

Office of Education Abroad

Handbook for Students Going Abroad

OHIO
UNIVERSITY

Center for International Studies

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Dear Bobcat,

Congratulations on your decision to go abroad! This decision will have a positive impact on your life -- not only academically, but also personally and professionally.

The next step is to prepare for your journey. We encourage you to begin this process today! The student handbook that follows provides a lot of useful information designed to help you prepare for the unique experience that awaits you. It will guide you through the steps to a successful experience abroad. Read through it carefully and pay attention to policies and procedures.

If you have questions along the way, feel free to contact the Office of Education Abroad. You can stop by the office in 185 Lindley Hall, [email](#) us or call us at 740.593.4583. Contact information for specific staff members is below.

We wish you an enriching, productive, and memorable experience abroad!

Sincerely,

The Office of Education Abroad Staff

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

FOR OHIO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Student code of conduct

Ohio University students are subject to the Ohio University Student Code of Conduct at all times while they are abroad. Students violating any aspect of the Student Code of Conduct can be removed from a study abroad program and referred to University Judiciaries. A copy of the Student Code of Conduct is available [online](#).

Forms and Paperwork

The list of paperwork and required forms for various types of international experiences is available [online](#). Your director or program coordinator may have additional paperwork for you to complete.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN OHIO UNIVERSITY STUDENT ABROAD

Educating yourself

- Familiarize yourself with all program-specific expectations (particularly academic objectives and policies, daily routine of program, required excursions, and free travel time).
- Research your host country and other countries you will visit. Learn the local customs and laws. If you break a local law and are subsequently arrested, neither Ohio University nor the US Government can get you out of jail.
- The Lonely Planet and Rough Guide series are two great resources for information. These provide information about the local area, point out important or unusual laws, and give safety and emergency response tips.
- Online newspapers, literature and film are other great sources of information about your host country.

Withdrawing from your Ohio University study abroad or exchange program

If you need to withdraw from an Ohio University program for *any* reason, contact the OEA immediately.

If you are withdrawing for medical reasons, you must provide the OEA with a statement from a medical doctor certifying that you must withdraw for medical reasons. The Office of Education Abroad will provide refunds of all recoverable costs whenever possible in the case of certified medical reasons but cannot guarantee any refund in advance.

If you withdraw from the program after your acceptance for any reason that is not medically certified, notify the faculty director or program coordinator and OEA in writing immediately. You will be held responsible for any non-refundable costs, including the program deposit, \$150 administrative fee, and other expenses paid on your behalf. (Please see the **Conditions of Participation** in your [online application](#) for more details.)

Contact information

It is your responsibility to update the Office of Education Abroad with any changes to your contact information while living in Ohio or abroad.

Update your local address with Ohio University to ensure that your billing and registration information go to a parent or responsible friend who will take care of your affairs. See the Communications section for details.

Fee payment to Ohio University

You can view your student eBill anytime [online](#). The eBill details the amount due and due date. You can access your eAccount with your Oak ID and password at the Bursar's office [webpage](#). You can also set up guest access to your account for your parents.

You must pay all charges by the due date indicated on the eBill statement. Information about the eBill, the Ohio University Monthly Payment Plan, and other payment methods is available [online](#) or by calling the Office of the Bursar at 740-593-4130.

Before departure, verify that your Ohio University student account is free of debts or obligations such as parking and library fines. It is important to do this, as you will not be permitted to register while abroad or upon your return until all holds are removed.

Financial aid

Please visit our [funding page](#) for information on using your financial aid abroad, scholarships and grants for international study, and tips on funding your experience.

Pre-departure orientations

The OEA offers pre-departure orientation sessions each quarter for all Ohio University students studying abroad. The Bobcats Abroad orientation session is mandatory and provides valuable information about safety and health issues, student conduct guidelines, perceptions of Americans abroad, and pre-departure tips. Orientation dates and times will be e-mailed to you.

Travel documents for US citizens

Passports – Visit the U.S. Department of State website for information on obtaining a passport and other travel documents you may need for your program. If you are a US citizen and have not already applied for your passport, do so immediately. The average wait time for a passport is 4 - 6 weeks.

Visas and Residence Permits - Some countries require you to obtain a visa to legally enter and reside in the country; others require residence permits once you arrive. Each country sets specific visa standards and application processes. If you are a US citizen, your faculty director or program coordinator will let you know if you need a visa for your program and will provide details on how to apply; you can also visit the State Department's [website](#) for more information. You will need a passport to apply for a visa. We suggest you apply for a passport when you are applying to a program, no less than 4 months before departure. Expect to pay a visa application fee, and in some cases medical forms may be required with the visa application.

Travel documents for non-US citizens

As a non-US citizen you may require a visa in order to enter your host country as a student. It is your responsibility to determine whether or not you need a visa.

A good place to start your research is the Visas or Consular Affairs/Services section or Consular Division of the official website for the Embassy of *HOST COUNTRY NAME* in the United States. You'll find the official website for the embassy using this [search engine](#).

Some countries use their US consulates to handle visa services. You'll find links to these consulates on the main Embassy website.

If you can't find information on student visas for non-US citizens on the website of the Embassy in the United States, use the search engine to find the website of the Embassy (for the country you're going to) in your home country.

If you do require a visa it is your responsibility to follow the appropriate application procedures to obtain the visa before the start of the study abroad program.

If you accept nomination to this study abroad program and then fail to obtain the necessary visa you will be deemed to have withdrawn yourself from the program, and may be held responsible for the full program costs.

You are also responsible for ensuring that you have the necessary paperwork to re-enter the USA at the end of the program. You will need to meet with an advisor in International Student and Faculty Services prior to accepting a nomination to an Ohio University program to discuss travel documents and how to maintain your F-1 status during your study abroad program.

Please [email](#) the Office of Education Abroad if you have any questions about the visa process.

International travel

Some programs require you to make your own travel arrangements; others offer a group flight for participants. If you are making your own travel arrangements, it is a good idea to do some comparison shopping before purchasing an airline ticket. Here is a checklist to have in mind:

Confirm the dates of your trip with your program coordinator.

Read the fine print of the ticket restrictions before purchasing (any fees for changing tickets, the ability to change departure dates, cancellation policies, etc.)

If you're flying internationally, make sure to arrive at the airport no less than 2 hours before the flight.

On-campus housing at Ohio University

Study abroad participants are released from their Ohio University housing contracts for the duration of their study abroad. OEA will notify the Housing Office of all study abroad participants each quarter. If you are currently living in on-campus housing:

- Let your RA know that you will be studying abroad next quarter.
- Vacate your room completely at the end of the quarter and leave it clean.
- When leaving, officially check out of your room with your RA.

NOTE: You will not be billed for your room during the quarter(s) you are studying abroad only if you check out of your room with your RA.

Students who want to live in on-campus housing upon their return to Athens should contact the Housing Office (60 Chubb, (740) 593-4090, housing@ohio.edu) to request a housing application and discuss housing options prior to studying abroad. The Housing Office will do everything they can to accommodate your preferences. Be aware, however, that they cannot guarantee that you will be able to return to your previous room, building, or green assignment.

Pre-registration while abroad

Before you leave for your program, speak to your academic advisor about the courses you wish to take when you return. To pre-register for courses from abroad:

1. Email saregistration@ohio.edu no sooner than 1 week prior to the beginning of the pre-registration period to request your pre-registration starting time and current Registration Access Code (RAC). Pre-

registration dates are available [online](#). Click on either Registration Access Schedule or Academic Calendar. In the email, provide your name, birth date, and PID number (available on your DARS report). You can access your DARS [online](#). You may want to carry one with you if you will not have consistent access to a computer.

2. Check your OAK e-mail account for your RAC and pre-registration time/date. You can access your OU e-mail account [online](#).
3. Visit the Registrar's [homepage](#) to access the schedule of classes, web registration hours, and to register for classes. After you register, you can view and print your class schedule from the Registrar's [homepage](#).

NOTE: If you are unable to access a computer overseas and/or need assistance with registration, contact Lori Lammert, Office of Education Abroad, one month prior to the starting date for pre-registration, at (740) 593-4583, by fax at (740) 593-9758, or by email at lammert@ohio.edu.

