

## CHAPTER 8

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The goal of this section is to provide new international students with helpful information about Hopkins and living in the U.S., specific to their concerns as non-U.S. citizens. In this chapter, we bring together practical information and the transition experiences of current international graduate students.

## ■ International Student Services Offices

The **Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISSS)** on the Homewood campus, the **International Faculty and Student Services** on the East Baltimore Campus, and the Peabody's Office of **International Student Affairs** aim to assist all international students and faculty at the respective Johns Hopkins campuses to acquire and maintain their appropriate visa status. It is imperative that you keep in close contact with these offices, especially if you are planning to leave the country. Considering the current conditions in the U.S., it is crucial to stay informed. The secondary function of these offices is to help international students and scholars to cope with obstacles they may face when making a transition from one setting to another.

Regardless of what campus you are on, make sure you check out all offices' websites as well as that of the **Johns Hopkins International Society (JHIS)**: <http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/intlsvcs/jhis/newcomers.asp>. The JHIS offers a variety of services to the international newcomer, as well as programs for the entire Johns Hopkins community, although it is located at the East Baltimore campus. The organization's activities include a welcome reception and orientation programs, a support program for spouses, a bi-monthly discussion

**Homewood, Office of International Student and Scholar Services (OISSS)**, 3103 North Charles St., 410-516-1013, Fax: 410-516-1018, [www.jhu.edu/~iss](http://www.jhu.edu/~iss)

**East Baltimore, International Faculty and Student Services**, 1620 McElderry Street, Reed Hall, 1st Floor, 410-955-3371, Fax: 410-955-0871, [www.hopkinsmedicine.org/intlsvcs](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/intlsvcs)

**Peabody, Office of International Student Affairs**, Unger Lounge, Peabody Institute, 1 East Mount Vernon Place, 410-659-8100 (ext. 3075), Fax: 410-783-6604, [www.peabody.jhu.edu/116](http://www.peabody.jhu.edu/116)

**Embassy and consulate** contacts can be found at [www.embassy.org](http://www.embassy.org)

group (Global Expressions), cultural awareness programs, social gatherings, tours, international dinners, and holiday celebrations.

The Johns Hopkins University Alumni Association also runs a popular Host Family Program for incoming JHU students, especially for international students. Members of Johns Hopkins alumni, faculty, and staff in the Baltimore area offer hospitality for new students in many ways — dinner at home at various holidays, tours of Baltimore, shopping or sport-

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ing events. If you wish to participate, you may complete and submit our online questionnaire or fill in and print out the PDF version of the questionnaire. The **JHU Alumni Association** will match you with an individual or family whose interests are similar to yours.

Finally, do not forget to browse through all JHU clubs and students organizations' websites (<http://sts.jhu.edu/studentinvolvement/stuco.xsp>). You might also want to check with the website of **Multicultural Student Affairs** ([cultural/\), the office seeks to foster the holistic development of multicultural students by providing direct services and encouraging the full use of all university resources. Some student organizations are not listed or are difficult to pin down, but you can find them on the "JHU Students Club Day", usually during the second week of every Fall semester, with hundreds of student clubs have their stands set up in front of Levering Hall and recruit new members. Stay alert and you are bound to find the society that makes you feel at home.](http://web.jhu.edu/studentprograms/multi-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

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## ■ Identification, Documents, and Taxes

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The two offices you will need to locate as soon as you arrive on campus are the **Social Security Office** and the **tax office**.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires a Social Security Number (SSN) or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) for all individuals receiving any kind of payment (including scholarships for tuition) or declared as an eligible dependent on a tax return.

