

# Story of Me

## An Orientation Workbook for Refugee Youth

My name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's date is: \_\_\_\_\_



## Moving to the United States

*You are about to move to a new country and culture. Think about how you are feeling. Draw or write answers to the following questions.*



What do you think your life will be like in the United States?

What are your concerns or fears?

What are you looking forward to?



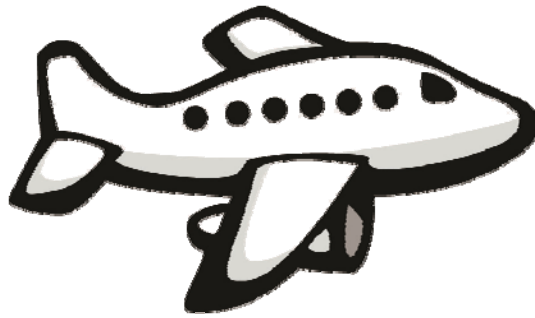
# Traveling to the United States

*Draw pictures or write words describing what happens before, during, and after traveling to the United States.*

What happens before you travel?



What happens while you are traveling?



What happens after you arrive in the United States?



## Packing for My Trip

*When packing for your trip to the United States, what should you pack, and where? Draw or write about these items in the correct boxes below to show what and where things should be packed.*



Pack in  
my carry-  
on

Pack in  
my  
checked  
bags

Cannot  
take



## My New Home

*Think about what “home” means. Draw or write answers to the following questions.*

What does a home look like?

What rooms are in a home? What is kept in these rooms? What happens in them?

*Here are some pictures of common homes in the United States. Your new home may look like one of these.*



Apartment



House



Trailer home

## Being Safe at Home

Your new home may have appliances and electronics that you have not used before. Many of the appliances are used to make housework easier. Electrical devices help people communicate with each other. It is important for you and your family to learn how to use them appropriately and safely. Here are some common appliances and electronics.



**Air conditioner**

Use: to cool the temperature of an indoor space



**Bathroom sink**

Use: to wash in the bathroom



**Cell phone**

Use: to communicate with others both inside and outside the home



**Desktop computer**

Use: for word processing, Internet access, and other computer-related tasks



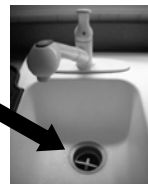
**Dishwasher**

Use: to wash larger amounts of dishes at once



**Dryer**

Use: to dry clothing after it is washed



**Garbage disposal**

Use: to get rid of food scraps; a kitchen appliance found in a sink



**Kitchen sink**

Use: to wash dishes, etc., in the kitchen



**Laptop**

Use: a mobile computer; can be taken anywhere



**Microwave**

Use: to warm food



**Oven**

Use: to bake or roast foods in a compartment, often below a stove



**Shower**

Use: to wash the body



**Stove**

Use: to cook food over a contained open fire, often on top of an oven



**Washer**

Use: to wash clothing

Circle the ones you are not familiar with. When you see them, you need to learn how to use them appropriately and safely.

## My Family

*Think about your family. Draw or write answers to the following questions.*

Who is in your family?



Who will travel with you to the United States?





## My Family's Roles

*Think about who is in your family and what their roles are.  
Draw or write about this in the chart below.*



| Who is in your family? | What roles does this person have? |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                        |                                   |

*The roles in your family may change when you are in the United States. This can be difficult and members of your family may feel frustrated. It is important for family members to talk about how they are feeling.*




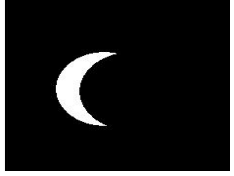
*Some children learn English faster than their parents. You may even be asked to translate for your parents sometimes. This can be hard for you and frustrating for your parents.*

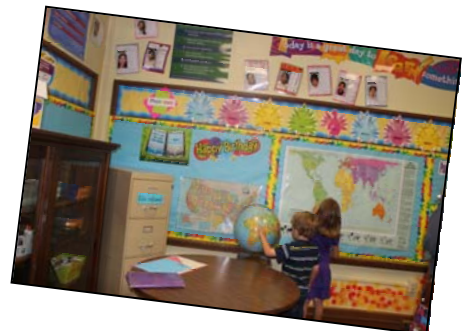
*Remember that your parents are busy and having trouble with adjusting to life in the United States as well. They may not know what to do if you need help. Talk with your parents about this, and remember that there are other adults who can help you, such as teachers, school guidance counselors, or caseworkers.*

