

# Sharing Your Peace Corps Experience

## *Compressing Two Years into Minutes*



### Types of Presentations

As a returned Volunteer, you are a valuable resource for helping recruit future generations of Peace Corps Volunteers. We encourage you to give presentations about your service in a variety of venues. Your involvement can take many forms:

- Speaking at local colleges and universities, joined by a Peace Corps recruiter
- Talking with nominees or invitees who have just been nominated for service or invited to a country
- Sharing your experiences with students in a classroom
- Staffing an information table at a career fair or local event
- Participating in a panel discussion at a community or organizational event

### Purpose of the Presentation

Your presentation should inform and inspire the audience, providing a sense of what it is like to commit two years of service in the Peace Corps. Many people in the audience are genuinely interested in being among the next generation of Peace Corps Volunteers. Your goal is to provide them with more information and help them visualize how they might make a difference for others and themselves through service in the Peace Corps.

### Tailor for Your Audience

Focus on your personal experiences that might interest the specific audience you're addressing. What do they want to hear?

Suggested topics you might focus on include:

- Why did you become a Volunteer?
- What was your most memorable experience as a Volunteer?
- How do you think your service made a difference in your host community?
- How did you benefit from Peace Corps service, personally and/or professionally?
- Describe a specific project from start to finish, including challenges and triumphs
- Share a lesson learned or a special relationship (such as best friend, colleague, host parent, etc.)
- Compare and contrast a topic, such as life for teens in the U.S. compared to your country of service

Share photos, clothing or artifacts from your country of service. Play samples of music from the country and/or give examples of words or phrases in the language spoken in your community. Tell an amusing anecdote about a mishap or cross-cultural misunderstanding. Please remember your audience might not have a good grasp of life overseas. Keep all anecdotes tasteful.

### Presentation Materials

If you are presenting alone, take advantage of the downloadable materials provided the by Peace Corps. Visit [www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/resources](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/resources) for items such as:

- A customizable recruitment Power Point presentation
- A presentation video
- Peace Corps Fact Sheet
- Promotional materials (posters, customizable fliers)

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## *Compressing Two Years into Minutes (cont'd.)*

If you are co-presenting with a Peace Corps recruiter, please allow the recruiter to guide the direction and pace of the session and follow his or her cue as to when it is your time to speak. Agree on the content that each of you will cover to avoid duplication, and if time allows, preview your materials with the recruiter. Stay within the time allotted for your portion of the presentation, and defer to the recruiter to field questions related to Peace Corps policies and procedures.

### Commonly Asked Questions

Try to address the following types of questions during your presentation, or be prepared to answer them in a follow-up question-and-answer session:

- How did you become inspired to serve in Peace Corps?
- How were you perceived in your country of service and what did they think of Americans in general?
- What was a rewarding experience you had?
- Was it easy getting to know people and make friends?
- Were you homesick? How did you stay in touch with friends and family back home?
- What was your assignment?
- What was your typical day like?
- What kind of foods did you eat?
- What were your social life and leisure time like?
- What were your host family and housing like?
- Were you able to see the results of your work while you were there? And now?
- Do you still keep in touch with your host country friends or fellow Volunteers?
- What was the greatest challenge you faced during service, and how did you deal with it?
- What was it like adjusting to the United States when you came back home?
- Where are you from originally? Where did you go to school, and what was your degree in?
- Why is the Peace Corps important to you today?

### Participate in Peace Corps' referral program, *Increase Peace*

Do you know someone who would make a great Peace Corps Volunteer? Encourage him or her to consider serving overseas through the *Increase Peace* referral program. Learn how at [www.peacecorps.gov/increasepeace](http://www.peacecorps.gov/increasepeace)

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## Speaker Tips: Dos and Don'ts

**DO** have fun. Simply think of this as a conversation with friends who want to learn about your experience. Be sure your answers are animated and engaging, yet concise.

**DO** speak about personal experiences, and feel free to talk about what motivated you to serve.

**DO** ask questions of audience members. If you lose your train of thought or simply want to get some feedback, say something like, "I had an amazing two years in Zambia. Is there anything specific you would like to learn from me about the Peace Corps or about Zambia?"

**DO** bring photo albums, PowerPoint presentations, artifacts, and/or articles of clothing for display.

**DO** select 10-20 photos when creating a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation should last no more than 20 minutes. Select photos that walk the audience through your experience, with photos from training, host families, housing, work projects, travel, friends, landscapes, and cultural events.

**DO** weave colorful glimpses of the Peace Corps experience, utilizing at least three snippets of anecdotal material. This adds emotional depth to the presentation.

**DO** remember that you are someone who is fun and interesting to listen to. You are an expert on the Peace Corps! Your audience probably doesn't know anything about the country where you served or your experience. Your personal stories inspire and create possibilities in other people's lives.

**DO** keep in mind that audiences will see you as a representative of the Peace Corps, a person who - in the words of founding Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver - "personifies our best qualities and deploys to the world the vision of what the United States stands for." What you choose to say - and how you say it - matters.

**DON'T** read your PowerPoint slides word for word. The audience can read your slide while you talk about an experience related to the subject.

**DON'T** generalize about the Peace Corps experience. What you experienced is unique. Each Volunteer has a different experience. Say, "This is what I experienced" or "I can tell you about what it was like in my village."

**DON'T** use Peace Corps acronyms like RPCV, PCV, IST, APCD, PCMO, and COS. These terms are meaningless to someone who has not served in the Peace Corps.

**DON'T** try to explain everything about the culture or history of the country where you served. The details will be lost. People remember a personal story more than a history lesson.

**DON'T** go on and on with horror stories. It's all right to share stories about getting sick or about giant spiders, but try to seek some balance. If you speak about getting sick for 15 minutes and you talk about your work for 5 minutes, then your audience will take away the negative part of your experience and not the positive. How did you receive help or guidance to get through difficult situations? Why would you join Peace Corps again despite those hardships?

**DON'T** cite statistics unless they are particularly relevant to any anecdotal material you happen to use. And if you do, only cite those statistics that are from a reliable source.

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