



YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING
Intercultural Exchange Programs

Thank you for your interest in YFU Canada!

This document includes the initial application and interest form, as well as general information about YFU Canada (Fact Sheet, Frequently Asked Questions, Fees and Scholarships, Letter to Parents, etc). We recommend that you review this information carefully, as well as the resources available on [our website](#) and [YFU Canada's Facebook page](#).

Once you decide on a country and program and fill out the application below, **please email a digital copy of your completed form to outbound@yfu.ca, and mail the signed hard copy to our office along with the \$50 administration fee.**

YFU Canada

688 Hespeler Road
Unit 2B -1D
Cambridge, Ontario
N1R 8N7

All programs are subject to availability, and the student's acceptance will not be confirmed until after the admission interview, granted that he/she meets all other program requirements. If you have any further questions about the application process after reviewing this information package, please contact Outbound Coordinator Ashley Haley at outbound@yfu.ca, National Director Leah Jakobsen at leah.jakobsen@yfu.ca, or call the YFU Canada office at 1-877-516-9111 / 519-653-0550.

We are looking forward to reviewing your application and invite you to join our international family of exchange students around the world. Your adventure is just beginning!

Sincerely,

Ashley Haley

Outbound Coordinator
Youth for Understanding Canada
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www.yfu.ca

Add YFU Canada on Facebook!
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<http://www.facebook.com/yfucanada>



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ABOUT YOUTH FOR UNDERSTANDING

YFU is a non-profit international educational organization and one of the world's oldest, largest and most respected exchange organizations. Established in 1951, YFU has successfully exchanged more than 240,000 students worldwide. That's why we have been selected to administer more government and corporate scholarships than any other high school exchange organization. And that's why more than 10,000 parents trust us with their teenagers each year.

QUICK FACTS

- Dr. Rachel Andresen established the Youth For Understanding (YFU) International Exchange Program in 1951.
- YFU is a non-profit international student exchange program with offices in over 50 countries around the world.
- YFU Canada's office is located at 688 Hespeler Road, Unit 2B -1D in Cambridge, Ontario.
- YFU Incorporated, the program's International headquarters, is located in Bethesda, MD, USA.
- YFU's mission is to promote world peace through global understanding.
- YFU Canada provides six-week, summer, semester and year programs for Canadian high school students ages 15 to 18 years. On semester and year programs, students live with a host family and attend school in their host country.
- YFU is reciprocal - international students from 13 different countries attend high school and live with host families in Canada for 10 months.
- YFU is a volunteer based program. Volunteers assist in recruiting, screening and supporting students, host families and other volunteers. They are essential to every part of the program.
- Host families are also volunteers, who open their homes and hearts to international students for a school year and are rewarded with a lifetime experience.
- Community volunteers who are trained in cross-cultural issues give support to host families and students during the stay to help cope with cultural adjustments.
- The majority of our funding comes from program fees. The balance of our revenue comes from donations from service clubs or individuals. We are a registered non-profit organization.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Application Process

I'm thinking about going on exchange. How do I talk to my parents about it?

YFU recommends that you have a conversation with your parents about going on exchange prior to contacting YFU. Try to ask yourself questions; for example, why do I want to do on exchange? What do I want to achieve? Where do I want to go? These types of questions may help you define your motivation and reasons for going abroad.

Decide on an appropriate time (for example a family meeting or over dinner) when you can present your thoughts about going on exchange, and discuss with your family whether this is the right decision for you. Take some time to look at YFU's website for more information about the organization, our programs and scholarships.

Where can I go?

YFU has partner offices in over 50 countries worldwide. Any of these countries are available for students. YFU Canada's primary partner countries can be viewed on our website.



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What are the chances that I will go to my first choice of country?

Program availability depends on the number of spots YFU Canada is allocated each year, and the number of applicants that we have. After you have been interviewed, it normally several weeks for the completed assessment to be reviewed. If you are accepted, your place in the program will be pending until we have received your completed registration package, including transcripts and health forms.