# What I Do During the Day

Complete this chart by writing or drawing pictures in the boxes to show what your regular day is like now, and what you think your day will be like in the United States.



|                          | <br><b>Morning</b> |       | <br><b>Afternoon</b> |       | <br><b>Evening</b> |       | <br><b>Night</b> |       |
|--------------------------|---|-------|---|-------|--|-------|---|-------|
|                          | Earlier   | Later | Earlier   | Later | Earlier  | Later | Earlier   | Later |
| Current day              |   |       |   |       |  |       |   |       |
| Day in the United States |   |       |   |       |  |       |   |       |



## Going to School

*By law, children have to go to school in the United States. You will be enrolled in school soon after you arrive. There are no school fees for public school in the United States.*



*There are usually four levels of school:*

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Preschool                           | This level is for children 3 to 5 years of age. It is not required.  |
| Elementary or primary school        | This level begins with kindergarten (age 5 or 6) and continues through grade 5 or 6 (age 11 or 12).  |
| Middle school or junior high school | This level usually includes grades 6 to 8 (ages 11 to 15).   |
| High school                         | This level usually includes grades 9 to 12 (ages 14 to 18). Students in grade 9 are also called "freshmen," students in grade 10 are called "sophomores," students in grade 11 are "juniors," and students in grade 12 are called "seniors." Students who finish this level receive a high school diploma. |

*In most U.S. schools, boys and girls go to school together. Children of different races, ethnicities, and language backgrounds go to school together.*

Who do you think your new classmates will be? Draw pictures or write about them here.



## Getting to School

*How did students in your home country or country of asylum get to school? Draw pictures or write about getting to school here.*

*In the United States, some families live close enough to walk to school. If the school is far away, you may take a school bus to school.*



## What I Will Bring to School

*Students are given a list of school supplies that they need, and may be loaned textbooks that will have to be returned when the class is finished using them. Most students in the United States carry a backpack to school with their school supplies in them. Circle the supplies you have seen or used before.*



Notebook



Pencil box with pens, pencils, pencil sharpener, erasers, scissors, colored pencils, paper clips, glue sticks, and other materials



Calculator



Crayons and colored pencils for younger children



Geometry set for older children with compass, ruler, protractor, and other materials

## When I Get to School

*Many students have lockers or cubbies to keep their jackets, backpacks, and other items. Here are pictures of lockers and cubbies. Draw pictures or write about items you may leave in your locker or cubby.*



## Eating at School

*Most schools have a cafeteria. Students go to the school cafeteria to eat lunch, and sometimes breakfast. Students can bring lunch from home, or they can buy lunch at school. You and your family will have to decide what is best for you. Here are some pictures of a school cafeteria.*



*Younger children often have “snack time” when they can eat a small amount of food in the morning, between breakfast and lunch. Younger children also have recess, a time to get a break from school and play outdoors with friends.*



## My Classes

*What do you think a school classroom looks like? Draw pictures or write about classrooms here.*

*Here are some pictures of common classrooms and other rooms you may find at schools in the United States.*



*U.S. classrooms have rules. Sometimes the students are involved in making the rules. It is important to abide by the rules so you do well in school and do not get in trouble. Here are some common rules in a U.S. classroom. Circle the rules you have practiced before.*

- Treat others and school property with respect
- Be honest
- Arrive on time or early and be prepared
- Walk calmly inside the school building
- Raise your hand when you have something to say
- All work must be your own
- Settle disagreements with discussion and ask for help if needed

## Who is At School

Complete the boxes by writing or drawing a picture to show who works at school and what they do, in your home country or country of asylum, and who you think will be at your new school in the United States.



|                                    | <i>Who are they?</i> | <i>What do they do?</i> |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| My former school                   |                      |                         |
| My new school in the United States |                      |                         |

Your new school will probably have a principal, teachers, guidance counselors, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria staff, a librarian, a school nurse, coaches, and students.

