ACCULTURATION and TRANSITIONS

“A Primer on the U.S., Its People, Customs and Nursing”

Developed by:
Cross Country University,
in collaboration with Assignment America

Contributing Authors:
Ray Kaminer, MBA
Franklin A. Shaffer, EdD, RN
To our new employees and their families:

Welcome to Assignment America and to your experience in the United States.

We are very happy that you have decided to join us for what we hope will be a richly rewarding adventure. The United States is a large country with a variety of customs and cultures. While many aspects of life in the United States are the same, the U.S. is truly a land with different cultures and customs – many brought over from across the world. There is an openness to American culture that is accepting of customs and traditions – the U.S. is truly a “Nation of Immigrants”.

We know that you will go through a period where much of what you encounter will be new to you and that you may experience a period of adjustment. This is natural. This manual, and the other resources we will provide you, will help make the transition easier.

We will do whatever we can to make your stay in the United States a pleasant and rewarding one. We hope you will take advantage of the many unique features of American life and work. Take advantage as well of those features that are familiar to you and that will remind you of your home or of other countries you have visited. In most places in the U.S., you can find books, newspapers, organizations and stores that are from your home country or that will have products from your native land.

Use this manual to learn about the U.S. Do not treat it as a course to study American culture, but to make your life easier here and to help you in your daily affairs. Many of those you meet will also be “foreigners” who are here temporarily or who are recent arrivals. They will also be going through a period of adjustment; sharing experiences will help you feel comfortable quicker.

Treat this manual as an information resource to help you make the transition to a new experience. And, remember that there are people around you (the Assignment America team, your co-workers and new friends, and almost anybody you meet) who will go out of their way to help you.

We have made this manual comprehensive within the limits of what can be absorbed in a relatively short time. But, there is no substitute for experiencing the United States first hand and becoming a part of the community.

Section 1 starts with a discussion of the process of acculturation and what you need to understand about that process. Keep in mind that most adjustments are not unique to you and that some uncertainty and dislocation is usual and normal. Also recognize that there are a variety of customs and traditions that define many regions of the U.S. An enjoyable part of your experience will be learning about them and finding differences between what you are used to, what you have experienced elsewhere, and what is common in other areas of the U.S. Travel in the U.S. can be one of the most interesting and exciting parts of your adventure.
Next, there is a discussion of what makes the U.S. such an interesting place to be. There is an overview of the U.S., a discussion of U.S. geography, history and government, and information about U.S. time zones, major holidays, and cultural elements. Then, we go into discussions about typical social customs, the legal system, and health and medical services. There follow sections dealing with the practical information you will need to know about daily life in the U.S. – such as, housing, communications, banking, shopping, mail, food and slang.

Section 2 discusses nursing education, the concept of team, and nursing care delivery models. This section will probably be more of a refresher on who does what in health care. It also provides a short history of care in the U.S., how care is currently delivered, and nursing education requirements.

Section 3 discusses the different cultures you are likely to meet as a nurse. One of the defining characteristics of the American way of life is that there is tremendous diversity in the U.S. and that you will likely be exposed to different cultures in treating patients. Many of these patients will have their own attitudes and ideas about health care and you will need to be sensitive to the different attitudes and knowledge patients bring with them. Of course, patients will probably be as interested in learning about your culture as you will be in learning about theirs. This is your opportunity not only to contribute to the U.S. health care system, to learn new techniques, and to experience different health care protocols, but also to share your experiences and teach others what you have learned.

Section 4 discusses several of the major recent trends and issues in U.S. nursing.

Our main purpose in putting this manual together is to guide and assist you in the acculturation and transition process. Bear in mind, that the term ‘foreigner’ is really just someone in the U.S. from another country. The U.S. has so many people who live here from other countries, that the attitude is “Welcome. Have a good time”. There really is no question of “fitting in”. Americans welcome those from other countries and will be as happy to learn about your customs and traditions as you are to learn about theirs.

Enjoy your stay. Take advantage of your experience. Learn as much as you can. Have fun. We hope that one of the most pleasant parts of your stay will be facing and dealing with new situations; that can be a most exciting and enjoyable part of your work and daily life.

Sincerely,

Franklin A. Shaffer, EdD, RN
President, Education and Training Division
Cross Country, Inc.
Chief Education Officer
Cross Country University

Sylvia Mullarkey
Managing Director
Assignment America
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### United States Map

![United States Map]

### State Abbreviations

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SECTION 1

U.S. – People, Customs, Government
A. Acculturation Guide

Adjusting

Jet Lag
One of the first adjustments you will have to face after your arrival in the United States is "jet lag"; Jet Lag is the physical shock of having to adjust to a new time zone. It is caused by the long airplane flight. After several days (perhaps as long as a week) of disorientation and sleepiness, you will begin to function normally. It takes about one day to adjust for each hour difference in time. Do not be surprised if you feel a bit disoriented or unusually tired for a week or more.

