

Pre-release  
WITH EDITS



## Handbook for host families of host students from the USA



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## Foreword (not yet edited)

Dear host family,

you have invited a young student from the USA to live one year in your family and you have the chance to make new intercultural experiences.

At first sight, the German and US (teen) culture may have much in common, e.g. fashion, media and McDonalds.

At a look behind the scenes you will find how different the values and the "view of the world" are. Think about the importance of religion, the influence of historic roots for both countries or the exposure to space and time

*„For Americans 100 years are a long time – for Europeans 100 kms are a long distance“*

With this handbook, we want to give you a first insight into the culture of your host student. We will discuss topics that often cause questions or incomprehension when Germans and US people live together.

This Handbook is a community project of seven US-American and German full-timers and volunteers of AFS. Many experiences of former host families and host students were taken into account of this project.

Please don't hesitate, to tell us your experiences, so that we can use them for our future work.

We wish you a nice time during this fascinating exchange of experiences!



*This project was funded by the Transatlantic Program of the Federal Republic of Germany from funds of the European Recovery Program (ERP) of the Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology (BMWi).*



## Quiz: Germany & USA – everything similar, or something?



Test your intercultural US-knowledge with this little quiz!

### Which behaviour complies in the US with good table manners?

|   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| A | Eating with sticks, elbows on the table   | B | Eating with the right hand, not using knife and fork                           |
| C | Cutting the meat with the knife, than change the fork from the left to the right hand, the left hand lays down on the lap | D | Eating with fork in the left, knife in the right hand, both hands on the table |

### On the airplane, you meet a nice US-American, who says when leaving that you might come around when you are near his place. How do you behave?

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| A | You will drop by when you are around   | B | You will visit him after you called him to say you will be there           |
| C | You plan your next summer holidays that you can spent two weeks visiting him – at least you have an invitation | D | You will recognize it as a polite guesture and don't give it any relevance |

### The total area of the US in proportion to Germany is:

|   |     |   |      |                  |
|---|-----|---|------|------------------|
| A | 1:1 | B | 26:1 | Gelöscht: 26:1   |
| C | 9:1 | D | 48:1 | Gelöscht: 1:100  |
|   |     |   |      | Gelöscht: 1:1000 |

### What typical topic in a „Bravo“ [popular German teen magazine] will you never find in a US teen magazine?

|   |   |   |             |
|---|---|---|-------------|
| A | Styling-Tips                              | B | Photo-Story |
| C | Dr. Sommer with Photos [sexual education] | D | Star-Poster |

Correct Answer: 1 a ; 2 d ; 3 b ; 4 c

## American values (not yet edited)

*“Only when you understand the cultural themes of any given culture can you accurately interpret and understand its inhabitants’ behaviour, communication, and way of life. If you don’t understand their cultural themes, you will necessarily project your own values, norms and beliefs onto them, and this projection is one of the principal causes of intercultural misunderstanding.” (Greg Ness, Germany, Unravelling An Enigma)*

Although the aim of intercultural encounter, like the exchange experience, is, to get to know to a culture from the inside – “learning by doing”, the quote on top makes clear that it is very helpful and necessary, to prepare for the fundamental differences of the other culture even as a host family.

Next to the many practical tips, some chapters in this handbook are dedicated to the cultural values like e.g. patriotism and sexuality.

These values can be presented as pair of contradiction, where everybody tends to see the predominant value in his culture as positive and the other as negative. Proverbs and sayings show the core of this thinking.

### Honesty

*“Honesty is the best policy.”  
“You won’t get far by lying.”  
“A liar is not believed even when he speaks the truth.”*

As you see in the chapter “Communication” with direct and indirect speaking styles, the honest German may appear as impolite to offending to a US-American. The US-American may appear as superficial to dishonest to the German.

### Effort and thoroughness / efficiency

*No pain, no gain.*

Germans tend to explore a problem to the deepest ground, to let no aspect be untouched until a optimal solution is found. US-Americans like the fast and efficient solution, while they accept to may lose some secondary aspects as long as the major line is into the right direction. US-Americans find long discussions as exhausting when they don’t lead to a direct outcome. The different methods of schooling (see “school” chapter) US students are comparatively less trained in debating verbalizing of their personal opinion. Internalized sense of duty or anticipated obedience are typical German attributes and should not be expected from a US host student.

In Germany it is common to try treating everybody the same and direct competition is frowned upon, in the U.S. everybody has the same rights, but a direct competition is seen as positive motivation. Cups and medals are used as motivation boost in any part of the life. In supermarkets, there are portraits of the salesman, students collect lots of trophies in their school time for sports benefits. On the business cards of employees, often the terms “president” or “director” are claimed what are not comparable to the German meanings of these terms.

## Self-determination

*Cleanliness is next to godliness.*

Orderliness is in Germany an important cultural value. Scenes where pedestrians snub cyclists for driving on the wrong side loudly are only seen in Germany. For US-Americans with their strong sense of individualism and personal freedom, many German rules may appear as fussy and absurd.

“Manifest Destiny”- the personal opportunities of development is a very important cultural value for US-Americans. The idea that in “the country of endless opportunities” “everybody can be president” (at least having the right to, if not the opportunity). This personal freedom of self-determination starts within the schools (choose the subjects you like in the high school). People are not always judged by their level of education but by their skills and financial success – craftsmen, actors and business people – teacher have not a high recommendation.

The personal opportunities of development and individualism are very important. In New Hampshire there is no technical inspection agency for cars. New Hampshire’s slogan is

*“Live Free Or Die”*

In contrast to that, there are strict speed limits in the states of “free riders”. There is a seatbelt law even in school buses and on ground carousels for small children. From the German view, the juridification of the legal system is insane – extremely high actions for trespass lead to a limitation of the personal freedom through the protection of those trespasses. A smoking ban in private houses is thought of. For teenagers, there are generally more strict laws (see rules and laws chapter) so that you can expect that a host student will feel more personal freedom in Germany even if they don't have many choices at the German school like at home. Another aspect is the tight “social net” in Germany of work-, health and annuity insurance. For Germans, it is very important to be supported from the state in the case of need. In the US, “Do It Yourself” or “Every man is the architect of his own fortune” is essential. The right to own guns and defend your belongings is deeply fixed in the US core values.

## Anxiety

In US-American handbooks on German culture, often our “Anxiety” (Besorgnis) is mentioned. Meant is the German tendency to worry about something before a problem appears. Farewell words like

*“Take care of yourself!” or “Drive carefully!”*

will not have an impact, but you want show your anxiety and not have to reproach yourself if something happens. This may appear to a US host student as hyper-provident. Much more positive are the American “Enjoy your ride!” (“Schöne Fahrt!”) or “Have a nice day!” (“Viel Spaß!”).

On the other hand, Germans see that Americans fear other things like “germs” (Bakterien) or “odor” (Körpergeruch) up to the fear of criminality and terrorism. In the meantime, it is less dangerous to make photos of public areas like train station in Russia than in the US. The fear of the threat from outside – as political systems (e.g. communism), illegal immigration (e.g. from Mexico) or the “axis of evil” are equal to the German anxiety about future.

## Sense of tradition vs. focussing on the future

The US society is generally much more focussing on the future than the German. The pioneering spirit of the “wild west”, which bravely headed towards the unknown, is in contradiction to the German sense of constancy and predictability. For US Americans, job changes or move is a positive challenge and no stroke of fate. Flexibility and mobility in the job are increasing in Germany, too – in a country where people wanted to do their profession for a lifetime in the past. The German proverb

*“Everything used to be better”*

will not be heard from an American.

## Money matters

While Germans want to have earned the money they spend, because debts (Schulden) are linguistically near to guilt (Schuld), the Americanization of our society makes credit cards, small personal credits and “virtual” money accepted in Germany, too, and another generation- and country specific difference is created.

## Patriotism (worked through – no edits needed!)

US-American exchange students recognize a big difference between the Germans’ attitude towards Germany and their own deep bond to the USA. Explanation can be found in the history of the two countries (look at chapter about US History): US-Americans experienced their history as a positive continuum of fighting for independence, conquering their continent, struggling for unity and defence against exterior enemies. Germans on the other side had to face the horror of the Holocaust and two World Wars in Europe and to cope with the question of collective and individual guilt.



In the USA as the classic country of immigration, the relatedness to the nation USA is often the only tie between ethnically, linguistically and religiously different groups. Symbols and rituals help to strengthen this relatedness, e.g. singing the national anthem before school or sportive events.

For some exchange students it is difficult to cope with the censorious and critical German attitude towards US-American politics.



*„We often discussed about politics with Silvana. She discussed with her classmates a lot. She noticed the very bad view of America of her classmates, what is highly impacted by the present president and government and war in Iraq. Silvana had the same opinion about that but she felt offended by her classmates how they spoke about the “Amis” and especially that all Americans were generalized.”*

*Host family survey, spring 2007*

There is a lack of background information about other countries in the US media, therefore US Teenagers grow up with a US-centred world view. In Germany, this might be perceived as nationalism or chauvinism.



„The media is mostly reports from within the USA and very few from other countries. When you don't search information yourself, you won't get some. Because many media only reports from the "wonderful America", many Americans feel superior to all the others."

Host family survey, spring 2007

A US-American student is not necessarily common with German history. Because of US comedy series, jokes about Nazi are popular and commonly used without knowing the historical background.



**Talk to your host child about German history and its impact for today's sensitiveness and resulting political consequences – e.g. that there are no big celebrations on our national holiday, our relationship to our national anthem or flag.**

### Sarcasm, irony, wordplays

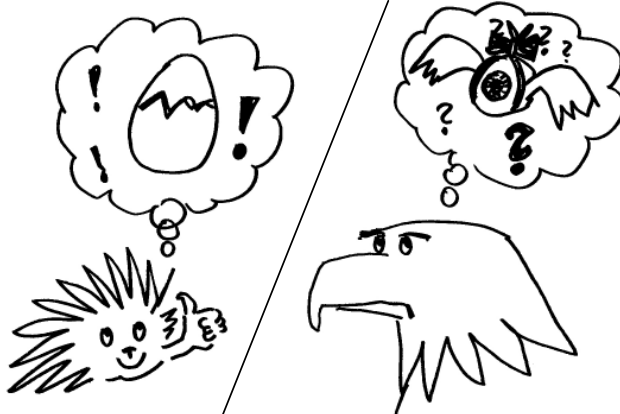
For exchange students who fight with the basics of grammar and articulation, it is nearly impossible to differ in sarcasm and irony and their subtle difference in accent. Wordplays nearly aren't translatable. The example (see down) shows us, that within a language, misunderstandings can occur. It's very spiteful when a US student tries to come along with a difficult language AND people who aren't that "polite" and "political correct" than he is used to from home!



*In autumn of 2006 a German host family explain to their host student while an exhausting discussion on the Cyprus-issue, that they were talking about "Turkey and Greece". They felt affronted that he made totally improper comments to their topic. The host son earned a lot of mock as they found out that he thought their topic is the meal of Thanksgiving – turkey and grease. Those and other embarrassing situations and the raising sarcasm of the host family in addition with his raising shyness were a reason why the boy was an "early-return" after 6 months.*

Try to reconstruct the original German sentence, the US host student would declare for totally senseless.

Is it a gift for the eagle when he becomes an eye?