Adults who work in U.S. schools are usually addressed with a title and their last name. This chart explains the common titles used.

|      |  |
|------|--|
| Mr.  | This is the title used before a man's last name. It is pronounced "mister."  |
| Miss | This title is used for a woman and implies that she is not married. It is pronounced the way it is written.  |
| Mrs. | This title is used before a woman's last name and implies that she is married. It is pronounced "missus."  |
| Ms.  | This title is used before the last name of a woman who is married or single. It is a safe title to use if you do not know if a woman is married or single, or how she prefers to be addressed. It is pronounced "miz." |

## Learning English

*Think about why it will be important for you to learn English. For example, you will do better in school and will be able to talk with your new friends. Draw pictures or write about why it will be important for you to learn English.*



*There are many different ways to learn English. Some examples are shown below. Circle the pictures which show the ways you will learn and practice English.*



Doing schoolwork



Working with a tutor



Talking with friends



Using the Internet



Reading books, magazines, or the newspaper



Talking with your teacher



Participating in class



Playing with friends

*Learning English will take time. You may feel frustrated as you learn. But the more you practice, the more confident you will be and the better your English will become!*



## Doing Homework and Studying

*Participating in class, doing your homework, and studying all help you succeed in school in the United States. It is important to find good places to study and do your homework that are quiet and help you focus. Circle the pictures below that show good places to study. Cross off the ones which are not good.*



## Other Important Information About School in the United States

*School may be new or very different for you. Below is important information about U.S. schools. Draw pictures or write about the information in the space provided.*



### School is Your Responsibility

Education in the U.S. is required by law for all children between 6 and 16 years of age for boys and girls. Getting an education is a great opportunity, and in the United States it is free.

For some families, older children may need to work in addition to or instead of going to school.

You will have to learn the school's rules. If you do not abide by them, you may have to stay after school for "detention," your teacher may call your parents to talk about the problem, or you could be suspended from school for a number of days. If you disobey school rules, your grades may not be as good because you would miss classes.



## Starting School

School in the U.S. usually starts in August or September and ends in May or June. Children will be enrolled in school soon after arriving in the United States unless it is summer vacation (June, July, and early August).

In most states, if you enter after October or November, you may have to repeat the school year the next year. This can help you understand your subjects better and get better grades.

You can do well in U.S. schools by attending class and doing your homework. If you do not understand your work, ask your teachers for help. Students are expected to work by themselves and in groups.

Students who are older than their classmates in the United States may feel embarrassed or alone. These are normal feelings. If you continue to have these feelings, you should talk about them with an adult you trust. This could be a parent, a school guidance counselor, or a caseworker.

## School Schedules and Attendance

You will find out your school's calendar when you register. School is typically Monday through Friday, and usually starts in the morning and ends in the afternoon. Different schools have different holidays and holiday breaks. **Most schools** have about 2 weeks off at the end of December, 1 week off in the spring, and 2 to 3 months off in the summer. Many schools have special summer school classes for students who need extra help.

If you are sick and cannot go to school, your parent or guardian must call the school that morning and tell someone in the school office that you will not be in school that day. You will be responsible for any schoolwork you miss while you are out sick.

## Support for Students

There are people at your school who are there to help you. In addition to your teachers, school guidance counselors are available to talk with students when they are having trouble.

U.S. students spend a lot of time in classes, but there may also be programs available that offer more support. These might include English as a Second Language class, summer school programs, or tutoring sessions after school or on the weekends. Your guidance counselor or teacher can tell you what may be available for you.

## **Working**

*Some older students work part-time when they are in school or during the summer to help support their family. You and your family will need to decide together what will be most important for you.*

*There are laws in each state restricting the amount of time children under the age of 18 can work when they are in school. Some states require a work permit. If you work, it may not be the same type of job that you have had in the past because you may not have enough English or job skills training in the United States.*



*Many youth in the United States work part time while working on higher education degrees.*

## Outside of School

*What are some things you have done in the past when you are not in school? What are some things you might be interested in doing in the United States? Draw some pictures or write about things you would like to do in the United States when you are not in school.*

*In the United States, you will be in school during the week. You will have time after school, on the weekends, and during school holidays to spend time with family, do your homework, see your friends, and get involved in other fun activities. Other activities help you learn new skills and can help you do better in school and in the future.*

*Most schools or community recreational centers offer extracurricular activities including sports teams and clubs, such as:*



Baseball



Basketball



Chess club



Band



Debate club



Drama



Soccer



Student  
council



Volleyball



Yearbook

*Circle the pictures of activities above that you might be interested in trying.*

## Making Friends

*It will take time for you to make friends in the United States. Think about how you have made friends in the past. Use the space below to draw pictures or write about the different ways you might make friends in the United States.*



