

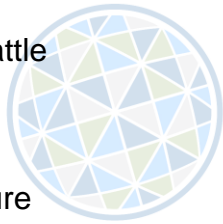
The FIUTS
International Student
Handbook



FIUTS
local connections. global community.

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Arrival Checklist

Welcome to the University of Washington! Use this checklist to complete everything you need to do before your classes begin at the UW.

- Complete New Student [Online Check-In](#).

- Visit the International Student Services Office on the 4th floor of Schmitz Hall to submit copies of your immigration documents. You will need to make copies of the following documents before you go - the ISS Office cannot make copies for you. See the [ISS website](#) for details and examples of each document:
 - Your passport photo page
 - Your visa
 - Your I-94 Card (front and back - you will receive this on the plane)
 - Your I-20 form (if you have an "F" visa) – this must be copied **after** you arrive in the U.S.
 - Your DS-2019 form (if you have a "J" visa) – this must be copied **after** you arrive in the U.S.

- If you are a J-1 Scholar, visit the International Scholars Office in Geberding Hall, room 239.

- Purchase UW student health insurance. Alternatively, if you already have eligible insurance, complete an [Insurance Waiver Form](#) at the ISS office.

- Get your student ID (“Husky Card”) at the Husky Card Center on the ground floor of Odegaard Library. This card is your student ID, bus pass, library, and student account card.

- Complete your [Measles Immunity Verification Form](#) at Hall Health Center. You cannot register for classes until this is done.

- Academic/Departmental Advising:

For graduate students: Go to your academic department to meet an advisor and get assistance with class registration.

For undergraduate students: Go to [First Year Programs](#) and register for an Advising & Orientation (A&O) Session.

Arrival Checklist (Continued)

- Create a [UW NetID](#) (UW Internet Identification) and make a UW e-mail account.
- Open a bank account (for students staying longer than one quarter).
- Get a Washington State ID or driver's license, if necessary. You will need a copy of your SEVIS printout to get a driver's license.
- Apply for on campus or off campus housing.
- Go to www.fiuts.org and see the FIUTS calendar for social events and more ways to get involved in the UW community. You can also become a member of FIUTS and enjoy event discounts, priority registration, and other benefits!



FIUTS
local connections. global community.

Student Reference List

- [FIUTS](#) (The Foundation for International Understanding Through Students)
206-543-0735, Condon Hall room 511C, info@fiuts.org
- [Office of International Students Services \(ISS\)](#)
Tel: 206-221-7857, Fax: 543-9772, Schmitz Hall room 459
- [International Scholars Office \(ISO\)](#)
Tel: 206-685-8847, Fax: 685-8114, Gerberding Hall room 239
- [International Programs and Exchanges \(IPE\)](#)
206-221-4404, Schmitz Hall room 459, ipe@u.washington.edu
- [Housing and Food Services \(HFS\)](#)
206-543-4059, Schmitz Hall room 301, hsfinfo@u.washington.edu
- [University Registrar's Office](#)
206-543-8580, Schmitz Hall room 225, regoff@u.washington.edu
- [Student Fiscal Services \(SFS\)](#)
206-543-4694, Schmitz Hall room 129, sfshelp@u.washington.edu
- [Hall Health Center](#)
206- 685-1011, Hall Health Center, hhpcc@u.washington.edu
- [Center for Undergraduate Advising, Diversity, and Student Success](#)
206-543-2550, Mary Gates Hall room 141, advice@u.washington.edu
- [The Career Center](#)
206-543-0535, Mary Gates Hall room 134, ccsfd@u.washington.edu
- [Testing Center](#)
206-543-1170, Schmitz Hall room 440, oeatests@u.washington.edu
- [ASUW Off Campus Housing Affairs \(OCHA\)](#)
206-543-8997, asuwocha@u.washington.edu
- [Student Legal Services](#)
206-543-6486, slsuw@u.washington.edu
- [Online Student Guide](#)
- [University of Washington home page](#)
- [MyUW Web portal](#)

About the University of Washington

The University: Then & Now

The University of Washington (also known as the “UW” or “U-Dub”) was founded in 1861, before Washington gained statehood as the Territorial University. Its first class had 30 students and the campus was located in downtown Seattle. The campus eventually relocated to what is now called the University District in northeast Seattle, and today, the University of Washington’s campus has a student population of over 40,000. Denny Hall (built in 1895) was the first building on the new campus where students took classes, and contains a cornerstone of the old “Territorial University” that keep alive earliest history of the UW. Since then, over 200 buildings have been built and 17 major departments now occupy 693 acres of the campus.

The UW’s Seattle campus has a many resources a student can use. Your student ID allows free entrance into the Burke Museum of Natural History and the Henry Art Gallery. You can check out books from the University’s 16 libraries, and use the Hall Health Center for your health and wellness needs. The Intramural Activities Building (IMA) is the University’s main athletics complex, and has as an indoor swimming pool, extensive weight and cardio gyms on 3 floors, racquetball/ squash courts, outdoor playing fields, swimming pools, and a climbing center.

Campus Tours

The University of Washington has been recognized for having one of the most beautiful college campuses in the United States. UW students lead regular campus tours, combining their knowledge of campus history with personal experiences. The tours are free, and do not require reservations. They leave from the 3rd floor lobby of Schmitz hall, at the following times:

- Monday through Friday, 10:30am and 2:30pm
- Saturday, 10:30am (with some exceptions; check the [website](#))

Getting Around Campus

Because the UW campus is so large, it can be easy to get lost! Familiarize yourself with a campus map and keep it with you for quick reference. You can also see [campus maps](#) online or download the My UW app for your smartphone to find specific buildings quickly. Another useful way of getting around campus is to use landmarks.

We are honored that you have chosen the University of Washington to be the home of your studies in the United States. We wish you a successful and rewarding experience during your time here in Seattle. Good luck with your studies!

Campus Resources

MyUW

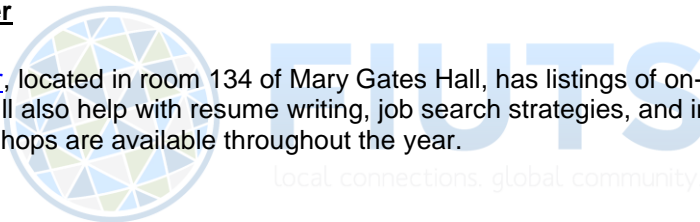
MyUW is your online portal to everything relating to the University of Washington. MyUW gives you access to UW e-mail, class registration, class schedules, tuition payment tools, transcripts, and much more. To access MyUW, you will use your UW NetID and password. When using the MyUW system, your personal information is not disclosed unless such action is necessary by law or to enforce UW policy. See the [MyUW website](#) to get started today.

Husky Union Building (HUB)

The Husky Union Building (HUB) is the center of student activity on the University of Washington. The HUB houses a food court, the majority of student services, ballrooms, gaming centers, meeting rooms, and more.

The Career Center

The [Career Center](#), located in room 134 of Mary Gates Hall, has listings of on-campus jobs. Career advisors will also help with resume writing, job search strategies, and interview techniques. Workshops are available throughout the year.



