Pre-Departure Handbook
Dear Student,

Congratulations on your decision to study at International American English Institute (IAEI) in Austin, TX! This will be a great opportunity not only to learn and improve your English but also to gain greater insight on American culture and Texans. Studying abroad can be a daunting experience at first. You may be overwhelmed or insecure initially, but in no time at all, you will gain confidence, improve your English, and thrive in a new culture! Studying at IAEI is an opportunity for you to expand your English as well as to challenge your personal horizons, learn more about yourself, and the way in which people across the world live and work together every day.

IAEI was established in 1987 and is a leading private English Language School in Austin, Texas. Our faculty and staff are dedicated to broadening and improving your English as well as providing you an American cultural experience. We strive to accommodate the needs of each and every student. Every year, hundreds of students from all over the world choose to come to IAEI, and we welcome each with open arms.

Our teachers have been carefully selected and have a wide range of experience teaching English all over the world. Our classes are designed to be interactive and to make students feel comfortable in real-life English experiences as well to prepare them to study in English speaking universities. We listen to our students and are always trying to improve every day to ensure our students are offered the best opportunities to improve their English.

The best way to learn English and improve your fluency is to speak English every day and immerse yourself in an English speaking community. IAEI is excited to be that community for you. We look forward to welcoming you in person soon!

Best Regards,

Hussain Malik
President
Intensive American English Institute
A Division of House of Tutors
Pre Departure Preparation for International Students

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BEFORE YOU DEPART

**Essential Documents for your IAEI and I-20 applications**

You will need all of the documents in the checklist below to complete your IAEI application and to receive your I-20.

- **Passport**: Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond your planned arrival date in the United States. For example, if you arrive on August 1, your passport must be valid until February 1 of the same year.

- **Statement of Purpose**: Write a short essay that clearly explains how learning English will help you achieve your personal goals.

- **Recent Bank Statement**: Submit a recent bank statement (*less than one year old*) that documents a balance of at least USD$8000. If you plan to bring one or more dependents with you, the account must show an additional USD$2000 for each dependent. The account holder’s name must be written in English characters.

  *Important Note: If a student is sponsored by another individual, we will need two items:*

  1. **The sponsor’s bank statement that reflects the funds described above and**

  2. **A letter that verifies the relationship between the sponsor and the student and a commitment that the sponsor will cover all living expenses while the student is studying in the United States.**

**Completed Application and Application Fee** - The application can be completed online: [http://www.houseoftutors.edu/esl/program/esl-register/](http://www.houseoftutors.edu/esl/program/esl-register/). The $100 application fee can also be paid online or over the phone (512 472-6666) during business hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM Central Time.

Upon receipt of all checklist documents, we will process your application and create your I-20 Certificate of Eligibility. This typically takes no more than one week to process. After your I-20 has been prepared, we will notify you and prepare to ship your documents. We do require that you pay for shipping costs. Once we have received payment for shipping, your I-20 and acceptance letter should arrive in 3 to 5 business days. Please note: shipping costs vary from country to country. We can provide you with a quote once we receive your full address.
Understanding your Certificate of Eligibility (I-20)
Government approved U.S. Educational institutions, such as House of Tutors, issue the Certificate of Eligibility (I-20). The I-20 confirms that a student has been accepted to a full-time study program and that the student has demonstrated that he or she has sufficient funds to reside and study in the U.S.

- Once a student has received the I-20, he or she is eligible to apply for an F-1 student visa at a U.S embassy or consulate abroad.
- Any dependents that travel with the student will need their own individual I-20 in order to apply for an F-2 visa (dependent status).
- To create an I-20, we enter student and dependent information into a U.S. Government database, the “Student and Exchange Visitor Information System” (SEVIS). SEVIS processes the information and produces the I-20. A Designated School Official (DSO) prints and signs the I-20, and arranges delivery to the student.

How to Pay the Required SEVIS fee
Any student beginning a new program in the U.S is required to pay a one time SEVIS fee prior to obtaining a F-1 Student Visa. ONLY the student is required to pay the SEVIS fee, not the dependent/s.

IAEI does not receive any part of the SEVIS fee. The US government receives all proceeds. If you have any questions about the SEVIS fee, you'll find the most current information on the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement website at: https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.jsp

There are three ways to pay the SEVIS fee:

I. Online
   1. Visit the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement website at: https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/students/formSelection.htm
   2. Complete the online form (I-901) as instructed.
   3. Enter your name EXACTLY as it is listed on your I-20.
   4. List your SEVIS ID on your I-901. This can be found in the upper right corner of your I-20 above the bar code.
   5. Print out a copy of your online receipt.

II. By Mail
   2. Read the payment instructions on page 2 of the form.
   3. Make sure to allow adequate mailing time to send the fee payment and to receive your payment receipt.

III. By Western Union
    Read and follow the payment instructions for Western Union payments here: http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu_instr.htm

After you have paid your SEVIS fee and have a copy of your payment receipt, you are ready to apply for your F-1 Student Visa.
Applying for your F-1 Student Visa

IMPORTANT: The order of the steps you must follow to obtain your visa and how you complete the steps will depend on the U.S. Embassy or Consulate to which you apply. Please contact the Embassy directly or visit the following website to fully understand what your U.S. Embassy requires of you:
http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/find-a-u-s--embassy-or-consulate.html

All students applying for a F-1 Student Visa must complete the following steps. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

1. Complete the online Nonimmigrant Visa Application (Form DS-160) here:
https://ceac.state.gov/Genniv/. Print the application form confirmation page.
2. Upload a photo on the Form DS-160. Read and follow all photo requirements.
3. Contact the U.S. embassy to which you are applying for your visa to schedule a visa interview. Wait times for interview appointments vary by location and visa category, so it is best to apply for your visa as early as possible.
4. You may be required to pay the non-refundable visa application fee prior to your interview.
5. Once your visa is approved, you may be required to pay a visa issuance fee. It is best to ask the U.S. Embassy to which you apply for specific information and guidelines about any fees.

Preparing for your Visa Interview

Bring the following items to your visa interview:

- Your Passport
- Form DS-160 Confirmation Page
- I-20
- Application Fee Payment Receipt (if you are required to pay before your interview)
- IAIE Acceptance Letter
- SEVIS Fee Receipt
- Evidence of Financial Support such as a bank statement

IMPORTANT!

U.S. Embassies and Consulates may require additional documentation. Check with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate with which you make an interview appointment. Confirm which documents they require you to bring.

- **During Your Interview**
  - A consular officer will ask you several questions to determine whether you are qualified to receive an F-1 Student Visa.
  - Ink-free, digital fingerprint scans may be taken at this time as part of your application process.

- **After your interview**
  - The consular officer will inform you if further processing or additional documents are needed prior to your Visa approval or denial.

IMPORTANT! We cannot and do not guarantee that you will be issued a visa. Do not make final travel plans or purchase your airline ticket until you have been approved for your visa.
Understanding the Importance of Maintaining Your Status

You should also ensure that your data in SEVIS is accurate and updated. Once you arrive in the United States and locate a place to stay, inform your Designated School Official (DSO) at IAEI. The DSO must register your I-20 upon your arrival and then print you out a registered I-20 with your address in the United States. Don’t ever hesitate to ask any DSOs questions regarding your status. They can help you better understand the requirements governing your immigration status and help you avoid making choices that might jeopardize your status.

Every visa is issued for a particular purpose and for a specific class of visitor. Each visa classification has a set of requirements that the visa holder must follow and maintain. Those who follow the requirements maintain their status and ensure their ability to remain in the United States. Those who do not follow the requirements violate their status and are considered “out of status”.