SSNs are required for all individuals receiving a working wage while in the USA. The SSN is issued through a Social Security Office and is used on all tax returns filed with the IRS. If you receive regular stipends (as TA or RA) from the University, you should contact the International Student Service Offices at your school to provide you a letter to help you apply for a SSN. If you receive a SSN after receiving an ITIN, always use the SSN. An ITIN is only issued to individuals who are not eligible for a SSN, because they are receiving fellowship/scholarship, but are not receiving a working wage, or are not eligible for employment in the USA. Visa status information associated can be found at [www.jhu.edu/~iss](http://www.jhu.edu/~iss) or [www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/services/visas.htm](http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/services/visas.htm). After the IRS issues you an ITIN, use this number on all tax returns filed with the IRS. Additional

### **Social Security Offices near Homewood**

Room 212, 2nd Floor, 711 West 40th Street, 1-800-772-1213, Mon - Fri 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Suite 200, 1010 Park Ave., 1-800-772-1213, Mon- Fri, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

information on SSN and ITIN can be found at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) and [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

The **JHU Tax Office** (443-997-8442) usually offers two workshops for foreign students every Spring (before April 15, the submission deadline for taxes), one on the Homewood Campus, and the other on the East Baltimore Campus. They don't offer personal tax advice, but they tell you what forms to fill in and, in general terms, how to fill them in. Also, the Maryland State Comptroller's Office will do anyone's state taxes for free at their downtown office. You should also check if your country of origin has a Tax Treaty with the USA at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), which might benefit you in some ways.

Since you may be carded when buying liquor or tobacco or trying to get into a club, you

should always carry either your Passport or a government issued photo ID card. On campus and around Charles Village, usually your J-Card (the University ID) is sufficient, except for pubs and liquor stores. Therefore, until you get an American ID, you should carry your Passport around. Make a copy of it and keep the copy at home in case you lose it or it gets stolen. Once you decide to get a government issued photo ID card, then you can either get a Maryland driver's license (drivers' licenses are the equivalent of a regular ID in the USA) or a non-driver ID card. Either can be obtained from the **Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA)**. The MVA has an Express Office located at 1 Charles Center Metro Station (Mezzanine Level of the Charles Center Metro Station), the office hours are Monday – Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm (effective July 1, 2002). You should also check their web site [www.mva.state.md.us](http://www.mva.state.md.us) or call 1-800-950-1MVA to obtain additional information before heading out to their office.

Do not procrastinate if you plan on obtaining a Maryland driver's license. It could prove to be a very long process for internationals. You first need to pass a 3-hour drug and alcohol awareness course. The course is not offered by the MVA but they do provide you with a list of schools.

The 3A Method Driving School also provides the course online ([www.3Adriving.com](http://www.3Adriving.com)), although you will have to take the exam at a designated location.

#### Driving Schools

**3A Method Driving**, 410-426-1836  
**AA Driving Improve**, 410-552-9200 **Pro-drive Driving School**, 410-433-6009

If you have a driving license from your own country, and want to exchange it to a U.S. one, you first need to do Out-of-Country document reviews. Good news for international students, effective on April 17, 2006, all applicants who are applying for a Maryland driver's license or

identification card who are presenting immigration or foreign documents can walk into one of MVA's current Out-of-Country locations Monday thru Friday for document review. Please note that there will be no document review on Saturdays. The out-of-country document review locations are: Baltimore City, Bel Air, Beltsville, Frederick, Gaithersburg, Glen Burnie, Salisbury, and Waldorf offices. The review process used to be time-consuming, as people have to call ahead to make an appointment—sometimes have to wait for a while for the next available date. Now, you can just walk into the locations list above. Please check with MVA's website carefully for the required documents that you need to bring along with you.

Foreign/Out-of-Country documents may be used as a primary/secondary source of identification if translated into English by a court translator/interpreter; or the Embassy of the Country where issued. The original document must accompany the English translation. Translations must be on a document prepared by a court translator; or on the letterhead of the Embassy of the country of origin; AND must contain the typed/printed name of the translator, telephone number and signature of translator. All individuals on the MVA's State of Maryland Court Registry Interpreter Listing are authorized to translate foreign/out-of-country documents. You can find the list of approved interpreters from MVA's website. If there is no translator/interpreter for the requested lan-

#### Document Translation

**GlobalArena**, 230 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19102, 1-800-361-6444 ext. 16, 1-215-735-1055, [www.globalarena.com/human](http://www.globalarena.com/human)

**Academy of Languages**, 20 S. Charles Street, Suite 405, Baltimore, MD 21201, 410-685-8383, [www.academyoflanguages.net](http://www.academyoflanguages.net)

**Firn Language Connections**, 5999 Harpers Farm Road, Columbia, MD 21044, 1-888-399-FIRN, [www.firnonline.org](http://www.firnonline.org)

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guage on the listing, document translations or interpretative services may be provided by the companies listed below. Please note that MVA does not accept faxed copies of translations.