Student Legal Services

Student Legal Services provides legal advice, counseling, arbitration, and court representation in legal matters. All currently enrolled students who have paid the Student Activity Fee are eligible for a free initial consultation. If additional services are needed, there is a minimal charge. The office is staffed by third-year law students who are supervised by licensed attorneys. You can contact the SLS office here: [Student Legal Services](#)/ 206-543-6486

Online Student Guide

You can visit the [Online Student Guide](#) for everything you ever wanted to know about UW academics, finances, student life, and university policies. Learn how to achieve academic success, manage student accounts, comply with the student conduct code, and more.

Academic Advising & Class Registration

Graduate Students:

Go to see your departmental or faculty academic advisor. They will help you with program requirements, class selection, and registration related to your particular field of study.

Undergraduate Students:

Register for an [Advising & Orientation \(A&O\)](#) session. During your session you will receive instructions about how to register for classes and make an appointment to meet with an academic advisor.

NOTE: IP&E Exchange students do not need to check in at the Undergraduate Gateway Center.

The Undergraduate Gateway Center

171 Mary Gates Hall
(206) 543-2550
Weekdays 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
advice@u.washington.edu

Online Class Registration Through MyUW

Registering for classes is usually quick and easy, but good planning before you register is essential. Make sure you have completed all of the following items before registering for classes:

- Checked in with the International Service Office (ISS).
- Your Measles Immunity Verification Form has been submitted to Hall Health.
- You have talked with an academic advisor.
- You have created a UW NetID with password.

[Detailed instructions on how to register](#) are available online. If you still have questions after reviewing this information, e-mail the registration office at regoff@u.washington.edu, or call (206) 543-8580, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Academic Life

The University of Washington Grading System

The UW uses a numerical grading system, to one decimal place. The highest grade you can get for a class is 4.0. Generally speaking, the following grade boundaries apply:

A= 4.0

B= 3.0

C= 2.0

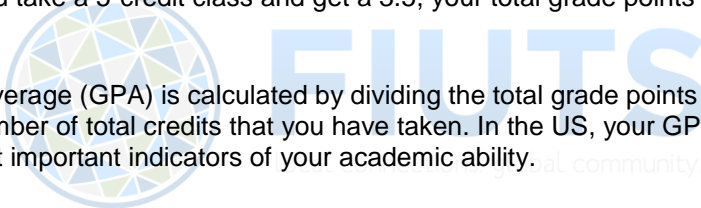
D= 1.0

Grades descend by increments of 0.1 down to a minimum of 0.7, the lowest passing grade. This is the lowest grade where you can earn credit for the course. A grade of 0 is classified as a failure, with no credit earned.

Grade Point Averages (GPA) and Grade Reports

In the U.S., when you take classes you earn grade points for each graded course you take. Your grade points are calculated by multiplying the number of credits attempted by the grade earned. For example, if you take a 5-credit class and get a 3.5, your total grade points for that class will be 17.5.

The grade point average (GPA) is calculated by dividing the total grade points from all your classes by the number of total credits that you have taken. In the US, your GPA is considered to be one of the most important indicators of your academic ability.



Pass/ Fail

There are two pass/ fail systems at the UW: Satisfactory/Not Satisfactory (S/NS) and Credit/No Credit (CR/NC). S/NS is an optional way to take a UW course if you do not want to receive a grade for a class. Under this option, a grade of 2.0 or above is an S, with a NS given if your grade is below 2.0. You do not earn credit for a course if you receive a NS.

Alternatively, CR/NC is a pass/fail option selected by the department or by the professor offering the course; students cannot choose this option. If you receive a NC grade in this system, you do not receive any credit for that class. Before choosing a class with either of these options, you should consult your academic advisor to learn the impact on your academic transcript and grade point average.

Libraries

UW Libraries & Study Centers

Although there are many libraries on campus, the two you use the most are the Odegaard Undergraduate Library and the Suzzallo/ Allen Library. These libraries are located on an area of campus known as “Red Square”. It is good to familiarize yourself with the layout of each library, and know which services are provided at each.

For hours and general information or for further details about other specialized libraries, visit the [UW Libraries home page](#).

[OUGL Computing Commons](#) is the University’s largest drop-in computer lab.

The [University Libraries Media Center](#) is meant for individual study and research. The Media Center houses a large collection of audiovisual materials consisting of more than 25,000 items in a variety of formats, including VHS videos, DVDs, CDs, and audio tapes. Equipment is available on site for viewing and listening. Most items are available for check-out.

Math and Writing Centers

The University of Washington has a wide variety of writing centers to help students with their coursework. Some centers are open to any student currently enrolled in classes, while others are specifically for a particular discipline. Here are some samples of writing/study centers:

English Department Writing Center	open to all
CLUE Evening Drop-in Writing Center	open to undergraduate students only
Odegaard Writing & Research Center	open all
History Writing Center	intended for undergraduates
Math Study Center	open to all
Statistics Tutor and Study Center	intended for undergraduates

Academic Honesty

Students at the UW are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic conduct. In basic terms, you are guilty of academic misconduct – cheating - whenever you present as your own work something that you did not do. You are also guilty of cheating if you help someone else to present their work in a similar way.

One of the most common forms of academic cheating is plagiarism: using someone else’s words

or ideas without giving them credit. When students plagiarize, they usually do so in one of the following six ways.

1. Using another writer's words without giving the proper citation.
2. Using another writer's ideas without giving the proper citation.
3. Citing a source, but using the exact words without indicating quotation marks.
4. Borrowing the structure of another writer's phrases without crediting the author.
5. Borrowing part or all of another student's paper, or using someone else's outline to write your paper.
6. Using a paper writing "service", or having a friend write the paper for you.

The University of Washington takes cheating and plagiarism very seriously. If you are found guilty of academic misconduct, you will be subject to disciplinary warnings, academic probation, lost credit, and in extreme cases, you will be asked to leave the University. Remember that many professors now have sophisticated online tools that will detect cheating and copying in papers.

You have earned the right to be a UW student; earn your degree with similar pride.

Student Conduct Code

It is University policy to support and promote the right to freedom of speech, the right to associate freely with others, and the right to assemble peacefully. In order to assure these rights to all members of the UW community, the University General Conduct Code outlines what a student can and cannot do while on the University campus. The conduct code also identifies which sanctions can be applied to students if they break these rules.

You can access the complete text of the University's General [Conduct Code](#) online.

Health & Safety

Student Health Insurance

All UW international students are required to have health insurance during their time in Seattle. Unless you are eligible for an insurance waiver from ISO, most students choose the UW student insurance plan. You can find more information about the [plan](#) online.

Hall Health Care Center

Hall Health is an outpatient clinic that provides health care to University of Washington Students, faculty, staff, and the general public. Many valuable health services are available at no cost to currently registered UW students who pay the quarterly Student Activity Fee. For detailed information regarding services available, visit:

[Hall Health Center](#) (located across the street from the HUB)

General Information – (206) 685-1011

Appointments and Registration (Patient Services Center) – (206) 616-2495

After-hours medical advice – (206) 731-2500

Open weekdays 8 am – 5 pm; Tuesdays 9 am – 5 pm

The Counseling Center

Culture shock can be quite stressful. You might find yourself alone too much, or you may encounter too many choices, too much freedom, and confusing situations. You might worry about how to make friends and communicate, or about your academic performance. You may feel overwhelmed by life in Seattle.