Ohio University graduation

Candidates for graduation must apply and pay the application fee by the appropriate deadline date. Graduation applications and deadlines can be found on the Office of the Registrar [webpage](#). If you need assistance with the on-line graduation application, please contact the Registrar's Office at graduation@ohio.edu or 740-593-4196.

If you are receiving transfer credit for your program, consult with your college of enrollment about your study abroad plans, the college's graduation requirements, and the date by which your college will need to receive your overseas transcript. OEA recommends that you also inform your program coordinator or provider about your intentions to graduate.

If you are a candidate for spring quarter graduation, or if you have earned your degree during the preceding summer, fall, or winter quarters, you are eligible to attend the commencement ceremony held in Athens each spring quarter.

Absentee voting

Absentee voting allows you to cast a vote from overseas. To vote overseas, request an absentee ballot as early as possible prior to departure in order to meet the registration deadline for your county. You can request an absentee ballot (and register if you haven't already) at the sites below, or at your county Bureau of Elections:

Ohio Residents:

General information on [absentee voting](#).

Voting from overseas.

Non-Ohio Residents:

- [Links](#) to information for other states

Taxes

If you are planning to be overseas between January and April 15 and you file your own taxes, you may request an extension on the deadline for filing your income tax. The extension usually is until June 15. Should you need additional assistance, contact the [US Consulate or Embassy](#) in your host country for information on your tax obligations.

Power of attorney

If your signature will be needed for any official or legal documents during your absence, you may want to make arrangements for a Power of Attorney, an appropriate person to act on your behalf. This can be done by contacting a notary public or an attorney.

Paying bills while abroad

If you will be responsible for any bills while abroad, consider pre-paying your utilities or adding a parent to your checking account so they can pay bills for you. You may be able to pay some bills online. Be aware that some students have reported problems accessing these websites abroad, and some countries limit access to foreign sites. Some cell phone companies will allow you to put your account on hold for the time you are abroad, usually up to 3-6 months, for a small fee

Packing

How much and what you pack will depend a great deal on the location and duration of your study abroad program. Check with your faculty director or program coordinator for specific requirements or needs for your program.

Things to consider when packing:

- Limit your luggage. Most airlines allow two pieces of checked luggage and one carry-on, and most airlines charge a fee for any checked luggage.
- Pack lightly. Airlines usually restrict weight to two 50-pound bags. Do not pack more luggage than you can manage on your own.
- Pack comfortable and culturally appropriate clothing and shoes.
- Research the climate of your destination and pack accordingly.
- Include a backpack or messenger bag that can be used for shorter trips - this can be packed and stored in a checked piece of luggage during your flight overseas.
- Avoid taking jewelry, items of value, or anything you do not want to lose.
- Take several travel packages of facial tissues – they will come in handy if you find a poorly-equipped toilet.
- Use Ziploc Baggies to pack shampoo and other liquids that could spill in your luggage.
- Include adapter plugs and/or voltage converter for electric appliances such as hairdryers and razors. Electrical service is not identical throughout the world.
- Wear a money belt while traveling for safekeeping of your passport, cash, credit cards, and other important documents.
- Carry a small first aid kit containing the following items: bandages, adhesive tape, gauze, sterile cleansers, antibacterial ointment, pain reliever/fever reducer, and anti-diarrhea medicine.

In your carry-on luggage and money belt, OEA recommends that you pack the following items:

- Passport
- Visa / Residence Permit (if necessary for your country)
- Airline tickets or E-ticket confirmation number
- Cash (enough to get you through the first couple of days, but not so much that it would ruin your trip if you lost it).
- Health Insurance card
- Emergency card (available from the OEA)
- Prescription medication in original packaging
- One or two changes of clothes (in case your luggage is delayed)
- Camera
- Laptop computer

NOTE: Airlines limit the amount of liquids you can carry-on and restrict the packaging of those liquids. Please check www.tsa.gov for additional information.

Do not pack any items in your carry-on luggage that could be viewed as a weapon. Such items include, but are not limited to, aerosol cans, knives or pocketknives, lighters, nail files, razors, and scissors. A detail list of airline-prohibited items can be found [online](#).

Important Documents

We recommend that you make several photocopies of the following documents. Carry the originals in your carry-on and a set of copies in your checked luggage, and leave a set of copies with your family or a friend who you can contact in an emergency.

- Passport / Visas / Residence Permits
- Airline Tickets or E-Ticket confirmation number
- ATM / Credit Cards (front and back)
- Health Insurance Card / Information
- Driver's License
- Prescriptions

Laptop computers

- Talk to your faculty director or program coordinator about whether it is necessary or advisable to take your laptop.
- Make sure you pack an adapter (most laptops are already equipped with voltage converters) for local electric outlets.
- Check if your laptop has its own multi-voltage transformer/converter.
- Insure your laptop – they are highly attractive theft items. It may be covered under homeowners, rental, or certain travel insurance policies.
- Check the customs requirements for taking a laptop into the country.
- Travel with your computer as a carry-on.

Prescription medication

- Take enough medication to last for the duration of your trip.
- Carry all medications in your carry-on luggage.
- Keep medications in original labeled containers with your name, your physician's name, and the generic name of the medication. It may be helpful to write a list of this information as well.
- Ask your pharmacist for a copy of the original prescriptions for all medications.
- Bring an extra pair of eyeglasses and contact lenses as well as the prescriptions.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

General safety precautions

Ohio University will work to protect your health and safety while abroad, but you must take responsibility for the results of your decisions, choices, and behavior. Prior to departure, carefully read this handbook and all information that is presented to you by your faculty director or program coordinator, attend all required orientations, and research your host country. The Office of Education Abroad monitors several websites and listservs, such as the US State Department Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings, to keep updated on health and safety issues abroad. These are available [online](#).

Immunizations

Keeping yourself in good health is of great importance when studying overseas. Before departure:

- Gather health information and find out what immunizations are required or recommended for your host country at the Center for Disease Control [website](#).
- Consult your family physician or a travel health professional about immunizations. Travel Immunizations can be administered to students at the Hudson Health Center. Call (740)593-4747 for an appointment.
- Schedule your appointment well in advance of your departure as it takes 2-4 weeks for some antibodies to activate and some immunizations require multiple shots. Fees vary by immunization.

Sharing health information

If you are studying abroad on an Ohio University-sponsored study abroad or exchange program, you have submitted your health information with your application form. The purpose of the health information section is to help Ohio University and the OEA be of maximum assistance should you need medical assistance during your study abroad. Mild physical and psychological disorders can become serious under the stresses of a new environment. It is important that the program administrators be made aware of any medical or emotional problems, past or current, that might affect you in a foreign study context.

The information provided will remain confidential and will be shared with the program staff, faculty, or appropriate professionals only if pertinent to your well-being. Please be sure to notify your program coordinator if your health information has changed since you applied to your program.

Prescriptions

Please see Packing section.

HTH Worldwide Health insurance

As a participant of a study abroad program, you are required to enroll in a supplemental health insurance plan through HTH Worldwide Insurance Services prior to departure. If you are participating on an OU-program, the cost of this insurance is included in your program fee and you will be enrolled for the program dates. If you are participating in an exchange, OIC, affiliate, or Non-OU program, you are responsible for the cost of this reasonably –priced insurance. Contact the Office of Education Abroad at 740.593.4583 to get a quote for the specific dates you will be traveling.

HTH has an extensive network of providers around the world, and online services to help you plan for medical care before you leave. Once enrolled, you will receive a description of HTH benefits and covered medical expenses. In addition, you will receive an insurance card prior to your departure. Please carry this insurance card with you at all times while you are overseas.

Once enrolled with HTH, you will be assigned a personal ID number (Certificate Number). This number will be on your ID card and may also be accessed through your advisor. Upon receipt of this number, please log on to the HTH [website](#) to register and have access to the HTH tools, services, and benefit information. You will need to enter your personal HTH Worldwide ID number to register at this website.

