

# A GUIDE TO — EXCHANGE —



#DISCOVER ADVENTURE  
#DISCOVER TRAVEL  
#DISCOVER YOURSELF

**YES**  
CANADA

# A Guide to the YES Canada Exchange Program

The purpose of this guidebook is to provide you with essential information you will need to know as you proceed with submitting your full application and participating in an exchange with YES Canada.

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## Student Exchange Explained

Welcome and congratulations from the entire YES Canada team on taking the first steps into what will be the adventure of a lifetime!

An exchange provides for learning outside of the classroom environment, which challenges you to experience a new lifestyle and global perspective. There are several key components that all combine to create a unique and individual experience. Your host family, the host school, the friends yet to be made, the cultural norms, the language or dialect, and you – all contribute to the program, the learning and the life experience!

As an exchange student you will have the opportunity to experience what daily life is like in your host country first-hand by living with your host family and attending school. The relationship you develop with your host family will be a foundational aspect of the exchange program. As a member of the host family you must learn to adapt and integrate into their way of living. By doing so you will gain valuable insights into daily life and a genuine appreciation and deep understanding of what it means to belong as a part of that culture. In this way, you will learn so much more about your host country and their culture, and also yourself, than you ever possibly could as a tourist.

### **International Exchange as a Catalyst for Personal Growth and Development**

An exchange is a unique kind of travel experience that offers language learning, cultural education, while also acting as a catalyst for personal growth and development. While the focus of an exchange is on integrating into your host culture and family, much of your success on exchange is determined by your attitude, commitment, and willingness to try new things. While on exchange, you must be prepared to step outside of your comfort zone, and apply essential skills and strategies to navigate your new environment. In doing so you will grow as a person, develop valuable leadership skills and transform your exchange into a life-changing experience!

Here are just some of the life-changing skills you can develop through an exchange:

1. Independence and Maturity
2. Self- Advocacy and Problem Solving
3. Flexibility and Adaptability
4. Language Fluency and/or globalized world view and perspective
5. Self-awareness
6. Intercultural understanding & empathy
7. Sociability

## Taking Ownership of your Exchange Starts Now

We are delighted that you have decided to undertake a student exchange and have taken the steps to become a member of the YES Canada Student Exchange Program and family. An exchange is a great opportunity providing you with a unique cultural adventure, enabling you to improve or learn a new language, experience a new school system and way of life.

An exchange fosters maturity and independence helping to prepare you for further study or work after high school. Having the skills to self-advocate, ask questions, and take initiative are important skills you will use and develop while on exchange.

During the application and pre-departure stage of the exchange we ask that **you**, the student, manage this process as independently as you can and work with the YES Canada team to prepare yourself for your exchange program abroad.

It is important that you are an active participant in your exchange from start to finish. We ask that you be involved in the planning and become an integral part of building the foundation to a successful exchange program. Learning to advocate for yourself and work independently will help prepare you for when you are studying abroad.

We have noticed a significant link between students who demonstrate a high level of responsibility in completing the application elements and their levels of engagement and ability to adapt and transition successfully while on exchange. The sooner you can start practicing these skills, the better!

We also ask that you ensure you are meeting the necessary requirements, responsibilities and expectations of an exchange student as described in this guide, and outlined in the Letter of Understanding and Agreement which is part of your application package.

The YES Canada team will be here to assist you throughout the application process and pre-departure stage, and will provide you with the information you require to successfully study and live abroad. We are here to help make your experience a success, so think of us as your trusty advisor!

# The Benefits of an Exchange Experience with YES Canada

## **International Connections – Family and friends from all over the world**

An exchange enables students to expand their social network to an international level. Students build trusted connections and develop lifelong friendships with peers and foster lasting relationships with their host family that endure well beyond their initial stay abroad.

## **Jumpstart Fluency with Language Immersion**

One of the best ways to learn a language is to fully immerse yourself in a foreign language and culture with an exchange. Immersion forces your brain to begin to think in another language and frees you from constantly translating back and forth. This form of authentic communication allows the student to learn a second language in a similar manner to the way they learned their first language.

Language skills develop naturally through daily conversation, in context, and with constant reinforcement from the world around them. Through intensive exposure, language immersion allows students to reach a high level of proficiency and fluency quickly while developing a deep cultural awareness.

## **A Home Away From Home: The difference between belonging vs. visiting**

There is an old saying that ‘home is where you lay your head’. This is especially true of exchange as students forge meaningful connections, identify with a different culture and language, and develop a true sense of belonging to the country that has become their home away from home.

Living with a host family integrates the student into local life immediately. Students acquire genuine cultural insight that they would not otherwise experience as a tourist or a visitor. Exchanges are structured to be longer in duration so the student has time to build roots in their local community, develop confidence, and experience all that their country of choice has to offer. Being a tourist is about what you’ve done; being an exchange student is about who you are.

## **Increased Confidence, Independence, and Practical Life Skills**

Travelling to a different country and adjusting to a new culture and language is not without its challenges. Upon completion, exchange students have real-life evidence that they are fully capable of overcoming obstacles and navigating new situations. They are able to draw on their experience and utilize proven strategies when faced with future challenges. Students typically return from exchange with a fresh outlook on the world, increased confidence and independence, and a sense of accomplishment.