After documents review, you will then need to make another appointments for the knowledge and driving skills road tests. You can take the road test on the same day after you pass the knowledge test—you must pass the knowledge

test before taking or scheduling a road test. For scheduling a road test, you will need to call 1-888-212-4709.

## ■ Practical Information

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### *Out and About*

#### **Tipping**

If you are at restaurant and you want to get good service the next time you are there, you ought to know something about the tipping system in the U.S.. Wait staff are often paid less than minimum wage because tips are expected to add to their income. (The words ‘tip’ and ‘gratuity’ are used interchangeably.) Restaurants do not include a service charge in

the bill, still, U.S. waiters anticipate a tip that is 15-20% of the total bill. You must tip unless you receive terrible or rude service. Watch out though, in some restaurants, gratuity is included for bills for parties of eight or more. Taxi drivers also expect to get a tip of approximately 15 %of the fare.

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#### **Smoking**

If you are dying to light that cigarette, make sure you are allowed to first. Smoking is prohibited in government and public buildings. It is also illegal on public transportation, including buses, subways, and trains. Also, many businesses, especially restaurants, will not permit smoking on the premises. Those restaurants that permit smoking will usually have a sepa-

rate section for customers who smoke. Tobacco products may not be sold to anyone under 18 years old, and Federal Law requires stores to ask for a government issued photo identification card (ID) for anyone under 27 years old. If you are a guest in someone’s home, you should ask whether it is okay to smoke before lighting up.

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#### **Alcohol**

You will be asked for a government issued photo ID at liquor stores, restaurants, clubs, pubs or cafés as it is illegal to sell or serve alcoholic drinks to anyone under 21 years of

age. Store owners or bartenders may refuse to serve you or admit you to an establishment if you lack identification or do not cooperate with staff requests for identification [see Documents

and Taxes below]. Also, alcoholic drinks cannot be consumed in most public spaces, such

as parks, sidewalks, some sports venues, and beaches.

## Taxes

Listed prices for merchandise, hotel accommodations, or meals do not usually include the sales or room taxes in force. In Maryland (taxes vary by state), sales tax is 5% and room

tax varies by county, from 5% to 8%. Keep that in mind when you are calculating your shopping expenses.

## Numbers and Measures

American English has its own particularities when it comes to numbers. The word trillion means a 1 followed by 12 zeros, a British billion. The word billion means a 1 followed by 9 zeros, a British milliard. A period is used to indicate a decimal point, not a comma. A comma is used to separate groups of three digits in large numbers, thus \$1,232.52.

Dates are written as month/day/year. This is the opposite of the way most countries write dates, which usually is day/month/year. So while 4/3/85 would be March 4, 1985 in most countries, it is April 3, 1985 in the USA. It is best to write out dates using the month name in order to avoid confusion.

English system of weights and measures are widely used in the states. The metric system is available, but people think in quarts and inches, not liters and centimeters. The following charts convert between the English and metric systems for the most commonly used measures.

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

Temperatures are most often reported in Fahrenheit, and occasionally also in Celsius. To convert Fahrenheit to Celsius, subtract 32 and multiply the result by  $\frac{5}{9}$  (a faster way to give you an approximate value is to subtract 32 and

then divide the result by two). The following

### Length

1 inch = 2.54 centimeters (cm)  
 1 centimeter = 0.39 inches (in)  
 1 foot = 0.305 meters (m)  
 1 meter = 3.28 feet (ft)  
 1 foot = 12 inches  
 1 yard = 0.914 meters (m)  
 1 meter = 1.09 yards (yd)  
 1 yard = 3 feet  
 1 mile = 1.61 kilometers (km)  
 1 kilometer = 0.62 miles (mi)  
 1 mile = 5280 feet

### Weight

1 ounce = 28.35 grams (g)  
 1 gram = 0.035 ounces (oz)  
 1 pound = 0.4536 kilograms (kg)  
 1 kilogram = 2.2046 pounds (lb)  
 1 pound = 16 ounces

### Volume

1 gallon = 3.7854 liters (L)  
 1 liter = 0.2642 gallons (gal)  
 1 miles/gallon = 0.42514 km/liter  
 1 gallon = 4 quarts  
 1 quart = 2 pints  
 1 pint = 2 cups  
 1 cup = 8 fluid ounces  
 1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons  
 1 teaspoon = 5 ml

table lists some common temperatures, as well as some corresponding weather conditions in Baltimore.

