

# Refreshing Profile Highlights

## WHY?

**Why Refresh a Profile highlight?** Every field staff approaches refreshing profile highlights a little differently. Some change a sentence or two in almost every profile they receive. Others only spend the time to refresh a profile when there are challenges placing a student. Below are some of the most common reasons:

- If a student is **unplaced** after weeks of trying – rewriting makes our volunteers and families notice different aspects of a particular student.
- **Specific rewriting for a particular host family** – bring forward features most appealing to that host family.
- You cannot picture the student
- To **drop uninteresting info and make it shorter** – i.e. household chores, empty phrases (“can’t wait to learn a new culture”), extensive travel experience, etc.
- **Too longwinded** – aim for short, tight writing style.
- **To differentiate our “products”** – so that all our “products” don’t sound the same.



**When evaluating a profile highlight...**keep these questions, below, in mind to help you decide if the highlight needs refreshing and hone in on what should be tweaked.

- ❖ Is it **lively**?
- ❖ Is it **intriguing** or is it boring?
- ❖ Is there a **benefit to family**?
- ❖ Can you **imagine the student** adapting well and getting involved in American lifestyle?
- ❖ What will a **family’s objection** to this student be? How can it be overcome?
- ❖ Does it give you the **warm-fuzzies**?
- ❖ Is it **hard to imagine** the student fitting in here?
- ❖ Can you imagine the student’s **personality**?
- ❖ Does the description seem **“unique”** and set the student apart from other selections in your field?

## Tips

# Helpful Tips

- ✓ **Benefits to host families** – write a feature of a kid as a benefit to a host family, example: “A flute player is a possible marching band member.”
- ✓ **Start with a snappy open line** – avoid first sentences which are vague such as “Stefan is a nice boy with many varied interests.” Instead, hook them immediately.

Example: “Music or sports? Stefan can’t decide so he pursues a passion for both”

- ✓ **Describe “your best friend”** – Personality characteristics are stronger hooks than interests for many families. Read carefully so that when you talk about the kid, it sounds like somebody you know!
  - Use key descriptive phrases from the confidential section as appropriate if it gives a new perspective on the student.
- ✓ **Use strong and descriptive words!**
- ✓ **Use quotes** from the letter if it’s a strong emotional appeal (or shows capacity for gratitude).
- ✓ **Counteract possible objectives** - Answer possible objections before they come up. For example, if it’s a poor photo: “Behind this serious photo, you’ll find a young man with a dazzling sense of humor.”
- ✓ **Overcome prejudices** - highlighting qualities not generally associated with a certain nationality to attempt to overcome prejudice. For example: “an outgoing Asian boy”, “a South American who helps with housework”, etc.
- ✓ **Common interest**

## Tips

# Student Interest

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Some profile highlights feature interests that sometimes make students more difficult to place because potential host families are not able to connect to the interest of that student. Often it is an interest more common in the student’s country, not the US.

At times, listing an interest that families do not connect to will have a very negative effect on a student’s placement (“kiss of death”). Here are a few examples of activities and alternative/acceptable revisions to describing that student’s interest:

- **Serious handball player** (nobody here plays handball!) = Team sports aficionado
- **Ballroom dancing** = Enjoys dance activities with friends
- **Vaulting (horseback)** = Bury it later in the remarks and don't imply the kid would be able to continue it here
- **Loves learning Latin** (this needs to be buried—other kids will think student is boring) = Enjoys learning languages
- **Great badminton player** = Enjoys racquet sports

Avoid narrow and SPECIFIC requests for activities that are unlikely to materialize, and generalize them to something more possible. For example, a horse-crazy girl can be “an animal lover.”

## Tips

### Student Photo

**Sparkle in the Eyes.** The best photos show an open attitude and a sparkle in the eye. We all know that students who smile are generally placed first. It is not so important that the student be very attractive, but they do need to appear to show at least some of these characteristics: friendly, open, enthusiastic, natural, easy-going, capability to connect. Any photos that appear angry or unfriendly or too serious or without humor need to be dealt with promptly. These kids are among the students that are placed last. Request further photos from partners until we see the sparkle in their eyes that will get them placed.



*Everyone smiles  
with the same language.*

# ??Questions??

Questions about profile  
writing can be directed to  
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847-516-8009

File questions go to  
District Registration  
Specialist.



