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University of Tennessee

The University of Tennessee is the second oldest and the largest public higher education institute in the state of Tennessee. It was founded in 1794, two years before Tennessee became a state. The University of Tennessee, Knoxville hosts over 27,000 students. Of those, approximately 1,000 are international students. The University offers more than 300 degree programs at the Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral levels. Many of these programs are consistently ranked in the top 50 in the USA.

Pre-Arrival information

Obtaining a Visa Stamp and Entering the U.S.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) charges a fee for students to use the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). The fee is $200 for F-1 students, and $180 for J-1 students. Before you apply for your first F-1 or J-1 visa, you must pay the SEVIS fee. Please go to: www.fmjfee.com for more information on the fee payment process.

In order to apply for and obtain a valid student visa in your passport, you must have paid the SEVIS fee and present the correct documents to the U.S. embassy or consulate. You must include the I-20 or DS-2019 which identifies you and the school you will be attending. The I-20 is used to obtain an F-1 visa, while the DS-2019 is used to obtain a J-1 visa. Most students will use the F visa. Exchange students will use the J-1 visa.

Once your visa application is approved, the laser printed visa (which includes your name and photograph) is “glued” in your passport designating the school you will attend upon arrival in the U.S. More details about the Visa application process are provided on page 4 of this handbook.

Important Notes:

Canadian (citizens) students who enter from Canada are exempt from having to obtain a visa but must use the SEVIS Form I-20 or SEVIS Form DS-2019 to enter the U.S. in F-1 or J-student status. You must obtain a Form I-94 clearly indicating F-1 or J-1 status when you enter.

First-time new students are not permitted to enter the U.S. more than 30 days prior to the start date noted on Item #5 on the SEVIS Form I-20, or Item #3 on SEVIS Form DS-2019. You are required to report to and attend the school designated on your visa and Certificate of Eligibility (SEVIS Form I-20 or SEVIS Form DS-2019).
Visa Application Step by Step

Step 1: Read all of the information on your I-20 or DS-2019 to make sure it is correct. If there are any errors, contact the UTK Center for International Education before using the form.

Step 2: Read Page 2 of the form very carefully and sign at the bottom of Page 1 to show that you have read it.

Step 3: Go to www.fmjfee.com to pay the “SEVIS Fee”. Print your receipt!

Step 4: Information about how to apply for Student visas can be found at https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study.html. Review the information on this web site concerning how to apply for a visa. Then, local the U.S. consulate nearest you at the http://www.usembassy.gov/ web site.

Step 5: Fill out the DS-160 visa application form found here: https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/

Step 6: Follow instructions on the Consulate website to pay the Visa Application Fee of US$160. (This is different from the SEVIS Fee). Print proof of payment.

Step 7: Schedule your appointment for a visa interview. Be sure to print confirmation of your appointment.

The Visa Interview

Take the following items to your visa appointment:

• I-20 or DS 2019 Form
• Passport valid for at least six months
• Printed receipt for SEVIS fee
• Documentation that you have paid the Visa Application Fee
• Confirmation of your visa interview appointment
• Evidence that you have the amount of funding indicated on your I-20 or DS-2019 form.

Visa Interview Tips

1. Dress appropriately
2. Arrive at least 15 minutes early for your interview appointment
3. Interviews last 3-5 minutes.
4. Be clear of your intention to study.
5. Show ties to your home country
6. Be confident and prepared
7. Be able to discuss why you chose the school and major
8. Provide brief, specific, succinct answers
9. Remain calm and relaxed
10. Only answer the questions that are asked.
Common Interview Questions

1. What do you intend to do after completing your program?
2. Do you have any relatives in the US? Where are they living?
3. Why should I grant you a visa?

Please Note:

F-1 and J-1 visas are nonimmigrant visas. The most common reason for visa denial is the failure to overcome the presumption of immigrant intent. U.S. law requires that visa officers assume that applicants for an F or J visa want to move to the US permanently and students must overcome this in order to be eligible. U.S. consular officers want the applicant to demonstrate permanent employment, meaningful business or financial connections, close family ties, or social or cultural associations, which will indicate a strong inducement to return to the country of origin.

