



HOW TO

STUDY ENGLISH IN THE USA

PART 3



TALK
SCHOOLS



PART 3

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

PART 3

**PLANNING
YOUR TRIP**



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LET'S GO ALREADY!

INTRODUCTION:

Study abroad is about more than gaining academic skills. It's a total, enriching life experience. You learn about other cultures and how to interact with different people. You are challenged to examine who you are, and who you want to be.

So now - no turning back! You're on your way! In this part of our e-Guide How to Study English in the USA we tell you what you need to know about buying your airline ticket, what to pack, and handy tips to make your trip easier.

A. TIPS ABOUT PLANE TICKETS AND TRAVEL

Your international airfare to study at an English School in the USA is one of the big cost items in your study abroad budget but, armed with some good tips about finding cheap airfares, you can travel for less!

Here's what you need to know about finding the best-value airfares that suit your plans and needs:

1. Don't be fussy about flying on a specific date. If you are flexible within 2-3 days you have a better chance of finding a cheaper ticket.
2. Check out the best dates to fly. There are lots of websites and apps which identify the best times, days of the week and months to book your flight, both internationally, and or those in-country trips to other places in the USA, domestically. Check our Section 2 to learn how to save on your airline ticket.
3. If you can't be flexible with your dates, be flexible with your flight times. Traveling early in the morning or late at night is often cheaper.
4. Many airlines offer discounted fares if you fly on Saturday: airlines make money from their business travelers flying during the week. Mid-week bookings - as opposed to a Monday or Friday - are often cheaper for the same reason that Saturday is.
5. Avoid busy holiday dates.
6. The best tip is to book your flight early. A good rule of thumb is to book at least two weeks ahead, preferably three for domestic flights, and 30 days for international flights.



7. Airfares never stay the same. Book the flight right when you think you see a good deal.
8. Buying insurance for your ticket/airfare is a great way to avoid costly fines for unforeseen changes. These fines can start at \$150 and sometimes be the price of the original ticket!!
9. [STA Travel](#) specializes in student travel, including flights, trains, buses and hotels. You can buy your International Student Identity Card here, too. Their Exclusive Flights Section offers students travel deals with flexibility in terms of fares, travel dates, and refunds. Another recommended site devoted to discounts for student flights, tours and accommodation: [Student Universe](#).
10. Make sure that the entry and exit dates for your flight are in accordance with the ones on your visa. It's important that you do not exceed the time period allotted to you on the visa.
11. Check the baggage weight restrictions. You will be fined for exceeding the limit. For international flights, you are allowed to check in 2 bags.

