

Checklist – Practical Preparation for Study and Work Abroad

Are you planning to study or work internationally? Great! Before you leave, make sure you have made all the necessary preparations. While packing tends to be left to the last minute, if you are going to be spending several weeks or months in a country, you need to make plans starting months in advance. This is especially true when it comes to travel documents like visas, money, and plans for using electronics while abroad.

Safety Precautions

Before you leave for a new country, make sure you know what the potential hazards are in that country, and what will be different from home. See the [Canadian Travel Advice and Advisories](http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories) (<http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>) website for information on safety precautions for travel to each country. This includes information on visa requirements, health services and concerns, relevant laws, and more. It also warns you of any immediate security risks that warrant cancelling or altering your travel plans.

University Requirements

Talk to your home university about your program and how transfer credits will work. Here are some suggestions of questions to ask your advisor (and make sure to get answers in writing if you are at all uncertain):

Will my program count for credit back home? Will it count for academic credit or work term/co-op credit? What will be the difference on my final transcript/diploma?

How many credits will this program give me? At what course level?

Will the grades from my program appear on my home transcript? Will the university have access to the grades from my program?

Will this program count towards my residency requirement (number of courses that have to be taken at the home university to graduate)?

Will the courses I take during my program count towards my major? My minor? My certificate program?

What will I have to do to have my grades and credits calculated? Will I need to provide detailed syllabi from each course I take? When will my grades and credits be calculated? Will they be calculated before or after I return from my program?

What will the university I am attending require in terms of class attendance? If I miss a certain number of classes (eg. for travelling), will I lose credits and/or marks?

|

will likely need a note from your doctor confirming that you are medically fit to study or work abroad, but you may need additional documentation, such as testing for HIV or tuberculosis. Check the documentation requirements early, as this may be necessary for you to obtain a visa, and the process can be time-consuming.

Money

Credit cards – Make sure your credit cards will be valid for the entire period of time you are abroad. Some credit cards may charge you for transactions abroad, so check with your bank to avoid excessive fees.

Debit cards – Make sure your debit cards will be valid for the entire period of time you are abroad. Some debit cards may charge you for transactions abroad (sometimes at a much higher rate than you expect at home), so check with your bank to avoid excessive fees. Ensure that you have sufficient funds in your bank account for the entire time you are abroad, and talk to your bank to ensure that your card will not be cancelled while you are abroad. (Many banks will view transactions abroad as “suspicious activity” if they are not notified of your travel plans in advance.)

Cash – If possible, bring some cash

Packing

Now that you've planned for your trip, what do you need to bring? This will depend on the country you are visiting, the type of exchange you are participating in, and the length of time you plan to spend abroad. It will also depend on your personal needs and

***Note:**

o

Bring things you can leave behind – You are likely to want to buy souvenirs, gifts and clothing while you are away. So bring clothing you can leave behind! Better yet, you can donate some of your used clothing to a local shelter or charity when you leave.

Bring gifts for your hosts – Especially if you are living with a host family, bring gifts for each member of the family (and consider bringing extras in case there are additional people who might expect them). Bring something symbolic of your country or hometown. Canadian memorabilia could include maple syrup or cookies, Canadian flags, memorabilia from the Vancouver Olympics or your favourite sports team, dream catchers, inukshuk figurines, etc.

Check customs regulations and airplane cabin regulations – Bring important documents, money and a change of clothes in your carry-on, but check prohibited or restricted items such as liquids, scissors and knives. Check the customs regulations for the country you are visiting to ensure that you do not import any illegal items. This is also important on your return trip – Canada prohibits the import of items such as unpasteurized cheese, large quantities of cigarettes or alcohol and many animal products. It can be very disappointing to have to discard a gift or souvenir when you return through Canadian Customs because it is prohibited for import.

What Not to Bring

What items should you wait to buy until you arrive in your destination country? This will depend on the details of your program, but, generally, most basic toiletries, medical supplies (other than prescription medication) and other essentials can be purchased abroad with little difficulty. Here are some examples of things you should not bring with you and why:

Hair dryers, etc. – Large, heavy items of this nature can be purchased abroad relatively

Valuables – Especially when it comes to electronics, it is tempting to bring your most valuable items with you on international