeing, welcome parties, school registration – and these can be both pleasant and stressful.

If you are having difficulty with the language, you may find that you tend to be more tired than normal for several weeks. Try to get more sleep than you would at home. If you find that you have more activities than you can handle, ask your host parents to help you make choices.

## ***Where Do You Fit In?***

You are instantly going to be a member of the family, right? Well, yes and no. Your host parents have assumed all the responsibilities that go with being a parent. They will worry about you, make sure you have enough to eat, and try to make you happy. They will offer you support in dealing with homesickness and other crises.

For a while, they may even try too hard, treating you more like a guest (or tourist) than like a son or daughter. Of course, you will want to do some sightseeing and this will give you something to do together that doesn't rely entirely on communication. But you must move on after a few days to live as a member of the family – eating together, doing chores, *and talking*. You are not living in a hotel, so don't let them treat you that way.

Do your best to participate in all the daily activities of family life. You are at the core of your host country's culture, so try to get an understanding of the differences between your new and old culture.

## ***House Rules***

One of the most difficult areas for many exchange students is to understand your new family's rules. You have grown up under a system of rules in your family that represents both your parents' values and your society's values. These rules have become second nature for you – you don't even realize that some of them exist.

Now you are going to find that the rules have changed. Some families take the time to explain their expectations and to help you understand their reasons. Remember that rules are normal in all families, so they are not trying to insult you or to exert authority over you. Using the first night questions really helps to start you off on the right foot.

Other families may just assume that you will behave in a “*proper*” way for a child of your age. The problem is that “*proper*” can have vastly different meanings depending on the culture. There may be rules about where you sit at dinner, whom you can be social with or where you can go without supervision that to you may seem very *foreign*. It's natural for you to make mistakes but try to understand them and learn from them.

Try to discuss the rules openly with your host parents. Some families will not expect much of you beyond keeping your room neat, while others will expect you to share various responsibilities. Accept willingly and cheerfully whatever may be assigned to you. Discover the times you are expected to be home at night. You will find that such understanding will go a long way to ensuring a pleasant stay. Also take time to discuss the Rotary rules with your host family shortly after arrival so that the rules are clear to everyone.

Never take your host family for granted. Do not assume that what you did here at home will automatically be accepted in your new culture. Your natural parents have had 15 plus years to grow to understand you. Your new host parents will have only weeks to do the same.

## ***You're Dependent Again***

You have worked hard throughout your life to become independent. In fact, you must be an independent sort of person to desire to be an exchange student. Independence is one of the characteristics Rotary Clubs look for in selecting an exchange student.

So why are you going straight into a situation where you are totally dependent on another family? Depending on your language skills, you may not be able to read or communicate any better than a baby. You won't be allowed to drive, so you will need someone to take you most places. You won't have any friends yet, so your entire social life will depend on your family at first.

This stage won't last long. As you make friends and develop your language skills, you will gradually rely less on your host family. You have the opportunity to reach a new level in your relationships, called *interdependence*, where you will see the advantages of working together to reach your common goals.

## ***Host Brothers and Sisters***

Most of you will be in families with siblings. You may become as close as natural brothers and sisters, but this isn't always the case. You may be good friends, rivals for attention or debaters on the differences between your countries. Some siblings may totally ignore you. As with any relationship, don't expect too much at first; it takes time to develop.

You may find that your host parents treat you differently than your host brothers or sisters. You may find that you are given the privileges of an adult, whereas your siblings are treated as children. If this seems to be a problem to you, talk with your host parents or your club counselor about it.

At first, your host brother or sister may be helping you to make friends at school. After a time, you will likely find that you become more popular. You will receive invitations to go places and do things. Remember to repay your siblings by trying to include them as much as possible in your activities.

## ***Making Adjustments***

Though your hosts will do their best to make you feel at home, you must be prepared to adapt to their ways; not the reverse. The family that you will be living with was a family unit before you came along. It is your responsibility to blend into their life; they should not have to change to accommodate you.

There are usually two points of view on most issues, so keep an open mind. Try to see the other point of view even if you do not agree. Above all, be tactful and diplomatic when your hosts express views contrary to your own.

Some students have complained their host families involved them too much and they just wanted some "peace and quiet." Others have the opposite complaint that there is not enough to do. If either situation develops, have a word with your host mom and dad. Do not be disturbed if you are somewhat homesick. It will pass, believe it or not, especially if you can keep yourself busy.

The most important element to a successful stay with your host families is communication. It is the key to unlocking and solving the problems that could cause you to have an unpleasant experience.

If problems do arise on the host family level, consult with your counselor, who may be able to assist.

## ***They're Adjusting Too***

Even though your host family is not expected to change for you, they will be making many accommodations to welcome you into their home. This can be something little, like changing

the shower schedule or it can be more major, like canceling another activity to take you someplace.

Of course, you will have a positive impact on their lives as well. It's fun to have an extra kid in the family, especially one with a new outlook. And, believe it or not, some people actually like looking after teenagers and helping them through daily life!

Host families are a breed of brave people who volunteer to take care of someone else's teenager for a while. Without these people there could be no Rotary Youth Exchange Program. The host families that you will live with deserve your courtesy and respect. Above all, they deserve your love.

## ***Some Basic Tips***

- Have a happy face and an open mind.
- Offer to help around the house.
- Say “thank you” - often!
- Talk to your family; communication is very important.
- Follow family patterns of living.
- Accept invitations, but ask for permission first.
- Mix with your family; don't hide in your room. Even if you would prefer to sit and read in your room – take your book, journal or laptop into the family's living area where the hub bub can go on around you.
- Initiate conversation; don't wait to be spoken to.
- Love your family; you'll be loved in return.
- Involve yourself in family activities.
- Educate yourself about your new culture.
- Share your problems with your host family and your counselor only - don't discuss problems outside the home unless absolutely necessary.

## ***From Past Exchange Students***

*“Try to get as close as possible to your families. Nothing can bring you closer to your host country. However, be prepared to stay with families who may not be as sensitive to your feelings as others, and try to make the best of it, and attempt to become close to them as well.”*

## ***Making Friends***

For many students, the friendships they make during their exchange year are the most precious aspect of the exchange. You will have the opportunity to make a wide variety of friends from different backgrounds.

Choose your friends wisely. Take your time building friendships. Ask your host family for advice. Remember, you don't need to worry about how many friends you make; it is the quality of your friendships that you will remember over the years.

Try to avoid becoming a member of a "clique." At first, this will seem like an easy way to make friends, but over the long run this will limit your opportunities to make a variety of friends.

## ***Friends and Culture***

Through your new friendships, you will be exposed to new outlooks on life that are part of your new culture. By meeting different people, you will find new ideas that will open your mind to understanding your host country. You will begin to understand why they act in a certain way, and you will develop a better understanding of yourself and your own culture.

## ***Be a joiner!***

You will get the most out of your visit if you participate to the fullest. This means sharing family life, school life and community life. If you play a musical instrument, get together with other musicians in the school or community. If you are good at a particular sport, play it if possible. Be a joiner! Take an active part in whatever activities are available to you - school clubs, church groups, etc. Contribute whatever talents you can whenever you can. Participation also will help prevent the homesickness that is almost inevitable at some point. Use the resourcefulness and sensitivity that were among the qualities your sponsors sought in choosing you.

Unlike the USA and Canada, most countries do not have a wide variety of activities at the school. You will usually find that you need to join a club outside school to pursue your interests. Ask your host family and host club about opportunities that are available. You may not necessarily be able to find a club in your favorite sport or activity. On the other hand, this a great opportunity to try something new – and your friends and family back home will never know if you fall flat on your face!

## ***Who You Are Is Who You Attract***

"Birds of a feather flock together," or so they say. If you get involved in sports, you will make friends that enjoy sports. If you are musically inclined, you will attract friends that like music. If you act like a total airhead...well, you get the idea.

Exchange students are very social people, but often become quiet and shy when faced with their new environment and language. Most of you would like to make friends that are outgoing and gregarious, so you should be outgoing and gregarious too. But it's hard to be sociable when you don't know the language and don't have any friends.



You've got to put a smile on your face and introduce yourself as best you can. At first, this will seem very unnatural, but over time you will find that you enjoy the challenge. And you will become more outgoing too!

## ***Exchange Students as Friends***

You will be inclined to make friends with exchange students living in your town or city. This is natural since you may speak the same language and are facing the same challenges. You can provide a support system for each other when you face challenges such as homesickness.

If you only make friends with exchange students, you will miss out on the real benefits of your exchange. You will limit your opportunities for other friendships and your language progress will be slowed.

The best approach is to spread out your contact with other exchange students so you have plenty of time for friends from your host country. Try to limit your e-mail to once a week and maybe get together every month or two. Your host club or host district may plan get-togethers or weekends for you, but this will vary by country.

## ***From Past Exchange Students***

*“Learn the language of your new country and make a serious effort at real friendships with the local people. Exchange students who only hang around with other exchange students are missing out on something very special.”*

*“I had experienced difficulty at school because it is a nonacademic school, and I felt that it would be much easier to make friends at a different school. Just as I was feeling that the students were not accepting me, I realized that I had not accepted them as equals. However, my attitude towards other people is changing quickly and since I made this change in myself, I have made many new friends at school.”*

*“Don't try to understand your new friends, just try to love them.”*

*“Make lasting friendships because they will be yours forever.”*

## ***Learning the Language***

Most students are sent to countries where a language other than English is spoken. You are expected to learn the local language as quickly as possible. If possible, you should learn the fundamentals of the language before departure. You should expect to become reasonably proficient in the language within three months of your arrival in the country.

## ***Before You Go***

Before you depart, you need to make a real effort to build a foundation for learning your new language. Buy a basic language book or see what's available for free at the library that will motivate you to do a little every day (e.g. "Italian in 10 Minutes a Day").

Explore online apps and language programs, so you can start to get a feel for the sounds of the language. Be sure the programs are by native speakers – for example, Brazilian Portuguese sounds different than in Portugal. Be smart about connecting with native speakers you don't know online!

Ask your Rotary Club if they know anyone in the community that speaks your new language. You might be able to find teachers, business people or past exchange students that would be willing to help you get started.

Try writing in your new language. You can send e-mails to your host family or connect with them on social media platforms. If you are uncomfortable with that, ask about finding a past exchange student that you can connect with.

Finally, buy a good dictionary. Make sure it translate both ways. Also download an app you can use on your phone (very helpful at restaurants so that you know you are about to eat octopus – or maybe you don't want to know!)

## ***Use the Language***

You can't become proficient in your new language unless you use it. That means speaking, listening, reading and writing. Do whatever you can to use your new language as much as you can tolerate in the first weeks of your stay. Talk to people, listen to the television, read the newspaper, write in a journal. You must actively use the language to make progress.

Don't be embarrassed by your mistakes. Your hosts know that you are learning and they don't expect perfection. If you can't remember a word, explain it as best you can. Use your dictionary if necessary, but try to avoid switching to English.

## ***Tips for Picking up the Local Language***

- **Listen to the melody of the language.** Each language has its own intonation patterns - rises, falls, pauses - you can listen to without even trying to catch the meaning. Try humming along, to catch the accent. Or use a string of nonsense words and say it “like French” or whatever. Listen to the radio and watch TV. Can you catch the emotional tone even though you can't understand a word?
- **Think sounds, not the written word.** In many languages the way a word is pronounced may have little relation to its spelling.
- **Work on those “strange” sounds that don't exist in English:** rolled or guttural R's, deep-throated rasping sounds or puckered up vowels. Practice short phrases containing these difficult sounds. Watch people's faces when they talk for lip position on certain sounds.
- **Listen to phrases, not words.** Words seldom exist in isolation. You may not even be understood if you pronounce the language word by word, rather than by running them together in appropriate breath groups.
- **Practice on someone.** Learned a new phrase? Find someone to try it out on. Embarrassed about starting a conversation? Try talking to the kids, if it's easier. Practice asking people what time it is, how to get to a well-known local attraction or when the next bus is due. Find excuses to start a conversation. Each time you are able to ask a question and understand the response, you'll gain a bit more confidence.
- **Take some risks.** Risk making friends in the new culture rather than spending time only with English speakers. Go where the tourists don't go and do what the tourists don't do - preferably with a local person as your informal guide. Be brave enough to ask for language corrections once you know a local person well. Most people won't be so impolite as to correct you unless you request it.
- **Go Ahead! Read and Write.** Read the billboards, signs, headlines, advertisements and labels on packages. Try to associate the written words with what you've heard. Carry a notebook to write down new phrases or expressions as soon as you hear them. Then use them to communicate in ideas of your own.

