



## Culture Shock

Culture Shock is a term used to describe the challenges experienced by almost everyone who relocates to another culture for an extended period of time.

Common challenges include:

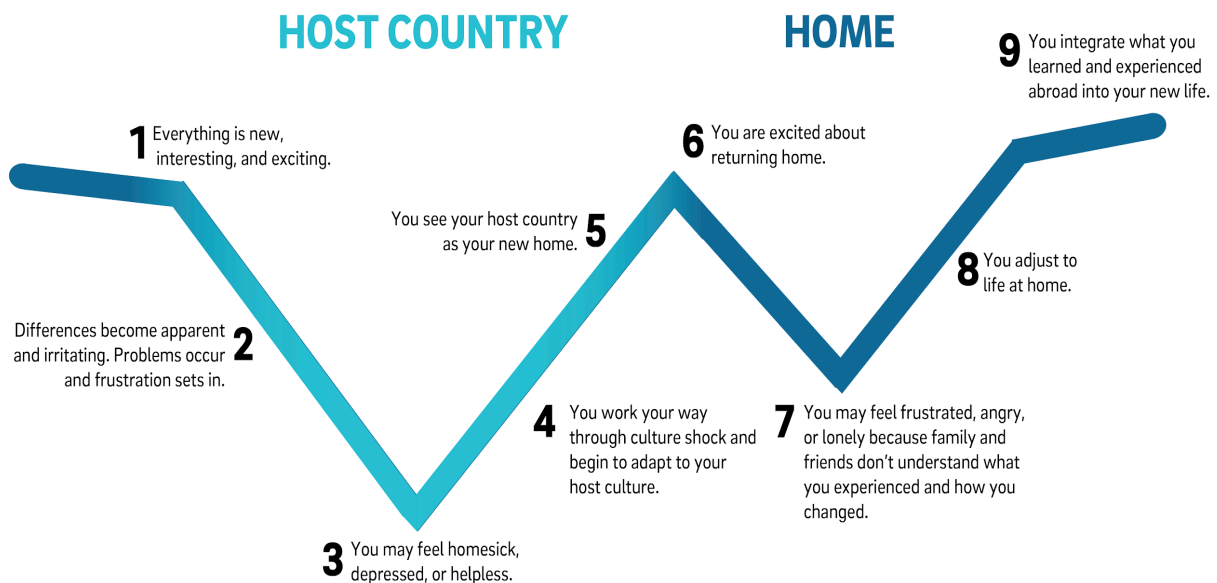
- Learning to cope with confusion with the language
- Frustration with different ways of doing things
- Isolation from your friends and family
- Sadness
- Homesickness (missing home)
- And more

These are all normal feelings and are part of adapting to a new culture.

## Adapting to a new culture

Phases in adapting to a new culture can manifest in different ways and at different times, and include:

- The excitement upon arrival, everything is new and wonderful.
- Homesickness, frustration, fear, and depression may occur.
- Beginning to adjust, make friends, and participate in activities.
- Difficulty returning to home country, reverse culture shock.





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## Ways to diminish feelings of culture shock

If you are experiencing culture shock please know that you are not alone! Many international students are experiencing it, too. The best way to overcome culture shock is to **meet new friends** and **get involved in activities** that you normally would do in your own country, or even try something new!

A good place to start is to talk with your host family or area representative about how you can get involved in the community and school.

Other ways to diminish feelings of culture shock are:

- Plunge" into your host culture and wrestle with the differences.
- Keep an open mind; it is natural to have preconceived ideas and beliefs that come into question while abroad.
- Athletic activities like team sports or taking walks may be helpful.
- Get to know others at your host school.
- Do not isolate yourself.
- Get to know your area representative. They are there for you to discuss your frustrations and encounters and come up with solutions.
- Learn as much as you can about your host culture and host family.
- Maintain a support structure with others, particularly those going through the same experience. However, do not retreat into an American "clique" to avoid the discomfort of culture shock.
- Keep a journal. Record your impressions of new experiences and the transformations that are occurring within you.



## Helpful facts about US culture

**Not all Americans are the same, but here are a few common American characteristics that you might find helpful to be aware of.**

- **Greetings**
  - Americans often will say, “How are you?” “What’s up?” “How’s it going?” as a means to simply say “Hello”, and “I’ll call you” “See you” or “Later” as a means to simply say, “Goodbye.” These statements are typically not taken literally.
  - Americans are also very informal and address each other by their first names from the time they meet, even with elders and people of authority.
- **Meals and Typical Meal Times**
  - Breakfast: 6 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
  - Lunch: 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
  - Dinner: 5 p.m. - 9 p.m.
  - Brunch: 10:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. (usually only on weekends or days off). A combination of the words “breakfast” and “lunch.”
  - Remember that typical food for meals in the US may differ from those in your home country.
- **Dress/Clothing**
  - The dress is generally informal. There is no one particular style adopted; however, it is important to keep in mind what is appropriate and what is not. What’s appropriate can change depending on where you are going or the occasion.
- **Gifts**
  - As a rule, gifts are given to relatives and close friends. They are sometimes given to people with a casual but friendly relationship, such as a host or hostess, but it is not necessary or even common for gifts to be given to such people.
- **Honesty vs. Politeness**
  - In a question of honesty versus politeness, honesty wins. For example, if you are invited to an event and cannot/do not want to go, it is much better to refuse graciously and courteously than to accept an invitation and not go.



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- **Time and Punctuality**
  - In the U.S., great value is attached to time. Punctuality is considered an important attribute. You should arrive at the exact time specified for class, sports practice, meeting up with your host family, transportation, and meals.
- **Gestures and Body Language**
  - Keep in mind that unspoken signals (body language) by others may not mean what you think. Various gestures are automatic and vary from culture to culture.
- **Inappropriate Behavior**
  - Actions involving sexual intimidation, sexual abuse, sexual assault, engaging in obscene behavior, or other unwelcome, intimidating, hostile, abusive, or offensive conduct of a sexual nature are strictly prohibited by law and are considered very serious matters in the U.S.