



Connecting Lives, Sharing Cultures

## Getting to Yes - Overcoming Objections

We all know – the whole purpose of calling and talking to people about hosting is getting them to say *YES!*

But it's rare, surprising, and very precious if you can actually get people to say "yes" on the first call, especially if they haven't hosted before and don't know what AFS is about. Here are some tips and scripts for calling both AFS people and new people.

### Success Is...

Early in the process, a genuine "maybe," "I'll think about it," or "I'll talk it over with the family" is great! When you start prospecting, success is finding people who are even a little bit interested and open to learning more.

Success is also getting referrals to people who might make good hosts, including their phone number and permission to use the name of the person who made the referral in the first place.

Ultimately, success requires follow-up, providing your prospects with the information they need, and keeping up contacts with them until they say YES. Along the way, you may want to introduce your prospects to someone a lot like them who's hosted successfully before, or a volunteer who'll be their support, or both. Send them a Link to the AFS website, a newsletter, or an article to show your continuing interest and remind them about AFS.

### Before You Call...

Before the very first call, it's a good idea to think about what you're going to say. You may want to use a script, or write out your own version, or make a few notes for yourself. Make yourself comfortable with what you plan to say, and think of questions you might ask to get people to talk about themselves so you know what's on their minds and what needs, wants and interests you can address.

And don't rehearse so much that you sound like a computer. Be yourself. Relax. Breathe deeply. Enjoy the call. Please don't be frustrated if most callers say NO. That is the nature of recruiting. Count your successes, congratulate yourself, and learn from each call how to make the next one better. And enjoy the chance to meet and talk with lots of interesting new people as you go!

## Overcoming Objections

The following is a list of common responses from families that have been asked to host, but have not answered, "Yes, we'd love to!" Not everyone is ready to say "yes" the first time they're asked about hosting. Always acknowledge their concern and then have the conversation about what might be an objection versus a legitimate barrier. Please keep in mind that some families may not be able to host in any given year so do be sensitive to their responses.

The answers following each question are possible approaches to answering each response.

### *Our past hosting experience was difficult*

- Not every experience works out. Sometimes it is chemistry; sometimes it is just the wrong student for the family or vice versa.
- Try to focus on how things went when problems occurred. Did the local volunteer work with them? Was the problem resolved in a timely matter? Did they receive satisfactory results when it wasn't working out?
- We don't guarantee every placement works out, just that we will take care of things if it doesn't.

### *It's too expensive to host, the economy is bad*

- Realistically, it does cost some money
- Families cover the costs of food, transportation and lodging, all else is optional.
- The added costs like the family vacation, Christmas presents, etc. are discretionary.
- The world needs trust and understanding more than ever now.
- Students have spending money and medical insurance.
- You can claim a special tax deduction on federal taxes.
- Think of the benefits of the experience that can't be measured in money.
- If it is something you want to do, don't wait for the perfect time. It will never happen!

### *Do we get reimbursed?*

- They do not, but they can get a tax deduction of \$50 per month.
- If they mean medical insurance, etc...then the answer is yes. The kids come fully insured.
- Talk to them about the non-tangibles that they get as a family, such as first-hand info on a new culture, helping to teach someone about American life so they can understand "us" better, a way to expose their children to new ways of thinking, educational experience for the entire family, etc.
- We don't pay families for hosting because it is a different type of experience that we offer.

***I'm thinking of hosting with an organization that will pay us***

- We are a volunteer organization.
- We want students to become a part of the family and not a boarder.
- Because we don't pay families, our tuition costs are lower and we are able to offer scholarships to students, thus varying the economic background of the students we host.
- Insurance is covered.
- We offer great support and orientations.
- We have over 60 years of experience.

***We do not have a high school age student of our own***

- Most times the younger siblings are excited and very accepting of a big brother or sister.
- One way to help support the student in this type of placement is to find a neighborhood HS student or an AFS student club member to be their buddy the first couple weeks and show them around.

***We don't have any children at home***

- Empty nesters make great host parents.
- People without children in the home are able to really focus on the student.
- Participants will make friends at school.
- No sibling rivalry.
- Most kids enjoy being the only child.
- Liaisons and others will invite them to do things.