<u>°F</u>	<u>°C</u>	<u>Description</u>
212	100	boiling point of water
98.6		37 normal body temp.
86	30	hot summer day
72	22	room temperature
60	16	spring day
32	0	freezing point of water
28	-2	winter day

There are four main time zones in the states: Pacific Standard Time (PST), Mountain Standard Time (MST), Central Standard Time (CST), and Eastern Standard Time (EST). Alaska is one hour earlier than California, and

#### **EST (Eastern Standard Time)**

Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, *Florida*, Georgia, *Indiana*, *Kentucky*, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, *Michigan*, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, *Tennessee*, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia

#### **CST (Central Standard Time)**

Alabama, Arkansas, *Florida*, Illinois, *Indiana*, Iowa, *Kansas*, *Kentucky*, Louisiana, *Michigan*, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, *Nebraska*, *North Dakota*, Oklahoma, *South Dakota*, *Tennessee*, Texas, Wisconsin

#### **MST (Mountain Standard Time)**

Arizona, Colorado, *Idaho*, *Kansas*, Montana, *Nebraska*, New Mexico, *North Dakota*, *Oregon*, *South Dakota*, Texas, Utah, Wyoming

#### **PST (Pacific Standard Time)**

California, *Idaho*, Nevada, *Oregon*, Washington

Hawaii is two hours earlier. Puerto Rico is in the Atlantic Standard Time zone, one hour after New York. Baltimore is on the East Coast and therefore is in the EST. The following table lists the states that occur in each time zone. States that span two time zones are italicized.

During Daylight Savings Time clocks are set forward one hour. It begins on the first Sunday in April and ends on the last Sunday in October.

The following table shows some of the more popular American holidays. Important national

#### **National U.S. Holidays**

**New Year's Day:** January 1

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day:** Third Monday in January

**President's Day:** Third Monday in Feb.

**Mother's Day:** Second Sunday in May

**Memorial Day:** Last Monday in May

**Father's Day:** Third Sunday in June

**Independence Day:** July 4

**Labor Day:** First Monday in September

**Columbus Day:** Second Monday in Oct.

Halloween: October 31

**Election Day:** Tuesday after the first Monday in November (Federal holiday in years divisible by 4)

**Veterans Day:** November 11

**Thanksgiving:** Fourth Thursday in Nov.

**Christmas Day:** December 25

\*Holidays in **bold** are national holidays.

holidays have been indicated in bold. Most government offices will be closed on these days (Fire, Ambulance and Police are always open). Banks and Post Offices will be closed on these days, and many businesses will give their employees the day off. Be aware that JHU, a private institution, does not close for all of these holidays. You should also consult the University Academic Calendar, which is posted every year. Here you can find out on which dates there will be no classes and/or where the University services will be closed.

It is also important to keep in mind the holidays of religious faiths. The University does not close for most religious holidays, with the exception of Christmas, but individual students and faculty may choose to observe religious holidays. For example, important Jewish holidays include Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in the fall, and Passover in the spring. Some students may observe Holy Week before Easter. Moreover, some holidays have a different degree of importance in the USA. For instance,

Thanksgiving is a national family holiday for which most Americans travel home. On the other hand, Easter is less so, and at JHU there are classes throughout the whole Holy Week, including Good Friday. Although JHU does not close for many religious holidays, most professors are understanding and accommodating of needs for religious observance, particularly if a student approaches a professor in advance of the holiday.

## ■ Banking & Finance

The following table presents some additional information for international students for the three banks used most by JHU students.