Preparing to Travel

Book travel so that you arrive in Knoxville, Tennessee USA by January 3, 2018 but no earlier than January 1, 2018.

Be sure to provide the required immunizations to the University of Tennessee Student Health Center prior to travel. If you do not provide these immunization records, you cannot move into your residence hall upon arrival. Please review the Immunization information on the UT Student Health Center web site and carefully follow directions. You may call the Immunization Coordinator to ask questions at +1.865.974.2264. Be advised that all documentation must be in English, so take time to obtain translations of your existing records if they are not already in English. Information is available at this link: https://studenthealth.utk.edu/immunization-requirements-forms/

Immigration Process for Entering the United States:

IMPORTANT: When you enter the U.S, have your passport and I-20 or DS-2019 Form ready to show the Immigration Officer.

- The office may ask that you show your SEVIS Fee Receipt and evidence of funding.
- The Immigration Officer will stamp your passport. Make sure that the passport stamp indicates you have F-1 or J-1 status.
- As soon as possible, go to https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#!/home to view your I-94 arrival document. The I-94 is the official record of legal entry to the United States in F-1 or J-1 status. Print a paper copy and keep an e-copy on your phone, I Pad or laptop computer.
- Take a photo of your passport bio page, F-1 or J-1 visa stamp, I-20 or DS-2019 and F-1 or J-1 Status entry stamp and I-94. Keep an e-copy of these with you on your phone or other electronic device.
Traveling

Getting to Knoxville, Tennessee

Students should try to fly into Knoxville’s McGhee-Tyson Airport (TYS). Most international flights from Europe arrive in Atlanta, New York, Chicago or Washington DC, with flights from Asia coming into Los Angeles or San Francisco, and flights from Latin America flying into Houston or Miami. Flying into these major cities usually means good Knoxville connections from international flights.

Important Note:
Due to increased security measures at U.S. airports, expect long delays at immigration and security checkpoints. We advise that you schedule long layovers (at least 4 hours) between flights at your port of entry to reduce the risk of missing your connection flight to Knoxville.

From the TYS Airport

When signing-up for orientation, you will also have the option of signing-up for our airport pick-up service. This service is available to new students arriving for the fall semester (August) or spring semester (January). Information about how to schedule an airport pickup will be sent to you after you have registered for orientation. If you are arriving when the pick-up service is unavailable, there are taxi services available at the McGhee-Tyson (TYS) Airport. Please be sure to have $35-$40 in cash to pay for the taxi. Ride share apps can also be used if you prefer to ride with an Uber or Lyft driver.

- **Yellow Cab Company**: 865.523.5151
- **AAA Airport Taxi Service**: 865.531.1930
- **Discount Taxi**: 865.755.5143
- **Airport United Tax**: 865.437.7375
- **International Taxi**: 865.607.8732
Housing

A. On-Campus Residence Halls

If you are an undergraduate student and plan to live in UT housing, you should submit a housing application immediately. UT housing can and does fill up quickly. If you wait to apply for housing until you arrive in Knoxville or just before classes begin, you will encounter difficulties. You can review the residence halls and apply here: http://housing.utk.edu/.

Residence halls are located on campus. These single rooms are normally shared with one other student, but some private rooms are available. The halls differ from one another in the amenities included, so you should research each option before making your housing request. Please contact University Housing with any questions concerning your application or room assignments.

Graduate Students:

The University of Tennessee does not offer on campus housing for graduate students. The University does provide information about off campus housing that is available. Please go to https://offcampushousing.utk.edu/ for information and review the information on the next page. Please note that CIE and ISSS cannot arrange housing for you.