Failure to maintain status can result in arrest, and violators may be required to leave the United States. Violation of status can also affect the prospect of readmission to the United States for a period of time. Most people who violate the terms of their status are barred from lawfully returning to the United States for years.

Recognize and avoid status violations! Examples of violations include the following:

- Failure to enroll by the date specified by your school.
- Unauthorized employment during your stay.
- Failure to leave the United States following completion of your course.
- Failure to maintain a full course load.
- Failure to attend classes or maintain grades at a passing level.

Please note that this is not a complete listing of potential status violations! Check with your DSO if you ever have any doubts or questions.

Note: Non-immigrant students who fall out of status for reasons beyond their control may be eligible to apply for a reinstatement of status. The student must check with the school to determine if reinstatement is an option.
THE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Packing Suggestions
Electricity

U.S. appliances use 110-volt electricity. In most cases, you’ll need only an adapter plug; in some cases, a voltage converter or transformer.

- Some electrical devices use heating elements or mechanical motors. Many are rated for dual-voltage, and may be automatic or manual. Examples include:
  - Hair dryer
  - Electric shaver or toothbrush
  - Irons (for clothes or hair)
  - Coffee maker or water heater

- Some electronic devices use chips, circuits or electronic motors. Most are rated for multi-voltages. Examples include:
  - Laptop, notebook, tablet, e-reader
  - Smartphone, cell phone, MP3 player
  - Camera
  - Battery chargers (for devices with rechargeable batteries)

Both types of devices are likely to need an adapter plug to work in foreign outlets.

Some devices however, are single-voltage rated and may require a voltage converter or a transformer in addition to an adapter plug. Every device carries a voltage label. To better inform yourself about various devices, it’s best to visit a web site in your country and in your language that fully explains voltage transformer, converter or adapter requirements for travelers from your country to the USA.

Weather

“If you don’t like the weather in Austin, just wait an hour and it will change.”

Although Austinites expect long, hot summers and short, mild winters, they also know to expect the unexpected!

- **Summer** typically starts in late May and ends in late September. During the summer months, it’s not unusual for the temperature to rise over 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Centigrade).

- **Winter** typically starts in late November and ends in late March. Temperatures can vary dramatically during these months, with overnight freezing temperatures scattered throughout the season. Although snow or hail is rare, it does occur.
Packing

Packing for a long trip abroad may seem like a daunting task. Fear not! Take advantage of the many online student bloggers who have created their own version of the “ultimate study abroad packing list” that mentions everything from belts and pajamas to nail clippers and earplugs. Although we don't provide a full list here, we would like to emphasize:

- During the summer months, it's best to bring clothes made of light, natural fabrics like cotton, rayon or silk.
- In the winter, bring at least one warm coat or jacket, warm gloves, a wool scarf, several sweaters or long sleeve shirts. Plan to layer your clothing: T-shirt, long-sleeved shirt, sweater, etc.
- Bring at least two pairs of comfortable walking shoes and a comfortable pair of sport shoes (running shoes or “sneakers”) so that you can take advantage of Austin's famous hiking and running trails.
- Make sure to bring any prescriptions for any medications that you are taking or that you may need. It is advisable to bring a back-up supply of any necessary medication in case you are delayed during your trip. Keep it on you when you travel in case your luggage is delayed. Keep in mind that some medications may be prohibited. You can find a current list of prohibited and restricted items here: [http://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/kbyg/prohibited-restricted](http://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/kbyg/prohibited-restricted). It is also advisable to get a letter from your doctor listing your medications and why you need them. Remember to keep your prescriptions in the original bottles so that they are easily identified by customs.
- Pack an extra outfit and toiletries in your carry-on in case your luggage is lost or delayed.
- Take all valuables, including jewelry in your carry-on bag.
- Make sure your luggage is labeled clearly with your name, address, and telephone number.
- Avoid wearing heavy perfumes.
- For a complete list of prohibited items in both your carry on and checked luggage, please visit [http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/prohibited-items](http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/prohibited-items).
- Always carry the following with you when traveling:
  - Passport with nonimmigrant visa
  - Envelope of immigration documents
  - I-20
  - Evidence of financial resources
  - School Acceptance Letter
  - 2 Pens

On the Plane

Prior to landing in the U.S., you will be given a Customs Declaration Form. You must complete one Customs Declaration form per family traveling. This link will take you to a page with a sample Customs Declaration Form and full explanation of the requested information: [http://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/sample-declaration-form](http://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/sample-declaration-form)
Once you exit the plane, you need to proceed to the Immigration Line. An immigration officer will request to view the following documents:

- Passport
- Visa
- I-20
- Customs Declaration Form

All entering visitors are asked to state the reason they want to enter the U.S. They will ask you to provide them information about their final destination.

It is important that you tell the immigration officer that you will be a student. Be prepared to tell them the name and location of your school. In addition, they may ask you other questions, such as how long you plan on studying English, and how long you plan to stay in United States. Answer all questions confidently and honestly.

The officer will then:

- Take your digital fingerprints
- Take a digital photo
- Stamp your passport with the date of your arrival, end date of stay, your visa class
- Create a digital I-94 form.

The I-94 form is an Arrival/Departure Record issued to all non-US citizens who are admitted to the U.S. We advise you to print a copy of your I-94 form and keep it for your records. It can be found at the following site: [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html)

The immigration officer will not print you a copy of your I-94. It is your responsibility to do so.

After immigration, proceed to customs.

Follow the signs to Baggage Claim. Check the screens to see which carousel your flight has been assigned to and just wait for all of your bags to appear. Go to the correct baggage claim carousel and claim your checked baggage, even if you have another connecting flight.

After you have picked up all of your bags, proceed to the customs lines. Make sure to have your completed Customs Declaration Form that you received on the plane. On your form, you stated whether or not you had any items to declare. If you responded no, proceed to the green lanes marked “Nothing to Declare”. If you do have items to declare, proceed to the red lanes marked “Goods to Declare”. It is not unusual for customs agents to randomly search baggage. Don’t be alarmed if you are stopped. The process generally takes only a few minutes.

After the customs officer indicates that you may continue, either follow the signs to the Connecting Flights/Connecting Baggage Drop-off Area or, if you have reached your final destination, follow the exit and ground transportation signs.
Transportation to your Hotel/Apartment

- Once you arrive in Austin, you have the following options to get to your apartment or hotel: Rent a car: Arrange this online before you arrive. Occasionally, vehicles are in high demand. Car rental agencies require you to show your driver’s license and a major credit card.
- Super Shuttle: Cheaper than a rental car, but more wait time. You purchase a “ticket”. The fee is based on your destination. You may have to wait a bit for the shuttle to fill, but it will drop you off at the front door of your destination. You can also make these arrangements online and we will be happy to help you make reservations with the Super Shuttle if you wish.
- Taxi Service: Taxis queue directly outside the baggage claim exit doors. You can ask the driver for a trip fee estimate, which will vary by destination.
- Private Car: This can also be arranged online. However, if you would like assistance. We are more than happy to help.
MONEY MATTERS

Students often ask us how much money they need to bring. The answer varies, based on lifestyle and expectations. However, as of March 2014, every student must show that he or she have at least $8000 in a bank account in order to receive an I-20, plus an additional $2000 for each dependent if any. We estimate that for one 15-week term at IAEI, you need approximately $6000 for tuition and supplies and $2000 for living expenses.

The average cost of living in Austin varies. We suggest you do your own research as well as speak with an IAEI ESL Coordinator. The ESL Coordinator will be able to refer you to several useful sites regarding cost of living.