## **From Past Exchange Students**

*“This is when the language barrier really hit me. I was relaxing trying to make out the flight attendant's broken English, when a girl no more than 3 years old came and began talking to me. I am not sure why, but I really expected her to speak English to me. I guess my first reaction was that a 3 year old would not be able to do something I could not.”*

*“I think that Rotary should push even harder on the fact that learning the language is NUMBER ONE PRIORITY when you arrive. We may not think about it, but people are very appreciative when you make an effort to learn any aspect of their culture, life or country. Things come easier for you in the beginning if you make an effort. People see that you want to learn and you are accepted, the friends come so easily and those few tough moments after arrival are gone. They are forgotten because you are enjoying yourself in your new life and you are constantly learning new and interesting things. You are constantly active and when you stay active you stay happy. The day you sit down with your friends and talk as you would with friends back home is the day you are just a normal person in your city and the day you realize you never want to leave.”*

*“There are times when I really had my doubts about understanding the language, but everyone that said it will come with time and practice was right.”*

*“It is vitally important to learn as much of one's host country's language before leaving -- most people don't make the effort.”*

*“I find life in general has improved quite a bit, and I feel a large part of it has to do with the language. I definitely feel that it is the most important thing, and it makes all the difference for one's success. It is also one of the best things you can take back with you -- along with your memories.”*

## ***Dealing With Homesickness***

You should be aware that some feelings of homesickness and may creep into your otherwise beautiful experience. We can predict certain periods of potential stress that you may experience.

## ***Pre-Departure Feelings***

Even before you start your year abroad, you may begin to feel conflicting emotions regarding your upcoming departure. You finally realize that you will be leaving your family and friends to go to a strange country to live with strangers. At the same time, you will be excited and busy making your plans.

The most difficult time is saying good-bye to your family and special friends. Getting on the plane can be both exciting and emotionally draining.

## ***Challenges Early in Your Year***

When you first arrive in your new country, you may be faced with one or more of the following:

- You arrive in your host country and the host family greets you and you don't understand a word they are saying!
- You can't understand the language and it seems as if everyone is laughing at you.
- The host family insists that you go to church with them and you are devoted to another faith.
- Letters from home are frequent and enjoyable , but make you wish you were home.

One of the ways to combat these early signs of homesickness is to get comfortable in your new room. Take some things with you that you can use to decorate – things that will make the room feel like home.

And keep busy! You've got to get involved with your new friends and stop thinking about your friends back home. Don't waste your time thinking about which country or culture is better – it just doesn't matter!

At this stage of your year, try to limit communication back home to an absolute minimum. Set aside one time per week to do all your e-mail, and call/skype home only about once a month.

## ***Adjusting to Emotional Swings***

You are going abroad to learn another culture. Most of you will be dealing with a new language; all of you will have to deal with culture adjustment. Schools often will be more demanding of you. After the first two or three weeks, the excitement of your "arrival" will disappear. You will be truly on your own. The realization of this may be depressing. This feeling is temporary. It is also part of the youth exchange experience as it is with life. There may be other initial adjustment problems. Every student has them.

How you deal with these feelings and problems will determine the kind of year you have. Feel free to talk about them to your host parents or with your counselor. But whatever you do about them, *don't hide in your room*. Go out and meet your hosts and actively assert yourself in the life of your new community.

### ***Problems Later in the Year***

Usually, feelings of homesickness go away after the first two months or so. It's not unusual for these feelings to recur at a special event or change in host family. You may get homesick again in circumstances like these:

- It's your birthday and no one seems to know about it – no cake, no gifts – nothing!
- The oldest male child in the household gets all the attention and privileges.
- You don't get along well with the host children.
- Christmas is approaching and you miss the usual preparation and excitement that exists in your house back home.
- Your grandmother is very ill and you feel you should be home.

Probably the most challenging time of the year is during holidays. Try not to think too much about the way things are back home; you are there to experience the traditions of your new culture. Of course, you should share some of your holiday traditions with your host family; they will enjoy learning about your traditions, and you will feel a connection to home.

## ***Culture Shock***

When you leave home and all the things that are familiar, you encounter many new and confusing situations. These situations naturally create stress; the reaction to this stress is called “culture shock.”

When you go overseas, you take with you cultural “baggage” that reflects your customs and values. This baggage affects the way you perceive your new environment and can make you uncomfortable when your values do not align precisely with those of your new culture.

Culture shock does not suddenly affect you. It is a gradual sense of discomfort as you adapt to your new culture. It is a normal process, but is often difficult to recognize. It often affects exchange students in a profound way as they face a variety of circumstances and issues.

Culture shock is a type of homesickness. The term refers to the stresses and strains that accumulate from meeting your everyday needs (e.g. language, climate, food, cleanliness, and companionship) in unfamiliar ways. Some symptoms of culture shock are frustration, mental fatigue, disorientation about how to work with and relate to others, boredom and lack of motivation.

## ***Cultural Differences***

Some of the differences between life at home and life in a new place are obvious:

- language
- climate
- religion
- food
- educational system
- absence of family and close ties

Other differences are not as obvious:

- how people walk and talk
- how students relate to teachers
- how people make decisions
- how people spend their leisure time
- how people resolve conflicts
- how people express feelings and emotions
- meanings of hand, face and body movements
- how people value various experiences and things

These differences cause feelings of uncertainty and anxiety:

- “Am I speaking properly?”
- “Will I be a successful student?”
- “Will I find friends?”
- “Should I discuss my personal beliefs or my political opinions?”
- “What does it mean when someone looks directly into my eyes?”
- “Should I trust this friendly stranger?”

All of these uncertainties are confusing. You may also feel that you don't know what to do in certain situations. Probably you did not think about these things at home because you knew

what to do and what to expect. You also knew how other people acted and thought. In other words, you understood “the rules” and “the signs.” Life was easier at home.

## ***Psychological Impact***

What are the psychological implications of living in another culture for an extended time?

Your mind (and your body) may react in unusual ways to the stress and confusion of living in a new culture. Some of the reactions you experience may include:

- feeling isolated or alone
- wanting to avoid social contact
- feeling angry toward local people
- feeling helpless to control your own life
- difficulty concentrating at school
- sleeping too much or tiring easily
- finding it difficult to sleep
- suffering body pains, especially in the head, neck, back and stomach
- wanting to return home

You may think these are symptoms of severe homesickness, but they are really the signs of culture shock. These reactions are normal and to be expected. You are not ill. It is a temporary situation for people who are adjusting to life in a new environment.

## ***Stages***

According to Dennis White in “The Psychology of International Living,” culture shock is experienced in several stages. These stages include:

### **1. Euphoria**

At first, there can be real excitement in dealing with the new and interesting environment of your host country. You will be experiencing many new people, sights and sounds even though you are confused by much of it. You may feel like an explorer, learning much about a culture that your own family knows very little about.

During this stage, you will try to grasp the familiar, saying to yourself that things really aren’t all that different from home. Of course, the people that you meet will be making every effort to explain things to you and make you feel comfortable. You may be thinking that you won’t have to change very much to adapt to your new situation.

### **2. Hostility**

The next stage is often a period of hostility toward your environment. In this stage you start to realize that there are some profound issues that are of concern to you, but you don’t really fully understand how everything fits together.

Things just don’t seem natural. You start to concentrate on the differences rather than the similarities in various situations, and the differences are not as interesting as they once were.



You become frustrated because you don't know what is happening and you don't have control over your situation. People don't understand why various situations bother you and you don't understand why they think the way they do. You may be frustrated at school - either because the work is too difficult or because the teachers make things too easy.

### **3. Gradual Adjustment**

As you become fluent in your new language, you can start to understand the complexities of your new culture. You begin to recognize the cultural conflicts that affect your behavior and response to those around you. You regain your self-confidence, and begin to face your challenges once again. You adapt your behavior to fit your new culture.

### **4. Biculturalism**

In this final phase, you have adapted to the point where you are fully comfortable with your host environment, often to the point of not wanting to return to your native culture. You start thinking and dreaming in your new language. You take on certain mannerisms that are not present in your own culture. You might have some trouble with your own language, especially when you have learned words or phrases that are not easily translated.

You may be concerned about losing your own culture. You don't need to worry about this. You can't lose your own culture since you were raised in it. As you become comfortable in your new culture, you will learn to understand and appreciate your own culture in a new light.

## ***Coping with Culture Shock***

Here are some suggestions for coping with culture shock:

- First, recognize the problem. Understand that you will face uncertainties and confusion.
- Learn as much about the country and customs as possible before you leave. Also, plan to explore the unique aspects of the host country. Talk to travel agents and speak with people who have been there.
- Include your parents and siblings in the planning if they are interested. This could be the basis for their sharing the year abroad with you. Letters home will give you an opportunity to provide specific information about your new land with your family.
- Know what to expect. You should anticipate the problems you may face and plan how you can deal with those situations. Planning puts you more in control of your future.
- Take care of your physical and psychological needs. Make sure to eat properly and get plenty of rest. Get some exercise on a regular basis. Take time out to read a book or go for a walk. Write about your feelings in a journal or diary.
- One way to address a cultural difference is to step back from a specific event that is troubling you. Try to understand what the cultural influences are, why the situation bothers you and how you can best move forward to resolve your conflicts. Learn so that you can use the experience when you are presented with a similar challenge.
- Observe how people in your new environment act in situations that are confusing to you. Try to understand what they believe and why they behave as they do. Avoid judging things as either right or wrong; regard them as being merely different.
- Remember the ways you have been able to reduce stress in difficult situations in the past and apply those methods to your present circumstances. For example, you might

take a long walk, go to a movie theater or write a letter to a close friend or relative. Try to see the humor in confusing situations that you encounter; laughter is often the best “medicine.”

- Accept the difficult challenge of learning to study and live in a new cultural setting. Believe that you can learn the skills to make a satisfactory transition. Gradually try to apply some of the skills you are learning.
- Talk with other exchange students to see how they would handle a similar situation. Use them for moral support, and be sure to reciprocate.
- If you get to the point where you think returning home is the only solution to all your problems, you have already been through the worst of the culture shock cycle. **Don't give up!** You put in the hard work to get to this point and soon you will be reaping the benefits of your efforts!
- Recognize the advantages of having lived in two different cultures. Meeting people whose cultural backgrounds are not the same as yours will enrich your life. Share your time with many different people. Avoid having friends only from your country but maintain strong personal ties to your culture while you are away from home.
- Acknowledge your progress in adjusting to the new culture. Think of all that you have learned since the day you arrived. Recognize that, like other people who have lived in an unfamiliar country, you can and will make a successful adjustment to the other culture.
- Enjoy yourself! Your year abroad will probably be the single most significant event in your life. It will change you in many positive ways.

## **Questioning Who You Are**

As you go through the process of adapting to your new culture, you may start to ask questions about your own culture. Your culture is a part of you, so you will begin to question your own roles and values. As an exchange student, you may have a more significant role in your new culture and may not want to return to being just another teenager.

You may start to wonder how much you can change and still be the same person you were. As you become more mature and self-reliant, you may have trouble thinking of yourself as “daddy’s little girl.” Part of you may wish you could return to a simpler way of life were your parents took care of everything.

In reality, you are just accelerating the natural process that all students go through when they leave home. You simply have done it all in one year rather than a gradual adjustment over several years of college.