YFU

Intercultural Exchange Program

# Re-Write Examples

Here are the examples of the current students' profiles we were looking at as a group:

<p><b>Original</b></p>	<p>Meet Nada from Thailand who will be sixteen years old at the time of her exchange year. Nada is thankful for the opportunity to live the American experience and be a part of your family. Nada is a strong student excelling in science and mathematics. She is a very well rounded person with a wide range of interests such as music, movies and reading books, and recreational sports. She is adventurous, imaginative, and personable with a good sense of humor. Nada has no dietary restrictions and is not a fussy eater. She is okay with pets and helpful with household chores, however she prefers a non-smoking host family. She intends to perfect her English language skills in her exchange year. Nada is interested in a career medicine because she believes service to others is most important. She will have so much to share during her exchange year about culture and life in Thailand as you share the American experience with her. You will find Nada to be confident, fun and adventurous. Sharing her exchange year experience with her new American family is what she is looking forward to most, so start the adventure and invite Nada into your family!</p>
<p><b>Refreshed</b></p>	<p>Meet Nada (16) from Thailand whose family has a simple life goal: "seek happiness in every day." She's a diamond, and that's exactly what her nickname "Petch" means. Together with family and friends, Nada enjoys music, movies, singing, books, and recreational sports of many kinds. She'll fill your home with beautiful music on the piano and flute---and maybe join your school's band! Adventurous, imaginative, and funny, Nada will offer her service to others through a career in medicine and excels already in science and mathematics. During your personal adventure together, Nada will further develop her language skills as you all mutually share beautiful experiences.</p>
<p><b>Original</b></p>	<p>Julia, who'll be 16 year old this spring, is looking forward to living the American way of life, experiencing the school spirit and, if possible, even attend prom. To spend a year in the US is her biggest dream and she's excited about this unique experience to start this summer. This German teenager is adjustable, open minded and considered. She's a true team player who is interested in getting to know people on a deeper level. For her, friends and family are very important. After school, Julia spends time with her friends. They study together, go shopping or watch a film at the movies. She's also a avid photographer and enjoys track &amp; field. Julia is keen to try out a new sport in the US. Julia comes from a family of 6: She is the second eldest child and loves playing with her siblings in the garden. As with many teenagers, she has some chores and she sometimes cooks for the family. She entertains them with her piano skills and if possible, she'd like to continue practicing the piano. On Sunday, it's tradition to go to the grandparents</p>

	for lunch where everyone meets. And now Julia writes, "I cannot wait to meet you"
<b>Refreshed</b>	Wanted: close-knit family for 16 year old German Julia. She hopes to enjoy "crafting or baking with the whole family" because that would be a unique family experience. At school, she wants to experience school spirit and, if possible, even attend prom. Flexible, open minded and considerate, Julia is a true team player who is interested in getting to know family and friends on a deeper level. After school, Julia spends time with her friends: they study together, go shopping or watch a film. She's also an avid photographer and enjoys track & field. Julia comes from a family of six: she is the second eldest child and loves playing with her siblings in the garden and visiting her grandparents every Sunday. She entertains her family on the piano and, if possible, she'd like to continue practicing the piano. And now Julia writes, "I cannot wait to meet you"
<b>Original</b>	Neal, 15 from Germany, is no stranger to adjusting to different living styles. He attends a boarding school for gifted students many miles from his family. In addition to being an excellent student, Neal is described as being loyal and fun to be around. In his free time, Neal can be found playing soccer, free climbing or kick boxing but he writes that he likes nearly all sports and would enjoy the opportunity to try something new while on exchange. Apart from sports, his hobbies include reading books and ballroom dancing. Neal has a dog at home and enjoys being around animals. He does, however, require a cat free home. When he is home from boarding school Neal likes to spends a lot of time with his brother and sister shopping, playing soccer and completing their required chores. Neal decided to go on exchange because he loves getting to know new things, cultures and lifestyles and he wants to improve his already excellent English language skills. He is looking forward to experiencing the American way of life and meeting his host family.
<b>Refreshed</b>	Neal, 15 from Germany, is no stranger to adjusting to different living styles. He attends a boarding school for gifted students many miles from his family. In addition to being an excellent student, Neal is described as being loyal and fun to be around. In his free time, Neal can be found playing soccer, free climbing or kick boxing but he writes that he likes nearly all sports and would enjoy the opportunity to try something new while on exchange. Apart from sports, his hobbies include reading books and ballroom dancing. Neal has a dog at home and enjoys being around animals. He does, however, require a cat free home. When he is home from boarding school Neal likes to spends a lot of time with his brother and sister shopping, playing soccer and completing their required chores. Neal is passionate about exchange and will have already completed a three-month-exchange in Spain before coming here to make more lifelong connections!
<b>Original</b>	Open and friendly, 16-year-old Liese from Germany loves laughing and having fun. Two of her favorite activities are reading and horseback riding. Though she hopes to try new sports and perhaps join a drama group while in the USA. Her favorite subjects are biology because she likes nature and wants to know how everything works, and social studies where she participates in discussions. She thinks it's important to have the ability to form your own opinion after thinking

