



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs

Restricted Language: What Not to Write on a Profile

The document below is provided to IS profile writers annually during their training. It entails directive on what NOT to include per DOS guidelines and German Privacy laws as well as additional information on graduated students, direct placement and placement restrictions.

We strongly advise that you read the information below prior to re-writing any profiles as YFU strives to stay in compliance with both DOS and German Privacy laws.

SPORTS/ACTIVITIES

Due to DOS, CSIET and State Athletic Board regulations, we need to be conscientious of how we write about sports in the profile highlights. The guidelines below are meant to help you word the profile highlight correctly. If you have any concerns about an individual profile, please contact your District Office Coordinator.

- **Do not mention the level of sport that the student plays at, special events or specific meets they have attend or their individual times, averages, etc.** This is a clear violation of CSIET standards and we need to avoid any mention of these in the profile highlights.
- **Do not mention the number of times a week the student practices, has meets, games, events or that they attend a special sports school.** Instead, write something like: “Mary can often be found on the soccer field...” However, it is fine to state how many years the student has played the sport.
- **It is all right to say the word “team”, but we need to avoid the use of the word “club” when referring to sports for students.** While students in the rest of the world play on club teams on a regular basis, the use of this word in the USA sometimes indicates a higher level of play, so it’s best just to avoid the word. If the student writes that they play on a sports club, substitute the word team.
- **Avoid** any words that indicated how skilled they are in a sport. Examples are:
 - Talented
 - Exceptional
 - Better than average
 - Superb

Instead, use words to indicate their interest in a particular sport like:

- Avid
- Enthusiastic
- Keen
- Passionate
- Favorite

These words indicate only that the student loves to play, not how good they are at the activity. It is okay to use phrases like “sports-oriented” or “sporty” or “athletic” but only as a description of person not in connection to a particular sport. (“Described by his friends as social, musical and athletic....”). It is okay to say that a student plays a sport competitively versus recreationally. Anytime a student plays on a team, it implies competitive play but doesn’t indicate skill level.

- **To help clarify a student is very interested in a sport, mark this sport as the “main interest”.** Other sports that they are not as serious about should be marked as a “general” interest.
- **Avoid mentioning if they travel with a team, especially outside the country, as this is another indication of their level.** If they have traveled outside of their country for a meet or game, it is all right to say that they have been out of the country, but please do not mention what the travel was for.

- **If the student would like to continue participating** in the sport while in the US, it is perfectly fine to make mention of that fact, but keep it general (“Mary would like to continue playing soccer while in the US”).

It is important to note that if a student writes about how good they are in a sport or national competitions, etc. in their host family letter, we do not need to redact. These guidelines only apply to the profile highlights and how we are promoting the students.

PLACEMENT RESTRICTIONS

Before changing any placement restrictions on a student based on reading the student file, please check the student comment log notes. When we get updates regarding allergies, pet dislikes, etc. those are posted in the student comment log and the profile is updated. If information has been requested and not received, it will be noted in the review codes in the student overview page as “pending partner comment.” The requesting email should be in the student comment log and eventually the answer, when we receive it.

DIRECT PLACEMENTS

If you need to change a student to a Direct Placement (DP), you must:

- Mark the DP “yes” button in the edit profile page
- In the Application Codes in the student overview, make sure the student is marked direct placement and fill out the corresponding box. The information should be the family name and the relationship to student. (ex. JOHNSON family, HF for Nbro) Not all staff members have access to the Application codes so please make sure your DOC is aware of any changes in DP status.
- Include communication about the direct placement in the student comment log.

As required by the DOS, we must report DPs to their particular hosting school and the National Federation of State High School Associations prior to the first day of classes. The school is notified of the DP when the student file and profile are sent to the school. Therefore, if the profile is not correct, then the school has not been officially notified, as we are required to do. The Registration Department sends the National Federation of State High School Associations a list of DPs and relationship to student in August.

GRADUATED

We must also report graduated students to their American high schools, which is included when the student’s file and profile is sent to the school (again, if the profile is not correct, then the school has not been officially notified, as we are required to do). Please do not change the graduated status of a student without reviewing all documentation and reading the comment record in the student file. When students are processed, we verify any questionable graduation status. By the time you get the files, any questions about graduation status should have been at least asked – though we might not have a response yet. If you change the graduation status, please include why or correspondence in the student comment log.

DATA PROTECTION GUIDELINES

Department of State

The 2012 DOS directive provided more information about what is considered “personally identifying information” and “personal student data.” **Information that cannot be included in the profile highlight paragraph or has to be redacted in the HF letters includes:**

- **Last name of student**
- **Home city**
- **Birth date**
- **Birth place**
- **Natural family information: names, ages**
- **Student’s school name**

- **Email, Facebook, YouTube links, etc.**

German Privacy Guidelines

In addition to the above, German privacy laws prohibit us from mentioning that a student has allergies or specific diseases in the profile highlight since profile highlights are for public use (Facebook, blogs, shown to non-vetted families). We are permitted to write profile highlight statements such as; “Maria cannot live with cats”, “Anton speaks Polish and German” or “Peter cannot eat peanuts.” As long as the underlying reason is left out, we are in compliance with the restriction.

In addition to the 2012 DOS directive, please do NOT include the following information in German student profile highlights:

- Health information including allergies
- Information about religious beliefs
- Race and ethnicity
- Political beliefs