Preparing for medical emergencies abroad

While abroad, you may become sick or encounter a medical emergency, anything from getting a cold to a serious accident. You will be covered by HTH Insurance while abroad, and their resources can help you locate medical experts in your region.

The following are ways that you can prepare for medical problems before you leave:

- Research the medical conditions in your host country– what immunizations, if any, are required? Are there any special considerations such as extreme heat or cold? You can learn more at the Center for Disease Control’s [website](#).
- Think about any concerns you have about your physical and mental health, and make sure that you are comfortable with the decision to study abroad. You can speak with a nurse or doctor at Hudson Health Center or meet with a counselor at OHIO’s [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (740-593-1616). In any case, you should give your faculty director or program coordinator all necessary information to help you plan a safe experience.
- Once you are enrolled in HTH insurance, [log on](#) to register and have access to the HTH tools, services, and benefit information. HTH has resources on medical care available abroad, tips on preparing for medical emergencies, and you can even find specific providers and pharmacies before you leave the US.

- ❑ If you take any medications regularly, such as for allergies, blood pressure, or depression, continue to take them as prescribed unless told otherwise by your physician. See information on prescriptions above.
- ❑ Take a First Aid Kit.
- ❑ Visit the dentist and get a medical checkup before you leave; you may be able to avoid a serious condition while abroad.
- ❑ Always carry your HTH Insurance card and emergency contact card, available from the OEA or your program director. Be sure the emergency telephone number, HTH contact number, and local hospital address are listed.

Preparing for non-medical emergencies

Just as there is a range of serious medical issues that can arise while abroad, there can be many types of non-medical emergencies, ranging from pick pocketing and losing a passport to political crises and natural disasters.

Your faculty director or program coordinator knows your destination and its hazards well. They will give you specific advice on dangerous neighborhoods and risky behaviors to avoid. Ohio University and its representatives have the authority to establish rules of conduct necessary for the operation of the program during the entire period of the program, as outlined in the Conditions of Participation you signed when applying to study abroad. If you are on a non-Ohio University program check your provider's student conduct policy for specific information.

As in a medical emergency, keeping calm and knowing the resources available will make a big difference. The following tips will help prepare you for emergencies:

- ❑ Know the possible risks in a country. [Department of State](#) Consular Information Sheets are available on every country.
- ❑ Remain aware of your surroundings at all times.
- ❑ Remain in control of your actions and aware of the effects of alcohol and other drugs on your condition.
- ❑ Use common sense, avoiding dangerous behaviors such as walking alone after dark or getting into a car with strangers.
- ❑ Avoid all political protests, even if they seem peaceful. They may turn violent at any time, and your status as a visitor does not necessarily keep you safe.
- ❑ Read the Department of State's ["Tips for Traveling Abroad"](#)
- ❑ Know what to do and where to go in the event of an emergency. Review the Center for Global Education's ["Personal Emergency Action Plan"](#).
- ❑ Always carry your HTH Insurance card and emergency contact card, available from the OEA or your program director. Be sure the emergency telephone number, HTH contact number, and local hospital are listed.

While abroad, you are subject to the same laws and rules as a citizen of the host country. It is important to know that the US Embassy has only limited services if you are arrested; they can only assure that you receive due process as defined by the host country, arrange for legal aid, and help your family in the US understand the situation.

Sexual health

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), the HIV virus, and Hepatitis B are major considerations abroad. Rules about using common sense and condoms apply abroad as well. It is a good idea to take condoms with you when you leave the US. Latex condoms can be hard to find overseas, and those you can purchase in other countries may not be of the same quality as in the US.

Sexual assault and rape are further risks while abroad.

- In some cultures, saying no is considered flirting, in which case a firmer, but polite, response may be necessary.

- Discuss in advance how to respond to different types of advances with your faculty director, program coordinator, and if appropriate your host family. If the situation reaches a point where you are uncomfortable, you should get out of it immediately without worrying about offending someone in the host culture.
- Stay with people you know whenever possible, especially after dark. Students often feel a sense of security around other Americans in a foreign setting, but sexual assaults also occur between Americans abroad.
- Rohypnol, the 'date rape' drug is legal in some countries. Be wary of accepting drinks from others.
- If you are the victim of sexual assault or rape, you need to be fully aware of your choices. Talk to someone you trust, such as a director, program coordinator, or other contact in the host country. You can take advantage of resources at Ohio University such as [Counseling and Psychological Services](#). Most importantly seek help and feel comfortable with the choices you make.

Alcohol and drugs

One of the best ways to protect yourself abroad is to avoid excessive drinking. If you drink, do so in moderation. Drunkenness can be culturally offensive in your host country. Moreover, drinking can impair your judgment when you need to be alert and aware, such as when finding your way home late at night.

Drugs, like alcohol, can cloud your judgment when you need it most. You are responsible for knowing both your study abroad program's policy on drug use and your host country's drug laws. If you are on an Ohio University program, drug use is forbidden at all times and will result in dismissal from the program. Criminal penalties for drug use vary by country and can be very severe if you violate local drug laws. If you are arrested, you are not eligible for Ohio University or US legal protection and will be held to the laws of your host country.

COMMUNICATION

Changing your mailing address with Ohio University

Before leaving, verify your billing and permanent addresses with Ohio University. You may update your address and/or phone number [online](#). You can also update your information by e-mailing your new address information to address@ohio.edu (include your PID number and your name in the e-mail request) or by completing a Change of Address Form. Deposit the form in the address deposit box on the first floor of Chubb Hall or turn it in to any of the Registrar Services Windows.

E-mail communication

While you are overseas, Ohio University will communicate important university information, such as your pre-registration time and RAC code, to your Oak e-mail account. If you have never activated your Ohio University e-mail account, do so before you leave by visiting Ohio IT [online](#). You can access your university e-mail account internationally through the Internet by using [Webmail](#).

If you plan to forward your Oak e-mail to a non-University account, please be aware that many internet-based e-mail providers (i.e.: Hotmail, Yahoo) do not handle forwarded e-mail very well. The only way to guarantee that important University-related messages, including grade reports and course schedules, reach you is to leave your Oak account unforwarded and regularly check your e-mail using [Webmail](#).

Ohio University Information Technology
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Communicating from Overseas

International calling cards

Calling cards are a convenient option for calling home from your host country. Wait until you arrive in your host country before purchasing a calling card to ensure that it will work in your destination. You could also consult a guidebook or your program sponsor abroad for advice about which type of calling card will fit your needs.

You will need to adapt to a new telephone system while abroad, as phone usage varies from country to country. To call the US from abroad, you will dial 001 (US country code) before the phone number.

Internet communication

Many online instant messaging programs (e.g. Gmail) now offer voice options. You can talk to your friends or family on the computer (and view them with webcams), often for free. Some services do not require that the other party have a computer at all. SKYPE offers cell phone, landline, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) technologies, and international calls at very low rates. For more information visit their [website](#).

Email is one of the easiest ways to keep in touch. Although internet access is common in many areas of the world, you may not have as much access as you're used to at home. Click [here](#) to locate Internet cafés in your host country.

Mailing from overseas

When mailing packages to and from the U.S. from your host country, be sure to allow additional time for your mail to arrive. If you are sending a package, be aware that sending packages is costly and often impractical. Packages mailed overseas can be delayed by customs or internal bureaucracy. Package contents may also be subject to damage or theft during transit. Consider these risks before mailing a package, or instructing your family to do so.

International calling cards

One economical way to communicate from overseas to the US is through the use of an international calling card, available through companies like AT&T, Sprint, MCI, or a local company. The phone company you choose will send you an international calling card, billing instructions, and a list of country toll-free numbers for your particular phone service. Make sure to obtain the toll-free number for all of the countries you plan to visit before leaving for your trip.

Purchase phone cards in the host country

You can buy country-specific phone cards at airports, postal offices, newspaper stands, some hotels, and train stations. These pre-paid cards will use the equivalent to a 1-800 number. Fees will vary based on the card and where you are calling from.

Use a mobile phone

Although local calls may be inexpensive, international calls may have a high cost. You may be able to rent a cell phone for your destination. Two sites that offer this service are [Planetfone](#) and [International Cellular](#). If you have an International Student Identification Card, you are eligible for [discounts](#) on phones.