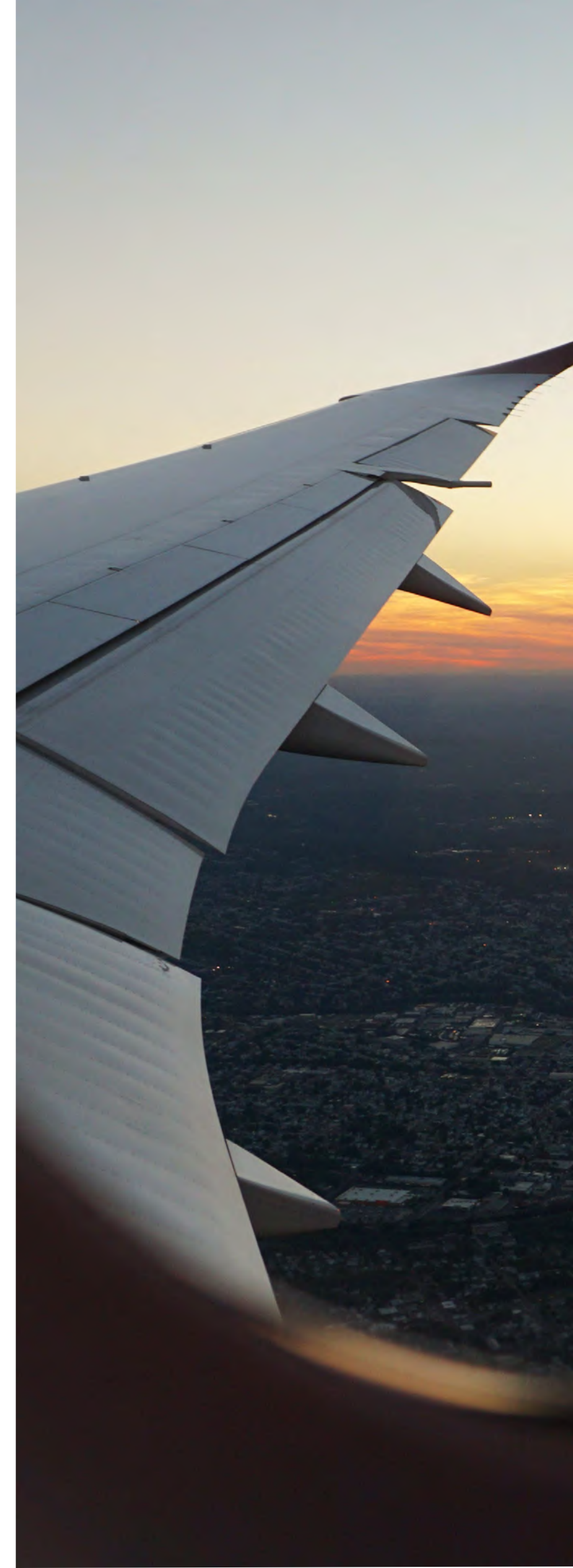
[Here](#) is a useful site that provides current information and tips for cheap air travel.

Low Cost Carriers – What You Need to Know.

It's important to research all the ways to travel for less, but when looking for the lowest fare available, apply some caution!

- Budget airline tickets are usually nonrefundable, so do not miss the flight or arrive late for check-in!
- For your international flight between home and the USA and back, it is best not to use a low-cost carrier.
- Budget airlines often use out-of-the-way satellite airports or small terminals far away from the main terminals of major airports, so be prepared for longer times to reach your departure terminal.
- Seating is often less comfortable and spacious than on major carriers, so reconsider your options if you are traveling a long distance.

Add up all these extra costs to see if it is worth the lower cost – or even if it really does cost less – to use a budget airline.





B. PACKING FOR YOUR STUDY ABROAD STAY

What you take on your study abroad trip to the USA is largely a matter of personal choice. Most students pack more than they need. Keep in mind that you will be lugging all those bags on taxis or buses and beyond, and then home again with even more!

Keep it light and compact. You'll have space to pack for the return trip the cool things you acquired in the USA and the gifts for loved ones.

- **Clothing and Personal Items:**

Bring clothes that are easily layered for various climate conditions, that don't need ironing, can be drip-dried, are comfortable and durable. Check the climate in the city you are going to [Weather.com](https://www.weather.com) lists temperatures and rainfall year-round.

Tip: dark clothing does not show stains and dirt as much as light-colored clothing!

Pack clothing items that are interchangeable, i.e. any of your shirts can go with any of your skirts/pants, etc. This will provide you with many more "outfits".

School wear in the USA is informal (jeans and t-shirts are the norm). Check your program for special dress requirements.

If you need to purchase additional clothing, it may be cheaper to do so in the USA where there are discount clothing stores in malls and shopping outlets in every single city. Buy items you will be needing but do not already own when you arrive in the USA (heavy winter coat, summer clothes, etc.).

You will be able to buy many items – toiletries for example - in the USA. Pack just enough of these items to get you through.

- **Electronics:**

Most everyday electrical appliances can be purchased cheaply in the United States. Pack less of them and save space.

Appliances such as desk lamps, fans, hairdryers and chargers can be purchased from a variety of convenience stores such as Wal-Mart or pharmacy/convenience stores or computer/electrical stores.

Remember that most electrical appliances from your country will not work because of the different electrical current and you will probably need an adapter.

- **Medicine:**

If you take prescription medication, bring a sufficient supply plus a list of all of your medications signed by a doctor as proof of legitimacy with you as you travel. To find out if you need to claim these medications at customs, check the Transportation Security Administration website for details and potential restrictions.

