



# What to Bring

## ...and What NOT to Bring on your Mission Trip to Houston

---

### Five things to remember about the City:

1. The people who live in the city come from many different places, backgrounds, and cultures. Different isn't good or bad.
2. The people of the city work hard at preserving their cultures...they are proud to be Korean, Thai, Salvadoran, Honduran, Mexican, African-American, etc.
3. You will bring your suburban/rural culture with you. You will naturally look, act, and talk like suburban/rural people.
4. Sometimes these cultures are in conflict. Please remember to respect the cultures of the city that are different from your own. Do not make fun of or denigrate the dress, actions, food, or music of the cultures with which you come in contact. This also includes different religious groups, ethnic cultures, sexual orientations, political views, etc.
5. The city is inconsistent. We ask that dress be modest and appropriate to the situations you will be in. This is regardless of the attire that you may see others wearing who are not part of CSM. Many work sites that deal with food require tennis shoes or other closed shoes with non-skid soles – no open-toed or open-heeled shoes such as sandals, flip-flops or clogs.

### Things to bring with you to the City:

- An attitude of FLEXIBILITY! And remember, Houston is in the Central Time Zone!
- Please make every effort to use VANS for your group's transportation. Make sure there is room for your CSM City Host in your vehicle.
- Sleeping bag or twin sheet, pillow, towel, wash cloth. (All participants will have a bunk bed or mattress).
- Personal toiletries (shampoo, soap, toothbrush, sunscreen, etc.)
- Fan in the summer (optional).
- Your Bible, a pen and a journal.
- Work clothes: most sites prefer jeans/long pants, t-shirts, closed-toe shoes with non-skid soles.
  - Shirts that expose the shoulders (tank tops, etc.) may NOT be worn.
  - Shirts must be long enough to raise arms without exposing midriff or underwear.
  - For summer, shorts to wear around our housing site and at most ministry sites (modest length)
  - Sturdy, flat, closed-toe shoes with non-skid soles for use at most ministry sites.
  - Sandals or flip-flops may be worn around the CSM buildings, but be prepared to change.
  - One-piece swimsuits with modest cut for females, only in summer.
- Church clothes (only if you will be in Houston on Sunday morning): Please check with your CSM City Director because different churches that we visit have different requirements.

OPTIONAL: Sheet to lay your sleeping bag on, Flip-flops.

LEADERS: Alarm clock.

### Things NOT to bring to the City:

- Any headphone devices such as iPods or MP3 players, portable gaming systems, TVs. (We prefer that students not bring cell phones. If you do, they must be left at the housing site.)
- Anything that is not replaceable or has significant value, like expensive jewelry.
- A lot of money (CSM t-shirts are available for \$10 to \$20.)
- Drugs, alcohol, knives, guns, weapons of any kind, etc
- If planning VBS activities, please be creative and **do not** use the "Salvation Bracelet" craft, as the colors can easily be misinterpreted and offensive to certain cultures.



# Rules and Guidelines

## Houston

---

The best attitude to take into this experience is to pretend that you have arrived in a far-away land where the customs, language, food and thinking are very different from your own. Thinking about the inner-city this way will help you prepare for your time in the city. Safety is our number one priority and the following guidelines are to help you understand the culture of the city a little better.

1. While in the city, you will be guided by CSM staff. These are people who know the city and how to make your experience safe and meaningful. Please listen to CSM staff at all times and do not question decisions on the spot (wait until you are out of the immediate situation).
2. It is important that students are never outside of the CSM housing site without an adult sponsor. Within the building, students should travel in pairs or groups of three, if guys and girls are together.
3. There can be no yelling, whistling, gesturing, etc. out of the buildings or vehicles. This can be misinterpreted and may be dangerous.
4. Money should be handled out of sight so we do not create temptation for anyone. In addition, we ask that group members not give money to anyone. If you think that someone has a legitimate need, please refer him or her to CSM staff. This is for your own protection. If you have money that you want to give to people who need it, it is best to give it to one of the organizations where you will be serving, as money goes further that way. You may make extra sack lunches to give out, or maybe even invite someone to a ministry site for lunch.
5. You should always be aware of your surroundings and not so wrapped up in conversation that you don't realize what is going on around you. The best way to avoid danger is to not walk into it.
6. The culture of the city tends to not be as friendly as in suburban or rural areas. Don't look people in the eye because this can be seen as a sign of physical or sexual aggression. People will not be offended if you don't smile and wave at them. However, if someone speaks to you, or if you are speaking to him or her, it is okay and encouraged to look him or her in the eye.
7. Bathrooms and showers are at a premium. Due to limited space, we ask that your showers be five minutes maximum.
8. Lights out will be at 11 p.m. each night.
9. Most ministry sites do not allow photographs to be taken because it takes away from your effectiveness to do ministry. In addition, many people don't want their picture taken and some children cannot be photographed for legal reasons. If you want to take a picture, first check your motivation, then check with your CSM host.
10. Part of your CSM trip is experiencing the many cultures of the city through eating at ethnic restaurants. The people at the restaurants are very proud of their food (its an important part of their culture) so please be open to trying everything and being polite.
11. The key to inner-city ministry is flexibility. We have a schedule prepared for you, but God may have something different in mind. If plans change, just accept it as God's guidance for your trip and go with it.
12. It is important to remember that wherever you go, you are an ambassador for Jesus Christ. It will be quite obvious to city residents that you are not from the area, and many can also tell that you are with a church. Therefore, you will want to behave well towards each other and strangers. In addition, public displays of affection between men and women (students, leaders and/or CSM staff) such as teasing, roughhousing, and backrubs are inappropriate when with CSM and especially at ministry sites.