You may also be competing for a spot with other applicants, and the slots will be assigned on a first come, first served basis to students that meet our application criteria and pass the admission interview.

What can I do to improve my chances of getting accepted?

- 1) Transcripts showing a minimum 70 percent average over the past two years.
- 2) Apply early. Slots are allocated on a first come, first served basis.
- 3) Consider why you wish to go on exchange. We look at motivation, personality traits and goals in the admission interview.

How much does it cost?

The cost of a YFU exchange is dependent on length and location. The most updated prices are listed on the Countries and Prices section of our website, or by contacting YFU directly. In addition to the tuition, students are required to bring their own spending money for extras such as clothing and school supplies.

I don't have much money. Is financial assistance available?

YFU Canada offers several grants for students demonstrating financial need and a keen interest in studying abroad – please contact us for an application form. Some students fundraise all or some of the money for their exchange through sponsorships from local businesses or corporations, bake sales, car washes, etc. Get creative!

When and how should I apply?

We recommend that you apply at least six months in advance. The earlier you apply, the more likely you will be to get your first country choice, and it also leaves more time to prepare for the exchange. Depending on where you go, the visa and placement processes may take a long time, as well as filling out all the registration papers.

Once we receive your application, we schedule a time for an admission interview. If you are accepted, a registration package will be emailed to you with instructions to proceed.

Can I request to go to a certain city or area?

YFU prioritizes the ideal student/host family match over all other factors, and as such, cannot accommodate requests for certain cities or regions. Keep in mind that our host families are usually spread all over the country, and that any town, place or city that you end up in will be a unique and interesting experience in itself.

What is included in the program fees?

- Round-trip airfare from Toronto (the student pays fare difference for other departure points)
- Pick up and transfer in your host country
- Comprehensive travel insurance
- School placement
- Orientations throughout the exchange year, including domestic transportation.
- Pre-departure material and student guide
- Your stay with a carefully selected host family
- 24/7 emergency support in your host country
- Support from your own YFU area representative
- Support and assistance from the national office in Canada
- Mentorship with a YFU alumni (upon request)



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When are the program fees due?

A \$950 deposit is due once you submit the Statement of Agreement form from your registration package. The second payment is half of the remaining total and is due 150 days before your departure. The third and final payment is due a minimum of 45 days prior to departure.

What happens if I am accepted and pay, but decide not to go?

From the time of registration (signing of contract and payment of \$950 deposit), your YFU insurance coverage begins. Therefore, if cancellation is due to medical issues or death in immediate family (parents/siblings), you will receive a 100% refund.

However, when the \$950 deposit is received, almost all of this amount is immediately paid out by YFU Canada to the receiving country for registration, insurance and support fees; therefore, unless it can be claimed on insurance for medical/death cancellation, the deposit cannot be returned after that point.

If you choose to cancel at the last minute and airfare has already been purchased, you are liable for the ticket cost as well as the original \$950. The remaining balance will be returned to you.

I am over 18 and/or already graduated, can I still participate?

You may apply after graduating, but you will face limitations in terms of which countries you can apply to. Certain programs will only take students that are still enrolled in high school in their home country.

That being said, many YFU students successfully go on exchange after their Grade 12 year. Please contact the Outbound Coordinator at outbound@yfu.ca to discuss whether the country you wish to apply to will accept a 'gap year' student.

What kind of grades do I need?

You will need a minimum 70 percent average over the past two years to apply. Certain countries, such as Japan, require a minimum of 80 percent.

Do I have to know the language in the country I am going to?

Most of our destinations do not have a language requirement, but a select few require that you take a course prior to arrival, or have taken the language as a subject in school. France requires a language test before acceptance. Please check on [our website](#) for further specifications on language requirements.

I have a physical or learning disability/take medication to regulate anxiety or depression. Can I still go on exchange?