UT On-Campus Housing website:
https://housing.utk.edu/

Housing Contact Info:
Phone: 865.974.3411
Fax: 865.974.1420
Email: housing@utk.edu
B. Off-Campus Housing

Off-campus housing is a popular choice for many international students at UT, especially in the Fort Sanders and Tyson Park areas, which are both within walking distance from campus. There are several housing options available: Each type has its own amenities and appeal.

- **Apartments** can be large enough to have two or more bedrooms, can be furnished or unfurnished, and should provide you with a stove, kitchen sink, refrigerator and one or more bathrooms. Apartments are usually shared with 1-3 other students.
- **Efficiencies** are small, single-occupancy apartments where one large room serves as a bedroom, living room, and sometimes kitchen, with a private bathroom.
- **Rooms** are typically a rented room in a larger house or apartment, where the kitchen, living room and bathroom facilities are shared by everyone in the house. Three to six (or sometimes more) people can live in one house, depending on the size of the house.

**Important Note:**

All incoming freshman undergraduate students must live on-campus for their first year at UT. After one year, students may choose to stay on campus or move off campus.

C. Temporary housing

If you are unable to check into your permanent housing when you arrive in Knoxville, temporary housing **may** be available at a UT residence hall. You would be required to move into a regular room assignment a few days before classes begin, or find your own housing. It is important to note that temporary housing on campus is **not** available for students arriving in the spring and summer terms (Temporary Housing policy is subject to change).

- **If on-campus housing is unavailable:**
  Some of the **international student associations** will help you arrange for temporary housing with a current student who is willing to let you spend a few nights on their spare bed or couch. The website for the associations is: [https://ihouse.utk.edu/international/](https://ihouse.utk.edu/international/).

- **If you arrive after office hours:**
  After 5:00 P.M. or on the weekend, the easiest thing to do is to check in to a hotel, and then visit the CIE the next business day to check if any temporary housing is available on campus. Knoxville hotels are listed here: [http://international.utk.edu/resources/](http://international.utk.edu/resources/).
Graduate Assistantship

Students with a graduate assistantship (GA) are normally granted a tuition waiver, health insurance and a monthly stipend. However, it is still important to bring an adequate amount of money with you when you arrive to assist with expenses you will incur at the beginning of the semester, including student activity and technology fees. And, of course, there will be other expenses such as books, meals and household equipment.

Important Note:
Due to the procedures involved in putting a new GA on payroll, it takes 1-2 months before you receive your first paycheck. Therefore, it is important that you bring an adequate amount of money for at least the first 2-3 months. Do not rely on receiving your stipend in August (for fall admits) or January (for spring admits).

Immigration Information

For students outside the U.S.

Under current U.S. immigration law, the University of Tennessee is not allowed to employ any person who does not have work authorization. Because a graduate assistantship is considered employment, it is important that you obtain the necessary legal immigration status before you begin your assistantship.

If you are in legal status as an F-1 or J-1 student, you are allowed to accept an assistantship (a J-1 student must first obtain permission from the program sponsor). A student with J-2 immigration status may also be allowed to work, if employment authorization has already been granted by the Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS), a branch of DHS. A person with any other non-immigrant status is normally not allowed to accept employment as a graduate student.

For students already inside the U.S.

- **(Transfers from another U.S. institution)** If you are currently an F-1 student studying at another U.S. institution, you must comply with U.S. immigration transfer procedures before UT can employ you. You will need to complete the immigration transfer procedure within 15 days of the program start date before you are eligible to begin working at UT. If you are currently a J-1 student, you should check with your program sponsor for assistance with correct procedures.

- **If you are on your current university's J-1 program**, your transfer to UT must be processed and completed by UT before you may begin work. If your DS-2019 is issued by a governmental/scholarship agency rather than by a university, you do not need to transfer to the UT program. However, you will be required to show a letter from your sponsor authorizing you to work at UT.

