



	<p>patters, personal distance, individualism vs. collectivism, etc.).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Understand that cultural references are relative.</li> <li>4. Be aware that understanding cultural characteristics requires knowledge of the cultural context (e.g. history, values, safety issues, religions, etc.).</li> </ol> <p>The Other Culture:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be aware that they will have to take on challenges (be comfortable about the exchange experience not always being comfortable).</li> </ol> <p>Adaptation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Understand the challenges of intercultural communication in terms of language, different communication styles, and different cultural perspectives.</li> </ol>
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## INTRODUCTION

Remind the group that earlier in the orientation (in “Culture, Yours and Theirs”), you used an analogy of an iceberg to represent culture.

- Above the waterline, so to speak, are aspects of culture that are visible, taught and explicit.
- Under the waterline are hidden aspects of culture – the assumptions, beliefs, understandings, values and judgments that underlie that which is seen.

### Info for Facilitator

- Bullets represent talking points or instructions.
- ✓ Checkmarks represent key points or take aways.

## ACTIVITY 1: How Do You Get Culture? Discussion (10 minutes)

1. Ask them: How do you “get” a culture? Are you born with it? Can you “catch” it by just living in it?
  - Write their ideas on a flipchart; hint if necessary so the three main ways are captured
2. Using the terms they have given, pull out these three methods of “getting” a culture:
  - **Learned** (*formally and informally/consciously and unconsciously, through language, art, etc.*)
  - **Shared /transmitted generation to generation** (*family, peers, media, school, church*)
  - **Based on symbols** (*gestures, clothes, objects, flags, religious icons, with language probably being one of the most important and influential*)

3. Because they are going into a new culture as young adults, ask the students what ways they may have “missed out” on learning their host culture (*students can go back to the list you have just generated, or can add new ways*)
4. What are ways they can compensate for that (missing out)?
5. Tell the students that some cultures are very direct and informal in style, relying on the literal and precise meaning of what is said or done to communicate. Others rely on the message being understood through implication – people should just “know” what to do or say.
6. Introduce the next activity by telling them that the group is going to do a short exercise to help them think about cultural differences and some of the challenges they might face as they communicate with others.

#### Info for Faciliator

Items 3 and 4 are discussion; you can capture on a flipchart, but it might work best just to talk about it, gesturing to items already on the flipchart as appropriate.

## ACTIVITY 2: Toothpicks (25 minutes)

Introduction (10 minutes – includes intro and merging with other group)

**THIS ACTIVITY IS COMBINED WITH A SECOND GROUP** (which two groups are working together should be arranged ahead of time); that movement time is included in the total time.

Set Up Notes:

- Each group’s facilitators should give the introduction below and hand out the cards before the groups come together (will probably be less chaotic that way).
- If possible, facilitators should try to give the "norms" out to students who's personality seems like they would struggle acting out that norm to simulate some of the discomfort they may feel overseas, though this may take too much time, so don't worry if you can't personalize them.
- All of the students from both groups will intermingle as described below; they can talk with people in their own group as well as the other group, and should talk to as many people as they can.
- Every minute and a half or so while the students are talking with each other, tell them to switch people and talk to someone else.

1. Introduction to Students:

- Each of us has our own culture and way of communicating. In this exercise, each of you will be given an additional nonverbal norm – something that will be ingrained in you and that you will always follow.
- We need two volunteers to have slightly different role in this activity (*get the two volunteers*). Each of you – except our two observers here – will get a card with your new “norm”.

DISPLAY THESE RULES ON A FLIPCHART:

- Follow the norm that is on your card.
  - Talk with someone who has a different color mark on his or her card.
  - If the person violates **your** rule, give that person a toothpick; if they violate it again, give them a second one, but don't give more than two to the same person (even if they violate your rule again).
  - Don't talk to two people with the same color in a row – for example, don't talk to two reds directly after each other.
  - Do not share what your norm is with others, including observers.
  - Try to figure out the difference in your nonverbal communication norms.
  - At the end, we will check to see who has the most toothpicks left and who was given the most.
2. Pass out the cards – remind students not to share the content with anyone else.
3. Tell the observers to wander around wherever they want, but they can't talk to anyone, just observe, and shouldn't look at anyone's card.
- Observers should try to distinguish what the various norms are, and can take notes if they want to.
4. Merge your group with the other small group – remind the students that they can talk to anyone in either group about anything (movies, where they like to travel, hobbies, etc.)
5. Remind students not to give more than two toothpicks to the same person, even if they violate the rule more than twice.
6. Students should keep talking until time is called.

Activity (approximately 10 minutes of interactions, then a few minutes to split back out into regular small groups)

After a few minutes, tell the students to switch and talk to someone else (can't be with someone who has his/her color). During the 10 minutes, they should talk to at least 5-6 people (as many as they can) – each with a different color.

Gather each small group back together (they should have interacted for 10 minutes or so).