Buy a SIM chip for your phone

If you own a multi-ban GSM phone, you should be able to buy a SIM chip for your destination. Check with your cell phone provider for details.

MONEY AND CREDIT CARDS

The amount of money to take depends on your program length, destination, and personal spending habits. Here are some general recommendations in regards to money matters:

Safety with money

No matter what type of money you take with you overseas, be careful. Use caution while using public transportation or in crowded areas where pick pocketing may be prevalent. A money belt worn inside your

clothing or a money pouch around your neck is often recommended for safekeeping your emergency card, credit cards, and travelers checks or cash.

How to exchange money

You can exchange cash and traveler's checks overseas at banks, airports, railroad stations, large hotels, some tourist information centers, and travel agencies. Every time you exchange money, expect to pay a commission or fee. Typically you will need your passport as your personal identification. As exchange rates fluctuate daily, try to keep up with current rates to get the most of your money. Always ask what the fee is to exchange money at a particular establishment. It is not possible to exchange coins.

Cash

It is helpful to carry some US cash to exchange easily as needed. It is also advisable to obtain some foreign currency before departure to use for buses, taxis, telephone calls, meals, and tips upon arrival. Check with local banks to see if you can obtain foreign currency before you leave or order on-line. Personal checks drawn from a US bank account are virtually impossible to cash overseas due to the long amount of time it takes an overseas bank to clear the check.

Traveler's checks

Traveler's checks are a safe way to carry cash overseas, as it has a serial number and is easily replaced if stolen or lost. You can purchase traveler's checks from a variety of internationally recognized sources such as AAA, American Express, Bank of America, Thomas Cook, and Visa. American Express is popular due to its numerous overseas offices. Traveler's checks can be obtained at most banks in the US for a commission charge and can be purchased in various denominations and currencies. Traveler's checks can be cashed at overseas banks, money exchange bureaus, or at the overseas office of the agency which issued the checks.

ATM/debit cards

ATM cards with a Cirrus or Plus designation can often be used to obtain foreign currency from ATM machines abroad. Prior to departure, contact your bank to let them know that you will be taking your card abroad. Check with them to see if it is possible to use your ATM in your host country, if there are any added fees for withdrawing money overseas, and to make sure your numerical PIN number will work abroad. CAUTION - Although ATM cards are very advantageous, sometimes ATM cards just don't work overseas or get "eaten" by an ATM machine; make sure you have other ways of obtaining money.

Credit cards

Most major US credit cards can be used worldwide and are extremely valuable in a financial emergency. If you plan on doing additional travel, you may need a credit card to book hotels or hostels. It is highly advisable to obtain a major credit card before studying abroad. The most commonly accepted credit cards are Visa and Mastercard. Credit cards should be in your own name as given on your passport. Before you go abroad, contact your credit card company to let them know that you will be taking your card abroad. Be sure to record your credit card number and the information on your emergency card in a separate place in case your card is lost or stolen. Credit card use is rare in some countries outside of tourist areas. For information on ATM machines worldwide, visit [Visa](#) or [Mastercard](#).

CROSS-CULTURAL PREPARATION

This section deals with the cross-cultural experience and provides tools for living in a different culture, with tips to help you become a truly global citizen. When you study abroad, you are more than simply taking classes. You are also living in a new place, meeting new people, and learning how to adapt to new surroundings. You will be learning about yourself and all the wonderful aspects of a new culture. You will find yourself in situations where you may not understand what is happening around you, even if everyone is speaking English. This is part of the learning process. By showing that you understand cultural differences and respect the values of the host culture, you will show that Americans are excellent global citizens.

Talking about the host culture

Generalizations are useful tools in talking about the large ideas represented in a culture; however, it is important to remember that a society is made up of individuals who differ in many ways. Just as stereotypes of Americans do not apply to all US citizens, generalizations about another culture are not representative of each member of that culture. What's more, when observing the actions of an individual in the host culture, it is important not to assume that your observations apply to all members of the culture; they could be unique to the individual.

Knowing your culture

Just as you bring along clothes, a camera, and other personal items for your overseas study experience, you also carry cultural baggage. Presumptions, worldviews, values, and beliefs are an integral part of you and shape your interpretation of events in the new culture. The more you know about your own personal values and culture, the better prepared you will be to see and understand cultural differences that you encounter abroad.

Below is a description of some of the values that Americans hold and descriptions of contrasting values you may encounter in other countries. The chart lists generalizations and may not apply to individuals, and suggests ways that these values are reflected in actions, behaviors, and speech. These generalizations are often not a case of straightforward differences, and you may feel you fall somewhere between them. How do you feel about these generalizations? Do they apply to you? How do you differ from this description?

U.S. Majority Values

Individualism and Independence: People are seen as separate individuals, not group members. Independent thinking, competition, and achievement is values. Importance is placed on taking care of oneself before the community as a whole. Dress is seen as an expression of one's identity and personal style.

Personal Determination: People can and should control nature, their environment, and their own destiny. With resources, opportunities, and motivation, anyone can become anything they want.

Privacy Time: Alone, personal space, and respect for personal possessions is important.

Change: Change is positive and indicates progress, growth, and improvement.

Efficiency: Hard work is valued, as a means to achieving goals and as part of being a "productive member of society." Not procrastinating, working quickly and efficiently, and meeting high quality standards are signs of a good worker.

Materialism: Material goods are seen as just rewards of hard work and a sign of success.

Equality/Egalitarianism, Informality: People have equal opportunities; people are important as individuals, not the family they come from. To be formal is to show superiority and arrogance. It is often acceptable to address a boss by his or her first name, and in some situations to socialize with superiors.

Directness, Openness, Honesty: One can only trust people who "look you in the eye" and "tell it like it is." Interpersonal conflicts should be discussed directly. Direct and explicit expression of feelings and requests are common.

Rational, Scientific Thinking: The most productive thinking is linear, cause and effect, and rational in nature. It is based on concrete evidence and facts.

Contrasting Worldview

Collectivism, Group Membership, Dependence: It is proper to remain dependent upon the family and group; the group must be successful, and no one person's achievement should be praised above others. Membership in the group defines personal identity. Dress reflects attitudes toward and respect for society.

Destiny: Life happens; destiny is pre-determined; people must accept what comes their way. Trying to change the way things are can be futile.

Collectivism: Many cultures have no word for "privacy." Possessions are shared and spending time together is important.

Tradition: Change should be resisted unless there is an obvious good to be gained from abandoning tradition.

Relationships: Value is placed on the relationships at work and completing tasks is less important. Time is not money.

Spirituality: Spiritual growth is more important than amassing wealth. Material possessions can be a sign of poor spiritual health and even disruptive to society.

Hierarchy and Rank, Formality: Society is better organized if there is rank, status, and hierarchy. The professor has all the answers. Informality can be intrusive and can result in a loss of respect for a superior. Referring to superiors without proper titles is a sign of disrespect. A strict separation between work and personal life is maintained.

Indirect Questioning: Direct questioning is rude and intrusive. Do not look a stranger in the eye. Do not disagree in explicit terms. It is assumed that the listener can infer background information. Intermediaries are often necessary to resolve conflict.

Intuitive Thinking: Intuitive, creative thinking is most highly valued. Holistic approach includes mind, body, spirit; seen and unseen elements.

Adapted from: Dr. L. Robert Kohls' "Survival Kit for Overseas Living" and J. Daniel Hess' "The Whole World Guide to Culture Learning".

Knowing Ohio University, Ohio, and the US

The friends you make overseas will appreciate learning about your home. Here are some online resources to learn more about Ohio, the university, and more.

- Ohio University:
 - [Main page](#)
 - [Admissions Facts](#)
- Ohio:
 - [Discover Ohio](#)
 - Ohio [Facts](#)
 - You know you're from Ohio [if...](#)
- [Fun Facts](#)
- United States:
 - CIA World [Factbook](#)
 - United States [Department of State](#)
 - Fun [US facts](#)

Journaling

One of the best ways to prepare and reflect on your experience is by keeping a journal. With a journal you can record your first impressions of the host country, reflect on what you're learning about the culture and how you are learning the language, and gauge ways in which you have changed while abroad. At the end of your experience, reading and writing in your journal can be essential for reflecting on and sharing your experiences. Keeping an online blog is a great way to journal, and it allows your family and friends to read about your experiences.

