

Being an Int'l Student in America

(Courtesy of the Embassy of the United States in Yaounde, Cameroon

<http://yaounde.usembassy.gov/>)

Adjusting...

- Most International Students and scholars spend the first few days in the USA settling in and getting adjusted to their new environment. However, adjustment is an on-going process that usually takes more than just a few days or weeks.

The adjustment process involves:

- Learning about the new culture and societal laws
- Making new friends
- Appreciating differences and similarities
- Maintaining contact with family and friends back home (very important)
- Feeling comfortable in both settings

Stages of cultural adjustment

(see video at <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/1105/ijse/ijse1105.htm>)

- *Honeymoon Stage*: Characterized by a feeling of excitement and anticipation. One is usually very happy to be studying in a new country and to be learning about and meeting new people.
- *Uncomfortable stage*: Characterized by frustration, anger and sometimes depression. Students may experience homesickness, boredom, problems sleeping and eating, loss of sense of humour, mistrust of Americans, and some academic problems.
- *Adjustment stage*: Student begins to relax in the new environment and has an established support system. The student realizes the importance of the home culture while navigating and adjusting to the norms of the new culture. The student has the best of both worlds and chooses ideals from both cultures.

Adjustment tips from International students

- Do NOT stay alone in your room every day. Go out with a friend to see the city or shop.
- Get involved with nationality clubs (e.g the African Students Association) or other clubs on campus
- Travel within the USA whenever opportunity arises
- Laugh at yourself whenever you make a mistake
- Do not be afraid to try new words or to practice your English
- Be open-minded and accept others as they are.