**(Ist es Gift für den Igel, wenn er ein Ei bekommt?)**

(Is it poison to the hedgehog, when he gets an egg?)

| <u>For understanding (not in German HB!)</u> |                 |                |                       |
|--|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>English</b>                               | <b>German</b>   | <b>English</b> | <b>German</b>         |
| <i>gift</i>                                  | <i>Geschenk</i> | <i>become</i>  | <i>zu etw. werden</i> |
| <i>poison</i>                                | <i>Gift</i>     | <i>get</i>     | <i>bekommen</i>       |
| <i>eagle</i>                                 | <i>Adler</i>    | <i>eye</i>     | <i>Auge</i>           |
| <i>hedgehog</i>                              | <i>Igel</i>     | <i>egg</i>     | <i>Ei</i>             |

## Communication Styles

What came first: The chicken or the egg? Is our language and communication style affected by our culture? Or does our verbal and non-verbal language limit our view on the world and determines our cultural values? In any case, we do need empathy to be able to communicate with another culture. Before developing empathy for others, we need to understand our own pattern of communication and to identify, how we differ to other cultures.

That applies for both our values, behaviour and communication style. All patterns of communication are important for that: How we present information, how fast and loud we speak, when we interrupt someone, when we excuse ourselves, smile and use humour or other gestures.

### Direct and indirect communication

In general U.S. Americans and Germans consider themselves direct in their communication style (and compared to many cultures such as those found in Asia, they are).

A direct style of communication is one in which the meaning of what is said is found primarily in the words spoken. In an indirect style of communication the meaning is more often derived from factors other than what is said, such as the sender's status relative to the receiver, the context of the situation and body language.

In short, direct communication is like "reading the headlines" and indirect communication is like "reading between the lines." How you sense another culture and their characteristics, is defined by the perspective of your own culture. US-Americans and Germans sense themselves as cultures that communicate directly.

In comparison to many Asian and Latin-American cultures, they are. On an axis between direct and indirect communication, western civilisations are on the one side and Asians on the other side.

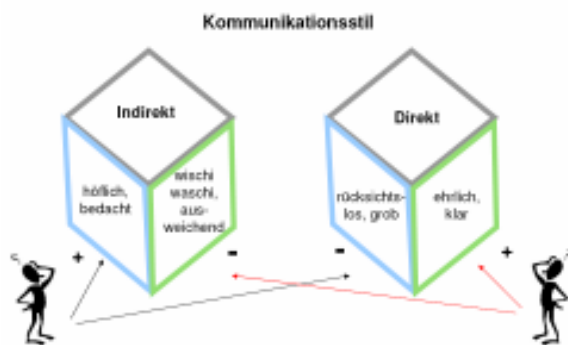
In direct comparison, US-Americans often are irritated, because Germans criticize even more open or don't hold back their personal opinion.



Half of the German host families identified differences in communication style. Mentioned were discussion style, topics and the choices of words.

In the German language, words like "should" or "must" are often used. In US language, advises are mostly formulated as indirect questions: "Could you clean the table" is a direct order and not a question! American students feel challenged and offended by the common German choice of words. They use "please" and "thank you" much more and see their host siblings as being impolite.

On the other side, German students interpret the less direct style of communication in the USA as superficial and wishy-washy, while they sense their own, more direct style as honest.



*„In our family, the personal opinion is spoken out. Our host daughter said, this wouldn't happen in her family”*

*Host family survey, spring 2007*



*“Germans tend to be very direct and appear to be critical. ‘This tastes really bad’ Americans would say something like ‘I’ve never tasted something like this before’ The explanation being that he felt it was important that I knew it was bad tasting so 1) I could fix it 2) not waste my time making it again.”*

*American host mum*

The different handling of critique is also shown in the choice of words. Germans use “intensifier” to strengthen their critique (like absolutely, totally, really, especially, definitely): “His behaviour is absolutely rude”. US-Americans often use “reductions” like “maybe, eventually, fairly, anyhow”. The same statement would sound like “Anyhow, he didn’t behave very cleverly.”

### Values and Communication

Another important difference in communication touches “honesty” versus “friendliness”. While in Germany, honesty is a very high value - in the US-american communication friendliness is more important.

“The food doesn’t taste good“ translated to the American culture would sound like “I’ve never eaten something like this”

For US-Americans, it’s difficult to differentiate between a “animadversion on the thing” and the unusual “animadversion on the person” of the Germans.

“Everything is fine – always. The communication is very superficial, even if trouble is obvious.”

**Kommentar:** I wouldn't say this is "friendliness" but rather what we consider to be "politeness" Maybe that is just an issue of translation.

**Kommentar:** I don't understand "animadversion" here. Do you mean that we are more person focused vs. idea focused in our style of communication? We have a harder time criticizing others' ideas as we see them somewhat attached to the person. Someone who is idea focused doesn't attached the person to the idea and therefore has no qualms about criticizing the idea.



*“Everything is fine – always. The communication is very superficial, even if trouble is obvious.”*

*German host family*

A part of the US mentality is a strong pursuit of benefit and the desire for approval. Compliments on the look or the achievements of a person or group are spoken out directly, creating a personal contact. Compliments e.g. for the new haircut, which sound in our [the Germans] ears as easily spoken, create a polite start of conversation. While the German honesty or suggestion for improvement of the haircut can be very offending to a US-American.

Another important value for US-Americans is „equality“. This means the equal opportunities, to rise from “dishwasher to millionaire”. But this means, that basically everyone has the same value, too “All men are created equal” is a basic statement of the declaration of independence. This can be found in the language, too. In German, “du” und “Sie” represent the differences in hierarchy between the communicating persons. The US-American “you” doesn’t indicate that. New acquaintances are called by their first name – no matter what their position is. The same applies for colleagues, the boss or staff in a restaurant or shop. For Germans, this may sound disrespectful or uncouth, but for Americans it’s a sign of the equality of all men.



**Explain your host student the differences in „du“ und „Sie“ and the use of first and last names – and give examples for that.**

### Conversations, Smalltalk, Discussions

Sitting in a café or at the dinner table and talking for hours is a way for Germans to their knowledge, become better informed, and to get to know each other. U.S. Americans might perceive these long discussions as perfectionist or tedious. U.S. Americans value creativity and imagination and tend to jump around in their conversations, leading German to view them as superficial and simple.

The communication style of the US-Americans is comparable to the headlines of a newspaper: clear and brief. While Germans like to get deeper background-information, trying to understand the “why” and the history of the problem, US-Americans are interested in a brief overview. Not the problem, but the solution is interesting. „Don’t tell me the problem – tell me the solution“. For host students, who mostly had no information on German politics and society it’s difficult to participate on those discussions.

**Kommentar:** It may be confusing to use this analogy here and in the description of direct and indirect because they mean different things in each context.



*„Communication was even very, very difficult even after she had learned German very well. There was nearly no conversation – we had to drag every word out of her.“*

*German host family*

### Smalltalk

Smalltalk is a major way to get into contact with someone new. When two U.S. Americans meet for the first time, they often use small talk as a way of trying to find out what they have in common which can serve as a basis for further conversation and deepening the relationship. This search for common ground is important in a land of immigrants, a land of loosely linked, diverse mass of people who frequently change places for professional reasons.

In contrast, German society is more ethnically homogeneous and well established, so there is less need to seek information about the other individual – because most habi-

tants of small towns know each other anyway. Typical small talk-themes are not found on the same personal level.

American Smalltalk cover personal themes like the job, likes and dislikes. German Smalltalk covers common societal or intellectual themes like politics. US-Americans may appear as superficial for Germans, while Americans sense Germans as cold and reserved.



**For US-American host students it's very tough to take part in German discussions, especially in the first months. Normally, they haven't heard too much of German society and politics and feel insecure in the German language. They mostly are overwhelmed by the impressions and not uninterested on the suggestions of the host family. "I don't care" doesn't mean that "I'm not interested at all" but mostly "Please make the decision for me."**

A sense of community in Germany is created by "lamenting": the late train, the impoliteness of the staff and – of course – the weather.

Lamenting has become a social ritual and a way to establish a sense of commonality and social solidarity. Through complaining together and about the same topics, the speakers are implicitly communicating that they belong to the same group and thus share a common view - and common interests in the improvement of the situation.

Instead of discussing about grievances, U.S. Americans often tend to use humour and irony to get their point across. This humour is not transferable. Humour and irony are bound to the culture: historical events, TV-shows, news, VIPs etc. are the groundwork for this. In the US, there are neither German TV-shows nor German VIPs or politicians in the media. For host students it's very tough – even if they speak German – to get the point of jokes.



**Think about the use of irony and sarcasm – especially at the beginning of the exchange year. Your student might misinterpret it.**

### **Nonverbal Communication**

Germans are more willing to use their tone of voice to express negative emotions (anger, frustration, etc.), whereas Americans use their tone of voice to express happier, positive feelings.

Silence/pauses are longer in German speech. Germans view this as being thoughtful, but Americans are not as comfortable with this.

Although the fast switches of topics, the order of a conversation is stricter than in Germany. Germans do interrupt each other to signalise their interest. US-Americans go back and forth in talking after a quiet pause. Imagine speaking with an Italian, who is gesticulating and always heckling into your sentences – US-American host students feel the same when talking with a German.

While both Germans and Americans value direct eye contact, Americans do not maintain the eye contact for as long. The German may view the American as being untrustworthy, whereas the American may view the German as being too intense.

American smiles are an indication of politeness, but German smiles are a sign of real affection.



*“She was very polite, but didn't said her opinion clearly, e.g. proposals always yes, but wasn't pleased afterwards, what she didn't say. I always felt the gap between verbal and nonverbal communication.”*

*Host family survey, spring 2007*

## Conclusion

Differences in communication style and – methods – verbal and non-verbal – may appear as high barriers in understanding and integration of the student. Good communication is always the key to completion of daily life and it is very important to develop a shared awareness of differences in communication style. Discuss this topic with your student and find out, what cultural norms apply for you and your student.



## Speak German !

When a German host family decides to host a student from the USA, the decision is often made based on a desire to practice their English with a native English speaker. The host parents often expect that the US-American guest will teach the German children English or help them with their English homework.

The US-American host child can (and should) never be expected to fulfil these expectations. He/she is coming to Germany to learn about a new culture. For this reason it is absolutely necessary for the US-American student to learn German. Otherwise he/she will have difficulties making friends, gaining independence, experiencing certain aspects of a new culture, taking part in daily life, and benefitting from his/her AFS-year.



You should try to support your host child as he/she begins to speak his/her first German words, when he/she starts to use idioms and when he/she starts to speak in complete sentences. If you think your host child is less talented in languages than German kids are, please keep in mind that he/she comes from a completely different school system. Your host child will probably have problems with word order and grammar because

- Gelöscht: child
- Gelöscht: they often have in mind¶ the wish to talk English with him/her.
- Gelöscht: They
- Gelöscht: have
- Gelöscht: expectation that the
- Gelöscht: ¶ host
- Gelöscht: own
- Gelöscht: doing
- Gelöscht: Only this way he/she
- Gelöscht: get along well in Germany, he/she will be able to
- Gelöscht: e
- Gelöscht: will be
- Gelöscht: t
- Gelöscht: will have own experiences, wil
- Gelöscht: l
- Gelöscht: e
- Gelöscht: German every-day life
- Gelöscht: will profit
- Gelöscht: help
- Gelöscht: to
- Gelöscht: the
- Gelöscht: s and by and by to
- Gelöscht: nd whole
- Gelöscht: totally
- Gelöscht:
- Gelöscht: Probably
- Gelöscht: y
- Gelöscht: s

he/she has never learned a foreign language before and therefore has not acquired basic knowledge of grammar, even in his/her own language.