The Austin Chamber of Commerce also has some useful information regarding cost of living in Austin. You can visit the Austin Chamber of Commerce site at https://www.austinchamber.com/site-selection/greater-austin-profile/cost-of-living.php

Banking Options

Financial institutions all over Austin have varying services available. Visit the corresponding websites for information about fees, additional locations and convenient ATMs.

The following banks are located near the IAEI Campus. These banks do not require an SSN to open an account; however, official identification in the form of a Texas State ID or Driver’s License, Student ID, Passport or Tax ID# is required.

- University Federal Credit Union
  www.ufcu.org
  2244 Guadalupe St – tel. 512-467-8080
  4611 Guadalupe St – tel. 512 -467-8080

- Chase Bank
  www.chase.com
  1904 Guadalupe – tel. 512-236-3070
  1000 E. 41st St. – tel. 512-302-3881

- Compass Bank
  www.bbvacompass.com
  321 W. 6th St (on Guadalupe) – tel. 512 -421-5761

- Wells Fargo
  www.wellsfargo.com
  2354 Guadalupe St., Ste. B – tel. 512 -236-1250
  3909 North I-H35 (in the Fiesta supermarket) – tel. 512 -344-7900

Useful questions to ask when choosing a bank:
- What identification and documents do I need to open an account?
- How much money is required to open each type of account?
- What kind of checking, savings, or money market accounts does the bank offer?
- What is the service charge?
**Checking Accounts**

You will need a checking account to pay bills such as rent and utilities. Most checking accounts will include a debit card you can use to withdraw money from your account at any ATM 24 hours a day. This allows you to make deposits, withdrawals, and other transactions at any time, even when the bank is closed. ATMs are very convenient because they are located throughout the city. As a safety measure, ATMs limit the amount of your daily withdrawals to a maximum of usually $500.

Be careful in selecting an ATM to use because the bank that owns the ATM can charge a fee in addition to any fees your own bank may charge for ATM withdrawals. It is best to use your debit card to withdraw money only from ATMs owned by your bank, if possible. Although you can make withdrawals from almost any ATM, deposits should be made only at your bank’s ATM.

If you do opt to get a checking account and debit card in the United States, always make sure you have sufficient funds in your account before writing checks or using your debit card. Banks in the United States will not honor checks if you do not have the full amount of the check in your account. In addition to not honoring the check, you will be charged a fee by the bank for “bouncing” a check. If you use your debit card and your account is overdrawn (meaning you charge more than is available in your account), you will be charged an overdrawn fee. Many international students expect the bank to pay checks or cover charges even when their account is overdrawn and are shocked when they discover that the US banking system handles overdrawn accounts differently.

**Credit Cards**

Credit cards are such an ingrained part of the American way of life that you will have trouble making certain purchases with anything other than a credit card. If you want to place an order online or by phone, rent a car, or buy an airline ticket, you need to have a credit card. A debit card will suffice as well, so long as it has a Visa, Master Card, or American Express logo.

Many international students find it difficult to get a credit card in the US because they do not have an established credit history. If you already have a credit card that can be used internationally, it is a good idea to bring it with you.

The major credit cards in the US are Visa, Master Card, American Express and Discover.
IDENTIFY YOURSELF

Texas Photo ID (Identification Card)
If you do not plan to drive in the U.S. but would still like a local ID, you can apply for a Texas Photo Identification Card at the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). This card is not related to driving. It is useful as identification when a photo ID is required.

You will need the following documents in order to complete your application:
- Passport
- I-20
- I-94 card
- Current Enrollment Letter
- There is a $16 fee for this ID card.

Driver's License for International Visitors
Students who will be in the US for longer than 30 days and plan to drive a car should obtain a Texas Driver's License at the DPS. Access to a car, knowledge of Texas driving regulations, as well as testable driving skills is basic requirements for a driver's license. You must provide your own vehicle to take the driving test.

Please take the following steps to obtain your driver's license:

- Study the information about traffic laws in the Texas Driver’s Handbook available from the DPS as well as online at http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/documents/DL-7.pdf.
- Take the written and in-car examinations for driving at any DPS office. If you do not have a driver’s license from another state, you must take both a written and a driving test. There is an $11.00 fee, valid for three opportunities to take the test within a 90-day period.
- Pay the $25.00 fee for your Driver's License.

In addition, you will need to take the following documents to a DPS office in order to complete your application:
- Passport
- I-20
- I-94 card
- Current Enrollment Letter
- Completed Driver’s License Application (http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/internetforms/Forms/DL-14A.pdf)

Required Auto Insurance
If you own a car but do not have insurance, you will NOT be permitted to apply for a driver's license. We highly recommend that you apply for a driver’s license before you purchase a car.
Texas Department of Public Safety - DPS
Regular office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Locations:

- Central Austin: 6121 North Lamar Boulevard (512-424-2076) – open till 6 p.m. on Tuesdays
- Northwest Austin: 13730 Research Boulevard (512-506-2847) - open till 6 p.m. on Tuesdays
- South Austin: 6425 South Interstate 35, Suite 180 (512-444-5241) - open till 6 p.m. on Tuesdays
- Austin-Pflugerville Mega Center: 216 E. Wells Branch Parkway, Pflugerville, TX 78660 (512-486-2800)
- Vehicle and Title Registration Department (for questions concerning car registration) 512-465-3000
WHERE TO LIVE

Although IAEI does not have on campus housing available for students, there are many housing options available near our school. Many of our students choose to live within walking distance of our campus. Below are some available short-term and long-term housing options near IAEI.

Please note: IAEI does not endorse or promote any of the housing options below.

**Short Term - Motels, Hotels & Hostels**
Listed below are several motels located near campus:

- **Days Inn, University**
  3105 North I-35
  (800) 225-3297

- **Doubletree Club Hotel**
  1617 IH-35 North
  512-479-4000

- **Doubletree Guest Suites**
  303 W. 15th Street
  512-478-7000

- **La Quinta Inn**
  5812 N. IH 35
  512-459-4381

- **Motel 6**
  8010 I-35 North
  512-837-9890

- **Motel 6**
  9420 I-35 North
  512-339-6161

- **Bed & Breakfast**
  Austin's Folk House Inn
  506 W 22nd St
  512-472-6700

- **The Mansion at Judges' Hill**
  1900 Rio Grande St
  512-495-1800

- **Carriage House Inn**
  1110 W. 22. 1/2 St
  512-472-2333

- **Star of Texas Inn**
  611 W 22nd St
  512-311-1619

- **Strickland Arms**
  604 E 47th St
  512-454-4426

- **Inn at Pearl Street**
  1809 Pearl Street
  512-478-0051

- **Youth Hostels**

- **American Youth Hostel**
  2200 Lakeshore Boulevard (Located on NR shuttle route)
  512-444-2294
  $22 – 25 per night
Long Term Housing
All students are responsible for making their own housing arrangements. There are many housing choices in Austin. Some students choose to rent an apartment or house while others choose to reside with roommates in shared housing. You can share with a friend, or with one of the many students who look for housing in Austin.

The median apartment rents in 2014 are as follows:

- 1 bedroom - $853
- 2 bedroom - $1074
- 3 bedroom - $1454

You'll find many available apartments near campus that rent by the room. These apartments are typically furnished with all utilities included in the rent payment.

Short-term leases are available for most shared housing opportunities. Rent varies depending on the apartment and size of bedroom. Rent tends to be between $500 and $750 a month.