- **If you currently hold another non-immigrant status**, it may be possible to change your status to F-1 so that you can accept a position. However this process takes many months and you will not be able to begin working until the change has been approved. If you would like to know more about this procedure, contact your current international student advisor, or our office.
Check-in and Orientation

Check-in Sessions

Like most universities in the U.S., UT has a required orientation for international students, including transfers. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requires all new international students at UT to check-in with the Center for International Education. The check-in process is part of international student orientation. Go to http://international.utk.edu/check-in-and-orientation/students/ to register for an international student check-in session. You must arrive by the date of your scheduled check-in session. During your check-in session, you will learn about important immigration laws and regulations, campus work authorization procedures, taxes, health insurance and more.

What to Bring

Things to bring to orientation:
- your passport,
- I-20 or DS-2019
- I-94
- Any other documents issued by the U.S. government.

If you are an F-1 student transferring from another U.S. school, you must also bring the following with you:
- An original I-20 from UT.
- I-20(s) issued in the last year from previous U.S. institutions attended.
- Proof you are in legal status (either a transcript or practical training documents).
- Current semester class schedule for UT.

International Student Orientation Guide

Along with the International Student Check-In Session, there are many other suggested and required events that you should attend. To see a complete orientation schedule and learn more about orientation events, click here:
Other important events following your arrival

A. English Placement Guide

Four courses—English 121, 122, 131, and 132—focus on teaching advanced English academic literacy to UT students whose first or strongest language is not English. Incoming international students will be placed into one of these courses based on their TOEFL (or equivalent) scores used for University admissions.

Undergraduate Students
A combination of scores and sub scores will determine English course placement. You will be contacted by the English Department as soon as you confirm attendance.

Graduate Students
The ESL Writing Program uses standardized test scores to place graduate students into ESL writing courses. If graduate students do not have test scores or are not satisfied with their test scores, they can choose to take an English Placement Exam, which usually takes place in August and January about a week before classes begin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No English Required:</th>
<th>English 122 Required:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL iBT 100 and above, OR</td>
<td>TOEFL 99 or below, OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS 7.5 and above, OR</td>
<td>IELTS 7.0 or below, OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL CBT 250 and above, OR</td>
<td>TOEFL CBT 247 or below, OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL PBT 600 and above</td>
<td>TOEFL PBT 597 or below</td>
</tr>
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B. ITA Testing Program

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are also required to participate in the ITA Testing program (formerly the SPEAK test). It is a rule in the State of Tennessee that any non-native English speaker wishing to teach must score at the appropriate level on test. For more information, visit: http://gradschool.utk.edu/graduate-student-life/ita-testing-program/.

C. Registering for Courses

You cannot register for classes until you have arrived in Knoxville, attended orientation, taken the EPE (if necessary), and met with an academic advisor from your department. If you are an undergraduate student, the academic advisor must clear you to register before you will have access to the system. During orientation, we will go over registration procedures, as well as the minimum number of enrollment hours required for international students to maintain their legal status. These steps/procedures are different for graduate and undergraduate students.

D. Paying Tuition and Fees

DO NOT PAY FOR ANYTHING UNTIL YOU GET TO UT! Once you have registered for classes, you will be required to pay your tuition, fees and health insurance. You do not have to pay before registration. Most graduate assistantships grant a tuition waiver but do not cover all student fees. Once you register for courses, you can check and pay your balance online at myutk.utk.edu or you can pay in person when you get to Knoxville at the Bursar’s Office, located at 211 Student Services Building. They will accept cash or check. If you choose to pay by credit card, you must do so online, and will be charged a processing fee. The university also accepts international wire payments through flywire.

You should check your MyUTK account regularly throughout the semester to see if you owe anything such as: parking tickets (if you get a car), library fines, classroom fees, or health center fees. If you do not pay on time, you will be charged late fees, your account will be put on hold, and UT will not release your transcript until your account is settled. For more information about your student account, visit One Stop Student Services: http://onestop.utk.edu/
Post-Arrival Information

Health Care Information

A. Health Insurance

All international students attending UT are required to enroll in a health and accident insurance plan. UT has negotiated a plan that fits most students’ needs. You will automatically be enrolled in this plan and pay for it at registration. If you have a scholarship that provides an adequate policy, you may be exempt from UT’s insurance. Most graduate students who have been offered assistantships will have this health insurance fee paid for by their departments. Health insurance will be discussed in more detail at orientation. For more information, you may also visit: https://international.utk.edu/health-insurance-information/students-2/.