## **From Past Exchange Students**

*“When you have a problem, never give up. Always try your best to resolve it and you will see that when it is resolved, you will feel proud of your accomplishment and your exchange will be even more fantastic than before.”*

*“I had a hard enough time trying to become adjusted to a new school, family and new friends. I had to be the one to make the first move in becoming familiar with*

*all the new experiences. I also had to accept the fact that I was the one who was different. There will be times when you are feeling down, but these are the times when you must stop and think of what a wonderful experience the Rotary Exchange is. I have already gained independence and maturity.”*

*“I have come to realize that you get out of your exchange exactly what you put into it. Some days it is a struggle to keep on the optimistic side of things, but for every bad day there are at least three really good days when I learn or see something new and different.”*

## ***Cultural Awareness***

You may think of “culture” as fine arts or the orchestra. When we speak of going to another culture, we are referring to the deep-rooted mannerisms, behaviors, and ways of responding to various situations.

You may find that your new culture is more male-dominated than we are used to. Elders may be more respected in some cultures than in others. Also, a different culture may value family relationships more or less than you do. Property and possessions may be less important in some cultures.

## ***Cultural Baggage***

According to Bettina Hansel, “Cultural baggage...is a set of assumptions and values you share with everyone else in your culture. Because almost everyone you know at home holds these same assumptions and values about right and wrong, you probably take these things for granted and hardly realize that they exist. When you go to another culture where people share a different set of assumptions and values, you become acutely aware of them or at least you become aware that something is wrong.”

You may be quite surprised by the differences in thinking that you observe in your new culture. You have only lived in one culture; therefore, have not been exposed to significantly different values than your own. Honesty may not have the same meaning as it does to you. Talking at dinner might be considered rude, while talking at the movies might be totally normal. Children may be doted on in one culture, while they may appear to be totally ignored in another.

Try not to overreact to these situations. Different approaches exist but one isn't necessarily better than another. Try to understand the differences in behavior without being judgmental based on your own culture and values.

## ***Sharing Your Culture***

As you learn your new culture, you may find it helpful to discuss the differences with your hosts. Talk about the things you do in a typical day and how it compares to your new situation. Discuss the things that are important to you, whether you like sports, music, reading or whatever.

Be sure to plan to cook at least one meal for each of your host families. This could be planned around a traditional holiday or it could just be a favorite meal of yours. You should take some recipes with you. Don't worry if you can't find the exact ingredients you need – just do your best. Your host family will appreciate your efforts even if the meal doesn't come out perfectly. Remember that you will be using metric measuring cups and spoons, so some conversion may be necessary.

Remember the importance of showing an interest in your host culture and be careful not to demean the host culture by your comments. You will be in a different social and political climate. Be discreet in your social and political observations.

## ***Deepening Your Understanding***

As you deepen your understanding of your new culture, you begin to question your own views. You will be able to look at situations from different perspectives and begin to learn more about the culture you grew up with. You will change in subtle ways regarding your attitudes and opinions. You will become more confident of your own insight and at the same time more aware and accepting of others' attitudes and perspectives.

### ***One World...or Many?***

Dennis White, a psychologist who works with orienting Rotary exchange students, wrote an interesting article on whether all cultures are basically alike once you get past the language and customs.

Some people hold to the belief that people around the world are basically the same. The goal of exchange programs for many years was to show that if children were alike and could get along, then the adults ought to be able to do the same.

Many exchange students, however, find there are significant cultural differences at a very basic level. Patterns of thought and values cannot easily be reconciled between differing cultures. Your natural instinct will be to either criticize your new culture or defend your own culture. This is because you have grown up believing that your values are naturally the correct ones.

Your next reaction may be to minimize the differences, relying on the "One World" theory that things are not really all that different. Remember that it is OK to accept the differences in culture without having to determine which is right or wrong. In fact, looking for the differences between cultures rather than the similarities may ease making the adjustment to your new culture. You must be flexible in dealing with situations rather than always trying to "be yourself."

As you become immersed in your new culture, you may find it difficult to explain to your parents and friends exactly what you are experiencing. In the "One World" theory, you would assume that one culture could be explained through the context of another. In fact, it is very difficult to evaluate another culture based on your own culture, because this assumes that your culture is "more correct" than the other culture.

Dr. White gives the following example: "Americans tend to pride themselves on punctuality, especially in matters of business. In trying to make a business appointment in another culture, an American might find that his or her business counterpart arrives late, keeps them waiting and then allows all sorts of interruptions, other business and social events to interfere. An ethnocentric interpretation might be that the other person isn't very businesslike, is rude, disrespectful and disorganized. An ethno-relative view might be to try to understand why those behaviors and values are present and what they mean. It assumes that the above behavior is normal for that culture and that the person is behaving exactly as he or she should. In that culture, it may be that time is very past or future oriented, not present oriented. It may be that business and social life are constantly mixed, not separated. It may be that no disrespect whatsoever has been shown and the other person may be behaving quite ethically within the values of that culture."

In the end, you may find that the "One World" theory just doesn't help you cope with the cultural challenges you face.

You will likely come to believe that there really are many different “worlds.” People are basically alike in some ways, but the ways they interact in a given culture can be vastly different. You will come to value and appreciate the differences between your two “worlds.”

## ***Sexual Harassment***

You have been encouraged to go on your journey with an open and accepting attitude. We’ve told you to listen to your hosts and accept their rules and values. *You should never, ever, allow someone to harass you physically or sexually*, even if they claim it is part of their culture. It doesn’t matter if it is a Rotarian, a host parent or a school student.

Sexual harassment is unacceptable and you should immediately discuss it with your host family or counselor. If the situation isn’t corrected immediately, contact your Host Club Youth Exchange Officer or Club President. If still not resolved to your satisfaction, contact your Host District Chair. If the matter is still not resolved satisfactorily, contact the District 7090 Youth Exchange Chair, your Vice Chair or your Sponsor Club. Do not allow the situation to continue.

Harassment is any unwanted physical or verbal conduct that offends or humiliates a student. Harassment includes sexual harassment but can take the form of deliberate or repeated comments or gestures about a student’s home country, language, culture, personal appearance or other characteristics. Be aware, however, that counseling, warnings or restrictions resulting from inappropriate behavior on the part of a student are not normally considered “harassment” unless done in a way that unnecessarily embarrasses or belittles a student.

## **From Past Exchange Students**

*"I have found that it is easier than you think to find friends and begin life in a totally new society. However, it is up to you to get yourself there. You must make the first move and only then will people respond. You also have to accept new things, new ways of life. You can't judge the people there as you are the one who is different. It is you that has to adapt to different tastes in food, clothing, lifestyles, etc. Once you can do that the rest slides into place and you find that time has just flown by."*

*"Get involved as much as possible -- this gives you a more varied perspective of the country and people. Never compare your exchange with anyone else -- no two are alike."*

# Your Role as Ambassador

## ***Representing Your Country***

One of your responsibilities as an exchange student is to represent your country as an ambassador. You will be asked many questions about your country, your culture, and your way of life.

Some of the questions people ask will seem really stupid or naive. People may ask questions based on the stereotypes they have of your country. Your best approach is to answer these questions in a serious manner. You can help develop an interest in your country by engaging people in conversation and answering their questions, no matter how silly they may seem.

You may also be asked questions about your government and current events. Try not to feel that you must either defend or criticize; just present the facts as you know them and let your hosts have their own opinions. As an ambassador, you present your country in a positive, truthful manner.

You don't have to become the stereotype of your country. In fact, one of the most important lessons you can teach is that everyone is different. No two Americans/Canadians are the same and you should do your best to communicate this to your hosts.

Remember that you also represent Rotary International. Your attitudes and behaviors reflect on our Youth Exchange Program. By creating a positive influence with others you will help us succeed in recruiting future students and host families.

## ***Keep up on Current Events***

Be sure to keep up on current events, both before you leave and after you arrive in your new country. You probably won't be asked how many members of Congress/Parliament there are, but you will be asked what you think of the President/Prime Minister. Also, read up on events happening in your host country, particularly those in which your home country would be involved. Foreign trade and environmental issues are subjects that are often of interest.

You will be asked many questions about your community such as the primary industries, housing arrangements and transportation. Be prepared with a good knowledge of your area, including population, tourist attractions, schools, economy – things that would be of interest to your parents and your Rotary Club if a foreign visitor came to speak.



## ***From Past Exchange Students***

*“I am here to promote world peace and understanding. It starts here, with me, with each of us...it is time to embrace the concept that has brought me here, not just for me and my family and those I know but for those I do not, and indeed for the world.”*

## ***Medical and Dental Issues***

### ***Food and Diet***

Proper eating habits are vital to helping you adapt to a new environment. You must meet your nutritional needs during these difficult periods. Try to eat a variety of foods in reasonable quantities. Have something at every meal, even if you aren't very hungry. This will help you adapt to the new eating schedule.

You will be presented with many new foods. Give everything a try, but don't feel that you must pretend that you like everything. Every culture has foods or flavorings that not everyone likes, such as wasabi or sauerkraut. Be honest about your opinions and make sure your family knows the things that you really do enjoy. Be sure to show your appreciation for your meals, even if you don't like something.

Many exchange students gain weight during their year abroad, sometimes a substantial amount. You might think this is because you are trying so many new things. Or perhaps it's hard to resist certain favorites, because you know you won't get to eat them back home. It has been theorized that you actually gain weight because you are missing some staple from the diet of your own culture, and your body can't tell when you've had enough to eat. Whatever the reason, don't be alarmed if you gain a little weight. As long as you avoid junk foods and try to eat reasonable amounts, you should be fine. Most students find that they quickly lose the excess weight when they return home.

### ***Getting Enough Sleep***

Just as your diet is important, so is getting enough sleep. When you first arrive, be sure to go to bed at a normal time, even if you aren't sleepy. You need to adjust to the new schedule. Try to get more sleep than you usually would, since you need to be well rested to cope with your new language and activities.

### ***Cleanliness***

You may be used to a hot shower and clean clothes every day. This may not be the norm in your new culture. Your host family will try to make accommodation for you, but you must also be flexible. Hot water may be limited or considered an extravagance, so you need to check with your host family on the length and timing of your shower or bath.

You will find that each culture stresses different areas of cleanliness. Just as you might feel "dirty" if you don't wash your hair every day, your new friends may think eating food with your hands is disgusting. Your host family might expect the house to be ultra-clean. These are just some more of the cultural variations that are neither good nor bad, just different.

### ***Minor Problems are Normal***

You may experience some minor illness or condition when you first arrive in your new environment. You may be more susceptible to certain illnesses because you are tired or less resistant. You may have trouble with diarrhea just as other travelers would.

For the girls, you should be aware that your monthly cycle might be disrupted at first. This is not unusual and should return to normal in a month or two.

## ***Finding a Doctor***

If you have a problem that persists, or otherwise feel that you should see a doctor, consult with your host family. They can help you find a doctor and make an appointment. Your Rotary Club may have doctors or other people with contacts that can help you get better or more prompt treatment. Don't be afraid to ask and don't try to make these arrangements on your own.

## ***Prescription Drugs, Dental Retainers and Glasses***

If you are taking prescription medications, be sure to carry at least one month's supply with you. If you will require this medication while abroad, a clearly typed letter concerning your condition and treatment should be obtained from your physician. Present this letter to your host counselor so that treatment may be continued under a physician's supervision in your host country. Ask your physician to use generic terms rather than brand names, as these may not be available in your host country. The cost of this medication is your parents' responsibility unless your health insurance covers it. You may wish to discuss options with your doctor and insurance carrier about taking a year's worth of medication with you.

Because Customs Officers may question unidentified medication, including over-the-counter items such as vitamins, take a small supply in the original prescription container to last until you can obtain it locally.

Similarly, if you wear corrective lenses (glasses or contacts) be sure to take an extra pair with you. You should also take a copy of your prescription for these to obtain new ones in case of loss or breakage. Do the same with your retainer if you have one.