Apartment Locator Services often provide free apartment locating services. Call one of the following businesses or visit their website for additional information:

- Home Place Apartment Search 512-258-5200 [www.austin-apt-locator.com](http://www.austin-apt-locator.com)
- Apartment Experts 512-339-4411 [www.apartmentexperts.com](http://www.apartmentexperts.com)
- ATX Apartment Finder 512-657-1674 [www.atxapartmentfinder.com](http://www.atxapartmentfinder.com)
- UT Student Apartments (888) 843-4132 [www.utstudentapartments.com](http://www.utstudentapartments.com)
- All Austin 512-241-1441 [www.allaustin.com](http://www.allaustin.com)

There are other web resources available to help locate Austin-area apartments:

- Apartment Guide: [www.apartmentguide.com](http://www.apartmentguide.com)
- Apartments.com: [www.apartments.com](http://www.apartments.com)
- Craigslist for Austin: [http://austin.craigslist.org](http://austin.craigslist.org)

Feeling confused about what you should know when looking for an apartment or home rental? We recommend that you ask the following questions when trying to select a rental:

1. What is the rental price?
2. How many bedrooms and bathrooms does the apartment have?
3. How many people may legally share the apartment?
4. Is the lease an individual lease or a joint lease?
5. What utilities are included? How are excluded utilities billed?
6. What amenities are included?
7. What appliances and/or furniture are in the apartment?
8. What form of rental payment is acceptable?
9. How close is IAEI?
10. How close is the nearest bus stop?
11. Where is the nearest grocery store?
12. Do they offer roommate-matching assistance?
13. What are the application requirements? Is there an application fee?
14. How much is the security deposit?
15. Who is responsible for appliance repairs and maintenance?
16. Is there a written move-out policy?
17. What is the sublet policy?
18. Is short-term lease available? What’s the difference in monthly rent between short-term & year leases?
19. What is your policy for early termination of the lease?
20. What is your pet policy?
21. What is the neighborhood school my children would attend? Is it near IAEI?
TRANSPORTATION - HOW TO NAVIGATE THE CITY

There are several transportation options. Many students who live near IAEI choose to purchase a bike or walk to school. Others choose to buy or rent a car. However, there is no reason to do so.

**Austin Metro Bus**
Capital Metro buses provide a clean, inexpensive and reliable way to get around Austin. As of March, 2014, a monthly bus pass is $33. To get the most current bus fare information as well as bus schedules, please visit the Capital Metro website: [https://www.capmetro.org/metrobus/](https://www.capmetro.org/metrobus/)

**Rental Cars**
The minimum age to rent a car is 21 years old. However, there are some companies that require you to be 25 years old to rent. If you are younger than 25 years old you may be allowed to rent, but may have to pay an extra fee, about $10 a day.

The price of rental cars varies greatly depending on the kind of vehicle. Companies charge per day, usually with unlimited mileage. Rates range from $30/day for a small economy car up to $90/day for a sports car or SUV. In addition, to drive any vehicle in Texas, you must have liability insurance. If you do not currently have this type of insurance, you will have to pay for it on a day-to-day basis. The average cost is $10 to $15 per day.

You should ask the following questions when renting a car:

- Late charges? Rental car companies are strict about when the car is returned. You may be charged a penalty if you are late in returning your vehicle.
- Driving limits? Some companies will allow you to travel in only Texas, while some may allow you to go beyond the state, but rarely into Mexico.
- Unlimited mileage? Sometimes the company may advertise unlimited mileage; however, some may still enforce a limit for “unreasonable” distances. **Check the terms and conditions of your contract.**
- Discounts? Sometimes companies will offer discounts on certain cars or days.
- Credit Card Rental Perks? Some credit card companies offer liability insurance for rental cars. Others offer an addition to your card services to cover full auto rental insurance. Check with your credit card policy to see if you are covered. If not, buy the extra policy offered by the rental company.
- Personal auto insurance coverage? Your personal auto insurance policy may ALSO cover any car rental. Review your policy to determine if you have this insurance. If not, buy the extra policy offered by the rental company.

Austin also has services that allow you to rent a car by the hour on a case by case basis. You typically have to sign up for the services as a member. Please visit the following sites to learn more about hourly car rentals.

- CAR2GO - [https://www.car2go.com/en/austin/what-is-car2go/](https://www.car2go.com/en/austin/what-is-car2go/)
- Zipcars - [http://www.zipcar.com/austin/find-cars](http://www.zipcar.com/austin/find-cars)
Buying a Vehicle
You can buy a used car either from dealers or directly from a private party. Dealers may have made the necessary repairs and/or maintenance on a car before selling it. Typically, it is cheaper to buy from a private party but you also run a higher risk of buying a "lemon" (a car that is bad).

Popular places to find used cars are Craig’s List (http://austin.craigslist.org) or the Classified Section of the Austin American Statesman. Contact the seller to get further information before you go see a car. Ask for the VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) when you speak with the owner. Buy a Carfax on-line subscription ($20/month) at http://www.carfax.com so that you can check the VIN number.

Set up a Purchase Budget

Keep in mind the expenses of auto insurance, sales tax, title application, vehicle registration, repairs and maintenance, etc. increase the final sales price. You may compare prices at www.kbb.com.

If you decide to buy from a private party, find an experienced driver to test-drive the car for you. Also, it is highly recommended that you take the car to an auto mechanic for a “buyer’s check,” which costs $70 – $120 per car-check. If the buyer’s check comes up with major mechanical defects, the mechanic will give you a car report with all the vital details.

Car Titles and Registration

To avoid penalty, transfer the car’s Title within 20 working days from the date of purchase. Take your driver’s license and proof of insurance with you. See the Travis County Tax Office website for further details: http://www.traviscountytax.org/goVehiclesRegistration.do

Auto Insurance

Liability Insurance is mandatory in Texas. Contact a few insurance agencies. They will give you a FREE price quote. When you compare the price, make sure the insurance coverage, exactly what is insured and for how much, is the same. You will be required to provide both your car VIN number and your driver’s license number in order to buy insurance.
DRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

If you plan to drive while you are residing in the United States, you must familiarize yourself with the driving rules and traffic laws. Although each state sets its own traffic laws, most laws are the same or similar throughout the country and traffic keeps to the right. You must not drive faster than the posted speed limit and driving while intoxicated is always illegal. To see state specific laws for Texas, please familiarize yourself with the Department of Public Safety’s Texas Driver’s Handbook. An electronic copy of this book can be found at the following site: http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/driverlicense/documents/dl-7.pdf

Consequences for Disobeying Traffic Laws
Traffic and driving laws are taken very seriously in the United States. Failure to follow the laws can endanger others and yourself. If you are caught speeding, driving while intoxicated, ignoring traffic signs, or breaking any other traffic law, you are in danger of receiving a traffic ticket. Traffic ticket fines vary by area but the cost of your fine will always be listed on the front of your ticket. The back of your ticket will give you instructions on how to proceed. If you receive a traffic ticket, you must not ignore it! Failure to pay the traffic ticket or to try and get it dismissed will result in a warrant for your arrest!

If you receive multiple traffic tickets, this may affect your I-20 renewal. There is an easy way to avoid this...follow all traffic and driving laws!

Police Stops: What to Do if You Are Pulled Over
If you are driving and notice a car behind you with flashing lights, you are being pulled over by a police officer or a Texas State Trooper. Follow the below steps in the event that you are pulled over:

- Slow down immediately, put on your blinker, and pull over as soon as it is safe to do so.
- Take a deep breath and wait patiently in your vehicle. Roll down your window all the way and place your hands visibly on the steering wheel. Any quick moves can be misinterpreted as a threat. Keeping your hands visible on the steering wheel lets the officer know you have nothing to hide.
- The officer will approach your car and will ask to see your license and insurance. Gather the documents and be very polite!
- When the officer gives you your ticket or warning, sign where he indicates. Do not refuse to sign the ticket! If you refuse to sign the ticket, the officer has to arrest you.