## Good Friends and Role Models

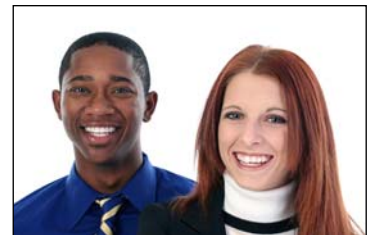
*Use the space below to draw or write about what your role models and good friends look like and why these people are your role models or good friends.*

My good friends

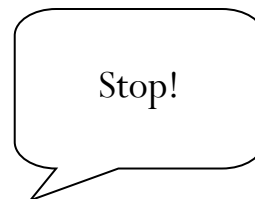
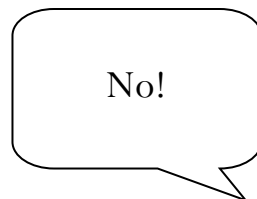
My role models

## Dating and Relationships

*As youth get older, they may be interested in dating others. This is common in the United States but happens at different times depending on comfort and family beliefs.*



*It is important to remember that if you are not comfortable with something that is happening, you should say so or say, “No,” or, “Stop.” Practice saying these words out loud:*



*If someone is not respecting your wishes, you should get help from a trusted adult, such as a parent, teacher, or counselor.*

## Discrimination and Bullies

*You may find that some people are not nice or respectful. Some people may discriminate against you, bully you, or pressure you to do something you are not comfortable with. This also includes cyber bullying, which happens online or over email.*

*If you are feeling discriminated against, bullied, or pressured to do something you do not want to do, you should get help from a trusted adult, such as a parent, teacher, school counselor, or caseworker.*

*It is important to remember that smoking, drinking, and drugs are illegal.*

*If your friends are pressuring you to do these things or other things that make you feel uncomfortable, they are probably not very good friends.*



## Being Safe

*Some things that will help you stay safe in your new community are:*




- ✓ Staying in groups with friends you can trust
- ✓ Avoiding areas you know are bad
- ✓ Avoiding situations where you feel unsafe
- ✓ Getting help from a trusted adult



## What I Eat

Complete the chart below by writing or drawing pictures to show what you eat now at different points during the day, compared with what you might eat in the United States.



|                       | <br>Morning: Breakfast | <br>Afternoon: Lunch | <br>Evening: Dinner or Supper |
|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| Now:                  |   |  |  |
| In the United States: |   |  |  |

When you eat small amounts of food between mealtimes, these are called “snacks,” and are often eaten during “snack time.” What do you like to eat for snack?





## Healthy Eating in the United States

*There are many different cuisines in the United States from all over the world. You may have many different options when you are choosing what to eat. You may know some of the foods, and others might be very new to you.*

*This is the Food Plate, which shows how much you should eat from each food group to be healthy. Circle the foods that are familiar or you would like to try. Draw pictures or write about other foods that you eat that fit into these categories.*



*There are also a lot of unhealthy options available in the United States, such as fast food (like McDonald's). These foods are very quick to get and may be popular. However, fast foods are not healthy or good for you.*

## Hygiene in the United States

*Hygiene is considered very important in the United States. Some common hygiene practices may be unfamiliar to you, or you may practice some more or less often than is expected in the United States. Here are some common hygiene items and practices.*



Clean your home regularly



Shower or take a bath using soap and shampoo most days of the week



Eat healthy food daily



Use toothpaste on your toothbrush to brush your teeth twice a day



Exercise regularly for a healthy body



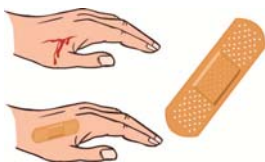
Wash hands when they are dirty, after using the bathroom, and before and after eating



Groom facial hair regularly if needed



Wear deodorant daily if needed



Keep injuries clean and see a doctor if necessary



Wear clothing that looks and smells clean

*Circle the common hygiene practices shown above which are new for you. It will be important for you to remember to practice these!*

## Weather in the United States

*The United States is a big country and the climate is different depending where you are. In most places you will see the seasons change. The four common seasons are:*



Spring



Summer



Fall or Autumn



Winter

*Circle the seasons above that look familiar to you.*

*Americans believe it is important and healthy to dress appropriately for the weather. For example:*



When it is cold outside



When it is warm outside



When it is raining



When you feel comfortable outside

# My Culture

Complete the chart below by writing or drawing pictures to show the culture you are coming from, the traits you would like to keep, and the traits you might adjust when you are living in the United States.

