

## **PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION FOR HOST FAMILIES**

This section contains a great deal of useful and interesting information about hosting a student from abroad. If, after reading through the material, you have any questions, please contact your Program Director.

- How to make our student's stay rewarding for ALL of us.
- Hints and suggestions for host families - some thoughts and advice from us.
- Hints from past host families.
- Hosting within your family budget.
- Translation of the guidelines your student will receive.
- Getting to know you: bonding and language activities.
- Insurance report procedures. If your student is involved in an accident or becomes sick, please contact your Program Director immediately. Please keep all original bills and receipts to send to World Exchange.

### **How to make our student's stay rewarding for all of us.**

We are sending you this information because we want you to have a wonderful and rewarding time with your student during the homestay. World Exchange has one of the highest success rates of all student exchange organizations, but every year there are a few families who find that their experience was not everything it might have been. We hope that by sharing what we know with you, we can help you to have the best possible time.

There are ways to approach the exchange experience, which, while they don't guarantee success, certainly contribute to it. Certain families have a great time year-after-year with a wide variety of students. We want to tell you why they have such a good time. Also we would like to reassure you that if your best efforts should fail, we will move your student, relieving your family of any discomfort. Fortunately, we rarely have to do this.

To a large degree, success lies in following our suggestions, rules and guidelines. The key is how you enter the experience. The hopes of your visiting student and the hopes of his or her parents (which the student carries as hidden baggage), like your own hopes for the exchange, form the framework for your experience.

Do you remember how you felt the first time you left home on your own for a long period of time? The stronger your memory of those feelings and anxieties, the more you will be able to understand what exchange students go through when they first arrive in the "foreign" country — the USA. A new culture and a completely new way of life suddenly engulf them. That is why a host family's support is so crucial to a student's successful intercultural experience. Being sheltered by the friendship and warmth that a family has to offer is invaluable. It is especially important that you, as a host family, recognize your student's feelings and fears and then help him or her to cope with different situations. Understanding your student, and helping your student understand you in return, will make the stay a pleasant one for all of you.

It's important to remember that your guest is a teenager with all the exciting highs and lows that this age puts us all through. Then, to this recipe add the fact that, for better or worse, your teen-guest is your "prisoner" - he or she is stuck! You make the rules, and so you should. Only you know about all the interesting things that can be done in your area and only you can either open the way to a fascinating experience or keep the door closed. The most your student can do is react. He or she can be excited and happy or morose and miserable.

It helps if you and your family imagine how you would feel if you went to stay with a family in France, China or Spain. If you're a shy sort, you would like to be encouraged and coaxed into doing things. Of course, if you are so shy that you don't tell your host family what you do and don't like, you'll be in trouble. If you are out-going and interested in everything, your host family will get out there with you and show you how to play soccer, how to make crêpes and how to do Tai Chi. You'll see movies, concerts, ball games, meet people, see the sights, etc. You are after all, a teenager, and you want it all! This is a special vacation - you are hoping to experience it to the full.

We are sure you get the picture, but it sounds exhausting and perhaps expensive: it doesn't have to be either. It does require three things: the ability to encourage forthrightness, the ability to think ahead and flexibility. Communicating your household rules, your hopes for the exchange and your plans for your student's stay is half the job. The other half is opening the way through humor, pantomime, pictures, music, etc., for your student to communicate with you. A bottleneck in either direction causes frustration and misery. You have to spend time and really talk. Thinking ahead is crucial. Imagine again that you are staying with a host family in France. It cost you and/or your parents a lot of money to go. And what does the family do? They take you to the same American style mall every day, eat at the same restaurant, and talk about the fact it was a shame that they got started so late in the day that it did not pay to go and see the Eiffel Tower as was planned. It is not a matter of money: it is a matter of being active, or arranging for your student to be active.

### **When you first meet**

You have just picked your student up and are making your way home. What should you say? Your student has been traveling for many hours and looks tired and nervous. Tell him/her how happy you are to have him/her here and explain what will happen next - a drink, a light snack, a shower or sleep, whichever is most wanted. The warmth of your welcome and the comfort of your concern will help your student through this tense time. Speak slowly and in simple sentences and give your student time to get used to his/her situation...and your accent. Your student may want to call home or send an email and will appreciate your offer to help with this.