Culture Shock
People experience culture shock in varying degrees – some hardly notice it at all. Below are some of the common symptoms of culture shock:

- You may feel isolated and frustrated. You may become nervous and excessively tired. You may want to do nothing but sleep – even after you should have recovered from jet lag.
- You may be excessively homesick. It is normal to miss your family and friends.
- You may feel hostile toward the U.S. as the cause of your discomfort. Minor irritations may make you unusually angry.
- You may become very dependent on others from your country. Of course, these friendships are important and supportive. However, if you make friends only with others from your country, you will deny yourself one of the main benefits of your experience – meeting and interacting with people from the U.S.
- You may have deep doubts about the wisdom of coming to the U.S. "Will I do well in a system different from the one I am used to?"

Almost all international arrivals must cope with culture shock to some degree. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Maintain your perspective. Remember that millions of international workers have come to the U.S. Not only have they survived, many have done extremely well.
- Keep an open mind. People in the U.S. may do or say things people in your country would not do or say. Try to understand people in the U.S. are acting according to their own set of values, and these values may reflect a culture different from yours. Avoid judging U.S. behavior by the standards of your own country.
• Do not withdraw. Withdrawing to immerse yourself in your work, studies or a hobby is not a good solution. It is best to work out your feelings by interacting with others to learn about your new environment.

• Always seek help if you continue to have personal adjustment problems either from Assignment America personnel or from the professionals where you work. Remember, they are trained to care for your concerns and are willing to help you resolve the issues you face.

**Cultural Change**

In adapting to a new culture, the goal is learning about yourself and others, trying to appreciate the differences between your culture and the local one. At times, you may feel that you are supposed to like and accept all these differences. Cultural sensitivity, however, means knowing about and respecting the norms of the local culture, not necessarily liking them.

In talking about culture and in looking at American culture, there will always be generalizations. Overviews give you potentially accurate and useful information about a culture as a whole, but in meeting and dealing with people, the situation and the specific circumstances of your relationship are more important.

Americans, for example, may be regarded as individualists and overly concerned with material wealth, but in some circumstances, Americans will be team oriented and generous. There are many instances of Americans foregoing personal gain for the good of their communities.

Keep in mind, too, that culture is just one of many influences of behavior. Differences can result from a difference in personality, age, generation, or gender. Maybe there are differences because you come from a rural area and the person you are dealing with comes from a large city. Personal differences often play as great or even a greater role than culture in communication and understanding.

To understand culture, remember the following elements that go into making a culture:

- Culture is collective, shared by a group
- Culture is learned
- Culture has to do with values, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, and feelings
- Culture involves customs and tradition
- Culture influences or guides behavior
- Culture is transmitted from generation to generation
- Culture is unconscious or implicit
- Culture is a response/adaptation to reality

In most cases, the invisible aspects of culture influence or cause the visible ones. Religious beliefs, for example, are clearly expressed in certain holiday customs, and notions of modesty
affect styles of dress. Surface behaviors are influenced by values and assumptions beneath the surface.

Culture is only one category of human behavior, and it is important to see it in relation to two other dimensions: the universal and the personal.

- Universal refers to ways in which all people in all groups are the same.
- Cultural refers to what a particular group of people has in common with each other and how they are different from other groups.
- Personal describes the ways in which each one of us is different from everyone else, including those in our group.

Because of universal behavior, not everything about people in a new culture is going to be different; much of what you already know about human behavior is going to apply. Because of personal behavior, not everything you learn about American culture is going to apply in equal measure, or at all, to every individual in that culture.

While conditioning occurs mostly in early childhood, adults continue to be conditioned as they acquire new behaviors throughout their life. One difference in adult conditioning, the kind you will experience, is that it often requires unlearning or changing behavior that was already acquired through childhood conditioning, and this can take longer. Here are the five steps in the process of cultural conditioning:

1. **Observation/Instruction** – At this stage, you are only beginning to become aware of a particular behavior but have not yet tried to do it yourself. Taking the example of conversation, you may have observed or someone may have told you the appropriate distance between people and the forms of address used.

2. **Imitation** – Now you carry out the activity. At this stage, you are conscious of what you are doing. You may have difficulty concentrating on a conversation, because your attention is on the act of talking and the body language of the person you are talking with.

3. **Reinforcement** – You sense when people are comfortable with you and when they are not. You further sense what are appropriate topics of conversation in different circumstances.

4. **Internalization** – Over time and with practice, you now know the cultural aspects of conversation in the U.S. and the differences between formal and informal conversations.

5. **Spontaneous Manifestation** – Now you are able to carry on a conversation without paying conscious attention to what you are doing. It comes naturally; you
are more aware of the topics of conversation and the person to whom you are talking, not on the mechanics of talking.

