INTERNATIONAL FACULTY AND STAFF ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

A practical guide to living in Urbana-Champaign

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
International Student and Scholar Services
Faculty and Staff
616 E. Green, Room 201
Champaign, IL 61820
The Office of International Student and Scholar Services welcomes you to the United States and to the University of Illinois!

Some of you have already spent a great deal of time in the United States and many of you are here for the first time. We understand the anxieties you may experience coming to a society and culture that are possibly quite different from your own. Please know that your sponsoring department will be able to assist you with many practical matters and the staff of this office is ready to assist you as much as possible.

This handbook provides practical information for adjusting to life in the United States and, specifically, the Champaign-Urbana area. Even if life in your home country is quite similar to that in the United States, we hope you will find the information in this handbook to be of use.

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When French explorers first came to this area in the late 1600s, they encountered the Illiniwek or Illini Indians (Native Americans). The Illinois were actually a confederation of six related tribes and part of the larger Algonquin tribal group. These explorers set up trading posts and missions and gave the French spelling “Illinois” to the name Illini. At one time or another, many different Indian tribes occupied the Illinois region. Their presence is reflected in many place names throughout the state such as Kankakee, Kickapoo, Waukegan and Winnetka. French influence is evident in names such as Des Plaines, Creve Coeur, Joliet and LaSalle. In 1763, the French were defeated by the British in the French and Indian War. The Illinois region then became British territory until the time of the American Revolution. The Iroquois Indians gradually drove out the Illini and by 1832 virtually all Indians had been driven out of Illinois.

Illinois became the 21st state in 1818 and Champaign County was established in 1833. Because of the rich land, many farmers moved to Illinois. The town of Urbana became official in June of 1833 and was the county seat. Champaign County was part of the judicial district served by the young lawyer, Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln grew up in the village of New Salem and later lived and worked in the city of Springfield where he is also buried. Illinois is known as the “Land of Lincoln”. The Illinois Central Railroad line from Chicago was established in the 1850’s and ran two miles west of Urbana where the village of West Urbana developed. By 1860 West Urbana had become the city of Champaign, population 1,727. The 1850’s were a time of growth in Champaign County. During this period, the first doctors arrived, the first public school, first newspaper and the first bank were established. The Champaign Public Library was established in 1866, Urbana Free Library in 1874. In 1868, 77 students attended classes at the Illinois Industrial University, which changed its name to the University of Illinois in 1885. Wright Street is the dividing line between Champaign and Urbana today. Part of the University is in Champaign and part is in Urbana. Although the cities are physically connected, they have separate governments, school districts, etc.

Nearly two-thirds of the people of Illinois live in or near Chicago, but the capital city is Springfield. The state tree is the oak, the state bird is the cardinal and the state flower is the native violet. The state song is “By Thy Rivers Gently Flowing”. Principal rivers are the Illinois, the Ohio and the Mississippi. Besides Abraham Lincoln, other famous natives of Illinois include the social worker Jane Addams, President Ronald Reagan, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, writer Ernest Hemingway and poet Carl Sandburg. Film critic Roger Ebert and Olympic speed skater Bonnie Blair are natives of Champaign-Urbana.
AFTER YOU MOVE IN

The following information will be important for you after you move into your chosen place of residence.

Utilities
Utilities include electricity, gas, water, and trash/garbage pick-up. All or part of these MAY be included in the rent. If they are not, here is a list of phone numbers that will assist you:

- Ameren Illinois (gas and electricity): 1-800-755-5000
- Illinois American Water Company (water): 1-800-422-2782

Telephone service
Most of you will need to purchase your own telephone. Usually, a landline phone can be installed by plugging the phone into the wall. Phones can be purchased at many local stores.

Landline telephone service has a monthly fee. You will be charged a small amount for each local call and an additional amount for each long distance call. There are extra charges for calling card calls, directory assistance, operator assistance, etc. You can ask a telephone representative about special plans for people who make many long distance calls.

You will need to make a number of choices such as which local telephone service you want and which long distance. If you do not have a Social Security number, you will have to fax copies of your passport and visa papers to the telephone company.

Another option is to purchase a mobile phone. Some people have a mobile phone along with their landline telephone, while others only have a mobile phone.

Home Phone Companies:
- AT&T: [www.att.com](http://www.att.com)
- COMCAST: [www.comcast.com](http://www.comcast.com)
- Consolidated Communications: [www.consolidated.com](http://www.consolidated.com)

Mobile Phone Companies:
- Verizon Wireless: [www.verizon.com](http://www.verizon.com)
- AT&T: [www.att.com](http://www.att.com)
- Sprint: [www.sprint.com](http://www.sprint.com)
- T-Mobile: [www.t-mobile.com](http://www.t-mobile.com)

Laundry
Most apartment buildings have coin-operated washing machines and dryers in the building where you live or in a separate structure. In some apartments it is possible to install your own washer and dryer. There are also many laundromats in Champaign-Urbana where you can do your laundry in coin-operated machines. Most laundromats are “self-serve”, but some have attendants who will do your laundry for you for a fee. You can search online for “Laundromats in Champaign-Urbana” to find a location that is convenient for you.

Personal Property Insurance
It is a good idea to protect your property in your home from such things as theft, flood, and fire. You may purchase renter’s personal property insurance by the year. There are many insurance companies listed in the Yellow Pages of your telephone directory and online.
BANKING

All banks have a customer service representative who can assist you in opening your account and answering any questions you may have. They can also assist you if you wish to receive money from or send money to another country.

Choosing a Bank Account
There are two basic types of bank accounts: checking accounts and savings accounts. When you go to open your account, take your passport and immigration documents with you to serve as identification. If you have a Social Security number, take that as well, although it is not required.

Checking Account
A checking account will probably be most suited to your needs. With a checking account you can deposit your money in the account and access those funds with a debit card or by writing a personal check. The bank will provide you with a debit card and a few checks to get you started, any additional checks can be ordered for a fee. When you buy something in a store or online, make sure that you have enough money in your account to cover the cost. If you do not, the charge will be returned to you and you will be required to pay a fee for the “overdraft” of your account. If you don’t understand how to keep records of your account, ask the customer service representative at your bank for assistance. Some checking accounts have a minimum balance requirement. If you go below the minimum, you will be charged a fee. Be sure to ask about any requirements when you go to open your account.