### **In the beginning**

At the start of the homestay, when you most want to show interest in your student, you may tend to bombard him or her with questions and activities. We don't want to discourage your efforts and enthusiasm, but we do ask you to make sure your student has a chance to breathe and to absorb each event as it happens. Also, don't be afraid of giving

your student a chance to have some time alone—this time is important to sort out new ideas and feelings, to rest and maybe even catch up on lost sleep after a long journey.

### **Culture Shock**

The combination of excitement, nervousness, exhaustion and homesickness is a potent recipe for turmoil during the early days of the homestay. If you add a hefty dose of confusion at encountering a totally different culture and language, you can begin to imagine how your student may be feeling. The term for this state is known as "culture shock" and it can attack in varying degrees and in a variety of ways. Your student may be overly excitable and nervous or may lack appetite and prefer to be alone to sleep and recover. He or she may feel ill-at-ease and clumsy in his/her new surroundings, where everyone else is so comfortable and relaxed. The longing to return home may be overwhelming for a few hours or even days. So, too, may the tendency to be wary of what is new: for example to resist new foods, new experiences, even to openly criticize the host country and its culture. Please don't take these symptoms as a personal slight, but give your student the space, time and understanding to help him or her through this demanding transition.

### **Speaking of English**

Our students come with a fairly good knowledge of English. However, there is no guarantee that your student will be able to speak comfortably, especially for the first few days. Even the best students of English are baffled by North American usage. At school, most Europeans learn British English and may not be familiar with your vocabulary or pronunciation. We use many words, slang expressions and idioms that are not in their schoolbooks, and learning written English is nothing like speaking it. Encourage your student to ask about expressions that are confusing. Any help you can give will avoid embarrassing situations. It is tiring at first for the student to pay constant and close attention to what is said and to respond in English. Try to speak slowly and clearly during family conversations and use simple sentence constructions. You may find your student smiling and agreeing with whatever you say only to discover later that very little was understood. Remember that students are struggling with so much that is new and that they may be embarrassed to admit they didn't understand what was said to them. Keep a dictionary handy and use post-its to label household items or leave instructions.

Students in language classes often learn "opposites", i.e. good-bad, wonderful-terrible, etc. They seldom learn the "in-between" words. Don't be offended if your student says something is "stupid" or "terrible", because these may be the only words he or she has to use. Also, if your student doesn't do something you asked, check to see if you were understood. Misunderstanding is often taken for disobedience. Repeat things often and in a variety of ways for your student and encourage your student to talk. Slang can be exceptionally confusing. For example: "Please stop doing that!" can be stated as, "Knock it off!" or just as confusing, "Cut it out!" Awesome, isn't it?

### **Awareness of cultural differences**

It is easy to suppose that the North American norm for good manners, proper behavior, morals, family rules, etc. is the same for people all over the world. In reality, our

students often have to learn a whole new way of behaving in order to be accepted while they are here. Your student may do something that annoys you, yet this same thing is perfectly acceptable in his or her own country. Students have so much to learn so quickly. Ask your student to explain differences when he or she encounters them.

It is your responsibility to let it be known when certain forms of behavior are unacceptable. Students need this information. Please give explanations, not criticism. The intriguing part is that you'll both learn during this adjustment period and acquire respect for another way of doing things. Here's an example: in Europe, proper etiquette indicates that a fork should be used with the prongs facing down, not up, as is the case here. A knife is almost always used, too.

### **Rules and responsibilities**

Each family has its own set of household responsibilities, rules and behavior expectations. Some of these can be clearly spelled out but others are so automatic that you and your children are not even aware they are definite expectations. It will be helpful to make a list of your normal family routines before your student arrives. Plan to introduce them gradually, remembering that what you may consider normal behavior may be totally foreign to your student, who may follow completely different rules at home. So don't assume anything, and be patient yet firm in explaining what you expect.

