



District 5360 Youth Exchange Information Sheet #4 – Pre-Departure Information: Getting Ready for your Youth Exchange Experience



In addition to packing and saying good-bye to friends and family there are a variety of things you should do to prepare yourself for your upcoming experience. Because you won't have the rest of your life in your host country, understanding the new culture needs to occur quickly in order for you to accomplish your goals and have a positive experience. You don't want to take the first three months figuring out things you could have prepared for before you even left!

Reading

- ◆ Read some things from (not just about) that country/culture.
- ◆ Read about the theory and concepts associated with culture and culture shock. Be aware that experiencing culture shock is a normal part of crossing cultures and that there are ways of meeting the experience and working creatively within it.

Keeping a journal

- ◆ Keeping a journal during the initial stages of your time abroad is a very useful tool for observing your adaptation to the new culture. Through your journal you will be able to observe your movement through the various stages of cultural adaptation and culture shock. In some cases your journal will assist you in overcoming some of the negative aspects of culture shock. Read *Keeping a Journal* for more information.

Learn the Language

- ◆ The importance of making an effort to learn some of the basics of the language in your host country cannot be underestimated.
- ◆ Having some language basics will make it easier to start learning the language at a higher level upon arrival in your host country.
- ◆ Being able to say a few things (even if it isn't perfect) will show your hosts that you are interested not only in their language, but in being in their country – this will be very appreciated
- ◆ See *Learning the Language* for more information

Other Activities

The more information you know about your host country/culture before departing, the better off you will be. Several ways to do this are:

- ◆ Complete as much as you can of the Host Culture Questionnaire
- ◆ Talk to people from your host culture, or other exchange students who have been to the same country in order to answer the questionnaire and to find out more specific things, such as what items will you need to bring from home, what should you take as gifts, how easy will it be for you to reach your goals in the culture
- ◆ Use your imagination on ways to think about “culture” - think about yourself as a cultural being – someone who is influenced by and influences the society in which you live
- ◆ Attend Rotary meetings with your sponsor club to get a feel for the culture of Rotary in Canada
- ◆ Offer to share what you have learned about your host culture and your goals for your exchange with your school and your Rotary club





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- ◆ Look for cultural festivals, films, plays and music featuring your host culture

