

# CROSS CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

## Tips for a Smoother Transition

---

### ASK QUESTIONS

Ask questions of the practical nature, such as “Where may I find food/stuff from my home country?”, or “Where is the nearest bank?”, but also ask questions about a person’s opinion on things, and about their experiences. Ask for their reactions to happenings, newspaper articles, television programs, etc. You may find that some stereotypes you held about your new host culture are crumbling!

### LEARN AND PRACTICE THE LOCAL LANGUAGE

There are regional and local variations to most languages. Learn the version that pertains in your new host culture. Watch television, listen to the radio, read local newspapers, and Talk! Talk! Talk! with persons you encounter everywhere you go during your everyday routine.

### OBSERVE RITUAL SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Notice what people say and how they say it when they greet an acquaintance, when they are introduced to a stranger, when they say goodbye to a friend or to someone they have just met. Watch for variations with age, sex, and apparent social status.

### TAKE "FIELD TRIPS"

A field trip is a visit to a place where you can observe what happens. Your field trip may be conducted in a visit to someone’s home, the grocery store, or a public school. Riding public transportation is also another great trip! You may be amazed by how much you can learn simply by observing.

### TALK WITH EXPERIENCED INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

One of the benefits of studying at most universities abroad is the presence of other international students from different countries. Their experiences can be an invaluable resource for you, the new sojourner. Don’t limit yourself to members of your own culture group: be adventuresome!

### KEEP A JOURNAL OR A BLOG

Writing in a journal or blog is a time-honored method of coping with a new culture. Writing about your experiences forces you to be observant and to reflect on what is happening to you and around you.

### READ

An abundance of materials exist about your new national, regional, and local host cultures. Newspapers, magazines, and the university libraries are excellent resources for your quest.

### VIEW YOURSELF AS AN EDUCATOR

You can use your stay abroad to teach a few host country nationals about your home culture. Thinking of yourself as an educator may give you additional patience and help you avoid becoming irritated when asked questions to which the answers may seem just plain obvious to you!

### REFLECT

An essential part of the cultural adaptation process is taking time to reflect on what is happening to you and around you. The demands of academics are rigorous and reflection time won’t happen unless you purposefully set out to reserve the time for it. Ask yourself such questions as “What did I expect from my study abroad experience?”, “How does reality compare with my expectations?”, “What can I do to make my experience more constructive and interesting?”, and “How is the experience preparing me to meet my goals for the future?”

Culture shock experience doesn’t stop at a certain time or a certain stage. It can continue to happen throughout your stay in the host country. There will be times when you feel like you are at home or getting used to the host country’s culture. There might be times when you still discover something new in this culture and find yourself going through the cultural adaptation stages again. The process can be frustrating and irritating. But remember, you are NOT alone. It is a process that most international students experience. During this process, it is also not unusual for an international student to seek help or support from the health center by a professional psychologist.

