Responsibilities & Expectations of the Family

Families and students are expected to meet at least once a month and to maintain consistent communication with each other. The family is NOT expected to provide any form of financial support or transportation; nor does the student live with the family. If, for any reason, the family is no longer able to participate in the program, please inform the Friendship Family Coordinator (FFC).

Responsibilities & Expectations of the Student

Students are expected to meet with their families at least once a month, and to maintain consistent communication with them. Students should NOT ask their families for financial support, nor should students ask to live with their families. If, for any reason, a student is no longer able to participate in the program, please inform the Friendship Family Coordinator (FFC).
Mission Statement

The Friendship Family Program at Ball State University exists to match international students with host families in the community to promote cross-cultural understanding and awareness, as well as provide a healthy support system for students while they are away from their home countries.

What is the Friendship Family Program?

The Friendship Family Program at Ball State University (BSU) exists to promote cross-cultural understanding and awareness by matching international students at BSU with a host family in the community. This serves the dual purpose of helping students adjust and learn about American culture, as well as introducing the friendship family to other cultures. The friendship family provides a warm, supportive environment that fosters a mutual exchange of cultures and a respect of cultural differences. The program helps students build a support system while they are away from their home countries.
Who Can Join?

Families:
We only ask that you live close enough to Ball State to physically meet with your student on a monthly basis, and that you approach this relationship with an open mind and heart.

Families could include:
• Married couple
• Unmarried couples
• Single Person
• Family with children
• Same-sex couple
• Families of any religion
• Families originally from the U.S.
• Families originally from other countries
• Anyone over the age of 18 who wants to befriend an international student!

How to Apply

Students:
• Complete a Friendship Student application. In addition to the application, you’ll be asked to sign a waiver of liability.

Once the Rinker Center has your completed application and waiver, you are ready to be matched!

Online Student Application

Students:
Any international student at Ball State can join the program. This includes students living on campus, off campus, as well as single students, married students, and students with children.
The Matching Process

Families and students are matched based on preferences indicated on the family and/or student applications. Students rarely match every preference, so preferences are prioritized in this order:

1. **Gender and family preferences (single, couple, family)**
2. **Country or language preference**
3. **Diet restrictions, pet preferences, and smoking preferences**
4. **Length of stay and interests**

Once a potential match has been identified, the FFC emails a description of the friendship family to the student. If the student is interested in the match, the FFC then emails the student and family to inform them of the match and provide them with one another’s contact information. In the event that a specific request or preference cannot be fulfilled, the FFC will contact the family and/or student to explore other options.
STUDENTS: CONVERSATION STARTERS

Starting a conversation with someone from a different country can be a little overwhelming! You might be scared, nervous, unsure of appropriateness, or afraid of accidentally offending. We have provided the following list of conversation starters that can help. One of the purposes of the Friendship Family Program is for you and your friendship family to learn about each other’s cultures, so ask away! The best way to learn is to ask!

Relationships
• How do you define “friend”?
• What activities do you do with your friends in America?

Family
• What is your role in your family?
• What kinds of activities do families do together in your culture?
• Do you have any siblings?
• Do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend? Husband or wife? Children?

Food
• What kinds of food do you like to eat?
• Is food an important part of your culture?

Interests and Hobbies
• What do you do in your spare time?
• What are your favorite movies/shows, books, sports, and types of music?
• Are you involved in any campus clubs or organizations?

Goals and Aspirations
• What would you like to accomplish in your lifetime?
• What career would you like to pursue? Why?

Education and Work
• Are you in school? If so, what are you studying?
• What is your favorite part of class?
• Do you work? What is your favorite part of your job?

Experience
• What are some experiences or events that have made a big impact on your life?
• Can you help me with finding information or resources?
• What are some things that are unique about living in America?
• How do you celebrate holidays in your culture?
• Do you speak any other languages besides English?

1 Adapted from James Madison University LIFE Handbook: no longer available online; Hampshire College International Friends and Family Program: Retrieved from https://www.hampshire.edu/cultural-center/hampshires-international-friends-and-family-program
STUDENTS: ACTIVITY IDEAS

Expand your experience in America by trying new things with your friendship family! Look for ways to introduce them to your culture, and feel free to suggest things you would like to do together.

Here are some ideas:

- Celebrate holidays from your culture
- Cook together
- Go to the theatre or a concert
- Travel to surrounding towns
- Bike rides
- Fairs
- Decorate Easter eggs
- Board games
- Road trips

- Fishing
- Ice skating/Roller skating
- Sledding
- Go out to eat
- Watch movies or TV
- Shop
- Play or attend sports games
- Festivals
- Carve pumpkins
- Decorate for holidays
- Museums

- Celebrate birthdays
- Miniature golf
- Swimming
- Build a snowman
- Visit the zoo
- Bowling
- Invite them to your campus activities
- Teach them about your home country/culture

CULTURE SHOCK

This may be your first time to the United States – Welcome! You have left the comfort of your home to begin an exciting and, sometimes, overwhelming journey. When you first arrive, you may face challenges adjusting to American culture. You may experience culture shock, which is a feeling of disorientation or confusion that often occurs when a person leaves a familiar place and moves to an unfamiliar one. When you arrive in Muncie, you will likely experience a multitude of different things: buildings, stores, nature, food, and even smells.

