

Rotary District 5500 General Guidelines



**“THE TOP 20
RULES OF THE ROAD”**

This packet is designed as a brief review of the general guidelines or “Rules of the Road” for Rotary District 5500 inbound youth exchange students. Please read and understand, along with your natural parents, these guidelines. Once you have reviewed the pertinent information, please complete the last page and send to the attention of the Rotary District 5500 Inbound Chair before your arrival date via fax or email.

Shortly after your arrival, your hosting club counselor will meet with and give you the Inbound Handbook which will further explain the guidelines. Our first mandatory group Inbound Orientation is scheduled for you and your host family Saturday, September 8th and Sunday, September 9th. This will be the first time you have the opportunity to meet your counterparts from around the world and an opportunity for your host parents to meet their counterparts too. At this meeting, we will discuss as a group the handbooks and the rules of the road in great detail. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of the district’s exchange policies, please bring them to the attention of your host family, club counselor, club youth exchange officer, hosting district inbound chair or to this first orientation.

THE RULES:

You are here to become part of the American culture one far different from your own. Your perception of America has been formed to a great extent by magazines, movies, and television. The America you will find is much, much different. Your role as an exchange student is to adapt to our culture and way of life. This means that the customs and laws of this country may not be the same as yours, but that does not mean they are wrong, just different. Do not waste time and ruin your exchange by constantly comparing America to your home country and being critical of your new culture. In addition, do not compare the experiences of your current exchange year to friends or family that may have participated in exchanges in the past. Every student, host family, community and country has its own unique qualities and it is your responsibility to observe, learn and adapt to your exchange year.

The rules and guidelines are also in place to assist you in maintaining the high standard of behavior expected of all exchange students. You are an ambassador of your country and the Youth Exchange Program. The impression you make on your club, host family and schools determine the present and future success of the exchange program. One very important point to remember is “if the rules of your sponsoring country are more restrictive than District 5500’s rule and guidelines, than the more restrictive rules shall apply. If your host families’ rules are more restrictive than either the hosting or sending district, then the families’ rules will apply.” (Please do not get confused and think it is the other way around).

1. Language

English is spoken in the United States. Before coming to District 5500, students must have a basic knowledge of the language as required by the State Department of the United States Government. Please note, that with our close proximity to Mexico, many people in the region speak Spanish. As an exchange student you are expected to speak the national language of English.

2. Travel

Students will take the shortest and quickest route to and from the host country. Prior to your arrival, the Hosting District Inbound chair, Hosting Club Counselor and first host family need to be notified well in advance of your arrival dates, times and airports. This includes any layovers. If by chance you encounter any flight delays or cancellations, we recommend you carry with you during your travels the contact phone numbers for these same people in addition to your Sponsoring District contact numbers. **Call all involved parties of any flight changes immediately.** Students should also have in their possession during travel to the United States, all necessary documentation. This includes your passport, DS-2019, I-94, flight information, and any other legal documentation necessary to enter the country.



While in the host country, students will only be permitted to travel with their host families, approved adult supervision, or as part of a Rotary or school sponsored function. Travel outside the immediate area of the host community may need approval by the host club president, club counselor and/or club youth exchange officer, and the host family. Independent travel will require multiple written and notarized approvals from a large number of persons. In addition, the level of participation in the exchange program and your community is considered. Without these written consents and other requirements, student will not be permitted to travel independently.

Many of our communities are very near the border. For travel to Mexico, both natural parents must contact the Mexican Consulate in their country and prepare the proper paperwork before a student will be allowed to cross the border. Travel into Mexico is only allowed with the host parents or approved Rotarians. Please refer to the Travel Matrix for clarification.

3. School

You are a Rotary Youth Exchange *Student*; school is part of the exchange program, and school attendance is a *requirement*. You have chosen to be a participant of an educational program not a holiday or travel program. Unnecessary or unreasonable absenteeism from school will not be tolerated. Good, passing grades must be maintained. If you are struggling with classes or find them unchallenging, please do not be afraid to speak with someone at your school, your host parents, or your counselor.

4. Motorized Vehicles/Driving

Students are not authorized to operate a motorized vehicle of **any kind** or participate in driver education programs. This includes cars, boats, motorcycles, off-road/recreational vehicles, airplanes, farm equipment, scooters and most motorized methods of transportation.

The driving age in the United States is sixteen. Students are not allowed to ride with any drivers under the age of 21 unless that person has been pre-approved by your host parents **AND** the District Youth Exchange Committee. This is on a case-by case basis and you will be only allowed to travel point to point within your own community. You are prohibited from “cruising” or “joy riding” around town or traveling with unapproved drivers outside of your immediate community.



