

The four stages of culture shock

The honeymoon stage

When you first arrive in a new country, how do you feel? Happy? Excited? Nervous? You have gone to the effort of choosing your destination, booking your flight, and researching what to do when you get there. Whether you have come to travel or live abroad, it is likely that you feel positive about the discoveries and challenges that **lie ahead**. This is known as the honeymoon stage.

The frustration stage

Culture shock **sets in** when fascination **turns to** frustration. The little things that you thought were really interesting when you first arrived start to annoy you. Maybe it's the food (everything is just so spicy!), the customs (how am I supposed to remember all these rules?), or the way the locals react to you (why won't they stop staring?). You begin to miss your friends and family back home. It becomes stressful not being able to do simple tasks such as posting a letter or paying a bill without first spending an hour researching how to do it on the Internet.

The adjustment stage

Over time, you learn to **deal with** these frustrations. This is the period of adjustment. You may still not understand or enjoy everything, but you are more familiar and comfortable with your surroundings. You have got to know friends and colleagues better, and sharing your experiences with them is helping you to **settle in**. You have also learned to laugh at the things that frustrate you, and to focus on developing qualities such as flexibility and tolerance.

The acceptance stage

This final stage can take weeks, months, or even years to arrive. When it does, it doesn't mean you have got used to everything around you, but that you have learned to accept the bad with the good. You have found a balance between the things that make you want to tear your hair out and the things that make you wonder if you will ever be able to leave. Your new home won't have changed, but you will have – and hopefully for the better. Isn't that why you came overseas in the first place? And if nothing surprised you any more, it wouldn't be as much fun, would it?

- 1 In which of the four stages of culture shock would the following situation occur? Talk to a partner.**

You are invited to dinner by one of your colleagues. You want to go, but feel nervous about doing so. It will be the first time you have been into a local's home and you are not sure what will be expected of you. You are worried that you might do something to offend your host.

- 2 Look at the key words in bold in the text and match them to the definitions.**

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|----------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| a | to be likely to happen in the future | _____ |
| b | to become familiar with a place | _____ |
| c | to start to happen | _____ |
| d | to develop into | _____ |
| e | to take action to solve a problem | _____ |

- 3 Imagine you are going to work or study overseas. You have just got off the plane in your new country. How do you feel? Talk to a partner.**