You may encounter a language barrier, which might make it hard to express your wants, needs, and personality to Americans. This can cause feelings of discomfort and isolation, and you may even begin to doubt your decision to come to America. This is normal. It’s also important to remember that some students are more affected by culture shock than others.

---

Symptoms of Culture Shock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nervousness</th>
<th>Depression</th>
<th>Irritability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>Loss of Appetite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Physical Illness</td>
<td>Lethargy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Sleep</td>
<td>Uneasiness</td>
<td>Insomnia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Homesickness</td>
<td>Headaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Unhappiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What To Do

- Find other people to interact with. Focusing on someone outside of yourself can help relieve feelings of discomfort and loneliness.

- Surround yourself with familiar things from home (food, music, TV shows, etc.).

- Slow down and relax to allow your emotions to catch up.

- Develop daily patterns and routines to increase your sense of familiarity.

- Call or Skype friends and family in your home country.

- Express yourself! It is okay to laugh, cry, sing, pray, draw, etc.

- Find ways to practice your English skills.

- Express how you are feeling to your friends, family, and host family. If they know you are experiencing culture shock, they can help you.

- Be patient with yourself. Culture shock does eventually pass.

- Take care of yourself by eating well, getting enough rest, and exercising to prevent physical illness or exhaustion.

- If difficulties persist, seek counseling at Ball State’s University Counseling Center. This is a great service, and it is free for students. You don’t have to have a mental illness to get counseling, and many people in America seek counseling for help with adjustment or difficult life circumstances.

---


**Model of Cultural Adjustment**

Below is an outline of what the adjustment process to a new country often looks like. Remember that you may not go through each stage, and you may not experience the stages in exactly the order depicted here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-departure Anxiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Plane Icon]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lot to do before going to another country! Students often become overwhelmed with details, and may be nervous about leaving family and friends for so long. Boarding the airplane can bring enthusiasm back.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“The Honeymoon”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Heart Icon]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just like a new relationship, the first reaction to a new culture is often euphoric. You have finally arrived after months - maybe years - of planning. The differences in scenery, food, language, or customs can be exhilarating!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Culture Shock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Lightning Icon]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is where the initial excitement turns into frustration. For some, the shock might come at the first meal in which familiar foods are nowhere to be found. For others, it might be the realization that speaking a second language all day long is both frustrating and exhausting. For others, the initial shock might be an accumulation of many factors; including homesickness and unfamiliarity with the new culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surface Adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Wrench Icon]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have settled into a routine by now. Maybe you successfully registered and made it to your classes. Perhaps you have met some people in your classes that seem like they will become friends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Culture Shock

This is when the novelty wears off and deeper differences between cultures are revealed. There may be unresolved cultural conflicts in the classroom, with friends, or with society in general.

### Places of True Cultural Learning

Moving out of culture shock and into adaptation and adjustment is not simply a matter of feeling better. It requires that students understand the reasons for their culture shock and develop personal strategies for dealing with cultural differences. Most people cannot do this alone, so get help from international friends, or the Rinker Center for International Programs. These resources can help you understand U.S. culture and find appropriate coping strategies.

### Adaptation and Adjustment

It takes time to adapt to a new environment. Adjusting to a new culture requires students to know themselves well, and also learn the ways of the new culture.

### Re-entry Shock or Adjustment

When it’s time to return to your home country, you may not expect it to be difficult. But no matter how excited you are to see family and friends, you will face challenges in making sense of your experience in the U.S. This is especially difficult if you have to immediately find a job or return to your studies. Try to take your time in adjusting to your home country again. Look for opportunities to use the skills you gained while studying abroad, and stay connected with friends from Ball State.

---

STUDENTS: THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Weather
If you are from a warmer climate, Indiana winters may be challenging! Ask your friendship family for suggestions about suitable clothing to stay warm.

Language
Many friendship family students are enrolled in the Intensive English Institute (IEI) and may still be learning English. Feel free to practice English with your friendship family. Don’t let language barriers scare you - with lots of practice, it will get easier!

Religion
Religion is an important part of American culture for some families, so your friendship family may invite you to religious activities as a way of experiencing American culture. You can feel free to attend if you want to, but you are not obligated to. If you do not want to attend, just politely decline the invitation.

Timeliness
In America, people expect you to arrive for a meeting at the time you agreed upon, and it is considered rude to arrive late. Arriving 5-10 minutes early is usually considered polite. Keep this in mind when scheduling meeting times with your friendship family. Try to be respectful of them and arrive at the designated time you scheduled with them.

