



Keys to a Successful Year

- **Always say “Please” and “Thank You”:** Politeness and manners is highly valued in U.S. culture. These words are VERY IMPORTANT, and it might take some practice to know when to say them.
- **Do your homework:** To get passing grades (A, B, C, D) in U.S. high schools, it is necessary to do homework every night. In almost all schools and classes, homework counts toward your final grade. Failing grades (F) in school can put your program participation in jeopardy. Doing your homework every day and on time is an easy way to maintain a passing grade.
- **Ask for help and talk about conflicts:** If you are confused about something or have any misunderstandings, it is better to admit that you are confused instead of pretending that everything is fine or you understand.
- **Say “I’m sorry.”:** In the U.S., admitting that you made a mistake is a sign of maturity, respect and responsibility. An apology – saying “I’m sorry” after an argument or misunderstanding can resolve many situations.
- **Learn the language by using it:** Speaking English is your key to getting involved in your new culture, host community, and host family. Even if you don’t speak English perfectly, your attempts to speak English will be appreciated. Don’t worry about making mistakes, your host family and liaison is there to help you and assist you. Practice saying the same thing in many ways. Changing the words that you use (rephrasing) can help people to understand.
- **Be aware:** Listen to and observe those around you. Look for non-verbal cues (ex: body language, gestures, facial expressions, etc.), which can help you to understand more about people and culture in the U.S.
- **Suspend judgment:** It is natural to think about something as “good” or “bad”. But, judging and labeling everything that you see or experience as “good” or “bad” gets in the way of learning and trying new things. Try to understand and accept the situation before judging. Try to see things from different perspectives. Remember, “It’s not good or bad, it’s different.”

- **Find ways to relax:** It is important to remember that anxiety and stress is natural and normal. Speaking another language and living in another country can be stressful. Taking a little time to rest can help you keep a sense of humor about your mistakes and experiences. Share with your host family about your favorite ways to relax and bond with others; find out if you can do these activities in your host community as well.
- **Become involved and stay engaged:** Show your interest in the people and culture by participating in daily life. Look for opportunities to share about yourself, your culture and your home country with your host family. Try new foods; join the drama club or a sport team; attend community events or religious services, etc. Involving yourself in these kinds of activities will help you learn about yourself and others.