If any of these, please notify YFU before applying. We will have to discuss your situation with the host country as early as possible in the application process to ensure that the school, host family and staff will be able to provide the support needed. Additional documentation from your teachers and/or doctors may also be required. For any other health problems, please notify YFU to discuss your situation.

What about my school in Canada? Can I graduate on time?

Many students work with their Canadian schools to get full or partial credit for their classes overseas. Discuss your school requirements with your guidance counsellor in your present school as soon as possible to be sure you understand your Canadian school's requirements for graduation.

When is the application deadline?

While there is no set deadline, we do encourage students to apply *at least* six months prior to departure in order to ensure full preparation before you leave. Our most popular destinations reach capacity a year or more in advance. For a complete list of countries and departure times, please check <http://www.yfu.ca/>, or our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/yfucanada

I have dietary restrictions. Can my desired host country accommodate me?



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Many, though not all, host countries are willing to accommodate dietary restrictions. When you fill out your registration package, you will be able to notify YFU of any allergies and dietary restrictions. However, it is very important that you are as detailed as possible in your description/diagnosis, and that you only write down what is crucial to your well-being and health. Many host families will hesitate to host a student whose dietary restrictions will be difficult to accommodate in the host family's culture (for example, an allergy to rice or seafood may be challenging in Japan!).

Also keep in mind that an open mind and attitude towards trying new things is important in order to succeed as an exchange student. You will most likely not have access to the same food items and products as you do at home. Think of this as an exciting opportunity to try new things rather than a limitation.

Preparing to Depart

When will I find out my departure date?

Once you have applied to a specific program, YFU Canada can give you an approximate departure and return date. However, your exact departure date will not be confirmed by your host country until about two months prior to departure.

Where will I depart from?

Your flight is included in the program price, and YFU will book your ticket. Our program fees are based on Toronto as the point of departure, but we can book your ticket from any other city in Canada (please note that you will have to pay the fare difference, if any).

How will study at school if I don't know the language?

Attending school full-time in your host country is the fastest way to learn a new language. You will be immersed in the language, the culture and make new friends. It will be very confusing at times and you have to learn to lower your expectations of yourself academically in the beginning, but it all gets much easier after a little while. Learn to practice patience, use body language and enjoy observing your new host culture. You will be surprised by how far a smile can take you!

When you return to your home country, most full-year students have become very adept at communicating in their second language.

Will I be living in a big city or a small town?

In the admission interview, the YFU representative will ask you what kind of community you would prefer to be placed in (e.g. rural, or a city). However, no guarantees will be made, and we encourage students to keep an open mind.

When do I find out about my host family?

The placement process in your host country will start once you have submitted your completed registration form. The length of this process varies greatly from country to country, depending on the number of volunteers and applicants. Not having a host family until a couple of weeks before departure is not unusual, and does not mean that there is no a family for you. However, the process takes time, and we ask students and parents to please be patient.

Can my parents/friends come to visit me?

YFU does not recommend, and rarely allows, visits from parents and friends. There are many reasons for this, and although a visit sounds completely harmless and very nice, it can serve as a disruption to the exchange experience and the takes the focus away from your life in the host country.



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If you do want your parents or friends to visit you, YFU recommends that they come at the very end of your exchange. Regardless, you will have to apply for permission from YFU prior to their arrival. Visits from parents and/or friends that have not been permitted by YFU may result in an involuntary early return.

Can I get credits for the courses I take abroad?

YFU cannot assist in the transferring or approval of courses and credits. However, most schools are willing to work with you to plan your exchange and the transition back to your high school. Please arrange a meeting with your guidance counselor prior to departure to discuss your situation, as well as a follow-up meeting when you come back. You may be asked by your school to choose certain courses while you are abroad if possible, or to provide course descriptions and transcripts.

How much luggage can I take?

For baggage restrictions, please refer to the airline's website or customer service.

What happens when I get there?