Gifts
While in some cultures it is considered polite to refuse an offer 2 or 3 times before accepting, it is fine to accept an offer the first time in America. If your friendship family offers a gift/food/refreshments/etc., you can say yes the first time. They usually will not offer again.

Paying
Your friendship family is not expected to pay for your meal or ticket if you attend an event together, so you should plan on paying for things yourself. However, if your family offers to pay for your meal or ticket, it is fine to accept their offer.

Pets
Many American Families have pets. If you are not used to pets, ask your friendship family for tips on how to handle their pet, and approach their pets slowly.
Seven Lessons Toward Cross-Cultural Understanding

Communicating with someone from a different culture can bring about feelings of nervousness and apprehensiveness. You may wonder what you should or should not talk about, what activities are acceptable to do together and how to begin a conversation. These seven steps can help!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 1</th>
<th>Don’t assume everyone is the same.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STEP 2</td>
<td>Don’t assume behaviors mean the same thing in every culture. For example, giving someone a “thumbs up” in America indicates approval, but in other countries, the gesture is insulting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEP 3</td>
<td>Don’t assume that what you think is “normal behavior” is normal in every culture. A lot of behavior is universal, but certainly not all of it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEP 4</td>
<td>Don't assume that what you meant is what was understood. Check for signs like body language or facial expressions to ensure the other person understood you correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEP 5</td>
<td>Don’t assume that you understand what the person meant. You hear others’ words through the medium of your own culture. You know what those words mean to you, but they may mean something different to the person speaking them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEP 6</td>
<td>You don’t have to like “different” behavior, but understanding where it comes from may help you respond with more sensitivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEP 7</td>
<td>Most people do behave rationally; you just have to discover the rationale!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

FAMILIES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I contact my family the first time? Once a match has been made, the Friendship Family Coordinator (FFC) will send you the family’s contact information in an email. Contact your family as soon as possible, explain who you are, and express your interest in meeting with them. If you have any problems making contact, please inform the FFC as soon as possible so they can help!

Can I recommend activities to do with my friendship family? Yes! Invite your friendship family to activities that interest you. This could include movies, concerts, plays, etc.

What if I set a time to meet with my friendship family and they cancel? Ask again! Don’t give up after the first attempt, but continue to invite them to meet with you.

What if my friendship family continually cancels or does not respond to me? Please contact the FFC so they can help. If the FFC is unable to resolve the issue, we will happily match you with a new family. We want you to benefit from this program!

How often do I meet with my friendship family? At least once a month.

Do I live with my friendship family? No, you do not live with your friendship family, nor do they provide any financial assistance to you.

Is my family responsible for providing transportation if I need it? No. You may ask your friendship family to take you somewhere, but they are not required to say yes.

What other ways can I communicate with my friendship family? Call, text, email, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, etc. These are great ways to check in with your family between meetings.

Can I have more than one friendship family at the same time? Most likely, not. We do not have enough families in the program for students to be matched with more than one family at the same time. However, if your original match does not work out, we are willing to match you with a new family.

What if I no longer want to participate in the program? That’s okay – this is a voluntary program! Just let the FFC know that you would like to withdraw from the program, so they can match your friendship family with a new student.

What if I have a question or concern about my family? Email the FFC at friendship@bsu.edu or call the Rinker Center for International Programs at (765) 285-5422. We welcome any and all questions, and would love to assist you!

---

Annual Events in Muncie

Here is a list of annual events that take place in Muncie. You will receive periodic email messages regarding events that you may wish to attend with your friendship family. In addition, the Rinker Center for International Programs hosts at least one Friendship Family event each semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Downtown</th>
<th>Cardinal Greenway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• First Thursday Gallery Walk</td>
<td>• 5K Run/Walk and Kids Fun Run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• St. Patty’s Day Parade</td>
<td>• Great Greenway Tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Free Friday Movie Night (June,</td>
<td>• Walk Indiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July, August)</td>
<td>• Turkey Trot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fourth of July Parade &amp; Fireworks</td>
<td>• Polar Express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rib Fest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Muncie Music Fest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ArtsWalk</td>
<td>Minnetrista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New Year’s Eve Unity Walk and</td>
<td>• Enchanted Luminaria Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball Drop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact Us

The Friendship Family Program would like to thank you for your participation! The program has been very beneficial to many students and families over the years and we hope this continues.

If you have any questions or suggestions for improving the program, please call or email. We want you to enjoy the program as much as possible!

Address:
Ball State University
L.A. Pittenger Student Center
Room 102
Muncie, IN 47306

Website: [www.bsu.edu/international/friendship](http://www.bsu.edu/international/friendship)
Email: friendship@bsu.edu
Phone: 765-285-5422