## **Life-Changing Experiences – Standout from the Crowd**

An exchange is a great way for students to distinguish themselves above and beyond academic achievements or extra-curricular involvement. There is no better classroom than the world we live in, which has become increasingly globalized, multi-cultural and interdependent.

International experience speaks to your quality of character, highlights your appreciation of diversity and cultural sensitivity, and evidences your ability to overcome new challenges, which translate to real-world situations and demands. Increasingly, admissions officers and potential employers use international experience as a way to target employable skills, differentiate applications, and determine best fit.

## Ready to Apply? Check you meet the YES Canada Requirements for Exchange Applicants

Before getting started on your full application, make sure you meet the following requirements.

### General Requirements and Eligibility

- Students are between 14 & 18 years of age.
- Students must have appropriate motives, commitment and maturity. This will be demonstrated through the full application and interview process.
- The student's parents/guardian must support the application.
- Students must be enrolled in their own school district during the academic calendar year of the proposed exchange.
- Financial resources to manage the YES Canada Program Fees.

### Academic Requirements

- It is required that students maintain a minimum 70% average and have passed all their classes.
- Do you have a minimum B average (which is 70%) for the past 3 years of study?
- Have achieved a passing grade in all of your classes to date?
- Do you have any specific learning disabilities or an IEP? If yes, please notify YES Canada with more details.

### Medical Requirements

- It is required that you alert YES Canada to all medical conditions, allergies, and dietary preferences at the outset of your application.
- All medical information must be taken into consideration when lodging your application and our partner will take this information into consideration when arranging for host and program details.

If you are concerned about meeting any of the above requirements please contact us so we can discuss program options further.

## The Admissions Process – From Application to Acceptance in 7 Easy Steps!

Step 1: Apply by sending us your preliminary application to reserve your place on the program.

Step 2: Check you meet the minimum requirements for an exchange with YES Canada.

Step 3: Chat with us during an information interview – we want to get to know you!

Step 4: Complete the full application – it's easy, we promise!

Step 5: Submit your application for review by your admissions coordinator.

Step 6: Scour your emails for the conditional acceptance letter!

Step 7: Check the mail to receive your full acceptance to the YES Canada Program!

Then the fun begins and the placement details are confirmed!

## Helpful Tips on Completing your Full Application

### 1. **Compose a Heartfelt Letter to you Host family:**

Your host family letter is a perfect place to truly let your personality shine through and highlight your motivations for pursuing a cultural exchange.

Well-written letters have a solid structure and begin with a salutation and contain 3-4 paragraphs ending with a closing statement and your name. For the body of your letter you might want to consider highlighting your family life, special interests, and motivators for exchange, previous travel experience, or what you are looking forward to doing with your host family while on exchange. If you are applying to a country where they speak another language, you might want to mention your interest in learning this language, current proficiency level or length studied. Make sure to proofread for errors or have someone edit your letter before submitting it.

### 2. **Pictures say 1000 words:** Attaching a variety of photos in your photo album helps to paint a complete picture of who you are. Great applications are able to capture family life, social interests and friendships, as well as local life and extra-curricular activities. Since your potential host family won't meet you in person until you arrive at your destination, pictures can also be a great way to bring to life what you mention in your application or host family letter.

### 3. **Demonstrate your knowledge of your host country or passion for travel:** Outstanding applications highlight prior knowledge or interest in the local culture and traditions of your desired exchange country. A great place to describe your interest in your desired country is in host family letter and throughout your application. You might consider mentioning what it is about that culture you are passionate about or perhaps there are elements you are not familiar with, but are eager to learn?

### 4. **Be Honest and Genuine about who you are:** Our partners overseas will use your application as the foundation for matching you to a potential host family. It is important to be honest about your likes and dislikes (for example pets or food allergies) but also to let your true personality shine through. It only benefits you to be truthful in your application, as this will yield the most suitable host family match possible. Who you are on paper, should reflect who you are in real life.

### 5. **Add Insight with Family and Teacher References:** Academic references from a school official speak to the character and qualities as a student that your host school will be looking for. A teacher reference also helps your potential host school understand your study habits and how you learn best, which will assist you in being successful on exchange. A letter to the host family from your parents is a great way to echo your personality traits and suitability for exchange as well as provide your host family with information of how you function in a home environment and how you participate as a member of the family.

### 6. **Ensure Medical & Travel Documents are complete and current:** Your Doctor will be required to fill out medical forms on your behalf. Before leaving your doctor's office, we recommend you read over the medical forms to ensure they are complete and correct. It is better to review before leaving to avoid a second visit in the future to correct a simple error. Your Passport needs to be valid for the entire duration of your exchange including 6 months past your intended return date.

### 7. **Edit for Correctness:** Your application is your first impression. Legible and neat handwriting, grammatical correctness, and sentence structure all matter. If you are concerned about this, have someone you know edit your application before submitting it. You might also consider typing up elements of your application if you do not have legible handwriting.