Savings Account
If you have money that you do not need to use immediately, you may want to open a savings account. The advantage of a savings account is that money in the account earns a small amount of interest. You can usually deposit and withdraw money from a savings account as you wish. As with checking accounts, there is normally a minimum account balance requirement. If your account balance falls below the minimum requirement, the bank will deduct a monthly fee from your account.

ATMs (Automated Teller Machines) and Debit Cards
A debit card is a card that can be used to purchase goods and services in stores and online. They are given with most new checking accounts. They can be used anywhere credit cards are accepted. Unlike a credit card, however, the funds are immediately deducted from your account balance when you make a purchase. A debit card allows you to get cash, make deposits, transfer funds, or check your account balance at any time of the day or night from a bank ATM machine. A small fee may be incurred when using an ATM to withdraw funds from your account. There are many ATM machines located throughout the Champaign-Urbana area. Please keep your personal safety in mind when using an ATM, especially after dark and when on foot. Never give your Personal Identification Number (PIN) or card information out to anyone.
American currency is based on the decimal system with 100 cents (¢) to each dollar ($). Currency is issued in coins or bills. The names and values of the coins are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coin</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>1 cent</td>
<td>The only copper colored coin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nickel</td>
<td>5 cents</td>
<td>Larger than a penny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dime</td>
<td>10 cents</td>
<td>The smallest coin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarter</td>
<td>25 cents</td>
<td>Larger than a nickel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Dollar</td>
<td>50 cents</td>
<td>Larger than a quarter, rarely used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Dollar</td>
<td>100 cents</td>
<td>The largest coin, rarely used</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paper bills come in values of $1, $5, $10, $20, $50 and $100
MAILING SERVICE

Mail is delivered to your home mailbox once a day Monday-Saturday. You can also purchase a Post Office Box (PO Box) that allows you to pick up your mail at the post office when it is convenient for you. A PO Box requires a key, and may be a more secure option. Letters can be deposited in one of the blue mailboxes located on many streets or taken to the post office. If you change your local address the post office should be notified. Champaign and Urbana each have a main post office and several substations that provide partial service.

Post Office Locations

Champaign
2001 N. Mattis Avenue, 217-373-6018
600 N. Neil Street, 217-352-2167
302 E. Green Street, 217-328-5200

Urbana
3100 Tatman Court, 217-337-6297
202 S. Broadway, 217-367-9629
700 S. Wright Street (on campus, Altgeld Hall) 217-367-9890

Mailing Packages in the U.S. and Overseas
When sending packages, you can use any one of the following services:

United States Postal Service: www.usps.com
FedEx: www.fedex.com
UPS: www.ups.com
If you are going to have an appointment with the University of Illinois and do not already have a Social Security number, you must apply for one as soon as possible. Individuals in J-1 status must register with ISSS before applying for a Social Security number. After completing check-in procedures with ISSS, you should wait at least two days before visiting the Social Security office. This ensures that your information will be available in their system.

1. Complete Check-In with ISSS before applying for a Social Security Number. After completing check-in procedures with ISSS, you must wait 3-4 business days before visiting the Social Security office.

2. Apply IN PERSON at the local Social Security Administration office located at:
   101 South Country Fair Drive, Champaign, IL 61820.
   
   Take Springfield Avenue to Country Fair Drive and turn right. The building is on the west side of the street, just south of University Avenue.
   Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday – 9:00am to 3:00pm
   Wednesday – 9:00am to 12:00pm
   Phone: 1-877-819-2593

3. Present your passport, I-94 (admission number), and other visa papers relevant to your status such as a DS-2019 or I-797.

4. You will need to complete form SS-5 “Application for a Social Security Card.” You can complete this form at the Social Security office or you can find it at http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber/ss5.htm

5. Dependents cannot obtain a permanent number unless they are in J-2 status and have obtained work permission from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. H-4s, F-2s and O-3s cannot obtain a number.

6. The Social Security office will give you a receipt to show the University Payroll Office so you can get a temporary ID number (TCN). Your Social Security card should arrive in a few weeks, and it should say “Valid for work only with DHS authorization.”

NOTE:
Those who are not eligible for a Social Security number but need to obtain a Driver’s License can visit the Social Security Administration (SSA). They will provide them with the documentation needed to receive a temporary visitor’s Driver’s License.
THE TELEPHONE SYSTEM

The telephone system in the U.S. is composed of many privately owned but cooperating companies. There are home phones and mobile phones in almost every household.

Telephone Numbers
Telephone numbers in the U.S. contain ten digits, a three-digit area code (usually written in parentheses), a three-digit number for the local exchange, and a four-digit number for the individual subscriber. For example, the number at ISSS is (217) 333-1303: 217 (area code), 333 (local exchange), 8225 (subscriber number).

Long Distance Calls
Within Your Area Code
When calling another city within your area code, you just dial the seven-digit number. Another way to know which “exchanges” in your area code are considered local is to check a local phone book. A list of local exchanges appears in every phone book. Non-local calls are more expensive than local calls, even if they are within the same area code.

Outside Your Area Code
The U.S. is divided into many small regions or areas, each reached by an area code that must be dialed when calling from outside that particular “area”. When dialing a telephone number outside your area code, dial a “1” followed by the three digit “area code”. Plus the seven-digit local phone number. For example, if you were in Virginia and needed to call ISSS you would dial: 1-217-333-1303

If You Don’t Know a Phone Number or Area Code
If you do not know a phone number or area code you can either look for it in the telephone directory (phonebook), search online, or you can dial “411” for DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE. There is usually a small fee for using Directory Assistance, which is added to your phone bill. The telephone directory can also be accessed online at www.smartpages.com.

The white pages of telephone directories usually list individual people or families in alphabetical order by their last (family) names. The “Yellow Pages” list businesses, stores, industries and individuals alphabetically according to their category of service, such as “Laundromats”, “TV Equipment”, “Dentists”, etc. Directories give addresses as well as phone numbers. You may also want to utilize the Internet when looking up phone numbers and addresses.

usually a small charge for these calls.
Libraries

Campus Libraries
There are two main libraries on campus: the Undergraduate and Main Libraries. During the academic year, there are regular tours given of these two libraries. The University’s main card catalog, circulation desk, general information desk and stacks are all located on the second floor of the Main Library. You must have a University faculty or staff ID card to enter the stacks. This building also contains several departmental libraries including the Asian, Commerce, Education and Social Sciences, Modern Languages and Linguistics and Reference Libraries, among others. Interlibrary Loan is also located in the Main Library.

