

HOUSING



& SETTLING-IN GUIDE

Finding Housing	1
Short Term/Temporary Housing	
Long Term Housing	
Housing Information	3
Housing Checklist	
Tips to Renting	
Utility Information	6
Telephone Service	6
Transportation and Shopping	8
Banking Services	9
Child Care Services	10
Adjusting to Austin	10

Housing Website: www.utexas.edu/international/iss/housing



Housing Information

SHORT TERM TEMPORARY HOUSING

There is no temporary housing available on campus. You may plan to stay in one of the following facilities until you find permanent housing. Ask for a UT discount if applicable. See the UT-Austin International Office Housing website for additional Short-Term Housing options <www.utexas.edu/international/iss/housing/st_housing>.

Motels (in order of proximity to UT campus)

Doubletree Club Hotel, 1617 N. IH35 & MLK, Tel. (512) 479-4000, <www.doubletree.com>, \$80-120

Rodeway Inn, 2900 N. IH 35, Tel.(512)477-6395, <www.rodewayinn.com>, \$60-76

Days Inn, University, 3105 N. IH 35, Tel. (512)478-1631 or (1-800)725-7666 or (1-800)329-7466, <www.daysinnuniversity.com>, \$55-75

Doubletree Guest Suites, 303 W. 15th, Tel. (512)478-7000, <www.doubletree.com>, \$100-175

LaQuinta Inn, 5812 N. IH 35 (need car) Tel. (512) 459-4381, <www.laquinta.com>, \$70-80

Motel 6, 9420 N. IH 35 (need car), Tel. (512)339-6161, <www.motel6.com>, \$39-50

Private Dormitories and Cooperatives

Those marked with an * in the Long-Term Housing section may accept temporary residents. Reservations may be required.

Also Available

Hostelling International, 2200 S. Lakeshore Blvd. (located on the NR shuttlebus route), Tel. (512)444-2294, \$16.50-19.50. Web address: <http://www.hiaustin.org> Email:austinayh@aol.com Reservations are recommended.

LONG TERM HOUSING

Students and scholars are responsible for finding housing. UT does not require that students live on campus and cannot make off-campus housing reservations. There are many housing choices in Austin:

1. Residence halls or dormitories: On-campus housing is available only to enrolled students at UT-Austin. While students are not required to live on campus, residence halls or dormitories are available for international students. These living facilities provide room and meals, which are served in a cafeteria. Priority is given to freshmen. Apply as early as possible (no later than May 1) as spaces are limited. For on-campus housing, contact Division of Housing and Food Services, KIN (200 W. Dean Keeton St.), P.O. Box 7666, University Station, Austin, TX 78713-7666. Tel. (512)471-3136; FAX (512)471-9101. <www.utexas.edu/student/housing>

Private Dormitories: Though on-campus dormitory space is limited, the need for safe, convenient dormitory space in Austin is filled by several off-campus private dormitories. Though located “off” campus, private dormitories are quite near (in some cases, just across the street) from UT. Private dormitories room prices include a meal package. Following is a listing of private dormitories:

*The Castilian, 2323 San Antonio, Tel. (512)478-9811, www.thecastilian.com

*Dobie Center, 2021 Guadalupe, Tel. (512)505-1000, www.dobiecenter.com

Goodall-Wooten, 2112 Guadalupe St., Tel. (512)472-1343, www.goodallwooten.com

Hardin House, 2206 Rio Grande, Tel. (512)472-6717, www.hardinhouse.com (women’s dorm)

University Towers, 801 W. 24th St., Tel. (512)472-5846, www.universitytowers.com

Texana, 2819 Rio Grande St., Tel. (512)476-5657, www.texanadorm.com



Housing Information

2. Cooperative houses are democratically-run residences, called “co-ops” in which occupants share cooking and cleaning responsibilities and share decision making about house policies and activities. Sometimes less expensive than other housing options, Co-ops provide an opportunity to meet a variety of people. For information contact:

*College Houses, Inc. 1906 Pearl St., Tel. (512)476-5678, www.collegehouses.org
Deutsches Haus (German House), 2103 Nueces St. Tel. (512)477-8865,
www.utexas.edu/students/dhaus

*Inter-Cooperative Council, 510 W. 23rd St., Tel. (512)476-1957, www.iccaustin.com

3. Apartments. A few apartments known as “family housing” are owned by the University. Family housing is available only to enrolled students at UT-Austin and offers inexpensive off-campus furnished apartments for married students, available on a limited basis. Contact: Division of Housing and Food Services, KIN (200 W. Dean Keeton St.), P.O. Box 7666, Austin, TX 78713-7666, Tel. (512)471-3136; FAX: (512)232-7730. Most students live in privately owned apartments, many of which are available within walking distance of campus and on the UT shuttle bus or city bus routes. Apartments are usually rented in-person. <www.utexas.edu/student/housing>

