

Friends across cultures

1 Look at the old Russian saying and discuss with your partner. Then answer the questions.

- 1 What do you think the saying means?
- 2 What kind of qualities do you look for in a friend? Make a list of adjectives.

“ Instead of having 100 roubles, better have 100 friends. ”

2a Read the letters page about two teenagers moving to another country. What advice does each teenager need?

Advice 4 Life

Making friends across cultures

Friends are the same all over the world, aren't they? Well, it's impossible to generalise and easy to stereotype people. Let's help two teenagers from different backgrounds with some advice on moving countries and establishing new friendships.

Hiya,
My dad has a new job in Bangkok, Thailand, and we'll be moving there at the end of March. Can you give me any advice on making new friends in a culture that's very different from my own?

Thanks!
Alison,
aged 16, UK



Hi Alison,
What a great opportunity for you and your family! Moving to a new place can always be a bit scary, but it's important to see this as a chance to embrace a new culture. In many ways, Thailand will feel different to the UK, but there are also lots of things that people in both countries have in common. Teenagers in Thailand are very similar to teenagers in the UK, and in many other parts of the world – they're interested in music, computer games, films and hanging out with their friends. Finding similarities like these can help you feel more comfortable, but appreciating difference is also important. Thai people are often considered more gentle and subtle than people from Europe. Respect and politeness are generally very important for them. Be courteous and show understanding and I'm sure you will quickly find new friends. Take part in extra-curricular activities at school, too, like sport or a traditional activity, as this is a great way to meet people. You might also like to know that shoes aren't usually worn in school buildings in Thailand – an interesting fact for any student moving to the country!

Good luck!

Hi,
My parents would like me to do a high school year programme in the US, and I'm thinking about it for next year. It would be a great opportunity, but I'm worried it could be challenging, too. What are the benefits of living in another country, and would it be easy for me to make new friends?
Many thanks!
Hussein, aged 17,
Morocco



Hi Hussein,
If you have the chance to study in the US for a year, I say take it! People from the US are generally very friendly and I think you'll feel quite welcome. There are many advantages to living in another country, and if you take the time to understand the new way of life, it shouldn't be difficult to settle in. It's important not to make judgments about people from a country, you can form your own opinion once you get to know them.
Of course, there are cultural differences between Morocco and the US. I imagine you'll be staying with a host family, so it's useful to know that people from the US can be quite informal. Their table etiquette may be more relaxed than at home, and it's not always necessary to take your shoes off in people's houses. Obviously, this depends on where your host family is from originally. The US is very multicultural, and people who have moved there from other places have brought their own cultures and traditions. There is a great mix of nationalities and different ways of life.
As for making friends, show an interest in the students you meet at school and they will be very interested in learning all about you. Be proud and dignified in representing your country, and once you become familiar with your new surroundings you'll have a lifetime of memories.
Wishing you well!

2b Read the letters again and tick (✓) the advice that Robert gives about the benefits of getting to know another culture.

- 1 Moving to a different country is a chance to learn about a new culture.
- 2 Taking part in extra-curricular activities isn't the best way to make new friends.
- 3 Being polite and respectful allows you to build new relationships.
- 4 Judging people before getting to know them isn't helpful.
- 5 When you become familiar with your new surroundings, you may face new challenges.
- 6 Show an interest in others for them to show an interest in you.

2c Match the vocabulary from the letters to Alison and Hussein to the correct definition.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Letter to Alison | a polite, especially in a formal way |
| 1 embrace | b not obvious and therefore difficult to notice |
| 2 subtle | c to completely accept something |
| 3 courteous | |
| Letter to Hussein | |
| 4 settle in | d behaving in a calm way that people respect |
| 5 etiquette | e become familiar with a new way of life |
| 6 dignified | f a set of rules for behaving correctly in social situations |

2d Who does Robert give the following advice to? Write Alison or Hussein.

- 1 Your host country may seem more informal than your home country.
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- 2 It's important to show a lot of respect.
.....
- 3 The students of your age are probably very much like you.
.....
- 4 You're a representative of your country so it's important to behave properly.
.....
- 5 Wearing shoes indoors isn't the custom.
.....
- 6 Your memories of living among a different culture will last forever.
.....

Gateway to culture

3a Work with a partner and discuss the questions.

- 1 Do you have any friends that come from another country or cultural background?
- 2 What do you think might be some of the challenges of making friends with someone from another country or cultural background?
- 3 How would you feel if you moved to another country?
- 4 How would you go about making friends in your new country?

PROJECT

3b You are going to work on a project about the customs of your own and other countries.

- 1 Look at the task below:

A student from an English-speaking country is coming to study in your country for six months. They will stay with a host family and go to school during the week. They are excited to see your country and make new friends, but they are also frightened about coming to a new place on their own. What advice would you give them about coming to stay in your country?

- 2 Work in pairs to prepare your advice. Choose an English-speaking country and research the everyday customs that people have there. Make notes for your letter of advice.
- 3 Next, think about your own customs and cultures. What are the similarities and differences between your culture and the English-speaking country you have researched?

3c Write your letter to the English-speaking student giving advice about coming to your country.