

# WHAT TO PREPARE



## CLIMATE

Michigan has four seasons: spring, summer, fall and winter. You will arrive near the end of summer when temperatures are still between 70-80 degrees Fahrenheit (21-26 degrees Celsius). Cooler fall temperatures will arrive by mid-September. By December, you can expect snow and winter temperature between 20-40 degrees Fahrenheit (-6 to 4 degrees Celsius). Warm boots, gloves, hats, scarves and coats will become a part of your wardrobe when going outdoors during the winter months. Even if you do not wish to bring these items with you, you will need to purchase them once you arrive. Cold weather usually lasts until at least March when spring arrives and temperatures slowly begin to warm up to the summer averages.

## ITEMS TO BRING

Your first packing concern will probably be clothing. Warm clothes will be the most sensible items to pack. Sweaters, sweatshirts, long-sleeved shirts and pants will be your normal attire. Jeans are the universal clothing for most students in the US, even when going out on a weekend. If you plan on attending more formal events, dresses, skirts, blouses and ties are good but not necessarily required. Clothing tends to be more casual in the US so pack what you will be most comfortable wearing. From April to mid-September you will probably want to have some lightweight and summer clothes.

You will probably want to bring three pairs of shoes: walking/running shoes, casual shoes and dress shoes. You may not want to bring expensive jewelry. Most hair and /or makeup products can be carried overseas with you; however, most of the same products (or at least close replicas) can be purchased here and are reasonable priced.

It is recommended that you bring any medication or vitamins that you are used to taking and English translation of any prescription medication or for eyeglasses/contacts. You may want to bring small toiletries with you but you will be able to purchase most of the same products in the US. Place these in your personal carry-on for easy access.

The voltage used in the US is 120v. You may want to bring an adapter for any electronic devices you decide to bring. You will also want to check to see if your mobile phone will work in the US. Most students purchase a pay as you go plan once arriving in the US. You may also purchase a US prepaid SIM card. We also recommend that you bring pictures of home and family members.

As for school supplies, most students find a backpack, folders, pads of paper, pencils, pens, 3-ring binders, a stapler and planner useful. Again, all these items can be purchased at a store upon your arrival.

Remember to leave extra space in your suitcase, carry-on bag, and or/purse. Most students make many purchases while here, whether they are things they want for themselves or gifts for family and friends. Occasionally they do not have enough room for everything they purchase to fit into their suitcase when they return home. Also keep in mind that if luggage goes over the weight limit, you will be charged an additional fee at the airport. If you think you will have too much luggage, you have the option of mailing items to your home. This can be very expensive. Make a copy of your passport and place it inside your checked luggage.

## ARRIVAL

When you arrive in the US at your first stop, you will immediately have your passport/visa checked. Have your passport/visa and the letter that states your acceptance to student in the US ready at that time. You may not be asked to show your acceptance letter, but it will be good to have available nonetheless. You will also need to show your I-20 form. Once you get through this line, you will be able to pick up your luggage and go through customs. Here you may have your luggage opened and thoroughly searched. There is also an opportunity for you to switch your cash into American currency if you did not do this in your home country. We recommend that you put various amounts of cash in different places for safety purposes.

After you exit customs, you will catch your connecting flight(s) to Grand Rapids (Gerald R. Ford International Airport – GRR). From there you will exit the plane and go to the baggage claim areas where you will find three carousels. Your host family or a representative from Rotman Education Technology Group will meet you at the carousel that has your luggage. If for some reason you are not met immediately, go to the information desk and wait there. If you are still not met, then you should call Mary Gao-Rotman at 616-606-2388. The drive from the airport to your residence will be approximately 30 minutes.

## BANKING

If you would like to open a bank account in the US, we recommend Chase Bank, although you are certainly welcome to use another. Whichever bank you choose, be sure to ask about their international wire transfer capabilities and other international services. You will be given the option of opening a checking and/or savings account. Unless you plan on living here for a long period of time, you will probably choose a checking account. When opening a checking account, you will be asked if you would like checks and/or a debit card. Both are usually accepted anywhere you go, though checks are bulkier to carry and sometimes not honored if you are using starter checks which are often given to new account holders while waiting for their personalized checks to be printed. Debit cards work like credit cards except when you use one, the money comes straight from your checking account, so they are much easier and faster to use. If you decided to have a debit card, remember that as you continue to withdraw funds, the bank will continue to take money from your account, sometimes even if you do not have sufficient funds. This causes an overdraft on your account and you will incur fees. Many people decide to use a debit card and checks.

There are many ways to keep up with how much money is in your account. The quickest and most efficient way is to look online at the bank's website. You can also call the customer service phone number. Another option is to simply keep track of your spending manually by using the check register and monthly statements your bank will provide. By taking advantage of all these options, you may lessen your chances of overdrawing your account and incurring unnecessary fees.

You are not eligible to open a credit card in the US. You may use one your family has given you from China. Most major credit cards (Visa and MasterCard) are accepted almost anywhere in the US. Cash is also accepted everywhere. You can use your debit card to withdraw cash from your account from ATMs. Almost every bank has an ATM. If you do use an ATM from a bank other than the one at which you have your account, there is usually a fee for withdrawing cash.

## PHONES

Although it is not mandatory to buy a cell phone, it certainly will be helpful and practical. There are a number of stores in the area at which to purchase a phone. The best option would be a pay as you go plan which allows you to buy the number of minutes you want to use instead of signing a year-long contract. A cell phone will be your main means to make or receive calls. Remember that in the US, incoming cell phone calls are also charged. You may also purchase a pre-paid SIM card from any phone carrier.

## COMPUTER

Computers are a critical component to completing your classwork. If you bring a computer, it will be useful. However, it is not necessary since there are several computers at school. If you need to use a computer and do not bring your own, make arrangements to use school computers.

## SKYPE AND FACEBOOK

Many international students communicate home by using Skype. This is an internet-based communication system. More information can be found at: [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com). Students also use Facebook to connect with each other. You may also create a Facebook account by visiting: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).

## SHOPPING

There are many shopping options in the Jenison and Grand Rapids areas. Jenison features two large grocery stores and other specialty stores. Meijer is the most popular grocery store. It has an extensive variety of food, clothing and general merchandise items for sale. Other stores that many students go to are Family Fare, Target and Wal-Mart. There are large malls in the area that include clothing stores, restaurants, bookstores and movie theaters. To find show times of movies playing at the theaters at the malls, go to [www.celebrationcinema.com](http://www.celebrationcinema.com), and click on RiverTown.