## My Culture



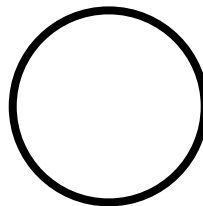
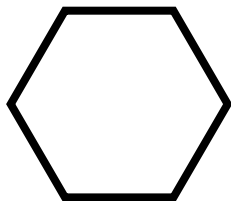
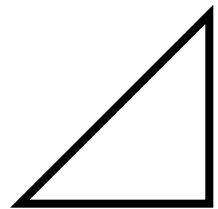
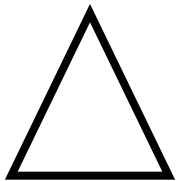
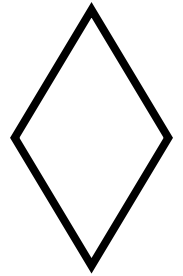
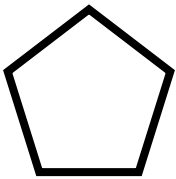
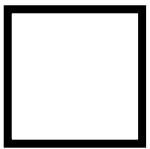
Traits to Maintain

Traits to Adjust



## Balancing My Culture With U.S. Culture

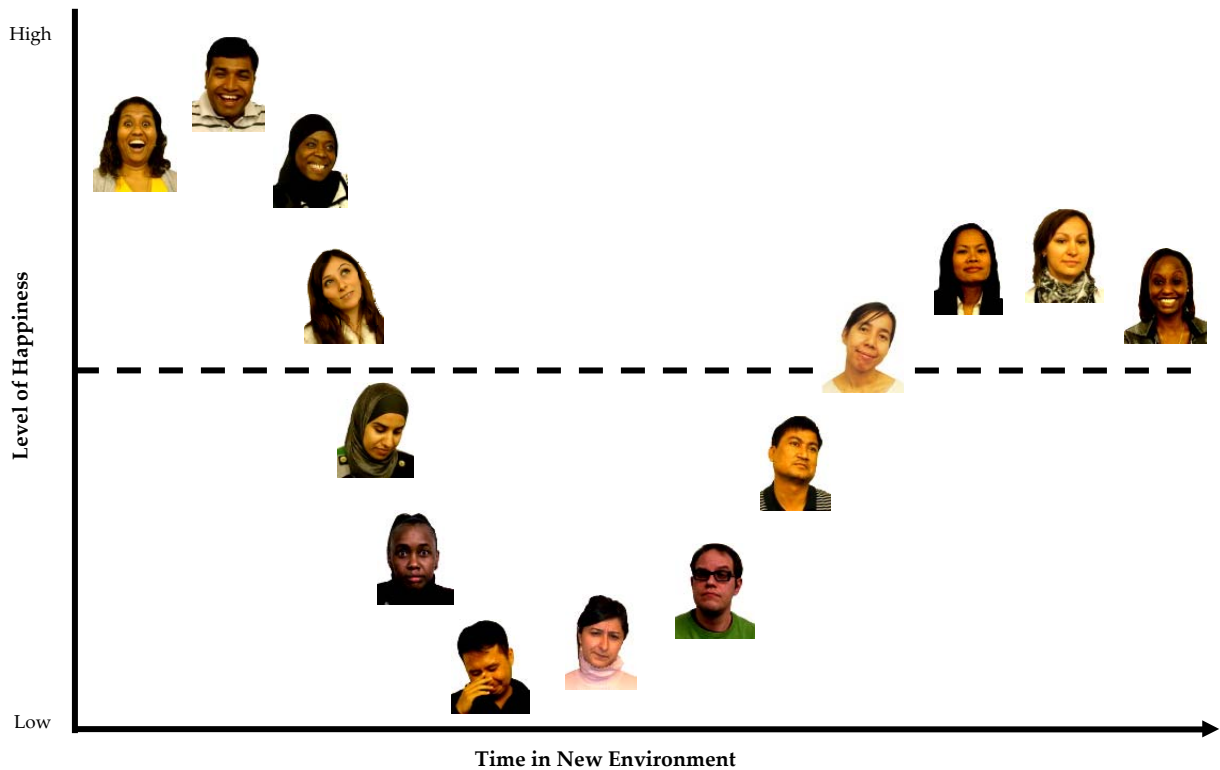
*Use the space below to draw two shapes that overlap. One shape represents the culture you are coming from. The other represents the culture you are going to. The space where the two shapes overlap demonstrates how the culture you are coming from and that which you are going to will overlap. You will need to find a comfortable balance between where you are coming from and where you are going.*



