## Think Analytically About Going Abroad

Congratulations! You’ve landed a working holiday job abroad and are now undertaking the dream of living and working overseas – now don’t miss the opportunity to document it in writing.

No matter whether you’re on a short or a long contract, chances are that there will come a time in the near future when you’ll need to professionally describe the experiences you are having and the skills you’re building.

## 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 in your new workplace 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.

If you don’t seize the moment to write while abroad, you’ll be losing valuable insights and momentum: this is the time when your energy and ability to reflect is at its highest peak.

You’ll of course be able to polish up your writing once you return home if you feel it’s not perfect.

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.

A well-constructed thoughtful Self-Evaluation will give you an edge with employers, grad schools, and in other potential post-graduate opportunities.

Your *Self-Evaluation* will provide you with an opportunity to showcase your writing/analytical skills and allows you to make personal statements about the impact of your experience, including your professional skills in an international context. When looking for future professional work, you can reference your *Self-Evaluation* in resumes, cover letters and online profiles like LinkedIn.

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.

## Questions To Get You Thinking Analytically About Your Experience

*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. We recommend answering them one or more times over the course of your work abroad term; this way you'll be able to track your development and insights.

1. When and where are you working/did you work abroad? What is/was your position?
2. What made you want to work abroad?
3. How long did it take you to find a job and what job-search strategies did you use? Did you work in your field of interest?
4. Describe the application, interview, and selection process. What made you successful?
5. What was the biggest surprise about your working holiday experience?
6. Did you participate in extra-curricular or social activities through your work abroad? If so, how did they differ from social activities in your home culture?
7. What made your work experience abroad a success?
8. How did you finance your trip abroad and did you find any creative solutions to stay on budget?
9. Do you have a story from your workplace that gave you particular insight into your host culture?
10. What was the biggest challenge in adapting to your international work environment?
11. How did you deal with the cultural divide in the workplace?
12. What was the most important thing you learned about communicating in a foreign culture while you were working abroad?
13. What did you miss most about home?
14. What is your number one tip for anyone hoping to follow in your footsteps by working abroad?
15. Do you have any final observations on your experience?
16. Describe an experience from your time abroad that made a particularly strong impression on you.
17. What are your future plans for going abroad and for your career?

## Don't Forget the Visuals!

Also, when you participate in international activities, be sure to document them with photographs and/or videos. Having visual documentation of your participation in groups, events and work-related tasks is especially important nowadays, since most online professional profiles have a visual component, and if you begin keeping an internationally-oriented blog, you’ll want to show examples of yourself in action!

A word of advice: Always collect photos that showcase your activities and interactions with people. Photos without people are boring when you want to highlight your overseas activities. We especially recommend photos with your host family, as well as with your overseas work colleagues. Your friends and professional acquaintances will want to see you in these contexts.

## Submit Your Story from Abroad

If you are an internationally-minded student or professional with international work 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 $25 gift card). We’d love to hear from you!