## Submitting your Application To YES Canada

Submit your application by e-mail for best results. All photos and passport pictures must either be scanned or emailed as a jpg.

**By Email** to: [admissions@youthedservices.ca](mailto:admissions@youthedservices.ca)

**By Mail:** If you do not have access to a scanner, it is preferable that you mail your full application to:

Admissions Coordinator  
YES Canada  
439 University Avenue, suite 2110  
Toronto, ON  
M5G 1Y8

**Once you've sent it in kindly allow us time to review it to ensure your application is the best that it can be!**

## Preparing for the Interview

YES Canada conducts a family interview as part of the application process to help us get to know you better! The interview is an informal conversation that allows us to get to know you better and offers you the opportunity to get the answers to any questions you have at the outset of your application. There is no need to be nervous, just relax and be yourself!

The structure of the interview is to first ask a couple of get to know you questions directly to the student, and then we open it up to any student or parent questions that you might have. The purpose of the interview is to get to know the student, what their interests are, and why they want to go on exchange. We recommend that students complete some basic research about your selected destination country prior to having the interview.

**We will ask you questions about your selected destination country and language.** For example, what about your chosen host country really interests you? If foreign language applies, be prepared to speak to your experience or commitment to learning a foreign language prior to departure for a successful exchange.

**Be prepared for questions about your home life such as your daily routine, chores or social activities.** For example, do you have any chores at home? The main focus of an exchange program is integrating into your host family's way of life. For that reason we like to know what your daily life is like in Canada as well.

**We will ask you questions about your interests and hobbies and what you like to do in your spare time.** For example, what kind of activities do you enjoy? The more we know about you the better we are able to match you to a host family that shares your interests and would compliment your personality.

**Be prepared to speak to your previous travel experience, ability to navigate challenges and problem-solving skills.** For example, what would you do if you experienced homesickness while on exchange? For most students, an exchange is a life-changing experience that has multiple benefits but also may present certain challenges. We like to know how you might cope when you are far away from home or when you are confronted with a difficult situation.

### **Additional Interview tips:**

- Did you recently win an award at school? Perhaps you feel you are really organized; have a good sense of humor, or excel in sports? Everyone has different strengths and special skills that make them unique. We would like you to mention these to us in the interview.



## Post Submission: What happens after I submit my full application?

1. Once we receive your application, we will review it for completeness before sending it to our partners. We may request further information from you or additional documents to complete your application.
2. A conditional acceptance will be granted upon the assessment and approval of the YES Canada team. You will be notified of this via email after your full application has been reviewed and an interview has been conducted. An invoice will be issued along with your conditional acceptance letter. Please note: cancellation fees will apply once conditional acceptance is granted.
3. Your application will be sent to our partners for review and full acceptance. During this time, YES Canada may request additional documentation from you at the request of our partners.
4. A full acceptance will be granted on approval from our partners abroad, converting your conditional acceptance to a full program acceptance. At this point in the process YES Canada will be in regular communication with you discussing the details of your exchange.

## Everything You Need to Know, When You Need to Know it

Over the months leading up to your departure the YES Canada Team will send you the following information. You can expect details to arrive according to the schedule below. Please note these are suggested timelines, individual student timelines may vary depending on the country of choice and program complexity.

### 3-4 Months Prior to Departure:

- Flight departure and return dates confirmed with partners abroad and communicated to students and families.
- Destination country orientation dates and preliminary itineraries shared with students and families dependent on receipt from partners abroad (please note this does not apply to all destinations).
- Visa guidelines provided and procedures explained (this process cannot be initiated until host family and school placement are confirmed).

### 2-3 Months Prior to Departure:

- Students and families invited to attend YES Canada's pre- departure orientation session.
- Emergency Medical Insurance documents sent to students and families. At this time, you are encouraged to review the policy to determine if you wish to purchase added coverage.

### 1-2 Months Prior to Departure:

- Pre-departure orientation session occurs at YES Canada's Toronto office or via telephone, depending on student/family location.
- Destination country orientation itinerary shared with students and families (if applicable).
- Pre-departure orientation session occurs at YES Canada's Toronto office or via telephone, depending on student/family location.
- Destination country orientation itinerary shared with students and families (if applicable).
- All visa related placement forms issued and sent to students and families (dependent upon receipt of appropriate documents from partners abroad).
- Students are encouraged to submit their visa applications according to the guidelines of the relevant consulate/embassy website (if applicable).

1 Month or less Prior to Departure:

- Host family and school placement documents shared with students and families (dependent upon receipt from partners abroad). Host family details can arrive up 2 weeks prior to departure.
- The YES Canada Team is available for any last questions before student departures.
- Departure preparation summary email sent to students and families.

## Be Prepared: Cultural Research and Language Learning

### Language learning is foundational to exchange success

Having a solid understanding and ability to communicate in your host country language is foundational to your exchange. If you are travelling to a country where the language spoken is not your first language, it is very important you study prior to departure. No one expects you to be fluent upon arrival, however you are expected to study in advance and demonstrate a strong commitment to improving your language skills while you are on exchange.