It is important to remember that it may be necessary to run over your rules more than once - there is so much to remember and all of it in a foreign language! Even the simplest things like deciding whether or not to suggest to your student that he or she should help him or herself to food in the refrigerator can cause a problem. Will he take a beer? Will she help herself to tonight's steak?

One thing often forgotten is making a list of contacts your student should call in case of emergency. What doctor? Which neighbor? What are the numbers of the fire department, police station? What should your student do if there is an emergency outside the home? Does your student know your or your spouse's phone numbers at work? These should be written on your student's ID card, which he/she should carry when out and about.

In some areas of the country water rationing has become common during the summer with large fines backing up the laws. It might be nice of your student to water the brown patch that was once your beautiful green lawn, but if it costs you \$250 you might reconsider. Do mention water restrictions to your student if applicable. Also please discuss poison ivy/oak, Lyme disease and restrictions on the purchase of tobacco.

### **Personal habits**

Personal habits differ from country to country. Some students may not be used to bathing daily and some may bathe more often or longer. Some may not use deodorants and will need to be asked to use them while experiencing the heat and humidity of our summers. Some may not change underclothes daily. If you have a septic tank, explain that only toilet tissue can be safely flushed. Take nothing for granted and don't wait to be asked but offer careful instructions, or post signs in critical places if you think something is

important ("don't let the dog out", "only toilet paper to be flushed", "keep screen doors closed", "turn off computer before a storm", etc.)

### **Integration into the community**

There is one other facet of the exchange experience, integration into the community, which, if done, can help your student to feel that he or she accomplished something really unique during the stay. Once he or she has learned how to get around comfortably and how to master common tasks like ordering in a restaurant, buying something in a store, he/she is ready to delve deeper into the life of your community.

Think of one activity each week that your student can do. This activity can be for a few hours or a whole day and must be voluntary, not paid. It will give your student the chance to improve language skills, meet new people and learn more about us. Try to find things that bring your student together with other teens or adults in wholesome surroundings. Volunteer organizations may be of some help once they understand your objectives. Don't expect every student to jump at this idea: for some, it is too scary, for others it smacks of real work - and they are on vacation. You will have to sell them on the idea of meeting other people, practicing their English and the very real fact that you are busy and cannot entertain them every day. You might want to wait until day number three or four before you bring the subject up - it might be too overwhelming at first. Here is a list of possible activities:

1. Work as a volunteer at the town hall, library, day care or senior center.
2. Volunteer to visit a summer school French class and talk with the American students.
3. Visit a day camp - a good place to meet other teens working as camp counselors.
4. Help out at your own place of employment. This way your student can see how the American workplace functions.
5. Student themselves have special areas of interest that can point you in the right directions. Soccer points to soccer teams and clubs. Photography points to photographic equipment stores, photographers, newspapers and magazines. If your student plays an instrument and wants to play during his/her stay, there are bands who might welcome a fellow musician into their midst for a few days. A student's future profession might also hold some clues.

### **Telephone do's and don'ts**

Explain the use of the phone and long distance calling to your student soon after arrival. Your international operator can give details of the cheapest times to call abroad. Students can also call France Telecom at: 1800 537-2623 to hear instructions in French on making calls to France, or on using their phonecards. Discourage too many long distance calls home, once an initial call to say "I've arrived safely" has been made, if desired. Frequent phone calls home often cause homesickness. Be sure to explain that international

calls are costly, that phone bills are itemized and that students will be responsible for any calls charged to your bill, even after their departure.

These days, communicating by email is a far cheaper way to keep in touch, but it's wise to make sure that your student isn't spending too much time in front of your computer, emailing family and friends back home.

### **What to do if there are problems**

Ask for help! This is what we are here for. Call your local Program Director and talk about it. Speak to your student's group leader, who will be calling regularly to check on the well being of your student. You may want the leader to talk to your student and share his or her thoughts with you and your Program Director—maybe even the State Program Director or National Headquarters. Try to identify the exact problem and determine why it has arisen. There are usually several things that can be done. It's so important not to let problems fester. In many cases, we learn the most about ourselves and grow the most by working out these difficulties. The students certainly grow through this, too. The program works best when the lines of communication are kept open and flowing between your family and the Program Director and the students' group leader.