Try to steer your host child away from US-American TV and instead try to help him/her find good programs on German TV. Encourage your host student to read German newspapers and magazines or to listen to German books on CD. If your host student has a particular hobby, try to find German magazines that focus on this hobby, e.g. tennis, cars, etc. He/she will be interested in the topic and will therefore be motivated to read the magazine articles.

It would be desirable if your host child could participate in family discussions. But don't expect this to happen right away. Perhaps your host child still has significant problems with the language and cannot follow the conversation. Or he/she is not used to the particular conversation style or topics being discussed. When individuals are learning a foreign language, they often feel more comfortable speaking with one person at a time. A family conversation with more than one other participant might be difficult to follow and somewhat intimidating at first. As the student's language skills improve, he/she will be more likely to participate in group conversations



It might take a lot of time and patience before your host child speaks German. But your efforts and encouragement will be worthwhile.

- Gelöscht: sn't got the
- Gelöscht: also
- Gelöscht: with regard to
- Gelöscht: get
- Gelöscht: of this you better
- Gelöscht: look out for
- Gelöscht: me
- Gelöscht: i
- Gelöscht: child
- Gelöscht: soon share (take part in) discussions in the
- Gelöscht: will
- Gelöscht:
- Gelöscht: too early !
- Gelöscht: still great
- Gelöscht: 't
- Gelöscht: isn't jet
- Gelöscht: style (way) of your
- Gelöscht: s
- Gelöscht: ¶
- Gelöscht: All together
- Gelöscht: i
- Gelöscht: till
- Gelöscht: these
- Gelöscht:

## Friendships (not yet edited)

In the matter of finding friends, there are culture-specific characteristics that may cause misunderstandings. You could compare the depth of friendships with the help of coconuts and peaches. The depth of the intrusion into the fruit symbolizes the depth of a friendship. For Germans, there is the "Coconut principle": It's tough to break through the hard paring – but if that happened, it's easy to go one forward. Germans appear to be cold, but if the "ice is broken", very deep friendships can develop, holding on for very long time. For US-Americans, there is the "Peach principle": It's easy to break through the paring and come close to the core, but the core is nearly unbreakable. US-Americans are very open and friendly and seem to let people come very close to them. However, acquaintances can disappear as fast as they came. But they do have very few but very close friends. For Germans, those many, changing friendships of US-Americans may appear superficial - for US-Americans, the German friendships seem like a contract with many obligations.

Both systems stand in contrast to each other (hard paring, soft core vs. soft paring, hard core [this is a German saying/proverb]), and for the host student it may be very difficult to adjust to this.



An Example: For US-Americans words like "Hey, come around today" and a short "Yes, sure" as the answer don't mean anything. They would be surprised, if someone really comes around. For Germans, this is a serious invitation and they would clarify the details.

The US host student needs to know, what he needs to expect if he invites someone like this or what is expected of him if he accepts an invitation (see "communication" section).



**As a host family, you should try to help your student with that. Encourage him/her to invite classmates, neighbours or other people from e.g. the sports club (see "leisure activities" section), even if those don't approach the student directly. Please explain the differences in US/German friendships.**



*„Our host student said the Germans seem to be cold. In contrast to the US-Americans, we Germans are more reserved and it's more difficult to get in contact than in the US. But friendships outwear longer.“*

*German host family*

## School life

### The US Education system

Prior to the twelve regular years of schooling, pupils usually attend the so called pre-school or kindergarten (please do not mix up with our 'Vorschule' (=pre school, last year of Kindergarten, C.E.). Here the basic skills necessary for elementary school (year 3-5) are taught and learned. Students may attend public schools, private schools, or they may be home-schooled.



The U.S. educational system includes twelve years of regular schooling (age at completion: 18) and leads to receipt of the *High School Diploma*. The system does not differentiate for students to enter one of several school forms at the lower secondary level, such as the German Gymnasium, Realschule and Hauptschule. Instead the students attend a mix of required and elective courses at a compulsory school which suit their academic talents best.

The groups of students are put together newly every year (course system instead of class structure) and the major aim of the school is to create homogeneous groups of equally talented students no matter which age they are. Thus a 9<sup>th</sup> grader (Freshmen) could study in the same course as a student of the last year (Senior). After High School, students can add a four-stage higher education degree system (associate bachelor's master's and doctorate as well as a number of non-degree certificates and diplomas). (the figure of the school system is also put into the appendix, like you do)

### A typical daily schedule at a US-American school

High school start times generally range from 7:30 to 8:30 and end between 2:00 and 3:30. The length of the school day is determined by the State and the local school board. School recess and lunch periods are very limited in most schools as they are under increasing pressure for their students to achieve higher scores in standardized testing. Students may stay at school until early evening to take part in extra-curricular activities, such as sports games or drama practice up to 3 times per week the matches are held and the students may not come home after dinner hour to complete their school homework afterwards. However, the US-American School allows to do the 'homework' at school hours in a so called 'Study Hall' hour under supervision of a teacher.

Most high school students have part-time jobs after school and on weekends, like working at the local supermarket, delivering newspapers or baby sitting.



*„no academic pressure in the US, sports/athletic achievements are important, school and sports form the students school day”*

*German host family*

## Lessons

In the US-American Education system, there are required and elective courses which are to be taken. Depending on the degree of difficulty, the student receives credits for his total credit account. At the end of the school year and at the end of grade 12, a certain amount of credits have to be achieved in order to pass or to graduate. At the end of a term or a half year, students receive a report card which lists individual grades (A=excellent, B, C, D, F=Failed).

Because the course classes are taught by teachers who specialize in one or two subjects, the lessons are taught in the special room of the teachers. It is the students who move from room to room after each class. The school materials for each subject are stored in a personal locker and will be arranged newly for each session.

While some schools are trying to include Foreign Languages in their daily course structure, it is the exception that F.L. such as Spanish or German are taught before grade 9. Most students attend such a course for one to three years, but seldom have the opportunity to practice the language in daily life or at a field trip abroad.

Although the US-American exchange students are taught about the differences in the German-American Education system before their departure, they still are astonished to see they cannot choose their courses/classes freely. The right for election is an important element of the democratic understanding in the US and some students, when abroad, cannot understand that the difference in Education systems is not only to be seen in a negative light.

## Homework

In the US, homework is given and expected to be complete on a near daily basis. The US-American course system is organized with the same time table for every day of the week and therefore the tasks/assignments have to be completed for the following day. After half a year, the timetable changes according to the new courses. All homework is checked by the teacher for completion and usually graded as well. The student is told weekly what his work participation is worth compared to a percentage for the final grade. U.S. students are likely to be initially overwhelmed by the daily school life in Germany, due in great part to the language barrier and the fast speed of academic work. Because the German teachers do not have the same chance as their US-American colleagues to care about and spend as much time with their students during lessons or after school, the US exchange students may feel lost or even frustrated at the German schools.

**Kommentar:** Some classes only meet 2-3 days per week (Tues – Thurs) or Mon-Wed-Fri) so the schedule is not exactly the same daily.

**Kommentar:** Some schools have semesters, others quarters, and others trimesters. The classes change in accordance with this annual cycle.

*„ Our host son could not follow the lessons because of his few German language knowledge, therefore he sat in class sitting out and reading his English literature.”*



*“Our American girl found our Education system very tiring, but the manners of the students were viewed as very pleasant. Everybody can behave the way he wants, without picked on. Own opinion and way of dressing up are accepted by others.”*

*German host family*

In the US, it is generally not acceptable to copy homework from others or cheat during a test/exam. This would have serious consequences, such as automatic failing grades and in some cases disciplinary action. In general, it will be rather unlikely that a US student will cheat in Germany. Host parents should talk with the student about the consequences at German school which might be very different depending on the teachers and school.

### Support through teachers or the School network

US schools have many opportunities to support the students, in class and out of class. They do not only have teachers employed but also additional professions such as teachers for special needs, guidance counsellors, school psychologists and/or school nurses. While one single school psychologist in Germany has to take care of approx. 12 000 students, almost every High School in the US, no matter of which size, hires one school psychologist or one school social worker who support and relieve the teachers. Still, many teachers are occupied for more than just one job. They might be the coach of the sports team, the driving instructor or the band conductor. Thus, the teachers can establish a much closer relationship with their students compared to their German colleagues who might see their students only 45 minutes per day. Some US teachers even allow their students to address them with their first name or a nick name.



*„Teachers and students have been uninterested and less helpful.“*

*“At home, they had a personal connection with their teachers.”*

*German host family*

Another sign for the strong US school network is the strict ‘taking roll’ in each class. If a student receives too many missing hours or days, the parents (and the guidance counsellor) are contacted. The ‘tardies’/ attendance rates have a direct impact on a student’s final grade. US-American students often react surprised about the demand of independence at German schools. They are used to contact the guidance counsellor or the teacher when they need help. They can do so, because the staff is present at school until late afternoon. Because this often is not possible at German schools, the student might consider the atmosphere as cold and anonymous.



**It would be perfect if the host family can contact a supporting teacher at the school who will chaperone the exchange student. (Often the foreign language teachers spent a year abroad in a foreign country and can relate to the situation the student is in.**

### Extra-curricular activities

There are a wide range of activities available for the students in the afternoons including special interest clubs, musical groups, sports teams (Basketball, Baseball, Softball, Football, Wrestling, etc.). These activities are generally school sponsored and take place immediately after school on school grounds.

US students will likely miss these activities at the German schools



and have to be told that in Germany, sports activities or music clubs have to be contacted in the local community instead of relying to school offers.

Because the students will have more free time available than used to and this 'newly spare time' causes many problems, we will dedicate a new chapter for this topic (see chapter 'free time')

## Grades and Recognition

U.S. students are presented with diplomas and trophies starting at a young age, and it is not only the "top three" upon whom these are bestowed.

Praise and positive thinking are generally the norm and students expect good work or even a good effort to be acknowledged.

Often the students talk about receiving the best results in academic and sports competitions, therefore they are under enormous pressure to perform. Only the best students of a graduation class receive 'honors roll'. Diplomas and letters of recommendation are thought to be necessary to position students to enter the college or university of their choice.



*„School in Germany is way different to school in the US. It is from 8am to 1pm and the work is more exhausting. A test in Germany has less tasks but they require more writing and thinking. A test in America is crossing answers and filling out missing words. That is why you have to write less, and, from my opinion, they are way easier.“*

*Host student from the US, 2007/2008*

Because the High Schools hand out many school recognitions, it will be very different for the exchange student to miss out on these in Germany. Also, US students must know that in Germany, grades are not only calculated by written performance but further more by adding 'other (oral or extra) ratings' the students accomplish by 'bringing themselves in' in an extraordinary way.



*„Difficulties with the German Education system are to be expected.“*

*German host family*

## School Spirit

A common 'School spirit' is very strong in the U.S. The school spirit extends from the school itself to the broader community as evidence by high attendance rates at events and the tracking of team scores and ranking in local newspapers. The big enthusiasm and the support by the parents and friends of the school students can be compared to a fan crowd of a bigger German soccer club. Life-sized mascots, set up 'pep bands' and the motivated cheerleaders are another manifestation of the high level of school spirit in the U.S., their sole purpose being to motivate the crowds of spectators to cheer on their team. Schools create and sell merchandising (T-shirts, scarves), class rings and bumper stickers (e.g. with the following text: 'Proud to be a mother of an honor student!')

