

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" (Appendix I)?
- 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?

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 traveler's checks and credit cards

During your exchange

- When you arrive, give your passport and airline ticket to your counselor or host family to keep in a safe place. Make sure that they 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.