

Lancer Communities

The 10-Point Cultural Adjustment Checklist

Navigate your first 90 days abroad with confidence.

Phase 1: Pre-Departure (Weeks 1-4)

1. The “Why” Anchor

Write down the core reason you are moving. When culture shock hits, you will need to read this to re-center yourself.

2. Administrative Map

Compile 3 physical copies of all vital documents (visas, marriage certs, degrees). Bureaucracy loves paper.

3. Linguistic Triage

Don't try to learn the whole language yet. Memorize exactly 20 “survival phrases” (Greetings, “I need help,” “How much?”, “Where is...”).

Phase 2: Arrival & The Honeymoon Phase (Days 1-30)

4. Establish the “Third Space”

Find one place that isn't work or home where you feel comfortable (a cafe, a park, a gym). Make it a weekly habit.

5. The Observation Rule

For the first two weeks, listen twice as much as you speak. Observe how locals greet each other, manage time, and express disagreement.

6. Micro-Routines

Moving strips away your habits. Immediately establish one daily micro-routine you have total control over (e.g., a 10-minute morning walk, making your own coffee).

Phase 3: The Trough & Integration (Days 30–90)

7. Expect the Dip

Around week 6, the novelty will fade and frustration will spike. Recognize this as a normal biological response, not a personal failure.

8. Break the Expat Bubble

Identify one local community event, club, or class to attend that has nothing to do with your work or fellow expats.

9. Find a Cultural Informant

Identify one local colleague or friend who is patient enough to answer your “silly” questions about why things are done a certain way.

10. Forgive Your Mistakes

You will commit a faux pas. You will use the wrong word. Apologize gracefully, laugh at yourself, and move forward.