Highlights of a school year are the social activities such as the Prom or Homecoming dances. These celebrations can be quite elaborate and sometimes costly for the student or parents of the student who wishes to participate.

US students surely will miss the school spirit as experienced at home.



## Free time (worked through – no edits needed!)

For US Host students it may be a problem how to spend their free time. In the US, school usually ends in the late afternoon. Pre-organized activities like sports, arts, music, theatre etc. take place in school. Every day in school is scheduled so that the student doesn't need to worry about how to spend his free time. Being at home again, there is usually no more time to spend, because homework needs to be done.

In Germany, where school ends in the early afternoon, there are only few pre-organised activities. Teenagers have to search and organise them on their own.



*„Our host student had all-day lessons in America and it was a huge problem for him, to change over to the half-day school. – Boredom at the afternoon – and to organise learning himself. He said that he wouldn't miss his parents or friends, but school.”*

*German host family*

So it may happen to US host students that they don't know what to do with their lots of free time, especially at the beginning of their stay, because they haven't formed friendships already (see "friendship" section). Host families who don't know that may judge the student to be antisocial or as someone who doesn't take initiative. On the other hand, the US host student may feel the host family to be little helpful or disinterested.



**It would be very helpful to encourage the host student to speak out his interests and find proper activities. That needs to explain the German "system" of leisure activities with it's different ways of organization in clubs, sports clubs or special schools and to make it easier for the student to join the group. It is important to show the student how he could get to the location where it takes place (see "public transportation" section).**

The host student can feel this many free time as a huge freedom, what is confirmed by US students who just came back from their stay in Germany, who adored the "many freedoms" in Germany. For host students it may be difficult to find out where the limit of the German freedom is. Some tend to play with that and to kick over the traces. So there should be made arrangements in prior towards curfews. Curfews are common in the US and often quite strict.



*„In the US, school ends in the late afternoon. Here in Germany, students mostly are at home for lunch. For many host students, it's a problem to organise and use this free time sensuous. Often, the TV is turned on and that's it.”*

*German host family*

# Transportation and Mobility

One big cultural difference between the US and Germany is in the matter of transportation and mobility. Each country's system has developed according to the density of population and, the history and transportation needs of each country.

In 2003 there were more private vehicles in the USA than drivers. Each private household averaged 1.9 vehicles, totalling 204 million. That means that in the USA there were 700 vehicles per 1000 people. The average in Germany which is known as the "country of automobiles" was about 560 vehicles per 1000 (46,6 million on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2007). In spite of this fact public transportation in Germany is much more commonly used. US citizens are greatly dependent on automobiles for transportation due to the lack of public options, especially in rural areas.

Gelöscht: These

Gelöscht: s

Gelöscht: have

Gelöscht: had

Gelöscht: in average

Gelöscht: a total of

(See list with more details in the appendix)

Accordingly many us students will not be used to public transportation:

*In San José, Ca., you can find multi-lingual information in the interior of tram coaches, Spanish as well as Vietnamese, which indicates, that these trams are serving areas with dense minority population.*



Gelöscht: There are two reasons why the majority of US host students will most likely

Gelöscht: be

Gelöscht: On one hand most of them origin from rural areas, small towns or suburb housing areas where public transportation is less available (neighbourhoods of WASP - white anglo saxon protestants), on the other hand are those public transportation systems and areas of urban conglomeration with a higher density of social and financial "week" population regarded as "not safe". ¶

Gelöscht: as well Spanish

Gelöscht: a

Gelöscht: got his

Gelöscht: c

Gelöscht: e

Gelöscht: or is driven by friends or family members.

Gelöscht: One exception is the system of the world wide known yellow school busses which is spread all over the USA ¶

Gelöscht: host child

Gelöscht: to him

Gelöscht: used

Gelöscht: y

Gelöscht: host child

Gelöscht: to him

Gelöscht: .

Gelöscht: Arguments like¶

Gelöscht: ing

Gelöscht: saving costs

Gelöscht: and

Gelöscht: of a "chauffeur"

Gelöscht: ing

Gelöscht: might help your student to accept and appreciate the loss of the used comfort ¶

A typical US American exchange student may have received his/her license at age 16 and is used to driving even short distances with his own vehicle or a family car. The majority of schools in the USA run their own fleets of yellow school busses for transporting students exclusively.

Cycling or walking is - when it is practiced - a sportive activity rather than a matter of mobility, in areas other than urban.

How can you as host family help your new family member to get used to the new and unfamiliar situation?

## Tip in general

\* Explain to your student that youngsters in Germany are used to getting around independently without using a car, but by using public transportation, cycling or walking. Explain, that German parents are less likely to chauffeur their kids around regularly - they do it only when there is not other possibilities. Introduce your student to the available transportation systems and explain your expectations of use. Encourage your student to use public transportation and point out the following advantages:

- reduces pollution
- fitness
- saves energy
- independence
- gain experiences in the neighbourhood

## Tip Public Transport

*Being asked what they would like to take back home from Germany after the exchange experience many students name the public transportation systems as one of their favourite "souvenirs"*

Let your host child know that the use of public transport is widely common in Germany and almost absolutely safe.

Explain to your host child where and when there might be less safe areas and show him where and how to get help (for example at emergency-facilities like "SOS-columns")

Make sure your student gets to know all necessary information about the public transportation system in your region - including maps, time tables, price lists, instructions how to use ticket vending machines and whatever.

Also think about explaining small details like pressing a button to demand the stop of a bus or the opening of the door. Also, explain the "tiny" differences about how time, distances and numbers are written in Germany (see chapter XXX in the appendix) (16,45 Uhr = 4:45 p.m., distance is measured in km instead of miles, numbers are written 1.000,00 instead of 1,000.00).

Be aware that you will have to be more patient with your student and give him extra time for unexpected/unplanned detours. Your student may not ask questions or know things which are self evident to you.

### Tip Bicycling

Encourage your host child to use the bike frequently (with the above arguments) and whenever it is suitable.

Show him the bike paths off the main traffic routes and let him know if bike transport in public transportation of your region is available.

Explain the traffic rules and safety aspects and how he can protect himself and his bike. Teach him how to care for his bike and how to repair it.

Be patient and give your student extra time for detours and breaks if necessary.

### Tip Walking

Not only cycling but also walking might be uncommon to your host child. Encourage your student to explore your street or neighbourhood or downtown by foot. Many German towns have include small shops, cafés, public parks and busy life in the streets. Encourage US students to explore your locale to discover resources for activities and socializing.

US students may be less savvy at reading train maps, train schedules and basic direction skills. Be aware these students may not have any experience in these skills until now.

### Tip Car driving

Driving of any motorvehicles is not allowed for students regardless if they hold valid driver's licenses. Hitch hiking is forbidden as well.

Your student may get to know German youngsters who already have driver's permission. Talk to your student about your worries and the issues of "driving and alcohol". Try to find alternative ride options that are comfortable for you.

- Gelöscht: that you host child
- Gelöscht: that and where one has to
- Gelöscht: So a
- Gelöscht: need to
- Gelöscht: host child
- Gelöscht: host
- Gelöscht: child
- Gelöscht: will
- Gelöscht: not
- Gelöscht: e
- Gelöscht: Many US-American housing areas do not have sidewalks. (Often mailboxes are facing the driveway for easy access to car drivers).¶
- Gelöscht: host child
- Gelöscht: ,
- Gelöscht: ,
- Gelöscht: feet
- Gelöscht: He might be stunned and surprised to find
- Gelöscht: many
- Gelöscht: within walking distance. Especially in the beginning of the experience
- Gelöscht: American
- Gelöscht: might get bored in the afternoons when there are no school activities to participate. He might needs help to get ideas and to develop motivation what to do and where to go
- Gelöscht: Many of the US-American host students find it very difficult to locate his US-home on a map or on Google Earth and have a less profound sense of orientation and 3-dimensional imagination than Germans in that age usually have. Try out how keen you host child really is to get an idea how much independence you might expect and how much "basic training" in how to get around he might need.
- Gelöscht: One of the few (... [1])
- Gelöscht: . This rule res (... [2])
- Gelöscht: h
- Gelöscht: host child might
- Gelöscht: got a
- Gelöscht: When they off (... [3])
- Gelöscht: t
- Gelöscht: your host child
- Gelöscht: a compromise
- Gelöscht: for the ride ba (... [4])
- Gelöscht: to

Often host parents are more strict or concerned about their host child than they are toward their own offspring of the same age. Explain to your host child that you feel a higher responsibility and that your concerns are not a sign of lacking trust. Host parents feel more relaxed about curfew when they know with whom and where the student is. This is one more reason for you to encourage your student to invite his/her German friends to your home. (see chapter friends XXX)

- Gelöscht: spends his time with
- Gelöscht: host child
- Gelöscht: d

### Tip

Compared to the USA Europe is small scaled and densely populated. It might be difficult for the student to estimate how far it still is or how long it will take to travel for example from Hamburg to Paris, Rome or Amsterdam. If your student wants to travel to visit friends or relatives in "near by" neighbor countries for a weekend you should judge this as naiveté and inform the student of travel realities concerning distances, time and costs. The temptation to travel and see as much as possible within a high school year abroad is somehow understandable. The host family should not be surprised to see this desire in many students visiting Europe. However, the AFS travel rules draft a very clear line for exchange students - what they are allowed to do and where there are limits. It is important that you show to your student the possibilities and borders of his freedom of movement and that you support or slow down his urge of exploration so that you, your family and your host child feel most comfortable about this matter altogether.

- Gelöscht: exposed to a lot of ads for low budget flights and train rides
- Gelöscht: host child
- Gelöscht: mentions the desire
- Gelöscht: the
- Gelöscht: ur
- Gelöscht: just
- Gelöscht: or lack of knowledge than missing modesty or satisfaction about the given hosting situation.
- Gelöscht: T
- Gelöscht: host child

### Space (not yet edited)

*„For Americans 100 years are a long time – for Europeans 100 kms are a long distance“*

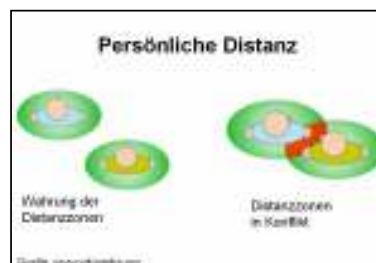
How we perceive living space and personal space is determined by the surroundings we grew up in.

A comparison between the size and the population of the USA and Germany shows that US-American exchange students coming to Germany will probably perceive everything as very small and narrow whereas German students will often be overwhelmed by the huge dimension of the country.

|                    | Germany                 | USA                       | Relation |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Space              | 350.000 km <sup>2</sup> | 9.000.000 km <sup>2</sup> | 1:26     |
| Population         | 80.000.000              | 300.000.000               | 1:3,75   |
| Population density | 230 pro km <sup>2</sup> | 33 pro km <sup>2</sup>    | 1:0,14   |

The idea of having enough space and being able to push the frontier more and more to the west to gain more space has been characteristic for US-American consciousness for a long time. In contrary, though Germany had been marked by changing frontiers for centuries, there had always been neighbours with densely populated territories, too.