5. Illegal Drugs & Alcohol

Underage drinking is a significant problem in our society, and we are not so naïve to think that you will not be exposed to situations where alcohol is present. But remember, you have a lot more at risk than your US friends if the police appear. The legal drinking age in the State of Arizona and many other states is 21 years of age. It is illegal and a punishable crime for anyone under the legal age to be in possession of or consume alcohol. State law prohibits serving alcoholic beverages to minors by restaurants or other licensed establishments, even when ordered/paid by someone over age 21 and all three parties are breaking the law. It's best to avoid these situations; you do not want to jeopardize an early termination of your exchange year by drinking alcohol.

Possession or consumption of any kind of illegal drugs or substances is strictly prohibited and against the law in the United States. Any exchange student found in violation of this rule will be immediately returned home (contingent upon release by legal authorities) – **NO SECOND CHANCES!** Rotary will not provide you with legal representation for a student charged with these violations and lawyers can be expensive. Also note that legally-prescribed controlled medications must be identified on your application if brought from home, country or prescribed by a U.S. physician. If in doubt, ask.

Exchange students in the United States are not permitted to smoke. It is illegal to sell cigarettes to anyone under the age of 18. There are many regulations to smoking in the United States and you will find many places are “smoke free”. Students must understand that if they did not indicate on their application that they smoke, they will be expected not to smoke during their time here.

6. Sexual Activity/Intimate Relationships



You will benefit the most from your year here by making as many friends as possible, both male and female. If you are leaving behind a “serious” boyfriend or girlfriend back home, recognize that you will both change a lot in a year. Putting that relationship “on hold” during your exchange year will allow you to focus on where you are, not where he or she is. Seek input from your Host Family, teachers, and other adults on the character of individuals you would like to be friendly with, and include their advice with your own observations.

Sexual intercourse and intimate play are strictly prohibited and *will* result in the early termination of your exchange. Avoid serious romantic relationships; *you* will have to go home at the end of your year and this will make departure even more difficult. You also want to avoid including only other exchange students in your circle of friends; while you have much in common, you can learn more about America from Americans.

7. Parental Visits

A visit by your parents and siblings during the last few months of your exchange year is a great opportunity for them to see what you have been experiencing and meet all of your Host Families and new friends, and for you to display your knowledge of our country, culture, and language. Visits should take place *no earlier than* the final three months of your exchange year and should never conflict with school, holidays, or impose a burden on your host family.

Any planned family or friend visits from home *must* be discussed with and acceptable to, the affected Host Family, the Host Rotary Club Counselor and the District Youth Exchange Committee before their arrival; *Surprise visits or those with short notice are not acceptable.*

8. Relatives in the United States

Relatives living or visiting in the United States will not have authority over an exchange student while that student is under the supervision of the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. Do not expect that just because you are in the United States and you have relatives living or visiting here, you will have the opportunity to travel and see them. This also includes visits by friends or distant relatives, including any that may reside in the United States, that involve more than an incidental involvement by you *are strongly discouraged*, and *permission for travel* as part of such visits may be denied under certain circumstances

9. Religion/Church

Students WILL NOT be permitted to change religion while in the United States. Your host family or club counselor should be immediately informed if you are pressured in any way to join any new religion.

10. Personal Behavior

Exchange student are “citizens’ ambassadors for their country, their family, and Rotary. The manner in which you conduct yourself will often determine where the host club, host families, or school will wish to accommodate another Rotary Student in the future. Your host family is family is responsible for your social, emotional and physical well-being. You will respect your host parents’ wishes and requests especially when they pertain to meal schedules curfew hours, household chores, computer usage, phone usage, electronics usage, appropriate dress and social courtesies. Manners are very important to many people and the use of “please” and “thank you” are always appreciated. It is also very important to keep family matters private. Do not discuss issues at home with friends or classmates. If you are having a problem in or with your host family; talk to your counselor and if necessary; the District Inbound Chair or District Youth Exchange Officer. Remember, showing respect earns respect

11. Offensive Behavior

Students are considered ambassadors but do not have immunity from the law. Students should avoid political, cultural, or religious conflict during the exchange. This includes participating in any political, cultural, or

religious marches or gatherings. You are permitted and encouraged to participate in community events such as fundraisers for school and community events with approval of your host family and your host club.

12. Public Engagements

All exchange students are expected to speak on a number of occasions to Rotarians, school groups, other service clubs and community organizations. Students should come well prepared with a good selection of color slides and/or PowerPoint presentations of their home, family, town and country.