The University of Washington Counseling Center offers personal counseling, career counseling, and study skills workshops to help students find the right balance in their lives. Students can receive counseling individually or in a group to resolve relationship difficulties, to improve time management skills, to overcome substance abuse, etc. They can attend free “Study Smarter” workshops to learn how to study well in the American educational system and improve their grades.

Contact the [Counseling Center](#) to make an appointment: counsels@u.washington.edu

Wellness Resource Center (Hall Health, room 213)

At the Wellness Resource Center (WRC), you can get information and resources that will help you make informed health-promoting behavior changes. Information is available on topics such as alcohol or drug use, depression, nutrition, eating disorders, reproductive health, and more. Bike lights, helmets, and other safety and wellness products are also available at reduced prices.

U-CALL

U-CALL is an after-hours telephone listening service. When Hall Health is closed at night or on the weekends, you can talk with a trained student volunteer about any concerns you might have (classes, relationships, stress, money, etc.) Information about resources to contact the following day is also available. Dial (206) 543-2255. Visit the [Hall Health Center](#) online for details.

Protecting Yourself & Your Property

Seattle is considered to be safe compared to many large American cities, but like any big city in the world, crime happens. Using common sense and being cautious is always a good idea. The University of Washington Police Department (UWPD) is located at 1117 N.E. Boat St, and is staffed 24 hours a day. The UW police department consists of Seattle Police officers who enforce state and local laws and patrol the campus on a 24-hour basis.

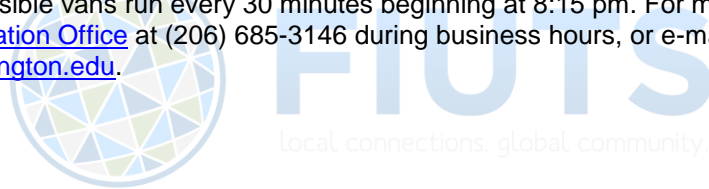
Emergency Numbers:

From non-campus telephones:	911
From campus telephones:	9-911 or 911
For the hearing impaired:	(206) 543-3323
Non-emergency police contact number:	(206) 543-9331

Night Ride

Night Ride vans operate Sunday through Thursday from 8 pm – 12:15 am during Autumn, Winter, and Spring quarters, but do not operate during Summer quarter. The vans carry students, faculty, and staff from campus to their destinations in three zones within one mile north, east, and west of campus.

Passengers can ride free with a U-PASS or purchase a \$1 ticket at the IMA front desk until 10:00 pm. Shuttles will pick up passengers every 15 minutes at five stops— the HUB, Stevens Way at Garfield Lane, Meany Hall, the flagpole in front of Parrington Hall, and the Art Building. Wheelchair-accessible vans run every 30 minutes beginning at 8:15 pm. For more information, call the [Transportation Office](#) at (206) 685-3146 during business hours, or e-mail shuttles@u.washington.edu.



Helpful Tips for Preventing Theft

Theft is the most common crime on campus. The best means of prevention is to reduce or remove the opportunity. Remember that keeping property is not worth endangering your life.

- Lock all doors and windows, even when you are going to be out only for a short time. Never prop open outside doors, and never let anyone you do not know into your building.
- When answering the door, look through a peephole or a window first to see if it is someone you know. If not, do not open the door. If the stranger is representing some group, insist on identification. Don't worry about being polite.
- Avoid walking alone at night. Use the Night Ride or call a friend instead.
- Chose major roads or a route that avoids dark, isolated areas.
- Do not leave backpacks, purses, or briefcases unattended in public places, especially in libraries.
- Lock your bicycle with a U-shaped lock.
- Register your bicycle at the University Police Station or the ASUW Bike Shop in Condon Hall.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment may include:

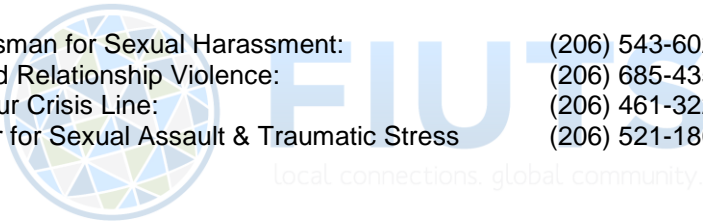
- Sexually suggestive looks or gestures
- Visual displays of sexually explicit materials
- Sexual teasing or jokes
- Pressure for dates
- Attempts to kiss or fondle
- Unwanted touching
- Demeaning comments based on gender

How to deal with sexual harassment:

- Don't delay. Pay attention to comments and address unwanted conduct immediately.
- Say no. Tell the person that the conduct is unwanted and you want it stopped.
- Tell someone. Tell your department chair, your supervisor, your Human Resources Consultant, the Ombudsman, or the University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office.
- Keep track of dates, times, places, and statements to help you make your report.

If you believe you are being harassed, seek help. The UW has designated offices to help you.

University Ombudsman for Sexual Harassment:	(206) 543-6028
Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence:	(206) 685-4357
Crisis Clinic 24-hour Crisis Line:	(206) 461-3222
Harborview Center for Sexual Assault & Traumatic Stress	(206) 521-1800



The University Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is a neutral 3rd party who specifically assists in the protection of the rights of students, faculty, and staff against arbitrary actions by the university, students, faculty members, or UW staff. The University Ombudsman does not advocate for either side during a dispute; they are simply a neutral negotiator that both sides can trust.

The ombudsman is there to help achieve a fair and reasonable settlement for both sides. Working within the existing rules, the University ombudsman can help to address problems in an informal manner. Concerns commonly addressed by the university ombudsman include academic concerns, employment concerns, departmental concerns, harassment, and mistreatment.

For more information, contact the [Ombudsman's office](#):

University Ombudsman

Condon Hall 206

(206) 543-6028

Weekdays 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, or by appointment

ombuds@u.washington.edu

UW Athletic Facilities & Programs

As a student, you have access to a variety of UW sports facilities.

The Intramural Activities Building (IMA) is the university's main sports center, and is located next to Husky Stadium. Its facilities include: three floors of weights and cardio gyms, archery ranges, badminton courts, basketball courts, racquetball/ squash courts, locker rooms, a sauna, martial arts studios, swimming pools, volleyball courts, and an expanded climbing center. Outdoor facilities include facilities for soccer, rugby, Ultimate Frisbee, lacrosse and tennis.

The Waterfront Activities Center (WAC) is directly behind Husky Stadium on Union Bay. The WAC offers canoe and rowboat rentals, and acts as a center for sailing, kayaking, and rowing. Boat storage is available for private non-motorized boats to students, faculty/staff, and alumni association members.

The intramural sports program at the University of Washington is designed to provide an opportunity for every student, faculty, or staff member to participate in organized sports. Structured leagues and tournaments are offered in a variety of sports activities. If you are interested in one of the activities and do not have a team, you are encouraged to sign up on the "Free Agent" roster. If you have a team, fill out a team roster form, pay the team fee, and choose a playing day and time.

