



**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
DEPARTURE GUIDE**



“Stepping into the future!”



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"As an international student program, our vision and goals were designed to benefit our participants culturally and educationally in a Christian environment to achieve a better understanding of God's love in our world community."

Dear Intl. Student,

It seems hard to believe, but the time has come to begin planning the return to your home country. We are sure that you will agree, the time has passed quickly.

We hope that you took the maximum advantage of your opportunity in the United States to learn, make good friends, and leave with positive memories of the entire experience.

In order to ensure that your return goes as smoothly as possible, there are some important guidelines that you must follow:

Tour Excursion



Any plans that have been made with your natural parents (family or friends) must be communicated to the USA Program corporate office in Texas. For example, if your natural family is planning to come to the United States and meet up with you for a vacation before your return to your home country, we must be notified.

Transcripts of Grades

In order for your grades from your American high school to valid in your home country, you must:

- ✓ Go to your high school's office and request a transcript of your grades that also includes credit hours of study, attendance, and any additional notations from school officials. This transcript must be on the high school's official letterhead with the high school's seal or the signature of the principal.



- ✓ If you attended more than one high school during the academic year, the request for a transcript must be made to all high schools attended.

For Spanish Students Only:

- ✓ Mail your original, not a copy, transcript of grades (with school principal signature and seal), US\$10.00 (Ten dollar) money order made payable to the Secretary of State with self-stamp & pre address (your host family or the USA Program address) envelop. Here is the USA Program address:
83 Misty Mesa Trail
Mansfield, TX 76063
- ✓ The Sec. of State will verify your original transcript of grades to the appropriate section (Apostille).
- ✓ After they validated your transcript of Grades, they will mail it to you in your self-stamp & pre address envelope. If USA program receive it, we will mail to your home country address. It will take approximately two weeks.

Airport/Airlines Taxes/Fees

Be aware that you may be charged a **US\$25.00** (or more) airport tax/fee for the international flight and, in some cases, airlines will charge a fee for changing the original departure date (**US\$100.00 - 150.00**). Be prepared and have the proper funds available just in case.

Customs

Every international student has the right to return to his home country with his personal belongings. It is important that you retain all receipts for items that you purchase in the United States. Be aware, however, that at some airports, you may be asked to declare some items with Customs. You may be charged a fee for importing electronics, housewares items, and certain equipment into your home country.



We hope that you will have a good trip home. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please call the USA Program toll-free number: 1-877-411-8721

Pre-Departure Preparation

As you prepare to return home, you may experience mixed feelings of sadness and excitement. These feelings are natural. Although you are excited about returning to your home country and seeing your natural family and friends, you may find it difficult to leave your newly acquired family and friends in the host country. Special activities are usually scheduled for the end of school year. You may be invited to parties and/or festivities.

With all of the excitement and anxiety, you may feel emotionally exhausted. By carefully making a pre-departure plan, many of these feelings will be minimized. You should make a list of items that you would like to send home or purchase.

Your host family may also feel the emotions of your departure. Include the host family in your pre-departure planning and discussion. Reinforce your sincere appreciation for their involvement and contributions to your exchange experience. Remember, without the host family, your participation would not have been possible.



Return Baggage: What to Send Home

All airlines have baggage limits, and some items that you purchase may have to go through customs for entry approval. Again, plan ahead and consider the total amount of baggage that you may be returning home with.

Most airlines will allow passengers to check two pieces of luggage at 50 pounds (32 kilograms) each and to carry one small piece on the aircraft. You may have to pay for excess baggage for extra weight and size at the check-in counter.

It is best to inquire of your returning airline as to the cost per pound of excess baggage. For example, some airlines are charging US\$50.00 for over 50 pounds and less than 70 pounds, and US\$100.00 for over 70 pounds.

The best method for packing is to roll your clothes and ensure that all space is filled, with large items on bottom. Make sure that your pieces of luggage are balanced with weight instead of having one that is very heavy and one that is very light.

If you prefer, some baggage may be sent back home by sea. While this method is relatively inexpensive, it may take up to 5 months for your baggage to arrive. Investigate other shipping alternatives such as United Parcel Service (UPS), the United States Postal Service (US-Mail), Federal Express (Fed-Ex), DHL, etc. Research the options in advance of your departure.

The most important thing is to plan ahead and consider the total amount of luggage that you will be bringing home.



Saying Good-Bye

For some students, the hardest part of the exchange experience is saying good-bye to the host family and friends, just as it was difficult to say good-bye to your home country family.



Your excitement about returning home will be countered with the sadness of leaving behind your new friends and family.

To help ease these emotions, begin discussing your departure in advance. Gather names, addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses in one place so that you will be able to stay in touch with those you have come to care about.

Some ideas for you to leave your host family with a great final memory prior to your departure are to prepare a lovely meal for them from your home country, take them out to eat at their favorite restaurant, create a memory album with photos and memorabilia, or write a special letter to each family member.

Be creative!



Welcome Home!

Excitement

Upon arrival to your home country, you may feel some of the same emotions that you felt when you first arrived to the United States. Everyone will be very excited to see you again and will probably have a multitude of questions to ask you. You will be very excited as well, but may find that you quickly tire due to jet lag from the long flight.

Ask your family and friends for a little extra time of rest so that you will feel up to answering their questions and sharing the cross-cultural experience in the United States in a fun, relaxed atmosphere.



Re-adjustment

For the first month back home, you will go through a re-adjustment phase. After having grown accustomed to a new way of life in the United States, becoming completely comfortable with your daily routine in your home country may feel a bit awkward at first.

You will find some of your habits have changed, and your family will quickly take note. Discuss your feelings and attitudes openly and honestly with your family and friends. This will help them more easily accept any differences that you may display.

You are considered a "Cultural Ambassador" of sorts. You will probably notice changes that have taken place in your home country and community while you were gone.

Be cautious not to negatively compare your home country's attributes and customs to the American way of life.

If you make negative comparisons, you will likely offend those around you. Instead, understand, assimilate, and explain the transition that you have experienced.

After experiencing a new culture and way of life, you will have grown to better understand, appreciate, and respect your home country and culture and not take for granted the wonderful cultural aspects that make it unique.

Additionally, you will come to appreciate your natural parents' investment in your future of personal growth, communication skills, academic progress, and cultural understanding.

We are proud to sponsor students like you and to facilitate your **"Stepping into the future!"** Thank you for allowing USA Program to be a part of your cultural experience.

We trust that your international study experience has proven beneficial to the enrichment of your life and future.

Have a safe trip back home!



"If you plan a better **FUTURE**,
You eventually have a great **PAST**."

"The important thing is to
invest in your future and
make the right decision for
your dreams to come true!"



*Learn from yesterday,
Live for today,
Hope for tomorrow!*