Space, i.e. real estate, is very expensive in Germany. Therefore houses and flats are smaller, streets and public places are narrower, people use to pass each other much closer. US-American exchange students might be irritated by this at the beginning. Maybe they are not used to coming so close to other people like we are used to in queues or crowded trains; they might



perceive the Germans as “pushy”.

Even in personal contact US-Americans tend to avoid touching the other person, e.g. hugs between teenagers in a high school surrounding are not common and not well regarded. The US-student has to first to get accustomed to physical contact like hugs, also to coming much closer to others, especially of the opposite sex (e.g. while cooking together in the kitchen). Sensitiveness of the host family for not intruding into the student's the “personal bubble” is important, and their help to get an idea of the different perception in Germany.



While living with the host family, it might be a new experience for the student to share a bedroom and/or a bathroom with others. Our “German” need for privacy often manifests itself in closing our doors whether we stay in the room or not. For an US-American a closed door means “Stop – do not enter”. Locking a bathroom door would not be necessary - and by the same means the exchange student would not enter his host sibling's room when the door is closed.



**Talk to your host child about the meaning of such a sign in your family.**

Also important: how to deal with the front door: it's not common all over the US to lock the front door. If that's important for the host family, the exchange student should be advised to do so – eventually several times.

## Modesty and Hygiene

US-Americans feel uncomfortable with all conversations and situations concerning the topics nudity and sexuality. They can be embarrassed about it. Therefore they avoid coming into situations where they could live to see nudity or nakedness and according to this they behave reserved (restrained). From our point of view this behaviour seems prudish.

In some groups of the US-American society the historical Puritanism continues to have an effect and this is finding expression in the new conservative-religious movement - for example in everyday politics, in election campaigns or in demonstrations against abortion.

It is very important that host families do not dismiss this attitude as ridiculous. About this - in German eyes - “natural topic” you can't talk as frankly with your host child as you can with your own children : Here the cultural difference is enormous and goes deep.

US-Americans tend to equate nudity with sex and therefore they judge it as sinful. Germans view sex and sexuality as a matter of biology you can talk and discuss about where-as US-Americans as a matter of morality you better remain silent about because it touches modesty.

This can be obvious in following situations :

US-American teenagers are probably shocked by liberal illustrations of naked bodies in films, advertisements, journals and magazines for young people.

This is also clear when comparing magazines for teenagers which report in a very different way ( in text and pictures) about the same topic (here the “Highschool Musical” ) .



In an US-American family it can be very indecent (embarrassing) to meet another member of the family in underwear or naked. This modesty can become a problem in a German host family if there are no clear rules, for example how to share one common bathroom.

For many US-Americans it would be impossible to go naked into a sauna. They couldn't overcome their inhibitions ( self consciousness) and their modesty. Even separate saunas (one-sex-only) are used in bathing suits as a rule. Before inviting your host child into the sauna you should explain him/her the circumstances.

In summer in Germany one can change clothes at a lake or at the beach without causing annoyance. It is important to know that US-Americans feel this to be scandalous (outrageous).

**Gelöscht:**

**Kommentar:** In fact, in most areas there are laws against public nudity. If one wants to sunbathe nude or partially nude, one must go to a designated beach where this is allowed.

Male members of the family shouldn't drop a remark on the body of a girl. By US-Americans this could be understood as "come-on". It is also important to keep distance between each other ( respect personal space) because otherwise American girls might feel getting into difficulties.

### Hygiene and Body Care

In the US-American society well-groomed appearance ( well looked after ) is highly esteemed.

Same as German young people the US-Americans take shaving body hair for granted. To take a shower at least once a day and to change under and outer garments daily are regarded as a matter of course and belong to well-being. This often collides (clashes) with the German awareness of costs for health, for environment and for energy.

**Gelöscht:** several times a day

**Gelöscht:** dresses frequently

**Gelöscht:** ¶

**Gelöscht:** ¶



In many US-American houses there are several bathrooms. Talk with your host child about times for using the bathroom in your family in order to be right. Explain to him/her in time the high costs for water and for energy in Germany.

## Rules & Laws

The USA and Germany have a very similar legal system (Separation of executive and legislative) based on the democratic constitution of the nation, including freedom, equality and human rights.

Nevertheless there are differences which are worth knowing, when you are in contact with US-American teenagers.

### Alcohol and Curfews

In Germany, there is a standardized law for the protection of youth nationwide. In the US, there are different laws in every state with curfews and the consumption of alcohol regulated much more strictly. This doesn't mean that there isn't alcohol use and abuse among teenagers. In the USA, it is unthinkable, that teenagers drink alcohol in public.



### Drugs

Illegal substances are forbidden in both countries. Nevertheless, illegal drugs are available. Like smoking or drinking, Germany seems to handle this issue quite liberally. For hosted German students, it must be clear that illegal drug will not be tolerated and the student will immediately be dismissed from the AFS program.

### Driver's license

Recently, German teenagers have been allowed to get their drivers licenses at age 17 with special restrictions. In the US, most students get their drivers licenses by age 16. Nevertheless, driving any motorized vehicles is forbidden to any AFS student.

### Penalties

It should be noted that in the US, that penalties are more strictly enforced and cited, but this does not mean that the US has a greater criminal element, only that the laws and penalties are enforced more often.

The US hosted student may perceive the lessened threat of punishment for infractions to symbolize a lack of authority. Subsequently the student may think they can get away with everything.



„After parties and alcohol got too much, we explained our expectations. We made him understand that he is allowed to enjoy the German freedom, but that he always had to inform us where and how long he went out. After that, it worked well. The alcohol wasn't a problem anymore (like for other teenagers).”

**Kommentar:**

**Gelöscht:** basing

**Gelöscht:** s

**Gelöscht:** the

**Gelöscht:** to know

**Gelöscht:** the

**Gelöscht:** C

**Gelöscht:** are mostly

**Gelöscht:** stricter

**Gelöscht:** ,

**Gelöscht:** what

**Gelöscht:** is no

**Gelöscht:** . But

**Gelöscht:** Consumption

**Gelöscht:** is

**Gelöscht:** not unusual

**Gelöscht:** that

**Gelöscht:** -

**Gelöscht:** if they consume drugs, they

**Gelöscht:** excluded

**Gelöscht:** Newly

**Gelöscht:** are

**Gelöscht:** with

**Gelöscht:** years with

**Gelöscht:** special obligations

**Gelöscht:** with

**Gelöscht:** steering a car

**Gelöscht:** or other vehicle

**Gelöscht:** is noticeable

**Gelöscht:** much

**Gelöscht:** common

**Kommentar:** I think I hear what you're trying to say. I hope that I captured it.

**Gelöscht:** and a much higher part of the people have a criminal conviction. This does not include, that there is a much higher criminal potential, but that penalties are spoken out much more often

**Gelöscht:** ¶ It is possible, that the less authority and threat of punishment in Germany makes US host

**Gelöscht:** s

**Gelöscht:** would

**Gelöscht:** we took him to task

**Kommentar:** On the boxed quotations, I hope it was OK to take a little literary license to bring in [5]

**Gelöscht:** , too).”

### Rules in the family

In the daily routine, US teenagers are less likely to question their parents decisions, although some do. This is a usual demonstration of respect by US cultural standards. USA children are taught from an early age to obey, their parents and, not question their authority. (See communication)

It is very important that you as a host family make your values, rules and routines clear to the host student. But you shouldn't expect an immediate adaptation, because in the host students regular family, other values, rules and routines may be very different.



**Make clear your rules and limits. Explain to the student rules of the household (curfews, having lunch/dinner together, etc.). Don't expect the will do anything for themselves. Try to spread the chores fairly over all siblings.**

An immediate adaption should not be expected, because in most families of the US student other structures and rules occur.

- Gelöscht: mostly treated like children and not like
- Gelöscht: young adults on the same level as the parents. The "WHY" question of a teenager is mostly answered
- Gelöscht: by a short "BE-CAUSE"
- Gelöscht: Teenagers should
- Gelöscht: to
- Gelöscht: ing
- Gelöscht: ¶
- Gelöscht: prevailed.
- Gelöscht: Give
- Gelöscht: them
- Gelöscht: tasks in
- Gelöscht: t
- Gelöscht: them
- Gelöscht: that they
- Gelöscht: something
- Gelöscht: tasks
- Gelöscht: for
- Gelöscht: them



"Host family let the student have way too much freedom."  
Host family survey, spring 2007



„After I made the rules clear early, only the typical teenager-problems occurred...“  
German host family

As a host family you will discover how many rules and routines you have internalized unconsciously. Germans are said to be the "world champions" in rules, from waste separation to punctuality to the swabish cleaning days. It is best to explain this to your host student to make he/she aware of this cultural difference. The host student is like a mirror, in that we can see our own behavior in another way.

- Gelöscht: You
- Gelöscht: The must
- Gelöscht: makes it become conscious and may be questioned by yourself
- Gelöscht: works
- Gelöscht: u

### Table Manners

... are quite different from ours.

Most US-Americans have – like us – three meals a day. Breakfast, lunch and dinner (while on Sundays and Holidays "Brunch", a combination of breakfast and lunch is often favoured). For breakfast, you have e.g. oat flakes with milk, a glass of orange juice and toast or muffins with marmalade, butter or margarine – or scrambled eggs, omelette with hash-browns and breakfast-meat like sausage or bacon. Cookies, Doughnuts, eggs, pancakes or waffle (mostly made of cake mix) are eaten as well. Plus loads of (from a German point of view thin) coffee. The German slice of bread with butter and marmalade



or cold cuts and cheese, Coffee and Tea with eventually some cereals seem to be a bit meagre.

**In some families** You will rarely find fresh fruits and vegetables on US-american plates. Eating is fun, there is green ketchup and blue Pepsi.

The host student will not be used to – like in most families in Germany – have a joint meal with the whole family using the time for conversation and reflecting of the day.



**Eating while sitting is not self-evident: having a fast lunch in the car or watching TV besides, reading or getting other things done is more common.**

In the US, you mostly eat alone. Fastfood is very common, eating out too. That doesn't mean you aren't able to cook yourself, but you often just don't do it. Most meals are seasoned while eating, not while cooking like we mostly do.



In the US, it is very common to cut half of the meal into bite-sized pieces, than to lay the knife on the edge of the plate, put the fork into the right hand and let the left arm on the lap or hanging down. **(It is polite to leave some leftovers on the plate.) OMIT THIS**, The German ritual to wait with the beginning the meal till everyone has received his food is not usual. In many US-american families, there is no taboo to walk away when you have finished your meal.