	<p>about several aspects of a theme. In school she is a member of a medical service club. "We learned there how to help persons, if they are hurt and I think that is something you need in your whole life. I like to volunteer, because I enjoy doing something for other people." From a farming family with three sisters, Liese helps her father occasionally, often walks the dog and loves to bake cakes. As a family, they may take day trips on the weekend or walk TV together in the evening. Liese has always been fascinated by the US and its many different cultures. She wants to see how other teenagers live and what they do in their everyday life. She would also like to share her own culture with her new family and friends.</p>
<p><b>Refreshed</b></p>	<p>Question: Who's 16 year old Liese from Germany? Answer: An open and friendly girl who loves laughing and having fun! From a farm family with three sisters, Liese helps her father occasionally, often walks the dog and loves to bake cakes. As a family, they may take day trips on the weekend or watch TV together in the evening. Two of her favorite activities are reading and horseback riding--though riding is not an essential activity she needs to continue. Maybe she can try new sports and perhaps join a drama group while in the USA? Her favorite subjects are biology because she likes nature and wants to know how everything works, and social studies where she participates in discussions. She thinks it's important to have the ability to form your own opinion after thinking about a theme. In school she is a member of a medical service club. "We learned there how to help persons, if they are hurt and I think that is something you need in your whole life. I like to volunteer, because I enjoy doing something for other people." Welcome Liese to your life!</p>

The examples below show highlights before and after re-writing. While there may be many useful changes, you will see some wording highlighted that is an example of one of the principles shown above.



## Additional examples

**BEFORE:** Ida enjoys helping and working with people. She works in a nursing home 4 days per week and earns her own spending money. She enjoys dancing, swimming, and eating ice cream. Her friends say she is honest.

**AFTER:** Ida is a cheerful girl who laughs a lot and **enjoys showing affection within her close-knit family**. She has a younger brother and an older sister at home and definitely enjoys having siblings around! She has been working in a nursing home for two years and has learned to handle difficult situations. She works a few hours on 4 days out of the week and earns her spending money helping and working with people. When she is not at school or at the nursing home, she likes to dance, swim, and eat ice cream. Skiing is her favorite thing to do in the winter. Her friends say she is honest, open-minded, and cheerful. She speaks Russian, German and English.

**BEFORE:** Jiayun, or Karen as she likes to be called, is an active student who likes to play badminton and swim. Her other hobbies include singing, listening to music and playing the piano. "Karen" is willing to attend her host families religious services once a week and hopes to learn as much of the culture as she possibly can. She also hopes to improve on her English as her goal one day is to become a translator.

**AFTER: Just call her Karen! Her teachers say that her host family and American classmates are sure to love this optimistic, bright and sociable girl!** In her spare time, she is a casual participant at badminton or swimming or whatever friends might suggest. Her other hobbies include singing, listening to music and playing the piano. **Maybe she can join your choir?** Karen is willing to attend her host family's religious services once a week and hopes to learn as much of the culture as she possibly can (just as she did on a prior experience in Australia). She also hopes to improve on her English as her goal one day is to become a translator

**BEFORE:** Carl, or Anton, as his family calls him, spends most of his free time participating in the Sea Boy Scouts. He is also very into mechanics and enjoys working on his moped. He is looking forward to mountain biking while in the States and hopes to spread the Finnish culture while living with his host family

**AFTER:** Lively, talkative, sociable and active: that's Anton! **His leadership skills and spirit of cooperation were developed through years spent participating in the Sea Boy Scouts.** Maybe Carl (or Anton as his family calls him!) would enjoy getting involved in scouting here—where he could share some of the skills he has learned! He is active with friends in a variety of team and outdoor sports like camping and sailing and shows a high degree of flexibility about getting involved in them here. Maybe he will get a chance to try mountain biking in the States? But he's also the hard-working, practical kind of guy who doesn't mind helping his grandfather chop wood or helping get the house painted. He's eager and enthusiastic to spread the Finnish culture while living with his host family.

**BEFORE:** Oscar is the oldest of 3 siblings and he enjoys taking care of his younger siblings. He also takes care of the family's dog. Oscar enjoys basketball and soccer and plays on his school's team. He wants to come to the US to "grow up, become independent from parents and learn better English".

