



## Guidelines for International Communications

When we go to another culture, we are the odd ones. We are the ones with the unusual perspectives, the funny accents and strange clothing. It is important to remember that we are the guest, and be humble and courteous when communicating with our new friends.

We want to be open to different methods of doing things. We are not necessarily the ones with all the answers and we are not in relationship to fix everything. We honor people when we accept and appreciate what they offer, be it food, an idea or a new way of doing something.

Our Spanish does not need to be perfect. Our attempts to bridge the language barrier are another way we can honor our new friends. Your efforts and openness demonstrate value to the person you are communicating with.

Refrain from discussing politics. Do not be offended if US politics are criticized.

Share your faith/worldview/perspectives respectfully and without proselytizing. Listen to other's views and philosophies as well, as they may be eager to share their beliefs with you. The meaning of terms are different in the Ixil than our typical understanding. Religious beliefs, family issues, and cultural freedoms adjust when viewed outside our country.

Always dialogue as a polite guest. Open disagreement or challenging views is rarely appropriate.

Be patient. Latin American time orientation may be different that you are accustomed to. Schedules are often dynamic guidelines. We honor our friends by adjusting and being flexible. As most correspondence will be via email, it is important to respond to email in a timely fashion. Photos are appreciated when included in an email, but avoid photos of material possessions. Evidence of the discrepancy in material wealth will not help your new relationship. Your teacher will be very interested in your life in the United States. Avoid talking about money. ***Never make a promise of future action or personal support.*** Do not encourage gift-giving. Material donations must be made to the school and with equality for all the teachers.

Be respectful when asking questions related to poverty issues. It may take time to understand certain situations, but dignity is always more valuable than accurate data.

Demonstrate respect for age, status, local perspectives and knowledge.

Communicate affection and courtesy. The people in the Ixil are generally friendly and polite. They do not draw attention to themselves. Their manner of speaking is gentle and the women dress very modestly. It may be difficult for them to connect with you if you are harsh, direct or critical.