Once you receive a ticket, you have 10 days to decide how to respond to it. You can choose to either pay the fine or appear in court. It is your responsibility to respond to the ticket! Don't fail to do so!
ACADEMICS

Time in the United States
It’s important to note that the United States is a punctual country. When an appointment is made for 6:00 pm, whether it be to meet friends or go to a doctor’s office, it is best to arrive at least 5 minutes early if possible. When coming to your classes at IAEI, the same is true. It is best to be at least a little early for each class. If you are late to class excessively, it can even affect your I-20 status, so remember to be punctual. Some people even say that when you are early, you are right on time!

Attendance
Your attendance at school is very important, not only to ensure academic success but also to maintain your student visa. It is important to attend classes daily and, as mentioned before, to arrive at class prepared and on time. As a student studying in the United States on a student visa, it is your obligation to attend classes. In fact, you are required to attend at minimum 80% of all of your classes in order to remain in status. If you fall below the 80% attendance benchmark, your I-20 may be terminated.

From time to time, a student may have a medical emergency that causes him or her to fall below the attendance requirement. It is important to communicate with your school DSO so that they are informed of your situation and can help advise you on maintaining your status.

Maintaining Grades
In addition to attending your classes and being punctual, it is important to maintain (at a minimum) passing grades in each of your courses. During the first week of class, your teacher will give you a syllabus. The syllabus provides you the most comprehensive information about each course, including how you will be graded. Read each syllabus for each class carefully. Understanding the criteria and expectations for each class will help set you up for success.

If you find yourself struggling in class, never hesitate to speak with your teacher. They are there to help you, and they want you to succeed! They can offer you advice on how to improve your grades and skills.

Failure to maintain a passing average may affect your I-20 status. Don't let this happen! Come to class prepared and never hesitate to ask for help.
HEALTH INSURANCE

While having health insurance when you study in the U.S. is not required by IAEI, it is highly recommended. It is best to be prepared. One can never know when medical treatment may be needed, and, without insurance, many international students are unprepared for the high costs of health care in the U.S.

We understand that choosing a health insurance plan can be a daunting experience. We have gathered some information that will guide you through the process.

What is International Student Health Insurance?
International student health insurance, at its best, is a tailor-made health insurance plan designed to cover an international student (and their dependents, if applicable) while they are studying in the U.S. It is best to keep in mind that insurance in the U.S. will vary depending on the insurance plan you choose and will more than likely be different from what you are accustomed to receiving in your home country. We recommend that you contact more than one insurance provider so you can compare the different options that are offered. When you speak with each insurance agent, let them know your needs and what you would like in a health care plan. Don't hesitate to ask them questions. They are there to help you!

Important Insurance Terms Defined

- **Premium**: Direct cost for the insurance plan, not including deductible and co-payments.
- **Deductible**: Set amount that must be paid for medical services by a policyholder before any payment is due from the insurance company.
- **Co-payment**: The preset dollar amount of a medical services bill a person must pay out of his/her own pocket.
- **Benefits**: Expenses payable to a policyholder as described in the insurance policy.
- **Claim**: A policyholder's request for reimbursement of expenses from an insurance company.
- **Exclusions and Limitations**: Medical conditions and/or events not covered by an insurance policy.
- **Explanation of Benefits (EOB)**: Description of payments issued by the insurance company after a claim has been processed. The EOB will also state the remaining amount that may be owed by the policyholder to the medical provider. Note: this is not a bill, but an explanation of covered expenses.
- **Co-insurance**: The percentage of each medical services bill a person must pay out of his/her own pocket.
- **Out-of-Pocket**: Money spent directly by a policyholder that will not be reimbursed by the insurance company. For example: If your hospital bill is $1,000 and you must pay a $300 deductible, your total out-of-pocket expense would be the $300 deductible + $140 co-insurance.
- Out of Pocket Maximum: The maximum dollar amount the policyholder can be required to pay out-of-pocket, after which time the insurance company must cover costs at 100% until the maximum dollar limit is reached.

- Maximum Dollar Limit: The maximum dollar amount an insurance provider will pay out during a certain amount of time as specified in the policy.

- Pre-Existing Condition: A medical condition or illness that a policyholder had before purchasing a health insurance policy.

- Provider: Any doctor, specialist, hospital, or other person or entity providing medical services.

- Network Provider: All physicians, specialists, hospitals, and other providers who have agreed to provide medical care to holders of an insurance policy.

- Generic Prescription: A prescription offered by a company that did not originally patent it. Generic prescriptions are generally identical to and cheaper than their “brand-name” alternative.

- Rx: A common abbreviation for the word “prescription”.

**Tips for Choosing a Student Insurance Plan**

Every student has different needs. If you are unfamiliar with health insurance or come from a country where there is a socialized healthcare system, the idea of health insurance and having exclusions may be a little foreign to you. It is not typical that every single medical expense will be covered under a health care plan, so it is important to determine what you must have. This will help you in your search.

The following steps and questions will help you choose the plan best suited for you:

- What is the maximum out of pocket expense you are willing to pay? Some plans have limited or no co-payments while others have larger out of pocket expenses. A larger out of pocket expense means you will have to pay more up front when you go to the doctor, hospital, or pharmacy.

- Are there certain benefits you must have? Do you require additional benefits such as maternity, mental health, dental coverage, or vision coverage? If these benefits are not necessary for you, that will help you choose between plans.

- How much can you afford to spend monthly for an insurance plan? Keep in mind that premiums, while very important in the decision making process, should not be your only leading factor. Cheaper plans rarely cover more than more expensive plans, so be sure to pick a plan that is affordable as well as provides you the benefits you need.

- Study the benefits offered by each plan. Compare them carefully.

- Make sure you receive a full listing of exclusions for each plan. This will tell you exactly what is not covered by each plan.

- Ask the representative to provide you with examples of how each plan works. For example, if you visit a general doctor and the total cost of the visit is $1000, what portion of that cost will you have to pay? What will the insurance plan cover?
- Ask about your access to doctors, clinics and hospitals. Some plans require that you use only doctors in a PPO network. A PPO network is a network of doctors that accept that particular insurance plan. If a plan only allows you to use doctors within a PPO network, make sure that there are doctors and hospitals in the PPO network that are accessible to you.

- What services does each plan offer if you need assistance? Will they help you locate a health care provider if necessary? Are they available 24 hours a day if you have questions? Do they have translators available in case you need further explanation in your native language?
CHILD CARE

If you are traveling with younger children, you may be in need of childcare while you are at school. There are many day care centers in Austin. A day care center is a place where parents take children to be taken care of by qualified individuals. They typically operate during the day when parents are at work or school. They vary in terms of services offered, pricing, and location. Some day care centers offer specialized learning or educational surroundings targeted at certain age levels. Day care centers are typically geared toward children who are between the ages of a few weeks to 5 years old.

Choosing a Day Care Center

You should approach your day care search very seriously. Be thorough and start your search early. Many daycare centers fill up very quickly so the earlier you begin your search, the more daycare center options you will have.

Determine what is important to you in a daycare center. Would you prefer a center close to school or to your home? Do you want your child to be in a center that is more learning focused?