**AFTER: Wanted: Close-knit family for this family-oriented Chilean boy!** Oscar's most remarkable qualities are his respect, simplicity, honesty, integrity of values, sense of humor and his intelligence. As the oldest of 3 siblings, he enjoys taking care of the younger ones. He also takes care of the family's dog. Oscar enjoys basketball and soccer and plays on his school's team. He wants to come to the US to "grow up, become independent from parents and learn better English". A caring host family will help in the adjustment process!

**BEFORE:** Tae is a caring young man who is described as a leader in his school and community. He greatly enjoys being outdoors when he is not studying. His main interest is helping out his family, cooking and cleaning and helping the family business. In his spare time, his hobbies include badminton, basketball, and spending time with his father.

**AFTER: Loyal! Caring! Warm! That's Tae,** who others know as a leader in his school and community. He's ready to bond already: **"I'm sure my host family will be the best!"** He comes from the beautiful seaside tourist area of Thailand where he loves the outdoors. Tae's father runs a touring company and Tae helps when his school commitments allow it. Tae's excellent command of English is probably a result of his lending a hand in showing tourists around! Someday, he'd like to welcome his host family there. Introducing Tae to some winter activities should be fun for your family! He would like to get involved in a school sports team while in the US. He mentions badminton. Maybe we have a strong tennis player here? Tae is very close to his family. His respect for his parents is apparent in his letter. In his spare time, his hobbies include badminton and basketball. He is an excellent student, especially in math, science and English.

**BEFORE:** A responsible, warmhearted and humorous girl, Mareike loves to dance. She has practiced dance4fans (video club dancing) for 4 years and even took part in a performance during a youth fair and

still trains every week. She would love to continue dancing in the US. Mareike runs 6 times a week. She had ridden and played piano before she stopped due to time lacks. As a volunteer she takes care of a youth group and helps organizing weekly girl's gatherings. Mareike lives with her parents and takes care of her cat and dog. She is very interested in computers. Her grades are very good and she is excited to join her host family in their church activities.

**AFTER: A natural with young kids! That's Mareike, a responsible, warmhearted and humorous girl who helps organize frequent children's activities for a Christian youth group!** She teaches the kids games, crafts and baking, and is also an eager babysitter! But Mareike also loves to dance. She has practiced video club dancing for 4 years and even took part in a performance during a youth fair. Mareike also runs almost every day (maybe a new member of your cross country team?). Mareike lives with her parents and takes care of her cat and dog. She sticks to a vegetarian diet and maybe she'll be able to teach you some new recipes! Her grades are very good and she is ready to join her host family in any religious activities. Maybe she'll be a sister at last?

**BEFORE:** Britta enjoys playing the clarinet in her school orchestra. To stay active, she plays handball and is also a handball referee at the local club. Britta attends her church youth group on a regular basis and hopes to continue this activity while on exchange. During her free time, she can be found cooking, jogging or playing volleyball or soccer.

**AFTER: Lively and idealistic, Britta is a girl with very high values!** She comes from a supportive family with five siblings. Britta enjoys playing the clarinet in her school orchestra and practices almost daily after nine years of lessons! To stay active, she plays handball and is also a handball referee at the local club. Britta attends her Catholic church youth group on a regular basis and hopes to continue this activity while on exchange. During her free time, she can be found cooking, jogging or playing volleyball or soccer. She attends church weekly with her family. Britta is tentatively scheduled to arrive on Aug 18th. She is well respected by her peers for her values, her enthusiasm and her sense of energy.

**BEFORE:** Markus is a grounded young man who finds enjoyment in a great many things. He admits that he enjoys his art and PE classes more than academics. He should be thrilled by the wide variety of extra curricular clubs and elective classes most American high schools offer.

**AFTER: "I'm so excited to see who will choose me!" says this grounded young man** with a great many hobbies and interests. **But as an actual juggler (your neighborhood kids will be intrigued!),** he's obviously able to juggle all those interests! Because he admits that he enjoys his art and PE classes more than academics, he should be thrilled by the wide variety of extra-curricular clubs and elective classes most American high schools offer. Since he knows that hard work is necessary to be successful in his future, he maintains very good grades in school. Markus and his family enjoy getting outside whenever possible and have many active interests like biking and hiking, but sometimes they just enjoy simple pursuits like playing board games together. Markus has a close relationship with his younger brother. Markus is hopeful that this year will allow him to further narrow his future career choice.

**BEFORE:** Hisatsugu's dream is to eventually become a Hollywood make up artist, brought about by watching Star Wars when in junior high. When not bowling with his father he does so with friends and would like to continue it in the U.S. He is anxious to learn more about America and to make new friends. He gets on well with his sister, five years his junior.