There are many other libraries in other buildings around campus such as the Music Library, Engineering Library, and the Health Sciences Library. Not all of these libraries have the same hours. Some are open at night and also on weekends. Information concerning the hours of all libraries on campus is available at [http://www.library.illinois.edu/services/find.php](http://www.library.illinois.edu/services/find.php).

Public Libraries
Both Champaign and Urbana have public libraries. Residents of the towns are eligible to use both public libraries without charge. Each library has special programs for children and a large collection of children’s books, a collection of records and pictures, international newspapers and a reference section.

To obtain a library card you must present proof that you are a resident of the town. A library card allows you to take items home for a specified length of time. There is no charge for taking out books (unless you don’t return them by the due date). There may be a small charge for checking out DVDs, videos, or CDs.

Champaign Public Library: 200 W. Green St. Champaign, IL 61820  [http://www.champaign.org/](http://www.champaign.org/)
Newspapers and Publications

The Daily Illini
The campus newspaper is published Monday-Friday during the academic year and during summer session. It is written by students and contains national, local and campus news. The Daily Illini is a good source of information about campus activities, entertainment, lectures, symposia, etc. It contains the weekly University calendar and daily notices. You may also find classified advertisements for such things as housing, used items, and job openings.

The News-Gazette
Champaign-Urbana’s only daily newspaper for local, some national and international news, and classified advertising. You may subscribe to the paper and have it delivered to your home or buy it at the Illini Union and most drugstores and supermarkets in the area. The News-Gazette office is located at 15 E. Main, Champaign, 351-5252. You can also visit their website at www.news-gazette.com.

Inside Illinois
Published by the University for faculty and staff. It is a free publication that is published every Thursday and contains University news and entertainment information.

The Illini Union and most drugstores and supermarkets in the area sell Chicago and New York newspapers. Some local bookstores sell international magazines and newspapers. The University has a Newspaper Library in Room 246 of the Main Library, 333-1509, which subscribes to many overseas newspapers. The University YMCA on Wright Street has a few international newspapers that you may read there.

Radio
There are several AM and FM radio stations which broadcast a wide variety of news, music, and other entertainment. The University operates three radio stations: WILL-AM at 580 on your AM dial offers a wide variety of information and National Public Radio; WILL-FM at 90.9 features classical music and fine arts broadcasts; WPGU-FM at 107.1 and AM at 640, a student-run radio station, features a wide range of news, music, and entertainment.

Television
There are four local television stations that broadcast a variety of programs shown nationally. National and international news is broadcast daily at 5:30pm. Local news is broadcast daily at 6:00pm and 10:00pm.

Cable television is also available giving you access to more local and out-of-town stations as well as movie channels such as Home Box Office and news stations such as CNN and Headline News. There are charges for installation and monthly service for cable television. If you are interested, contact a cable television service listed in the telephone directory. Cable television is provided in University family housing.
There are many types of stores in the Champaign-Urbana area. Some stores are “specialty” stores meaning that they only sell a certain type of merchandise such as shoes, clothing, food, furniture, etc. or discount stores (Wal-mart, Target) carry a variety of merchandise. The Yellow Pages in your telephone book are a shopper’s guide. The local newspaper, the News-Gazette, is also a good resource. Prices marked on most merchandise are fixed—you cannot bargain for a lower price. Bargaining is common, however, for larger purchases such as automobiles.

**Types of Stores**

**Supermarkets** (grocery stores)
These are large stores where you can buy almost any food (meats, vegetables, fruit, baked good, milk, cheese), cleaning supplies, paper goods, toothpaste, shampoo, etc. They are frequently combined with a drugstore and therefore have a pharmacy. Supermarkets in this area include IGA, Schnucks, Wal-Mart, and County Market.

**Specialty Stores**
There are several oriental and international food stores in Champaign-Urbana, “health food” stores, meat and fish specialty stores, and bakeries. Fresh fruit and vegetables can be purchased during the summer at the weekly Farmer’s Market in Urbana. There are many places in the countryside around Champaign-Urbana where you can buy, and in some cases pick, your own fresh produce.

**Convenience Stores**
These are smaller stores with a more limited selection of items. Prices are usually higher than at larger supermarkets. Some of the convenience stores in this area are Colonial Pantry and Super Pantry. Many convenience stores are connected to gas stations.

**Drugstores**
These businesses sell a variety of items such as cosmetics, candy, magazines, film, cleaning products, and personal hygiene products. Drugstores in this area include Walgreen’s and CVS Pharmacy.

**Hardware Stores**
Specialize in home repair items but often carry a wide variety of household items and gifts. True Value is one local hardware store.

**Major Shopping Areas**
There are several major shopping centers in Champaign-Urbana.

- **Market Place Mall**, North Neil Street, just north of Interstate 74.
- **Country Fair Shopping Center**, Mattis and Springfield Avenues, Champaign.
- **Lincoln Square Mall**, Green and Broadway Streets, Urbana.
- **Old Farm Shopping Center**, Mattis and Kirby Avenues, Champaign.
- **Prospect Avenue**, north of Interstate 74.

**Used Items**
“Garage Sales” are held by private individuals. They are very popular and an acceptable way to buy and sell items. People sell used clothing and household supplies at these sales and you can often find good quality items at low prices.
It is a good idea to establish contact with a physician and dentist when you arrive here, especially if you have children. You may wish to ask friends or co-workers to recommend doctors. Physicians are also listed in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory under “Physicians and Surgeons” and on the Internet. There are two major clinics in this community. Carle Hospital is located at 602 W. University, Urbana. You can visit them online at www.carle.com. Presence Covenant Medical Center is located at 140 W. Park, Urbana. Their website is www.provena.org/covenant. There are a large number of general and specialty doctors at each hospital. Your particular medical insurance may limit your choice of doctors, so it is important to check with them before making an appointment.

It is important to be on time for doctor’s appointments. However, you may experience a long wait to see the doctor. You may ask the doctor’s receptionist how much the charge will be. On your first visit to a new doctor, you may have to pay at the time of the visit instead of being mailed a bill. Take your health insurance papers with you to the doctor’s office.