**The photos of the refrigerators will be inserted here**



**It is very important to explain your host student what you expect of him at the dining table.**

**It might be good to add that students are use to eating lunch at school and that dinner is usually the hot and main meal of the day.**

**US American students eat lunch at school and this is also a very social time at school. Lunch is sometimes brought from home such as cold cuts and sandwiches or a hot lunch bought in the school cafeteria. Dinner is usually served between the hours of 5 and 6:30 and is the main and hot meal of the day. US Americans may perceive the traditional German dinner without hot foods to be a cheap meal.**

## Appendix



### Reading material: redommendable books and webpages

#### Culture:

- BÖHM, Andrea: Die Amerikaner. Reise durch ein unbekanntes Imperium. Herder, 2006.  
*Preiswertes Buch über das tatsächliche Amerika. Menschen in Alltagssituationen zeigen uns Amerika und die Amerikaner einmal aus anderen Perspektiven.*
- BRYSON, Bill: Streiflichter durch Amerika. Die USA für Anfänger und Fortgeschrittene. Goldmann, 2002. (9 €)  
*Humorvolle Beschreibung des Alltags in den USA*
- GELFERT, Hans-Dieter: Typisch Amerikanisch. Wie die Amerikaner wurden, was sie sind. C. H. Beck, 2002.  
*Motive des amerikanischen Denkens werden erklärt; ein Schlüssel zu typisch amerikanischen Motiven, Argumenten und Denkmustern*
- HENKE, Ingrid: Kulturschock USA. Reise-Know-How, 2004  
*Umfassender Einstieg in Kultur, Alltagsleben, Gesellschaft und Politik der USA*
- KREISEL, Uwe: Kulturschlüssel USA. Hueber, 2003. **SUPERTIPP!**  
*Sehr zu empfehlendes Buch, das Land, Leute und kulturelle Eigenheiten bewusst entdecken lässt. Von echten Insidern kurzweilig geschrieben.*
- THOMÄ, Dieter: Unter Amerikanern. Eine Lebensart wird besichtigt. C.H. Beck, 2001.  
*Beschreibung der amerikanischen Lebensart; räumt auf mit Vorurteilen*
- NEES, Greg: Germany – Unraveling an Enigma (englisch). Intercultural Press, Inc., 2000.  
*Beschreibung der deutschen Kultur aus US-Amerikanischer Sicht*
- HALL, Edward T.; HALL, Mildred Reed: Verborgene Signale – Studien zur internationalen Kommunikation – Über den Umgang mit Amerikanern. Stern, 1983.  
*Ratgeber für erfolgreiche Kommunikation mit US-Amerikanern*



#### Understanding of politics:

- LÖSCHE, Peter; LOEFFELHOLZ, Hans-Dieter: Länderbericht USA. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Schriftenreihe, Bd. 401), 2004.  
*Vermittlung komprimierter Hintergrundinformationen zu gesellschaftlichen, wirtschaftlichen und politischen Prozessen sowie Formen der amerik. Hoch- und Populärkultur.*
- MATTER, Christine: New World Horizons. Transcript, 2007. (deutsche Sprache)  
*Eher eine Studie als ein leicht zu lesendes Handbuch; Alltag, Individualismus, amerik. Moderne werden beschrieben; wirft ein Licht auf die Wurzeln einer schwierig gewordenen amerikanisch-europäischen Verständigung*

#### Languages (funny):

- BERGMANN, David: Der, die, was? Ein Amerikaner im Sprachlabyrinth. Rowohlt, 2007.  
*Nichtmuttersprachler schreibt auf amüsante Weise über seine Probleme mit der deutschen Sprache. Eine bemerkenswerte Liebeserklärung eines Deutschlerner*

- GILISSEN, Elfi, H.M.: Kauderwelsch, Amerikanisch Wort für Wort. Reise-Know-How. 2000. (zusätzlich: Aussprache-Trainer als CD)  
*Natürlich sollen Sie kein Englisch sprechen, sondern der Schüler Deutsch, doch dieser kleine Ratgeber kann evtl. bei Verständnisproblemen am Anfang oder bei der Kommunikation mit der amerikanischen Familie helfen.*
- TUFTS, Gayle: Absolutely unterwegs. Eine Amerikanerin in Berlin. Ullstein, 1998. (ca. 8 €)  
*Ein lustiges Buch mit deutsch-englischem Kauderwelsch und der Entdeckung von DINGLISCH*

**Online:**

- <http://usa.usembassy.de>  
*Materialsammlung für alle, die Informationen über die amerikanische Gesellschaft, Kultur und Politik suchen*

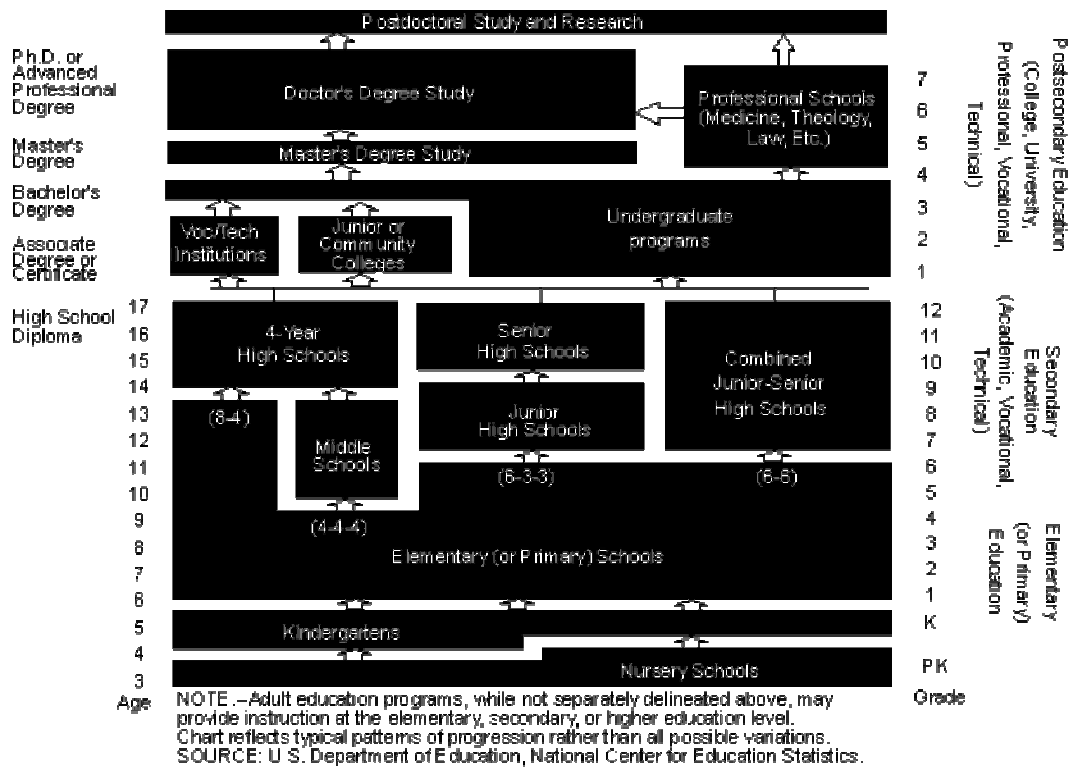


## More on US-American and German communication styles

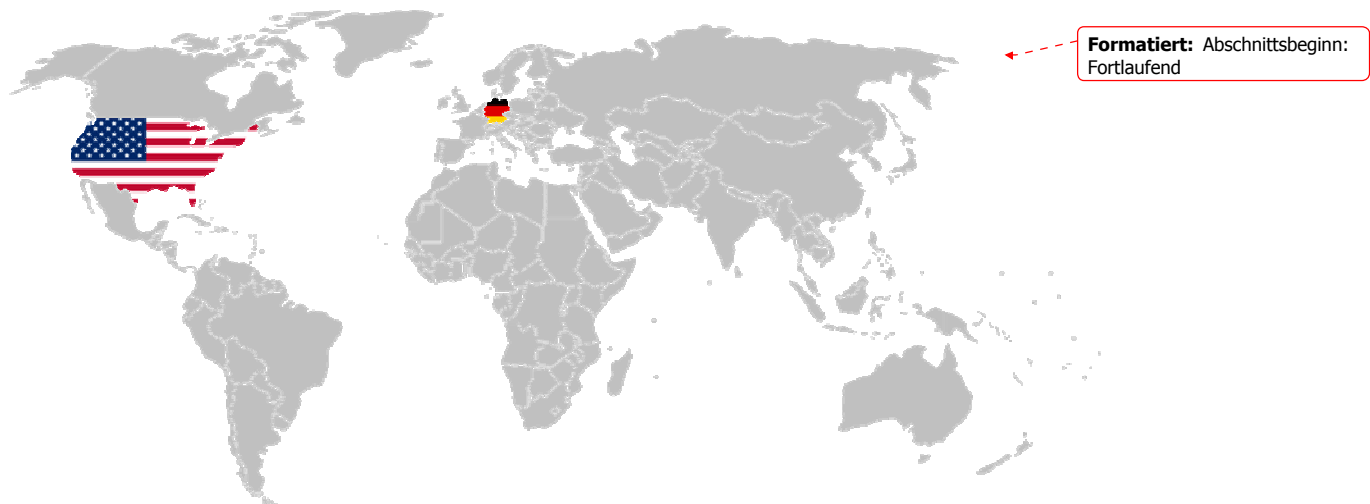
| In general U.S. Americans...  | In general Germans...  |
|---|--|
| Do not like interruptions (speaking-replying-speaking) which to them signifies impatience, or extensive descriptions and allusions to history or books.   | Expect interruptions (speaking-replying-speaking) which to them signifies interest in the topic. They also value extensive descriptions and allusions to history, books, and statistics.   |
| <p>Consider the following to be "taboo" topics unless you know the conversation partner well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Money, how much one earns</li> <li>○ Family</li> <li>○ Religion</li> <li>○ One's sexual orientation</li> </ul> <p>View Communication as a search for information, asking questions is very common and meant in a polite way "There are no stupid questions!"</p> | <p>Are eager to discuss almost all topics, at length and from as many points of view as possible, with a few exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ one's personal income</li> <li>○ who one voted for</li> <li>○ one's sexual orientation</li> <li>○ the Nazi time in Germany's history.</li> </ul> <p>View communication as a way of exchanging ideas and of showing your knowledge and interest in a topic. Questions are seen as a way to encourage someone to show his own interest/ knowledge.</p> |
| Can say "No" directly and without embarrassment because it is only information  | Can say "No" directly and without embarrassment because it is only information – and because not the whole person is criticized but this particular idea, situation etc. However, they will also be more likely to expand on the reason behind the "no" than U.S. Americans.   |
| <p>Think that time is limited and tasks must be accomplished, therefore their language favors direct, clear communication (simple and factual sentences – efficiency over effectiveness)</p> <p>Rely less on people inferring meaning from other information (such as status of speaker or the surroundings)</p>  | <p>Don't view time as a commodity, and value critical discussion so highly that their language favors complex and lengthy constructions</p> <p>Rely less on people inferring meaning from other information (such as status of speaker or the surroundings)</p>  |
| Do not expect subtle clues and indirect messages and therefore are not accustomed to them   | Do not expect subtle clues and indirect messages and therefore are not accustomed to them  |
| Expect respect in conversations and equality guides interaction among people. The style of interaction is informal, with nearly everyone on a first name basis. Please and thank you are said to anyone and everyone.   | Expect respect in conversation and recognition of hierarchy. Interaction is more formal and their language reflects this with two forms of address: Du and Sie. Please and thank you are said less frequently and with less – visible - enthusiasm.  |

**Kommentar:** You would also not ask someone for: his/her own sexual orientation, his personal income, which party he voted for or how he was involved in the Nazi regime. But the general topics income, sexuality etc. are ok.