Upon arrival in your host country, your host family and/or YFU staff will meet you at the airport. In most cases, you will attend an arrival orientation shortly after your arrival. More information about this can be found in your host country's welcome letter, which is distributed to all students closer to departure.

When should I apply for a passport?

Prior to going on exchange, it is crucial that you have a passport that is valid for the next two years – minimum. You also need your passport to apply for a visa, so please start the application process as soon as possible. Check with your local passport office for the procedures in your province.

Will I need a visa?

Most countries require you to apply for a visa prior to arrival. YFU Canada will provide the official documents you need for your application, but the student is responsible for contacting the consulate for updated instructions, and for filing the application on time. Please take the time to visit the embassy websites to familiarize yourself with the requirements and suggested guidelines for applying, as YFU is **not** able to apply for the visa/study permit on the student's behalf.

Passport and visa application fees are also the responsibility of the student, as each country's consulate charges differing amounts. Keep in mind that you may only apply for your visa **after** we have received and forwarded you the necessary documentation from your host country.

I know a family that I can stay with in my host country. Can they host me?

Yes, if you already know a family that you would like to stay with, please notify YFU Canada and we can arrange for a so-called "direct placement." The family can then apply to become a host family for you through the YFU office in the host country, but will still have to go through the host family interview, police checks, etc.

How is the host family chosen?

A family that wants to host through YFU has to fill out a hosting application. The family will be then be interviewed, and YFU staff and/or volunteers will visit their home. Each host family also has to provide references that are interviewed and checked by YFU, and all people living in the house over 18 years must have a police check.

It is important to note that none of YFU's host families are paid - they do this on a voluntary basis. This helps us ensure that people have the right motivation to host, and many families have been long-time volunteers with YFU, have kids that have gone or are on exchange, or are alumni themselves.

For many, hosting is a great way to give back to one's community, and share what they have with the rest of the world. Most families have a great respect for and interest in other countries, and value the aspects of inviting another culture into their home.



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Does my family have to host a student if I go?

No. YFU does not require you to host a student, however, if your family would like to host, you will receive a credit to put toward your YFU program fees.

I am insured under my family's health plan. Do I still need to buy insurance with YFU?

You cannot opt out of the YFU insurance. It is part of the program price, and is a very comprehensive plan that has been tailored to the needs of exchange students on our program. Because of its solid and broad coverage, you will not need any additional insurance.

Will I need to get any vaccinations?

For some countries, yes. Please refer to Health Canada's guidelines, or [inquire with YFU directly](#).

On My Exchange

Can I travel to other cities and countries while on exchange?

Any travel, both inside and outside your host country, has to be approved by the YFU office in your host country. You will have to contact them directly if you plan to do any traveling while on exchange, and you will need both your host parents and natural parents' permission. Under no circumstances are YFU students to travel by themselves while on the program.

Can I come home for the holidays?

Exchange students cannot travel to their home country while on exchange, unless in the case of an emergency. Please understand that such visits can severely disrupt the process of settling into your exchange and amplify culture shock.

How do I do my banking while abroad? How much spending money should I bring?

The amount of spending money varies from country to country. Generally, YFU recommends between \$100-200 per month. Some students choose to open a checking account in their host country, and have their parents do a wire transfer every few months. Keep in mind that international transfers can be expensive, however, so it is better to transfer large amounts at a time. Some banks also offer VISA debit cards that make it easier to withdraw money and purchase items abroad, and many ATMs abroad accept Canadian debit cards.

Your pre-departure orientation information package contains more detailed banking info. It is recommended that you set up a meeting with your local branch prior to departure to discuss the best available options to you.

Can I work while on exchange?

You cannot work while you are on exchange. You will attend school full-time, and your student visa does not allow you to work. If you were to take a job while on exchange you would risk an early return.

What if any problems arise when I am away on exchange?

When problems or questions arise, each student has a designated YFU representative in their area that will be able to help answer their questions. Whether it is a simple inquiry, or you are experiencing any other difficulties, your area rep is your point of contact when an issue cannot be resolved or answered by your host family.