Start chronicling your experiences now. List your expectations, concerns, goals, etc. Keep writing regularly as you experience new things and gain new insights.

Communicating across cultures

Communicating with people from your host culture can be both frustrating and rewarding, even when the language of your host country is English. Each culture has different communication styles. Non-verbal behavior, such as gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, eye contact, and posture, has different meaning in different cultures – and even in different situations in a culture.

Communication is also affected by the general values of a culture. The values listed in the US Majority Values chart manifest themselves in communication styles. For example, because Americans highly respect privacy you may be put off by your host sisters hanging out in your room. With US ideals of equality and informality, Americans often

inquire about the family and private lives of superiors, and rarely use titles and terms of respect in everyday situations. These could be offensive behaviors in some cultures.

If you find yourself in a situation that could result in miscommunication:

- Slow down. Take the time to think about reasons for the other person's behavior. Be aware that context may affect behavior. For example, some behaviors may be unacceptable in public, but are okay in private.
- Try to give the other person the benefit of the doubt. Assume that he or she did not intend to upset you until you are certain of what was really meant.
- Check with the other person to see if you have understood correctly before you act on your assumptions. Make sure that he or she has understood you correctly.
- Be aware that you may need to follow the other person's communication rules to be understood.
- Be very polite. Try your best not to embarrass the other person.

Tips for individualists on interacting with collectivists:

The US is one of the most individualistic countries in the world. If you are going to a collectivistic country, such as most countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and some in Europe, the following suggestions can help you increase your chances of communicating successfully.

- Learn to pay attention to group memberships. Be aware that people's behavior is influenced by the familial, social, and work groups to which they belong.
- When you want people to do something, you may be more persuasive if you can demonstrate the benefit to the groups to which they belong.
- Recognize that people are likely to feel uncomfortable in competitive situations. Try to emphasize harmony and cooperation, help people save face, and avoid confrontation.
- If you have to criticize someone, do it in private than in public. Be careful in how you criticize, as people are likely to take it personally. Try to make positive statements first, and then criticize.
- Cultivate long-term relationships, as people tend to prefer dealing with old friends rather than new acquaintances. Be patient – getting to know someone might take much longer than you think it should. People may want to spend a lot of time with you, while you may feel they are infringing on your right to be alone. Try to be open-minded and remember that long-term relationships will be very important to them and to your experience.
- Know that status plays a large role in relationships. People may base status on who you are, rather than what you have accomplished. Be prepared to answer personal questions that can help others determine your status. Try to learn the norms for appropriate ways to behave around those of higher and lower status.
- Realize that authority figures tend to have more power and are held less accountable than authority figures in the United States. You may encounter difficulties if you try to challenge a professor, boss, etc. – even on small issues.
- Realize that what you consider to be acceptable conversation topics may not be considered acceptable to others, and vice-versa. For example, people may ask about your age and your income. If you don't feel comfortable discussing personal information, be prepared to explain why.
- Avoid discussing topics that may dishonor people and the groups to which they belong. Remember that collectivists are more likely than individualists to present themselves in the best possible light and to give socially desirable answers.

The previous section was adapted from: 'Intercultural Communication Training Workshop for Ohio University Students in Education Abroad Programs'. 2003, prepared by Ingrid Aizicovici, M.A. student in the School of Communication Studies, Ohio University using:

Source: Gallois, C. & Callan, V. J. (1997). "Communication and culture: A guide for practice." Chichester, West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons.

Source: Triandis, H.C., Brislin, R., & Hui, C.H. (1988). Cross-Cultural training across the individualism-collectivism divide. "International Journal of Intercultural Relations," 12(3), 269-289.

Knowing your host culture

How much do you know about your host country and its culture? Although you may not be able to learn everything, here are some questions you should ask yourself. Then, research what you do not know (see hints below).

- How many prominent people in the affairs (politics, athletics, religion, the arts, etc.) of your host country can you name?
- Who are the country's national heroes and heroines?
- Can you recognize the national anthem?
- Are other languages spoken besides the dominant language? What are the social and political implications of language usage?
- What is the predominant religion? Is it a state religion? What other religions are present?
- What is the attitude toward divorce? Extra-marital relations? Plural marriage? Homosexuality?
- What is the attitude toward drinking?
- What are the special privileges of age and/or sex?
- Is the price asked for merchandise fixed or are customers expected to bargain? Does this change in different situations?
- If you are invited to dinner, should you arrive early? On time? Late? If late, how late?
- What foods are most popular and how are they prepared?
- What are the important holidays? How is each observed?
- On what occasions would you present (or accept) gifts? What kind of gifts would you exchange?
- What are the favorite leisure and recreational activities of adults? Of teenagers? What games do children play? What sports are popular?
- What is the normal work schedule?
- How will your financial position and living conditions compare with those of most people living in your home country?
- What kind of local public transportation is available? Do all classes of people use it?
- How are children disciplined at home? At school?
- Is education free? Compulsory?
- In schools, are children segregated by race? By caste or class? By sex?
- Is the most popular media generally friendly in their attitude toward the US?
- What are common home remedies for minor ailments? Can medicines be purchased?
- Where are the important universities in the country?

Researching your experience

Others Who Have Been There

Returned study abroad students can help you with researching details about what to expect. Additionally, you may find students from your host country studying at Ohio University. Ask them about their experiences and how they dealt with the challenges of living in a new place.

Faculty and staff

Your faculty director or program coordinator can be a great help in preparing you for the cultural aspects of your experience. Directors can give you advice based on their experiences and those of past students, and may also suggest books that specifically address cross-cultural concerns between the US and your destination.

OEA

The Office of Education Abroad houses a library with guidebooks and other resources for cross-cultural living. We can also refer you to other information at Ohio University that can help you. Remember that you can contact the OEA by phone or email while you are abroad.

Online

There are several on-line resources that can help you prepare for the cross-cultural experience and learn more about your country.

CIA World [Factbook](#)

Department of State [Consular Information Sheets](#)

Michigan State [Global Access](#)

[Executive Planet](#)

[‘What’s Up with Culture’](#)- information on culture shock, cultural adjustment, and the role of culture in everyday life.

Library resources

Alden Library has a selection of books in the follow series, and your local public library may have more.

- *Culture Shock!* series
- *Passport to ...* series
- Travel Guidebooks – *Lonely Planet & Rough Guides*

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

This section has more information on some specific cultural differences and considerations for certain students. Please see the resource list at the end of this section for websites and further information.

Gender roles abroad

Because the US values equality of opportunity, women and men expect to be treated the same in most situations. However, some cultures have deep-seated traditions of preferential treatment based on gender and other factors. You may notice a higher percentage of men in your classes, particularly in fields dominated by women in the US. You may also notice more men and fewer women out at night, and that leisure activities are different for different genders.

What’s more, the world abounds with stereotypes of American men and women, mainly from Hollywood and news reports from the US. American men are often seen as bold and boisterous; American women are seen as promiscuous. When you are in a situation with others from the host culture, you may find they expect you to live up to these stereotypes. You should be aware of these assumptions, think about how they might affect you, and how you can change them.

Gender roles may play a large role in your experience, particularly if you are traveling to a country with a more traditional culture. American women may feel constrained by the expectations of their host family – they may have earlier curfews, be expected to spend more time at home, and have their clothes critiqued when they leave the house. Men, however, may not notice these constraints and might be expected to act quite the opposite – staying out late and hanging out with the guys. Even in Western cultures, you may notice that men and women act differently than you expect – it may acceptable for men to drink more and date many women, while women are expected to stay faithful and sober.