TIPS FOR FINDING A PLACE TO LIVE

ROOMMATES

A person living alone in an apartment may spend an average of \$700 or more per month for rent, utility bills, & food. Sharing an apartment with a roommate can significantly lower these costs, & can help international students practice speaking English & learn about United States culture. Here are some ways to find a roommate: Look on bulletin boards in the International Office and around campus, check the Classified section of the newspapers, go to the Texas Union Information Desk & use the roommate referral service.

FAMILIES

You may want to make your choice of neighborhood based on the location of the school you want your children to attend. In Austin, students are assigned to the public school in their local district. Exceptions are based on individual circumstances. To find out more about schools, check the information available at <www.austin.isd.tenet.edu/k12/schools/school_boundaries> or call AISD Student Services at 414-1726.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR A PLACE TO LIVE:

- Visit the International Office and the International Office housing website:
<www.utexas.edu/international/iss/housing>.
- Check the “Classified” Section of the Daily Texan or Austin American Statesman.
- Go to the University Housing Office in Kinsolving Dorm & ask for their list of non-university housing.
- Walk or drive around neighborhoods near campus (north or west) looking for “For Rent” or “For Lease” signs.
- Contact an Apartment Locator Service:
Apartment Finders, Tel. (512)322-9556; (1-800)711-0498, <www.ausapt.com>



Housing Checklist

Renting an apartment, duplex, or a house usually requires current evidence of income three times the price of the rent to qualify applicants. Have an extra copy of the financial guarantee (bank or sponsorship statement or your assistantship offer) used to obtain your visa as evidence of your ability to afford a year's rent. (Your visa authorization document, I-20 or DS-2019 is not a financial guarantee). You may also be asked to show your immigration documents, such as your I-20/DS-2019. Do not give your original documents away. We suggest that you make photocopies of your I-20/DS-2019 to be able to give to an apartment manager that may be requesting your immigration documents.

- Spend time finding (an) roommate(s) to help you share the cost of housing.**
 - * Consult the academic department you will be entering, the international student organizations representing your region of the world, and rental advertisements posted in the International Office, the Austin-American Statesman, and elsewhere on campus.
 - * Compare daily habits, study habits, dietary customs, etc. with the individuals with whom you propose living.
 - * Discuss and agree to arrangements for handling bills, ordering telephone service, maintenance, entertaining guests, buying groceries, cooking, watching TV, and listening to music, etc...
- Look for housing that suits your budget and your needs**
 - * Ask a lot of questions, Read the contract carefully.
 - * Check that the number of apartment mates with whom you plan to live is within the legal occupancy limit for the apartment. (All apartments have a legal occupancy limit.)
- Make an application for the apartment/rental unit of your choice. Ask if your application involves an application fee.**
 - * Is your application binding? This means that you make a commitment to sign a lease if your application is approved.
 - * You will be asked for a financial guarantee to prove that you can pay for the rent. Use the financial information from your personal, family, or sponsor's support statement or your assistantship offer.

When your application is approved you will be asked to pay a security deposit and the first month's rental fee.

- * The security deposit will be held by the landlord during your rental period. When you terminate your lease, the landlord must send you an itemized bill for any unpaid charges due on the apartment and the remainder of your security deposit.
- * Your careful maintenance and your timely payment of rent protect your chances of a refund from your security deposit.
- If you have roommates, sign the lease contract with all of your roommates**
- Inspect the rental unit and make a damage checklist within the first few days**
 - * Detail any damage and/or lack of cleanliness
 - * Photograph any parts of the apartment that you want to document
 - * Deliver the damage checklist, dated and signed by everyone living in the unit, to the landlord or apartment manager as soon as possible to provide evidence of the condition in which you moved in and for which your security deposit should not be charged
- Make an application for utility and telephone services**
- Update your new address in UTDirect <<https://utdirect.utexas.edu>> to assure that the university has your most recent address.**



Housing Information

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO LIVE

- Where is the rental unit? How close is it to campus? How close is the nearest bus stop?
How often does the bus service run during the week, weekends, evenings, summer?
- What is the rental price for a furnished/unfurnished (#) bedroom apartment?
- Do you offer a short term (semester, six-month, nine-month, summer-only) lease?
What is the difference in cost between this short term and a twelve month lease?
- Do you have play area facilities for children? How near is a public park and elementary school?
Are elementary school children bused?
- Who is responsible for maintenance and repairs of the unit - the landlord or the tenant?
- How many people may share the room/unit?
- Do you offer individual leases or joint leases?
- What utilities are included in the rent (electric, gas, heat, etc.)?
- Where are the nearest laundry facilities?
- Is pest control included in the rent?
- What is your pet policy?
- Are sublets allowed? How do you want those handled?
- Is there direct bus service to a grocery store?
- Do you require an application fee? What is the required security deposit?
- Do you have a written move-out policy?
- Is bicycle storage available?
- Is parking available?