If you depend on eyeglasses, it is a good idea to bring an extra pair. Bring a copy of your eyeglasses prescription.

Although you may feel more comfortable using over-the-counter medications from home for common issues such as headaches, colds, upset stomach or minor injuries, those remedies will be available in the USA.

Use the [College Packing List](#) app to help you create your study abroad packing list!

ITEMS YOU CAN LEAVE BEHIND

We recommend you to not pack items you can easily buy in the USA.

Books: Only bring those books, manuals or journals that you think may be useful for reference in your field of study and that definitely will not be available in the USA.

Stationery Items: Items such as notebooks, pens and paper are a different size in the USA. For example, paper in the US is of a slightly wider size (8.5x11 inches) than in countries following the metric system, and pencils must have a certain quality of lead (called #2 in the USA) to be read by testing machines frequently used for marking exams. Therefore, it is a good idea to purchase these on arrival.

Toiletries, Towels, and Linens: Though it might be wise to pack one towel for showering upon arrival, these bulky items take up valuable space in your luggage. Most accommodations provide linen – both bed and bath.



WHAT TO PACK FOR YOUR ROOM TO MAKE YOU FEEL AT HOME?

Whether you have opted for on-campus, off-campus, homestay or apartment accommodation, it's important that you make your temporary home feel like home. Bring along personal items, furry toys, decorative accents and gadgets that will be comforting to have around. Just make sure they are small, light and not fragile! Photographs of family, friends and pets can sit on your desk and nightstand and posters or light hangings can decorate your wall. Buy frames and weightier decorative items in the USA. Don't use nails on walls - there are a lot of good substitutes out there such as putty and double-sided stickers.

If you have special tastes in coffee, a favorite flavor of tea or even types of snacks, pack some of them to see you through your transition period or longer.

Here are some other items that can help you to feel at home:

- Photos of family, home, friends, pets;
- Nostalgic items - throws, ornaments, furry toys;
- Favorite pictures and posters from your room.

PACKING FOR THE FLIGHT

When packing for your study abroad adventure in the USA, keep the following in mind:

- Consult the airline website for baggage restrictions as there are often strict limits on both the weight and number of bags. On international routes, US carriers allow 2 suitcases weighing up to 50 pounds (23 kg) to be checked, one carry-on and one personal item (purse, laptop, etc.) can be brought onto the airplane. Many US carriers charge fees for checked baggage. If you're going for 3 months or less, you probably just need one suitcase. If you're only going for 3 months or less, you probably just need one normal-size suitcase. Wrap liquids containers caps with tape and place them in plastic storage bags to avoid them leaking in your luggage. Lock and label your suitcase and use some kind of identifying tag that tells your case apart from other passengers
- Folding and then rolling clothes is a great space saver, though the weight will stay the same. Use large re-sealable bags to make clothing items more compact. Larger, bulky items such as shoes can be added to your carry-on luggage to distribute the weight.
- Be aware that only 3.4 fluid ounces (100 mL) of liquid items are allowed in your carry-on luggage. (Most standard travel-sized shampoos and conditioners fit these limits). Store these items in clear, re-sealable, plastic bags. Consult the Transportation Security Administration website for details and further explanation.

PACKING LIST FOR CARRY-ON LUGGAGE

- Passport
- Student Visa
- Copy of your National ID Card
- ISIC (International Student Identity Card)
- Copy of birth certificate
- Driver's license
- Boarding pass and e-ticket print out
- Travel itinerary
- Travel tickets (if you're taking a train or other transport after your plane lands)
- Emergency contact list
- Health insurance card
- Prescription medication(s) you usually take (make sure you bring enough refills. Prescriptions can go in your checked luggage)
- Cash (exchange \$50 to \$100 USD - bring enough to use in case of an emergency, but not more money than you can afford to lose)
- Credit card (notify your bank that you'll be abroad before you leave to avoid your account being frozen)
- Debit card
- E-reader or book
- Headphones
- Deodorant
- Face wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- Spare outfit (in case your luggage gets lost or delayed)
- Travel pillow
- Wallet

THE ULTIMATE STUDY IN THE USA PACKING CHECKLIST

The wisest approach to your packing list is to list everything you think you will need in the USA. Then, eliminate the items you can buy easily in your host country. Use this list to help you pack – it's been created for both men and women to use!

