



ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE CALIFORNIA DISTRICT 5230

<http://www.RYE5230.com>



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS A FAMILY MAY ASK

About Hosting A Rotary Youth Exchange Student

1. Who are they?

Rotary Youth Exchange Students are high school age (15 – 18½, usually 16 or 17) from a variety of countries around the world, both boys and girls.

2. Do they speak English?

Yes, although they may need a little time to adjust to our accent and “special terms.”

3. What kind of families do they come from?

They come from all kinds of families, although most parents will be business and/or professional people. Often one of their parents is a Rotarian.

4. How long would a Rotary Exchange Student stay with us?

Their stay with a host family is usually 3-3½ months, although the period may be shorter or longer if you and the Host Rotary Club agree on it. Students usually come in August just before school starts, change host families soon after Thanksgiving, and change again about the beginning of March. They normally go home in June, although sometimes they participate in a Rotary sponsored two-week tour then go home in July.

5. Do they ever stay longer than this?

No. Their visa is good for one year only and they must return to their home country before they can come back to the United States.

6. Why do Rotary Exchange Students change host families in this program?

There are several good reasons. First, it exposes them to a variety of ways of family life in our country so that they get to know our culture better, with as little bias as possible. A second reason is that if you and your student don't happen to match personalities too well, then 3-3½ months of “tip-toeing around each other” is about all anyone can stand. This isn't usually a significant problem, but it can happen; and it doesn't have to be the case that you or the student is a “bad guy.” On the other hand, if the match between you and your student is really good, then more than 3-3½ months produces a bond that hurts too much to break.



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Rotary Exchange Students expect to change host families; they've been told that they will. Sometimes host families want to keep them longer than the assigned period. But a good deal of experience has shown that all things considered, it's usually best to change.

7. Who meets our Rotary Exchange Student when he/she arrives at the airport?

As many of the first host family as is reasonable, and the Counselor or some other representative of the Host Rotary Club should be there. The first host family should also write to the Rotary Exchange Student before they arrive and welcome them to the USA, to their state and to their home. A small welcoming gift at the airport also helps a lot to make the student feel welcome. A token is enough – even flowers for girls, a correspondingly simple gift for boys.

Photos should be made of the Rotary Exchange Student with the host family when he/she arrives at the airport and a copy should be sent to the student's home family. The student should also be encouraged to phone home as soon as possible to inform the home family of a safe arrival. By the way, the student is expected to pay for his/her own long distance charges.

8. By the way, what is a "Host Rotary Club?"

The Rotary Club in your community serves as host club for your "inbound" Rotary Exchange Student. Among other responsibilities, they provide an allowance for your student (about \$125 per month) and one of them with knowledge about the program will serve as Counselor for your student. The Counselor will meet the Rotary Exchange Student either on arrival or very soon thereafter and assist him/her in getting enrolled in school. He/she will also maintain contact with your student and make sure he/she gets the allowance, usually monthly.

9. What else does the Counselor do?

Although the Club Counselor is an advocate for your Rotary Exchange Student, he/she also serves as a resource for you in case some situation develops which either you don't know how to handle or which is a bit too tedious for comfortable direct confrontation. In other words, the Counselor serves as a "go between" for you and your student on matters which are awkward for either you and/or your student. The Counselor "takes the heat" either direction! It makes things a lot more peaceful around your house! Wouldn't it be nice if you had one for your own children?



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10. What if we don't have children, or they are still small, or they are already gone?

Strangely, it doesn't seem to matter very much. Like everybody else, Rotary Exchange Students come with preconceived notions about the characteristics of the best host family, children, no children, small children, children of the same age, etc. But at the end of the year, they usually think the host families they had were the right ones.

11. If we have children in our family, who "looks after" our Rotary Exchange Student?

Nobody! And everybody! Your Rotary Exchange Student lives as a member of your family, has the same care from and responsibilities to others as any other family member. This includes chores, rules of the house, curfew, and kind of friends – same as any other child in the family. No child in the host family should be expected to "look after" the social life of your Rotary Exchange Student, take him/her along every time they leave home to see a friend, etc. They should treat their exchange brother/sister like other brothers and sisters.

12. What about transportation to school, and other places? Will our Rotary Exchange Student expect to drive our new BMW?

Absolutely not!!! Rotary Exchange Students are not permitted to operate any motor powered vehicle – automobile, motor boat, tractor, motorcycle, whatever. Rotary is absolutely emphatic about this rule. Violations are grounds for getting sent home early.

13. So how will our Rotary Exchange Student get to and from school?

Any of the usual means is fine. They can walk, ride the school bus, ride with your son or daughter or another school friend if you approve. Some host parents drive their exchange students to and from school as they may do or may have done with their own. Whatever is reasonable, safe and works for you is good.

14. What about other places our Rotary Exchange Student needs or wants to go? Can't this transportation thing get to be a headache?

It doesn't usually hurt as much as you might think. If your exchange student needs to go to a special school event, someone is just about always going who would take them; if they need to go to a store to buy something, they can usually go with one of the host parents at a time when



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they happen to be going anyway. Keep in mind that a teenager's needs for transportation are not usually urgent; they can usually be worked into the family schedule. And besides, family togetherness is the essence of this experience. Two often-overlooked solutions to transportation problems are legs and bicycles; and most of our Rotary Exchange Students are much more familiar with these modes of transportation than our own. Also, walking and riding a bike are not against Rotary rules.