Below are some useful questions to ask each day care center:

- How long has the center been in business?
- What are the center’s accreditations?
- What are the center’s hours? What are the pickup and drop-off times? Is the center open during holidays?
- Is there space for your child to join now? If no, is there a waiting list?
- Are the kids grouped by age or are the ages mixed?
- How large is the group my child would be in?
- What’s the caregiver-child ratio in each group?
- What are the fees? How and when do you need to pay?
- What supplies are provided?
- Is there a daily report or another way the center informs parents of what children did during the day?

You can begin your day care search before you get to the U.S. as well. Start your research online. You can call centers and begin asking questions. The more prepared you are and the more research you do, the easier it will be to find a center once you arrive in the U.S.
ALL ABOUT AUSTIN

History
Austin is the capital of Texas. Located in Central Texas, it is the fourth largest city in the state of Texas. In the 1830s, pioneers began to settle the area in Central Austin along the Colorado River. After the Republic of Texas Vice President Mirabeau B. Lamar visited the area during a buffalo hunting expedition during the 1800s, he proposed that the Republic's capital, then located in Houston, TX, be relocated to area on the north back of the Colorado River near the present day Congress Avenue Bridge. In 1839, the site was officially chosen as the Republic's new capital under the name of Waterloo. Shortly thereafter, the name was changed to Austin after Stephen F. Austin, the Father of Texas and the Republic's first secretary of state.

Since its birth, Austin has developed into a major city. By the 1980s, it emerged as a center for technology and business. A number of Fortune 500 companies have headquarters or regional offices in Austin including Apple Inc., Google, IBM, Whole Foods Market, Dell, and Facebook.

Residents of Austin are known as “Austinites”. They include a widely diverse mix of people. The current official slogan promotes Austin as “The Live Music Capital of the World”. Austin is home to many live music venues and musicians. Austin is a great city that promotes many small, unique, local businesses. As of October, 2013, the FBI ranked Austin as the second safest major city in the U.S.

Religion
Religion in the United States is characterized by a diversity of religious beliefs and practices. The majority of religious Americans identify themselves as Christians while the other religious population spans from Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and a number of other faiths. The United States prides itself on being a nation where individuals can choose to practice any religion they wish, and, therefore, has no official state endorsed religion.

Austin is a particularly diverse and open-minded city. Students of all faiths and denominations can feel confident that they will be accepted in Austin with open arms.
Safety and Security
Most people you meet in the United States will be friendly and helpful. However, there is a moderate amount of crime against persons and crime against property, some of it directed specifically at foreigners. A few simple precautions will help safeguard you from crime.

Emergency Telephone Numbers
In most communities in the United States dialing 911 on any phone will connect you to emergency services such as ambulance, fire and police. Another way to get emergency help is to dial 0. This will connect you to a telephone operator. Tell the operator that you have an emergency and your location. The operator will connect you to the appropriate emergency service.

Safety Precautions
Austin is rated the second safest major city in the United States according to the FBI’s 2013 Unified Crime Report. Nonetheless, it is important to apply some common sense rules to help prevent you from becoming a victim of a crime:

- Keep your room or apartment locked whenever you are away. Make sure that all of your windows have locks and that the locks are fully functional.
- Keep your car doors locked at all times.
- Never leave valuable articles or packages on the seat of your vehicle. Lock them in your trunk instead.
- Never leave your books, backpack, purse or other belongings unattended.
- If you own a bicycle, buy a good lock and always use it.
- Don't walk alone at night. Walk on busy well-lit streets and learn what parts of town you should avoid at night. Never hitchhike!

101 Great Things to Do in Austin
Walkers, Hikers, Runners
- Walk, jog or bike the Hike and Bike Trail along Town Lake. 512-499-6700.
- “Take a hike” on Barton Creek Nature Preserve. 512-478-0098.
- Ascend all 106 steps of Mt. Bonnell to enjoy the view. 512-478-0098.
- Take a moonlight tour of the Wild Basin Preserve. 512-327-7622.
- Bicycle on scenic Loop 360. 512-478-0098.
- Windsurf at Windy Point. 512-266-3337.
- Follow the Walk of Stars on Sixth Street. 512-478-0098.
- Take a walking tour of The University of Texas at Austin campus. 512-471-1420.

Water Escapes
- Go sculling, paddle boating or canoeing on Town Lake. 512-467-7799.
- Swim in the constant 68 degrees, spring-fed Barton Springs 512-476-9044 or the heated Stacy Pool 512-476-4521.
- Take a friend to Hamilton Pool and experience the miracle of nature. 512-264-2740.
- Camp and swim at Sandy Creek. 512-854-9489.
- Go boating on Lake Austin. 512-327-4562.
- Sail, jet-ski or scuba dive at Lake Travis. 512-478-0098.
- View the spectacular sunset over Lake Travis from the Oasis Cantina del Lago. 512-266-2442.

**Nature, Parks & Wildlife**

- Ride the train or fly a kite in Zilker Park. 512-974-6700.
- In the summer, at dusk, watch millions of bats coming out from under the Anne W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge. 512-327-9721.
- On a Saturday or Sunday, take a tour of the Westcave Preserve. 512-825-3442.
- Spend the day at Emma Long Metropolitan Park. 512-346-1831.
- Camp at almost any of the LCRA parks. 512-4473-3200.
- Watch the peacocks and take a short hike at Mayfield Park. 512-974-6700
- Take a scenic drive through the scenic Hill Country. 478-0098.
- Play frisbee golf at Zilker Park or Pease Park. 477-7273.
- See the peacocks while enjoying Sunday brunch at the historic Green Pastures.

**History Buffs**

- Take a Historic Walking Tour of downtown Austin. 478-0098 / 442-1004.
- Research your roots in the genealogy department at the Lorenzo de Zavala State Archives & Library. 512-463-5455.
- Explore Austin's historic cemeteries where Texas Legends have been laid to rest. (830) 463-0605
- View the unique, late 19th-century Moonlight Tower. 512-478-0098.
- Attend a service at the oldest Protestant church west of the Mississippi, St. David's Episcopal. 512-472-1196.
- Tour our historic State Capitol Building. 512-305-8400.
- Take a tour of the Governor's Mansion, weekday mornings. 512-463-0063.
- Walk the historic Bremond Block and view several historical homes. 512-478-0098.

**The Music Scene**

- Join hundreds standing in line for a chance to see a taping of Austin City Limits TV. 471-4811, ext. 310.
- Enjoy live music 7 nights a week in one of the many local clubs. 512-478-0098.
- Go to an outdoor concert at Symphony Square. 512-476-6064.
- Enjoy the Austin Symphony at Bass Concert Hall. 512-476-6064.
- Attend a concert at the Frank Erwin Center. 512-471-7744.
- Enjoy legendary blues music on "the Drag". 512-478-0098.
**Architecture & Engineering**
- Drive across the award-winning *Penny Backer Bridge*. 512 -478-0098.
- Stay in one of Austin's historic bed & breakfasts. 512 -478-0098.
- Spend some time at *Discovery Hall*, a hands-on science center. 458-1891.
- On a hot, sizzling day, ice skate at *Northcross Mall*. 451-5102.
- Take the children to the *Austin Children's Museum*. 472-2499.
- Tour a historic home, the 1850's *Neill-Cochran House*. 478-2335.
- Learn about the 36th President, Lyndon Baines Johnson, at the *LBJ Library & Museum*. 721-0200.
- Explore the grounds of the national *Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Research Center*. 232-0100.
- Attend a performance by the *Austin Lyric Opera*. 472-5927.