**Children**
Schools require a physical examination before a child enters the school system. You will receive proper forms for this when you register your child for school. It is important for healthy children to have regular physical check-ups and immunizations against illnesses. Whenever your child is sick, telephone your doctor’s office for advice or to make an appointment. The doctor or nurse can answer many of your questions over the telephone.

**Maternity Care**
There are obstetricians—specialists in pregnancy care—and general practitioners who begin caring for women as soon as they learn of their pregnancy. There are several female doctors in this area who care for pregnant women. If you are uncomfortable with a male doctor, you may ask that a female nurse be present during examinations. Many hospitals in the area offer classes for expectant parents. Ask your doctor about these programs.

**Emergencies**
If you cannot contact your doctor, call the Emergency Room of a local hospital. In case of a serious emergency, call 911 for an ambulance. After normal business hours you can normally call your doctor’s telephone number, and his or her answering service will be able to give him or her a message.

**Insurance**
If you are in J-1 status, please refer to your “J-1 Program Handbook” for details concerning insurance requirements for J-1 exchange visitors. Even if insurance is not required, it is always best to purchase a policy that will cover you for the duration of your program. Without insurance, medical bills can be extremely expensive.
Day Care Centers and Preschools

On Campus
The University of Illinois’ Child Development Laboratory has half-day programs for children who are 4-years-old and full-day programs available for children 6 weeks to 4 years of age. Applications can be obtained at 1105 W. Nevada, Urbana or online at www.cdl.uiuc.edu. The phone number for the Child Development Laboratory is 217-333-2550.

University Primary School is available for gifted children from 3-years-old through third grade. It is located in the Children’s Research Center, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign. There is information available online at www.ed.illinois.edu/ups.

Off Campus
There are many private preschools and daycare centers in Champaign-Urbana for children under 6 years of age. You will find them listed under “Child Care” and “Schools” in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory. The University’s Child Care Resource Service, 217-333-3252, can help answer your questions about child care and offer updated information about childcare options available in Champaign-Urbana. Their website is www.ccrs.illinois.edu.

Schools
Illinois law requires all children between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school. Public school is free, private school is not. Most private schools are affiliated with churches. Your child will need a physical and dental examination before entering school. Show the doctor your child’s immunization record. The school will also want to see the child’s birth certificate and some indication of the amount of schooling he or she has already had in order to place the child correctly.

Schools are divided into three levels: Elementary School (Kindergarten through fifth grade), Middle School (sixth through eighth grade) and High School (ninth through twelfth grade).

There are many different schools to choose from in the Champaign-Urbana area. Each has its own unique learning environment. The Champaign Unit 4 School District has adopted the Controlled Choice program as its student assignment method. For information about Controlled Choice, please visit www.champainschools.org/FLCchoice.html. If you live in Urbana, your address determines which school your child will attend. For a map of the Urbana elementary school boundaries, please visit www.usd116.org/index.php/schools/elementary-attendance-areas/.
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

If you are interested in practicing or improving your English language skills, the following opportunities are available:

**Division of English as an International Language (DEIL)**

**Intensive English Institute (IEI)**
The Intensive English Institute offers courses to individuals who want to improve their English for personal or professional reasons. For more information about IEI, please visit [www.iei.illinois.edu](http://www.iei.illinois.edu).

Information about programs offered by the Department of Linguistics can be found at [www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students](http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students).

DEIL and IEI keep a list of English tutors available in Room 3070 of the Foreign Languages Building. The EIL program offers a Special English Class for non-students at a moderate semester fee.

**Urbana Adult Education**

This program offers classes in beginning, intermediate and advanced English. The classes cover conversation and grammar skills. They are free of charge. Call 384-3530 to make an appointment for a placement test or for further information. [www.usd116.org/adult](http://www.usd116.org/adult)

**International Hospitality Committee (IHC)**
The IHC organizes several informal weekly conversation classes led by volunteers from the community. Classes are free and can be joined at any time. [www.usd116.org/ums/apple/service/ihc/IHC.html](http://www.usd116.org/ums/apple/service/ihc/IHC.html)

**International Coffee Hours**
The Cosmopolitan Club sponsors weekly coffee hours with an international theme. All are welcome and it is free of charge. Call the Cosmopolitan Club at 217-367-3079 or visit [www.universityymca.org/international/coffee_hours](http://www.universityymca.org/international/coffee_hours) for times and dates.

If you would like to learn to type, repair an automobile or appliance, paint or draw and much more, there are several places that offer non-credit programs that you might be interested in. For brochures or more information, call the phone numbers listed below:

University YMCA - 217-337-1500, [www.universityymca.org](http://www.universityymca.org)
Parkland College - 217-351-2200, [www.parkland.edu](http://www.parkland.edu)
Champaign Park District - 217-398-2550, [www.champagneparkdistrict.com](http://www.champagneparkdistrict.com)
Urbana Park District - 217-367-1544, [www.urbanaparks.org](http://www.urbanaparks.org)
University of Illinois Office of Continuing Education and Public Service - 217-333-3060
Driving
If you will be driving a car in the United States, you must have a valid driver’s license. You should also be aware that the rules for driving in the U.S. may be very different from the rules in your home country. A publication called *Rules of the Road* explains all of the driving laws and requirements for the state of Illinois. You can view the rules of the road publication here: [Illinois Rules of the Road](#). Knowing these rules is truly a matter of life or death. Even if you are an experienced driver, you need to make yourself aware of the differences between American driving rules and those of your home country. Please do not drive until you understand the rules thoroughly. For a “hard” copy of this booklet, go to the Driver’s License Bureau at 2401 W Bradley, Champaign.

Driver’s License
You must have a valid license to drive in the U.S. A license from another state or country may, in some cases, be valid for only 90 days in Illinois. Contact the Driver’s License Bureau at 217-278-3344 to find out if your license is acceptable. Getting an Illinois license will make it easier to obtain the required car insurance. An Illinois driver’s license can be obtained at the Driver’s License Bureau. They are located at 2401 W. Bradley Avenue in Champaign. They are closed Sunday and Monday.

To apply for an Illinois driver’s license you must be authorized to live in the U.S. at least one year. If your program is less than one year, you will not be eligible for an Illinois driver’s license or a TVDL. You must also be at least 18 years old and have a U.S. Social Security number. People who are not eligible to obtain a Social Security number may be eligible for a temporary driver’s license.