B. UT Student Health Center

The UT Student Health Center on campus provides a full range of health services to all enrolled UT students who have paid the student health fee. Staff at the clinic are professionally trained and are able to counsel students on their health care needs. The clinic offers services including primary care, mental health and vaccinations. It also administers the health insurance program that all international students are required to purchase.

C. Health Records

Students are required to bring a copy of their medical and vaccination/immunization records to UT. The Student Health Service office on campus will be able to inform you if you need any vaccinations prior to arrival at UT. Any necessary vaccinations that you do not have can be obtained once you arrive at UT.

For more information, please visit the Student Health Service: http://studenthealth.utk.edu/

***Be sure to remember to bring copies of your prescriptions for medications, eyeglasses, etc (in English).

Resources

A. Utilities (Electricity and Water)

If you choose off-campus housing, you will, in most cases, be required to pay for your own gas/electricity and possibly water. Your landlord will tell you in your lease which utilities are included in your rent.

If you need to set up your own account for any of these utilities, you will need to call the Knoxville Utilities Board (KUB). You will have to pay a new connection fee, plus your bill for the first month. After that, you will pay a monthly bill based on the amount of water and electricity that you consumed during that billing period.

KUB:
www.kub.org
Ph: 865.524.2911
B. Internet and TV

Most off-campus housing does not come with preinstalled television and Internet. If interested, you should research provider options and choose a package that best suits your needs. Basic television is very cheap, but quickly becomes more expensive with additional cable channels. Internet alone can cost around $20 per month or more, depending on the speed. Most providers also offer special deals if you sign up for a TV and Internet package deal. Most people try to split costs with a roommate.

C. Mobile Phones

If you are interested in purchasing a cellular/mobile phone, there are many options around Knoxville. Many companies have month-by-month or pre-paid options, and some even have international calling plans. Data packages including web and email access usually cost $30-$45 extra. Be sure to shop around and check out a variety to decide which company and calling plan would best suit your needs.

D. Email

All on-campus residence halls and most academic buildings are equipped with free wireless Internet access. The library and residence halls have student computer labs. All incoming students at the University of Tennessee will be assigned a NetID and a UT email account. You are encouraged to access your UT campus email regularly because this is the primary means for CIE and other UT departments to communicate important information to you. For more information, please visit the website of the Office of Information Technology (OIT): http://oit.utk.edu/
Campus Life

Campus Activities

A. International House

The "I-House" is a free-standing, non-residential programming facility that was opened in 1996 to provide all UTK students and scholars with a place in which they could meet and learn about people of every culture represented at UTK.

**Hours:**
- **Mon-Thurs:** Fall and Spring: 8am-9pm  
  - Summer: Mon-Fri: 8am - 5pm  
  - Fri: 8am-5pm  
  - Sat-Sun: CLOSED

**Location:** 1623 Melrose Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37996

**Tel:** 865-974-4453

**URL:** http://ihouse.utk.edu/

**Email:** ihouse@utk.edu

*The hours of operation may change. Call 865.974.4453 for updated information.

Like the UTK International Facebook page to receive information about future events!

https://www.facebook.com/internationalut/

B. International Student Associations

Students from over 100 countries attend UT. If you are interested in knowing what international associations are represented at UT, go to: http://ihouse.utk.edu/international/.

If your country is represented, please feel free to email/phone the contact person to let them know you are coming. Often, these groups can provide assistance as you settle into your life in Knoxville and at UT. If your country is not represented by an association, feel free to start one when you arrive!