## US school system



## Comparison of the sizes of the USA and Germany on the world map



**Language-Tips: German/English**

**You might want to explain why this is being included in the Handbook. A title for this section might be: Language tips to help you support your host student as he/she learns German. Otherwise it might not be clear to some host families why you are including this section in the Handbook.**

|                  |        |
|------------------|--------|
| <b>1.) equal</b> |        |
| Finger           | finger |
| Nation           | nation |
| Idiot            | idiot  |

|                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| <b>2.) similar</b> |           |
| Bier               | beer      |
| Präsident          | president |
| Haus               | house     |
| Marmelade          | marmelade |
| es stinkt          | it stinks |

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| <b>3.) related</b> |       |
| Gast               | guest |
| Bett               | bed   |
| Apfel              | apple |
| Wasser             | water |
| dick               | thick |

**4.) totally different! This is not consistent with the previous sections. You need to include the English translation and explain that the native English speaker might translate bekommen as „to become“.**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| bekommen        | <u>to get</u> <b>NOT</b> to become (werden) |
| Gift (Geschenk) | <u>poison</u> <b>NOT</b> gift               |
| Igel            | <u>hedgehog</u> <b>NOT</b>                  |
| eagle (Adler)   | <u>egg</u> <b>NOT</b> eye (Auge)            |
| Ei              | <u>star</u> <b>NOT</b> stern                |
| Stern (ernst)   | <u>garbage, dung</u> <b>NOT</b>             |
| Mist            | <u>condom</u> <b>NOT</b> pre-               |
| mist (Dunst)    | (Konservierung)                             |
| Präservativ     | <u>I want</u> <b>NOT</b> I will (ich)       |
| servative       |   |
| ich will        |   |
| werde)          | <u>bath</u> <b>NOT</b> bad                  |
| Bad (schlecht)  |   |

|                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>5.) articulation</b> |                             |
| Ü                       | Form den Mund zum U, sage i |
| Ö                       | Form den Mund zum O, sage e |
| Eu/äu                   | wie oi in loiter            |
| ch                      | wie in nach (Schnarch-Laut) |
| ch                      | wie in mich (Fauch-Laut)    |
| sch                     | wie in Englisch/English     |
| aber                    | Häuschen = Häus-chen        |
| und                     | Rüdesheim = Rüdes-heim      |

|                     |        |
|---------------------|--------|
| <b>6.) dialects</b> |        |
| Brötchen            |        |
| Rundstück           |        |
| Semmel              |        |
| Schrippe            | = roll |

|                                |                     |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>7.) shortcuts</b>           |                     |
| z.B. zum Beispiel              | for example         |
| z. Zt. zurzeit                 | right now           |
| uvm (und vieles mehr)          | and much more       |
| etc. (et cetera)               | and so on           |
| usw. (und so weiter)           | and so on           |
| mfG (mit freundlichem Gruß)    | Sincerely Yours     |
| uAwg (um Antwort wird gebeten) | please answer       |
| PKW/LKW                        | car/truck           |
| AKW                            | nuclear power plant |
| p.P.                           | pro Person          |
| Kfz                            |                     |
| GmbH                           |                     |
| z.T.                           |                     |
| insbes.                        |                     |
| bzw.                           |                     |
| BRD                            |                     |
| DDR                            |                     |
| usw.                           |                     |

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| <b>8.) ss or ß</b>   |                 |
| ß ist das Sütterlin s und z und ersetzt das ss hinter einem langen Vokal |                 |
| =  | Straße (street) |
| und nicht  | STRASSE         |
|  | StraBe          |

|                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>9.) minimization</b> |                       |
| Brot/Brötchen           | bread/roll            |
| Schatz/Schätzchen       | treasure/darling      |
| Frau/Fräulein           | mrs./miss             |
| aber Frau/Frauchen      | women/ lady dog owner |
| Biss/bisschen           | bite/a little bit     |

- Formatiert:** Schriftart: 10 pt
- Formatiert:** Schriftart: 10 pt, Fett
- Formatiert:** Schriftart: 10 pt
- Formatiert:** Einzug: Links: 0 cm, Hängend: 0,32 cm
- Formatiert:** Schriftart: Fett
- Formatiert:** Schriftart: 10 pt
- Formatiert:** Schriftart: Fett
- Formatiert:** Schriftart: Fett
- Formatiert:** Schriftart: Fett
- Formatiert:** Schriftart: Fett
- Formatiert:** Schriftart: Fett
- Formatiert:** Schriftart: Fett

**10.) keyboard Es gibt auch andere****Unterschiede**

Z und Y sind vertauscht  
Zusätzliche Umlaute im Deutschen

**11.) address**

|                       |                                       |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Du/Dein<br>(singular) | Anrede im Brief<br>unformal you/your  |
| Sie/Ihr<br>(singular) | formale Anrede<br>formal you/your     |
| ihr/euer<br>(plural)  | unformale Anrede<br>unformal you/your |

**12.) numbers**

|             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| 1.000,00    | 1,000,00   |
| 1 Million   | 1 million  |
| 1 Milliarde | 1 billion  |
| 1 Billion   | 1 trillion |

Schreibweise von 1 und 7:

~~71~~ ----- ~~71~~

**13.) date/time**

|                               |                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 29.01.2008                    | 2008-01-29         |
| 29. Januar 08                 | January 29th, 2008 |
| 6:45 Uhr                      | 6:45 a.m.          |
| <i>auch ¼ vor 7 (morgens)</i> |                    |
| 18:45 Uhr                     | 6:45 p.m.          |
| <i>auch ¼ vor 7 (abends)</i>  |                    |
| 15:25 Uhr                     | 3:25 p.m.          |
| <i>auch 5 vor ½ 4</i>         |                    |

**14.) important vocabulary**

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Danke              | thank you          |
| Bitte              | please             |
| gern geschehen     | you're welcome     |
| Ja/nein            | yes/ no            |
| Ich heiÙe...       | My name is....     |
| Ich weiÙ nicht     | I don't know       |
| Ich verstehe nicht | I don't understand |

**Nützliche Ausdrücke**

|                      |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Wo ist...            | Where is...     |
| Toilette/WC/00??/Klo | restroom        |
| Entschuldigung       | excuse me       |
| Es tut mir leid      | I'm sorry       |
| Guten Appetit        | enjoy your meal |

|                              |                   |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Guten Morgen                 | good morning      |
| Guten Tag                    | Hello             |
| Guten Abend                  | Hello             |
| Gute Nacht                   | good night        |
| Auf Wiedersehen              | good bye          |
| Bis bald                     | See you soon      |
| Tschüß/Servus                | bye bye           |
| Ich hab dich<br>(euch) lieb! | I love you (all)! |

Wie spät ist es?      What time is it?

Was ist das?      What is that?

Es tut mir weh      It hurts me.

Ich fühle mich nicht gut. I'm not feeling well.

Ich bin müde      I'm tired

**15.) measurements**

|              |                            |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| 1 cm         | 0,3937 inch                |
| 1 inch       | 2,54 cm                    |
| 1 m          | 3,28 ft.                   |
| 1 foot (ft.) | 30,48 cm                   |
| 1 yard       | 91,44 cm                   |
| 1 km         | 0,6214 miles               |
| 1 mile       | 1,609 km                   |
| 1 m²         | 10,76 sq.ft.²/1,2 sq.yd.   |
| 1sq.yd.      | 0,836 m²                   |
| 1 km²        | 0,387 sq. miles            |
| 1 sq. mile   | 2,59 km²                   |
| 1 l          | 0,94 quarts /1/4 gallon    |
| 1 gallon     | 3,785 lt.                  |
| 1 g          | 0,353 ounce                |
| 1 ounce      | 28,35 g                    |
| 1 km/h       | 0,621 mph (miles per hour) |
| 1 mph        | 1,6093 km/h                |
| 55 mph       | 88,5 km/h                  |
| 0 °C         | 32 °F (freezing)           |
| 5 °C         | 41 °F (je 5°C / 9 °F)      |
| 10 °C        | 50 °F                      |
| 15 °C        | 59 °F                      |
| 20 °C        | 68 °F                      |
| 25 °C        | 77 °F                      |
| 30 °C        | 86 °F (hand wash)          |
| 35 °C        | 95 °F                      |
| 40 °C        | 104 °F                     |
| 45 °C        | 113 °F                     |
| 100 °C       | 212 °F (boiling)           |
| 250 °C       | 482 °F (baking)            |

Gelöscht: s

Gelöscht: 0

Gelöscht: 8

Gelöscht: 0

## More about transportation and mobility in the US (not translated)

In folgender Tabelle werden beispielsweise die Bevölkerungsdichte und die Anzahl von Städten mit Straßen- und U-Bahnen und Eisenbahn-Haltestellen gegenüber gestellt.

| Vergleich Nahverkehr USA/Deutschland   | USA         | Deutschland | Faktor (USA/D) |
|--|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Fläche [km <sup>2</sup> ]  | 9.809.000   | 357.050     | 27,47          |
| Einwohnerzahl (ca.)  | 295.000.000 | 82.500.000  | 3,58           |
| Bevölkerungsdichte [Einw./km <sup>2</sup> ]  | 30          | 231         | 0,13           |
| Großstädte über 1 Mio. Einwohner   | 9           | 3           | 3,00           |
| Großstädte 100.000 - 1.000.000 Einwohner (ca.)   | 250         | 80          | 3,13           |
|  |             |             |                |
| Stadtschnellbahn-Netze (U- & Hochbahnen)   | 16          | 5           | 3,20           |
| Straßenbahn- und Stadtbahn-Netze (z. T. unterirdisch, ohne "Heritage Tramways" bzw. Straßenbahnmuseen) | 26          | 60          | 0,43           |
| Eisenbahn-Stationen für den Personenverkehr  | 1.500       | 7.580       | 0,20           |
| Trolleybus- (O-Bus)-Netze  | 4           | 3           | 1,33           |
| Sonstige (Schwebebahnen, People Mover, auch an Flughäfen!)   | 29          | 5           | 5,80           |

Die Fläche der USA ist mehr als 27 x so groß, wie die Deutschlands. Bei einer nur 3,6-fach größeren Einwohnerzahl beträgt die durchschnittliche Bevölkerungsdichte in den USA nur rund 1/10.

Vergleicht man den Anteil der Großstädte im Verhältnis zur Einwohnerzahl ist der Unterschied nicht so signifikant: in den USA gibt es rund die 3-fach Anzahl von Großstädten bei 3,6-facher Einwohnerzahl. Auch die Anzahl der Städte mit Schnellbahnnetzen ist rund 3,2 x größer als in Deutschland und somit nur rund 10% geringer im Verhältnis zur Einwohnerzahl. Erst wenn man die Anzahl der Eisenbahnstationen vergleicht, erkennt man einen deutlichen Unterschied: Für die 82,5 Mio. Einwohner Deutschlands stehen 7.500 Eisenbahnstationen zur Verfügung, für die 295 Mio. US-Amerikaner nur 1/5, nämlich 1.500, d.h. durchschnittlich fallen in Deutschland auf 11.000 Bewohnern eine Bahnstation, in den USA sind es fast 200.000!

Ein kurzer geschichtlicher Rückblick zeigt, dass die USA, in denen die Bahnen von ihrer sehr frühen Einführung in den 1830er Jahren bis in die 1960er Jahre eine ganz entscheidende Rolle für die Erschließung und Besiedlung des Westens und für die Entwicklung der Ballungsräume spielte, durch die zunehmende Macht der aufstrebenden Automobilindustrie in der Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts zum Vorreiter des „autogerechten“ Lebens wurden. Mächtige Autokonzerne kauften in den 1930er-60er Jahren systematisch die in der Regel privaten Verkehrsbetriebe in den USA auf, um vorhandene funktionierende schienengebundene Verkehrsmittel zu eliminieren und durch motorbetriebene Fahrzeuge zu ersetzen.

