

**Topic:** Cultural Adjustment  
(International Organization for Migration, Overseas Processing Entity, Nairobi)

**Activity:** Culture Shock (Experiencing Change)

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### Introduction

Participants often know that many things will be different—they may have seen the U.S. on movies or on TV, they may have received letters from friends or family, or they may have heard travelers telling their tales. Much of what they have seen, read or heard is out of context so their ideas and expectations are often quite different from the reality.

One of the essential topics of cultural orientation training is "culture shock." They will learn that it is normal and can be expected. Furthermore, trainers will try to emphasize that the resultant feelings of anger, depression and helplessness will pass. But, unless someone has gone through culture shock, it is hard to really imagine how this "culture shock" will really feel.

In this activity, participants will experience and discuss change.

### Objectives

After the activity, participants will know that they will have to "re-learn" certain things that have become natural to them in their native country.

### Materials

- Paper
- Writing implements

### Practice

1. Ask the participants to write their full name on a piece of paper. And then, ask them how they feel about doing this. (Many will say that it is so easy that one doesn't have to think, concentrate or put any effort into it.)
2. Ask the participants to write their full names over again, but this time with their other (usually left) hand. Give them time. And then ask them how they feel about writing their name with the opposite hand. (Some may be laughing. Some may be reluctant to do it. Some will say that they never used their other hand before. Some may say that it takes too long to write with the other hand. Most will say that it is not a habit/polite to write with the other hand.)
3. Explain how this exercise relates to culture shock. Instructor explains, in a figurative sense, that just like writing with the other hand, "culture shock" is a process. For example they will have to re-learn certain simple daily tasks, things taken for granted in his or her culture, such as shopping, using public transport, using telephones, cooking, working and even understanding public signs.
4. Allow them to practice writing their name several more times with the opposite hand. Ask them if the task became easier.
5. Explain that "culture shock" is a temporary feeling of inadequacy and frustration. With time and practice they will become more adept at doing things differently in the U.S. just as they got better at writing with the opposite hand.

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