PREPARING FOR ARRIVAL

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ISSS
International Student & Scholar Services

University of Minnesota
PACKING

Before you start packing consider:
How much can you bring? What is safe to bring? Will you bring it with you to the United States or send it separately? This section will help you understand how to get your luggage safely from your home country to the United States.

Airline Baggage Allowance

There is a limit to the amount of baggage you can take with you on an airplane. The number of pieces of baggage and the size and weight of those pieces determine this limit. Confirm your airline’s baggage allowance when you purchase your ticket. Be aware that allowances to North America are often more generous than allowances elsewhere in the world. Regulations are subject to change.

If your luggage exceeds the allowances set by the airline, you will be asked to pay excess baggage charges.

Baggage

What you bring with you is largely a matter of personal choice. You will have to carry whatever you bring, so it is in your interest to keep it light and compact. If you need advice, you can contact another international student (check the student group website to find a group you might want to contact) or a scholar who has been working in your University of Minnesota hosting department or that has recently been to the United States.

Start to pack early, so that excess weight and bulk can be eliminated and essential items not overlooked. Do not worry if you cannot bring everything, since most goods are available in a wide range of prices in the United States.

Clothing and Shoes

Since the climate in Minnesota varies, we recommend that you bring a wide range of clothing with you. You will need items such as a heavy winter coat or jacket, boots, gloves, hats and rain gear. You will also need lightweight items, such as shorts, sandals and t-shirts to use during warmer weather. Most importantly, bring clothes and shoes that you are going to be most comfortable with. Most people dress casually on-campus. You can also check the Climate and Clothing section of this website to learn more about weather in Minnesota and how to dress throughout the year.

Do Bring:

- A good English dictionary; consider your skill level and determine if you should have a monolingual dictionary (e.g., English-English) or a bilingual dictionary (Spanish-English);
- All of your essential identification papers and documents, to be carried on your person or in your hand baggage. Do not put important documents in bags you have checked onto the plane—keep them in your hand luggage (see “Documents to Bring” section in this guide);
- Books, manuals, or journals that you think may be useful for reference in your field of study/research and that definitely will not be available in the United States;
- Personal items such as pictures of your family and friends, small gifts, traditional clothes, maps, posters, music, and items that represent you or your culture. These items will be helpful for you to introduce yourself and your country to people who you meet in the United States. These items will also keep you feel close to your home;
- A few non-perishable foods, sweets and/or cooking spices. Sharing your food is also a great way to make friends and to share part of your culture with others! Before selecting food items, make sure you check the [rules on customs](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/prohibited_restricted.xml);
- A camera, so you will have souvenirs of your time in the United States after you return home.

**Thing to Leave at Home**

You can obtain a booklet on customs regulations at the consulate or embassy where you acquire your visa. Prohibited items include some foodstuffs, narcotics, weapons, and items for resale. The U.S. Customs Service also provides this information on their Web site at [http://www.customs.gov/travel/travel.htm](http://www.customs.gov/travel/travel.htm).

**Do Not Bring:**

- Things you can easily buy in the United States, such as notebooks, pens, paper (paper in the United States is of a slightly different size than in countries following the metric system), toiletries, towels, or bed sheets. These items will take up valuable space in your luggage;
- Perishable foods, seeds, or plants. The United States has very strict restrictions on [importing foods, perishables, and agricultural goods](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg/prohibited_restricted.xml) into the country. It is a good idea to check what these restrictions are;
- Books that can easily be obtained in U.S. libraries. The University of Minnesota has its library catalog on the Internet, where you can check the availability of books. You can also contact the university library staff to verify the availability of any essential books. You can usually also obtain books through interlibrary loans;
- Medications, unless you have written prescriptions from a doctor (see “Prescriptions for Medication and Eyeglasses” in “Documents to Bring” section in this guide);
- Expensive jewelry, treasured possessions, family heirlooms, or delicate things, since there is always a chance that these items can get lost, stolen, or damaged during travel or during your stay;
- Narcotics or drugs;
- Any article of clothing, artifact, or medicine made from endangered animals;
- Electrical appliances. Appliances in the United States work on a 115 volts and 60 cycles system. It is usually best to purchase electrical items in the United States. Most items are reasonably priced. Also note that video systems, including televisions, VCRs, and DVD players (including those in laptop computers), use different systems in different parts of the world, and those you bring from home are unlikely to be compatible with the U.S. media.
Money

It is never a good idea to travel with large sums of money. We recommend that you bring a combination of cash, traveler’s checks, and/or credit cards to meet the initial costs of getting to campus, and at least the first month’s expenses (and first semester tuition for students). You should also plan to open a bank account once you are here and have your family or sponsor wire-transfer money to your account (see the Financial Considerations section for more details).

Baggage Customs

Be sure to declare unaccompanied baggage at customs when you enter the United States. When you pick up the parcels in the United States, you might have to pay “duty” (import tax). Ask about this when you make arrangements with the carrier you have chosen.