Captains and free agents then attend a captain's meeting prior to the beginning of league play. Please call the Intramural Sports Office for more information, 9 am – 6 pm, Monday-Friday.



The City of Seattle

Native Americans have lived in the Pacific Northwest for thousands of years. In the 1800s during westward expansion, white settlers arrived in the area, including [David Denny and his party](#) in 1851. Until the [Gold Rush of 1897](#), Seattle was known only as a small fishing and logging outpost. After the gold rush, Seattle grew into a bustling port and commerce center. The city of Seattle is named in honor of [Chief Noah Sealth](#) of the Duwamish Nation, a tribe resident in the area before settlers arrived.

Seattle has been through many changes as a city. Frontier town, industrial port, aviation and tech center; the city of Seattle has a proud lineage as the embodiment of the American Dream. The beginning of the twentieth century saw massive development in the city; nearby hills were flattened and dumped into the tidelands, and buildings sprang up along the water. Seattle's residents have successfully built an entrepreneurial-minded city, and Seattle is now home to some of the world's biggest companies: Microsoft, Starbucks, Amazon, Boeing, and Costco.

Seattle is known as "the Emerald City" because it is one of the greenest places in the country. Parks and trees are everywhere in Seattle, and although residents grumble about the rain they know in their hearts that it is Seattle's rain that helps to keep it green. Although it is a stereotype that Seattle gets the most rain of any U.S. city, it is not true! Seattle gets about 36.2 inches of rain a year; Chicago gets 39 inches, and Washington D.C. gets 40.3 inches.

Seattle Facts

Population: 572,600

Average yearly rainfall: 36.2 inches/ 92 cm

National rank for artist population: 7th

National literacy rank: 2nd

National health rank: 6th

Number restaurants in Seattle: 2,316

American Football Team: The Seahawks

(Go Hawks!)

Soccer Team: The Sounders

(Go Sounders!)

Baseball Team: The Mariners

(Go M's!)

For more facts about Seattle, see <http://www.seattle.gov>.

Seattle is Famous For ...

Coffee

Seattle is known around the world for its coffee culture. Coffee shops range from small unique coffee houses to [Starbucks](#), which are on almost every street corner. Coffee shops are great for first dates, studying, or hanging out with friends. Take a moment to learn about coffee, grab a drink, and then curl up in a comfy chair.

Aviation

Founded in 1916, [Boeing](#) is the leading American aerospace manufacturer. Boeing has its largest manufacturing facility in Everett, WA. From space technology to civil aircraft to US defense, Boeing remains a large employer in Western Washington.

Computers & Tech

[Microsoft](#) is the world's largest software company, and it is headquartered in Redmond, WA. The world's major tech companies all have major offices in Seattle: Amazon, Nintendo, Google, Facebook, Adobe...the list goes on. Microsoft founders [Bill Gates](#) and [Paul Allen](#) both have ties to the University of Washington, and are major contributors to research and education.

Music

In the 1990s, Seattle became the center of music that rocked the world. From 1991-1994, the “Seattle sound” became both a music and fashion phenomenon, and local bands such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains, and Hole found their way into mainstream pop culture. Today, Seattle also lays claim to Modest Mouse, Deathcab for Cutie, Audioslave, the Dave Matthews Band, the Foo Fighters, Sir Mix-a-lot, Kenny G, and of course, the immortal Jimi Hendrix.

[The Space Needle](#)

One of Seattle’s most famous landmarks, the Space Needle was built for the 1962 World’s Fair. At the time it was built, it was the tallest building in the west. Today, the Space Needle features an observation desk, rotating restaurant, and gift shop and remains both a proud local favorite and the heart of the Seattle Center.

The Neighborhoods of Seattle

Similar to New York City, Seattle is not simply downtown and the suburbs: it has many distinct neighborhoods, each with their own soul and personality.

University District

Also known as the U-District, this area is home to University of Washington, a variety of restaurants and coffee shops, movie theaters, second hand stores, a farmers market, and more. “The Ave,” (a nickname for the main street of the U-District), is the district’s main shopping corridor and a great place for people watching.

Capitol Hill

Capitol Hill is Seattle’s most bohemian neighborhood. Known for its diverse population, gay-friendly community, and nightlife, Capitol Hill has bars, clubs, restaurants, clothing shops, movie theaters, cafes, and bookstores. Capitol Hill is so called because Seattle was originally proposed as Washington State’s capital – when Olympia became the capital, Seattle never changed the name. The name is written Capitol because it refers to the Capitol building, not the state capital.

Ballard

Ballard has heavily Scandinavian roots, but is changing into a popular shopping and dining area. Originally the people of Ballard were fiercely against becoming a part of Seattle, but failed to stop the annexation – the city of Ballard became the City of Seattle. As a result, many people still joke that there should be a “free Ballard” campaign. The Ballard Locks and fish ladder are big tourist destinations, and you can still see much of Ballard’s Scandinavian and fishing heritage defiantly displayed today.

Belltown

Home to many upscale condos and apartments, Belltown is a center of Seattle’s nightlife. Although the neighborhood is upscale and is a dining center, crime has become a big problem for Belltown residents because of the large number of bars and clubs.

The International District (I.D.)

Located south of the downtown core, the International District is one the city’s oldest neighborhoods, rich with Asian-American history and culture. When you go, visit the Wing Luke Asian Museum and enjoy one of the many delicious restaurants. You can find anything from ramen to vegetarian dim sum in the I.D.

Wallingford

Compared to the nearby U-District, this Seattle neighborhood has a slightly older population and a quieter atmosphere. Wallingford boasts an independent movie theater and has a number of great restaurants, bars, bakeries, and cafes.

Fremont

Dubbed the “Center of the Universe” by locals, Fremont is reminiscent of New York City’s Greenwich Village and is known as a quirky arts-based neighborhood. It is home to upscale shops, bars, restaurants, cafes, and has both an enormous Troll statue. The neighborhood association of Fremont bought a 20-foot high bronze statue of Vladimir Lenin because it was cheap, and well, because they could.

Sandpoint

A mostly residential neighborhood, Sandpoint is right on the west shore of Lake Washington. Magnuson Park, located in Sandpoint, is one of Seattle’s largest parks with a kite-flying area, beach, and stunning views of Lake Washington. It is just north of UW’s Radford Court.

Greenlake

Greenlake is centered around a small lake with a popular lake path. Runners, walkers, bike riders, and other exercisers can be found on the path at any time of the day, and Green Lake is one of Seattle’s most popular places to go on a sunny day for its relaxing atmosphere. Cafes, bars, restaurants, and beautiful homes can also be found in Greenlake.

Eastlake

The Eastlake neighborhood is based on Lake Union, and is mostly residential. Eastlake is famous for its views of downtown Seattle, and is home to the houseboats featured in the movie “Sleepless in Seattle”.

Montlake

This neighborhood is almost entirely residential, and is home to Seattle’s most impressive park: The Washington Park Arboretum. The Arboretum is a must-see and features beautiful gardens, ponds, walking trails, and meditation grounds.