CLOTHING / SHOES

- One nice formal outfit (dress pants/skirt/dress) for special/formal occasions
- T-shirts (3-5)
- Tank tops (3)
- Long sleeve T-shirts (3 - 5. Make sure they are good for layering)
- Sweaters/hoodies (2-3)
- Coat/Jacket (water resistant with zip pockets and removable lining)
- Jeans (2-3 pairs. Substitute with skirts or khakis if going to warmer climates)
- Casual dresses (2)
- Shorts (2, if weather is appropriate)
- Skirts (1-2)
- Two set of workout clothes (if you plan to)
- Leggings (1-3)
- Underwear (2 weeks' worth)
- Bras (2 sports bras, 2 regular bras, 1 strapless/convertible bra)
- Thermal underwear (silk preferably for colder climates or the adventurous sort)
- Pajamas (2 pairs)
- Socks (2 weeks' worth. Include wool socks if you're going to colder climates)
- Belts (1-2)
- Warm hat, gloves and scarf (for colder climates)
- Hat for sun protection
- Sunglasses
- Swimsuit
- Athletic sneakers (1)
- Boots (if appropriate for climate)
- Everyday comfortable shoes (1-2)
- Flats (1)
- Warm slippers
- Flip flops (especially for showering at hostels)
- Workout clothes (2 sets)
- Purse (1-2)
- Jewelry (remember that bringing jewelry to another country is always a risk; don't bring anything too valuable!)

TOILETRIES

(Most items can be found in the USA)

Keep these in a plastic bag at the top of your checked suitcase.

TIP: To save room in your suitcase, buy standard items such as shampoo, conditioner and body wash in the USA.

TIP: Because of the voltage differences, you may want to wait until you're in the USA to buy items such as a blow dryer or hair straightener.

- Soap
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Mouthwash (small)
- Mini shampoo & conditioner
- Comb
- Makeup
- Face lotion/moisturizer
- Tissues

THE ULTIMATE STUDY IN THE USA PACKING CHECKLIST

TOILETRIES (cont.)

- Hair ties
- Hairbrush
- Headbands
- Contacts, solution and case
- Glasses and glasses case
- Nail Clipper
- Tweezers
- Feminine products (one month's worth)
- Contraceptives
- Over-the-counter medicines (aspirin, anti-diarrhea, anti-nausea, etc.)
- Acne medication/cream
- Portable stain remover pen

MISCELLANEOUS

- Backpack (small)
- Journal
- Language dictionary
- Map
- Travel guide
- Small plastic bottles for toiletries to use while traveling
- Refillable water bottle
- Umbrella
- Watch
- Thin lightweight towel (TIP: microfiber towels dry fast for easy travel)
- Sleepsack/sleeping bag (if you're planning to do a lot of traveling you may want one, but most hostels either have sheets or let you rent a sleepsack for the night)
- Travel sheet (for hostels)
- Playing cards
- Gift for your host family (bring something representative of your country or hometown)

ELECTRONICS

Remember that most of your electronic items will need an outlet converter in order to work!

- Laptop
- Laptop case
- Cell phone (or purchase upon arrival in the USA)
- Chargers (laptop, phone, camera, e-reader, etc.)
- Camera, case and USB cables
- Outlet adapters (2-3)
- USB cable
- Flash drive

TIPS FOR LONG DISTANCE FLIGHTS

1. Get a neck pillow

This will prevent the neck pain that results from contorting your head in all sorts of ways to be comfortable, and from resting it on your neighbor's shoulder.

2. Bring a watch

It's easier to check the time, the time difference and how many more hours you are still in the air if you have a watch.

3. Introduce yourself to the people seated next to you

It makes your long flight much more bearable if you can have an occasional conversation with your fellow passenger. Most people have something interesting to say, and many times the conversation is free-flowing and fascinating!