### ACTIVITY 3: Debrief of Toothpicks (20 minutes)

#### Part 1: Clusters (approximately 10 minutes)

1. Have the students describe some of the nonverbal differences they encountered or that the Observers saw. As they discuss the differences, write key words in clusters of the categories listed below, **but don't reveal what the categories are to the students**. Once the students have given some answers, look at each cluster of words you've hopefully gathered into each category.
  - Point out that nonverbal communication seem to fall into a few different categories.
2. Point to the "touch" group of words, and ask students what they have in common (*presumably, students will say "contact or touching"*)
  - Remind students that each culture has it's own rules about person contact – hugging, handshakes, casual touching while speaking.
  - Point out that rules might be different depending on if you are in a public or private setting, or with family/close friends.
3. Move on to next cluster, and work your way through, pointing out how different cultures vary on how they use nonverbal communication.

#### Info for Faciliator

Your group might not bring up each cluster, and you might run out of time, so you can pick and choose among these if you'd like.

Possible Clusters:

**Eye contact** – "Many Americans depend on direct eye contact as a sign of active listening, sincerity, or perhaps honesty – what does it mean to you?" (*Get a few responses, then ask if they know of some cultures that are different*)

**Gestures** – "You are all probably aware that gestures can have different meanings in different cultures. Do you know of a few examples?" (*Get a few examples*)

**Personal space** – “How far or near you stand to someone varies from culture to culture, and although personal space is always context-sensitive and variable, group norms exist for all cultures. The “size” of our specific “space” is unconsciously acquired in early childhood, so this is one of those areas you’ve “missed.” You will need to be observant of your family members and others around you to pick up on this area.”

**Timing** – “All cultures have well-established patterns that they see as important to maintain a correct flow in a conversation. How did you interpret interruptions? How did you interpret silences? How does this relate to your exchange?”

4. Wrap up this portion by reiterating that nonverbal communication can be grouped into categories, and if they are in a situation that is uncomfortable or that they don’t understand, they can use these categories to help determine what just happened or what might be causing the issue.

## Part 2: How did you feel? (approximately 10 minutes)

Have a conversation with the students about how it felt to do this activity (frustrating, fun, a challenge to try to figure out what the other person’s norm was).

- What did it feel like to give someone a toothpick? What about when you received one?
- Was it easy or hard to discover what someone else’s nonverbal rules were?
- Observers, how did it feel to not have any additional information about what was going on? How did it feel to just watch and not participate? (*this could lead to conversations about culture shock, so be prepared that it might come up*)

Say something like the below to wrap up this part.

- Culture goes deep, and is often unseen. As a young adult, some people may assume you have gained skills and knowledge that you have “missed” by not growing up in that culture. Some cultures are very explicit and “say what they mean”, while others expect the listeners to understand what they are saying – even if they don’t say it!

## WRAP UP (5 minutes)

Wrap up the session by asking the students what they think the takeaways are from this session. Examples below.

- ✓ Nonverbal behavior can have a great impact on communication.

- ✓ Learning the nonverbal “norms” in a new culture can help to prevent misunderstanding and personal embarrassment.
- ✓ Many communication “norms” are taken for granted by the people within a culture. It is important to be observant and to ask appropriate cross-cultural questions to enhance understanding.
- ✓ Silence may be a part of a communication style. Learning to allow for silence can enhance overall communication effectiveness.
- ✓ When you don’t understand something, step back and try to describe it unemotionally, so you can look at all the various interpretations.
- Remind students that they are coming into a culture without the background and tools that natives have (and may expect from the student).
- Language as well as nonverbal actions can cause confusion or be misinterpreted, so remember the categories we just discussed, and think to yourself ‘what assumptions am I making?’
- Remember to be open, flexible, and observant, and remember it’s ok to ask if you don’t understand what’s happening around you.



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## Intercultural Exchange Program

### NONVERBAL "NORMS" FOR "APPROPRIATE" COMMUNICATION

(print, cut, and paste on index cards or print directly on index cards)

You find direct eye contact offensive. When you speak, you try not to look people directly in the eye; instead, you avert your eye contact from listeners. If someone looks you in the eye, give him or her a toothpick.

You like to know that people are listening when you speak and you expect that people show they are listening by nodding their heads. You nod your head when others speak. When you are speaking, if listeners are not nodding their head, give them each a toothpick.

You find people standing closer than 18 inches or so to you offensive. Stand at quite a distance from people and give them each a toothpick if they come too close.

During conversations you find tapping one's feet or fidgeting offensive. Try not to do this when you speak to people and give them each a toothpick if they do this when you are speaking with them.

You like when people get their ideas out quickly in conversations and you are easily distracted by vocalized fillers such as "um," "ah," and "er." If people do not speak quickly enough or if they use vocalized fillers, give them each a toothpick.

When speaking, you pause frequently and you do not like to be interrupted until you finish speaking. You do not interrupt others when they speak. If people interrupt you and do not give you enough time to pause, give them each a toothpick.

When listening carefully you stand fairly still with your arms folded firmly in front of you so that nothing can "intrude" on your attention. If your conversation partner is standing with a "relaxed" posture or is overly animated, give her or him a toothpick.

Smiling during a conversation indicates to you that the conversation is not being taken seriously. If your conversation partner is smiling while you talk, give him or her a toothpick.

You like to know all the details about a topic, so ask as many questions as possible to be very clear about what the person is telling you. If the person skims over details, or doesn't answer your questions, give him or her a toothpick.