

CONVERSATION STARTERS



While it can sometimes be intimidating to engage with speakers of other languages, these are great opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations that can build lifelong friendship. Simple language and gestures are also forms of communication and silence and awkward pauses are completely ok! Remember that language learning can go both ways. Ask to learn some words in the language spoken by the family you are with. Make it fun and be able to laugh at yourself. Not only will this help encourage the family to feel comfortably, it will help build friendships.

Food:

1. Is your country famous for a special crop/food?
2. What is a normal breakfast, lunch, dinner, snack, and dessert for you?
3. What food would you serve a favorite guest?

Housing:

1. What does a typical home look like in your country?
2. Do you normally live with your immediate family or extended family?
3. What kind of furniture is inside a typical house in your country?

Clothing:

1. What do young children wear to school in your country?
2. What kind of clothes do men and women wear to work?
3. What kind of clothes do men and women wear to a party?

Transportation:

1. In your country, what do people use most for transportation?

Values:

1. What is an important value that parents teach their children?
2. Do students have religious education at school?

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Leisure Time Activities:

1. What kind of music do you listen to?
2. What kind of books do you read?
3. Do you like sports? Which kinds?
4. What are some common forms of charity or volunteer opportunities?
5. If I visited your country, where would you want to take me?

Language and Gestures:

1. How would you introduce me to your family?
2. Would I be expected to shake hands?
3. What would be the polite way for me to leave after a social evening at your home?
4. Would I be expected to bring a gift?
5. What do you say to another person when you see him in the morning?
Evening?

Holidays and Ceremonies:

1. What special holidays do you celebrate in your country?
2. How do people celebrate them?
3. Describe a marriage ceremony in your country.

Community:

1. Do most of the people in your country live in cities, small towns, or farms?
2. Do you have many factories in the cities?
3. What products are produced?
4. Do people speak different languages in different parts of your country?
5. What is the most common religion in your country?

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Schools:

1. How many classes a week do high school students have?
2. Is it difficult for high school graduates to find a job?
3. What is your favorite subject to learn about?

Social Structure:

1. What is the size of an average family?
2. Do the grandparents live in the same house?
3. What are the responsibilities of each member of the family?
4. Is it customary for the family to eat dinner together and talk?
5. What is the acceptable way of meeting someone to marry?
6. When does a child leave their home to be on their own in your country?

Children:

1. How do parents decide on a name for their baby?
2. Do children have a certain share in work at home?
3. Do boys and girls have the same education? Do they go to the same school?
4. How are children expected to behave with adults?
5. Are parents strict in disciplining their children?

Other:

What can people do to help refugees in their community and around the world? What do you want people to know about refugees?

*Please be mindful that many refugee families have experienced violence and loss so please do not push a family to speak of something that was traumatic for them. Let them lead into more difficult conversations and remember to be an active listener and a safe place for them to speak about difficult experiences. Please also remember that these are their stories and that they should remain confidential unless the family chooses to share them