**Shopping**
- Browse through the *Austin Antique Mall*. (51) 459-5900.
- Have a western hat made by the famous hat maker *Manny Gammage*. 512 -398-4287.
- Shop at the downtown *Bluebonnet Market Place*. 447-8848.
- Spend a morning/afternoon at the *Travis County Farmers' Market*. 512 -454-1002.
- Tour Austin's local wineries and sample award-winning wines. 512 -478-0098.
- Experience unique shopping at *Sixth Street's "West End"*. 512 -478-0098.

**Museum Visits and The Arts**
- Browse around the *Blanton Museum of Art*. 512 -471-7324.
- Visit the *Old Bakery & Emporium* – a registered national landmark, now a shop filled with arts & crafts. 512 -477-5961.
- Expand your art collection at the *Austin Artists Harvest*. 512 -473-3866.
- Stroll the twelve-acre grounds at *Laguna Gloria Art Museum* and enjoy an exhibit. 512 -453-5312.
- Experience rural central Texas in the 1880's at *Jourdan-Bachman Pioneer Farm*. 512 -837-1215.
- Visit the *George Washington Carver Museum and Library*. 512 -974-4926.
- Visit the 1840's *French Legation*, a foreign embassy. 512 -472-8180.
- Visit the *Elisabeth Ney Museum*, studio and home to this German sculptor. 512 -458-2255.
- Catch a free movie in the park at *Republic Square*. 512 -974-6700.
Live Performances

- Experience live theater on Austin's most intimate stage: Hyde Park Theater. 512-479-7529
- Attend an outdoor theatrical or musical performance at Zilker Park. 512-
- Attend a performance at the ZACH Theater. 512-476-0541
- Enjoy a performance by Ballet Austin. 512-476-9151.
- Go to a play at Mary Moody Northern Theatre. 512-448-8484.
- Take in a show at one of Texas’s oldest theatres, The Paramount. 512-472-5470.
- Watch emerging stars perform at the University of Texas’ Oscar G. Brockett Theatre 512-477-6060
- Discover innovative productions of original work at the Vortex Theater. 512-478-5282

Sports

- Enjoy an evening watching a professional ice hockey team, The Texas Stars. 512-600-5000.
- Watch UT Longhorns Football at Memorial Stadium. 512-471-7437.
- Play a round of golf on one of the many first-class Austin golf courses. 512-478-0098.
- "And they’re off!" horse racing at Manor Downs. 512-272-5581.
- Watch legendary golfers at the Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf PGA Seniors Tournament. 512-329-1076.

Seasonal Events

- January
  - Celebrate the first week of the new year with free live music at Austin’s Free Week.

- February
  - Put on a costume and samba at Austin's version of the Brazilian "Carnival". 512-476-5461.

- March
  - See hundreds of bands performing during the South By Southwest Music Conference, known as SXSW. 512-467-7973.
  - Watch the best in high school sports at the UIL state competitions. 512-471-5883.
  - Attend the Austin/Travis Country Livestock Show & Rodeo 512-919-3000.
  - Go for a ride on the Lonestar Riverboat or Capitol Cruise (Seasonal – through the summer and early fall). 327-1388 or 480-9264.
• April
  o Attend the *Texas Hill Country Food & Wine Festival*. 512-348-6847.
  o Sample the best food and drink from some of Austin's top chefs at the annual *Taste of Austin*. 512-476-2729.
  o Run *The Capitol 10,000*. 512-445-3596.
  o Attend "Safari" at the *Austin Nature Center*. 512-974-3888.
  o Watch young sailors navigate Town Lake at the *Roadrunner Regatta* at the Austin Yacht Club 512-266-1336
  o Put your party hat on and celebrate Eeyore’s Birthday, a beloved character from the Winnie-the-Pooh stories, on April 26th at Pease Park.

• May
  o Join in the celebration at the *Cinco de Mayo Festival*. 512-472-7142.
  o Attend *Laguna Gloria’s “Fiesta”*. 512-458-8191.
  o Visit the *Austin Garden Center* for “*Florarama*” 512-477-8672.

• June
  o Picnic at Rosewood Park during the *Juneteenth Celebration*. 512-472-6838.
  o Attend the *Blues on the Green* free concert series at Zilker Park. www.kgsr.com/bluesonthegree/.

• July
  o Celebrate July 4th with *Austin Symphony* and fireworks on *Auditorium Shores*. 512-476-6064.

• August
  o Watch the summer regattas on Lake Travis. 512-478-0098.
  o Partake in the annual Batfest festivities and live music on the Congress Ave Bridge. 512-327-9721 (Ex. 16).

• September
  o Celebrate “*Dieciseis de Septiembre*” at *Fiesta Gardens* 512-476-7502.
  o Spend a day or two at the Old Pecan St. Spring/Fall Arts Festivals. 512-448-1797.

• October
  o Go to *Sixth Street* on *Halloween* for a Spook-tacular time. 512-478-0098.
  o Watch or play in the "*Hoop it Up*” street basketball tournament. 512-474-2255.
  o Enjoy 3 jam-packed days of live music at *Austin City Limits Music Festival* while overlooking the downtown skyline of Austin. www.aclfestival.com.
November
  o Shop early for the winter holidays at the Junior League's Christmas Affair. 512-467-8982.

December
  o Buy something unique at the Armadillo Christmas Bazaar (December). 512-447-1605.
  o Watch the performance of the "Living Christmas Tree Concert" (December). 512-338-4473.
  o Ring-in the holidays by walking through The Trail of Lights. austintrailoflights.org/at-the-trail.

Specialty Food Stores
Austin is home to people from all over the world. We have many specialty food stores in the city. You can find some of them listed below.

East Asian
  ▪ Asahi Imports (Japanese) - 6105 Burnet Rd. 453-1850
  ▪ Asian Market - 8650 Spicewood Springs Rd. 331-5788
  ▪ Asian Grocery - 9200 N Lamar Boulevard 719-5552
  ▪ Han Yang Korean Grocery - 6808 N Lamar #A 110 371-3199
  ▪ Saigon Oriental Market - 8610 N Lamar Boulevard 837-6641
  ▪ Say Hi Importers - 5249 Burnet Rd 453-1411
  ▪ Seoul Market - 5610-B N Lamar Boulevard 302-1090
  ▪ . 512-697-9863

Indian
  ▪ Ghandi Bazar - 2121 Parmer Lane #113, 512-249-0075
  ▪ MGM Indian Foods - 9255 W. Parmer Lane #102, 512-459-5353
  ▪ Taj Grocers - 9515 N Lamar Boulevard #, 52-836-6292

Kosher & Halal
  ▪ HEB - 7015 Village Center Dr 502-8459
  ▪ World Food and Halal Market - 9616 N Lamar Boulevard, #110 832-8365

Farmer's markets
  ▪ Republic Square Park - 422 Guadalupe Sat 9 a.m. -1 p.m.
  ▪ Sunset Valley - 2300 Jones Rd. 280-1976 Sat 9 a.m. -1 p.m.
  ▪ Farm to Market Grocery - 1718 S Congress 462-7220 8a.m.-8 p.m.
International, organic & natural

- Austin International Market - 502 Pampa Dr. 453-5487
- Central Market - 4001 N Lamar 206-1020; www.centralmarket.com
- Central Market - 4477 S Lamar 899-4300; www.centralmarket.com
- Phoenicia Bakery & Deli - 4701 A Burnet Rd. 512-323-6770
- Phoenicia Bakery & Deli - 2912 S Lamar Boulevard. 512-447-4444
- Sun Harvest - 2917 W Anderson Lane 512-451-0669
- Sun Harvest - 4006 S Lamar Boulevard. 512-444-3079
- Whole Foods - 9607 Research Boulevard. 512-476-1206; www.wholefoods.com
- Whole Foods - 525 N Lamar 512-476-1206; www.wholefoods.com
- Wheatsville Co-op - 3103 Guadalupe 512-478-2683

Russian

- Sasha’s Garden Russian Market - 7817 Rockwood Lane #101 512-459-1449
HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES IN AUSTIN AREA

There are many post-secondary schools and education opportunities in Austin. Austin has an array of public and private universities, community colleges and trade and technical schools. Public universities are state supported schools while private universities and schools are for profit institutions. Four-year institutions offer bachelor's degrees and some offer more advanced degrees such as Master's or Doctorate Degrees. A community college is a public 2-year college that grants associate's degree. A trade or technical school is sometimes also known as a career or vocational school. At these schools, students prepare for specific careers, from cosmetology, medical imaging, and restaurant management. Students will typically receive a license, certificate, or associate degree.