4. Wear loose clothes

You need to feel comfortable and this is not the time for tight clothes with that bloating airplane food.

5. Bring a water bottle

Buy a big bottle of water after you have passed through the security check. The most important way to prevent jet lag is to stay hydrated.

6. Avoid coffee

If you are sensitive to coffee, avoid it and stick to water. Plus, you will get a better night's sleep without it.

7. Move around

Get your blood flowing. Walk around, stretch your legs, do some seated yoga poses. Sitting in one position for hours on end can be uncomfortable and dangerous.

8. Bring tissues and congestion reliever

The dry air of the cabin and the pressure can cause bad headaches and runny noses.

9. The emergency row offers slightly more space.

Request a seat in the emergency row.

These seats offer more space to stretch your legs.

10. Bring snacks

You are only offered meals every few hours, so if you are hungry you can reach for the fruit or granola bars you packed.

11. Bring a sweatshirt or a shawl

The temperature changes on the airplane, and the blankets provided are often not adequate to stay warm.

MENTAL PREPARATION

MAKE ADAPTING EASY



WHEN YOU'RE THERE: DO'S AND DON'TS

Prepare to experience culture shock when you go to a new place. This is natural and normal, and the best way to deal with it is to understand it before you go, and to know how to overcome it. See our special section about Culture Shock. These tips will also make your transition easier!

STAY IN TOUCH WITH HOME

ELECTRONICS – For travelers with cell phones (and cell phone plans) from another country, texting and calling rates are extremely expensive. Use text messaging when contacting family members abroad through free apps that work through Wi-Fi.

GOOGLE VOICE – Get a Gmail account. You can set up Google Voice from Google to call a friend or family member for free while abroad. Registering in the United States is free while registering abroad is not.

SKYPE – Skype is a great free way to talk and see your family. Download the application and keep in touch with your friends back home as well as those you make abroad.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR HOST COUNTRY

Do some research about the city and the country where you will be living. You will realize that some customs or traditions you know anything about and should understand that experiencing a little culture shock is inevitable. When you understand this, your expectations become reality based and you are less likely to be put off or alarmed by the lack of familiarity of a new country.