## Challenges With Adjusting

*Adjusting to your new life in the United States will take time and will be challenging. It may be helpful for you to remember that everyone who moves to a new place experiences common phases of cultural adjustment.*

*The U-Curve of Cultural Adjustment shows the common phases that people go through when they move to a new place.*



*When you are feeling sad, what are some things that you do to feel better? For example, you might exercise, eat a special treat, read a book, or talk to someone you trust. Draw or write about them here:*

*If you are feeling sad, it is important to talk to someone you trust, such as a parent, friend, teacher, or school guidance counselor.*



## How I Feel

*There will be a lot of changes in the United States. Some will be easier and others will be harder.*

*Read the statements below. Circle the number that best corresponds to each statement for the way you are feeling about it, 5 representing “very good” and 1 representing “not very good.”*

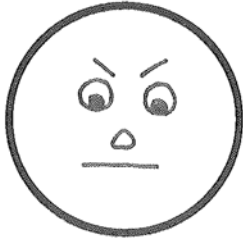


|  | not very good |   |   |   | very good |
|--|---------------|---|---|---|-----------|
| Many things, such as food and clothing, may be expensive in the United States.                                     | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5         |
| I am able to say no to things I do not want to do.   | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5         |
| I like to ask others for help.   | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5         |
| I want to return to my home country to live one day.   | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5         |
| I might be the only person in my school or community who speaks my language or who is from my country.             | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5         |
| I wonder about how people of different races, ethnicities, religions, or languages get along in the United States. | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5         |
| I can think of three ways to handle pressure or feelings of stress.  | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5         |
| Some people in the United States may know very little about my country or culture.                                 | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5         |

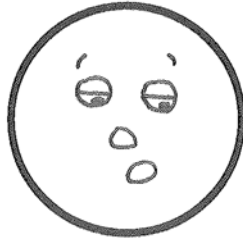


## My Feelings and My Emotions

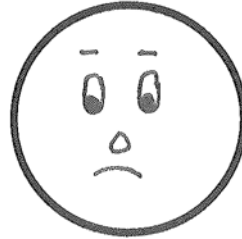
Color in a face to show how you are feeling right now. You may have very mixed and changing feelings about resettlement, and that is normal.



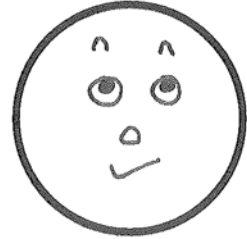
Angry



Bored



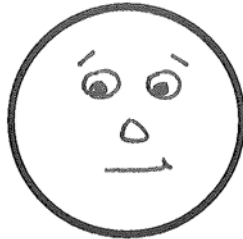
Confused



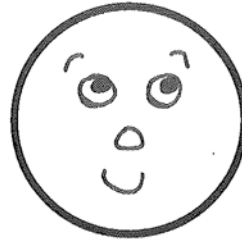
Curious



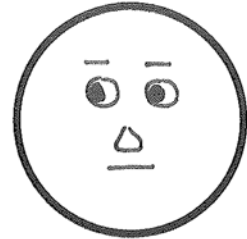
Excited



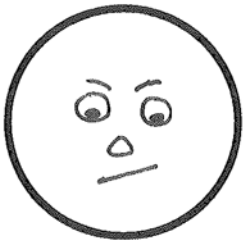
Fine



Happy



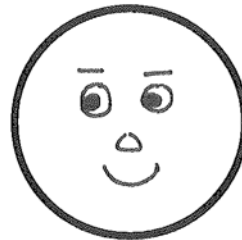
Impatient



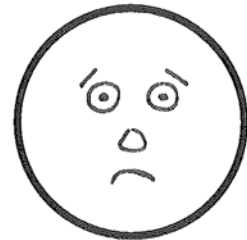
Insulted



Nervous



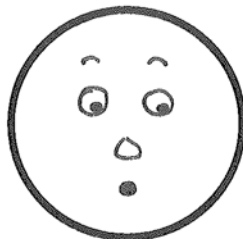
Proud



Sad



Scared



Surprised



Thankful




Worried



## My Goals and My Future

*You may have goals for your family, school, and friends. Think about what your goals are and how you will accomplish them. Write or draw pictures to show your goals and how you will achieve them in the boxes below.*

|   | What I want to do | How I will do it |
|---|-------------------|------------------|
| <br>Family   |                   |                  |
| <br>School   |                   |                  |
| <br>Friends |                   |                  |
|   |                   |                  |
|   |                   |                  |
|   |                   |                  |

*Revisit your goals from time to time. Revise them and set new goals!*

## Ages to Remember in the United States

*In the space below, draw pictures or write translations to describe the statements.*



- Individuals in the United States can legally attend public school (kindergarten through 12th grade) until the ages of 19 to 22, depending on the state.