In many areas of Latin America, Africa, and Southern Europe, women will notice particular attention from men on the street. Publicly, men are expected to react to women; catcalls and whistles are everywhere. In some cultures a young man shows his bravery by approaching an unknown woman, and if that woman is obviously foreign, he will get more respect from his friends. For American women this attention can be uncomfortable or annoying, and each culture has different ways of addressing it. You should try to be patient and watch how local women respond. If, however, you ever feel yourself in danger, get out of the situation and talk to a director, program coordinator, host parent, or instructor about the incident. They can help you learn appropriate responses, decide if you need to file a police report, or become aware of other available resources.

Sexual identity and dating

In some cultures, outward displays of affection are acceptable, while in others they are inappropriate. There may be a difference in behaviors between a city and a rural area. In more traditional cultures, young men and women

may rarely be seen in public together, even if they are engaged. Follow the lead of your friends and family in the host culture, and respect their behaviors and expectations.

LGBT students

Students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender should inform themselves about attitudes towards various sexual orientations in their host country. Just as in the US, you must make a personal decision about when, how, and with whom to discuss your sexuality. Attitudes toward homosexuality and definitions of sexual identity vary greatly from culture to culture. You might want to avoid disclosing your sexuality at first and observe behaviors and discussions around you. After you have a feel for the situation, you may find that you are more comfortable talking about your sexuality with certain groups or in certain situations. It is a good idea to research cultural expectations and laws that will affect you in the host culture. Find out what support systems are available, and, if possible, contact other LGBT people in the host culture to find out what more information.

Resources for LGBT students: The Office of Education Abroad's page for LGBT [page](#).

Diversity, ethnicity, and multicultural students

American multicultural students have been studying abroad for decades, and the percentage of minority students going abroad increases every year. As for any traveler, each experience is personal and particular; it is impossible to predict how people abroad will treat you. However, there are many tips for multicultural students that relate the experiences of others and can help you prepare for the journey.

Everywhere you go, you can encounter different definitions of ethnicity and identity. Those in the host culture may perceive you differently than you identify yourself. Many African-Americans traveling to Europe could be mistaken for immigrants from Africa. In some areas of Asia, very few people have seen anyone of African descent, while in Africa, African-Americans are often referred to as white or foreigners and treated like other Americans.

Heritage Seekers, or students whose parents or ancestors came from the region they are visiting, have special considerations as well. This could be Latino students traveling to South or Central America, Asian-Americans traveling to Asia, or African-Americans studying in Africa or the Caribbean. If you consider yourself a heritage seeker, you should be aware of the influence of American culture on your values and behaviors. Students have sometimes found that they are treated just the same as white, American students and little respect is paid to their ancestry. Furthermore, stereotypes of their culture in America have often been transferred to the host culture through popular media. If you feel you are being stereotyped abroad, reflect on the tips for communicating across cultures. This is a chance to share your side of American life with someone in the host country; they may never have an opportunity to hear it otherwise.

- [Resources for multicultural students](#)

Students with disabilities

Very few countries have as far-reaching public access laws as the US. You may find that while buildings are handicap-accessible, it is by inconvenient means. In many places you will be visiting buildings constructed centuries ago with no consideration for disability access. Also, many places have not developed extensive resources for hearing-and vision-impaired students, so some materials may be difficult for you to use. This should not discourage you, however; it just takes some planning to ensure a successful experience.

When you are looking at your options for study abroad, look for resources for students with disabilities and contact the faculty director or program provider if you need more information. Many programs have accommodated students with disabilities before and will work with your needs. After you have been accepted, continue to talk to your faculty director or program coordinator about what you will need, whether it is more exam time, large print resources, or special facilities. If you plan ahead and stay in contact with your coordinators, you can be prepared and ready for challenges you'll face abroad.

- [Resources](#) for students with disabilities
- Accommodation request form

Religious differences

Some countries or regions of a country are dominated by one religion; in others, a mix of beliefs is common. Some countries have an official state religion, and all citizens are expected to claim it even if they do not practice. In other countries religion is a private matter rarely discussed in public; in still others, religion is a strong part of group identity and while diverse religions are tolerated, you can easily tell who attends which churches, mosques, or temples.

In preparation for departure, you should try to learn as much as possible about the religious norms and practices of your host nation.

- Is religion a private matter, or is it openly discussed?
- Is there a state religion and what is its relationship to other religions?
- Are there class or regional differences in religion, and if so, how will this affect your experience?
- What is the context of your religion in the host nation? Is it seen as a remnant of missionaries and/or colonialism? Is it the religion of immigrants?
- If you practice a religion, will you be able to do so the same way abroad? If not, how will you address this?
- If you do not practice a religion, will you be expected to participate in one in some way abroad – attending church with your host family or dressing according to religious customs?
- How will these answers affect you and how you are viewed by your hosts?

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

Office of education abroad required forms and meetings

- If you are on an exchange or non-OU program, complete the foreign study checklist.
- Participate in the OEA pre-departure orientation session(s) and all program-specific orientation sessions.
- Purchase HTH Health Insurance
- Submit copies of the photo page of your passport and flight itinerary, and submit the proof of registration with the US embassy to the OEA.

Ohio University preparation

- Pay all required fees and clear all registration and financial holds.
- Update your address with the University.

Travel documents and processes

- Apply for a passport and any necessary visas well in advance of departure.
- If you are not a US citizen, consult a staff member in the International Student Faculty Service (ISFS) office to make sure your visa and other papers are in order.
- Make travel arrangements, if not provided by your program. Make sure you know how to get from the airport to your meeting place on your own!
- Make housing arrangements if your program does not provide them.
- Make copies of important documents (passport, visa, insurance card, prescriptions, credit cards, etc.) to bring with you, and leave copies at home.

Medical and safety preparation

- Make sure you understand the coverage offered by insurance, and how you can use it abroad.

- Obtain any necessary immunizations or medications for your country.
- If you are on any medication(s), acquire enough to last the duration of your trip and have copies of the prescription from your pharmacist.
- Schedule check-ups with your eye doctor, physician, and dentist.
- Discuss safety issues and emergency contact procedures with your parents.

General preparation

- Read information about the history, economy, education system, and culture of your host country.
- Visit the websites listed in this handbook.
- Create a budget for your time abroad and learn how to get emergency funds if necessary.
- Research how you will communicate from abroad.
- Forward your mail to your permanent US address if you will be gone longer than a few weeks.

ARRIVING IN YOUR HOST COUNTRY

As you step off the plane, you are met with new sights, smells, and sounds, which can be a confusing and disorienting experience. The following are some guidelines and suggestions for your first few days in a new country.

Travel with all of the contact information you may need upon arrival in your carry-on luggage, including your coordinator's phone number. You may also need this information if you miss a flight connection during your travel.

Customs and immigration

In most countries, leaving the plane you will first pass through immigration. Government officials will verify your passport and your visa or residence permit, if needed. They may ask questions as to your final destination, the purpose of your travel, your local address, and request to see a return flight ticket or other documents. Make sure that you have all relevant papers, including contacts of local coordinators, in case you encounter problems at this step.

You will then pick up your baggage and take it through customs. A customs official may ask about the contents of your luggage and carry-on bag. Every country and airport differs on what you can and cannot bring into the country. Check the US Department of State's [Consular Information Sheet](#) on your destination for more specific information.

Remember to remain polite and understanding with immigration and customs officials. While you may be weary after an international flight, good manners will go a long way in assuring that you are met with little difficulty entering the country. Avoid jokes about what you are carrying or what you are doing. A 'funny' comment about drugs or bombs could land you in jail. When you are waiting to be met or moving through the airports and train stations, make sure you keep all your belongings with you and in your sight at all times. In no case should you give your bags or belongings to someone you do not know, and if you have a cell phone refrain from using it until you have completed the immigration process.

Contacting home

Contact your parents or guardians within 24 hours of arriving in your host country to reassure them that you arrived safe and sound. The best method of communicating with home will vary by host country – some have telephone booths on every corner, while others have Internet cafes everywhere. If you are living with a host family, you should not use the phone without first asking them. Your host family or your program coordinator will probably help you find the best way of telling your parents that you are safe.

