

## Survival Topic #4: Clothing

### Questions to Ask:

What kind of clothes did you wear in your country?  
Do you still wear some of your traditional clothes?  
Where can you buy the type of clothing you like?  
What kind of clothing was used for special occasions in your country?  
What kind of clothes do you need now?  
Where can you get inexpensive clothing?

### Topics to Share:

Share with your mentees where you do your bargain shopping. Discuss what kinds of clothes are appropriate for different seasons, especially for a Chicago winter, and settings.

### English Language Learner Tips:

Find pictures of people from their culture dressed up in traditional clothes and ask them to say whatever they can about the clothing or the events where they would wear such clothing in English. For a mentee who is learning to read and write, you can practice story telling by writing down what they tell you and then working with them to correct some of the most basic errors. In this way, they can “write” their own story.

Teach basic clothing vocabulary using simple pictures from catalogues, ads, and magazines. You can increase the difficulty of this task by teaching them the differences within types of clothing. Bring examples with you and have them learn by pointing to various articles of clothing or by putting them on. The more senses involved in the learning process, the faster the person can learn.

In front of a closet, help your mentees ask for what they need. Use very basic sentence patterns, like “I need a \_\_\_\_\_.” Try to set up a basic dialogue with a set of sentences they can memorize.

### Other Notes:

Mentors can help interpret appropriate dress for different functions in American society. Explain to your mentees what kind of clothing is best for work or a job interview, and how they can keep warm if the climate here is colder than what they are used to.

There is also ample opportunity for you to learn about the traditional clothing worn in your mentees’ native country. There is often significant meaning behind special cultural designs and outfits. If you discover some significant needs for clothing, you might also help the family find the clothes they need.

People from every culture have their own ideas about what clothing is and isn’t appropriate. As a mentor, you can sensitively point out some of the basic cultural norms in the United States to help the newcomers in their adjustment.

You might serve as a cultural “interpreter” for children who want to wear what “all the American kids are wearing” and for parents who do not understand the intense peer pressure the children might feel.

Most refugees arrive in the U.S. with little clothing, particularly winter wear. Many are not used to cold weather. Even those who have lived here for a while can dress inappropriately for the weather. Children are especially prone to running around outside without adequate clothing. You can help by showing them what they may need for the winter.