Pioneer Square

The neighborhood is called Pioneer Square because it represents the area first developed by settlers when they came to the Pacific Northwest. This historic area is a fun place to go with friends from out of town. Tourists love the Underground Tour, which explains the history of the area.

South Lake Union

Amazon’s headquarters are in the South Lake Union neighborhood, and at present this neighborhood is Seattle’s fastest growing area. Don’t forget to visit the flagship REI on Yale Street for almost every piece of outdoor kit imaginable.

Wedgewood

Seattle’s best-kept secret, Wedgewood is definitely the coolest neighborhood in north Seattle. It features the amazing rock of Wedgewood, the Wedgewood Alehouse, The Wedgewood Broiler, and the city’s nicest library. The Grateful Bread bakery has the best bread products in the city, and Wedgewood’s Starbucks is one of the few in Seattle to feature a full fireplace in the middle of the store. Visit Wedgewood if you want to live.

Transport

Airplanes

The Seattle-Tacoma (Sea-Tac) International Airport is located 13 miles south of downtown Seattle. Sea-Tac offers direct flights to many cities around the world and the United States, and is one of the busiest airports in the country.

Buses

Seattle has an excellent bus system. Your U-pass allows you to ride any bus in Seattle to any destination, anytime. Normally, riders use their U-pass to pay the fare when they get on the bus by tapping it on a reader near the front door of the bus. For buses that are coming from downtown Seattle, riders pay when they leave. See a video on how to use the buses in Seattle [here](#).

Check out the Metro's online [Trip Planner](#) for an easy way to find the right bus routes and make travel plans. Just enter the departure and destination addresses, and the time you want to leave or arrive, and it will show you which buses to take for your trip, and give you the location of bus stops. If you want to find out if your bus is on time, you can access [One Bus Away](#) on your computer or Smartphone to get real arrival times.

Light Rail

Seattle is building a new light rail network – currently, you can get the light rail between Sea-Tac airport and downtown Seattle. You can ride the light rail anytime with your U-pass, or purchase tickets before you ride at the station with cash or credit cards.

Taxis

In Seattle, taxis are available 24 hours a day. Although they are convenient, taxis can be an expensive way to get around the city. When riding in a taxi, remember it is customary to give the driver a tip of 15% in addition to the fare.

Airporters

Airporters are shuttle buses that run from SeaTac airport to downtown Seattle. The trip to downtown Seattle costs around \$15 per person, and you can either purchase tickets online, at the airport counter, or from the driver. [Shuttle Express](#) is a special airporter service, designed for UW students – you can reserve a ticket online, and ride to and from SeaTac airport from any neighborhood in Seattle. The cost from the airport to the UW is currently \$21 for one person.

Bicycles

Seattle is one of the most bike-friendly cities in the US, and riding a bike is a healthy and cheap transportation solution. Many good bike paths lead to campus, such as the Burke-Gilman trail. You can use a bike locker or rack to lock up your bike on campus. Please remember, in Seattle it is the law to wear a bicycle helmet, and use lights/ reflective clothing at night. Hall Health offers students helmets and lights at a discounted rate. You can also take your bike with you when you ride the bus in Seattle — Metro buses have easy to load racks on the front of each bus.

Driving

While driving is convenient, owning a car can be costly and difficult for an international student. You must have a license to drive legally. You can use your home country's license or an international driver license for a period of time; however, it will be much easier for you if you have a Washington State driver's license. Washington State requires car owners to purchase and maintain automobile insurance. Also, you will need to register and license your vehicle. For the most up-to-date information, go to the [Washington State Department of Licensing's](#) website.

To get a driver's license in Washington State, you will need to:

- 1) Obtain and study the Washington State Driver's Guide. The Guide is free at any Licensing Services Office or you can find it on the Department of Licensing's website.
- 2) Go to a Licensing Office and apply for a license. You will need to take a written test on traffic safety laws and bring two valid documents that will prove your age and identity. A list of acceptable documents is provided in the Driver Guide.
- 3) If you pass the written test, you must schedule an appointment to take a practical driving test. To take this test, you will need to borrow or rent a car and show proof of current automobile insurance. The car also needs to be in good working condition to be acceptable for the test. If you pass the practical test, you will need to pay fees for both the examinations and the drivers license itself. Once you pass, you should receive your new driver's license within a month.

Washington State Identification Cards

The Department of Licensing issues photo identification cards to non-drivers for a small fee. These ID cards are considered legal state ID, and can be used for proof of age throughout Washington State. To get one, you must show the same identification as required for a driver's license.

To rent a car in the US, most companies require the driver to be 25 or older for insurance reasons. However, some companies allow younger drivers at a more expensive rate. Check around for the least expensive options and student discounts:

[Budget](#) (800) 527-0700

[Avis](#) (800) 331-1212

[Enterprise](#) (800) 261-7331

[Zipcar](#) (206) 332-0330



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Life in the USA

Shopping

Shops in the United States may be very similar or quite different from those in your home country. Generally, shopping in the USA is “self service” in that you place your purchases in a cart or basket and bring items to a cashier for purchase. Do not place items in your pockets, as store employees will think you are stealing or shoplifting.

In the USA, negotiating or haggling over prices rarely occurs, with cars and garage sales being notable exception. In the USA, sales tax is not included in price tags; remember that the price you see will increase when you bring it to the cashier. Be sure to check the store’s policy regarding returns and exchanges before purchasing, as every store has different rules on returns.

For grocery shopping, many supermarkets offer advantage/ membership cards. These are free, and often give you instant discounts on many items in store. In the US, it is normal that you do not pack your own bags in the grocery store – there are people that will help you with your bags.

Alcohol

Many international visitors to the USA are surprised by the strict rules that exist about alcohol. You must be 21 years of age or older to buy any form of alcoholic beverage, and to enter most bars. If you want to drink, be aware that your ID may be requested more frequently than in your home country – no need to worry, this happens to everyone! The only ID that is acceptable is either Washington State ID, or your passport. Foreign drivers licenses or ID cards will not be accepted. In Washington State, you are not allowed to take drinks outside, or have open alcohol containers in a car. Sometimes, restaurants will even ask that you refrain from taking alcohol from one table to another.



Finding Supplies

The [University Bookstore](#) is a great place to buy textbooks, stationery, and other student supplies. The main bookstore, located on The Ave., is where you can buy textbooks and computer supplies. You can also find a branch on the first floor of the Odegaard Undergraduate Library. Check out their Web site for further details.

The University Bookstore offers a certain percentage back on all purchases made by full-time University of Washington students, faculty, and staff. Present your Husky Student ID Card each time you buy something, and register online by the end of June to receive your refund. The University Village and Northgate shopping centers are good places close to campus to look for things that you might need – they have almost every type of store that you can think of.