Having a solid grasp of your host country is critical in order to communicate with your host family effectively and develop the necessary host family bond/ relationships required. Having basic language skills and the dedication to improve enables exchange students to facilitate making friends and build relationships more easily. Living your day-to-day life both at school and in the classroom is made much easier if you have spent time studying in advance.

Students who do not place enough emphasis on learning their host country language prior to departure and/or do not demonstrate enough commitment on improving while on exchange can be left feeling like more of an outsider. The inability to communicate with those around you can result in increased homesickness or additional program challenges such as transition or adjustment concerns. In the past, students without much interest in improving their language skills have had a more difficult time making new friends and fitting in with their host family.

We recommend a combination of self-study, such as online resources and textbooks, and guided learning resources such as tutors or language software for best results.

(Note: students who do not meet the minimum standard as determined by the school or partner organization may be required to attend additional language classes at the participants cost.)

### Start researching your destination Country

Before you arrive in your destination country, we recommend that you aim to learn some basic information about the country as this will help you easily adjust and show your school and host family that you are committed to being a part of their culture.

You should get to know:

- Foods – What do they traditionally eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner?
- School System- What time does school start and finish? How many classes per day?
- Family Life – How do families behave? What are typical traits and characteristics
- Cultural norms – What are the common social practices?
- Religion – In theory and in practice, what is typical?
- Holidays – What, when, and how do they celebrate?
- Dress – How do men and women commonly dress?

- Government – How is the country ruled and by whom?
- Leisure Activities – What do families like to do in their free time?

## Home Base: Your Host Family and the Selection Process

Your host family will be the foundation of your exchange experience and are ready to provide you with not only accommodation, meals and a comfortable environment but also a real insight into their country, culture and way of life. Your host family can be your support structure, parent and friend during your exchange so it's important to make time to make this a strong relationship. Students will become a member of the host family and must learn to adapt and integrate into their way of life. As volunteers, host families have a vested interest in the success of the program and participate to be a part of this experience and share their culture and family with you, the student.

### **How are the potential host families selected and screened for suitability?**

A detailed screening process is employed by YES Canada partners abroad to ensure that, to the best of their abilities, the host family and student represent the best possible match. Based on years of experience and a guided process, host families are selected based on a number of factors including but not limited to: motivations, similar interests, family composition, location, and ability to share their culture and home. All host families undergo a screening process including an application, an interview of family members, and evaluation.

The host family selection process is customized for each individual applicant. YES Canada partners concentrate their efforts on intensive screening for the host family that is best suited for each student. For this reason we do not offer a selection of host families but instead we will select the most suitable match based years of placement experience. The host family selected for the student by the YES Canada partners abroad will be the final placement, no alternatives will be offered at this time.

### **What is a typical host family structure?**

Families across the world come in all different shapes and sizes, so host families represent all variations of family compositions in the host community and country. Host family compositions include but are not limited to the following: "nuclear family" (mother, father, plus children), single parent with child/ren, empty nesters (older couples or singles who have older/grown children), couples (de facto or married) of any age with or without children, blended families, and more. Students may be placed with other exchange students, however they cannot be placed with another Canadian of the same first language. YES Canada makes an effort to take your preferences for family structure/composition into account, however no guarantees of family composition can be made.

### **What if I want to be placed in a certain location or area? Is this possible?**

Specific cities and placement locations cannot be guaranteed as host family compatibility and matching takes precedence in the selection process. Focusing on the best possible match will often mean that students are located in suburban or rural areas where volunteers are located. However some areas can be guaranteed for an additional location fee depending on the country of choice.

### **What types of locations are students commonly placed in?**

Host families may reside in any area, however placements are commonly found in suburbs or smaller towns, rather than city centres. Families that live in city centres typically do not have the additional space needed to accommodate an extra student. Generally, suburban areas tend to be safer, more family-oriented, and within close proximity to good schools and youth-friendly communities and activities. When deciding a host family placement, the emphasis is placed on finding the best family match, therefore participants must be prepared to be placed anywhere in their chosen country, rather than specific city.

### **When will we find out our host family placement?**

Screening procedures for minors take time to complete. The host family placement information typically arrives 1- 2 months prior to departure. However, it can take up to 2 weeks before departure to arrive. There is a great deal of paperwork, interviews, and safety protocols that need to be addressed and completed before a host family placement can be confirmed. While host family details are a very exciting aspect of the exchange, it is best not to rush this process. Your child's safety and security are of utmost importance and strict vigilance to safety procedures and host family screening protocols are critical.

Once the host family has been cleared and properly screened, we will send the host family placement form prior to departure. This gives your family a chance to get to know the host family by email before sending your son or daughter to stay with them. Correspondence with the host family is a great way to build trust and communicate about aspects of your child's exchange.

## **Making the Grade: Academic Planning for the Exchange**

### **How do students earn academic credits while abroad?**

Earning academic credit while abroad is subject to the approval of your school Principal, who may approve on-line distance education courses, interdisciplinary studies; overseas language courses; and other equivalent extra credits or alternative credit options (examples below). Only your school, school board, or school principal may grant credit for work done overseas.

