

Baggage Check—Culture Learning Exercise

A Simulation Game

This exercise provides an opportunity for people to take a look at their “cultural baggage.” In this context, cultural baggage refers to the values, habits, lifestyle, and expectations that the sojourner takes along into the overseas assignment. Individuals respond to a list of self-perception and self-assessment questions. Then, small groups are formed (pairs of people or groups of four) where items are compared and discussed.

Copies of the Baggage Declaration and Baggage Check are presented below in plain format and graphic format or table. Select a format and print copies of the Baggage Declaration and the Baggage Check forms for each participant. Instruct participants to write their responses to the items on the Baggage Declaration and Baggage Check forms.

As individuals complete the BAGGAGE DECLARATION, ask each to move quietly into an informal discussion session with one other person who has completed the declaration. They can compare and talk about their declarations while waiting for others to finish the form.

When everyone is finished, go the next form—the BAGGAGE CHECK. Explain or read aloud: As we all know, when you enter any country, there are some items that one may not carry into that country. At the level of personal judgment, there are things you know that you should leave home. The next part of this exercise (the Baggage Check) asks for some careful judgments about *what you carry into the country and what you leave home*.

Create groups of three or four (not three) people as they complete the baggage Check form. Write the following questions on a chalkboard, whiteboard, poster or other medium to guide discussion:

- What “baggage” might embarrass you if you take it overseas?
- What can you do about things you should leave at home? Be specific—discuss particular items.
- Find examples of each of the following (if they are on your lists) and discuss what can be done:
 - Matters of possible offense.
 - Sources of “personality clash.”
 - Matters that will interfere with one’s major purpose(s) in being overseas.
- What sort of help will you need in order to follow through on your good intentions? Be specific—talk about particular items.

BAGGAGE DECLARATION

I. Personal Characteristics

A. In your own country, what do people notice when they see you coming?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

B. In your destination country, what will people notice when they see you coming?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

C. What do you try to avoid?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

D. What do you most enjoy?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

II. Relational Style

A. What sort of people do you prefer to work with? Indicate major characteristics, traits or qualities:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

B. What sort of people do you prefer to be with for social and recreational activities? Indicate major characteristics, traits, or qualities:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

C. How do you feel about authority?

D. How do you feel about equality?

E. How do you relate to beggars and “pan-handlers” when they confront you on the street?

F. How do you react when invited to a formal or prestigious event?

Baggage Declaration

Baggage Declaration

Personal Characteristics:

In your own country, what do people notice when they see you coming?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In the country where you are planning to go what will people notice when they see you coming?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What do you try to avoid?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What do you most enjoy?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Baggage Declaration

Relational Style:

What sort of people do you prefer to work with? Indicate major characteristics, traits or qualities?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What sort of people do you prefer to be with for social and recreational activities? Indicate major characteristics, traits or qualities?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How do you feel about authority?

How do you feel about equality?

How do you relate to beggars and "panhandlers" when they confront you on the street?

How do you react when invited to a formal or prestigious event?

BAGGAGE CHECK

Make a list of your cultural baggage and indicate items that fall into each of the following categories:

1. **MUST CARRY** – my personal or career role absolutely requires that I not leave these items behind, whether or not I might want to. Give one example:

2. **WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE BEHIND BUT PROBABLY CAN'T** – My judgment is likely better than my capability of following through. I will try not to take these things, but they may show up as embarrassing stowaways: Give one example:

3. **MUST BE LEFT BEHIND** – My overseas assignment will be a new page in my life as far as these items are concerned. I will not take them along. Give one example:

Discuss the meanings and share a few examples of each category as individuals suggest them. Then ask individuals to complete the following form.

—BAGGAGE CHECK—

Categories of Cultural Baggage	MUST CARRY	WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE BEHIND	MUST BE LEFT BEHIND
Appetites (for food and other!)			
Attitudes toward other people			
Feelings about myself			
Feelings about my country and other countries			
Habits (especially things I do without thinking)			
Things (Yes, things—for example, your microwave oven)			