Jet lag

Do not be surprised if you experience jet lag, even if you are only traveling a couple of time zones away. It is the result of a combination of dry airplane air and disorientation when changing time zones. Some suggestions for dealing with jet lag:

- Stay hydrated during your flight. Take a water bottle with you on the flight and avoid drinking alcohol or caffeine. Water bottles must be empty through airport security, but you can fill it up on the other side.
- On the plane, sleep and eat according to the hours of your destination. If your flight to France starts at 5 PM in Columbus (i.e. 11 PM in Paris), sleep at the beginning of your flight and wake up and eat breakfast just before you land.
- Adapt your daily schedule, including meals and sleeping, to the new time zone as quickly as possible.
- Continue to drink lots of water during the first few days.
- Prepare to start your schedule on local time the day you arrive, and avoid naps. Eat meals in the morning, at mid-day, and in the evening, as you will be doing in the future.
- Go to bed at a decent hour in the local time, even if it's 9 PM. You need sleep, but you need it according to your new time zone.
- As soon as possible on the first day, take a walk. Your body is used to the sun being in a certain place at a certain time. A walk, or hanging out in a park, will help your body adapt to its new location quickly.
- Be aware of how jet lag is affecting your moods and reactions to your new surroundings. Some negative feelings might be due to your exhaustion, not necessarily because you do not fit in to the host culture. It may take up to a week to adjust to your new schedule.

US Embassies and Consulates abroad

The US Embassy or Consulate nearest you can be a wonderful resource while living abroad. Most of your contact with the Embassy will concern the Consular Affairs office, which handles concerns and paperwork for American citizens abroad, as well as issues visas for host country citizens. If your passport is lost or stolen, Consular Affairs will help you in replacing it. Click [here](#) for a list of US Embassies and Consulates abroad.

One section of Consular Affairs, the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, helps with 'protective services' for American citizens abroad. They can act as a liaison between you and your family at home if an emergency, such as arrest or medical crisis, arises while you are abroad.

MEDICAL CARE ABROAD

You should find out what medical services and providers are available at your destination. Your faculty director or program coordinator may provide you with this information, but if they don't, do the research yourself. HTH Worldwide has information on medical services and providers around the world [online](#). If you have a more serious illness or accident, you should contact your on-site coordinator and involve them in any action that you take. They can help you with language issues with the doctors and with contacting your host family or roommates. If you wish to tell your family at home, they can help you contact them as well. In serious cases, they will also contact OU or your program provider to keep them apprised of the situation. In the Conditions of Participation you signed when applying to study abroad, you agreed that OU and its agents (i.e. faculty director, contracted organizations) have the authority to secure medical treatment on your behalf in case of accident or injury, and that you accept financial responsibility for all treatments. Many hospitals abroad demand payment for services up front, even in an emergency. Your coordinator may be able to help with this, on the condition that you pay him or her back. You should keep all receipts for medical care and a list of any medications and treatments you receive abroad. When you return to the US you can turn the receipts with your claim in to your insurance company and take the record of your treatments to a doctor.

NON-MEDICAL EMERGENCIES WHILE ABROAD

Your faculty director or program coordinator can assist you during a non-medical emergency, providing advice on replacing lost or stolen items and working with local police. They are also the ones who work in close coordination

with American and foreign authorities in the case of a political or natural crisis. You should look to them for guidance and follow their instructions carefully. Another source of information is the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. Refer to the [US Embassies and Consulates Abroad](#) section above on working with the Embassy or Consulate nearest you.

While abroad, you are subject to the same laws and rules as a citizen of the host country. It is important to know that the US Embassy has only limited services if you are arrested; they can only assure that you receive due process as defined by the host country, arrange for legal aid, and help your family in the US understand the situation.

If a natural disaster or political situation warrants, your program may be moved to a different location or cancelled. In this case, your director or on-site coordinator will be in contact and help you in the move, including arranging return air tickets if necessary.

ADJUSTING TO YOUR NEW CULTURE

Culture shock and adjustment

What is culture shock? It is not quite as “shocking” or as sudden as the term may imply. Basically, it is the realization that many of your presumptions about the world and the way to get along may not always be accurate in another culture. It is also a deep and sometimes disturbing recognition that you are far from home, and you feel a growing sense that the rules you have learned your whole life do not apply. The “shock” is not a single moment but rather a growing emotional, physical, and mental awareness.

It is important to remember that this “shock” is part of your adaptation and a very normal process. These are feelings that are commonly experienced by anyone going through a major transition. Knowing some of the cues that might suggest the various stages of cultural adjustment may help you recognize those moments for yourself. Not everyone progresses through these stages at the same time; you might feel ‘culture surprise’ longer than your travel partners, or pass through ‘shock’ quicker. And the effects on you will be different from the effects on others. Even those who regularly travel and/or live abroad experience this, so do not feel ashamed of your reactions to the new situation. Acknowledge them and try not to let the negative feelings cloud your entire experience. The following phase descriptions may be helpful:

Honeymoon Stage – Initial Euphoria: This stage is characterized by the attitude: Everything is great! I love this place! You are fascinated and excited by everything that is new.

Hostility Stage: The differences of the host culture begin to annoy you. You begin to feel overwhelmed by the new environment. Speaking a foreign language is exhausting. You can feel frustrated that you can’t express yourself fully, and you start to have doubts about why you chose to study abroad. You find yourself spending time alone in your room, and constantly griping to other Americans about the negative aspects of the culture or obsessing about home.

Initial Adjustment (Humor Stage): You begin to relax and adapt to new situations. Your language improves. You get into a routine, and you can now laugh at the things that used to stress you out. You’re learning to communicate better and start making connections between the different levels of culture. You start to understand WHY something is the way it is and appreciate it.

Adaptation (Home): You can successfully function in the host culture. You see and understand both positive and negative aspects of your host culture and your home culture and can move in and out of them with ease.

Tips when you are experiencing culture shock

- Be quick to observe and slow to judge
- Make friends with host nationals
- Look for logical reasons behind everything that seems strange, confusing, or threatening

- Maintain an attitude of curiosity and eagerness to learn
- Learn humility. Graciously accept being corrected and learn from your mistakes.
- Express appreciation generously
- Be adaptable, flexible, and willing to try
- Have faith in yourself
- Keep a sense of humor, especially about yourself
- Go to learn, not to teach
- Show sincere consideration for others and the culture
- Be cooperative and willing to compromise
- Enjoy yourself and have fun!

Previous list adapted from: Welcome to the World, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and from L. Robert Kohl's Survival Kit for Overseas Living (1996).

CHECKLIST FOR LIVING ABROAD

General information

- Contact your family to let them know you arrived safely.
- If you have not already done so, register with the US Embassy at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/>.
- If you receive medical care, save all receipts. If you are an HTH network provider, you may not need to save receipts. Visit [HTH online](#) for more information.
- If you receive medical care, save a list of treatments received and medications taken to share with your US doctor when you return.
- Review the customs guidelines for departing your host country and re-entering the US.
- Take pictures, write in your journal, call home, and have fun!

OEA required forms

- If you are on an exchange or non-OU program, complete and submit your Verification of Enrollment once you are enrolled in classes. This form must be submitted for every quarter you are abroad.
- Update your email and contact information with the OEA.
- Submit a story for View from Abroad.
- If you are on an exchange or non-OU program, have your official transcript sent to the Office of Education Abroad, 185 Lindley Hall, Athens, OH 45701, USA.

Ohio University contacts

- Check your Oak email account regularly, or if you are forwarding mail make sure all important messages are reaching you.
- Check your OU student account regularly online.
- No less than one week before OU Pre-registration, request your RAC from saregistration@ohio.edu.
- You can view your DARS [online](#)

RETURNING HOME

Duties and customs

When re-entering the US, you must declare all items purchased abroad. Typically, the first \$400-\$800 worth of goods is duty-free. If you purchased more than this amount in goods overseas, you will be asked to pay duty on the additional items. When traveling by air, you may be asked to fill out a Declaration Form provided by the airline. Pack items you will need to declare separately and to have your sales slips for these items. For more information about US custom regulations and restricted items click [here](#).

NOTE: It is generally forbidden to use cell phones until you have cleared customs.