When interviewed by the press, radio or television at home or abroad, the counselor or host parent should be present. Students should be tolerant and never critical of their host country. Carelessly uttered remarks made on public platforms or during interviews may cause serious embarrassment to the student and Rotary. The fact that the people in the host country might be critical of their government and its policies, or their way of life does not give the student the right to be similarly critical. Criticism by the student may cause the host family and other students to become defensive and resentful.

13. Clothing

Dress to fit the American culture. For the most part school uniforms are not required. As a general rule, teens in Arizona dress more casually than in other countries. Jeans are common attire. Boys should bring one sport coat and tie and girls should bring at least one party dress for formal occasions. Many sponsoring Rotary Districts give their outbound students Youth Exchange Blazers. These are accepted very well here and should be worn at many social and Rotary Functions, including the District Conference and Annual Holiday Gathering. The cost of all clothing, including school uniforms is the responsibility of the student's natural parents.



Take care not to dress in a way that makes you stand out or be identified with a gang or other alternative lifestyle that would not be acceptable to your family and Rotary Club. Hair styles and colors should not be radical. If your host family or school has rules regarding your attire, you need to respect them and adapt accordingly.

14. Host Families

You will be hosted by a minimum of two (2) but not more than five (5) host families during your exchange year. This requires a lot of adjustments on your part as you must fit yourself into the life of your host family. You are not a guest but a part of the family. There is no obligation on the part of your host family to adapt to your way of life. You must do all the adaptation. The great majority of problems in the Youth Exchange Program around the world arise from the refusal of students to adapt to their new environment. Make an effort to be part of your new family. During the first night with each new host family the student should discuss each of the questions found in appendix D "Questions for a First Night with Host Family". Host families are expected to treat you as a son/daughter and not a guest. Problems sometimes arise from the refusal or unwillingness of students to accept the responsibilities and rules set by the host family. Students should be prepared to share a room with a host brother or sister who may have sacrificed the privacy of their own room to host you. If you are sharing a room, respect the privacy and space of your host siblings. If you have your own rooms do not spend too much time alone. Ask for help with schoolwork and offer to help in household chores. Ask your host parent if you can call them Mom & Dad. Above all respect their rules, their lifestyles and give them the same love and affection you gave your parents back home.

15. Moving

When it comes time to change host families, do not complain or resist the move. It is inevitable that the student will fit in more readily with some host families than with others. This makes it even harder to leave those whom you have grown to love but it is time to move on to a whole new experience. Do not embarrass anyone by speaking openly about your families. A student may not move themselves, choose their host families and is not allowed to move until the background checks and host family interviews have been completed. Your counselor will advise you when it is time and help you with the transition.

Once you arrive at your new host home, unpack your suitcases, toiletries, etc as quickly as possible to help create the feeling of “home”. Do not live out of your suitcases. Ask you parents for a place to store them until your next move. After you moved, respect the rules of your new host family. Check with them and get their approval before spending time with your previous family. In order to become part of your new family, you need to be part of your new family.

16. Financial Matters

Host Families may have a financial condition different from your parents, and it is your responsibility to accept and live within your host family’s means. You will receive a pre-set monthly stipend from your hosting club to cover miscellaneous personal expenses during your year. This amount varies from club to club, by should not be less than \$40 per month, paid around the first of the month. Do not compare your allowance with those of other students. The club will also help you with transportation issues such as getting to Rotary meetings and District activities. These are the only financial obligations of the host club. Anything else you receive is a bonus. If you do not receive the monthly spending allowance from your Host Rotary Club on a regular, timely basis, speak with your Club Counselor, Club Youth Exchange Officer or the District Inbound Chair.

Your host parents are asked to provide you with housing and food and include you in family travel and entertainment as they would for any of their children. You need to budget your expenditures (clothing, entertainment, travel, etc.) and should “pay your own way” when out with friends/classmates. We strongly suggest that you discuss finances, money “value”, and costs with your Host Parents; they should know how much money you have available for spending and how you have access to it (banking, ATM card, etc.)

The \$300 “Emergency Fund” you bring with you is for emergencies. It is not intended to cover non-essential personal spending. Shortly after your arrival you are to hand these funds to your counselor for safe keeping until the end of your exchange. If you withdraw any money from this fund, you are expected to replenish it.

17. Student Insurance

It is mandatory that all students coming into the United States have adequate life, medical and accident insurance. The U.S. Government sets minimum insurance requirements, and District 5500 sets minimum requirements as well. Currently all inbound exchange students in District 5500 are required to carry the Plan “B” insurance and liability through CSI-Bolduc during their exchange year. If you seek any medical attention during you exchange year, you are responsible for settling all monies owed (bills) in a timely manner and before the end of your exchange year.