15. Speaking of transportation, what about family trips, etc?

Take your Rotary Exchange Student any place you would take your children, especially family trips to see the relatives, on family outings, vacations, etc. If you must make a trip without your exchange student, call your counselor and they will help arrange for an approved alternate host family while you are gone. Often one of your student's other host families is glad to do this.

16. Are there rules about trips our Rotary Exchange Student takes?

You bet! They must either be with you or else approved by you and the Rotary Club Counselor. Often, Rotary families will volunteer to take some Rotary Exchange Student along on trips to see something special or some special place they might otherwise not see. If you and the Counselor approve, that's fine. In any case, if your exchange student makes a trip anywhere, you should know all about it and approve; if he/she makes a trip overnight, out of town, the Rotary Counselor should also know and unless it's with you, be asked to approve. The Counselor should always know how to reach your Rotary Exchange Student. Think of what you would want for your child if they were living in another country for a year.

17. Will our Rotary Exchange Student have any sort of obligation to the Rotary organization while they are here?

Yes. Several activities will be scheduled during the year for your Rotary Exchange Student along with other Rotary students. Most of these are on weekends, but your student may miss some school for such activities. Rotary Exchange Students are obligated to attend some meetings that require them to be gone for two or three days. For example, there is an overnight Orientation Meeting for them in September, an overnight "Fall Outing", usually in



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November, a weekend meeting (two nights) in February, a weekend Rotary District Conference in April (two nights) and "Good Bye Get-Together" in early June (two nights). From time-to-time your Rotary Exchange Student will also be invited to local Rotary Club activities and to some meetings. In fact, he/she will be asked to speak at one or more Rotary Club meetings, usually the local club, but sometimes in another community. If it's out of town, a Rotarian will accompany your student and provide transportation.

18. Won't all these activities interfere with school?

Not much. Rotary Exchange Students have gone through an extensive selection process and are usually very good students academically, often a little ahead of their age group here. And besides, except for often exceptional improvement in language for those who haven't spoken much English, their chief gain will be an understanding of the "American Culture" rather than academic advancement.

19. Well, just what is the purpose of this program, anyway; why are we doing this?

The overall objective of the Rotary Youth Exchange Program is to promote good will and better understanding among the people of the world, and thereby make our whole world a better place in which to live. For the Rotary Exchange Student, it is a life-changing experience; it broadens their perspective in a way that nothing else can and it develops self confidence that will enable them to feel at home and comfortable in almost any environment.

For host families, it is a milestone in the family experience, and often the acquisition of a new family member. It removes anxiety and fear of the word foreign, and indeed, usually relegates the use of the word to "things" rather than "people." Everyone involved begins to feel that they are a part of a community much larger, more comprehensive than what they perceived before.

20. Well, these are very noble ideals, but someone has to ask: How much is this going to cost me?

If you happen to have a son or daughter who goes to another country as a Rotary Youth Exchange Student, it comes out even. In fact, you probably will get ahead, because chances are your son or daughter drives a car, which they can't do as a Rotary Exchange Student, and the associated



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savings in auto insurance, etc., may more than offset the cost of the exchange. But in any case, it's not much. Most families throw out more food than even a hungry teenager will eat.

As already noted, the Rotary Club will give your student an allowance and your exchange student's own family (overseas) is expected to pay for clothing and such. To put it in usual terms, you will be expected to furnish room and board; that is, a bed in your house and meals with the family. This includes a school lunch, either sent to school or bought in the school lunch room. If the family goes out to eat, to a movie, or whatever, then your Rotary Exchange Student is treated as a member of the family: same rules about what and what not to order, and with his/her cost as a part of the family bill. But if your Rotary Exchange Student goes to the movie or out to eat with his/her school friends, they pay with their own money from the Rotary Club allowance or from their home. The same is true for film, developing, etc. Around the house, your exchange student would surely use the family soap, and maybe toothpaste, but buy their own toothbrush, lipstick and hair spray. You can generalize from these examples. But if in doubt, ask the Counselor.

21. What about medical expenses, the flu, accidents, etc.?

Your Rotary Exchange Student has insurance for medical expenses, including accidents, and life insurance as well. It's required, and he/she will have proof. Any expenses not paid by insurance are paid by the exchange student's own parents.

22. Is there anything else we need to know about money?

Well, it may be possible for you to get a \$50 per month reduction on your Federal Income Tax return for hosting a Rotary Youth Exchange Student!

23. And how do we deal with the 50 million things we forgot to ask about?

Just use the same common sense you would use with children of your own. The emphasis on Host Parent is "PARENT." But don't forget; the Rotary Counselor works for you, too. When in doubt, ask!



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24. A cold chill just came over me; what if our Rotary Exchange Student turns out to be that one in a million who "takes drugs" or is alcoholic or something?

Call the Rotary Counselor at once if you ever suspect a problem. He/she will know how to handle it. In the unlikely event this should happen, your Rotary Exchange Student will be sent home immediately, period. The Rotary Counselor keeps your student's passport and (required) return trip ticket during the entire exchange, for safekeeping, yes, but also for such emergencies.

25. Now that it's come up, are there any other reasons why our Rotary Exchange Student might be sent home?

Yes, of course there could be a serious accident or illness; and flagrant violations of such Rotary rules as operating a motor vehicle can do it. A serious love affair that is getting out of hand can do it. But it's pretty unusual for anything so serious to occur. Rotary Youth Exchange Students are selected and given careful orientation and counseling before they leave home. They and their parents know "the rules" and they sign agreements to follow them. (They also sign a release for medical treatment, etc.) With very rare exception, Rotary Youth Exchange Students are very fine and honorable young people that you would be glad to adopt as your own.