C. Outreach Activities

Many students are interested in sharing their cultural traditions with fellow students and their new community. The CIE is frequently asked by local public schools if international students are willing to talk about their culture to their classes. You may want to consider bringing your flag, some pictures, traditional dress or music. Several students will bring traditional instruments or are willing to perform traditional dances. Contact the I-House for more information.
Facilities on Campus

A. Student Union
   The University Center provides a wide range of services to UT students, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests. It includes dining, bookstore, post office, ticket office, computer store, and much more. For more information, visit http://studentunion.utk.edu/

B. UT Dining
   There is a variety of options on campus for dining. UT’s 21 dining stations offer continuous operation serving breakfast, lunch, dinner or even late night meal. For more information, visit http://dining.utk.edu/

C. Library
   There are three libraries serving the Knoxville campus. In the Hodges Main Library, research assistance and computer services are available 24 hours a day in the Commons. You may also explore virtual UT Libraries from home. For more information, visit http://www.lib.utk.edu/

D. RecSports
   RecSports provides a wide variety of programs and well-maintained facilities for students, faculty, and staff of the university community. RecSports has a number of programs including Fitness, Aquatics, Intramurals, Outdoor Recreation, Sport Clubs, and much more. For more information, visit http://recsports.utk.edu/

E. Museum
   The McClung Museum is a general museum with collections in anthropology, archaeology, decorative arts, local history, and natural history. The admission is always free. For more information, visit http://mcclungmuseum.utk.edu/

Transportation

Knoxville Area Transit (KAT) provides a transportation service to the campus community. Their routes and times vary during the day so we suggest you visit their website or obtain a brochure at the Parking Services Office. You can purchase a “semester pass” in the Central Ticket Office at the University Center, which will allow you to ride the bus unlimited times during one semester (you must present your VolCard). A free “trolley” bus runs between UT campus and downtown Knoxville.

“The T” is The University of Tennessee Transportation System, operated by KAT. The basic T routes include East-West, North-South, Ag Express and Late Nite. In addition, the T: Link transports students traveling late at night to the Late Nite bus or to their destination. UT Students and faculty ride free on all T services, with a UT I.D. Also there are free trolley services from UT to downtown. For more information: http://katbus.com or https://ridethet.utk.edu/
Daily Life

Stay Safe

A. Emergency Dialing

If there is an emergency, you can dial following numbers for assistance.

**Emergency:** 911
UT Police (emergency): 974-3111
UT Police (main line): 974-3114
Safety Information: 656-SAFE (7233)

- If you are on campus, you can also pick up a Blue Light Phone

If you need to quickly reach someone outside of the U.S., you can dial the international operator at #00. If you know the number, you can dial it directly. This is often quite expensive, but may be necessary in case of emergencies.

UT has its own police force, in addition to the City of Knoxville police. On the UTK campus there are more than 50 emergency call boxes with blue flashing lights. If you feel that you are in danger on campus, find the nearest callbox to automatically dial campus police. The police are expected to both enforce the law and assist the public. It is always appropriate to ask the police to help with all kinds of matters such as lost or stolen property, noisy neighbors, and emergency situations. Police are legally prohibited from taking "gifts" or money. They may arrest people who attempt to offer such payment.

B. Drugs

Recreational drugs are illegal but common in the United States. Many drugs are made in people’s homes and cut, or mixed, with deadly substances. Never set your drink down at a party or bar! People can slip drugs into your drink this way. If you happen to set your cup down, get a new cup and drink. Remember that you always have the right to say no to anything you encounter that makes you feel uncomfortable.

C. Alcohol

In Tennessee the legal age to purchase and/ or drink alcohol is 21, and you must show your identification before buying any kind of alcohol. It is illegal to carry open containers of alcohol in public places like the street, or even transport them in your car. In addition, the laws against drunk driving are very strict. **DO NOT DRINK BEFORE YOU DRIVE.** Not only is this dangerous to you and others, but you could also lose your license and go to jail.

D. Campus 24-hour Transportation Service

One of the best ways for members of the UT campus community to stay safe is to take advantage of the nighttime transportation services offered by the “T.” The services are convenient and free, and they are a great alternative to walking at night.