### **Restricted activities**

Some activities are restricted by the European insurance company, which provides coverage for the students. These include use of any motorized vehicles—including jet skis. We know how popular these are and regret that students are not allowed to use them. Students are also no longer permitted to ride as passengers in private planes. Another popular activity no longer allowed is white water rafting. Regular rafting is acceptable but rafting facilities here may require parental releases. Please notify World Exchange if you have questions about any activity for which your student might need to bring a parental release from home. If you should discover that a parental release is required after your student's arrival, we can arrange to have one sent on to you by email.

### **Student pocket money concerns**

Your student may have experienced a homestay in a country where it is the norm for host families to be paid. He or she may mistakenly think you, too, are receiving a stipend, which is rarely, if ever, done in North America. If in doubt, or if your student's attitude to paying his/her own way on outings is not appropriate, please don't hesitate to explain—or ask your Program Director and the student's group leader to call and explain. Your student should assume the cost of reasonable outings and not wait for you to pay each time. If your student runs out of pocket money, he or she should contact the group leader who can make arrangements for additional funds to be sent from France. In some cases, the group leader may even be authorized to lend your student some money. Please do not lend money to your student.

### **Calendar, Schedule and Contact List for your area**

Your Program Director will prepare a newsletter for your group, with full details of the arrival, day trips, farewell party and departure. You will also receive a local contact list.

### **If you plan to travel**

It is important that you alert your Program Director if you will be away overnight or longer. A contact address/telephone number as well as your cell phone numbers should be given to your program director (sending them by email is fine). The group leader will also need to know where his/her student can be contacted in case of an emergency. As the leaders call regularly, your student can provide him/her with this information. If you plan to be touring, please call or email your Program Director once or twice to check-in.

If your family's trip should be planned at the same time as one or both of the World Exchange excursions, please notify your Program Director. Host family plans take priority over World Exchange events and students are allowed to miss their excursions. We regret that we are not able to refund any fees that the students may have prepaid in France.

### **Tax deductions for hosting an exchange student**

Since the 1960's the IRS has allowed a \$50 per month tax deduction for hosting an exchange student. Efforts are underway to have Bill HR 1504 amended in the near future to reflect current expenses associated with hosting.

### **In summary**

Your student will be tired and unsure of everything upon arrival. Allow him or her to rest and adjust slowly after the long journey and time change. Your student will not transform overnight into an American. Even our smallest habits will be new to your student so don't take for granted what he or she should know. We are a conservative country by nature, more church oriented, less able to discuss personal habits than many other cultures. Your student will have questions and comparisons, which may sound critical. Be lenient, since a teenager will not have the tact or diplomacy learned with age. Remember, you are hosting a teenager and not an adult. It takes courage to try to live in another culture when you are still between two other worlds - teen and adult. There is so much to learn and adjust to. Explain, correct, share and enjoy.

## **HINTS FROM HOST FAMILIES**

*In the evaluations we sent out to former families, we asked for their recommendations and suggestions for future host families. Without doubt, the most common response was "Be yourself, relax, take it easy and enjoy". Other suggestions were as follows:*

"Try really hard in the beginning to communicate. It will be worth it." Glenmoore, PA

"Don't over-expect anything."

Hudson, FL

"We purchased our student a blank notebook to use as a diary and vocabulary builder. For the first half of her stay, I ended each day by giving her a list of words I thought were new to her that day - plus the French translation. I made a point of repeating these new words frequently. Saw a tremendous improvement in her spoken English." Danbury, CT

"Study a little about the student's country, culture, food, etc. in advance." Clovis, CA

"Keep the lines of communication open! Purchase a language dictionary! Remember that there are cultural differences and things don't necessarily mean the same for them as they do for you." Roseville, CA

"Make it easy for the student to become a family member. We encouraged observation of meal preparation, routines, chores, etc. (She had limited English). After a few days, she pitched in enthusiastically." Windham, NH

"Make available some mode of transportation for your student's private use, such as a bicycle." Concord, NH

