

As You Get to Know Each Other Better

Remember . . . an informal visit or meal together is better than an elaborate situation with unfamiliar customs.

Ask how your friend prefers to be addressed. Enlist help in pronunciation until you have it correct. This will be an encouragement to him or her.

Follow any verbal invitation with a written note, including precise directions and the exact date and time. This will clarify any misunderstanding and serve as a reminder. Let the student know how long a visit or activity will last and offer transportation if necessary.

Read in advance about your student's country, taking special notice of geography, customs, history, political systems and the current situation. Not only will this enable you to be more at ease and to relate more intelligently, but it will also suggest appropriate questions you might want to ask during conversations.

During your visit write on a card or paper your name, address and phone number (and names of family members or roommates) for your student.

Speak slowly and distinctly. Avoid raising your voice—internationals are not deaf! Though fluent in several languages, they may have difficulty with English when it is spoken fast. Repeat and rephrase things if necessary, especially instructions and invitations. Avoid slang and idioms. Jokes are often misunderstood cross-culturally. Watch for nonverbal cues of misunderstanding. Explain anything you think may have been misinterpreted. If in doubt—don't say it. Compliment your friend when he or she speaks well.

Refreshments for guests are the custom in most countries and always appropriate. **Offer them several times**, since in most countries it is impolite to accept the first or second time.

Learn greetings in your friend's language and let them help you learn to speak their language. In addition to "hello" and "goodbye" and "welcome," you can learn their special holiday greetings and teach them yours, such as "Merry Christmas" and "Happy Easter," discussing their significance

Where possible give your friends a tour of your home. Some items may be unfamiliar in their culture. Be natural, but be sensitive to the fact that Americans are often viewed as materialistic. Avoid ostentation.

Be a thoughtful listener. It shows you take your friend seriously and sets the stage for deeper sharing. Listening intently also helps you grow accustomed to different accents.

Ask questions. Encourage your friend to talk about himself/herself, family and country. This will both ease loneliness and teach you a great deal about another culture. Avoid bringing up financial or political matters before your friend does

Don't compare their country with America. There are always two sides to every issue and no one likes having one's homeland belittled. At the same time, don't be surprised or defensive at negative remarks about America. You are first an ambassador of **Christ**, not of the United States. Your life will do more to refute criticism than your words.

Do not be afraid of struggles in communication. Remember, your friend is struggling much more than you are. Patience, encouragement, sincerity and friendliness along with a genuine desire to understand, will enable you to overcome any language or cultural barrier in time

Share your friends. Invite your international friend to join you in your activities with other Americans.

Make arrangements for when you will see your friend again. This is an assurance that you are genuinely interested. Again, follow this up with a note. Encourage him or her to come by from time to time, just to have a quiet place to study or relax. Remember that, as students, their first priority is educational goals. Find out what times of the week and year they are free and when they are busiest with schoolwork and unable to visit. Telephone between visits.

Share your time. Never act in a rush with a foreign student. Be sincere and relaxed.

Help your international friend (when necessary) with practical needs such as an orientation to your campus and city, show them where and how to bank, shop, pay bills, find temporary or permanent housing, utilize public transportation, get and use a telephone, locate medical and dental services, register for classes, buy books, use the library and get academic help

Pray regularly for your new friend.