



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs

LIVING WITH FAMILIES OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

When deciding to study abroad, you must be aware that there is no such thing as a typical 'traditional family'. Host families are individuals of different races, cultures and beliefs. Your host family might be a single person, elderly couple whose children are grown and no longer at home, a same-sex couple or perhaps you'll even be sharing your experience with another intercultural exchange student. The important thing to remember is to be open-minded and to not let stereotypes develop expectations for you.

YFU believes that it is within local communities that we will make a global impact and a more peaceful world. By hosting each others' children, we come to understand that our similarities are greater than our differences, making us all citizens of one world.

The long-term objective of YFU and youth exchange is to engage young people in personal development opportunities that will increase their leadership ability and improve international understanding and public diplomacy. To achieve this, we place YFU students from around the world with volunteer host families who are willing to open their homes and share their traditions with an international student. During their academic and cultural experience, students learn that acceptance and tolerance are essential for success in a global society.

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Make your list of expectations very minimal. Just get to know each other!”

– Host Parent & YFU Field Director

5 TIPS TO HELP YOU PREPARE FOR YOUR EXCHANGE

1. Remember the purpose of your exchange is to experience a new culture and way of life.
2. Try to be open-minded and avoid having pre-determined expectations of what you'll experience while on exchange.
3. Remember that all families are different, even yours.
4. Don't be afraid to try something new!
5. Stay positive, don't stress and remember this is an adventure that will transform your life.

Develop global competence. Experience a true intercultural education by being open and embracing a placement with a family different from your own.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Experienced students & hosts help answer your questions.

Q: If I live with a single host parent, will I receive less attention? I imagine my experience won't be as worthwhile as if I'd been placed with a 'traditional' family.

A: False! In fact, when you have a single host parent you know that you are being welcomed into a home where you are truly wanted. In many cases, students find that they are given even more attention and opportunities as their host typically tries twice as hard to ensure you have a good experience. Single hosts are going to make time to be involved.

Q: I don't want to share my exchange with another student – potentially sharing a room and our host family's attention. Will my experience be less than it could be?

A: We understand you might be hesitant about living with another exchange student, but, trust us, we are constantly hearing from students about the special relationships they developed with exchange siblings.

According to one such student, "When YFU first asked me if I would accept a double placement, I was kind of afraid because I thought I would not get to know the culture enough. But all I can say now is that it was the best experience ever, and that I'm really happy that I got the chance to know all these people and that we had the chance to become an international YFU family. We always had so much fun together, and I would recommend everyone who has the chance to live with a host family or host sibling from another country to take it because it's really awesome!"

With an exchange sibling, you have someone who understands exactly what you're going through, who can relate when you might feel homesick or simply trying to adjust to a different culture's way of life.

YFU only permits dual placements if the students are coming from different countries and speak different languages, which means this is an incredible opportunity for you to not only learn more about your host culture but learn about the culture of your exchange sibling too.



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My host family hosted two of us and it was an incredible experience! I developed such a strong friendship with my Japanese sister that I cannot imagine my year without her!!!”

– International Student



Q: I'm not accustomed to being around a same-sex couple. Maybe I would be more comfortable living with a 'traditional' family?

A: Nothing that is genuinely worthwhile is easy. By getting away from your comfort zone, you'll form interpersonal skills and trusting relationships with a whole new community. Just like any host family you imagined, you will find that same-sex couples will be just as committed to being good host parents. Remember, every family is unique, and if you give a same-sex couple the chance to share a bit of their world, you will find that not only will you have had an amazing exchange experience, but that there are two new people who will have become important members of your international family.



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Since we don't have any natural children, I didn't think I'd ever be a 'dad.' I still remember the day (via text messages of course) when he asked if he could call me Dad. I immediately texted back a resounding 'Yes!! Of course.'”

– Host Father

YFU advances intercultural understanding, mutual respect and social responsibility through educational exchanges for youth, families and communities.



YFU USA VALUES

- Learning: For Life.
- Volunteering: Engaged and Dedicated.
- Caring: Personal and People-Oriented.
- Valuing Diversity: Inclusive and Fair.
- Promoting Quality, Transparency, Sustainability.
- Cooperating in International Solidarity



BE
UNIQUE!

BECOME A CITIZEN OF ONE WORLD. EXPERIENCE A TRUE INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION BY BEING OPEN AND EMBRACING A PLACEMENT WITH A FAMILY THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM YOUR OWN.

- Learning about other cultures and their cultural norms is what YFU exchanges are all about. You will experience a different way of living and develop an understanding of a culture that may be different from our own.
- Think about what you hope to gain from studying abroad in the USA. If you truly want to experience a different culture and gain mutual respect for another's way of life, then consider a placement with a single person, a same-sex couple or sharing the experience with another exchange student.
- All host families are *rigorously vetted and committed* to providing a safe and educational exchange.
- YFU values the individuality of each and every participant, and we treat everyone with kindness, respect and dignity. At YFU, our volunteers and staff are focused on creating positive exchange experiences for all our students, families and communities.
- YFU programs are for a select group of students who are ready to embark on a journey not just of distance and geography, but of culture and self-transformation.
- These placements are particularly suited to students who are open-minded, advocate for equality and don't tolerate discrimination.

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You have the potential to really make a deeper friendship with a single host parent. A single host parent really, really wants YOU. They were not talked into this experience by their spouse or their kids, they want you to come because they want you here. That means 100% of the people you will be living with are super-excited to meet you and have you here.”

– Host Mother

Host families come in all shapes and sizes. Hosts can be multi-ethnic, single, married, gay, straight, with children, without children, with pets, without pets, live in cities and live on farms.