Housing Information

IMPORTANT LEGAL ADVICE FOR RENTERS

Below is some important information that you should be aware of before signing a lease:

- A pre-lease is a legal document that reserves the apartment until your lease begins. If you change your mind after signing a pre-lease you will lose your deposit and other problems might arise. Make sure that an apartment number is on the pre-lease or you could be given a less desirable apartment.
- You usually have one week to complete a move-in inventory. It is very important to fill out this form! When you move or leave your present apartment, it can prevent you from being charged for damages you didn't make. List all scratches, stains, holes or other damage. Keep a copy of the move-in inventory for later reference. When you move out of your rental unit, request that the landlord accompany you in a walk-through of the apartment to inspect for damages. Refer to your move-in inventory to note any damages that were preexisting at the start of your lease.
- Date and submit all requests for maintenance in writing. Your landlord has a "reasonable" time to make an effort to make the needed repairs. If the "reasonable" time takes forever, submit a second written request. Your landlord then has seven days to act on the request.
- Don't withhold rent if requests for maintenance aren't met. You may face the following actions: You could lose your tenant rights; You could be locked out of your apartment; Your landlord can place a landlord lien and enter your apartment and take your stereo or computer, for instance, and keep it until you pay your rent.
- Within 30 days of the end of your lease, your landlord must return your deposit or give you an itemized account of any charges subtracted from your deposit.
- The Legal Services for Students office offers counsel and legal representation to UT students involved with disputes and claims against their landlords. For information and assistance, call 471-7796 or see their website <<http://www.utexas.edu/student/lss/handbook/llt.html>>.
- The Austin Tenant's Council offers advise to Austin residents in regards to tenant-landlord rights and responsibilities. For information and assistance, see their website: <<http://www.housing-rights.org>>.

BASIC HOUSING CONTRACT TERMS

Academic Year: 2 semesters, September-May.

Bath: bathroom facilities (water closet), private or shared.

Board: meals (1 or more daily).

Co-ed: facility with rooms for men and women.

Deposit: money held by manager to guarantee occupancy of room and to pay for any damage; usually refunded if terms of a signed contract are met.

Lease: legally binding contract signed by both manager and renter. Violation of a lease agreement can result in heavy financial penalty. Make sure you understand all conditions of a lease before signing. Ask for a copy of any document which you sign. Oral agreements should be set in writing.



Utility Information

Electricity & Water are connected through the City of Austin. Renters & homeowners are usually required to pay a deposit upon connection (\$40-170 depending on number of bedrooms, whether the residence has air conditioning, and whether or not the renter also pays the water bill). This service also includes garbage collection. Some apartment complexes are “all bills paid.” See your apartment manager first: often he or she will arrange connections for you. If not, new service can be established over the phone at 494-9400. After making arrangements by phone, you will have 2-4 weeks to mail in the deposit. During the call, you will need: Your name & social security number (or UT ID #), Address where utilities will be connected, Billing address (if different), Photo ID (Texas driver’s license or passport), Copy of lease (if available). For more information, see the Austin Energy website: <<http://www.austinenenergy.com/residential>>.

Gas Utilities are provided through Texas Gas Service <<http://www.texasgasservice.com>>. For new service call 1-800-700-2443. A \$50 deposit plus a \$26.32 connection fee, in check or money order form, is required. You will pay this deposit when a Texas Gas service representative makes the connection at your residence. You must be at the residence the day the connection is to be made. You will need: Your name (and roommate’s name, if any), Address where connection will be made, Date of birth, Texas driver’s license number (if any), Telephone number, address of relative or friend in the US to notify in case of an emergency, Name of previous occupant, if any.



Telephone Service

Telephone service in the United States is offered by a local provider for local calls and usually, by a separate long distance provider for long distance calls. Southwestern Bell is the largest provider of local service in Austin. To order service call 1-800-464-7928. You will need to know the address where your telephone service will be connected and the billing address (if different). You will also need to supply two forms of identification which could be: a copy of a Texas driver’s license, passport, visa, national identification or other form of identification.