"Establish at the start what you will assume financially, when on an activity. Understand the student is here to be part of your family, but also remember you are to act as a 'guide' and friend, not to be his/her parent. Most of these young people are more mature and worldly than American children at this age. Be tolerant of the cultural differences." Portland, CT

"Take time to talk, ask preferences, explain differences." North Branford, CT

"Be aware of the high French standard of living in order to avoid talking down to the student, as I occasionally found myself doing." Baltimore, MD

"Give your guest opportunities to meet and talk with Americans, not just see places. America is its people." Westfield, NY

"One of our big successes was including family and friends in our get-togethers with our student. Be interested in his language, country, family - try to learn a little of his language." Buffalo, NY

"We like to play games, cards, Risk, etc., and Patrice jumped right in and even taught us a new game. Games were good openers. Shared our humor with him, he showed his, too." Cold Spring, NY

"You have to spend time with your student. A friend of ours who was a host wasn't home much and the student didn't get as much out of coming to America." Sugar Grove, PA

"If your student is quiet or reserved, encourage her to join in, but don't force her." Scranton, PA

"It is sometimes possible for the student to understand written words rather than spoken words." Coatesville, PA

"Try to let your student know your plans in advance that so he/she can be prepared. If you don't have children of your student's age, find someone your student can do things with. Let your student know that he or she is doing fine, and that you are pleased." Havertown, PA

"Don't be afraid to ask questions. This helps your student know he can ask you questions. Students should have the opportunity to see and talk with other Americans." Meadville, PA

"Make sure there is a child of comparable age to spend time with your visiting student. Students who spent a lot of time alone were the least happy of the group." Lansdowne, PA

"Make your student a part of your family, but don't try to change him into an American." Springboro, PA

"Plan lots of little outings in your area to give your student an idea of what it looks like and what goes on. Plan to meet with other teens a few times (your child's friends, Recreation Center, etc.). Our student also seemed happy to have some quiet time at home - read, puzzles, games, TV." Marlborough, NH

"Our student was shocked at the lack of public transportation here. He found it hard to adjust to being dependent on us in order to get around." Mahopac, NY

"Be flexible and ready to accommodate last minute information and changes." Pittsburgh, PA

"Remember that this may be the student's only experience in America - make it the best it can be! Communicate! Smile!" Orlando, FL

"Just spend as much time as you can enjoying your student—the time flies by and you find yourself really missing your new friend when she returns to her home." Napa, CA

"Cecile was such a lovely girl, I smile whenever I think of her." High Falls, NY

## **HINTS FOR HOSTING WITHIN YOUR FAMILY BUDGET**

At World Exchange we know what it means financially to welcome an exchange student into the family. We also know that hosting doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg. Here's some advice to help you, as you and your family prepare for your student's visit.

The French students are not from poor families: some are from middle class homes, others are well off. They are nearly all benefiting from government and corporate support for these travel programs. Ask your student which "*comite d'enterprise*" he or she comes from: it may be Air France, TF1 (French TV), CGOS (the hospitals association) or IBM France, to mention just a few. These *comites* provide aid on a sliding scale, using a method similar to that of financial aid given to American college students. It's a wonderful system and it makes these trips affordable and popular.

Knowing this, you needn't feel at all uneasy about asking your student to cover his or her general expenses. You're doing quite enough already! That being said, "expenses" do not cover basic food needs. It is generally understood that a new family member will eat meals with you. To be honest, if your family chooses to eat out, your student has no choice in the matter. Students don't bring enough money to cover daily basic food costs. They may have enough for ice creams or pizza when out with other teenagers, but when they are with you we hope you'll agree that they really shouldn't be expected to pay.

### **Before the arrival:**

It's time for a family meeting. If your own children are old enough, make them part of the planning. You don't want any embarrassing showdowns with your own children in front of your guest. If your children know well in advance what you can and can't afford to do while your visitor is with you, things should go smoothly. If certain excursions would be best left until after the student goes home (an expensive restaurant or amusement park visit, for example) tell your kids: they'll understand. Tell them, also, that it is perfectly OK to ask their student to pay his or her own way at the movies, the bowling alley or the museum, when you aren't there to intervene.