Second-hand Items

You can find good quality items at low prices in second hand shops, and at garage and yard sales. Below are some local resources to help you find used clothing and other household items:

Craigslist, <http://seattle.craigslist.org/>
Value Village, www.valuevillage.com
Goodwill, www.goodwill.org
Salvation Army, www.salvationarmy.org

Money

If you are staying in Seattle for longer than one quarter, you should open a bank account at a local bank as soon as possible. You will need your passport to open a bank account. Research the types of services different banks provide, the accompanying fees, and how to transfer funds from your home institution. Banks compete for your business, so don't be shy about asking questions or shopping around. You should be able to open a student account for little or no charge at most banks. Here are the major banks available in your neighborhood:

[US Bank](#) (Inside the University of Washington Bookstore)
4326 University Way NE / (206) 632-7254

[Bank of America](#): 4701 University Way NE / (206) 358-1958

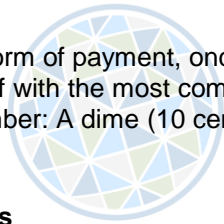
[Key Bank](#): 1300 NE 45th St. / (206) 585-9410

[Washington State Employees Credit Union](#)
1000 NE 45th St. / (206) 545-7181

[Wells Fargo](#): 4100 University Way NE / (206) 547-2811

Cash

Cash is an easy form of payment, once you are familiar with the different bills. You should familiarize yourself with the most common ones—\$20, \$10, \$5, and \$1 bills. Coins are commonly used, too. Remember: A dime (10 cents) is smaller in size than a nickel (5 cents), even though it is worth more.



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Traveler's Checks

Traveler's Checks are a safe way to transport large amounts of money. They can also be used if you travel in the U.S. Record the check numbers on a piece of paper and keep it separate from the checks.

Debit Cards

This allows you to withdraw from or deposit money in your bank account using an automatic teller machine (ATM) and to make purchases at stores that accept debit cards. Some debit cards carry a credit-card logo (such as Mastercard or Visa), and can be used in place of a check or credit card. Debit cards, however, draw directly from funds in your bank account, so you will want to ensure you have enough money in your account at all times. Also, make sure you understand your bank's fees if you withdraw cash from a different bank's ATM. Both banks can charge you up to \$4.00 (or even more) in service fees.

Credit Cards

This allows you to make purchases even when you have no money immediately available. You are billed every month and must pay at least a portion your balance each month. If you do not pay the entire amount due, interest (or a "finance charge") accrues on the unpaid balance. The interest rate can be quite high, particularly if you have not yet established "good credit." The annual fees and interest rates charged by some financial institutions are much higher than others. Shop around for the best value. Credit cards are convenient, but unless you are careful you may be shocked when you get your monthly bill. Save all your receipts to keep track of what you spend. Students can get into serious financial difficulties and amass huge debt with credit cards.

Money Management

Managing your finances is one of the most important and challenging aspects of a successful academic experience overseas. Dealing with a new currency and cost of living are just the beginning of the challenge. Before you leave home, pay attention to the exchange rate between your country's currency and the U.S. dollar. Learn to think in dollars. Also, prepare a monthly budget for yourself and track expenditures. The list below can be a guide for possible expenses you will encounter.

- Tuition
- Rent
- Meals (often called "board")
- Health insurance
- Books
- Transportation
- Communication/ cell phones
- Clothes
- Personal expenses
- Taxes
- Family expenses
- Recreation
- Travel

Telephone Services

If you live on campus, local telephone service will be provided. If you live off campus, you must arrange your own local telephone service. Check with the UW Student Housing Affairs office for the most current information.

Once your telephone service has been connected your phone company will deliver a telephone directory. Do not forget to have your telephone service disconnected or transferred to your new address when you move. There is no charge for disconnecting telephone service.

Instructions for using pay phones (or public telephones) can usually be found on the phone. Most pay phones still require coins for local calls (50 cents per call), but some allow you to make local and long-distance calls without coins using a credit card or "calling card." Phone numbers with a prefix of (800), (866), and (888) are toll-free. Beware of 900-numbers, which charge a few dollars per minute for their services and thus are extremely expensive. Phone cards with special international rates are available at many stores on The Ave. and throughout Seattle. You can make long-distance calls from any pay phone in the U.S.; long distance service is not confined to certain locales as it is in many countries.

Long-Distance Telephone Services

Long-distance companies provide national and international services and calling cards, and offer different calling plans and savings options. Regardless of whether you live on or off campus, you will choose a long-distance company or calling card based on your own needs. If you share long-distance service with roommates or housemates, make sure everyone understands how the bill is to be paid. Some companies permit each member of the household to enter a personal code when making a long-distance call, which simplifies the monthly process of dividing the charges.

Cell (Mobile) Phones

For many students, a cellphone (mobile phone) is a convenient and easy to get option. It is also an essential social tool! Companies charge different rates, and offer different contracts and services. Research your options. Plans can range from 200 to several thousand minutes per month. Most companies bill customers for airtime in one-minute increments. Pre-paid phones are an alternative to plans, because no contract is required, but they are much more expensive if used in high volume. To set up service you will need:

- Social Security # (except for prepaid or “to go” phones)
- A State-issued ID
- Debit or Credit Card with a Visa or Mastercard symbol

If you do not have a social security number or debit card, you may need to pay a deposit of a couple hundred dollars. The main cellular companies in the US are:

[Sprint](#)

[T-Mobile](#)

[AT&T Wireless](#)

[Verizon](#)

Postal Mail

The United States Postal Service (USPS) provides the primary mail service in the U.S. Other companies compete with the USPS for express mail and package delivery services—some examples are the United Parcel Service (UPS), Federal Express (FedEx), and DHL Worldwide Express (DHL). Unlike postal services in many countries, the USPS does not offer long-distance telephone service or savings accounts.

Mail is delivered Monday through Saturday to individual addresses and to boxes available for rent at most post offices. The UW has a campus mail system that distributes regular mail as well as “campus mail,” materials sent from one department to another. If you live on campus, your mail will be delivered to the residence halls by the USPS and then distributed by campus mail to your personal box.

You should not send cash through the mail. For additional protection, you may insure a package at the post office. For information regarding postal rates, services, and locations visit the [USPS website](#).

The U-District’s Post Office is located at:
4244 University Way NE / (206) 632-4737
Regular Business Hours:
Week Days 07:30AM - 06:00PM
Saturday 08:30AM - 03:00PM

The following companies offer express mail and package delivery:

[Mail Boxes Etc.](#): 4603 NE University Village / (206) 524-2558

[UPS](#): 1-800-PICK-UPS (1-800-742-5877)

[FedEx](#): 1-800-Go-FedEx (1-800-463-3339)

[DHL](#): 1-800-225-5345

US Culture & Customs

Introductions & Greetings

In the US, a handshake is a normal greeting when two people are first introduced, for both men and women. An appropriate response to an introduction is: "Nice to meet you." If you want to introduce yourself to someone, extend your hand for a handshake and say, "Hello, I am...." Some Americans greet each other with a hug if they are well acquainted. If you do not wish to be hugged, extend your hand quickly for a handshake. Shaking hands is common in business and social gatherings among both men and women.

In the U.S., when people say, "Hi, how are you?" or "How are you doing?" they often do not wait for a response. This is a polite phrase, not really a question. You can respond by saying, "Fine, thanks."