# Returning Home

Returning home can be very exciting, but it will also be a very emotional time for you as well as your host families, your friends in both countries and your own parents. You must make an effort to plan for your return home, just as you planned for your year abroad. Try not to suppress your feelings and don't pretend that you won't have any problems.

## ***Preparing Ahead***

By the end of your exchange year, you will likely get to the point where you don't want to go home. You've made it through all the challenges you have faced, and are really enjoying yourself. You finally are becoming fully aware of your new culture, and your language skills are better than you ever could have imagined. You've made wonderful friends and often think of your host family as your own.

You may be apprehensive about seeing your family and friends again. You know that you have changed but they are expecting you to be the same person who left a year ago. You miss them very much but wonder how they will react to you. There may be something that concerns you regarding school or tests that you may be facing upon your return.

You need to be aware of your feelings and do your best to express them. When you left your own family and friends, you knew that you would be returning in a year. Now the situation is much different. When you leave your host family and friends, you don't know when you will get to see them again. Your return marks the end of an important year in your life. You will be going home and moving on in life and it will be difficult to return to your host country for any length of time.

You need to express your feelings with your host family and friends. Many of them will also have similar feelings because they also know that they might not see you for a long time. Remember the good times and share your happiest and funniest experiences once again. Ask them to help you put together your photo albums. Perhaps your host family will help you organize a farewell party to celebrate your experience in your host country.

When you return home, you must have accepted the inevitable – your exchange year is over. By taking the time to review your year and share your emotions, you will be able to move ahead with your life when you return home.

## ***Reverse Culture Shock***

Because you are returning to a familiar culture, you may not think that you will have trouble adapting when you return home. Actually, many exchange students find it more difficult to return home. You can't just jump back in to your old life. You must be cognizant that, while your culture hasn't changed, you have.

Some of the changes will be obvious, while others are more subtle. Past exchange students have mentioned the following:

- You are different from your peers; somehow more mature, more - worldly!
- The food here tastes funny! You have to get used to all these fried foods again just when your palate was adjusting to raw fish.
- Your parents still want to treat you like a child. You've grown-up! Don't they realize that yet?
- You are moody, but have difficulty explaining your feelings.
- You are not the center of attention anymore.
- You sense that some of your good friends are a little tired of hearing about your exchange experience.
- You can't wait for a youth exchange meeting so you can share your experience with others who know what you have been through.
- You find that you are critical of your culture and your friends, even though you don't mean to offend anyone.

You will probably be excited about returning home, and at first your friends and family will be anxious to hear your stories. Unfortunately, they often tire fairly quickly of hearing about your experiences. This is because it is often difficult to appreciate something that you know you will never experience yourself.

Your relationships with your friends will inevitably change. You are likely to become closer with those friends who appreciate the new, more mature person you have become. Others may want you to be the way you were, and they can't adjust. You may find some of your friends now seem shallow or superficial.

Your attitude toward school may have changed as well. You may be more focused on your goals or you may wonder what possible use the schoolwork will be to you. If you had a career goal before you left, you may have changed your mind. You may have to change your college plans or prepare for entrance examinations.

Some exchange students become too well adapted to their new culture. This is sometimes called "going native." They may come back with a heavy accent, may reject their own culture, or may feel that they are homeless. Students in this situation may need additional assistance or counseling in order to accept their own culture once again.

## ***Readjustment***

Plan to re-enter your old world slowly. Don't push too hard for acceptance into the old routine. Take some time to assess where you are in relation to your family and friends. They still love you, but the "you" has changed! You don't want to give up all that you have learned just to fit in, so you need to give them time to know you again.

It can be a good idea to spend some time by yourself. Your family and friends may grow tired of your constant criticism of their culture. It may be difficult to share all your experiences and you need to look for positive ways to present your insights. You may not enjoy some of the activities that used to be your favorites.

Once you adapt to your old culture again, you will become comfortable with both of your cultures. You can never be the person you were but that isn't such a bad thing. You are more open to new ideas, more understanding of different perspectives, and more accepting of people that don't agree with everything you say. You think in a multicultural way.

## ***The Details***

### ***Travel Issues***

#### **Traveling To Your Host Country**

Your final travel arrangements are the responsibility of you and your parents. You should make your arrangements in coordination with your host district.

- Under no circumstances should you plan a “stop-over” on your journey from District 7090.
- You must purchase an “open” return ticket and may not travel on student stand-by tickets. We strongly recommend that you use the travel agent below.
- You must arrive in your host country on the requested day. This will usually be sometime between the middle of July and the end of August.
- You must return at the completion of your year by a direct route.
- Before booking your return reservation, you are required to consult with your counselor and host club to determine return date.

#### **Travel Agents**

The following travel agencies are to be used for your flight reservations:

##### **Tzell Park Avenue** in Connecticut

Contact information is:

Hilary Chivian

##### **Tzell Park Avenue**

Manager / Rotary Youth Exchange Department – Suite 2

456 West Main Street

Norwich, Connecticut 06360

USA

Phone 800-888-5275 x 2106

Fax 860-886-1853

E-mail: [hilary@tzellyouthexchange.com](mailto:hilary@tzellyouthexchange.com)

**Note:** Canadian Students using Tzell Park Avenue, – if you prefer to use Toronto as your gateway, please advise your Travel Consultant. You will either be ‘back tracked’ to US gateway to join many other Youth Exchange students from other districts or you may also elect to fly direct to the overseas gateway of your destination from Toronto. This may possibly incur a higher fee.

#### **OR**

**Nexion Canada** - head office in London, Ontario. They are very experienced with the Rotary program, have dedicated staff just for the Rotary students and can provide visa assistance.

Nexion Canada normally use Detroit for flight origination but can also use Buffalo or Toronto if requested (as your gateway). Direct flights from Toronto may possibly incur a higher fee.

Alex Foster

Rotary Youth Exchange Consultant

##### **Nexion Canada**

235 North Centre Rd, Suite 100,  
London ON N5X 4E7  
Phone 800-361-1334 or 519-660-6966 Ext. 2480  
[afoster@nexioncanada.com](mailto:afoster@nexioncanada.com)



The graphic is a rectangular box with a black border. On the left side, there is the Nexion Canada logo, which consists of the word "nexion" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by a circular icon containing a globe and the word "CANADA" in a smaller, uppercase font below it. To the right of the logo, the text "TRAVELLERS EMERGENCY HELPLINE" is written in a bold, uppercase, sans-serif font. Below this, "7\*24 after hours travel assistance" is written in a smaller, italicized, lowercase font. A horizontal line separates this header from the contact information below. The contact information includes: "From North America: During Business Hours 1-800-361-1334" and "After Business Hours 1-888-530-8277". Below this, it says "From all other countries, use an International Operator" and "Call collect 905-824-8277". At the bottom, it says "QUOTE THIS ACCESS CODE" followed by a rectangular box containing the code "YXUCS2102". Below the box, it says "Or advise the helpdesk you are a NEXION".

**nexion** CANADA  
TRAVELLERS EMERGENCY HELPLINE  
7\*24 *after hours* travel assistance

From North America: During Business Hours 1-800-361-1334  
After Business Hours 1-888-530-8277

From all other countries, use an International Operator  
Call collect **905-824-8277**

QUOTE THIS ACCESS CODE **YXUCS2102**  
Or advise the helpdesk you are a NEXION

You should plan for the unforeseen when traveling to your host country. You should carry a change of clothing and personal items in your carry-on bag. It is not uncommon for you to arrive at your destination to find that your luggage has arrived somewhere else. You should label your luggage both inside and out with your name and address and telephone number of your first host family or counselor.

If for any reason (missed flight or connection, delayed departure, etc.) you find that you will not arrive as arranged or you are not met as planned, contact your host club counselor or first host family to explain what has happened. You should carry these numbers in your wallet or purse. Your airline representative, an airport official or a policeman may be able to provide assistance. If none of these are successful, contact the nearest embassy or consulate or a local Rotary Club.

## Passport and Visa

If you do not currently have a passport, you should apply for one **immediately**. A passport is the document issued by your government proving your citizenship. Passport applications are available from post offices and passport offices in the US and Canada.

The next step is to obtain a Student Visa. Your host country will issue your visa; it gives you permission to be a student in their country. When you know the country to which you are assigned, determine which of their consulates or embassies is responsible for issuing these visas. Your travel agency will assist you in obtaining the required information. You may be required to write to that office asking for an application form and instructions on how to apply or you may download the application and information from the website. For US students, you may be asked to provide an apostilled birth certificate. This is an authentication of your local birth certificate by the state of New York. Please see the NYS Division of Licensing for more information.

The *Guarantee Form* from your Rotary Application is required for your visa application. Your host club and host school will complete this form and return it to you.



- **INSURANCE:** Many countries also require *proof of insurance with your visa application*. Your Vice Chair will advise you if you are to purchase CISI Insurance or the Insurance of the Country you are going to or both.
- Please read additional information regarding insurance on page 45

Immediately upon receiving the completed Guarantee Form, make application for a *ONE-YEAR STUDENT VISA*.

The Travel agents are often able and willing to assist with obtaining your visa. Please remember that the final responsibility for obtaining these documents rests with **you**.

Note: If you cannot obtain a direct flight to your host country and will be traveling through other countries during the trip to your destination, determine if a visa is required by any of those countries. Obtain the necessary documents *before* you leave.

Passports are a valuable commodity on the black market. You should treat your passport as you would any valuable item. Keep your passport safe and know where it is at all times.

### **Immunizations and Vaccinations**

In making application for your visa, you should determine what immunizations your host country requires. In addition, you should inquire from your local Board of Health/Health Department what particular immunizations are required to re-enter Canada or the US after having visited your host country. The travel agent may also be contacted for this information.

Arrange to have these administered well before your departure so that there will be ample time to clear up any adverse reactions before you leave.

Be sure you have your physician complete an International Health Card for you to take with you. This should include records of all vaccinations/immunizations over your lifetime. Failure to provide this information may result in additional vaccinations upon arrival in your host country.

### **Customs and Immigration**

Upon arrival in your host country, you will pass through customs and immigration. This can be a slow process, and can make you nervous. You are unlikely to have any serious problems so don't worry! **Just be patient and respectful of the officers.**

Customs is concerned with the items you are bringing with you. You may need to complete a declaration form, either on the airplane or upon arrival. Your suitcases may be inspected or you may just be waived through. The items they are looking for usually include illegal drugs, alcohol, plants, food and large sums of cash.

Immigration deals with your citizenship and reason for coming to the country. There may be separate lines for citizens and non-citizens. You should have your passport, visa and supporting documentation ready. Again, you should have no problems if your paperwork is in order.

## **Packing Tips and Baggage Regulations**

**Clothing** – Many students participating in the program report substantial gains in weight during the first few months. Also, styles and type of clothing worn in your host country may differ from ours. For these reasons you are urged to take a minimum of clothing unless you can determine before your departure the type and style of clothing worn and if there is a financial benefit in buying here. Any clothing bought here should be a bit on the large side to allow for the weight problem.

**Luggage** – Depending on your airline, your luggage allowance may be limited. Many airlines limit overseas travelers to one suitcase and one carry-on bag. There is often a weight limit. You should check with your airline or travel agent before departure. Sometimes additional suitcases can be carried for a fee, but these charges can be excessive. You are urged to plan carefully. Do not take unnecessary items no matter how precious they may be to you.

***Do not carry packages at any time for friends or strangers!***

## **Rules and Expectations**

Students who are sent abroad under the Rotary International Youth Exchange Program are required to conform to the “Program Rules and Conditions of Exchange.” Each student will have been supplied with a copy of this information as part of the application process and must agree to abide by these rules. Please read them carefully so there is no possible chance for misunderstanding.

Each Rotary District is autonomous. Although the program and rules of each district are similar, the host district guidelines take precedence over those of the sponsoring district. The host district, host club and host family are totally responsible for the student's cultural, spiritual and physical well being and have the responsibility for setting their own rules and guidelines. You should become familiar with them upon your arrival in your host country.