### **Soon after the arrival:**

When your student has settled in and recovered from the long journey, review your plans for the visit. Explain what amounts need to be set aside for outings, sporting events, movies and trips. This will help with budgeting. Money should also be set aside for the World Exchange excursions, to be used for souvenirs and snacks: most other excursion expenses have been prepaid in France.

### **During the homestay:**

At the pre-trip orientation in France, World Exchange asks Cap Monde representatives to address the issue of pocket money, reminding students to divide their funds into "personal expenses" and "shopping" money. A student's pocket money should not be used only to buy jeans and sneakers. Don't feel at all embarrassed to ask your student how his or her budgeting is working out as the days go by. If you find out that your student is running low on funds, contact your program director and the French group leader. It is often possible to notify the parents in France and ask for extra pocket money. If the natural parents refuse to send extra, do not lend money but help your student to budget wisely for the remainder of the visit. The group leader can help with this.

### **General advice:**

One of our veteran host families developed a great system for handling student finances. Before each outing, the host mom would ask her student if he/she had enough to cover the expenses involved and, if the answer was "yes", she would tell him/her to bring that amount along. If the student said it would be too expensive, the host would reorganize the day or make the decision to pay herself.

Don't feel duty-bound to take your student on extravagant trips. He or she has chosen a family homestay and not a teen tour (Cap Monde offers those, too, all over the USA and Canada). It's understood that in choosing a homestay, experiencing family life is key. Going on picnics, hiking, free outdoor concerts, county fairs, library events and other low cost and local family fun are perfect. World Exchange provides the two day-trips so that you will not have to feel responsible for major sightseeing excursions.

# Translation into English of the Student Guidelines

To maximize your stay, we ask you to respect some rules. Imagine your own family accepting someone into your home for free. You would expect this new family member to offer help and thanks. Show your American family that you appreciate the hospitality that they are offering you so generously: they are not paid for hosting. The first few days may be difficult for you because of jet lag, problems speaking English and possible homesickness. Your host family may be unaware of how you are feeling. Even if exhausted, try to be smiling and enthusiastic. Remember that your host family has a real interest in you.

- In the USA all members of the family share housework. Keep your room tidy, make your bed, set and clear the table, help with dishes, ask what to do with your laundry.
  - Husband and wife are more equal in setting the rules of the house and sharing household tasks in North America. Both sons and daughters help with chores.
  - It's very common in America for teenagers to have a job in the summer. Don't be disappointed if there are no teens in your family: host families consist of many family types. If there are teenagers, they may not be at home as much as you expect.
  - To aid your integration into American life, do not get together with other students in your program for the first week of the stay and only when permitted after that. Don't spend too much time with your compatriots: you are in the USA to experience the daily life of your host family. Invite your American siblings to join your activities and participate in your family's life as much as you can.
  - Do not invite friends to your host family's house without their permission. Boyfriends and girlfriends are not allowed to visit during the program.
  - Ask permission before going out. Tell your family exactly where you are going and when you plan to return, leaving a telephone number if possible.
  - Talk to your hosts: they want to help you improve your English.
  - Do not expect to be entertained continuously. Use your free time to find out more about the USA. Make use of newspapers, films, books, etc.
  - The first three days may be difficult. If you have a problem, try to talk with your host family, your group leader or the local World Exchange Program Director.
  - You are expected to participate in all of the activities organized for your group, but if your family is going away, you may be excused from these activities.
  - You are responsible for your own personal expenses: movie tickets, entrance to the pool or museum. Always offer to pay for yourself. Do not use all of your pocket money to buy clothes, gifts or souvenirs. If you think you'll run short of money, contact your group leader.
  - You must ask permission before using the host family's telephone. Call collect (PCV) or use a phone card when calling overseas. You are responsible for your phone expenses: your own parents will be billed for charges discovered after your departure from the U.S.A.
  - You may not smoke in your host family's home without permission. You may never smoke in bed. Most families are non-smokers.
  - Driving any motorized vehicle or travelling in a private plane is prohibited.
  - Drinking or the possession of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
  - The use or possession of illegal drugs is prohibited and may result in imprisonment.
  - If you are on the East Coast, become informed about tick-borne Lyme disease, symptoms, etc.
- Conduct yourself as an ambassador for your country. Be polite and pleasant. Communicate and share information about your own country and your home life. Show appreciation for the hospitality of your host family. Remember that this is not a tour program. Some of you will visit many places; others will have a quieter stay. If your hosts work, outings may only take place at weekends. Try to adapt to your hosts' way of life. They will try to make your visit pleasant. They

want you to become a member of their family. If you understand this, you will have the good luck to have two families - your own and your American family by the end of the summer.