Car Insurance
Illinois drivers must have liability insurance for their automobiles. Contact an insurance agent to purchase the required automobile insurance.
**Temporary Visitor Driver’s License**

The Secretary of State’s office issues a Temporary Visitor Driver's License (TVDL) for non-citizens of the United States who have been granted temporary, legal entry into this country and are temporarily residing in the State of Illinois and ineligible for a Social Security number.

**What is a Temporary Visitor Driver’s License?**
- Good for 3 years or period of time authorized to stay in the U.S., whichever is shorter
- Can be renewed if status is extended
- Is green instead of blue

**Who is eligible to apply for a Temporary Visitor Driver’s License?**
- Non-citizen of the United States residing in the State of Illinois;
- Authorized by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to be present in this country, and provide documentation verifying such authorization;
- Not be required to obtain a driver’s license issued by the U. S. Department of State, Office of Foreign Missions;
- Be authorized to be in the country for at least one year and have at least six months remaining on an authorized stay;
- Provide acceptable documentation that proves name, date of birth, Illinois residency and verification of written signature;
- Pay the appropriate fee, and successfully complete a vision screening, and the appropriate written and road tests.

**How to obtain a Temporary Visitor Driver’s License**

1. Go to the Social Security Administration office located at 101 S. Country Fair Dr., Champaign, IL 61821. Bring the following documents:
   - Passport
   - I-94

   Obtain appropriate forms/paperwork stating you are ineligible to receive a Social Security number.

2. Within 30 DAYS of obtaining your Social Security document, you must go to the Driver’s License Bureau located at 2401 W. Bradley, Champaign, IL 61822. Bring the following documents:
   - Passport and any paperwork regarding your status (I-797, DS-2019, etc.)
   - Proof of address such as a power or telephone bill or bank statement

Request a Temporary Visitor Driver’s License, take the written, vision and road tests, pay the fee, and then receive your Temporary Visitor Driver’s License.

For more information visit:
http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/drivers/drivers_license/drlicid.html#top
Seat Belts and Car Seats

www.buckleupillinois.org

Safety belts must be worn by all drivers and front seat passengers even if the vehicle has air bags. All front seat passengers must be 8 years of age or older. It is the responsibility of the driver to see that all front seat passengers obey this law. NOTE: Children under the age of 12 should not sit in the front seat if the car contains a passenger-side air bag. This can be dangerous and even deadly in an accident.

The Child Passenger Protection Act requires the use of an appropriate safety restraint system for children under the age of 16 years. Any person transporting a child under the age of 16 years is responsible for that child’s safety. Children under the age of 8 years must be secured appropriately in an approved child restraint system, which includes a booster seat.

These rules are federal law. Please use safety seats and seat belts as required for your children at all times. Never hold a child on your lap in the car. Do not take a baby out of a car seat while the car is in motion, even if he/she is crying. An unprotected child can be seriously injured in an accident, even if you are driving very slowly. Safety seats may be purchased at many places in Champaign-Urbana such as Target, Meijer, Toys R Us, and Wal-Mart.

Buying a Car

You may buy a new car from an automobile dealer and a used car from a dealer or private individual. Financing may be obtained from the dealer or a bank. You must obtain a Certificate of Ownership from a car dealer or a Certificate of Title from an individual. The car must be registered immediately in the new owner’s name. A Certificate of Title must be registered with the Illinois Secretary of State and transferred to the new name of the owner when the car is paid for. Illinois law requires you to purchase car insurance.

Campus Parking

If you will be parking on campus you must register your car with the Division of Parking and Transportation in the Public Safety Building, 1110 W. Springfield, Urbana, 217-333-3530. This will allow you to use University parking facilities. Your car must also be registered if you park in the Family Housing parking lots.

www.parking.illinois.edu

Local Transportation

Buses: Champaign-Urbana has an excellent bus system called MTD. Most of the routes are known by colors. A bus ride costs $1.00 and transfers are free of charge. If you have an i-card you can ride any bus in Champaign-Urbana free of charge. MTD schedules and other information are available online at www.cumtd.com. You can also call MTD at 217-384-8188.

Taxi (Cabs): There are several “cab” companies in the area. Taxi service is, of course, much more expensive than taking the bus. It is also customary to pay the driver 15% of the fair as a “tip.”
**Bicycles:** Bicycles are not as common in the U.S. as they are in many countries, but there are many of them on campus. On campus there are bicycle lanes for you to ride in. It is important not to ride on the Quad or on sidewalks. When riding in the streets you are expected to obey the same road rules as automobiles. If you own and ride a bicycle on campus, you must register it with the Division of Campus Parking and Transportation at 1110 W. Springfield, Urbana. Registration is free.

**Out of Town Travel**

**Air:** The University of Illinois’ Willard Airport is located south of Champaign on Route 45, south of Neil Street. You can fly from this airport to larger cities for connecting flights. Several different airlines serve the Champaign-Urbana area. Visit [www.flycmi.com](http://www.flycmi.com) for more information.

**Train:** The Amtrak train station is located in downtown Champaign at 45 E. University, on the second floor of the Illinois Terminal. Visit [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) for train schedules throughout the nation. You may also call the local station at 217-352-5905 for information about local train service. Some of the trains require reservations.

**Bus:** Several bus companies serve Champaign-Urbana. Look in the Yellow Pages under “Bus Lines” for further information.

**Rental Car:** Cars may be rented by the day, weekend, week, or month by a person having a U.S. driver’s license. Some companies require that the person be of a certain age and have a major credit card. Prices vary. The following are rental car companies in the Champaign-Urbana area:

- Enterprise Rent-A-Car: [www.enterprise.com](http://www.enterprise.com)
- Avis Rent-A-Car: [www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com)
CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

On Campus

**Krannert Center**

The University’s Krannert Center for the Performing Arts contains a 2100-seat Great Hall for orchestra and large performances; a 979-seat Festival Theatre for dance, opera and other musical productions; a 678-seat Playhouse Theatre for plays; and a 150-seat Studio Theatre, which is a facility for experimental theatrical projects.

Programs at the Krannert Center include professional performances by visiting artists and ensembles, performances by community and campus members, dance concerts by the Illinois Dance Theatre, performances by various groups and individuals from the School of Music, Illinois Opera Theatre and many annual productions by the University Theatre. The Krannert Center performance schedule is online at [www.krannertcenter.com](http://www.krannertcenter.com).