YES Canada cannot guarantee academic credits while on exchange and we authorize schools to decide on a plan that works best with their academic requirements and the student's course load. It is important that you speak to your guidance office to design an academic plan that works for you. YES Canada provides you with an academic request form to enable you to discuss options with your guidance department more effectively. If needed, we are also available for direct consultation.

### **What academic approaches or strategies are the most successful?**

For short-term exchange students (4 wks - 3 mths), we recommend students speak with their teacher(s) to see if it's possible to receive assignments and/or coursework prior to departure. Work is submitted through correspondence students are able to complete any missed work upon their return to Canada. This strategy should permit students to write exams and obtain credit as usual.

For long-term exchange students (5 - 10 mths), we recommend they speak with their Guidance Counsellors and teacher(s) to see if they may submit alternative assignments and/or coursework to receive equivalency credit(s). Credit is granted for work done abroad in lieu of coursework done in Canada.

Students who are the most successful at earning academic credits while they are on exchange employ a variety of academic strategies and do not depend solely on equivalency credits.

### **Alternative Credit Options:**

1. Completing additional courses prior to exchange. This is a great strategy for students who intend to travel on exchange during the following academic year. This gives them plenty of time to organize their course load and take advantage alternative options.
2. Students can enroll in a summer school course before and/or after an exchange.
3. Discuss online/correspondence courses or equivalency credit options

4. Our long-term students sometimes opt to immerse themselves fully in the exchange experience, and then enroll in an additional semester at the end of their 12th year in order to make up any outstanding credits.
5. Arrange for an equivalency language credit. Should the exchange take place in a country where the language of instruction is not English, we recommend exploring the possibility of receiving an equivalency language credit for time spent abroad.

#### **When and how will host school courses be determined?**

Course availability is subject to teacher and classroom availability as well as school scheduling. Upon arrival on the first day of school, your son/daughter will be provided with their course schedule. Courses cannot be confirmed prior to arrival and availability of courses is at the host school's discretion. It can be very difficult to secure school curriculum information/course offerings prior to arrival.

#### **We are exploring earning equivalency credits for work done overseas – how might this work?**

Granting equivalency credits is at the discretion of your school, school board or principal. Your own school/school board will have specific requirements for what kind of documentation is needed to enable them to grant credit for work done overseas. For example, some schools require a signed letter on letterhead attesting to the amount of hours completed. Other schools/school boards require signed transcripts, reports, or copies of curriculum. These types of documents/information are typically made available once the coursework is completed, not before.

We recommend you get in writing from your guidance department or principal a detailed record of the kind of paperwork needed to grant an equivalency credit so you can secure this information before you depart. When you arrive at your host school and meet with a teacher/counsellor to determine your schedule – supply them with this document and explain what you will need before you depart. About 2- 3 weeks prior to departure, follow-up with this person to see how the paperwork is going. It is very difficult to get the documentation you need when you are no longer in the country or attending your host school.

#### **I have applied for a program that departs in January, but also have exams during that time. How do we work around this?**

If you have applied for an exchange program starts in January, you must to be prepared to depart anytime from January 1<sup>st</sup> to January 31<sup>st</sup>. Sometimes, this can conflict with your school's winter exam schedule.

We recommend that you connect with your guidance department as soon as possible to determine exact exam dates and request alternative/flexible options for writing exams. We will provide exact departure details at our earliest convenience to enable you to organize your academic schedule accordingly. This may mean your son/daughter needs to request alternative options from individual teachers.

## **We've Got You Covered: Healthcare and Insurance**

#### **Insurance provided by YES Canada**

YES Canada provides comprehensive medical coverage services during the student exchange study period. This insurance policy provides \$2,000,000 comprehensive coverage for emergency medical services during the student exchange study period. Prior to departure you will be provided with an insurance policy and policy number.

#### **I have allergies or other medical concerns. How will YES Canada manage this?**

The health and welfare of students is our top priority. We work closely with our partners overseas to highlight and identify any allergies or specific medical needs which require attention. In order to allow us to provide adequate support and accommodation, it is important to be explicit and upfront about your medical needs in the application form, medical documentation, and our correspondence. Please inform us at the outset of your application if you have any major medical issues or concerns, so that we are able to provide sound advice as to the suitability of the exchange experience.

Occasionally, students with food allergies or special dietary requirements (such as vegetarianism/gluten free) can be more difficult to place depending on your country of choice. Some cultures have traditional diets, which make accommodating food allergies/ dietary requirements more challenging. This might mean the screening process to find a suitable host family can take longer than usual. Allergies to pets/dander (or aversions to animals) are made aware to our partners and taken into consideration when selecting a suitable host family environment.

### **Provincial/Territorial Health Care**

In some provinces/territories you are required to notify the Ministry of Health should you have any planned extended absences from Canada. We advise you to consult the website of the Ministry of Health in the province/territory in which you reside to determine which rules and regulations apply to you and your family. You can find further information and contact details on the Health Canada website ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)).