*Chicago hatte einst das weltweit größte Straßenbahnnetz der Welt, durch das auf über 1000 km Streckennetz auch weite Regionen des Umlandes erschlossen wurden und das die Industrialisierung der Region durch den Transport von Arbeitern und Waren erst möglich machte. Die letzte Straßenbahnlinie wurde 1958 eingestellt.*

Hervorragende Straßennetze, vielspurige Autobahnen mit beeindruckenden Überwerfungsbauten, großzügige Parkplätze an Einkaufszentren und Freizeiteinrichtungen, bequeme Drive-Ins vom Fast Food Restaurant über Bankschalter bis zum Briefkasten, preisgünstiges Benzin und die Vorstellung der Verwirklichung der persönlichen Freiheit ließen das Auto in den USA auch dort zum Verkehrsmittel und Prestigeobjekt Nummer

Eins werden, wo nicht die Siedlungsstruktur (Einfamilienhausteppiche in Vororten oder Einzelhöfe in den ländlichen Regionen) die Individualisierung des Personentransport sowieso nahe legten (siehe Luftbilder).

Disneyland, Orlando (Florida)  
mit beeindruckend großen Besucher-Parkplatzflächen im Norden

Heutzutage ist das Bahnnetz für Personenverkehr in den USA auf einige wenige überwiegend touristische Strecken geschrumpft, die im Wesentlichen von ausländischen Touristen, Armen, Rentnern oder Fortschrittsverweigerern genutzt werden. Es gibt etliche Jugendliche aus den USA, die noch nie mit einer Bahn gefahren sind, wenn sie nach Europa kommen.

In den Ballungsgebieten und Großstädten der USA wachsen jedoch seit den 1980er-Jahren moderne, funktionsfähige Verkehrsnetze von Regionalbahnen, Bussen und Light Rails (Stadt-Straßenbahnen), sowie Buslinien (z.B. gibt es in Denver kostenlose Linienbusse in der Innenstadt und ein Straßenbahnnetz). Allein in Kalifornien gibt es 5 Großstädte mit Light Rails und "Park and Ride"-Einrichtungen. Diese Nahverkehrsnetze in den Ballungsräumen der Ost- und Westküste entsprechen denen Deutschlands.

For those, who want to know a little bit more:

### The US-American history on three pages

The deeper you get into one of the cultural themes, the easier it is to see parallels to the history of the US, to understand why those special attributes are in the US culture. In this summary, the US history is presented in a short text so that you can find the parallels yourself.

**Kommentar:** Note that I will not correct the grammar as that is only due to the translation from the German into English, I will only correct errors of fact or misconception.

Around 1600, the first colonies were founded on the east coast of the North American continent, under the flag of different European great powers. The new settlers were often failed or people threatened by hunger, as well as politically and religiously haunted.

Life and trading started to boom in the new territories. In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, Great Britain was the most established power and founded 13 colonies, all of them on the east coast with almost the same frontiers as the states nowadays. The Native Americans, (incorrectly called "Indians" as Columbus though he had landed in India when he reached the "New World" in 1492), were paid to get away from the territories, they were displaced or a war was fought against them. France, which was established in the Midwest of the new continent, partly allied with the Indians. 1756 a war was fought, where the French and Indians fought against the British, but lost.

**Gelöscht:** the

To rebuild their shattered finances after the war, the British started to impose huge taxes on the colonies, which were not represented in the British parliament in London. The call for resistance and independence got stronger within the population. When in 1775 American patriots dressed like Indians were throwing tea away from British ships and organized an "continental congress" who recommended to boycott the trade with Great Britain (slogan: "No taxation without representation"), the British government started to send troops.

After the British troops started to shoot at enraged, but unarmed demonstrators, the American revolutionary war began. On the American side, many volunteers were willing to fight for their independence. The British troops outnumbered the Americans, but their soldiers were unmotivated, partly mercenary soldiers. After primary defeats, the Americans started to win most of the battles and in the end the whole war. They declared their independence in 1776. In commemoration of that victory in the war against the English, The French gave the Statue of Liberty as a gift to the Americans in 1886. This statue now welcomes immigrants and tourists in New York.

**Gelöscht:** statue

**Gelöscht:** liberty

**Gelöscht:** , which

**Gelöscht:** declared

In 1787, after many discussions, a constitution was written, which included a central government but left many freedoms to the states, too. George Washington, who led the American army in the war, became the first president. The understanding of the role of the state is nowadays still affected by the experiences of the first settlers, who fled from the overwhelming power of the European states. The American citizen tries to regulate as much as he can himself. Only when necessary, the state will be there for help, what is a very important element of the American concept of freedom.

The century of expansion to the west began, ending around 1890. Many expeditions started from the east coast to the unknown lands in the west. Hundred thousands of settlers followed them, founding new states, until the whole area, as we know it today, was settled.

These formative experiences, which these people experienced in the uncivilized, new territories, are summarized in the word "frontier", which is a central term in the US-American history. It is the expression of the feelings from the direct confrontation with nature and the total freedom with unlimited possibilities. The partly merciless expansion to the west was legitimated with the term "Manifest Destiny", what includes the belief that it was Gods will to expand and the (white) Americans were to fulfil the mission. Many

people thought it was their mission to spread their concept of democratic freedom. The term also includes - besides missionary ideas - the ideas of nationalism and racism, too.

The expansion didn't flow smoothly; there were many conflicts with the Indians. The Indians lived close to nature, following their food (e.g. buffaloes), not knowing any territorial borders (without nature's borders) and cultivating a culture full of traditions. The settlers built fences, demanded land and shot the buffaloes. They brought new illnesses that the Indians didn't know and favoured war instead of compromise or coexistence.

But within the US-American civilisation, the problem of slavery became more major issue. The northern states forbid slavery, because their economy lived of industry and trading, but the southern states, whose economy depended on agriculture and plantations, needed inexpensive workers – and for most of them, slaves were indispensable. After Abraham Lincoln (who represented the interests of the north) became president, many southern states left the "United States of America" and founded the "Confederate States of America". The north declared war in 1861, which the north won after four years thanks to its industrial resources. The slaves were freed, but their rights were radically restricted, especially in the south. For many farmers, the prohibition of slavery was their ruin.

After the war, the industrialisation got much faster, especially driven by the railways from east- to west coast. But this established corrupt trust of companies and monopolists, controlling politics and economy and suppressing their workers.

The immigration from Europe became stronger and stronger and was restricted by law for the first time in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The numerous different ethnic groups (Europeans, Asians, Latin-Americans, Africans and Indians) with all their different languages, behaviours, needs, traditions and religions influenced the social, religious and traditional structure of the USA. It is a "melting pot" of cultures. The different cultures have very few in common and the US state has a much shorter history than e.g. Europe. Therefore the smallest commonality, the citizenship is even nowadays the most important sign of national identity. It is demonstrated by symbols like the flag or the national anthem and unifies every single citizen, regardless of which culture he or she is.

During this century, the US had an expansive foreign policy. In 1854 the USA forced the insular and non-industrialised Japan to open the harbours, in 1898 annexed Puerto Rico and the Philippines (what was an important step to get near China) and banished the Spanish from Cuba. They also tampered into Latin-America, where the construction of the Panama Canal in 1903 was of major economical importance. Towards Europe, the US decided not to interfere.

This changed with the entrance into WW I (1914-1918) in 1917, in order to end the German militarism. The US was one of the founders of the League of Nations, a forerunner of the UN, and claimed that every nation had to define its own destiny.

Gelöscht: y

In the end of the 1920s, a global economic crisis began in the US. The free economy incurred speculation losses at the stock exchange, which caused extreme losses. This had a huge impact on the social and economical situation of many. Unemployment all over the world became a big problem. The Nazis in Germany used that for their propaganda.

Gelöscht: twenties

Gelöscht: the

In WW II (1939-1945), the USA was not affected in the beginning. They supported the British with financial and technological aid, but not more. After the attack on Pearl Harbour in the End of 1941, the one and only military attack on US-American territory, this situation changed and the US entered the war on the side of the British and French. The invasion in the Normandy in June 1944 became the key to the victory against Nazi-Germany. In the war with Japan, the atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki enforced the capitulation and the end of the war.

By implementing the Marshall-Plan the US invested a lot into the rebuilding of Europe and especially Germany. The aim was to use the economic potential to rebuild a stable Europe and to avoid a comeback of the Nazis.

The armament of both US and Soviet-Russia were not stopped after the war, so the "cold war" began, with the US committed to restricting the expansion of the Soviets (and later the Communist Chinese).

The run to space and the moon was another race of the two super powers, which the US won in 1969 after primary defeats.

With the collapse of the USSR in the 1980s, the only super-power competitor to the US disappeared. The US, often supported by the UN, followed a policy of being the world's "policeman", especially in situations of harsh dictatorships elsewhere in the world. This has resulted in the US involvement in the wars in Iraq (the first as a result of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, and the second as a result of the terrorist attack against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11/9/1999). Terrorism and the problem of climate change are the new challenges.

**Gelöscht:** resulting in the Korean War, the Cuba-Crisis and the Vietnam War.

**Gelöscht:** In the US society in the sixties, a new movement of students and the still heavily discriminated Afro-Americans got very popular. They fought for more social justice and fairness and they were able to abolish the race laws. ¶

**Gelöscht:** eighties

**Gelöscht:** In the nineties, an economical rise was followed by two wars against Iraq and the terrorist attack against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. New conflicts within the US society rose.

**Gelöscht:** The

## Imprint

### AFS Germany Team

- Andrea Riediger-Schubert
- Annette Gisevius
- Carmen Ellermann
- Cornelia Emmert
- David Kalwar
- Maxi Elsner
- Traudl Stürmer

### AFS USA Team

- Al Russell
- Catherine Pflueger
- Cia Considine
- Joann Halpern
- Lynn Whetstone
- Mary Kay Robinson
- Robin Weber



Von Links nach Rechts: Andrea Riediger-Schubert, Robin Weber, David Kalwar, Lynn Whetstone, Maxi Elsner, Catherine Pflueger, Carmen Ellermann, Al Russell, Mary Kay Robinson, Conni Emmert, Joann Halpern, Annette Gisevius, Traudl Stürmer und Cia Considine

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|--|-----------|------------------------|
| <b>Seite 21: [1] Gelöscht</b>  | <b>HP</b> | <b>29.02.2008 7:58</b> |
| One of the few No-Nos for exchange students is to drive a car no matter how old he is and that he holds a driver's license |           |                        |
| <b>Seite 21: [2] Gelöscht</b>  | <b>HP</b> | <b>29.02.2008 7:59</b> |
| . This rule results from insurance matters and will prevent you from any discussion about this and                         |           |                        |
| <b>Seite 21: [3] Gelöscht</b>  | <b>HP</b> | <b>29.02.2008 8:00</b> |
| When they offer your host child ride to visit a party or a disco,  |           |                        |
| <b>Seite 21: [4] Gelöscht</b>  | <b>HP</b> | <b>29.02.2008 8:01</b> |
| for the ride back home that is   |           |                        |
| <b>Seite 25: [5] Kommentar</b>   | <b>HP</b> | <b>06.03.2008 1:38</b> |
| On the boxed quotations, I hope it was OK to take a little literary license to bring the point into focus.                 |           |                        |