**Museums**

Spurlock Museum of Natural History, 600 S. Gregory St., Urbana

The Spurlock is a museum of world history and culture, holding in its collections approximately 45,000 artifacts from diverse cultures and varied historical time periods. The museum’s permanent galleries celebrate the cultures of Ancient Mediterranean, Africa, Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania. Admission is free with the suggestion of a $3 donation. Visit [www.spurlock.illinois.edu](http://www.spurlock.illinois.edu) for hours and more information.

Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavilion, 500 E. Peabody Drive, Champaign

The permanent collection of this museum provides a visual review of art history. Egyptian sculpture, Greek vases, medieval stained glass, renaissance paintings, English silver, Indian miniatures and Chinese porcelains. Admission is free with a suggested donation of $3. Visit [www.kam.illinois.edu](http://www.kam.illinois.edu) for hours and more information.
State Farm Center
The State Farm Center, formerly known as the U of I Assembly Hall, holds basketball games, professional musical performances, ice shows and sports tournaments among many other events. You can get information about upcoming events at www.uofiassemblyhall.com.

Sports Facilities
Campus Recreation provides facilities and equipment for the leisure and fitness needs of University students, faculty and staff. There are several facilities that can be used by members of Campus Rec. The Activities and Recreation Center (ARC) is one of the country’s largest on-campus recreation centers with indoor and outdoor pools, tennis, racquetball, handball, squash and basketball courts, a running track, locker and shower facilities, saunas and much more. Facilities are also available to spouses of University employees and to children of University employees during certain hours. For a list of locations, hours and fees, please visit www.campusrec.illinois.edu.

Campus Recreation Center East (CRCE) is located in the heart of campus behind Freer Gym, close to Krannert Center for the Performing Arts and two blocks from Foellinger Auditorium. CRCE has 110,000 square feet of space, including an aquatic center, two gyms, racquetball courts, multipurpose workout rooms, track, and a fitness area with a great view of campus.

Illini Union
In addition to the many programs, organizations, and special events found in the Illini Union, other entertainment is offered. On the lower level, there are bowling lanes, a billiards room, and several fast food establishments.

On the first floor are some of the large multi-purpose rooms that are used for a variety of meetings, exhibits, dinners and dances. The Information Desk on the north side of the building is a good place to go for maps and questions concerning the University buildings, special events and other information. www.union.illinois.edu

Off Campus

Allerton Park
This park surrounds the Allerton mansion, 20 miles west of Champaign off I-72 near Monticello. Natural areas as well as formal manicured gardens and sculptures highlight hiking or walking paths. For more information you can visit www.allerton.illinois.edu.
**Champaign and Urbana Park Districts**
Champaign and Urbana together provide 49 parks and recreation centers for public use. There are a variety of programs, activities, and beautiful areas to explore in the Champaign-Urbana area. For a full list of events and information, visit [www.urbanaparks.org](http://www.urbanaparks.org) or [www.champaignparkdistrict.com](http://www.champaignparkdistrict.com).

**Champaign Urbana Ballet Company**
The Champaign Urbana Ballet Company is comprised of local dancers. They perform an annual December production of The Nutcracker as well as a spring performance. [www.cuballet.com](http://www.cuballet.com)

**Cinemas and Live Theatres**
There are several movie theatres in Champaign-Urbana. The least expensive shows are usually before 6pm. The Art Theatre, 126 W. Church, Champaign, shows many foreign films. You can also view one of the latest U.S. productions at the Savoy 16 Theatre on south Route 45 or the Beverly Cinema on north Prospect Avenue. Follow the links below for show times.
- **The Art Theater**
- **Savoy 16 IMAX**
- **The Beverly Cinema**

Live theatre performances can be seen at the Station Theatre, 223 N. Broadway, Urbana, the Virginia Theatre, 203 W. Park, Champaign (home of the Champaign-Urbana Theatre company), and, on campus, the Armory Free Theatre, composed of University students.

**Kickapoo State Park**
This park offers boating, horseback riding, fishing and canoeing with camping and picnicking sites also available. Winter sports include ice-skating, ice fishing and sledding. Kickapoo is located four miles west of Danville on I-74.

**Lake of the Woods**
This forest preserve, located north of I-74 near Mahomet, sponsors a wide range of activities including paddleboats, rowboats, golfing and hiking. The Early American Museum and Botanical Gardens are also located there.

**Homer Lake (Salt Lake River Forest Preserve)**
Homer Lake has 56 acres of land and an 80 acre lake featuring fishing, sailing, hiking, cross country skiing, picnicking and nature study. Take I-74 east to the Ogden exit and take Route 49 south about one mile and follow the signs.
Springfield
Springfield is the capital of Illinois and the home of Abraham Lincoln. There are many historical places to visit including the State Capitol, the Old State Capitol, Lincoln Home National Historic Site and Lincoln’s Tomb. Near Springfield is New Salem where Lincoln’s boyhood village has been reconstructed. www.visit-springfieldillinois.com

Chicago
Chicago is located two and a half hours north of Champaign-Urbana on the shoreline of Lake Michigan. Important places in Chicago include: The Museum of Science and Industry, The Field Museum of Natural History, Adler Planetarium, Shedd Aquarium, The Art Institute, Buckingham Fountain, Lincoln Park Zoo, and the Willis Tower. www.cityofchicago.org

Tourist Information
The Champaign-Urbana Convention and Visitors Bureau, 1817 S. Neil, Champaign, can provide you with maps and information about Champaign-Urbana as well as Chicago and other places of interest in the State of Illinois. www.visitchampaigncounty.org
CLIMATE

Champaign-Urbana has four distinct seasons:

Fall (mid-September to mid-December) is cool, perhaps rainy, and famous for the changing colors of tree leaves.

Winter (mid-December to mid-March) is cold, windy, and often includes much snow and ice.

Spring (late March to late May) can be very rainy and stormy, but also has many sunny days with a mix of cool, warm and hot temperatures.

Summer (June to mid-September) can be very hot and humid with many thunderstorms.

Heating in homes is usually required from mid-October to early April. Many homes have air conditioning for the summer, but some people just use fans.