- Public telephones are often available in restaurants, grocery and department stores, shopping malls, hotel lobbies, many public buildings, and near auto service stations. Coin or card-operated phones are available at most rest stops along highways. Emergency phones may also be found along interstate highways.
- A telephone, as well as an answering machine, for home service may be purchased at most department stores and discount stores. Most new phones are “touch tone” models. If you purchase an old “rotary dial” phone, you will not be able to use a number of computer services functioning at an increasing number of commercial numbers.
- In order to make long-distance calls before you have your own service or from phones away from your own residence, you can make international calls from a “pay phone.” It is also possible to obtain credit phone cards and prepaid, debit phone cards. Prepaid phone cards are available at US post office, twenty-four hour convenience stores and a growing number of grocery and general stores.
- Long distance rates and international phone rates are highly competitive among phone companies. Therefore, phone rates change every so often. A customer representative of the phone company may contact you by phone to see if you would be interested in switching to their phone company at a particular rate for a certain period of time. Note: you might want to compare rates of different phone companies before you select a long distance carrier. If you are not pleased with your current phone company, you could switch companies any time you wish.



Telephone Service

Questions to ask when selecting a phone service:

- What is the basic rate?
- Is there a monthly service charge?
- What is the connection charge and the disconnection charge?
- Can I have an access code if I have a roommate, so that our calls will be billed separately?
- Will I receive a detailed bill showing the number I called, how long I talked, and the charge for the call?
- Is this plan an international plan and/or can I combine different plans for US long distance international calls?
- How do I get the lowest rate to my country? When is this rate applicable?
- What are the rates during other time periods?
- What method of payment can I use?
- Is a calling card available? Note: A calling card allows you to telephone from any phone and charge the call to your home telephone number.
- What are the rates and corresponding time periods on the calling card?
- Is the calling card international, so that I can use my calling card from my home country or elsewhere?

**For more information on getting settled in Austin,
see the Info Guide at:
www.utexas.edu/international/utfamily/infoguide**



Transportation & Shopping

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The bus system includes “city” buses (identified with a numerical route) and the UT shuttle buses (identified by a letter route). Both are free to students and scholars with a valid ID card. UT Shuttle buses do not usually require an ID. Pick up a UT Shuttle and Capitol Metro Bus Route Schedule at the International Office or on one of the buses. For specific information about bus routes, call the The Capitol Metro GO Line at (512) 474-1200.

Taxis cannot usually be hailed on the street; call for pick-up.

Austin Cab, 478-2222 / American Yellow Checker Cab Co., 452-9999 / Roy’s Taxi, 482-0000

SHOPPING SUGGESTIONS

University Area Grocery Stores

Wheatsville Food Coop, 3101 Guadalupe, 478-2667

Central Market, 4001 N.Lamar, 206-1020, Bus #1

Fiesta, 3909 N IH-35, 406-3900, Bus #37

Randall’s, Lake Austin Blvd. & Exposition Blvd., MS Shuttle

HEB, Hancock Shopping Center, Red River, 459-6513, Bus #15 or RR Shuttle

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

Classified advertisements in the Austin American Statesman newspaper lists furniture and other items for sale by individuals. A Greensheet newspaper, found at local convenience and grocery stores, also lists inexpensive items for sale by individuals.

Garage Sales: A garage sale is a sale of household items, clothes, furniture & personal items at a person’s home. It may be held in the garage or in the front yard. Information on time and location of the garage sale is available in local newspaper and banner postings. The best time to go to a garage sale is the first day between 7-10am in order to see the largest selection of items. You can find Austin streetmaps at bookstores and gas stations. You may want to choose several sales that are close together and begin with the sale that starts the earliest. You can sometimes offer a price lower than what the seller has marked. The seller will let you know if the price you offer is too low. Plan on buying your items with cash.

Thrift Stores and Used Furniture Dealers sell used furniture and household items.

Goodwill Industries & Salvation Army (several locations)

It’s New to Me, 6113 Burnet, 451-0388

Others stores can be found in the Yellow Pages of the Austin phone book, “Furniture Dealers—Used.”

Relatively inexpensive new furniture and other items are available at many stores including:

Wal-Mart (S), 5015 S. IH-35, 443-6601, Bus #61 or #62

Sears (Central), 1000 E. 41st St, 459-2319, Bus #15 or Red River Shuttle

Highland Mall (North), 6001 Airport, 451-2920, Bus #7

Tuesday Morning (South), 4006 S. Lamar, 442-5007

Target (Central), 512-232-2247



Banking Services

To find a list of banks that are convenient to you (this is especially important if you might not have any transportation in Austin), consult the Yellow Pages listing under “Bank”. It is usually necessary to go to the bank to open an account.