For more information, visit [http://parking.utk.edu/alternative-transportation/](http://parking.utk.edu/alternative-transportation/), [http://ridethet.utk.edu/](http://ridethet.utk.edu/) or call (865) 215-7800
Money and Banking

With a checking account, you will receive a checkbook and an ATM (automated teller machine) card, which allows you to withdraw cash from your account 24 hours a day. Without a Social Security Number (SSN), you will be ineligible for credit cards or check cards. Information on social security numbers and eligibility will be discussed at orientation.

Services and fees vary, but most banks in the area offer special “Student Accounts” with minimal to no monthly charges. Be sure to ask questions about student accounts and the stipulations for international students when you visit the banks.

A. Opening a Bank Account

When you open an account, the bank will likely ask you for identification documents (such as your passport, I-20 or DS-2019 form, and I-94 card). Some banks will also require you to have and Social Security Number, but not all of them will.

If you have a spouse or other dependents, you may wish to open a joint account so multiple family members can use the same account.

B. Using an ATM

Most of the major banks’ Automated Teller Machines (or ATMs for short) can be found on the 1st floor of the Student Union. ATMs allow you to make cash withdrawals, deposits, and transfers between accounts. You can also view your account balance.

There is a limit on how much money you can withdraw from an ATM at one time or on one day. Check with your bank to find out what the limit is.

C. Using a Debit Card

A debit card—also called a check card—is connected to your checking account and is used almost like a regular credit card, except that the charges made are deducted from your checking account upon purchase. You do not get a separate bill at the end of the month as with a credit card. Be sure to keep track of your spending, though. If you spend more money than is in your account, you do not only risk ruining your credit record, but the bank also charges you with a fee every time you overdraw your account.

D. Writing a Check

Americans usually write checks rather than paying cash for big purchases. When opening your bank account, you'll be given a check book. Using a check book for paying rent, your phone bill etc. helps you to keep track of payments.
Driving

If you plan to drive a car while you are in Knoxville, first make sure you have a valid driver’s license. You can park at UT by purchasing a monthly or semester parking pass. Visit https://parking.utk.edu to learn how to buy passes and how much they cost. Remember that you are required by law to wear a seatbelt while driving or riding in a car. You are also required to buy automobile insurance, which can cost between $500 and $2000 per year, so be sure to factor that into your budget.

A. TN Driver's License

Current Tennessee Driver License policy will allow you to qualify for a TN Temporary Driver License until the expiration date specified in your immigration documents. If you apply for and receive an extension to stay beyond the original date, then you will need to present your extension papers to the Driver License Office for renewal of your license.

To apply for a Temporary Driver License, you should bring to the driver license testing station:
1. Passport
2. Original I-94
3. I-20 if you are in F status, or DS-2019 if you are in J status, and
4. At least 2 documents showing your residence in Tennessee, such as KUB bill, rental contract, bank statement, health insurance policy etc.

If you have applied for a Social Security Number, you should wait until you receive it and then apply for a Driver License.

If the driver license office requests other documents that you do not have, please contact ISSS.

Important Notes:
Canadian citizens who have a valid Canadian Driver License can get a TN Driver License by showing their Canadian license and an abstract (of the driving record) from Canada. If they have a valid Canadian driver license, they only need to take the vision test.

German citizens who have a valid German driving license do not have to show an abstract from their country but do have to take the knowledge/theory test and a vision test. They will not need to take the road test when applying for a TN Driver License.

For more information, including Maps and the Driver's License Handbook and Study Guide, visit: https://www.tn.gov/safety/driver-services/classd/tdl.html

B. Automobile insurance

Before you buy, compare prices at different insurance companies. You can visit http://www.bankrate.com/insurance.aspx to compare many companies at once. By law you are required to have liability insurance when driving a car in the U.S.

C. Vehicle Registration

Once you get your TN driver license and decide to buy a car, you will need to register that car in a County Clerk office. For your TN license plates you will need to pay a fee every year you renew your registration.

