

# Hosting an Exchange Student: Problem Handouts



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# Hosting an Exchange Student

## Part 1

### Problem Introduction

One way to encourage building new connections between two cultures is through exchange programs with students from other countries. Through the interactions in exchange programs, participants gain a deeper sense of multi-cultural understanding as well as awareness of their own culture.

How can I make the most out of hosting an exchange student and ensure sure they feel welcome? What should I learn about a country or region in preparation for participating in an exchange?

Imagine that an exchange student from a Spanish-speaking country is coming to stay with you and your family for a few weeks as part of a cultural exchange program. What would some of the challenges be? You know a fair amount of information about the country but you don't want your family to embarrass you with their lack of knowledge about the culture of the exchange student's country including customs and food. You want your family to be as informed and open-minded as possible so that both your family and the exchange student can have a pleasant and transformative experience. It is your responsibility to do the research on this particular area and make sure your family is familiar with the exchange student's culture including common foods, popular expressions, behaviors, social norms and taboos.

You will need to convey the information you learned to your family as accurately, concisely and clearly as possible to ensure 1) they do not feel overwhelmed or discouraged by the potential experience, and, 2) they remember the pertinent details about the culture. You want to show the exchange student that you are open-minded, curious and worldly.

# Hosting an Exchange Student

## Part 2

### DAY ONE: Culture and Stereotype Class Discussion

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Members of Your Group: \_\_\_\_\_

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Get together in small groups of three or four students and discuss the following questions. Try to elaborate, be specific and give concrete examples as much as possible.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Have you considered studying abroad in a Spanish-speaking country? Why or why not?
2. What are the particular elements of any one culture (music, customs, pastimes, etc.)?
3. What is American culture and what does it mean to be American?
4. What are some of the stereotypes that people of other nationalities have of Americans? These stereotypes can be related to food, behaviors, values, lifestyle, etc.
5. What are some cultures that you think are very different from our own? What specifically makes those particular cultures dissimilar?
6. What are some of the things that come to mind when you think about Spanish-speaking cultures?
7. What are some regional differences among Spanish-speaking cultures?
8. How do people vary within a culture?
9. What have your interactions been like with people of other nationalities/backgrounds, particularly people of Hispanic cultures?

10. Have there been any aspects of Hispanic culture or behaviors that you learned through this class or personal experience that are surprising?
11. Do you think culture changes over time?
12. How should one interact with people of different cultures? What are some examples of appropriate and inappropriate questions to ask someone of a different culture?
13. What do you think it would be like to host an exchange student? What do you think the challenges and rewards would be?

**Notes/Summary of Discussion:**

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Did anyone in the group have a divergent opinion from your own? How so?

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# Hosting an Exchange Student

## Part 3

### Homework Activity:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Research some stereotypes of American culture and of other nationalities on the Internet or in the library. Feel free to use Wikipedia or YouTube as a starting point to complete these activities.

### Complete the following activities:

Some stereotypes of the United States and its people:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

Sources: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you find these stereotypes to be true? Why or why not?

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Common American stereotypes of other countries/nationalities:

| Stereotype | Country/Nationality |
|------------|---------------------|
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Sources: 

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Do you find these stereotypes to be negative or positive?

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How would you combat these stereotypes in general and in your own personal interactions?

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## Homework Activity (Part 2):

Think about the different countries and regions in the Spanish-speaking world. You can complete some cursory research online if you don't know a lot of information about them.

**Choose a country or region in the Spanish-speaking world that interests you.**

**Country or Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor Approval: Yes / No Instructor Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

Write what information you already know about the country or region, even if it is basic:

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Write some ideas about aspects of the culture that you do not know but think would be interesting to learn (this may include music, table manners, holidays, etc.):

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# Hosting an Exchange Student

## Part 4

### Cheat-Sheet and Presentation Guidelines

An exchange student from a Spanish-speaking country is coming to stay with you and your family for a few weeks. You know a fair amount of information about the country but you don't want your family to embarrass you with their lack of knowledge about the culture of the exchange student's country including customs and food. You want them to be as informed as possible. While there is no guarantee that this information will be true or relevant for each exchange-student of that region, it will be beneficial to know as much as you can about the culture and common customs of the country or region.

Choose a Spanish-speaking country or region (get instructor approval), research it online and create a cheat-sheet for you and your family about the exchange student's country in order to ensure your exchange student has a comfortable and welcome stay. Include the following information as well as your sources:

- Common customs (may include but not limited to: religious customs, home/family management and relationships/society)
- Common colloquial expressions with English translations or aspects of language dialect spoken in the country
- Common/popular foods and drinks in the country (You may include a few recipes for your family to make.)
- Common past times (good for conversation starters) such as sports and music
- Unique and/or important holidays celebrated in the country
- Behaviors or gestures which are taboo or inappropriate in the exchange student's culture but acceptable in your own culture. Behaviors that may be acceptable in the target culture but inappropriate in American culture
- Any other information relevant to the country, its history and politics

Please be prepared to give a short five-minute presentation about your cheat-sheet in class. Highlight the unique and fascinating material that you have learned. You are encouraged to use a PowerPoint presentation, pictures, videos, charts or other technology and media to aid your presentation. You may complete this assignment and presentation in English. Please give your cheat-sheet and other relevant materials to the instructor after the presentation.

## **General Cheat-Sheet Format:**

**Country or Region:**

**Common Customs (Religious, Social, Familial, etc.):**

**Common Regional Expressions/Dialect Characteristics:**

**Food/Recipes/Popular Drinks:**

**Past Times (Music, Game, Movies, Sports):**

**Unique/Important Holidays or Celebrations:**

**Taboo Behaviors or Customs:**



**Any Other Relevant Information:**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Class Presentation Notes**

**Write notes from each student's presentation. Highlight the main points as well as the unique and interesting information you learned.**

**Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Country or Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Country or Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Country or Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Country or Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Country or Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Country or Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Presenter:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Country or Region:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# Hosting an Exchange Student

## Part 5

### Presentation Follow-Up Discussion Questions:

Get together in groups of three or four students and discuss the following questions:

- 1) Based on what you learned in the presentations, which country or region presented would you most like to visit? Why?
- 2) What is some of the interesting information you learned from the presentations? What was most surprising?
- 3) Would you like to host an exchange student? What do you think some of the challenges and advantages would be? What should you do to be prepared?
- 4) Did this project make you more interested in the prospect of study abroad?
- 5) How has your understanding of culture changed through this project?

### Discussion Notes:

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### **Role-Playing (Optional):**

Considering your new cultural knowledge, role-play as a host family and an exchange student within your group. You can role-play as a foreign exchange student in the United States and then as an American exchange student in another culture.

Guide the conversation with your exchange student to discuss cultural differences and similarities. Explain unique aspects of American culture and ask about the exchange student's culture. What misunderstandings could you foresee with an exchange student? Construct a five to ten minute engaging dialogue and emphasize cultural differences and understanding.

### **Follow-Up Chat:**

Search for a person or people from that country or region using a website or app (iTalki, My Language Exchange, talkabroad.com, etc.). Chat online and ask them about their culture and interests. Ask about the specific customs, behaviors and social norms you discovered through your project. Is the information you found for your cheat-sheet accurate? How accurate are they for the specific person or people with whom you chatted? Did you learn something new that wasn't in your research?

Based on your chat, how accurate did you find the information you researched for your presentation?

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What are some similarities or interests you share with the person or people with whom you chatted?

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