### **Bank; documents required to open an account; international transfer fees**

**Johns Hopkins Federal Credit Union;** passport, PCN – number from the department confirming you are in the JHU payroll; \$30

**Allfirst;** passport, JHU letter of acceptance; \$8.50

**Bank of America;** two proofs of identity: passport and VISA or passport and J-Card; \$15

The Credit Union usually provides better interest rates, but does not provide basic banking services, such as selling foreign currency or traveler's checks. Transferring money internationally through the Post Office is not very common in the USA and the Post Office on campus does not cash international money orders. You need to go to a main post office to cash those. Additional information can be found at [www.usps.gov](http://www.usps.gov).

When you open your account, banks will pro-

vide you with checks (cheques). Checks are accepted at many retail stores, although you may be required to present a photo ID with your signature and address. Banks will also usually provide you with either a straight debit card to use in Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) or a check card, which is a debit card bearing either the VISA or Mastercard logo. You can use a check card in ATMs, but can also use it in stores accepting VISA or Mastercard. It is important to remember that the check card is still a debit card and will deduct directly from checking account, unlike a normal credit card. The real difference with a check card is the computer network it uses, not its billing procedures. The check cards, although having a VISA logo, are not credit cards. In the USA, using your debit card at an ATM from a bank other than the one that issued it may cause you to incur additional fees from the hosting bank or from both the host and your bank. Be aware of that. So, when you are paying with your debit card at a store, it may be safer, to avoid those fees, to ask for credit, instead of debit. This only means that the store will use the VISA system to debit your account, not that it will give you credit.

It is extremely important to establish your credit in the U.S. This means that you need to prove that you can handle money reliably. Unfortunately, the best way to establish a credit history is by getting a loan and paying it off or

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by getting a credit card and paying the bills on time. Paradoxically, most companies require that you have a credit history in order to obtain a credit card or a loan for that matter. ATM cards do not contribute to your credit history in the USA and most companies do not allow for international credit history checking, except for Canada. Banks and companies can run credit checks using the Canadian Social Insurance Numbers and get a credit report from Canada (although sometimes they may not do it!).

For all the non-Canadians, there are a few options until you have built up a credit history through paying utility bills and the like. You can attempt to apply for a credit card with a co-signer (obviously someone who already has a credit history in the USA). You can ask banks and credit card companies about student credit card deals (designed for first-time credit card users such as American college freshmen). Many students have also managed to get student credit cards, such as the Blue Student Credit Card from American Express ([www.americanexpress.com/cards](http://www.americanexpress.com/cards)) or the UNITED College Plus Visa Card from First USA. It is easier to get the Blue; the only disadvantage being that some places do not accept American Express cards.

If all else fails, you may apply for a secured credit card. A secured credit card is backed by your personal savings. Unlike an unsecured credit card, you will need to make a deposit before receiving your card; this can be submitted instantly by including your bank details when completing a secured credit card application. Once a deposit is made to a secured credit card your deposit is safe and also accrues monthly interest. Credit may vary between cards, but it is usually around 20% of your total deposit: so if you were to deposit \$500 you would receive a total credit line of \$600. Providing you make your payments on time, the growth of your credit will get reported to all the main credit bureaus every month. Then, in six months, you will have established enough credit to receive an unsecured credit card or loan. The most popular secured credit card is the Capital One Secured Visa Card, with no application fee, a credit limit up to \$400, a deposit as low as \$49, and regular reviews on your credit line increases. You can apply online at [www.capitalone.com](http://www.capitalone.com). You may find other companies offering similar deals; just make sure you read all the conditions to see if you are really eligible to apply.

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## Health Care

Unlike other countries, the USA does not provide socialized medicine. Because medical care can be very expensive, it is important to have health insurance. (It is also a condition of registration at JHU.) As of this year, the Homewood plan is phasing in full subsidization.

You can buy the health insurance from the JHU associated provider (see Health Insurance part in Chapters 1 and 2) or similar coverage from an approved outside provider. You will need to provide proof of coverage during course registration.

Starting the 2004-2005 academic year, the university is providing 100% subsidy for full-time PhD students. If you are not eligible for the subsidy but wish to enroll in the student health plan, the premiums are payable in full at the beginning of the academic year, and will be charged to the student's account. You might also be able to set up a payment plan.