Bad Weather

**COLD** temperatures here can reach –22°F/-30°C. If you are not used to weather this cold, it is important that you remember to dress properly. Several layers of clothes are better than one heavy coat.

- It is important to cover your ears and fingers as they can freeze easily. Small children chill easily, so they should be dressed warmly. In addition to a coat, wear boots, a hat, gloves or mittens, and a scarf that you can wrap around your face. If you are traveling in a car and have mechanical problems or suddenly cannot see to drive, stay inside your car to remain protected from the cold.

**ICE** is dangerous to walk on and even more dangerous to drive on. Stay off it if possible. If you must walk, wear shoes or boots that have rubber grids, not smooth leather-soled shoes.

**SNOW** should be shoveled away from your porch and sidewalks where you and others walk, because it can become compressed and slippery.

**BLIZZARDS** include snow, high winds, and cold. You often cannot see to drive in such conditions even if you can see out the window of your home. During blizzard conditions, do not travel by any means (you can be fined for traveling at these times). If you must travel for an emergency, call the police department for direction and assistance.
\textit{TORNADOES} can occur here. A tornado is a storm with very high winds that form a funnel cloud. These clouds can form very rapidly and do great damage in a very short time. These conditions develop most often during the spring and summer.

- A “tornado watch” means weather conditions are right for tornadoes to develop. A “tornado warning” means that a tornado funnel cloud has been seen. Champaign-Urbana has a disaster warning system that is used when a tornado threatens the area. A series of yellow sirens mounted on several buildings throughout the cities will sound continuously if a tornado is in the area.

- If you hear the sirens during threatening weather, take cover in a basement or under a table away from windows. If outside, take cover face down in a ditch. The warning sirens are tested the first Tuesday of every month at 10am. Be sure to familiarize yourself with their sound.

- In April of 1996 a tornado struck southeast Urbana, destroying homes and damaging property. Pay close attention when severe weather threatens.

\textbf{Weather Information}
Weather Information is available on all radio and television stations. If you have cable television, tune to the Weather Channel for detailed weather information at all times.

For a complete weather forecast call (217) 351-2900.

During severe weather, local radio stations carry frequent weather reports. Also, during the winter, radio stations provide information about schools that might be closed temporarily due to bad weather.

Local television stations will show a symbol on the screen such as a “W” (for “Watch” or “Warning”) to indicate the threat of severe weather in the area. Regular television programs will frequently be interrupted with weather information during these times. Radio and television stations will give you information on what to do in case of bad weather. If you have further questions, you can call the Champaign County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency at (217) 384-3826.
TIME ZONES

The Continental U.S. is divided into four time zones. Eastern Standard Time is five hours earlier than Greenwich Mean Time. Illinois is on Central Standard Time—one hour earlier than Eastern Standard. Most states change to Daylight Saving Time during the summer months. This means that clocks are advanced one hour on a given date in March and restored to standard time in November. Arrival and departure times of planes and trains are usually given in the current time of the arrival or departure point. Visit www.timeanddate.com for time zone information.

TAXES

Nearly everyone who works in the U.S. must pay federal income tax. Some states, including Illinois, also collect income taxes. There may be a tax treaty between your country and the United States. The treaty may exempt your income from taxation, at least for a certain amount of time. The University Payroll Office, 506 S. Wright Street, has information about tax treaties. For the most thorough information concerning your taxation status and for assistance with the preparation of tax forms, visit the Internal Revenue Service, 310 W. Church Street, Champaign. During tax-filing season, most forms can be obtained at U.S. post offices or libraries, or International Student and Scholar Services can give you information about an online tax system specifically for international visitors.

J-1 and H-1 employees of the University should contact the Payroll Office to determine their tax status. Please note that if you are not currently a “resident for tax purposes”, you may become one in the future. You might then become eligible for University of Illinois medical insurance if you are employed by the University.
WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

The United States is moving very slowly toward adopting the metric system. Few Americans, however, speak of weights and measures in metric terms.

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To change Centigrade (C) to Fahrenheit (F), multiply the C reading by 9/5 and add 32 to that amount. To change F to C, subtract 32 and multiply by 5/9.

**Weights**

1 ounce (1oz.) = 28.35 grams
16 ounces = 1 pound (lb.) 1lb. = 453.59 grams
2000 lbs. = 1 ton = 907.18 kilograms
1 gram (1 g.) = .035 ounces
1 kilogram (1kg.) = 2.2 lbs.

To change kilograms to pounds, multiply by 2.2 pounds

**Distances**

1 inch (1 in. or 1”) = 2.54 centimeters
12 in. = 1 foot (1ft. or 1’) = 30.48 centimeters
1 yard = 3 feet
5280 feet = 1 miles (1mi.) = 1.609 kilometers
100 miles = 160 kilometers
1 centimeter (1cm.) = 0.39 inches
1 meter (1m.) = 1.09 yds. (3.28 ft. or 39.4 in.)

To change kilometers to miles, multiply by .62

**Volume**

1 cup (1 C) = 8 ounces (8oz.) = .237 liters
1 pint (1pt.) = 2C = .437 liters
1 quart (1qt.) = 2pts. = .946 liters
1 gallon (1gal) = 4qts. = 3.785 liters

1 liter (1L) = 1.0567 qts.

To change liters to gallons, multiply by .264 or 1/4

**Area**

1 acre (4,840 square yards) = .405 hectares
1 square mile (640 acres) = 2590 square kilometers
HOURS OF BUSINESS

Business offices are usually open from 8 or 9am to 5pm Monday through Friday. Employees take a lunch break around 12:00 but offices usually remain open during that time. On the UIUC campus, most offices are closed from 12:00 to 1:00 pm.

Most stores open at 9 or 10am and remain open until 9 or 10pm and are open seven days per week. Some supermarkets are open 24 hours, including holidays.

TIPPING

There are a number of circumstances in the U.S. when tipping is expected. Many service personnel depend on tips for the majority of their income. Expected tips are as follows:

- Porters at airports, train or bus stations, $1.00 per piece of luggage
- Bellhops who show you to your hotel room and carry your baggage in hotels, a minimum of $1.00
- Waiters or waitresses in restaurants, 15% of the bill
- Taxi drivers, 15% of the fare
- Barbers or hairdressers, 10-15% of the bill

* Never offer a tip to public officials, including police officers *
HOLIDAYS

Official holidays are usually recognized throughout the U.S. On those days, schools, businesses, banks, post offices and most stores are closed.