If you have purchased a car from a private person, you will also need to change the name on your car’s title and pay the sales tax on your purchase. You can register your car, get the license plates, transfer the title for your car and pay the sales tax all in one of the County Clerk Offices. It is advisable you have your TN driver license at the time of vehicle registration.

For more information, visit http://www.knoxcounty.org/clerk/motorvehicle/index.php
**Traveling Outside the U.S.**

If you travel outside the United States during your program, you must obtain a travel validation signature on your I-20 or DS-2019 form from CIE before you depart. Bring your I-20 or DS-2019 form to ISSS at least two weeks before your trip. Also, make sure that your visa is valid on the date you will reenter the United States and that “M” (for multiple) or “2” (for dual) is listed under “Entries” on your visas.

*For visits of less than 30 days to Canada, Mexico or the adjacent Caribbean islands other than Cuba, you will be readmitted to the United States with an expired visa if you have a valid I-20 or DS-2019 and I-94. Contact ISSS for more information.*

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**Final Notes**

Please refer to the University of Tennessee’s website: [www.utk.edu](http://www.utk.edu) for more information about the university, campus life and news, as well as information about Knoxville in general. For more information on the Center for International Education, go to [www.international.utk.edu](http://www.international.utk.edu).

We try to answer email questions as promptly as possible. The office tends to get very busy as we approach the beginning of a semester, so it may take several days before you receive a response. Please do not send multiple emails as this tends to clog up our email accounts. Ask all of your questions in one email.

We strongly urge each student to arrive early. There are many tasks that have to be accomplished before the rush of orientation and registration begins. Remember, it will take most people a few days to get over “jet lag.” A couple of days spent resting and exploring Knoxville and the UT campus can make a big difference in how your first semester at UT gets started.
Glossary

- **CIE**: Center for International Education
- **Coke**: In the southern U.S., a term used to describe every type of carbonated beverage.
- **DHS**: Department of Homeland Security
- **EPE**: English Placement Exam
- **Off-Campus Housing**:  
  - **Apartments**: Can be large enough to have two or more bedrooms, can be furnished or unfurnished, and should provide you with a stove, kitchen sink, refrigerator and one or more bathrooms.
  - **Efficiencies**: Small apartments where one large room serves as bedroom, living room, and sometimes kitchen, with a private bathroom.
- ***Rooms**: One rented room in a larger house or apartment, where the kitchen, living room and bathroom facilities are shared by everyone in the house.
- **Old City**: Downtown Knoxville, about a 10-minute walk east of campus
- **Residence Halls (sometimes called “Dorms” or “Dormitories”)**: Massive buildings with 300-500 students. Rooms come in singles (you are the only occupant) or doubles (you have a roommate). Most rooms are doubles. Residence hall rooms are furnished with a bed, desk, dresser, mirror and closet. You must provide your own linens.
- **SEVIS**: Student and Exchange Visitor Program
- **Smokey**: UT’s mascot, a bluetick hound dog.
- **Smoky Mountains**: The beautiful mountain range located 45 minutes from Knoxville. It’s the most visited National Park in the United States.
- **SSN**: Social Security Number. Required for employment in the USA.
- **The Strip**: The section of Cumberland Avenue just north of campus with bars, restaurants, banks, book stores and other shops.
- **T-RECS**: Tennessee Recreation Sports facility located on campus. Contains an indoor track, workout rooms, pools, exercise machines and weights.
- **TOEFL**: Test of English as a Foreign Language exam
- **TYS**: The IATA code for Knoxville’s McGhee Tyson Airport
- **Utilities**: Electricity, water, telephone, cable and Internet
- **VOLs**: Short for “Volunteers.” Used to describe the Vols (men’s) and Lady Vols (women’s) athletic teams
- **Volunteers**: The University of Tennessee’s nickname.
- **Vol Card**: Student identification card.
- **Y’all**: Mainly used in the southern states. Short for “you all.” Used when referring to someone or a group of people. Plural – “All Y’all.”