### **Attending School**

You are required to attend school full-time during your exchange. There are no exceptions. This is a requirement of the Rotary Youth Exchange program, and also is a condition of the visa that will be issued to you by your host country.

Your host club will arrange for appropriate schooling for your situation. You must make an honest attempt to succeed. Of course, your language limitations will be taken into account, but you must still put forth a reasonable effort.

Remember that your fellow students and teachers will be observing your efforts to fit into their way of life. If they see that you are not participating as they are, then they may be less willing to be your friend. Teachers will be favorably impressed by active participation in their class. This will help to insure the continued support of the school. You would not be an exchange student if the school did not agree to admit you. Create a positive environment in the school so the same opportunity will be available for the next student.

**Note:** Many students ask if credit is available for courses taken during their year abroad. This is entirely up to your school district here. You should discuss this with the school *before you leave* - your school officials can advise you whether credit is available and what documentation will be required.

### **Travel Opportunities**

**You are not going abroad to travel, but to understand another culture.** You are not going away on a glorified holiday. Your host club and host families are not obliged to take you anywhere! Many Rotary districts do not allow widespread travel because of local conditions. You may be expected to limit your travel plans according to their wishes.

The great majority of students who go abroad do manage to travel a great deal and see much of their host country – thanks to the generosity of Rotary Clubs, club members and host families.

Some Rotary Districts or your school may sponsor student tours, the cost of which is generally borne by the student. When travel by the host club or district is permitted you must abide by all the rules and regulations stipulated by your host club and district.

If you do have an opportunity to travel, discuss your plans as early as possible with the proper district officials. The host district in the country where you are going establishes travel rules.

As a guide, here are our rules:

- You may travel anywhere in the area where you live with the approval of your host parents.
- You may travel anywhere with your host family, but must notify your host club and host district if going outside the district.
- You may travel for Rotary functions in the district with adult chaperones.
- Other travel must be approved by your host parents, host club, host district, and natural parents in writing.
- You may not travel alone or accompanied only by other students
- ***DO NOT, under any circumstances, make travel arrangements on your own and then expect your host club to go along with them!***

## ***Insurance***

You are required to carry health and accident insurance during your year abroad. There are specific requirements that must be met; therefore, you are required to purchase a policy specifically tailored for the Rotary requirements.

You will receive additional information regarding this program.

- CISI-BOLDUC Insurance to be used by all required to purchase our insurance.

Many countries accept **CISI-BOLDUC** (in USA) programs as the only necessary insurance. Some countries have their own program that you must purchase, either through the government or through the hosting district. This is because the Rotary policy provides coverage for accidents, repatriation and emergency transportation costs that are not covered by normal health insurance. Your host club and district must be satisfied that the coverage is adequate for the circumstances.

*Your Vice Chair will have more information regarding the specifics for your country.* You must provide us with evidence that you have purchased appropriate insurance before you depart.

**NOTE (1):** in order to process your student visa application, many countries require 'proof of insurance'; therefore, please process your insurance early.  
Indicate on the insurance application "departure date to be determined".

**NOTE (2):** if you are going to a country that requires you to purchase their insurance and that country's insurance does *not* have coverage for travel outside of that country, CISI-BOLDUC INSURANCE does have a Supplemental Plan C.

Your Vice Chair will advise you if you are required to purchase this additional plan.  
[www.culturalinsurance.co](http://www.culturalinsurance.co)

**USA:** CISI-BOLDUC INSURANCE – highly recommend applying for on line.  
Payment can be made with a credit card number.

[www.CISI-Bolduc.com](http://www.CISI-Bolduc.com)

- . go to "Student Login"
- . go to "Students Enroll Online"

You will receive confirmation of insurance within 48 hours along with a letter to be used for your visa application, your Student ID card (which is to be carried with you at ALL times) and policy.

## **A NOTE FOR CANADIAN STUDENTS:**

### **OHIP REQUIREMENTS FOR EXTENDED ABSENCES FROM CANADA**

Students must apply for extended absence by going directly to an OHIP office.

What you need to take with you:

3 documents indicating Proof of Citizenship, Proof of Residency, Proof of identification: (one document can not be used for 2 items, must be 3 separate documents)

#### **Item 1**

##### **Proof of Citizenship**

If you are born in Canada you can bring your birth certificate or valid passport.

If you are not born in Canada and PR card (permanent residency) or a citizenship card that confirms your status in Canada.

#### **Item 2**

##### **Proof of Residence**

This could be a report card, but must show address. It could be a driver's license.

#### **Item 3**

##### **Support of Identity**

Again this must have name and signature, credit card, student card, or again driver's license (as long as you haven't used this as your proof of residence).

Also:

**Ontario Health Insurance Card, either green or red.**

Also:

Letter from your school or sponsor Rotary club (must be on official letterhead) confirming that you are a full time student, the program name and the duration of the program.

Please be assured:

As long as your extended absence documentation is completed you will be covered as soon as you are back.

If you forget to get your absence documentation you will be treated the same as a new immigrant to Canada and there is a 3-month wait period before OHIP extends coverage.

By following all of the above procedures you are assured that the minimum coverage under OHIP is extended to cover the complete period with the additional coverage under the Rotary Master Policy being a top up only with considerable savings to yourselves.

## **Cameras**

You will want to preserve your year abroad in photos. On your return you will be asked to speak to your sponsoring Rotary Club and other groups about your experiences. A good power point presentation is an excellent method of sharing these memories.

If you are planning to purchase a new camera, consult with your camera dealer about the type you should buy, considering your needs and experience as an amateur photographer. There are many new and relatively inexpensive cameras available today that make photography much simpler for the amateur and produce excellent pictures.

Digital cameras are everywhere now, but you should get a large storage card and bring your install disk with you to make sure you can load it on your computer to ensure compatibility. If you are planning to use your phone as your camera, please make sure you have enough storage for all of your photos and that you download them regularly to a storage service or your computer for safe keeping.

Regardless of whether you are purchasing a new camera or plan to take one that you have now, *learn how to operate it before you leave*. Practice by taking several pictures in different conditions so that you are completely familiar with its operation.

Note: If you plan to take a foreign-made camera, tape recorder, watch, etc., with you, register these items with Customs or take a receipt with you.

## **Managing Your Finances**

### **Travel Money**

We suggest that you take \$100.00 or so in the local currency of your new country with you when departing from District 7090 to cover expenses on the trip to your host country. Any money left over can be deposited in your bank account after arrival.

### **Emergency Fund**

You must take with you the equivalent of \$500.00 (US) or another amount determined by your host district. Your host club will hold these funds in trust. At the end of the year, the remaining balance will be returned to you or your parents.

PLEASE NOTE: The balance must always remain at \$500.00. If you have to use any of it, please advise your family immediately.

## **Shopping**

When you are buying items such as clothing, do not hesitate to consult with your host family or counselor for guidance. As long term residents of the area, they should be helpful in assisting you to make “good buys.”

## **Allowance**

Your host club will provide you with pocket money roughly equivalent to \$75-100 US per month. Whatever amount your host club decides upon you will have to accept, as the host club has complete discretion in this matter. If you experience problems with money, consult your counselor. He or she may be able to help you budget better or persuade the host club to increase the allowance, if he or she considers this necessary.

## **School Fees**

Your host club will pay for your high school fees or tuition. Schoolbooks may or may not be provided free. You will likely have to buy your own notebooks, pens, pencils, etc. In a few countries you may also have to buy a school uniform.

## **Credit cards**

If you do take one with you, it is recommended that it be only used for purchases approved by your parents and should be a card with your name on it.

Debit cards or ATM cards may be a better alternative. You should check with your local bank to see if you can get a card that can easily be used worldwide. Then your parents can add funds to your account as needed.



## **Correspondence**

### **Home**

You need to establish a reasonable schedule for communicating home, whether through the mail or by e-mail. Your parents will expect to hear from you regularly, but you will be busy with settling in and adjusting to your new life. Try to send a note every week or two.

### **Social Media**

These tools are fantastic and are now part of our everyday lives. They have also become the single most serious threat to having a successful exchange year. You can't expect to become a part of your new culture if you spend hours in contact with your family and friends every day.

*You absolutely take control of your friends on Social Media.* We recommend that you set aside a couple of hours once a week to use social media and that you seriously plan how to limit how much you see and respond to the news of your friends back home. Try to use social media as a tool to communicate with your friends in your new country.

Of course, your host family may have other rules or restrictions. In some countries, there may be a substantial cost associated with Internet use or the required telephone connection. Just as you are responsible for your own phone expenses, you may be expected to contribute to Internet costs.

There is also the possibility that your host family will not have an Internet connection. Life goes on without the Internet, and you must get along, *without complaining*, if this is the case.

Note: Please be very careful with your postings and messages on social media as a hint of a complaint or criticism could very easily get back to your host family and new friends.

## **District and Club Reports**

All students are required to write reports to District 7090 Youth Exchange. Your reports are required to help us monitor your progress and the types of activities your host club and district provide. Often we can gain ideas on how we can improve the effectiveness of our program. In your report, you should keep in mind that exchanges like yours cannot exist without the dedicated efforts of many Rotarians and host "Moms" and "Dads." It is therefore important that your reports be completed on time and be newsy. Your report does not have to be long but it should tell about your activities with your host family, Rotary club and school. Tell about the impressions that your experiences have had on you.

We are interested in hearing what you have been doing, if you have been having any problems, and if you have any suggestions on how we might improve our program in getting students ready for their year abroad. It also gives us an opportunity to assess the programs in the countries with which we are exchanging.

A sample form is included toward the back of this guide. You may use the form as a guide or feel free to just write a letter about your experiences. We ask that you send a report every two months.

## Reporting Procedures:

Please send a detailed report, once every month, to the Vice Chair responsible for your region of the world as well as your club counselor:

Australia and Asia	Justin Bester	<a href="mailto:justinsunriserotary@gmail.com">justinsunriserotary@gmail.com</a>
Central & South America	Jessica Wooder	<a href="mailto:jess.wooder@gmail.com">jess.wooder@gmail.com</a>
Northern Europe	Patricia Murenbeeld	<a href="mailto:pmurenbeeld@gmail.com">pmurenbeeld@gmail.com</a>
Central Europe	Jeanette Murphy	<a href="mailto:murphykj@cogeco.ca">murphykj@cogeco.ca</a>
Southern Europe	Stan Simmons	<a href="mailto:thev400@yahoo.com">thev400@yahoo.com</a>
Short Term Exchanges	Connie Forsythe	<a href="mailto:connie.simcoerotary@gmail.com">connie.simcoerotary@gmail.com</a>

## ***Using the Phone / Skype***

We recommend that you try to call/skype home about once a month. You may think this is unnecessary, but your parents will want to hear your voice even if you have been writing regularly. Depending on the cost, you may be able to talk for only a few minutes, so it might be a good idea to arrange a particular day when everyone will be home. If you use Skype, or What's App try to limit your connection to 30 minutes so you don't get too caught up in life back home.

There's really not much difference between using the phone at home and using the phone in a foreign country. You can expect your host family to establish time limits and appropriate calling times for you (this can be a challenge with the different time zones). If your host parents get business calls, the rules may be more restrictive so customers can get through. In any case, you must abide by the rules of your hosts. Of course, the big difference is the cost. You are expected to cover the costs of your phone usage. International calling can be extremely expensive and varies widely by country. You will likely use an app that's free verses a regular phone call.

## ***Getting a cell phone***

We recommend that you get a cell phone plan once you settle in your host country. Most of you will be able to use your phones and just get a new SIM card and plan. Check with your carrier before you go to see if your phone will work in other countries! For many countries you may have to buy a phone when you are there as many of the phones in the US and Canada are locked. In addition, we recommend that you get a cheap text "pay as you go" plan with limited voice usage. You certainly don't want to be tied into a plan beyond the one year you are in the country. Remember also you will likely be paying for your phone from your own funds, so you will want to be as economical as possible. Remember too that you are only going to be there for one year, so resist the temptation to get the top of the line phone which may set you apart from your local friends unnecessarily.