***We have younger children, no one in the high school***

- Kids are great with the AFSers. Younger children really enjoy having a teenage brother/sister. They are so curious that they ask all the questions and tend to look up to the students as a role model.
- Families that have hosted when their kids are young have said that the kids really respond to their AFS student. Many students enjoy younger kids.
- It opens the kids' minds and makes them aware of the outside world at an earlier age.
- Plus, if they do like it, they can host that many more times while their kids are still home to enjoy it.
- Eliminates competition in the household.
- Students make friends at school (even when there are teenage siblings).
- You can practice on someone else's teen and find out about the HS before your kids get there.

***My child is going to be a senior and we do not want to take away from their "senior experience"***

- Try a student from the opposite sex.
- Look at it as adding to their year by having an AFSer to share the experience of the senior year (enhance, not hamper).
- Try the welcome or semester family approach to see if they can try it. If it proves to be too much, then commitment fulfilled at end of time agreed to and student is already known in community so second family is easier to find.

- Normally (80%) once they get a taste of the experience, they can't imagine it without the student.

***Live where we don't like the school and our kids go to private school***

- What is the objection to the school?
- Most AFSers do well in any school.
- Diverse schools are interesting places for exchange students. They might be more accepting of exchange student than homogenous school.
- Sign them up for honors classes.

***I live too far away from the school***

- Some of the most successful placements are just like yours.
- They are coming to be part of a family no matter where you live.
- We look for student who would like a rural setting.

***We never travel or go anywhere - what would the student do?***

- Participants are not here as tourists. They are here to experience American life and culture.
- AFS is a school-based program, not travel-based. They may have a chance to travel some with school, AFS trips, or church.
- Friends and family may offer to take them
- You might be surprised at how you can find time to do things you thought you were too busy to do.

***Grandparent sick***

- Find out what you can and ask if you can call them later.
- Call again to check, things may have changed.

***House is not in shape, thinking of remodeling***

- When? How long have you been planning?
- Will your family move out while doing this?
- AFSers can adjust and help, just like your family.

***House is too small***

- Student needs their own bed and study space, but not their own room.
- Sharing room will make them part of family faster.
- Relationship in the family is most important factor, not space

***We don't have enough time or we both work full time***

- We are all so busy. So are AFSers!! We try to find a student that matches their lifestyle. The family is a part of the experience but the student's are also involved in school activities, AFS weekends, activities, etc.
- Host families and kids come in all shapes and sizes. There is the right student for each family.
- Participants also come from busy families.
- Busy families encourage independence and self sufficiency.
- Most American families are busy.
- Busy people know how to get things done.

- Many host families have 2 working parents.

***We need some time off from hosting***

- This is very understandable plus getting new blood into the chapter keeps it strong.
- A family who has enjoyed the experience is the best source of publicity. Can they recommend a family or try to spread the word for us? Would they be willing to contact a few people in town or write a letter to the editor in town about their experience? Act as a support resource for a family considering hosting?

***No, we are not interested***

- Ask why to see if you can work on their reason. It may be that they just don't know enough about hosting. It could also be that they really just aren't interested. Ask if they can recommend a family if they seem understanding of the expectations of hosting, but just not interested.

***I don't know anybody that would be interested***

- Tough one! Ask more specifics like is there anyone you know that is "the neighborhood house" (where all the kids hang out) Ask them to think about groups they may belong to, sports clubs, churches etc.

***Why should we host through AFS and not another international organization?***

- We are the best because of our support and screening not to mention 60 + years of experience in the field of foreign exchange.
- Many programs are good and have families and students that have good experiences. The major difference between exchange organizations is the support of local volunteers, ongoing orientations, insurance coverage, etc.
- Very few other groups have a structure like AFS.

***We received the host family brochure, is there anything else you could send us?***

- Start working on an application and/or put them in touch with someone that has hosted before so they can ask more questions.
- Many times filling out the application will help answer some of their questions.
- Ask them what they see as the positives, negatives, what type of info they want or what questions they have.

***Host families:***

- are single, married, divorced or widowed
- range in age from their 20's to their 60's
- have young children, teenage children, or no children at all
- live in the country, suburbs or city
- practice a variety of religions or no religion at all
- can be of any race or sexual orientation

**The most common factors found among all successful host families?  
OPEN HEARTS AND OPEN MINDS!**