

# 36 TIPS

## FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Adapted From OISS, Michigan State University

### Social Life

- 1** A great way to meet people and make friends is to talk to new people you meet in class and go to parties. Another successful way is to become active on campus with various clubs and organizations.
- 2** You may be asked by other students if you would like to study with them. This can be very beneficial for both of you so don't be shy! Study groups can really help your grade. You can even start a study group yourself!
- 3** Keep your door open when you are in your room sitting, studying or watching TV. It's a great way of getting to know the other people on your floor and in your residence hall!
- 4** Don't feel bad if you have an accent or your English isn't the best. Most people will be very polite if they do not understand you and try to help you.
- 5** The legal drinking age for alcohol in most states is 21. Never drink under age or drive while under the influence and keep your eye on your drink if you are of age at bars or parties. You do not HAVE to drink alcohol if you attend a party or go to a bar. Don't be afraid to order a soda or a water and stay to socialize. Always be sure to bring an ID that shows your age.
- 6** If you ever find yourself in a situation in which you feel offended or uncomfortable, say something! Many Americans have never experienced another culture. You can use these moments to politely educate them and share something about yourself.
- 7** Don't be afraid to ask what a word or expression means if you are in an informal conversation. If it's a slang expression, you probably did not learn it at school!
- 8** To avoid getting depressed or under the weather, plan on exercising and doing something new or different every weekend. You can go to the movies, go shopping, go out

for dinner with friends, go snowboarding... Be patient and go out exploring every now and then! Try new things that you have never done before, especially things that are not possible in your home country.

**9** Learn the purpose of football... it is very big in the US. Attend a school football game to witness school spirit in person!

**10** Pedestrians share the sidewalks with bikers. If there is one coming your way, don't move all around; let them move because they are the ones on wheels! Make sure you only cross the street at designated crosswalks and, if applicable, when the "walk" signal is on.

**11** Learn how to use Skype if you don't already know (or some other internet-based communication system). This will help you stay in touch with your family and friends from back home.

**12** American students are very friendly. Do not be discouraged by blank looking faces in the classrooms, if you approach them, they will most certainly engage in conversation with you.

**13** The United States is generally an individualistic society with less social pressure to conform. As a result, you will need to become more assertive and to speak out on your own behalf. In an interview, talk about your goals and accomplishments.

**14** Eye contact is also important. It is not a sign of disrespect, but instead an indication of openness, honesty, and enthusiasm. Be careful not to stare though, as this makes most Americans uncomfortable.

**15** When two people are talking to each other, they tend to stand a specific distance apart. If someone steps into this personal boundary, they will feel uncomfortable and move away to increase the distance between them.

**16** **When you meet someone for the first time, shake their hand with a semi-firm to firm grip.** Touching (such as hugging or kissing) may be a little too intimate for casual acquaintances. However, there is an exception for close friends and relatives

**17** Smoking is prohibited in government and public buildings and on some campuses. Many businesses, especially restaurants, will not permit smoking on the premises.

## Get Involved

**18** Get involved in the student community! Go to student organization meetings and join all the clubs that interest you. Most universities will have a “club week” at the beginning of the Fall Semester to promote all the activities the campus offers.

**19** Go to orientations and resource fairs for international students. You may learn a lot about opportunities available to you on campus and get a lot of free stuff!

**20** Read everything, from e-mails to all the free campus publications, they are very useful in finding out about your university, student life, and career tips.

## Other Tips

**21** 1 kg=2.2 pounds. 1 meter=3.3 feet. 32 degrees Fahrenheit is 0 degrees Celsius.

**22** Watch what you eat! It can be really easy to gain weight the first couple of weeks you arrive in the US because everything looks yummy (and it is) but you should not give in.

**23** Don't forget to tip in restaurants, taxis, shuttle buses, hotels, salons, etc. (15%-20% if the service is good).

**24** Do not spend all of your money in the first two weeks; do not buy all of your stuff at once!

**25** If you don't have a car: car rental companies offer great deals (especially on the week-ends).

**26** You can store your belongings at a storage center when you leave for vacation. Costs will vary depending on how much you have to store but it's worth it!

**27** Make sure you pay when you park your car at a meters because you will get a ticket if the meter runs out of time. Parking in a handicapped space can result in a very large fine (\$200+) and your car will likely be hauled away.

**28** If you will be driving a car, make sure to get a parking permit and know where you are allowed to park with it around campus. Note that not all parking lots are allowed for students with parking permits.

**29** If you are really into TV shows, you can access the networks' webpage and watch the episodes online. Also, you should check out <http://www.hulu.com>. It has a huge database of many American TV shows for you to watch online. TV shows can be a great way to bond with people in your department.

**30** The number for an **emergency** in the United States is 911. This number will work for the police, ambulance or fire department. Most police departments have a non-emergency number to call if you need them.

**31** Within a couple weeks after you arrive at your host university, make sure you know where your primary medical care facility is located. It is better to figure that out when you are healthy than when you need to see a doctor but do not know where to go. Make sure that you do not go to the hospital emergency room (ER) unless it is a genuine emergency because you will likely receive a large bill!!

**32** If a police officer stops you while driving, drive to the right shoulder of the road. Make sure to be still and wait for the officer to approach your car. **Do not get out of the vehicle!!** Roll down your driver side window to speak with the officer.

**33** American names are written and spoken with the given name first and the family name last: John Smith's family name is Smith, not John.

**34** In the United States, dates are written as **month/day/year**. This is the opposite of what is used in other places, in which dates are written **day/month/year**. So while 4/3/17 would be March 4, 2017 elsewhere, it is April 3, 2017 in the United States. It may be best to write out dates using the month name to avoid confusion.

**35** Most electrical outlets in the United States operate with a voltage of 110-120 volts, 60 cycles. If your equipment requires 220 volts, use a transformer and plug adapter.

**36** International DVDs will not necessarily play correctly on American DVD players.