Believe it or not, overseas volunteers like yourself often arrive on the field without a toothbrush, not to mention other important items. That’s why you should know all you can about the country you’ll be visiting — the type of work site, the weather, church atmosphere and other information concerning the culture.

What you wear overseas does make a difference. Make sure your clothing is modest in all circumstances. As you’re packing, remember you’ll need some basic types of clothing: travel, work, church and sightseeing. For travel days you’ll want to be comfortable (especially your feet) but not sloppy. Try to blend with the nationals of the country. The way you dress makes a statement about your views of the country you’re entering. At the work site dress modestly also. Jeans are usually appropriate for work. However, in some countries jeans would not be appropriate for women to wear. If you’re in doubt, though, a long, full skirt would work well too. Dress casually for social events with local church members. Women should not wear pants to church events. You don’t need a suit or fancy dress for Sunday worship though. Men should wear nice slacks and a shirt, shoes and a tie. A jacket would be nice for men who are speaking. Women should wear a casual dress or a skirt and blouse (with sleeves) and dress shoes. You may need to walk long distances so avoid high heels. Sensible, modest dress is appropriate for sight-seeing. If you’re ever in doubt in a particular situation, just ask.

It’s also important to remember that in North America, the way we dress reflects our opinion of ourselves. But in many other cultures, the way we dress also reflects our opinion of others. So don’t overdress, but at the same time don’t underdress. For example, you may be tempted to wear jeans and tennis shoes, but be cautious where you go.

What to Pack

These are just suggestions. Your particular trip may require other items.

- Bible
- Passport/visa
- Airplane tickets
- Basic clothing (keep weather in mind)
- Towels and washcloths
- Hat (protection from sun)
- Camera and film
- First-aid items
- Toilet tissue
- Insect repellent
- Flashlight/penlight
- Watch (Leave valuable jewelry at home.)
- Feminine products
- Blow dryer (may not be able to use it)
- Medicines: prescription and over-the-counter including anti-diarrhea medication, laxatives, and motion-sickness medications (Take all medications you need. You probably can’t buy them in the country.)
- Journal/pen for quiet times
- Itinerary
- Work-related clothing
- Comfortable shoes
- Toiletry items
- Sunscreen/lip balm with sunscreen
- Wet wipes
- Tissues
- Plastic grocery bags (to pack dirty clothes for return trip)
- Electrical current adapter
- Gifts for host/hostess
- Reading material for travel time
- Visa or American Express credit cards (At times you cannot change money but credit cards will be accepted.)
- Extra eye glasses, especially if you wear contacts