## ***Public Speaking***

### **Preparing a Speech**

You will undoubtedly be asked to make several presentations during your year abroad. Some of these may be fairly formal, such as at a Rotary or business meeting. Others will be informal, perhaps at a school for younger students.

In preparing your speech, keep your audience in mind. Some will want to know about your home country, while others will be more interested in what you think of their country. A good topic to "break the ice" is comparing the school systems – hours, courses, activities, and rules.

And yes, you will be speaking in your new language. For your first speeches, get help from your host family or counselor with the language. You will want to write out your speeches and practice them until you are comfortable.

## **Power Point Presentation and Photo Album**

It is recommended that you take along a Power Point presentation with photos from home for showing at Rotary meetings, school, church groups, and other special groups. It is also recommended that you prepare a small good quality picture album of about 50 to 75 color pictures to show your host families and people you visit for dinner or on weekends.

Here are some ideas for photos:

- Your family, home, cottage.
- Your special interests such as school, sports, activities.
- Special local sites, such as historic and scenic points of interest.
- National points of interest, National Parks, photos from past trips.

## **Gifts**

Do not overlook the important item of gifts for your host families and for those who will act as your hosts for occasional weekends, etc. these gifts need not be expensive, but should be something distinctly Canadian or American. Here are some suggestions:

- Towels, napkins, or place mats with Canadian or American motifs
- A set of coasters
- Native prints (reproductions)
- Wall maps
- Flags
- Good quantity lapel pins
- Maple syrup or maple sugar candies
- T-shirts with Canadian or American designs
- Books relating to your region
- Bookmarks
- Stamps or coins
- Decks of cards with scenes on them
- Pamphlets about your region and its history

You should have a special present for your host family when you arrive. Do not forget birthday and Christmas presents (yes, you will be away at Christmas time) for your many mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. You may want to send a list home and ask your parents to mail suitable gifts. Again it should be stressed that these need not be expensive; being from your country and given with a warm thoughtfulness is what really counts.

Here is one more little suggestion. It is amazing how a single flower or a small box of chocolates given to your host mother with a little hug can have so much meaning.

## ***Blazer***

Nearly all Rotary Youth Exchange students wear a blazer. Blazers should be worn while traveling to and from your host country and at special Rotary events. You should feel comfortable wearing it to the homes of Rotarians or on other occasions that call for you get dressed up. Students usually come home with their blazer covered with the lapel pins presented to them over the course of the year. Students have told us over and over again how much the blazers help to draw people to them in very positive ways.

The color of your blazer indicates the country you are from. In our district US students wear navy blue blazers and red for the Canadian students. All blazers have a woven Rotary crest sewn on the left breast pocket. The blazers may be matched up with slacks (or skirts) and are acceptable as formal wear while on exchange.

## ***Miscellaneous***

### **Pins**

Lapel pins are extremely popular. Most students take 100 to 200 lapel pins to give out to Rotary Club members, fellow Exchange students, and all of your new host brothers and sisters. There is no “official” pin, so use your creativity here. Past students have had some success requesting pins from their governmental officials. Your local club may have ideas. You can even make your own pins.

### **Club Banners**

It is customary for Club banners to be exchanged when you visit a Rotary Club. Your sponsoring club will give you a small supply. It is appropriate for you to exchange banners with your host club when you attend your first meeting.

### **Flags**

Many students take at least one full-sized Canadian or American flag with them for presentation to their host club or school. Students tell us that this gesture of goodwill goes over exceptionally well. You should also take several smaller flags for gifts.

### **Business Cards**

District 7090 will supply you with your Youth Exchange Badge and approximately 250 visiting cards in a distinctive district format.

# About Rotary

## *What is Rotary?*

Rotary is an organization of business and professional persons united worldwide who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations and help build goodwill and peace around the world. There are over 1,100,000 Rotarians worldwide in 161 countries.

## *Four Avenues of Service*

The term “Four Avenues of Service” is frequently used in Rotary literature and information. The “Avenues” refer to the four elements of the object of Rotary: Club Service, Vocational Service, Community Service and International Service.

Although the Avenues of Service are not found in any formal part of the constitutional documents of Rotary, the concept has been accepted as a means to describe the primary areas of Rotary activity.

1. **Club Service** involves all of the activities necessary for Rotarians to perform to make their club function successfully.
2. **Vocational Service** is a description of the opportunity each Rotarian has to represent the dignity and utility of one's vocation to the other members of the club.
3. **Community Service** pertains to the activities Rotarians undertake to improve the quality of life in their community. It frequently involves assistance to youth, the aged, handicapped and others who look to Rotary as a source of hope for a better life.
4. **International Service** describes the many programs and activities which Rotarians undertake to advance international understanding, goodwill and peace. International Service projects are designed to meet humanitarian needs of people in many lands.
5. **New Generation** pertains to the many youth programs Rotary are involved in: Youth Exchange, RYLA, Slapshot, Interact, Rotaract, Early Act

## *Rotary Youth Exchange*

Rotary Youth Exchange is one of Rotary's most popular programs to promote international understanding and develop lifelong friendships. It began in 1927 with the Rotary Club of Nice, France. In 1939 an extensive Youth Exchange was created between California and Latin America. Since then the program has expanded around the world. In recent years more than 8,000 young people have participated annually in Rotary sponsored exchange programs.

The values of Youth Exchange are experienced not only by the high school-age students involved but also by the host families, sponsoring clubs, receiving high schools and the entire community. Youth Exchange participants usually provide their fellow students in their host schools with excellent opportunities to learn about customs, languages, traditions and family life in another country.

Youth Exchange offers young people interesting opportunities and rich experiences to see another part of the world. Students usually spend a full academic year abroad, although some clubs and districts sponsor short-term exchanges of several weeks or months.

## ***The 4-Way Test***

Rotarians use the following simple test to evaluate ethical concerns in everyday life:

Of the things we think, say or do

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

## ***The Youth Exchange Structure***

**District 7090 Governor** – oversees all Rotary activities in our district. You may see the Governor at the District Conference or at a youth exchange orientation. The Governor only becomes involved in the active management of the youth exchange program if a serious problem or situation arises.

**District 7090 Youth Exchange Chair** – is responsible for the youth exchange program throughout the district. The Chair oversees outbound student selection, training and orientation. The Chair is also responsible for promoting the program and for coordinating the hosting of incoming students. The Chair is consulted when any significant issue arises and is the ultimate authority in many situations.

**Vice Chairs** – handle the individual exchanges with each of the countries. Each Vice Chair is assigned to a region of the world. They make the international contacts to arrange an exchange, handle all paperwork associated with an exchange, and are often the first contact when a problem arises. They are actively involved with student selection, and assist with orientation.

**Club Structure** – Your sponsor club should have a youth exchange committee that promotes the program at your school and conducts the selection interviews. Either the youth exchange officer or an assigned counselor should have assisted you with your application process. Your counselor should be planning to correspond with you during your year abroad.

## ***The Role of Clubs – They're not all the same***

Each Rotary Club is different, and the level of involvement with the youth exchange program can vary widely. Some clubs will automatically invite you to every meeting. They may have a pre-planned schedule for each Rotarian to take you dinner or to an event.

Other clubs may be the opposite, handing you your monthly allowance and expecting that your host families will handle everything else. You can't force them to be involved, but you can make an effort to get yourself invited to meetings. If your club doesn't invite you to meetings, but another club invites their exchange student, ask if you can go to that club sometimes. Try to meet as many Rotarians as possible.

## ***The Role of Your Counselor***

Your sponsor Rotary Club and host Rotary Club each appoint a counselor to advise and help you. Your sponsor counselor will help you prepare for the year abroad. Ideally, your host counselor should be someone you will regard as your "confidant" during your stay abroad. If one has not been assigned, tactfully request that a counselor be appointed for you.

Your host club counselor will:

- Introduce you to your school and help you select suitable subjects
- Help you arrange suitable banking if necessary and your stipend
- Help you coordinate social and Rotary Club activities
- Help you resolve problems of any kind

You should make a point of taking the initiative to be in contact with your host counselor about once a week, especially during the early stages, and don't let it drop off to less than once every two weeks. If, by chance, problems develop which the counselor cannot resolve, speak with the club youth exchange officer, your host club president or contact the District Chair.

## ***Participate!***

To enjoy your Rotary Club, you must be actively involved with the members. This may take some real effort on your part. Try to get to their meetings, and learn about their upcoming activities. Find out about the charities they support, and offer to help at fundraising events. As you become more involved with them, you will make many close friends – and you might get some opportunities that will enhance your year.



# Selected Information

## ***Program Rules and Conditions of Exchange***

As a Youth Exchange student sponsored by a Rotary club and/or district, you must agree to the following rules and conditions of exchange. Please note that districts may edit this document or insert additional rules if needed to account for local conditions.

### **Strict Rules and Conditions of Exchange — Violations will result in student's immediate return home.**

- 1) Obey the Laws of the Host Country — If found guilty of violation of any law, student can expect no assistance from their sponsors or their native country. Student will be returned home as soon as he/she is released by authorities.
- 2) The student is not allowed to possess or use illegal drugs. Medicine prescribed by a physician is allowed.
- 3) The student is not authorized to operate a motorized vehicle of any kind which requires a federal/state/provincial license or participate in driver education programs.
- 4) The illegal drinking of alcoholic beverages is expressly forbidden. Students who are of legal age should refrain. If the host family offers a student an alcoholic drink, it is permissible to accept it under their supervision in their home.
- 5) Stealing is prohibited. There are no exceptions.
- 6) Unauthorized travel is not allowed. Students must follow the travel rules of the Host District.
- 7) The student must be covered by a health and life insurance policy agreeable to the Hosting District.
- 8) The student must attend school regularly and make an honest attempt to succeed.
- 9) The student must abide by the rules and conditions of exchange of the Hosting District provided to you by the District Youth Exchange Committee.

### **Common Sense Rules and Conditions of Exchange — Violations will result in a district review and restrictions.**

#### **Severe/Consistent disregard for these rules will result in being returned home.**

- 1) Smoking is discouraged. If you state in your application that you do not smoke, you will be held to that position throughout your year. Your acceptance and host family placement is based on your signed statement. Under no circumstances are you to smoke in your Host Family's bedrooms.
- 2) Become an integral part of the Host Family, assuming duties and responsibilities normal for a student of your age and other children in the family. Respect your host's wishes.
- 3) Learn the language of your host country. The effort will be appreciated by teachers, host parents, Rotary club members and others you meet in the community. It will go a long way in your gaining acceptance in the community and by those who will become lifelong friends.
- 4) Attend Rotary-sponsored events and host family events. Show an interest in host family and Rotary activities to which you are invited. Volunteer to get involved, do not wait to be asked. Lack of interest on your part is detrimental to your exchange and can have a negative impact on future exchanges.
- 5) Get involved in your school and community activities. Plan your recreation and spare time activities around your school and community friends. Do not spend all your time with the other exchange students.
- 6) Choose friends in the community carefully. Ask for and heed the advice of host families, counselors and school personnel in choosing friends.
- 7) Do not borrow money. Pay any bills you incur promptly. Ask permission to use the family telephone, keep track of long distance calls and reimburse your host family each month for the calls you make.
- 8) Travel is permitted with host parents or for Rotary club or district functions authorized by the hosting Rotary club or district with proper adult chaperones. Other travel must be approved by the host district contact, host club, host family and student's own parents/legal guardians in writing exempting Rotary of responsibility and liability. Students may not travel alone or accompanied only by other students.
- 9) If you are offered an opportunity to go on a trip or to an event, make sure you understand any costs you must pay and your responsibilities before you go.
- 10) You must show proof of proper immunization.

