

What to Do If You Get Lost

Kim Ly



Fruitvale station and busway in Oakland California. Photo from <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.

BEFORE YOU READ: Think about the phrase “to get lost.” Use it in several sentences. What strategies do you use to avoid getting lost?

I Learned the Route

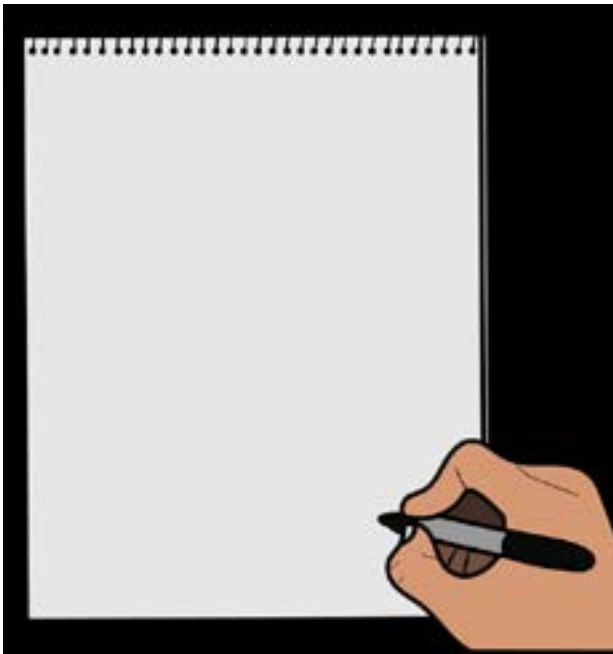
After being in the U.S. for two months, my sister and I went to visit our cousin in Oakland. Her daughter’s friend, Uncle Ky, found a job for me. I decided to stay.

In the morning, Uncle Ky took me by bus to a sewing company. I stayed there to work and he came at 5 pm to show me how to take a bus home. The second morning, he took me to work again. I told him that I could take the bus home by myself.

The Plan Changed

At the end of the day, the boss asked some of us to stay late and work overtime. He said he would drive us home. I did not understand English, but one of the Chinese ladies who I worked with encouraged me to stay. She said, “No worry. The boss is a nice person. He will drive me home too. I will be with you in the car.”

Making money was very important to me, so I decided to stay. I asked the supervisor to make a call home. At this time, I did not speak English, but she understood me when I pointed to the phone. However, I wasn’t successful in making the call and didn’t know how to ask for



If you were going to write a note to help someone not get lost, what would it say?

help. Later, I found out that I had to dial 9 before dialing the phone number.

I Had the Address on a Piece of Paper

It was dark when the boss drove us home. He drove two ladies and me to the bus station in Oakland Chinatown. The two ladies were dropped off there and went on the bus. I didn't know this place. The boss asked me something, but I didn't understand. Then, I showed him a piece of paper that had my cousin's address. Because I was in a strange place, I had to make sure I would get home safely, so I asked my cousin to write down the home address for me. Therefore, I had the address in hand to show to the boss. He was very kind, and he took me to the address.

How to Not Get Lost

When I stepped in the door, I saw my younger sister crying so hard! Her eyes were red and swollen. She thought I was lost because it was so late, and I was in this town without being

able to speak English. A deep feeling of family relationship was in my heart. To prevent getting lost, my young sister wrote down the company address and my cousin's address, and the sentence "I got lost" on a piece of paper. She told me: "When you get lost, just show this to the police and they will help you." Luckily, I didn't have to use it.

AFTER YOU READ:

- 1.** How did Kim's family support her to not get lost? What did her colleagues at work do to help her? What about her supervisor and her boss?
- 2.** Many people in Kim's life collaborated to help her get to work and home. They formed a "team" around her. Who is on your team? What do they do to support you? Whom do you support?
- 3.** For more stories on navigating public transportation, see [Issue #43](#) of *The Change Agent*.
- 4.** Write a note for someone to have in case they get lost. What information would you include?



Kim Ly is a student at Alameda Reads in Alameda, CA. She is the second child and the eldest sister of seven younger brothers and sisters, which made her strong and confident. She believes it is better to be calm, accept the situation you face, and improve it. She always tries to be a good model for her younger siblings to follow.