- Between the ages of 14 and 19 (depending on the state), individuals can take tests to get a driver's license.



- Age 18 is considered the age a person legally becomes an adult in the United States. This is the age when a person can do certain things, such as vote and join the military. Adults are also fully responsible for their actions.



- All boys must register with the Selective Service at an official U.S. post office when they turn 18.



- At age 21, you can legally drink alcohol, but you should make good decisions if you choose to drink.



## Important U.S. Laws for Youth to Know



*In the space provided, draw pictures or write translations to describe the statements below.*

- Your resettlement agency will tell you who in your community can help support and protect you.
- U.S. law says that children under a certain age cannot work. There are visas that allow those over a certain age to work before they become adults.
- There are laws about dating between minors and adults.
- The penalty for breaking certain laws can be very serious. For example, if you get into a fight and hurt somebody or if you drive while drinking alcohol, you can go to jail. These kinds of laws and penalties are different in different states.
- You have the right and the freedom to practice your religious beliefs in any way that is safe for you and others around you.
- After you have a green card for 5 years, you can apply for U.S. citizenship.
- In the United States, the police are there to help you and should be regarded as safe, trusted adults when assistance is needed.
- If you get in trouble with the law, you should always be honest with your lawyer about your immigration status so the lawyer will be best able to assist you.
- Some laws are the same in every state in the United States, and some laws are different in different states.



- Police and other law enforcement officials are there to help and protect you and should not be feared.
- Some cities and towns have curfews for minors.
- If you have a legal problem, you have the right to a lawyer to help you.
- All children in the United States are required to stay in school until they are at least 16 years old.
- As a refugee, after 1 year in the United States you can begin your application for a green card. This process is called changing your lawful permanent residence (LPR) status.
- It is important not to lie about your immigration status and not to sign any papers without checking with someone (like a lawyer) who can tell you what you are signing.
- If you are a male, as soon as you turn 18 you must register with the Selective Service at an official U.S. post office. You will need to show this registration when you apply for citizenship. If you do not have it because you did not register, you might not be able to become a citizen.
- You have the right to drive after a certain age. In the United States, many see driving as a sign of independence, and both boys and girls have the opportunity to learn how to drive.



## Rules and Discipline

Complete the chart by writing or drawing pictures to show what rules and disciplinary measures are common in your home country or country of asylum and in the United States.



|                                    | <i>Rules</i> | <i>Common Disciplinary Measures</i> |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Home country/<br>country of asylum |              |                                     |
| United States                      |              |                                     |



*It is illegal for U.S. teachers to use corporal punishment (such as hitting). If you do not behave in school, you may lose privileges. This could mean staying indoors during recess or staying after school for detention.*



# U.S. Money

*These are the U.S. bills and coins commonly used.*



1¢  
penny



5¢  
nickel



10¢  
dime



25¢  
quarter



\$1



\$5



\$10



\$20



# Needs and Wants



*Living in the United States is expensive. Your family will need to prioritize what to spend money on. Think about the things you need (or cannot live without) and the things you might want. Complete the chart below by writing or drawing pictures to show what you might need and what in the United States.*

| <u>Needs</u> | <u>Wants</u> |
|--------------|--------------|
|              |              |



## All About Me Worksheet

*You will need to tell people about who you are. Practice by completing the following statements.*

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I am from \_\_\_\_\_.

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

I have \_\_\_\_\_ siblings.

My address is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

My phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.

I like to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.





# Cultural Orientation Resource Center

Phone: 202-362-0700

Fax: 202-363-7204

E-mail: [cor@cal.org](mailto:cor@cal.org)

Website: <http://www.culturalorientation.net>

Mail: Cultural Orientation Resource Center

4646 40th Street NW

Washington, DC 20016



© 2011 Center for Applied Linguistics

The contents of this publication were developed under an agreement financed by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, United States Department of State, but do not necessarily represent the policy of that agency and should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. The U.S. Department of State reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use, and to authorize others to use, this work for Government purposes.

