

Preparing for Your Departure

- Your AFS year is winding down and soon you will be on a plane heading back to your home country.
- Now is a good time to think about all that is before you and what you need to get done before you leave.

Activity: Before You Leave

Before you arrived in the U.S., there were probably days of packing, saying good-bye to friends and family and many arrangements were made. The same will be true leaving the U.S.

- Have students think about what they want to do with their remaining time in the U.S. Go around the circle and discuss or form small groups and have them list their comments on a flipchart.
- Make a list on flipchart under the heading “Things to Do” what the students want to accomplish before they leave. Several things are mentioned below:
 - Play on the softball team
 - Mail extra luggage
 - Write thank you letters
 - Write a letter to my parents at home
 - Tape record sounds and music and the people at home to take back with you
 - Buy post cards of sites in the surrounding area
 - Do you have addresses of your friends?
 - Have you exchanged pictures with your family and friends and taken your final snapshots?
 - Do you have your transcripts and other necessary school documents ready?
 - Have you mailed your extra baggage? Check the postage required for the different shipping rates.
 - *Packing and getting things taken care of will help make the last few days go smoother.*
 - *Don't wait until the last day to say thank you to your family – it's always too busy.*

Activity: Host Family and Community Appreciation

- Saying goodbye to your friends and family in the U.S. isn't an easy part of your AFS experience.
- Taking time to say goodbye to your friends and family is important. It's good to know you have not left any "unfinished business" or important things left unsaid when you return home.
- In small groups ask students to write on flipchart paper the following things:
 - People you will miss
 - Places you will miss
 - Things you will miss
- After they have finished, have each group read their lists on "People you will miss" to the whole group.

It's natural to feel some loss. You may experience some of the same feelings you did when you left your natural family. You may begin to push friends and family away from you in anticipation of leaving. It's also natural for the family to feel this way.

- Continue with places you will miss and things you will miss.
- Summarize some of the points highlighted by the students.

A lot of good things have happened to you during the year. How can you thank the people who have made it possible and say goodbye? Who has helped you during the year?

- School advisor
- Chapter president
- Student/family liaison
- Host family
- Other AFS people in the area
- In small groups ask students to think of ways they can say goodbye to all these important things and show their appreciation to the people who have made this year possible. Allow about five minutes for students to jot down their ideas. Have siblings brainstorm ways they can also say goodbye.
- When finished, gather the whole group together and write their ideas on flipchart paper. Some ways students can thank people are:
 - Present a skit or play to the volunteers and families
 - Organize a potluck dinner for their families
 - Plan a day at a park
 - Make a favorite dish from your home country for your family
 - Make something inexpensive as a gift
 - Say "thank you"
 - Some ways host siblings can thank people are:
 - Do something extra special

- Present a small gift
- Have writing paper and envelopes on hand to write thank you notes to important people in the AFS chapter who helped them during the year. The students can do this later.
- Ask students and host siblings to think about how they can keep in touch with their family and friends once they are home. List the items on flipchart as they are suggested. Some of the things they may suggest are:
 - Letters
 - Cassette tapes with music of your country
 - Photos of your family and your home
 - Picture post cards
 - Small mementos of your country or town
- Stress that it means a lot to their families to receive word from them after they return.

• The exchange experience has provided you with the opportunity to develop deep and meaningful relationships with people from another culture. Some of these relationships will last over the miles and through the years.

• Thanking the people who have helped you throughout your year – your teachers, family, volunteers, and friends is important. Your “thank-you’s” are meaningful to them and they help keep the AFS Program alive in your community.