## *Getting to know you... Activities*

The ideas that follow were designed to help you and your student get to know each other better and to help your student to improve his or her English skills. We hope you will use the suggestions so that you can communicate more comfortably and meaningfully.

Families who have made the effort to follow the suggestions listed below have reported having a significantly better time with their students than those who just “wing it.”

You’ll see how much your student is helped to overcome initial shyness and difficulty in speaking in English when you spend time on the activities we propose. The ideas have been drawn from language enrichment suggestions given to World Exchange by host families over the past twenty-five years.

The only items that might need to be purchased are a small notebook and post-it notes.

### **Let’s start with the notebook.**

Give your student a pocket-sized notebook, in which to record new vocabulary, expressions and observations. Each day ask your student to jot down at least five new words learned that day. New idioms could be noted, also. By the end of the homestay, the student will have an impressive collection to show his/her parents or English teacher.

### **Post-it Notes**

Many families and students have fun labeling items in the home together, ideally in both languages so that everyone is learning at the same time. A different colored pen, or Post-it, for each language is helpful. After a few days the post-its can be removed and the student can try to recall the words. Post-its can be used for operating instructions as well.

### **Maps**

Take out an atlas and take a tabletop tour of the USA and the student’s country. Most students appreciate finding out more about where they are: how far from the airport at which they landed, how far from the nearest city, from San Francisco or New York. They are usually shocked to see the enormous distances between cities in North America.

Let your student tell you about his or her country. Ask questions: encourage descriptions of the landscape, the local industries, favorite vacation spots. Compare places you and your student have visited.

### **Getting around**

It is easy to forget that exchange students do not know how to do the simplest things when they arrive in the USA. Who do you call in an emergency? What does American money look like, what is each coin/note worth? Where do you buy stamps? Where do you get the bus? What do road signs mean? (This could be a lifesaver when the student is out on your bike.) To study these things might mean taking some short field trips, but it will be time well spent.

### **Getting to know you**

Paper and pencils required here. Maybe some of your family photos, too. The student's application package should have several photos of his or her family. Take it in turns to introduce your family. Draw family trees, so that you can all see how names are spelled and how everyone connects. Ask about your student's family, their interests and jobs, where they live, how often they meet. Tell you student which members of your family he or she is likely to meet: this will be so helpful and will reduce anxiety at the beginning of the stay when there is so much new information to absorb.

### **Write a letter**

Many students don't write home much. How about writing a joint letter or email to the student's parents, with a short message from each member of your family? It will provoke a lot of laughter as you discuss what to write – and it will make the student's parents very happy.

### **Sports**

There's nothing better than getting outside and showing your student the finer points of baseball or horseshoes. Ask about sports played in his or her country – try petanque or table tennis. Take a look at the sports section in your local paper and explain the scoring methods used, the leagues and sports calendar.

### **Games**

Board games are wonderful icebreakers and promote laughter. Many do not require advanced language skills. Try card games, Jenga, video games, Scrabble, Monopoly, etc.

### **Cooking together**

Some students really enjoy sharing their cooking skills, others simply need to know more about what they can and can't take from the fridge, how to make an American style sandwich or chocolate milk. Look at labels, explain ingredients, and make pancakes together. Your student will probably have strong opinions on foods like peanut butter, and cranberry sauce. P.S. French toast is a total mystery to the French.

### **Singing**

This is a wonderful language-learning tool. Teach your student a song ("Take Me Out To The Ball Game" is a favorite) and ask him or her to return the favor. Younger children will love singing Frère Jâques with your student on long car rides.