**MAKE YOUR STAY
AS COMFORTABLE
AS POSSIBLE**

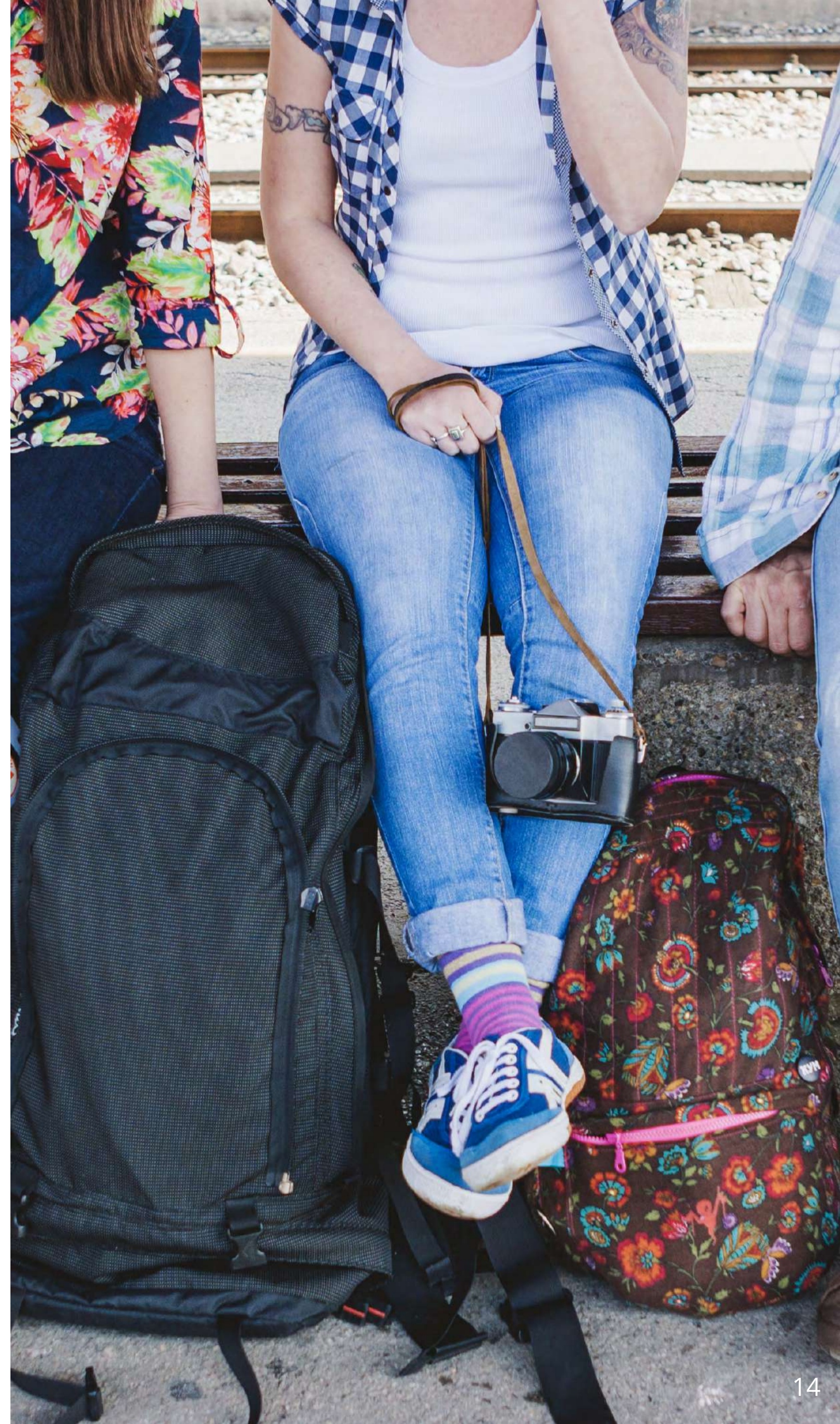
While studying and living in the USA, you want to make the absolute most of it. To enjoy your new surroundings, you first need to feel secure. Create a safe, homely living space, stick to your budget, manage your health whether this means having your prescription meds, eating and exercising wisely, staying in touch with home and reaching out to and befriending other students.

**FIND AREAS
THAT REMIND
YOU OF YOUR
HOME COUNTRY**

If you feel homesick, treat yourself to a meal at a restaurant serving your national cuisine, or buy some home-brand foods. A cautionary note: try not to do this too often! The objective is to immerse yourself in another culture. As you adapt and become more comfortable with your surroundings, you will feel less need to find reminders of your native country.

BE ACTIVE

While studying in the USA, be active! Whether it is chess, yoga, sports, or running. Keep your body and your mind active and focus on the “now”. This will help with culture shock and stave off your feelings of homesickness.



**FRIENDSHIPS
ABROAD
ARE FRIENDSHIPS
FOREVER**

Select the friends who are going to help you have a rewarding learning experience. One of the biggest secrets to a successful English study in the USA experience is knowing how to choose your friends. They can help you to practice the language, share fun times, and teach you about their culture and different life experiences.

Try not to gravitate to groups, clubs or room-share with people from your native country. It is easy to relate to people who have the same background and language as yours! Don't avoid people from your country, but make sure that they are part of a mix of friends who use English to communicate with each other.

**CHOOSE THE
RIGHT ACTIVITIES
FOR YOU**

Signing up for interests and activities also helps a lot to develop your English skills in a fun way. You are sharing your hobby, skill or passion with others with a common interest. It is also a great way of making new friends. The website [Meet Up](#) is a good opportunity for you to find local groups in the area that fit your style!

**SHOP SMART
AND SPEND LESS**

There are many smart ways to save money, such as comparing prices at different locations, finding out where you can get a student discount (museums, theaters, art galleries, etc.), buying from stores that sell used books, shopping at discount stores rather than department stores, watching for "on sale" items... Exchange tips with your friends about it! Also, be aware that the "sales tax" on an item is not included in the displayed price.