For Canadian international students, it might make more sense for you to keep your provincial health coverage as long as you can (which is generally five years out of the country, as

long as you provide updated proof of being a full-time student) and top that insurance off with extra out of the country insurance, which usually runs at about \$1 Canadian a day. This comes out much cheaper than the JHU plan and covers far more, without a deductible. However, do keep in mind the JHU subsidy

plan. You might want to make your own calculations, before making a decision. Also, some departments opt to pay their students' health premiums even if they are ineligible for the university subsidy. Check with your department administrations before you decide on any plan.

## Mailing and Shipping

The Homewood Campus Post Office in Gilman has added DHL ([www.dhl.com](http://www.dhl.com)), UPS ([www.ups.com](http://www.ups.com)) and FedEx ([www.fedex.com](http://www.fedex.com)) to its services. These services operate not at the main window, but at the side window, where you can also pick up packages. The Post Office does not sell boxes and packaging goods. Some packaging goods can be purchased at the JHU Bookstore (in front of the Post Office), but you should obtain boxes elsewhere. The packages should all be securely taped and you should not use string. These new services have to be paid with JCASH, meaning with your J-card (you can charge it with money for several services such as photocopying, meal plans, cafés on campus and even some services outside cam-

### **Stamp Prices for Basic Mail**

: Destination; Cards; Letters

Mexico & Canada; 50 cents; 60 cents

Rest of the world; 70 cents; 80 cents

Note: Postal rates change almost annually. Check rates at <http://ircalc.usps.gov>.

pus, see p. xxx). Most information on Postal Service can be found elsewhere in this book. Additional information can be found at [www.usps.gov](http://www.usps.gov).

## Safety and Security

The emergency response number in the USA is '911.' It will connect you to firemen, police and/or ambulance services. Non-emergency police response is '311.' You can also dial '0' and an operator will assist you.

Make a good use of JHU Security Escort Vans whenever you feel uncomfortable walking home alone or want to do some basic shopping

around campus after dark. A very common practice among students involves everyone making sure that, after a dinner, a party, or a late night studying at the library, no-one walks home alone. It is common to walk in groups or pairs for safety.

## Interpersonal Information

This last section includes some common observations made by international students about interacting with U.S. citizens and their culture. The extent to which these experiences

resonate with you will depend on your cultural background. As with all of the information in this section, please consider sharing additional

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information or experiences you think other students will find helpful. You can send it to the GRO at [groguide@jhu.edu](mailto:groguide@jhu.edu) for inclusion in future editions of the Guide.

### *Formality*

Americans tend to be more informal than people from other countries. It is common for Americans to wear casual clothing to school and to greet professors by first name (if invited to do so). Of course, there are situations in which formality is the norm, such as job interviews or weddings. Cultural events, such as the theatre, opera, or ballet, do not necessarily require dressing up, at least not in Baltimore. Any private social events invitations usually mention whether or not you should dress casually.

### *Personal Contact*

The average personal distance between two people when they are talking to each other varies from culture to culture. Americans tend to require more personal space than people from other cultures. Americans do not engage in as much physical contact as individuals from some other cultures when they are talking with others or walking side-by-side. Both men and women shake hands and general acquaintances do not kiss or hug when they meet.

### *Behavior*

Americans are much more assertive than some other cultures. Speaking for yourself and attempting to persuade someone to adopt your view are not only acceptable, but expected.

Americans often plan social gatherings on short notice, so don't be surprised if you get invited to someone's home or to see a movie or baseball game without much warning. If you are busy, do not be afraid to decline the invitation, perhaps suggesting an alternative time that would be better. Your host will not be insulted. If a friend has invited you to drop by anytime, it is best to call before visiting to make sure it is convenient for them.

If you are invited to dinner, do not arrive more than 5 minutes early and do not arrive more than 5-10 minutes late. It is appropriate to bring the host a bottle of wine, a gift basket of fruit, a box of candy, a small potted plant, or bouquet of flowers. If you are invited to a party, it is acceptable to arrive a little later and people usually bring drinks to the party, since alcohol is expensive. If you wish to thank the host for his/her hospitality, it is appropriate to call or send a brief written thank you note the next day.