When Americans talk to one another, they usually establish eye contact and keep a distance of about two feet. It is extremely uncomfortable for most Americans to talk with someone who stands too close to them, and you will find them backing away from such a situation. Physical contact, other than shaking hands, connotes sexual attraction or aggressiveness to some Americans.

Americans frequently use first names. This is true even when people first meet. Address people of your own approximate age and status by first name. If the other person is clearly older than you, you should address them with Mr., Mrs., or Ms. (for both unmarried and married women), and the last name. Unless a faculty member or someone else with a title tells you to use his or her first name, address that person using his or her title and last name.

The use of nicknames is very common among Americans. A nickname is not a person's real name but a name given to that person because of a physical characteristic, a behavior pattern, or a shorter version of a given name. Being called by a nickname usually indicates that you are viewed with affection.

Friendship

Americans are usually very friendly, and readily welcome and are willing to help newcomers. It takes a long time, however, for friendships to develop. In the U.S., people enjoy doing things together and exchanging ideas which can lead to friendship. However, "friends" may not become deeply involved in each other's personal affairs or even spend a great deal of time together.

Americans, in general, are very conversational. They are usually quite verbal when they are with one another. Unless they are very close friends, being quiet is usually noticed. Long silences are often uncomfortable to Americans. For this reason, Americans make "small talk" or discuss trivia or superficial and simple things. This type of conversation takes place before any serious conversation. Typically, both people are expected to contribute to the conversation. If someone asks you a question, it is common to return the question back to them. Also, don't be surprised if a stranger strikes up a conversation with you at the bus

You may hear an American say, "Drop by anytime" or "Let's get together soon." These are friendly expressions, but they may not be meant literally. It is polite to call someone on the telephone before you visit. Even without an invitation, it is acceptable to call a new acquaintance to see if he or she would like to go to an activity with you.

What is the difference between "friendliness" and "friendship?" Most Americans you meet will be friendly, but such friendliness is not necessarily a prelude to friendship. Avoid misunderstandings by learning the signals of a growing friendship.

Americans often talk about their children and family activities, for example, but they are reluctant to discuss family problems or why they do not have children, if they have none. Americans are also reserved about discussing financial matters and will often avoid answering questions about their income or the cost of their possessions. Generally, Americans are interested in discussions about politics, religion, local and international events, and hobbies. They are curious about how people live in other parts of the world and are willing to talk about their own way of life. You do not have to discuss any subject that is difficult for you, but when friends exchange views with honesty and mutual respect, they gain new insights and understanding.

Americans often indicate their interest in others by asking questions. Their questions to you indicate an eagerness to learn about your country and culture. Even the most basic information is of interest to them.

You can:

- Share photographs and slides from home
- Share a book from your country
- Explain your national holidays
- Give your hosts maps or postcards from your country
- Discuss events that are happening in your country
- Introduce your hosts to friends from your country

Social Customs in the United States

Americans, like all people, have unique social customs. A few are discussed below, but it is impossible to list them all. By observing Americans and asking questions, you can learn about others.

Making Friends

You may find that American students smile easily and are not hesitant to talk, but this is not an automatic commitment to friendship. In this fast-paced society where Americans are taught to be self-reliant, friendships are often transitory and established to meet personal needs at a certain time. Many Americans have friends at work, friends at school, and so on, but only a few very close friendships. Friendships are usually the result of repeated interactions between individuals who share similar views and a variety of experiences together. Casual friendships are especially common among college-age students who are trying to establish personal autonomy and are coming into contact with a variety of people representing different values and life-styles. This is not meant to discourage international students from attempting to establish friendships with Americans. Most Americans readily accept new people into their social groups. One of the best ways to meet Americans is to go to concerts, sporting events, and church activities, or to join a special interest group on campus.

Dating

Depending on where you are from, you may be surprised by the informality of relations between men and women in the US. Couples go out alone in the evening to attend a movie, concert, lecture, or party; students may get together for a "study date." In the past, the man usually asked the woman on a date, and the man paid the expenses of the movie, concert, or meal. Today, a woman may ask a man to go out with her. Whether the man or woman offers the invitation, students often share the expenses. Even if you are asked out, expect that you will be paying for yourself. When a couple goes out and each person pays for him- or herself, it is often referred to as "going Dutch." However, there are still many Americans who believe in the traditional dating style, where the man pays for the entire date. Don't be surprised if this is the case either. It is best to discuss this beforehand so you are prepared.

Relationships between American men and women of college age range from simple, casual friendships to strong emotional and physical commitments. As your friendships develop past acquaintance, you may not always understand what your partner expects of you. Whatever the relationship, the best policy is honesty and frankness. Although sometimes embarrassing, it is best to express your feelings and intentions so you can avoid misunderstandings and even greater discomfort.

If your date appears interested in a sexual relationship and you are not, it is very important that you say no clearly. And if someone seems to be saying no to you, listen. Unwanted sexual attention is a very serious matter in the U.S. Do not interpret the acceptance of a date as anything more than an agreement to meet at a certain time and place and to spend some time together.

If you are in doubt about correct behavior, talk with FIUTS, American friends, or with your host family. Be aware that alcohol and dating can be a problematic mix, particularly in a cross-cultural setting.

Invitations

Americans make statements such as, "You must come to see us," or, "See you later." This kind of friendly statement is not necessarily an invitation. An invitation specifies a time, date, and place. It is polite to respond to an invitation with either "yes" or "no." A "yes" answer requires you to attend unless you call to cancel. You can always decline an invitation from your hosts; it is polite to say "no" or "no, thank you." If you find you must cancel a meeting or social engagement, inform your host as early as possible. It is considered impolite to accept an invitation and not go.

Dining Customs & Social Gatherings

When you accept a dinner invitation, tell your host in advance if you have any dietary restrictions. He or she will want to plan a meal that you can enjoy. Cocktails or other beverages may be served before dinner. It is not necessary to accept an alcoholic drink if you do not want one. You can always ask for fruit juice, soft drink, tea, or coffee.

The evening meal is the main meal of the day in most parts of the U.S. This is a time for family members, including children, to be together and talk about topics of interest. Guests are encouraged to join in these conversations, to ask questions, and share their opinions and views.

Food may be served in one of several ways: "family style," by passing the serving plates from one to another around the dining table; "buffet style," with guests serving themselves at the buffet; and "serving style," with the host filling each plate and passing it to each person. Guests usually wait until everyone at their table has been served before they begin to eat. When eating foods such as hamburgers, raw fruit, fried chicken, and sandwiches, using your hands is most often the norm.

Another style of dinner gathering is called a "potluck," which usually means that each guest or family brings part of the meal. The person organizing the dinner will tell you which part of the meal you are expected to bring (main dish, side dish, dessert, etc.). It is fine to bring a typical dish of your country.

It is all right to say "No, thank you" when you are offered a second serving of food. Accept more food if you want it, however, as the offer might not be repeated. Most Americans think it is impolite to insist that people have more food after they have refused a second serving. Eating all of the food indicates you have enjoyed the meal; it does not indicate that more food should be served.