Reverse culture shock

Research has shown that coming home can be more unsettling than going abroad for some students. Returning students often find that they have changed a great deal, and it can be difficult to find people who truly seem to understand your new perspective. There is even a term for the feelings you may have when you get back home: reverse culture shock. It has many of the same symptoms of culture shock.

Remember that these feelings are a normal and on-going part of your cross-cultural experience. If your friends and/or family have noticed a change in you, it is because you have changed, usually for the better. The tips below will help you prepare for your homecoming, both emotionally and practically.

Reflecting on your experience

Continuing to keep a journal will be one of the best methods of addressing re-entry shock and reflecting on your experience returning home. Maintain the journal and look back on it regularly – digesting the long-term benefits of a study abroad experience will take awhile. Following are some things to consider in your journal:

- What were your goals for studying abroad? Have you achieved them?
- What were the biggest successes and disappointments?
- What were the biggest surprises?
- What are your regrets?
- What will you miss the most?
- Who will you stay in touch with, and how?
- Are you nervous about returning home? If so, why?
- How will it feel to enjoy the conveniences of home again – a car, Walmart, soy milk, etc.?
- How will your family and friends react to your return? What will they want to talk about?

While you were gone

Studying abroad can be so exciting and interesting that it is easy to forget that your friends and family stayed at home. While you are sharing your experiences abroad, ask your friends and family about their lives during your absence. Before you return home, think of the things your family and friends have told you about while you were abroad. How will you connect your experiences with their lives when you return? What will you say to them?

Arriving home

In your first few days back, your excitement to be home and back in your comfort zone will be colored by jet lag. However, once you have readjusted to the time change, keep yourself busy. Most returned students agree that getting a job or volunteering in the community keeps them from daydreaming and missing the host country.

Do not make any big decisions in the first few weeks following your return; what makes sense during these weeks can simply be your reactions to re-entry shock. Just because you were a pedestrian for a quarter or a year, for example, does not mean you should sell your car now.

Reconnecting with friends and family

Communicating with family and friends can be the most frustrating experience of re-entry shock. Everyone will be glad that you are home and want to hear about your experiences, but they may be intimidated by the independence you have had. In general, others find it difficult to relate to such a personal experience and may find it hard to share your excitement. The following tips may help:

- Talk to them about re-entry shock and the process, so they know what to expect.
- Organize your photos as soon as possible, so they are easy to share.
- Share your photos with your friends, but only if they ask, and do not talk too long.
- When you share the photos with friends or family, set a time so you do not impose on them and they can give you the attention you want.
- Be open to questions and comments.

- Be sensitive to their feelings, and try to relate your experiences to situations or events at home. (“This café we went to is a little like the diner down the street. Everyone ends up there in the evening.”)
- Let your parents and loved ones know how much you appreciate the chance they have given you to grow by living, studying, and traveling abroad.
- Ask friends what they have been doing while you were gone, and ask about local events.

Returning to campus

Coming back to campus will be another change, and some students say that returning to classes was harder than returning to American life in general. Talk to your advisor soon after you return about your experience and any possible changes to your career goals and coursework.

Program evaluation

We are extremely interested in hearing about your experience abroad and learning how we can better prepare future participants. Therefore, the OEA asks each study abroad participant to complete a written program evaluation. You can find a [program evaluation](#) on the OEA website..

Come to the OEA

The OEA sponsors a quarterly event for returned students and provides information on working and traveling abroad. You can also talk to us about any difficulties you are having adjusting to life in the US; we have contacts to help you.

If you do not have one already, you may want to add an international component to your degree.

- [International degrees](#) at Ohio University
- Certificate in [International Studies](#)
- Certificate in a [foreign language](#)
- [Global Leadership Center](#) (certificate program)
- Certificate in [Teaching English as a Second Language](#)

Getting involved internationally in Athens

Returning to the US and to the university does not mean you have to give up your new global skills – there are ways to continue the cross-cultural experience right here in Athens. Visit the OEA’s returned student [website](#) for links to some international offices and organizations at Ohio University and in the larger community.

Returned study abroad student services at the OEA

Your study abroad experience does not need to end after you return to OU. The OEA encourages you to get involved in international opportunities on campus, stay in touch with our office, and help promote study abroad to prospective students. To help keep you informed, OEA provides the following services to returned study abroad students:

- Information on reverse culture shock and suggestions for coping with re-entry.
- Social opportunities to meet other returned study abroad students.
- Opportunities to share your experiences with prospective students at Ohio University through information sessions, the study abroad fair, and orientation sessions.
- Involvement in a mentoring program for incoming international exchange students.
- Advising on how to go abroad again on another study abroad, work, volunteer, internship, or travel abroad opportunity.
- Opportunity to evaluate your study abroad program.
- Latest information on returned study abroad student opportunities offered at the national level, such as writing and photography contests.
- Potential work opportunities in the OEA as a federal work study student or a peer advisor.

CHECKLIST FOR RETURNING HOME

- Check host country and US customs requirements.
- Submit an OEA [program evaluation](#)
- Organize your photos and souvenirs to share with your family and friends.
- Contact the OEA for information on events for returned students and other ways to get involved in the office.
- Talk to your advisor about the courses you took abroad and any changes you want to make to your academic plan.
- A month or so after your return, check your DARS online. If you were on an exchange or non-OU program, verify that the OEA received your transcript. Your transcript may take several weeks to process.

OHIO UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

- Campus Security (24 Hour Emergency Hotline): (740) 593-1911, police@ohiou.edu
- Office of Education Abroad: (740) 593-4583, education.abroad@ohio.edu
- Bursar Office: (740) 593-4130, bursar@ohio.edu
- CNS Helpdesk: (740) 593-1222, helpdesk@ohio.edu
- Counseling & Psychological Services: (740) 593-1616, Counseling.Services@ohio.edu
- Financial Aid: (740) 593-4141, financial.aid@ohio.edu
- Health Promotions: (740) 593-4742
- Housing: (740) 593-4090, housing@ohio.edu
- Judiciaries Office: (740) 593-2629, judiciaries@ohio.edu
- Registrar Office: (740) 593-4191, registrar@ohio.edu
- Student Health Services: (740) 593-1660
- Student Health Services – Immunizations: (740) 593-4747
- University Switchboard: (740) 593-1000
- Webmail for Ohio University: <https://webmail.ohio.edu>

NOTE: When dialing from overseas to the US, dial 001 (country code) plus the phone number with area code.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Accommodation sites

- Hostelling International: <http://www.hiayh.org>
- Hostels Guide: www.hostels.com

Financial matters sites

- Currency Converter: www.oanda.com/converter/classic
- Mastercard ATM Locator: <http://www.mastercard.com>
- Travelers Checks: with American Express <http://www.americanexpress.com/travel>
- Visa ATM Locator: <http://www.visa.com>

Health and safety sites

- Embassy & Consulate Information: <http://www.embassyworld.com>
- Travel Warning & Consular Information: <http://travel.his.com/travel/warnings.html> | Traveler's Health (Center for Disease Control): <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>
- US State Department: www.state.gov

- Vaccinations (Center for Disease Control): <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentVaccinations.aspx>
- Women's Travel: www.journeywoman.com

Political matters and voting abroad

- Democrats Abroad: <http://www.democratsabroad.org>
- Republicans Abroad: <http://www.republicansabroad.org>

Transportation sites

- Kayak (searches multiple sites at once for best flight deals): <http://www.kayak.com>
- Student Universe: www.studentuniverse.com
- Eurail Information: <http://www.eurail.com>
- Eurostar: www.eurostar.com
- Rail Europe: www.raileurope.com
- STA Travel (Student Discounted Flight Information): www.statravel.com

Travel document sites

- Foreign Entry Requirements (Visas): http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html
- International Student ID Card: www.isic.org
- Office of Education Abroad, Required Documents:
<http://www.ohio.edu/educationabroad/students/Reqforms.cfm>
- Passport Services <http://travel.his.com/passport>

Travel guide sites

- Let's Go Travel Guide: www.lets-go.com
- Lonely Planet Guide Books: www.lonelyplanet.com
- Rough guides Travel On-line: www.roughguides.com