## ***Rotary Rules – Continued***

- 11) Students should have sufficient financial support to assure their well-being during the exchange year. Your hosting district may require a contingency fund for emergency situations. It must be replenished by the student's parents/guardians as it is depleted. Unused funds at the end of the exchange will be returned to the student. These funds must be turned over to your Host Rotary Club upon your arrival and are not meant to cover day-to-day expenses.
- 12) Any costs relative to a student's early return home or any other unusual costs (e.g., language tutoring, tours, etc.) shall be the responsibility of the student's own parents/guardians.
- 13) Students must return home directly by a route mutually agreeable to the host district and student's parents/guardians.
- 14) You will be under the Hosting District's authority while you are an exchange student. Parents/guardians must avoid authorizing any extra activities directly to their son/daughter. The Host Club and District Youth Exchange Officers must authorize such activities. If the student has relatives in the host country or region, they will have no authority over the student while the student is in the program.
- 15) Visits by your parents/guardians, siblings and/or friends while you are in the program are strongly discouraged. Such visits may only take place with the host club and host district's consent and only within the last quarter of the exchange or during school breaks. Visits are not allowed during major holidays, even if occurring during school breaks.
- 16) Avoid serious romantic activity. Abstain from sexual activity and promiscuity.

## ***Suggestions for the Exchange Student***

### **Prior to departure**

- Write to companies and local, state, and federal government agencies for pins, flags, maps, etc., of your home country.
- Obtain banners from your sponsor Rotary club.
- Attend a club meeting of your sponsor Rotary club.
- Gather slides of your home, school, family, and friends to take with you on your exchange.
- Learn as much as possible about your host country before you go (customs, currency, climate, voltage requirements, geography, government, history, language, etc.).
- Write to your host family, counselor, and club before you go.
- Send articles to your school and local newspapers to tell them about your upcoming trip.
- Review political situations, industries, and populations in your home country and community before you depart (for example, take a tour of a local industrial plant, business, newspaper, radio station, law-enforcement agency, etc.).
- Make a list of goals or things you want to accomplish during your exchange experience.
- Bring thank-you notes with your country's flag or a picture of the scenery or a national monument. Your thank-you notes will be appreciated by Rotarians who take you places, and they are a nice souvenir to remind them of you and your country.
- Bring a few native gifts for your host families. Make sure that you choose items that are non-breakable and can pack easily (perhaps tea towels, pins, or calendars).
- Bring an address book. Have "business" cards printed with your picture to give to all of the friends you meet while on your exchange.
- Get in touch with former Youth Exchange students or community members who have lived in your host country. Discuss with them what you need to bring, things you may wish to see, and other relevant issues.
- Make two photocopies of your signed passport and of your plane tickets. Take one copy with you (keep it separate from the originals) and leave the other copy at home with your parents. If either document is lost or stolen, the photocopy will assist you in replacing the item.
- Make a list of everything that you put in your suitcase. Keep this in your carry-on bag. This will help you if your bag is lost or stolen en route.
- Take a picture of your luggage and carry the picture with you.
- Put unique identification marks or tags on all your luggage. Many bags look alike.
- If you wear glasses, bring an extra pair. If you wear contacts, bring glasses and your prescription.
- Bring a camera and some extra film. Make sure your name is on your camera and camera case in a way that it can not be removed.

### **Are you really ready to go?**

- Do you have your passport and visa?
- Have you made your travel arrangements?
- Have you corresponded with your host club and host family?
- Have you made any language preparations? Do you have a bilingual dictionary and language tapes? Can you introduce yourself in your new language?
- Have you prepared your slides and/or photos for presentation? Take 20 or 30 good pictures of yourself, your family, school, local sights, etc. Have you rehearsed your presentation?
- How are your parents going to send you money? Do you know the exchange rate?
- How will you handle initial homesickness and loneliness?
- What gifts will you take for your host families and people who become special to you?
- Do you have your "business" cards and thank-you notes?
- What questions are you going to ask of your host family upon arrival? Do you have your "Sample Questions to Ask Your Host Family"?
- Do you have your sponsoring club banners?
- Have you done your homework on your new country — its history, geography, politics, neighbors?
- Have you made all of your insurance arrangements? Have your parents signed the necessary release forms?

## ***Suggestions for the Exchange Student - Continued***

### **On the flight**

- Put a toothbrush and other toiletries in your carry-on bag.
- Bring your blazer on the airplane with you and wear it in the airport when you arrive and when being picked up by your host family. (It will allow you to be easily identified.)
- Do not let strangers carry your bags. Keep your carry-on luggage with you at all times.
- Bring a book to read and a variety of activities (e.g., a crossword puzzle, cards).
- Drink plenty of liquids (juice or water rather than caffeinated beverages) on the plane so you do not become dehydrated.
- Get up and walk around to keep your circulation going. Do not disturb those passengers around you.
- Bring a small amount of money with you so that you can exchange currencies in any airport where you have a connection. You may want to buy something to eat or drink in the airport. In addition, you may need money for transportation once you get to your host country. It's also a good idea to bring bank cards or credit cards

### **During your exchange**

- When you arrive, give a copy of your passport and airline ticket to your counselor or host family and keep the originals in a safe place. Make sure you put it somewhere where it can be accessed 24 hours a day in case of an emergency
- Keep a copy of your health insurance policy with you at all times in case a medical emergency should arise unexpectedly.
- Learn the language of your host country to the best of your ability. This will help with your transition and impress your hosts. If the hosts want to learn your native language, set aside some time to help them but speak your native language as little as possible otherwise.
- Work hard to be a good student.
- Get involved in local and school activities. Continue with activities you participate in at home and try new ones!
- Be polite and say thank you.
- Smile.
- Try new things. This is your chance to experience the culture of another country.
- Learn to listen and observe. Do your best to adapt to life with your host family.
- Help with household chores as needed.
- If you are not sure about something, ask — and listen to the answer.
- Keep a travel diary and include souvenirs so that you will be able to share your time abroad with family and friends at home.
- Get involved with your host Rotary club. Think of ways to meet all of the Rotarians in the club.
- Participate in Rotary club projects.
- Write to your sponsor Rotary club. Rotarians gave you this opportunity and they would love to hear how much you are enjoying the experience.
- Try all foods offered to you.
- Be flexible and adapt to your new environment.

### **After your exchange**

- Keep in touch with the friends you met abroad.
- Be patient and realize that it will take time for you to readjust to returning home.
- Share your experiences with your family and friends.
- If possible, contact people in your community who were born or lived in your host country. This will enable you to maintain your newly acquired linguistic skill and reflect on your adventure.
- Give a presentation to the Rotary club that sponsored you, sharing all the highlights of your exchange.
- Stay active with your district's Youth Exchange program. Help with the interviewing, selection, and recruitment of students.
- Join an exchange student alumni group or ROTEX group if available.
- Join an Interact club or a Rotaract club or attend a RYLA camp.
- Continue to promote international understanding and goodwill.
- Write to your host families, counselor, and host Rotary club to thank them for their support during your year.
- Keep in touch with your sponsor club. They will be interested to hear from you even years after your exchange.

## **Sample Questions for the Host Family**

In general, ask the questions that you feel are the most important the first night and then ask the other questions over the next few days. Remember, when in doubt ask, and always try to be open and honest with your host family and your Rotary counselor. Good communication is essential for a successful exchange.

1. What do I call you?
2. What am I expected to do daily other than make my bed, always keep my room tidy, and clean the bathroom every time I use it?
3. What is the procedure for dirty clothes?
4. Where do I keep clothes until wash day?
5. Should I wash my own clothes and underclothes?
6. Should I iron my own clothes?
7. May I use the iron, washing machine, sewing machine at any time?
8. When is a convenient time for me to use the shower/bath (a.m. or p.m.)?
9. Where may I keep my toiletries?
10. May I use the family's bathroom toiletries (toothpaste, soap, etc.), or am I responsible for purchasing my own?
11. What time will meals be served?
12. What can I do to assist at mealtimes (help prepare meals, set the table, wash dishes, empty garbage)?
13. May I help myself to food and drink any time or should I ask first?
14. What areas of the house are strictly private (parents' bedroom, study/office)?
15. May I put pictures or posters in my room?
16. May I rearrange my bedroom?
17. What are your rules for me with regard to alcohol and smoking?
18. Where can I store my suitcases?
19. What time must I get up (on weekdays, on weekends)?
20. What time must I go to bed (on school nights, on weekends)?
21. What are the rules for going out at night and at what time must I be home? Can exceptions be made if I ask in advance?
22. May I have friends spend the night or visit during the day?
23. What are the rules about me using the telephone? Must I ask first?
24. Is it typical for teenagers my age to have cell phones and if so can you help me get one?
25. What are the rules in the house for using the internet?
26. May I make long-distance calls?
27. How do you want me to keep track the costs of my telephone calls?
28. What is the procedure for mailing letters? What address do I use for my incoming mail?
29. Do you have any dislikes, such as chewing gum, wearing a hat or curlers at the table, loud rock music, or smoking?
30. Do my host brothers or sisters have any dislikes?
31. What are the dates of your birthdays?
32. What are the transportation arrangements (car, bus, bike, walking, etc.)?
33. May I use the stereo, TV, computer, etc., at any time? Are there restrictions on computer and Internet use?
34. What are the rules about attending religious services?
35. Sample Questions for the Host Family - Continued
36. Would you like me to phone home if I will be more than 30 minutes late?
37. When we go out as a family, should I pay for my own entrance fee, meals, etc.?
38. What arrangements should I make for school lunch?
39. Does the Rotary club pay my cost of travel to school?
40. Am I to attend Rotary club meetings? If yes, how will I get there?
41. What else can I do around the house (yard work, help clean, babysit)?
42. Please tell me how to interact with the house servants (where applicable).

43. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

Note: This form is available online (google search Rotary First Night Questions) in French, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, and Spanish. It is an appendix to the Rotary “Youth Exchange Handbook,” which is available in these languages from Rotary International. Check the RI website.

## Rotary District 7090 Youth Exchange Report

Please provide the following information during your exchange. Be honest with your responses and inform us of anything you feel is important for us to know. If we are not aware of a problem or a concern, we cannot help you. Please print neatly. Thank you.

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor Rotary Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Host Rotary Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Residence telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor's address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_

Current host family's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Residence telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Current host family's address: \_\_\_\_\_ Business telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

List names and ages of host family brothers and sisters: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of anticipated transfer to next host family: \_\_\_\_\_

Next host family's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Residence telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Next host family's address: \_\_\_\_\_ Business telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you regularly receive your monthly allowance? Yes No

Amount of allowance received in local currency per month: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you had any public speaking engagements (Rotary gatherings, school, etc.)? Yes No

If yes, please tell us about the event and give examples of questions asked by the audience: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you attend Rotary meetings? Yes No (How often do you attend? weekly / bimonthly / monthly)

What other Rotary functions/events have you attended? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you been the guest of any Rotary members other than your host families? Yes No

If yes, what have you done with them (e.g., gone to their house for dinner, gone on a trip?) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Rotary District 7090 Youth Exchange Report - Continued

Please give a brief account of contacts with your counselor (How often do you meet? Who initiates the meeting you or the counselor? Do you feel that you are being listened to?): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us how you feel about your relationship with each of the following:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Host Club				
Club Counselor				
Current Host Family				
School Friends				
Natural Parents				

Please explain any unsatisfactory relationships and list ways in which you think that they can be improved.

\_\_\_\_\_

### Additional Questions

Have you experienced any health problems? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you appeared in the newspaper, on the radio, or on television? (Please attach articles if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the best way for us to contact you?  Mail  Telephone  Fax  E-mail

List preferred contact information here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any additional concerns, questions, or problems that we can help you with or you would like to make us aware of?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Send this form to:                      Your Vice Chair

Please feel free to include a personal letter with additional comments. We want to hear how you are doing! Comment on how you feel about being an exchange student in a different culture. What are your challenges? Success stories?



## ***Characteristics of a Good Youth Exchange Ambassador***

One of the significant responsibilities of Rotary Exchange Students is to serve as an “ambassador” of goodwill and international understanding for Rotary, your family, your community, and your country.

The basic ingredients for a successful exchange are in place. You are anxious to go. Your host club wants you and your host families want you. Let's review some of the essentials that will make your exchange an outstanding success.