### **Immunizations & Vaccines**

We recommend you consult the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada ([www.publichealth.gc.ca](http://www.publichealth.gc.ca)) at least 12 weeks prior to your departure to review the latest health advisories about your destination country. You will also find information here on the recommended immunizations and vaccines for travel to your destination country. Please ensure you budget for any health related costs associated with travelling abroad.

### **Prescription Medication and Dental Work**

If you currently take prescription medication we advise that you connect with your doctor to have enough medication filled for the duration of your exchange. It is also advised that you do any dental work needed (fillings, brace tightening) prior to departure as to avoid emergency dental work while you are overseas.

## **Not Just a Tourist: Visa's and Immigration**

All students participating in an exchange greater than 3 months are required to apply for a visa.

YES Canada will provide you with the required visa documentation associated with the exchange (host family profile, foreign school acceptance and insurance documents where necessary), however students and/or parents are required to prepare and submit the visa application and supporting documents independently.

The YES Canada Team will provide you with visa application guidelines and direct you to the online embassy/consulate websites. Due to frequently changing rules, regulations, and fees, YES Canada will not provide you with the visa application form(s).

Some countries require applicants to submit the application in-person, which often requires booking an appointment in advance. Please ensure you consult the relevant embassy/consulate website as soon as possible to determine if you and/or your parent(s)/guardian(s) must attend an in-person appointment.

Please note that while it is desirable to start this process early most visa applications cannot be submitted until 3 months prior to departure and should only be prepared and submitted upon receipt of the required formal exchange documents. Most applications are time sensitive and must be submitted in a specific timeline.

When planning for your exchange, please account for any additional visa related costs, i.e. photographs, official documentation, travel, application fees etc.

The YES Canada Team will provide you with visa guidelines, however we ask that you correspond directly with the embassy/consulate should you have any questions or concerns.

At this time, you can begin to research this process independently, however please be mindful that the application requirements can change in a matter of weeks.

### **How do I know if I need a visa?**

YES Canada will confirm with you if you require a visa when you apply. While YES Canada will provide students with the necessary documentation for the exchange (host family profile, foreign school acceptance and insurance documents where necessary), it is required that the student and parents prepare and submit the visa application.

In general, if you are applying for a longer exchange (5-10 Months) they will require a visa to be able to enter the country. Shorter exchanges (4 weeks – 3 months) do not usually require a visa. However, certain countries (such as New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, England) still require some form of visa regardless of the length of stay. Visa processing times vary by country.

### **I have never applied for a visa before; will YES Canada assist me through the visa process?**

YES Canada will direct students/parents to the consulate/embassy website and direct applicants to the online documents and contacts for the corresponding consulate/embassy. Please note that YES Canada is prohibited from advising or offering guidance relating to the visa application process and is legally unable to provide overview assistance or comment on application correctness.

Those applicants seeking additional support and guidance must consult the relevant consulate or embassy or alternatively with a registered immigration assistance organization or lawyer. Researching the visa process early on and making contact with the necessary authorities to discuss questions about the process is highly advised. Applicants should not wait until official documentation (ex. accommodation confirmation, school acceptance letter, insurance documents) is received to start preparing for the visa. Researching and preparing personal documents 3-4 months prior to departure is advised.

Please factor in the added cost of the visa and passport when budgeting for an exchange. Required partner organization documents will be supplied to the applicant in due course. Parents and students must research the visa process and be aware of the required documents they must provide. Ultimately, it is the student and parents' responsibility to apply for the visa and handle all necessary arrangements.

### **What kinds of documentation are typically required for a visa application?**

Students must have a valid passport before applying for a visa. It is the student/parents responsibility to obtain a passport with adequate time for processing and for a subsequent visa application. Students must have a passport with at least 6 months remaining upon return from the exchange for the passport to be valid.

Visa requirements are unique to the government/immigration policies and laws of the country you are applying to. However, for most consulates standard additional documentation can include (but is not limited to) an application form, additional passport photos, notarized/witnessed copies of original

documents (such as birth certificates), bank letter as proof of financial capability, proof of return airfare or residency. Additional supporting documents may be required depending on your country of choice. Documents that are supplied to you by YES Canada can include confirmation of accommodation, insurance/health care documentation, and school acceptance letters.

## **Getting the Journey Started: Booking Flights, Student Arrival, and Family Visitation**

### **How does booking flights work?**

Yes Canada will confirm with you the exact start and end dates of your program and the preferred arrival times and then you will be able to book flights that meet the parameters for student pickup in country. Students must arrive independently into their destination country.

If you have applied for a 10-month program, it may be more difficult to find return flights more than 1 year in advance due to airline scheduling. In this instance we recommend you look into booking a changeable return or looking into purchasing two 1-way tickets. Some visa applications may require evidence of a return at the outset of your application.

### **How is student arrival into the destination country organized?**

As with any experience, it is critical that students start off on the right foot, which is why arrival is such a critical time in a student's exchange. When students arrive into their host country they will be greeted by either a partner staff member or their host family. Prior to departure, YES Canada takes great care to communicate arrival plans in detail and provide comprehensive emergency information for both parents and students in order to facilitate a seamless and well-organized arrival.