**AFTER: Hisatsugu is a family oriented young man who enjoys spending time with his family.** Hisatsugu is close to his younger sister. They enjoy playing video games together. Hisatsugu's dream is to eventually become a Hollywood make up artist. I imagine that Hisatsugu will enjoy being part

of the "crew" of his American high schools theater productions! Hisatsugu is an avid bowler. He would like to continue to bowl in the US. Imagine his surprise when he learns that many schools have a bowling team or club! Hisatsugu spent several weeks in Oregon on a mini-exchange. He will be attending intensive language study prior to arriving at the home of his host family. Hisatsugu's language skills are already above average he will quickly become fluent!

**BEFORE:** Charlotte loves animals, especially horses, dogs, and cats. Horseback riding is her favorite sports, one she hopes to continue while in the U.S. She is fond of art and enjoys being creative, especially with painting and drawing projects. Cooking and baking are other activities she enjoys. At home Charlotte helps with the housework. She has been described as "easy going, kind, and eager to see the world."

**AFTER: "I will be VERY thankful about my host family... people with huge hearts!" says Charlotte, who describes herself as a social girl with many friends who is honest and self-confident, and always jabbering with other people. Charlotte loves animals and hopes her host family does too!** Horseback riding is her favorite sport, and maybe she will be able to continue it while in the U.S. She is fond of art and enjoys being creative, especially with painting and drawing projects. Cooking and baking are other activities she enjoys. At home, Charlotte helps with the housework. She has been described as "easy-going, kind, amusing, and eager to see the world." She comes from the northern tip of Norway far above the Arctic Circle.

**BEFORE:** Bendix is a very active student with a wide variety of activities. He especially enjoys sports that include playing basketball, bicycling, soccer, dancing and much more. He hopes he'll be able to continue many of his current hobbies but if not, he plans to seek out new opportunities. While Bendix enjoys sports he also is an excellent student. He is not sure what he wants to do yet as a career but he hopes it will include opportunities to travel. Bendix is responsible for taking care of his two cats, vacuuming, emptying the dishwasher. He also helps his grandmother in the garden when he visits her. It is his grandmother that has nurtured his interest in nature and encouraged his desire to travel.

**AFTER: Bendix's contagious smile and considerate, warm-hearted nature make him a welcome member of any group!** An active student in a wide variety of sports, Bendix especially enjoys playing basketball, soccer, bicycling, running, dancing and much more. He welcomes new opportunities, if these activities aren't available. While Bendix enjoys sports, he also is an excellent student in all subjects (esp. languages!) and a guitar player. He is not sure what career he wants, but he hopes it will include travel! Bendix is responsible for his two cats, vacuuming and emptying the dishwasher. He also helps his grandmother garden when he visits her. His grandmother has nurtured his interest in nature and his desire to travel. **Maybe his ready smile and appreciative nature will brighten your year?**

**BEFORE:** Julian is a warm hearted, considerate and responsible individual. He believes that it is very important to learn about foreign cultures and to make new friends and experiences. He is very involved in physical fitness and would like to continue in it in the US. He claims to be open-minded, helpful and in love with life.

**AFTER: This guy is "DOWN TO EARTH!" Warm-hearted, considerate, responsible and (despite the serious photo!) with a good sense of humor!** Julian believes that it is very important to learn about foreign cultures and to make new friends and experiences—and he'll plunge right into that as soon as he gets here. He is very involved in physical fitness and would like to continue in it in the US. And can you believe it? He has just started PLAYING BASEBALL! He claims to be open-minded, helpful and "in love with life!"

**BEFORE:** August is a well-mannered and polite boy who moved to Denmark from Russia when he was 3. He loves to learn new languages and scored a 54 on his SLEP test. As a paper boy, he earns his own spending money and has learned to be responsible. While in the U.S., August would like to play US football and go skiing. He hopes to be a journalist when he is older.

**AFTER: Already skilled at living in TWO cultures, Russian-born August is excited to add a third!** A polite boy who always has a lot of friends, August moved to Denmark 12 years ago. Even though his family speaks Russian at home, he is one of the best at his school in Danish. August likes to play a lot of sports and would like to learn about new ones here: maybe football? maybe skiing? or whatever his new family might suggest! He's also an ardent sports fan and will enjoy watching games on TV or in person. He loves to learn languages and has a good English proficiency. As a paper boy, he earns his own spending money and has learned to be responsible. August enjoys chess and enjoys writing movie scripts in his spare time. He hopes to be a journalist someday. Arthur is an only child who lives with his mother and visits his father nearby very often. One special dream is to be a brother at last if there are siblings (or pets!) in his host family—however, August says he is flexible and is even willing to live in a single person placement