1. Become part of your host family. Adapt to them. Comply with their rules, whether you agree with them or not. Remember that it's all part of the learning experience.
2. Keep your room tidy and yourself well groomed. Accept your full share of the household chores - and fun.
3. Be loyal to your host families. *Do not criticize them when talking to other people.*
4. Be sensitive to the use of the bathroom, laundry, etc. Use them when others do not need to. *Do not use all the hot water!* Clean up after yourself.
5. Take a keen interest in other people. Ask lots of questions. Be a good listener!
6. NEVER compare anything in your own country such as the school system, government, industrial efficiencies, homes, standard of living, as being better than what is found in your host country. You should provide information, but do not be judgmental.
7. Keep in close contact with your host rotary club. Ask to be put on their club bulletin mailing list. Make a point of getting to know the members and ask them lots of questions about themselves, their families, business, interests, etc. Many Rotarians are shy with young people and you will have to take the initiative to break down this barrier.
8. Above all else, *do not sit on problems you cannot work out on your own.* Talk to the appropriate individuals; your host parents, your host club counselor, your host club president, your District Chair. All problems can be resolved - view problems as unsolved challenges and opportunities.
9. Your first priority should be to keep yourself available for involvement with Rotary clubs, club members and host families. All other interests should receive secondary priority.
10. *Always be sure to express thanks to anyone who does something for you.* After all, if they took the interest and time to do something for you, the least you should do is show your appreciation.
11. When you return home, tell the facts about your year away, but do not express anything in a critical manner.
12. Each country has different customs, values and mannerisms. Be sensitive, tolerant and adjust to them. The adjustments are all part of the exchange experience.

This will probably be the most memorable year of your life. Enjoy it to the fullest!

## ***Speaking Tips***

Everyone becomes nervous when speaking in front of a group of people. Mark Twain once remarked, "There are two types of speakers: those that are nervous and those that are liars." Here are some tips to make the experience successful and enjoyable:

- Prepare ahead. This is the most important step to effective speaking. Know what you want to say. Rehearse as though you are already in front of the audience.
- Take visual aids. Slides are still the most widely used, but photo albums and picture books can be used with small groups. Computer-generated presentations can be very effective, but many of your audiences will not have proper equipment.
- At the beginning of the year, you may want to actually write out your whole speech in your new language and practice it. As the year goes along, you will find that note cards are more natural and effective.
- If possible, become familiar with the room before you speak. Arrive early and find out where you will be seated. Look at the seating arrangement and decide where you would like to stand. If there is a microphone, try it out to make sure it is working at a reasonable volume..
- The groups that ask you to speak will be very understanding of your language limitations. You will probably know some in each audience, so think of the group as friends.
- Make a good first impression – walk to the podium with confidence, stand up straight, and SMILE!
- Nervousness plus confidence equals enthusiasm! Visualize success and excite your audience!
- If you need to relax, just take a deep breath. Concentrate on speaking clearly and avoid taking too fast.
- Don't worry about making prepared jokes. It's more effective to tell humorous stories about your experiences with the culture or the language.

## ***Paul Harris: An Ordinary Man***

A Speech prepared by  
Charles Complin, Past District Governor  
St. Catharines Rotary Club

Everyone in Rotary knows who Paul Harris was and that he started Rotary. But only one in a thousand can tell you very much more about him. He was a remarkable man and yet an ordinary man. His life was exciting and colorful but, had he not started Rotary, none of us in this room would have ever heard of him. And yet he's the reason why all of us are in this room today. If he had not lived and if he had not founded Rotary, you and I would be elsewhere and the rest of the world would be a poorer place.

Who was he and what did he do that affected the lives of millions of people?

He was an ordinary man who did something that was remarkably different from anything that had been done before. Today there are service clubs in almost every city, town and hamlet in the world. But there were none, anywhere in the world, when Paul Harris graduated in the early 1880's as a young lawyer from the University of Iowa.

His father had been a druggist who had gone broke when Paul was a three-year-old boy and Paul was brought up on his grandparent's farm in Vermont. He lived a quite ordinary childhood and had a quite ordinary education. He had an education and a vocation, but he was not yet ready to begin to earn a living.

One of the lecturers at the commencement program for his graduating class said something that Paul Harris took as good advice. He said: "It would be a wise plan for each graduate to go first to some small town and make a fool of himself for five years. After that he could settle down and begin to practice law."

To Paul this was sound advice. He would set aside five years to make a fool of himself, not in a small town, but in all parts of the world to which he could manage to make his way.

What an adventure!

After having his fling he would hang up his shingle in some great city, Chicago perhaps, settle down and lead a regular life.

And so this young man set out on what he called "a fool's errand" and never once looked back.

Perhaps he could find the answer to a question that kept bothering him. "Why did races of men differ in their ways of life." He had read a great deal in University by English, French, German, Russian and Scandinavian authors. But this didn't satisfy him. Only by seeing these people in their own lands would tell him what he wanted to know.

And so he began five years of wandering first around the United States and often with almost no money in his pocket. He walked hundreds of miles in the open country and tramped the streets of great cities. He slept in the open country or in cheap city quarters. He often went hungry until he found a job that lasted long enough for him to begin to wander again.

For a time he was a newspaper reporter, he did manual labor on a fruit ranch, worked in a raisin packing plant and was a teacher at a business college in Los Angeles. He went wherever he

wanted to go and wherever he could find enough work to keep him going until he could begin to wander again.

He was an actor with a stock company in Colorado and a cowboy on a ranch. He was the night clerk at a hotel in Florida and later a traveling salesman for a marble company in Vermont.

He left for England working his way across as a cattleman on a boat that took him to Liverpool. His travels took him over much of the United States and many parts of Europe.

When he returned to the States a friend offered him a job saying: "Whatever the advantages of settling in Chicago may be, you will make more money if you remain in Florida with me."

To this Paul replied "I'm sure you are right. But I am not going to Chicago for the purpose of making money. I am going for the purpose of living a life."

And so finally, in 1896, at the age of 28, he returned to Chicago and hung up his shingle. The idea of a worldwide fellowship of business and professional men had not yet come, but a wonderful foundation had been laid.

The next few years were to be the most lonely of his entire life. He was a gregarious person who loved the company of others. In the first five years of his law practice he made numerous acquaintances but very few real friends. He was, as he himself said, dreadfully lonesome, particularly on Sundays and holidays.

He pondered the question of how to increase his acquaintanceship with young men, who, like himself, had come to Chicago from farms and colleges. But it took a long time for his thinking to produce results.

To him, the one essential was lacking, the presence of friends.

It was Emerson who said, "He who has a thousand friends has not a friend to spare." In his early days in his adopted city he had neither the thousand nor the one.

The thought persisted that he was experiencing what had happened to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others in this same city. In fact, he knew a few. Why not bring them together. If the others also longed for fellowship, then surely something would come of it.

Then the thought came to him. Why not, in a big city like Chicago, have a fellowship composed of just one man from each of many different occupations without restrictions on their politics or their religion and with a broad tolerance of each other's opinion.

Months, even years passed, before he decided to do something about it. In his own words "In the life of great movements it is necessary that one man who has faith walk alone for a time."

He did walk alone, but eventually in February 1905, when he had been in law practice for nine years and was now 36 years of age, he asked three other young men to meet with him. He laid before them a simple formula of mutual cooperation and informal fellowship, such as they had once known in the villages from whence they came. They agreed to his plan.

Of the three, only Silvester Schiele, stayed with the new movement for any length of time. He learned, as we have learned since, that Rotary is not everyone's cup of tea. Paul suggested that Silvester become the first President, as he wanted to remain behind the scenes for a while.

Others were quickly added to the group and joined in developing the project with great enthusiasm.

They grew in numbers and in fellowship and in the spirit of helpfulness to each other and to the city. The banker, the baker, the parson and the plumber, the lawyer and the laundryman discovered the similarity of each other's ambitions, problems, successes and failures. They learned they had much in common and they found joy in being of service to one another.

At the third meeting of the group Paul suggested several names for the club, among them Rotary. And that name was selected as they were then holding their meetings in rotation at their offices and places of business.

Paul Harris took no office of any kind in the first two years of the Chicago Club, preferring instead to merely nominate officers. However he assumed the Presidency in the third year, at which time there were three things he wanted to do.

1. To advance the growth of the Chicago Club.
2. To extend the movement to other cities.
3. To intensify community service as one of the club's objectives.

To the members of the small group, which came together in the large City of Chicago, Rotary must have seemed like an oasis in a desert. Their meetings were quite different from other clubs of those days. They were much more intimate and more friendly. They had made it a rule, for instance, that everyone was to be called by his first name.

Dignified reserve was checked at the door and the members became boys again. To Paul Harris attendance at a Rotary meeting was very much like being back home in the valley in Vermont where he had spent his boyhood.

The original concept of Rotary has expanded and will continue to expand as conditions change. Its ideals have been formulated and its objects have been set. But intimate and informal fellowship remains a vital element of its structure.

Sir Henry Braddon has said:

“One way in which Rotary develops the individual is in preserving the boy in him. Deep down in the heart of every good fellow there is a boy; a boy whose outlook on life is rather wonderful, unspoiled, with no prejudice, no intolerance, with keen enthusiasm, ready friendliness. It is a sad day for the man when the boy can be said to have passed away. As long as a man keeps his mind resilient, his nature open to friendly influences, he will never grow entirely old. Rotary encourages and helps to develop him by keeping the boy alive in him.”

THIS IS HOW ROTARY BEGAN.

It is doubtful if Paul Harris had a feeling for more than the basic principals on which Rotary was formed.

When it all began he could not know that Rotary would grow to a quarter of a million members at the time of his death at the age of 78 in 1947. Nor could he have known that by the time of Rotary's 80th birthday its membership would be close to one million Rotarians in so very many countries. He could never have known that Rotary is still growing today at the rate of some 500 new clubs a year. He could no more have known these things than any of us now know what Rotary will accomplish when it reaches its first hundred years in 2005.

This man - this very lonesome young man, had a plan to overcome this loneliness and, in doing so, created one of the greatest, non-denominational forces for the good the world has ever known.

In the final analysis he was just an ordinary man like every man in this room. An ordinary man whose vision of the world would change because of his travels. An ordinary man who did something to overcome his loneliness that created so much good, so much kindness and so much love in the world that those of us who have benefited from his solution revere him for changes he has wrought in our lives, and which will continue to change the lives of people long after we have gone.

## **Other Resources**

### **Recommended Reading**

Bettina Hansel, The Exchange Student Survival Kit, Intercultural Press, 1993. A general guide to the youth exchange experience.

Karen Connelly, Touch the Dragon, Turnstone Press, 1992. One student's experiences with learning a new culture.

### **Web Sites**

[www.rotary7090.org/](http://www.rotary7090.org/) - Our District website, including youth exchange information and letters from students.

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) – Language books and tapes. Go to the “books” page, and type your language (e.g. “German language”). You will be overwhelmed by all the choices. You should be able to find even the most unusual languages (I found Finnish, Hungarian, and Thai).

[www.magellans.com](http://www.magellans.com) – This is a luggage site, but has travel tips, packing guides, country information, and information on airline baggage restrictions. Just click on “Info Center.”

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Health Information for travelers.

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) – US State Department - travel warnings and information by country – also includes information about obtaining passports.

[www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com) – Free translation service.

[www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org) – Rotary International Home Page.

<https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/> – currency converter.

[www.dictionaries.travlang.com](http://www.dictionaries.travlang.com) – Free on-line language dictionaries.

[www.convert-me.com/en/](http://www.convert-me.com/en/) – measurement converter (if you don't know metric/Celsius).

[www.voyage.gc.ca/](http://www.voyage.gc.ca/) – Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs – travel reports and passport information.

[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/) – Information about various countries.

[www.school-for-champions.com/speaking.htm](http://www.school-for-champions.com/speaking.htm) – Public speaking tips.

<https://www.duolingo.com/register> - For help with second language development.