Post-Secondary Schools in the Austin Area

Public Universities

- The University of Texas at Austin: Founded in 1883, The University of Texas at Austin is a 4-year, state research and flagship institution that is home to 17 colleges and schools and more than 50,000 diverse students. It is ranked as one of the top public universities in the US. ([www.utexas.edu](http://www.utexas.edu))

- Texas State University at Round Rock: Located 20 miles outside of Austin, RRC offers eight bachelor's degrees and courses for eleven master's degrees, along with post bachelor's certificate programs. ([www.rrc.txstate.edu](http://www.rrc.txstate.edu))

Private Universities

- St. Edward's University: St. Edward's University is a private, liberal arts Catholic university. With more than 5,000 students, the university offers undergraduate and graduate programs and opportunities to study at their satellite campus in Angers, France. ([www.stedwards.edu](http://www.stedwards.edu))

- Huston-Tillotson University: Located in East Austin, Huston-Tillotson is a private university that offers four-year degrees in variety of fields such as business, natural sciences, education, and technology. ([www.htu.edu](http://www.htu.edu))

- Concordia University: Concordia University Texas is a private university located in Northwest Austin and offers 22 undergraduate and 2 graduate degrees in business, education, liberal arts, and science. ([www.concordia.edu](http://www.concordia.edu))
**Community College**
- Austin Community College: ACC is a regional community college that serves 45,100 credit students and 15,000 non-credit students, offering over 235 associate degree and certificate programs. ([www.austincc.edu](http://www.austincc.edu))

**Technical Schools**
- Academy of Oriental Medicine at Austin: AOMA Graduate School of Integrative Medicine offer Master’s and doctorate degrees in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine that prepare students for careers as skilled, professional practitioners. ([aoma.edu](http://aoma.edu))
- Le Cordon Bleu Austin: LCB Austin is an outgrowth of a chef-apprenticeship program organized by Ronald F. Boston back in 1981. Their culinary programs are designed to help students pursue their passions and prepare them for professional opportunities in the culinary, patisserie and baking, and hospitality industries. ([http://www.chefs.edu/Austin/About-LCB-Austin](http://www.chefs.edu/Austin/About-LCB-Austin))
CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Within states, cities and even in families, each individual has a unique communicative style. Sometimes, when speakers of the same language interact, different communication styles may result in miscommunication. International students have the extra burden of communication in a new language. Fortunately, listeners recognize that a non-native speaker may unintentionally miscommunicate. Most listeners will wait for clarification or repeat a statement to assure understanding. Although there is not one “USA communication style”, certain generalizations can be made. Understanding these generalizations will help the international student be better prepared for interaction with new friends and acquaintances in the US.

Small Talk
In casual conversation, often called “small talk”, Americans politely converse about unimportant or uncontroversial matters such as the weather, sports, jobs, mutual acquaintances, and past experiences, especially those they have in common with their conversation partners. Most American parents encourage their children to avoid discussing “controversial topics” like politics or religion. Personal topics like sex and body functions are “small talk taboos”. If you announce in a “small talk environment” that your stomach hurts and you’ve had bowel problems for days, you’ll quickly notice an uncomfortable silence descend on the conversation as the listeners try to figure out the best way to respond to such an unexpected comment. So, what are “small talk environments”?

- A dinner party in a private home or restaurant.
- Any business or office gathering for socializing
- A collection of students waiting for class to begin.
- A quick, verbal action between work colleagues, students or students and teachers.
- Any sort of festive gathering.
Here is a classic small talk scenario:

Susan: Hi Jim. Did you have a good weekend?
Jim: Sure did, Susan. What about you?
Susan: Me? I took advantage of the beautiful weather to walk Town Lake Trail. Did you get out in the sunshine?
Jim: Sure did. I went with friends to Barton Springs Pool.
Susan: Lucky you. Well, I'll see you later at the staff meeting.
Jim: Sure thing, see you then.

By contrast, people in some other cultures may have been taught to believe that politics and/or religion are good conversation topics. Or, they may have different ideas about what topics are too "personal" to discuss with others. Our suggestion is that you listen to the conversation around you, and follow that lead.

**Verbal Interaction**

People from other countries may be more accustomed to speaking and listening for longer periods of time when they are in conversation. They may also be accustomed to more ritual interchanges (about the health of family members, for example) than Americans. They may enjoy arguments, even vigorous arguments, of a kind that Americans are likely to find unsettling. Keep the following in mind when talking to Americans.

**Share the Conversation**

In a typical conversation between Americans, no one talks for a very long time. Participants in conversations “take turns” frequently, usually after the speaker has spoken only a few sentences.

**Avoid Heated Responses**

Americans prefer to avoid arguments. If an argument is unavoidable, they prefer it to be restrained, carried on in a normal conversational tone and volume. Shouting and expressing anger is never acceptable – if you want a conversation to continue.

**Use Minimal Ritual Expressions**

Americans rarely incorporate extended “ritual” conversational exchanges. Rather, there are a few common conversation openers and closers that are used often such as:

- “How are you?”
- “Fine, thank you, how are you?”
- “Fine.”
- “It was very nice to meet you.”
- “I hope to see you again.”

Americans do not generally expect very much personal involvement from conversational partners. “Small talk” – without long silences, which cause uneasiness – is enough to keep the conversation going smoothly.

It is only with very close friends, or with complete strangers whom they do not expect to see again, that Americans generally open up to discuss personal topics.
Adjusting to a New Culture
Imagine being dropped into a foreign place where your English might not serve you as well as you might have expected, the people dress and act differently, the food is completely different than what you are used to, and you know no one. Sound a bit disconcerting? Perhaps you have already experienced this! Don’t fret! This is a phenomenon known as culture shock, and it’s completely normal when you move to a new country. Always remember...when you travel, a foreign country is not designed to make you comfortable. It is designed to make its own people comfortable.

What is culture shock?
Culture shock is a syndrome brought on by the stress that results from the loss of all the familiar signs, symbols and surroundings that we have grown up with and taken for granted when we are plunged into a totally unfamiliar environment. We are like fish out of water. Culture shock is something that may be experienced by all travelers, though it is most significant in those who spend a longer time away from home. Everyone experiences it differently and not always to same extent.

It is important to be aware of the existence of culture shock and to recognize that it a natural process through which many people pass. Simply realizing that culture shock may occur will make your adjustment to a life abroad a bit easier. Take time to acclimatize to your surroundings. Keep in touch with family and friends back home but also make a conscious effort to develop a social life in Austin. Taking these steps will allow you to transition into a culture more easily.