Some of the questions to ask are:

- 1) What identification or documents are needed to open an account? Is a social security number required?
- 2) Does the bank offer the following international banking services?
International locations? Currency exchange? Wire transfers?
- 3) What are the hours of the bank for conducting transactions in person?
Are there locations near the UT campus?
- 4) Where are the bank’s automatic teller machines (ATM’s) located?
What is the charge for using your bank’s ATM’s?
What is charge for using other bank’s ATM’s?
- 5) Does the bank offer a check card?
- 6) What kind of checking, savings and money market accounts are offered?
How much money is required to open each of these accounts?
How much is the monthly service charge?
What is the minimum balance for each of these accounts?
Is there a minimum combined balance?
How much is the penalty charge for going below the minimum balance?
- 7) What, if any, is the limit on the number of withdrawals per month from the different accounts:
By check? By transfer? By mail or in person? By ATM?
- 8) Does the bank offer credit cards to its customers and what are the terms of agreement.

Some banks to consider:

University Federal Credit Union (ATM’s located on campus)

www.ufcu.org, 467-8080, 2025 Guadalupe, Dobie Mall, lower level

Bank of America (ATM’s located on campus)

www.bankofamerica.com, 397-2200, 501 Congress

Guaranty Federal

www.bank.guarantygroup.com, 495-9411, 301 N. Congress

Wells Fargo

www.wellsfargo.com, 344-7000, 2104 Guadalupe

Bank One

www.bankone.com, 479-5400, 504 Lavaca



Child Care Services

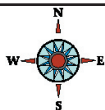
The University of Texas does provide child care for UT students, faculty and staff through the University Child Care Center <<http://www.utexas.edu/services/childcare/>>. However, there tends to be a long waiting list and children are placed on the waiting list according to the date of application. In the mean time, there are numerous qualified child care facilities in the Austin area. As a consumer and a parent, it is important to understand the difference between licensed and registered child care facilities.

Day care centers, group day homes, private kindergartens, nursery schools and drop in care centers are licensed by the Department of Human Services. To become licensed, the facility must meet certain minimum standards for a child's health and safety. These standards have been developed by DHS in consultation with licensed caregivers and experts in early childhood development education, fire safety, health and sanitation. Licensed facilities are expected to maintain: A well-managed, accountable organization, adequate supervision, a safe facility and a healthy environment, and safe activities geared to specific age groups.

Finding the right facility to enroll your child may require a lot of research, or you may be fortunate enough to find a good one right in your neighborhood. The following questions will help you evaluate different facilities to see if they meet your standards.

- Is the facility licensed?
- Is the caregiver/director firm and affectionate with children?
- Is the facility neat, clean, and well-lit, with enough room for all the children in care?
- Do planned activities develop your child's physical, emotional, creative and interpersonal skills, and are they geared to your child's age?
- Are there safe indoor and outdoor play areas, and enough toys, games, art supplies, and sports equipment?
- Are rules reasonable and fair, and are they consistently kept?
- Are parents allowed to drop in unexpectedly?
- Is the facility child-safe (for example, are electrical outlets and heaters covered)?
- Are snacks and meals adequate and nutritious?
- Can parents participate in activities? Are you aware of what decisions parents can participate in?
- Is there flexibility in the hours of care to meet your needs?
- Does the facility accept mildly ill children? What will the caregiver do if your child becomes ill while in care?

(Source: Texas A&M University Survival Guide)



Adjusting to Austin

Need help adjusting to life in Austin? Looking for someone who will understand? Or someone to have fun with? Why not contact UT students from your home country? UT has organizations representing most geographic regions of the world. Members of these student organizations are usually willing to help new students when they arrive in Austin. A list of contact persons for UT International Students Organizations may be obtained in the International Office or at: <<http://dpweb1.dp.utexas.edu/dsorg>>.

You could also join the PALS program at the International Office. The PALS program is designed to bring international and American students together for the purpose of cultural exchange and to practice English conversational skills. This is a perfect opportunity to meet new friends and get to know what Austin has to offer. If you are interested, go to the PALS website at <http://studentorgs.utexas.edu/iopals> for more information. To contact the PALS office, call 471-2348 or email: PALS@uts.cc.utexas.edu. If you are here with a family, encourage your non-student spouse to visit the International Coffee Mornings for advice and help getting settled. Go to the UT Family website for more information: <www.utexas.edu/international/utfamily>.