Travelling independently into the destination country is part of the requirements for an exchange with YES Canada. As part of our program policies, parents or family members are not permitted to accompany their children on their departing flight or escort them for arrival. If you have concerns about your son or daughter travelling independently, we recommend looking into an unaccompanied minor service with your chosen airline and consulting with the Admissions Coordinator for more information.

### **I would like to visit my son/daughter while they are on exchange, is this permitted?**

Parental or family visits are not permitted before or during the exchange term, as parental visits can be disruptive to program success and student integration in the host country. In the past, parental visits before or during the exchange program have led to reduced program success and terminated programs, as the student program is interrupted and homesickness likely results.

Instead, we encourage parent(s) to visit the student at the conclusion of the program, allowing the student to show the parent(s) the country they have been living in and what they have learned while on exchange. This can be a great experience for both you and your child. Additional permission forms will be required and in some instances an additional visitor visa will be necessary depending on your country of choice. If you are considering a parental or family pick your son or daughter up from their program, please inform the admissions coordinator and they will advise you further.

Returning home during exchange is not permitted unless in an emergency with express permission from YES Canada and partner organizations.



## A Different Kind of Exchange: Banking and Personal Spending Money

In preparing for your exchange you must also consider spending money. While the amount you should allocate and save for personal spending money differs depending on your country of choice, we recommend a minimum of \$350 per month (CAN).

The YES Canada Team will review the country specific spending money requirements with you at your pre-departure orientation, however we advise you to ensure you have established banking arrangements prior to the orientation.

To avoid complications, we recommend you carry and use cash in the currency of your destination country. It is advisable to exchange money at a registered bank or exchange office prior to your departure. We also suggest that you have available to you a debit card while you are abroad. In most cases, you will be able to use your Canadian debit card (Plus/Maestro compatible) to withdraw money at a local ATM.

If you do not have a bank account and/or debit card we recommend you acquire one as soon as possible. Should you need to open a new account, please consult with your preferred banking provider to ensure that you will be able to use your debit card whilst abroad.

You may also wish to bring a credit card with you for emergency purposes. We suggest you consider one of the following options:

- Apply for a student visa
- Apply for a supplementary card to your parents
- Apply for a Visa Debit card, available at some major Canadian Banks
- Purchase a pre-paid top up credit card. Information can be found online at major credit card providers' websites.

## Payment Schedule, Program Fees, and Policies

Pricing varies for each student exchange program dependent on the duration and country of choice. Please visit [www.youthedservices.ca](http://www.youthedservices.ca) for pricing. Please ensure the pricing listed corresponds with the program dates you register for:

### Payment Schedule:

1. \$500.00 (non-refundable application fee) due with the submission of the full application.
2. Host Country Program Deposit due upon conditional acceptance. (Please note fees are specific to each exchange country).
3. 35% of the remaining program fees are due upon receipt of the full acceptance letter.
4. 40% of the remaining program fees are due 95 days prior to departure.
5. 25% of the remaining program fees are due 35 days prior to departure.

Payments can be made via wire transfer, personal cheque, or credit card. If you will be using cheques we advise sending post-dated cheques. You have the option of indicating automatic withdraw on the credit card form supplied to you.

A deposit invoice is included with your full application. A full program fees invoice will be issued at the point of conditional acceptance. It is your responsibility to note the payment due dates and make payments accordingly.

#### **What is included in the program fees?**

1. School placement and registration
2. Host family recruitment and selection, screening and placement
3. Food and lodging with host family
4. Pre-departure orientation in Canada
5. Arrival orientation in host country (length dependent on country)
6. Monthly monitoring by local area coordinator and periodic progress reports
7. 24hr Emergency support overseas and in Canada
8. Full and comprehensive medical insurance. *It is the student and parents' responsibility to assess this policy and ensure it satisfies the student's requirements. Additional insurance or changes to the standard policy will be at the student/parents' expense.*
9. Round-trip ground transportation between final arrival airport/train station and the host home.
10. Airport greeting by representative from partner organization and/or Host Family
11. Provision of the host family information, health insurance policy, and school acceptance letter required for the visa. (if required).
12. Program documentation: orientation manual and other materials to prepare student for exchange. *Please note: some inclusions may vary for the short-term group programs or summer programs. Please clarify in specific program literature or with the admissions coordinator.*

#### **What is not included in the program fees?**

1. Airfare
2. Passport and Visa fees
3. Personal items and expenses including but not limited to toiletries, phone calls, postage, social activities, entertainment, restaurant and other meals away from the host family's home (cafeteria/school lunches required for some countries).
4. School excursions and trips not covered by the program fee, extended/optional in country orientations.
5. School supplies including but not limited to: textbooks (if not provided) and course materials, uniform (if required), as well as subject and/or extracurricular fees
6. Tuition, should a private school option be selected. A public school option will be provided as well.
7. Transport to and from school, if not provided free of charge by school.
8. Intensive language classes if required to meet language requirements or as requested by host school.
9. Students applying from a non-designated/reciprocal exchange school board may be subject to a \$1000 levy.
10. Any cancellation, change or program addition fees as issued by YES Canada or the partner organization.