18. Mandatory Rotary Events & Meetings

Students are required to attend the hosting Rotary District’s Conference, Youth Exchange Inbound Orientation meetings, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards and Annual Holiday Gathering. Students should also attend their hosting Rotary Club meetings and any other Rotary functions. A calendar of the mandatory District events will be distributed at the first inbound orientation set for Saturday September 8 and Sunday September 9.



19. Communication/Reports

Most sponsoring districts require student to send reports to the sponsoring club or district. Students should send reports on time to their home country as requested. District 5500 requires students to send a monthly report to the District Inbound Chair by fax, email, or mail no later than the 10th of each month. During the first orientation you will receive a copy of the monthly report format. Any student moving into a new host family must report the move information to the District Inbound Chairman within 10 days of moving. A change of family notice is included in your Inbound Handbook. This information can be mailed/emailed or faxed.

As a general rule, students should not make or receive phone calls to family and friends at home for the first 90 days of your exchange, other than an initial call when you arrive here to let them know you are o.k. There purpose behind this is not to punish you or your parents, but help you adjust to your new culture and family. This communication restriction extends to emails/instant messenger/ faxes/ letters/ text messaging.

Please restrict yourself and your parents and limit electronic contacts to one (1) per week maximum during the first 90 days. For many students, excessive calls, emails, instant messaging, text messages and letters to home will cause homesickness and make it difficult to settle in with your host family and build new friendships.

Students will attend special events; go on trips, and other activities at the expense of Rotarians and others. We recommend that students bring or purchase a supply of note cards/postcards and use these as way to say thank you to people how have entertained the student. A little note of thanks can go a very long way.

20. Hosting Club's Role

The local Rotary Club is an integral part of your support system. In addition to your host families, Hosting District, Sponsoring District and your natural parents, your hosting club has identified two (2) Rotarians to support you and the Youth Exchange Program. The Club Youth Exchange Officer (YEO) administers the club's exchange program, including the recruitment of outbound candidates, inbound host families and actions of the Club Counselor. The YEO is also responsible to process any background checks and club approvals for overnight/extended contact in addition to other documents supplied to the District Committee.

The Club Counselor serves primarily as an advisor for you, but will also be in contact with the host family on a regular basis and be available to answer any questions or direct host parents to the appropriate resource when needed. Your club counselor will also help enroll you in High School, open bank accounts if needed, secure the possession of your plane tickets, emergency fund and other documents, and give you your monthly allowance. You Club Counselor is expected to meet with you on a regular basis at least once a month, whether the counselor arranges it or not, and share both the happy experiences and the problems. If you are experiencing any problems whether it is family, club, school, financial, or personal nature, you should consult with your counselor who will do their best to assist. If you are having difficulty contacting or personality conflict with your Club Counselor, please bring it to the attention of your Club Youth Exchange Officer and/or the District Inbound Chair as quickly as possible.

The District Youth Exchange Committee, the local Rotary Club Youth Exchange Officer and the Club Counselor are her to help you and your host families have a successful exchange experience. They are available to you 24 hours a day to provide you with assistance on any matters of concern. We strongly urge you to seek our involvement before problems become to large for simple solutions. Don't let small problems go without comment. They tend to grow into larger problems.

The Successful Exchange Student:

- Is flexible and adaptable
- Wants to learn and have new experiences
- Is knowledgeable and well read
- Is open to challenge and change
- Is sensitive, loyal and trustworthy

- Is involved
- Recognizes “different” from good, bad, wrong, etc
- Communicates with family, Rotary, school, friends
- Is introspective

Ways to Get Sent Home Early:

- Drive a motorized vehicle
- Travel without Rotary Permission
- Being absent from school frequently without the counselor’s consent
- Refuse to attend school on a regular basis
- Don’t participate in class or get failing grades
- Behave in a rude or insensitive manner
- Engaging in sexual activities

- Damaging the image of Rotary in any way
- Failure to adapt to his or her host town/city environment
- Theft of any kind, including shoplifting
- Improper computer usage
- Abuse alcoholic beverages
- Use drugs which are not prescribed
- Break any of the laws of the hosting country/State/City

We have read and understand the Rotary District 5500’s General Guidelines and Information also known as the “Top 20 Rules of the Road”. We agree to abide by the letter and spirit of these rules designed to foster and support a successful year as a Rotary Youth Exchange Student.

Student Signature

Date

Parent or Guardian Signature

Date

Parent of Guardian Signature

Date



Please mail /email or fax back to:
Cassie Moyers, Inbound Chair
Rotary District 5500 Youth Exchange
3832 Calle Roca
Sierra Vista, Arizona 85650
FAX: 1-520-378-2833
EMAIL: moyersx4@hotmail.com