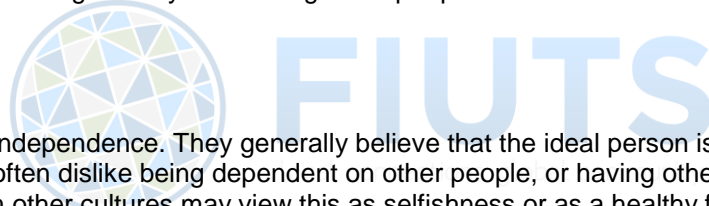
It is polite to take a small, inexpensive gift when you are invited to dinner, or when staying overnight in your hosts' home. A small item you brought from home can also be a pleasant surprise to hosts. At the conclusion of a visit, thank the host and hostess for their hospitality. Also, if you go to someone's home for a meal or if they take you out to a restaurant, it is appropriate to send them a thank-you note within 24-48 hours.

Dinner guests usually stay for an hour or two of conversation or other activity after the meal is finished. If your host is driving you home, he or she may suggest a time for leaving. In larger groups, it is not necessary to say good-bye to everyone before leaving, but of course you will want to locate your host and hostess to tell them good-bye and thank them.

University students often hold many parties that usually begin later at night, and continue for several hours. Such parties are very informal, and it is not as important to be on time or to dress formally. Most students will wear jeans to these parties. You should ask the person having the party if there is something you should bring; American students usually like to drink beer and eat snacks such as potato chips and pretzels. You may just be asked to "pitch in when the hat comes around," meaning that your host has bought the refreshments but expects the guests to contribute a few dollars towards the cost of the party.

Unspoken and Body Language

Because gestures and unspoken signals have become so automatic, we often forget how they may mean different things in different cultures. To avoid misunderstandings, be sure to keep in mind that the unspoken gesture you exchange with people from other cultures may not say what you think it does.



Individualism

Americans value independence. They generally believe that the ideal person is autonomous and self-reliant. They often dislike being dependent on other people, or having others dependent on them. People from other cultures may view this as selfishness or as a healthy freedom from the constraints of ties to family, clan, or social class.

Informality

Americans tolerate a considerable degree of informality in dress, relationships between people, and methods of communication. In some cultures this may reflect a lack of respect, and in others it reflects a healthy lack of concern for social ritual.

Time and Time Consciousness

Americans tend to place more emphasis on punctuality than do people in many other places. You are expected to be ready at the time agreed upon if someone is picking you up at your residence. When invited to someone's home, you are expected to arrive within five or ten minutes after the scheduled time, but never before that time. When you plan to meet someone at a restaurant, theater, or some other place where reservations have been made, it is important to arrive at the time agreed upon. Many Americans feel that arriving late for social events or appointments indicates a lack of respect for the person who is kept waiting. In general, you have a five minute grace period for arriving at social events.

In general, you can telephone Americans between 9 am and 9 pm without awakening them. Most Americans, especially families, do not like to be disturbed during the evening meal, anywhere between 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm.

The office hours for most of the University are 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. Some offices close for lunch between noon and 1 pm. Some of the town businesses close at 5 pm or 5:30 pm and some stay open until 9 pm. The large shopping malls are usually open until 9 pm on Saturday, but only until 5 pm on Sunday.

“Doing” is very important to Americans and wasting time is viewed negatively and discouraged. Many Americans organize their activities according to a schedule. As a result, they always seem to be running around, hurrying to get to their next appointment. This fast pace way of life may be overwhelming for people from other cultures.

Materialism

Success in American society is often marked by the amount of money or the quantity of material goods a person is able to accumulate. Hard work, cleverness, and persistence are valued as means to accumulate material goods. Some cultures view this as a lack of appreciation for the spiritual or human things in life. Others may see this as a way to sustain a comparatively high standard of living in this country.

Personal Cleanliness

Americans have a saying, “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” Most Americans are very conscious of body odors and may seem to be fanatic about taking showers, washing their hair, and using many types of toiletries, such as deodorant. Americans are also very particular about the cleanliness of their homes, especially the bathroom and kitchen. If you doubt this statement, visit any supermarket or discount store and take note of the large amount of shelf space dedicated to cleaning and personal hygiene products. Or take a look at an American’s kitchen (although, a college student’s kitchen is not necessarily a good example).

Dress

Everyday dress is appropriate for most visits to peoples' homes. You may want to dress more formally when attending a holiday dinner or cultural event, such as a symphony concert or a theater performance. Seattle tends to be a very laid-back city when it comes to the way people dress. You can wear jeans to most restaurants—especially the ones in the U-District.

Gifts

As a rule, gifts are given only to relatives and close friends. It is acceptable to give a gift to a host or hostess or to someone with whom you have a more casual relationship, but it is not required or even very common to do so. Gifts are not usually given to people in official positions; such a gift may be misinterpreted as a way to gain favor or special treatment. It is acceptable to give teachers a gift of appreciation, but it is better to do so after you have completed the course.

Americans usually give gifts to family and friends at Christmas, birthdays, weddings, graduations, and upon the birth of a child. Gifts are also sometimes given to someone who has moved into a new house or is moving away. Gifts are not expected to be very expensive; they are merely a thoughtful gesture. More expensive gifts are acceptable between people who are close to one another. It is best to give something that the recipient needs, wants, or would enjoy.

Americans usually open gifts in the presence of the giver. A verbal expression of thanks is appropriate. If the gift is opened in the absence of the giver, a thank-you note specifically mentioning the gift should be sent. This is an important custom for most Americans, signifying that you truly like the gift.

Social Equality

The American dream is that all individuals—regardless of occupation, handicap, sex, race, religion, or sexual orientation—should be treated equally. Obviously, this is a work in progress.

Both men and women in the United States have an active part in community life. Many women have full-time careers outside the home and in many cases both parents take care of small children and share the home chores. Women who hold positions in the working world expect the same professional respect, as do their male counterparts.

Smoking

A decreasing number of Americans smoke. Many Americans dislike being exposed to the cigarette smoke of others, and you should not assume that it acceptable to smoke indoors. It is rare to see people smoking indoors these days. Restaurants and bars in Seattle are designated as "smoke free" environments. This applies to University of Washington's campus. If you are a smoker, look for signs that indicate a designated outdoor smoking area before you begin smoking.

Alcohol

U.S. laws concerning the sale and consumption of alcohol may seem very liberal or very constraining to you, depending on your nationality. In the U.S., it is illegal to purchase alcoholic drinks, including beer and wine, until you reach the age of 21. Laws governing alcohol can vary from state to state. For example, it is illegal in some states, including Washington, to walk along the street with an open container of beer.

Practicing Your Religion

The U.S. is a multicultural society founded on tolerance and mutual respect; you should not hesitate to seek out opportunities to practice your religious beliefs. Organized religious groups of many denominations are easily found in Seattle. Although the U.S. has a higher rate of church attendance than most other western societies, some Americans are uncomfortable discussing religion. Some Americans may shy away from the topic altogether; others will want to share their religious views with you. Most people are sincere and straightforward, but some may try to take advantage of you or convert you to their religious beliefs by offering you their friendship. If you begin to feel uncomfortable in such a situation, politely but firmly explain that you are not interested.