#### **What is a Non-Reciprocal Exchange Tuition Levy?**

The YES Canada reciprocal student exchange program allows students to participate in a cost effective tuition free exchange and provides the opportunity for Canadian students to travel abroad for study and international students to attend school in Canada. When a direct reciprocal exchange occurs within a school board tuition fees are offset, where this cannot occur a levy is applied. In these areas YES Canada will act to negotiate contracts with school boards to enable the levy to be waived, however this cannot be guaranteed.

Note that whether a student participates in a one-way exchange or hosts an international student in their home, a reciprocal exchange occurs at the school level. As such, the tuition free exchange is provided when a Canadian student travels abroad and an international student assumes their place in the local school or school board. In instances where a reciprocal exchange cannot occur within a school board a levy may be charged.

### **What is your cancellation policy?**

1. Any cancellation, change or program addition fees as issued by YES Canada or the partner organization are the responsibility of the participant.
2. The \$500.00 application fee is non-refundable, and due upon submission of the application to YES Canada.
3. In the event of cancellation after conditional acceptance either all or a portion of the host country deposit is non-refundable (approximately \$1000-\$1500). Please inquire for specific country details regarding non-refundable deposits (Dependent upon destination: France, Belgium, Australia and Spain have higher cancellation fees at this stage).
4. In the event of cancellation after full acceptance but prior to confirmation of the host family placement, 35% of the program fee is non-refundable.
5. In the event of cancellation after confirmation of the host family placement, 55% of the program fee is non-refundable.
6. In the event of cancellation after visa forms have been issued 65% of the program fee is non-refundable.
7. In the event of cancellation less than 30 days prior to departure 75% of the program fee is non-refundable.
8. In the event of cancellation after program commences 100% of the program fee is non-refundable.
9. In the event the program is cancelled by YES Canada or the student is not accepted to the program a refund will be given.

### **How can YES Canada help to make this experience more affordable for my family?**

#### Hosting Scholarships

To determine if a student is eligible for a hosting scholarship we would first determine if there is an international student who requires a host in the specific area/city. The family would then undergo the host family screening process to qualify as a host family (home interview, inspection, criminal reference check). Canadian students who are travelling abroad and wish to host an incoming international student are given priority for hosting. Please inquire with a YES Canada representative about current scholarships, promotions, or competitions.

## Support Services During The Application and on Exchange

YES Canada provides personalized attention and 1-1 support throughout the application process and during exchange. You can expect us to review your application in detail to ensure it is your best.

We are always available to answer any questions or concerns you may have about the exchange process, application, or academics concerns. Our role is to ensure your family feels fully supported and adequately informed about the details of your child's exchange in a timely and efficient manner.

### **What kind of support do I have while on exchange?**

#### Local Support Network

There is a strong support structure in place to help you adapt to a new country, language and living away from home. All exchange students are designated a local area coordinator who will act as their local contact while abroad. Local coordinators are volunteers and are interested in helping students experience the local culture and support them throughout the program. The local area coordinator is available 24/7 for the student and lives nearby.

During the week, students also have the support of the teachers and staff at their host school that will be able to provide added support with transitioning, academic concerns, or any school related issues.

#### A Caring Host Family Home

The most immediate support you will receive is from your host family. While you are on exchange, your host family will act as your parents overseas. They are there to offer support during transition and help adjusting to a new culture and solid structure and boundaries to ensure a safe experience. Once your host family has been selected, you will be provided with a host family email so you can begin to build trust and develop a strong connection to your child's host family prior to their departure.

#### Emergency Response Services

Our partner organizations have a 24/7 emergency phone line which is available to students should they require immediate assistance. In addition, students are provided the phone contact for their local coordinator who can respond quickly to an urgent situation/request. Should your child require additional emergency assistance, YES Canada also has a toll free 24/7 emergency line.

#### Student Support and Monitoring

Upon arrival, you will receive an orientation from your local coordinator or partnering organization in order to orient you to the culture, language, and customs of your host country. Throughout the exchange, regular monitoring and/or check ups will be conducted with you to ensure you are provided with an opportunity to speak about any concerns or issues. It is crucial that all participants speak to the local area coordinator and advocate for themselves while on exchange. Monthly reports or updates from overseas are available for parents upon request.

During exchange YES Canada will check in with students to ensure their exchange is progressing smoothly. We are always available to parents to answer any questions or address any concerns while you are on exchange.

## Questions or Just Want to Chat?

If you have any questions or would like to speak to us further about our programs please contact the YES Canada Admissions Coordinator:

**Contact Us:**

**Phone:** 416-623-6220

**Email:** admissions @youthedservices.ca

**Best of Luck – we look forward to hearing from you!**

*Thank you for your application for a student exchange with YES Canada! We look forward to getting to know you and your family over the next couple of months. Congratulations on taking the first step towards an exciting exchange experience and good luck on your application!*