

Self-Evaluation: Your International Volunteer Experience

Prepare to analyze your experience while you are abroad and upon your return.

Write your name and date here.



Think Analytically About Going Abroad

Everyone who volunteers abroad for the first time has a life-changing experience. No matter how prepared you may feel before leaving your home country, there will always be challenges and surprises along the way.

Luckily, the challenges and surprises you have are extremely valuable, building your cross-cultural capacity, adaptability, and International IQ. Keeping track of these experiences as you have them, and reflecting on them from a professional standpoint can help you make the most of your time abroad.

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| Writing Tips   * **Even if writing isn't your thing**, jotting down a few notes about your adventures can really boost what you get out of your travels. It's a simple way to learn more and make your journey even more valuable! * **Move beyond** simple enthusiasm and basic anecdotes (“The Taj Mahal was incredible!”)! * **Maximize the professional value of your international experience** by thinking more deeply about your experiences. * **Incorporate an analytical perspective** as opposed to simply recounting your experiences. | * **Write** as if you were speaking to a employer, a mentor or a professor. * **Show** your knowledge, skills and attitude. * **Develop career stories:** Ask yourself what specific interactions with locals gave you insights into the culture and allowed you to build valuable skills like adaptability? * **A cartoon of a person with three boys    Description automatically generatedDemonstrate your insights** in terms of global competencies & career readiness as well as intercultural interactions. |

17 Questions to Get You Thinking   
Analytically About Your Experience

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| Questions | Your Answers |
| 1. When and where did you volunteer abroad? What was your position? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. What made you want to volunteer abroad? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. How did you conduct your search for a position? What made you select your program? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. Describe the application process. What made you successful? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. What was the biggest surprise about your volunteer experience abroad? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. Did you participate in extra-curricular or social activities while volunteering abroad? If so, how did they differ from social activities in your home culture? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. What made your volunteer experience abroad a success? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. How did you finance your trip abroad and did you find any creative solutions to stay on budget? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. Did anything happen in your volunteer workplace that gave you particular insight into your host culture? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. How did you deal with the cultural divide during your volunteer experience? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. What was the most important thing you learned about communicating in a foreign culture while volunteering abroad? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. What was your return like? Do you plan to go abroad again? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. What is your number one tip for anyone hoping to follow in your footsteps? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. What did you miss most about home? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. Do you have any final observations on your experience? | Write your notes here. |
| 1. Describe an experience from your time abroad that made a particularly strong impression on you. | Write your notes here. |
| 1. What are your future plans for going abroad and for your career? | Write your notes here. |

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| Energize Your Self-Evaluation | | |
| When you first head abroad, it’s energizing to get caught up in the excitement of the moment. | You’ll be in a state of high energy with so much stimulation around you, breathing in the wondrous air of your new home. You’ll be speed learning as you figure out how best to communicate across cultures, how to behave and how to get around. It’s easy to let this time fly by without stopping to reflect on your experiences – but don’t miss the chance to harness this energy and write about your impressions of life abroad! Not only will your writing be interesting to read when your adventure comes to an end; it will also give you unique insights into your personal and professional skill development.  By writing, you’ll be reflecting on your experiences from a different perspective, and you’ll surely find new and interesting ways of understanding your process of cultural immersion. | By thinking and making notes about your time abroad, you’ll also be building a professional profile of yourself in this new cross-cultural environment.  You’ll be able to observe yourself as you grow into an effective communicator and culture-savvy young professional.  So, pick up a pen, or flip open your laptop and start writing as soon as you plan to go abroad. We recommend writing in a professional, thoughtful tone. This will allow you to easily transfer your writings into an interview or on-the-job context. *MyWorldAbroad* has compiled a selection of questions that will help you focus your writing and prepare you for the moment when a potential employer asks you about your time abroad. |

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| Don't Forget  the Visuals!  Also, when you go abroad, be sure to document them with photographs and/or videos. Collect photos that showcase or highlight your interactions with locals, rather than simply collecting standard sight-seeing photos. When you do take a sight-seeing photo, make sure you’re in it! Photos without people can be boring, and they don't highlight your personal involvement. | Submit Your  Story from Abroad  If you are an internationally minded student or young professional with cross-cultural travel experience, why not submit your answers to the questions above as a [Story from Abroad](http://www.myworldabroad.com/storiesfromabroad) to *MyWorldAbroad*? Here at *MyWorldAbroad*, we are eager to highlight exceptional student stories! Your story will be professionally edited so that you will shine and look your professional best. [Access the submissions page here](http://myworldabroad.com/submit-story) (and receive a $50 gift card).  *We’d love to hear from you!* |

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