### **Compare lifestyles and routines**

When you're looking for things to talk about with your student, comparing the details of daily life can make for interesting discussions. With paper and pencil at hand, have your student show you a typical school day. Your children can then show theirs. Compare school vacations and public holidays. There can be interesting differences in meal times, bed times. Even greater differences exist in educational systems, attitudes towards teenagers having jobs, health care, the media and more.

*Encourage the whole family to join in!  
Share! Correct mistakes gently! Enjoy!*

## **INSURANCE ISSUES**

***What to do if your students needs medical attention or is involved in any kind of insurance related incident.***

**This is an important topic and one where your assistance is crucial and appreciated.**

As you know, the students are insured in France, as a group, for health, accident and liability. The company providing that coverage is Europ Assistance. It's a huge company, with offices in the USA (see below). It has very strict rules about the making of claims and, if anything isn't done to its satisfaction there can be long delays in reimbursement.

We appreciate your help in doing the following:

Notifying us immediately if your student needs any kind of medical attention, is involved in any kind of accident, goes to the dentist, feels ill, breaks something, loses something...you get the idea! "Us" includes your program director, the nearest available French group leader and Vera and Michael Sklaar at the World Exchange office: **1 800 444-3924** or 1 845 526-2505 (it's fine to leave a detailed message) or email [vsklaar@worldexchange.org](mailto:vsklaar@worldexchange.org). Notifying just the French group leader is not enough to ensure reimbursement.

**Notification of incidents needs to be submitted to Europ Assistance within 48 hours.**

We also need to ask you to keep sending **updates** when prescriptions are filled, doctors are revisited for follow-up, etc.

Europ Assistance requires all paperwork to be in **original** form. Photocopies and faxes will not do the trick, nor will bills that are not fully itemized.

Where there are **multiple service providers** we need to be especially vigilant. If your student had x-rays, blood tests or was seen by a radiologist or doctor unaffiliated with the E.R. or hospital, you can be sure that there will be separate bills. It will help us greatly if you keep track of all the service providers as you pass through the system with your student.

**What happens if a host family has to pay for service?**

Please be assured that if a doctor's office, dentist or E.R. will not accept the insurance information, World Exchange will send you a check to cover any costs you may have incurred on your student's behalf once we are in receipt of all the original bills. Hospitals and some Urgent care Centers will contact Europ Assistance directly: they will open a file with them and billing will be handled between them.

**The French group leaders will often assist host families in opening a file** for the student. In serious situations, the group leader may want to join you to provide support to you and comfort to the student.

The French group leaders often take the original bills back to Cap Monde with them, so that Cap Monde can submit them to Europ Assistance's HQ in Paris. If you know that your local group leader has taken bills back, please let us know ([vsklaar@worldexchange.org](mailto:vsklaar@worldexchange.org))

**Here's Europ Assistance's US contact information:**

**EUROP ASSISTANCE  
4330 East West Highway, Suite 1000  
Bethesda, MD 20817**

**1 800 368-7878 They have a 24 hour hotline.**

Cap Monde has a group contract number for each year's travelers. The last number given to World Exchange was 3500769. The French group leader will have updates relating to this year's group contract.

**What happens if you receive bills after your student has left?**

Please send all original bills to World Exchange at:

7 White Birch Road, Putnam Valley, NY 10579

In these cases, after reimbursing you, we often also call the service provider to ask them to switch the billing name and address to World Exchange, so that you will not receive any further bills. In the event that you continue to receive bills, please let us know.

**A hint about avoiding the insurance claim morass:**

French health care is good, accessible and affordable. Your student will have no idea about the complications of seeking medical care in the USA, so for minor problems see if you can seek the advice of your pharmacist (bug bites, upset stomach, headaches, etc) prior to agreeing to go to the doctor. Avoid emergency rooms wherever possible – but don't hesitate to seek help when your student is in real distress and you believe there is cause for alarm. Call the French group leader, because he/she can offer advice and reassurance. It's fine for your student to contact his/her parents for advice and TLC. The leaders often check in with the French parents, so they will be happy to help by calling them in these situations.