You can also contact the YFU office in your host country if you have any questions during your exchange - each national office has a 24/7 emergency contact number in case of an urgent matter. **Please contact the YFU office in your host country to resolve problems before contacting YFU Canada.** Student



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safety and support is YFU's top priority, and we strive to assure that you feel confident and comfortable on your exchange.

What if I decide to return home early? Can I get my program fees back?

If you voluntarily withdraw from the program, or are sent home due to disrespect of rules, there is **no** refund. If you have to leave the program due to medical issues or a death in your immediate family, however, your YFU insurance will provide a pro-rated reimbursement. This reimbursement is based on the portion of the program fees that have been set aside to support you while in-country; the part of the fees that have been spent preparing you for departure, however, cannot be returned.

More questions? Contact us at go@yfu.ca!

FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Congratulations! It takes a special kind of teenager to consider living and studying abroad as a Youth For Understanding (YFU) International Exchange student - one who is both eager to travel and willing to take an active role in his or her own education. Your child is one of them!

Educators, employers, parents and our alumni all agree that the benefits of international exchange reach far beyond the year, semester or summer the student spends abroad. In fact, the experience of learning a new language, living with a host family and adapting to a new culture produces lifelong benefits.

It's Education

With the stiff competition students face for entrance into college and university, the exchange experience offers a clear advantage. Why? Because at YFU, we know that the best way to achieve fluency in another language and to develop an intuitive understanding of another country is through total immersion. The host family experience provides the best education one can get in a country's language and culture.

It's a Sense of Direction

Most parents of YFU students say their teenager returned from the exchange experience with greater confidence, maturity, and increased ability to assess new situations and respond appropriately. They talk with pride about the personal growth and development they have observed in their son or daughter following their stay abroad.

It's Dollars and Cents

Not surprisingly, the cost of the program is a concern for parents. However, many parents find that if they compare the costs of a YFU program to the normal costs of food, clothing, school, sports and social activities for their son or daughter, the YFU program is actually quite reasonable. As a non-profit, as well, you are assured that our program fees are among the best available!

It's Peace of Mind

With YFU, each student is placed with a host family, carefully screened for its ability to provide a warm and caring home. The YFU host family volunteers to accept your son or daughter into their home as a member of the family, providing room, board and plenty of tender loving care. We also have a network of professional staff and several thousand well-trained volunteers throughout the world who are there to help you and your son or daughter every step of the way.



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FEES AND FUNDING

See our website, www.yfu.ca for current prices. Programs range from \$7,000 to \$14,000.

Grants

Students who demonstrate motivation and financial need can be awarded a grant of up to \$1,500 toward their exchange. We have additional discounts if your family wishes to host a student while, or the year before, you go abroad.

You first need to be accepted to a YFU exchange program in order to apply for a scholarship or grant. Once you have been interviewed and admitted, you should submit a one-page letter of motivation along with your registration package. There is no separate form. *Please remember to include the letter in order to be considered for a scholarship.*

Your letter should include:

- Why you want to become an exchange student.
- Your method of choosing your destination country.
- How you will help spread awareness about student exchanges and share your experiences with your Canadian classmates during your exchange. Some examples would be “writing articles to be printed in the school newspaper,” or “keeping a weekly blog.”
- Please describe in detail how you would be able to contribute to the YFU community after you return.

SEEING THE WORLD FOR THE SUMMER, A SEMESTER, OR A YEAR!

On the YFU academic year or semester programs, you will live with a host family and attend a local high school. You will have the opportunity to become fluent in another language as you live the life of a teenager in your host country for either a semester (4-6 months) or year (10-11 months).

A big part of the exchange is also getting to know the other international YFU students, and in most countries, YFU arranges trips to cities and attractions special to each destination (e.g. a week of skiing in Switzerland, or a bus tour across the country in Denmark).