New Year’s Day (January 1)
New Year’s Eve, December 31, is more important to Americans than New Year’s Day itself. Popular activities on New Year’s Day included watching televised parades and football games.

Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday (Third Monday in January)
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. organized and led the civil rights movement in the U.S. during the 1960s. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 and was assassinated in 1968.

Ground Hog Day (February 2)
The groundhog is a small burrowing animal that hibernates during the winter months. Legend has it that he emerges on February 2. If he sees his shadow he will return to his burrow and there will be six more weeks of wintry weather. If he does not see his shadow, spring will come soon.

Valentine’s Day (February 14)
Named for St. Valentine. A lover’s holiday that is celebrated by sending cards called valentines and giving flowers or candy in heart-shaped boxes. Red and pink are traditional Valentine’s Day colors.

President’s Day (Third Monday in February)
This holiday commemorates George Washington’s birthday (February 22) and Abraham Lincoln’s birthday (February 12). George Washington was a general during the American Revolution and the first President of the U.S. Abraham Lincoln was President during the Civil War, 1861-1865. He acted to free the slaves and bring the seceded states back into the Union.

Casmimir Pulaski Day (First Monday in March)
This day is commemorated by school children in Illinois. Pulaski was a Polish nobleman (1747-79) who served George Washington in the American Revolution and died in that war. Illinois has a large Polish-American population, and several places are named for Pulaski including Pulaski Avenue in Chicago and the town of Mount Pulaski.

Saint Patrick’s Day (March 17)
Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland and Irish immigrants brought this holiday to America. People—especially Americans of Irish heritage—celebrate this day by wearing something green and wearing jewelry, etc. in the shape of a shamrock leaf. In the city of Chicago, which as a large Irish-American population, there is a large parade and the Chicago River is dyed green for this day.
April Fool’s Day (April 1)
As in many other countries, this day is marked by the custom of playing practical jokes on one’s friends and colleagues.

Passover (Eight days, usually in April)
The Jewish holiday of Passover commemorates the liberation of the ancient Hebrews from slavery in Egypt in 1200 B.C. A highlight of the festival is the Seder, a ceremonial dinner attended by family and friends, during which the memory of the exodus is recounted through reading, singing and the consumption of symbolic foods. Unleavened bread or matzoh is eaten during this time.

Easter (One Sunday in Spring)
A religious holiday on which Christians commemorate the resurrection of Christ. Many folk traditions are now connected with Easter, including the decoration of brightly colored eggs, egg hunts and giving baskets of candy (from the Easter bunny) to children. Preceded by Good Friday.

Mother’s Day (Second Sunday in May)
On this day, Americans honor their mothers by sending them flowers, buying small gifts and taking them out to eat.

Father’s Day (Third Sunday in June)
Fathers are honored on this day. Children give their father cards and gifts.

Memorial Day (Last Monday in May)
Memorial Day is dedicated to the memory of all Americans who died in wars. Many families visit graves and decorate them with flowers, and the day is also marked with patriotic parades. This day is considered the beginning of the summer season.

Independence Day/Fourth of July (July 4)
This is the U.S. National Day. It commemorates the day the Declaration of Independence was signed in Philadelphia in 1776. This holiday is celebrated all over the country with picnics, parades, political speeches and community get-togethers that culminate in fireworks displays.

Labor Day (First Monday in September)
This holiday was established in recognition of the labor movement’s contribution to the productivity of this country. This day is the last holiday of the summer season and is celebrated with picnics and other outings.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (3 days in September and October)
The holidays of Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and the ten-day interval between them comprise the most sacred period in the Jewish calendar. This period,
known as the High Holy Days, combines the welcoming of the New Year with reflective examination of one’s life during the past year. Rosh Hashanah is characterized by family feasts and sending New Year’s greetings. Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish year, is a time of fasting and prayer.

Columbus Day (Second Monday in October)
Columbus reached the West Indies in 1492, and is popularly referred to as the explorer who “discovered” America, although the continent was already populated by Native Americans and had been visited by earlier seafarers. Americans observe the holiday with parades and festivals. In the Northeast, the long weekend is the high point of the season for viewing the brilliantly colored fall leaves.

Halloween (October 31)
This was originally a religious holiday—the day before All Soul’s Day—but its religious character has been lost in the U.S. and it is now celebrated mostly as a children’s day. Traditions include carving out pumpkins with funny faces as well as dressing in costumes and going around the neighborhood to receive treats of candy, fruit and cookies. When they knock on the door, children say “trick or treat”. Adults often use the occasion for costume parties. Colors of the holiday are orange and black and symbols include witches, ghosts, broomsticks and black cats.

Veteran’s Day (November 11)
Originally established to commemorate Armistice Day of the First World War, the holiday was changed after World War II to serve as an occasion to pay tribute to veterans of all wars. It is marked by parades, speeches, and the laying of wreaths at military cemeteries and war memorials.

Thanksgiving Day (Fourth Thursday in November)
In 1621 the pilgrims of Plymouth colony in Massachusetts prepared a feast that they shared with some Native Americans to give thanks for the bountiful harvest and their survival over the wilderness. It was made an official holiday in 1863. Americans give thanks for the good life they enjoy by getting together with family and friends to eat traditional food such as turkey, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes and pumpkin pie. Children frequently dress as pilgrims and Native Americans.
**Hanukkah** (late November or early December)
An eight-day Jewish holiday marking the rededication of the Temple. The “Festival of Lights” is celebrated by exchanging gifts and lighting the candles of the menorah.

**Christmas Day** (December 25) Although religious in origin (commemorating the birth of Christ), Christmas is a holiday celebrated either in a secular or religious way by most everyone in the country. Family members travel great distances to be together for this day on which gifts are exchanged and a traditional dinner is shared. Many houses are decorated with Christmas trees, lights, candles and wreaths, and Santa Claus brings gifts for children.

**Kwanzaa** (Seven days beginning December 26)
An African-American holiday adapted from the traditional African “harvest of first crops”. It is highlighted by exchanging gifts, feasting, lighting candles and discussing special topics.

**New Year’s Eve** (December 31)
People gather with friends and family for parties to “ring out the old and ring in the new” an expression that reflects the old custom of ringing church bells to greet the new year.