**CREATE LIFETIME
MEMORIES**

Write a blog in real-time, post a your adventures on Instagram or Facebook, take artsy photographs of your city or keep a journal. However you do it, make sure to record your study in the USA time.

**PREPARE FOR
THE CLASSROOM
ENVIRONMENT**

The school environment in the United States is very unique. You will be expected to participate in class discussions, share your opinion, debate and explain your reasoning, give class presentations and work in groups with your classmates. Class participation, along with tests, quizzes and projects will be one of the factors that determine your overall grade for the course.

**CHOOSE THE BEST
ATTRACTIONS
FOR YOU**

Wondering what you should see in each destination and how much you'll spend at these attractions? Guidebooks, as well as online travel and destination sites like Trip Advisor, list different kinds of attractions and events for every destination you can imagine.

**KNOW YOUR
NEIGHBORHOOD**

Make a note of routes you will be using regularly. It's good to have a general sense of the layout of your area. Download Google Maps and the local public transportation apps on your smartphone.

**LOOK FOR
FREE WI-FI**

Find out about local free Wi-Fi spots in the neighborhood. Coffee shops like Starbucks, public libraries, museums and other public spaces often have free Wi-Fi – check out a city guide or local online website for these places.

**MAKE FRIENDS
WITH THE LOCALS**

Befriend your local deli owner, mailman, supermarket check-out person and speak with them in English about everyday activities.

WATCH TV...

... and go to the movies and theater to improve your English and to gain insight into the culture.

**TAKE PART IN
COMMUNITY
ACTIVITIES**

Support your community and find out about their lives, concerns and interests. Go to local events, fairs and markets.

**SEE MORE
OF THE USA**

Take day trips and longer getaways. Travel around the country as much as your budget affords.

**BUY GIFTS FOR
YOUR LOVED
ONES AT HOME**

Get unique gifts, locally-made items which reflect the culture of the region. Visit crafts and farmers markets to get a sense of what is made by local artisans. These do not have to be expensive and will be highly appreciated



PREPARE FOR CULTURE SHOCK & KNOW HOW TO OVERCOME IT

For international students in the USA, this promises to be one of the most exciting experiences of your life. While there, you learn about the culture, another way of life and about yourself. Before leaving your home country you may not even think about how much it will affect your life. Once you arrive in the USA, you may experience what many students experience - culture shock! Read on to learn more about the 5 stages of culture shock.

STAGE 1: THE HONEYMOON STAGE

During the honeymoon stage you are curious, positive, and anticipating new and exciting experiences. You idealize your host culture and you feel like you're on an adventure!

STAGE 2: THE CRISIS PHASE

During the crisis phase you may become hostile, irritable, and bored. You may even find yourself criticizing local customs or the way the people around you do things. You may also become withdrawn, or experience aches and pains, homesickness and you may sleep a lot. Your feelings of loneliness and strangeness will not be helped if other students or people you encounter are ignorant about your native country, or if they display negative feelings about the country you call home. You could well feel defeated during this stage.

STAGE 3: THE ADJUSTMENT STAGE

During the adjustment stage you will become more relaxed and familiar with your surroundings. You may also begin to learn more about the habits and beliefs of people who are different to you. Your life will feel a lot more balanced. You will understand and accept your host culture and any negative feelings gradually turn into a positive, more tolerant attitude.

STAGE 4: THE CULTURAL ADAPTION STAGE

During the cultural adaption stage, you begin to feel a sense of belonging and an easier understanding of the host culture. You have a greater sense of well-being and security.

STAGE 5: THE HOME STAGE

During the home stage you feel right at home in your host country! You're experimenting with new behaviors, habits and customs. You are becoming an emotionally mature person able to adapt with less effort than before.

LAST TIPS

Grab every opportunity that presents itself.

Make a lot of friends.

Travel whenever and wherever you can.

Be wise about money and budgeting but splurge occasionally.

Have fun!



TALK SCHOOLS

LET'S GO!

ENROLL NOW

visit talk.edu