Several countries also offer specialized programs – for example, Estonia and Sweden specialize in various types of arts, including fine arts and theatre, while Lithuania offers a year-long basketball program. Hungary offers an option to study music in addition to regular academic study at a vocational school. In order to qualify for this special program, students must have studied music previously and be serious in working at a high level with instructors. An audition tape is required and should be sent in with the YFU application.

[Contact YFU Canada](#) or [view our website](#) for the most up-to-date program information!



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HOW TO APPLY

Our exchanges emphasize an educational experience; all students live with a host family and attend local high schools.

General Requirements

- Students must be between 15 and 18 years old at the time of departure and should currently be enrolled in high school in their home province. Overage students can be accepted by certain countries on a case-by-case basis.
- We look for students who are flexible, have a spirit of adventure, and who will enjoy the challenges of adapting to new people and cultures.
- Consistent academic performance, with an overall 70% average, is required.
- We are an equal opportunity exchange program. We encourage all students regardless of race, ethnicity or disability to be part of an exchange experience.
- Good health is necessary. Comprehensive medical and dental insurance is part of the program package; however, it may not cover some pre-existing conditions.
- Certain programs may have specific requirements for age, grades, language skills etc.

Your Application

Step 1 - Review the material in this information package to determine which program, country and departure time you are interested in. Note that not all programs are available at all departure times. Fill out and submit the application form in this document. Keep in mind the deadlines – allow six months before departure to complete the whole application process. Submit a scanned copy of the application form to the Outbound Coordinator at outbound@yfu.ca and send the hard copy and application fee by mail to the YFU Canada office.

Step 2 - Once we receive your paper application, we will contact you to set up a time for an interview with one of our staff or volunteers. If an interview cannot be completed in person, it will take place via Skype.

Step 3 – You will be notified via email whether you have been accepted. Country placements are first-come, first-served, so you would have to decide at that time whether to accept the spot. If you choose to accept, we ask you to send in your contract and first deposit of \$950 within two weeks to secure your place.

Step 4 - Once you have completed and submitted the registration package, you have finished your part of the application process. We will forward all your information to your host country, and they will work on placing you with a school and host family. Please be patient; your placement information might not come until about a month before your departure, as it takes time to find the most suitable family for each student.



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YFU CANADA OUTBOUND STUDENT APPLICATION FORM

Personal Information

First Name: _____ Last Name _____

Middle Name: _____ Birth Date (dd/mm/yyyy) _____

Male Female

Contact Info

Street: _____ City: _____

Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Are you a Canadian citizen? Yes/No *If no, what is your country of citizenship?* _____

Family Information

I live with my...*(check as many as appropriate)*:

Mother: Father: Mother and Father: Step-parents: Other: _____

The preferred parental contact while I am on exchange is my _____.

Name of Father/Guardian 1: _____

Occupation: _____

Email address: _____

Employer and business phone: _____

Name of Mother/Guardian 2: _____

Occupation: _____

Email address: _____

Employer and business phone: _____



School Information

School Name: _____ Expected Graduation (M/Y): _____

School Address: _____

Academic Average (over past two years): _____ Last grade completed: _____

If you spoke to a teacher or guidance counsellor about the program, please tell us:

Program Choice

Please confirm that your program choice is being offered for the time and length requested. Check our [website](#), or [contact us via email](#). If applying for a country that offers multiple languages, such as German- or French-speaking Switzerland, please also specify the preferred language.

Desired Departure Season

Desired Departure Year

Summer/Fall Winter/Spring

2019 2020 2021

Desired Program Length: Year-Long: Semester: Trimester: Summer (4-6 wk):

Country Choices

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Signature of Parent: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Student: _____ Date: _____

How did you hear about us?

Internet Teacher/Counsellor YFU Staff/Volunteer YFU Student

Friend Newspaper/Radio Social Media/Facebook YFU Host Family

Club Parents' Employer YFU Brochure/Poster Other _____

Finally, tell us why you chose to Go YFU!