Two people can look upon the same reality, the same example of behavior and see two entirely different things. Any behavior observed across cultures, therefore, has to be interpreted in two ways

- The meaning given to it by the person who does the action
- The meaning given to it by the person who observes the action

Only when these two meanings are the same is there successful communication.

Fundamentals Of Culture

One of the basics of any culture is how much the individual identifies with a small group compared to the overall society. While no culture is exclusively individualist or collective, most tend to be more one than the other.

Individualist/Collectivist

**Individualist** – The individual identifies primarily with self, with the needs of the individual being satisfied before those of the group. Looking after and taking care of oneself, being self-sufficient, guarantees the well being of the group. Independence and self-reliance are greatly stressed and valued. In general, people tend to distance themselves psychologically and emotionally from each other. Group membership is not essential to one’s identity or success. (You will see many examples of this in American culture.)

**Collectivist** – One’s identity is in large part a function of one’s membership and role in a group, e.g., the family or work team. The survival and success of the group ensures the well being of the individual, so that by considering the needs and feelings of others, one protects oneself. Harmony and the interdependence of group members are stressed and valued. Group members are relatively close psychologically and emotionally but distant toward non-group members.

Universalist/Particularist

No culture is exclusively universalist or particularist, but cultures tend to be more one than the other.

**Universalist** – Certain absolutes apply across the board, regardless of circumstance or the particular situation. Wherever possible, you should try to apply the same rules to everyone in like situations. To be fair is to treat everyone alike and not make exceptions. Where possible, look at each situation objectively.
Particularist – How you behave in a given situation depends on the circumstances. You treat family, friends, and your in-group the best you can, and you let the rest of the world take care of itself. Their in-group will protect them. There can be no absolutes because everything depends on whom you are dealing with and the particulars of the situation. No one expects life to be fair. Exceptions will always be made for certain people. (You will see many examples of this in American culture.)

Time
Another of the ways in which cultures differ is in how people conceive of and handle time, and how their concept of time affects their interactions.

Monochronic – Time is the given and people are the variable. The needs of people are adjusted to suit the demands of time; e.g., schedules, deadlines, etc. Time is quantifiable, and a limited amount of it is available. People do one thing at a time and finish it before starting something else.

Polychronic – Time is adjusted to suit the needs of people. More time is always available, and you are never too busy. People often have to do several things simultaneously as required by circumstances. (You will see many examples of this in American culture.)

Distance
Each society has an attitude towards power – how culture deals with different levels of status and access to power. It is particularly clear in workplace relations, particularly in the relationship between managers and subordinates.

High Power Distance – People in these cultures accept that inequalities in power and status are natural. Those with power tend to distinguish themselves as much as possible from those who do not have power. Subordinates are not expected to take initiatives and are closely supervised.

Low Power Distance – People in these cultures see inequalities in power and status as largely artificial; it is not natural, though it may be convenient that some people have power over others. Those with power, therefore, tend to delegate and share power to the extent possible. Subordinates are rewarded for taking initiative and do not like close supervision. (You will see many examples of this in American culture.)

Uncertainty Avoidance
While all societies feel threatened by uncertainty, some feel more threatened by it than others.

High Uncertainty Avoidance – Cultures characterized by high uncertainty avoidance feel anxious about the uncertainty in life and try to limit and control it as much as possible. They have more laws, regulations, policies, and procedures and a greater emphasis on obeying them.
**Low Uncertainty Avoidance** – People in these cultures do not feel quite so threatened or anxious about uncertainty. They seek to legislate fewer areas of human interaction and tolerate differences better. They are comfortable leaving things to chance. (You will see many examples of this in American culture.)

**Status**
How do people come by their status in their organizations, and in society in general?

**Achieved Status** – You get into positions of power and influence by virtue of your achievements and performance. Your status is earned and not merely a function of birth, age, or seniority. You are hired based on your record of success, not based on family background, connections, or the school you attended. People are not particularly impressed with titles. (You will see many examples of this in American culture.)

**Ascribed Status** – You are looked up to because of your family and social class, because of your affiliations and membership in certain important groups, and, because of your age and seniority. The school you went to and the amount of education you received also confer status. Titles are important and should always be used.

**Control**
Cultures differ greatly in their view of a person’s place in the external world, especially the degree to which human beings can control or manipulate forces outside themselves.

**Internal** – The focus of control is largely internal, within the individual. There are very few givens in life, few circumstances that have to be accepted and that cannot be changed. There are no limits on what you can do or become. Life is what you do. (You will see many examples of this in American culture.)

**External** – The focus of control is largely external to the individual. There are limits beyond which we cannot go and certain givens that cannot be changed and must be accepted. Life is in large part what happens to you.
Getting Things Done

One Thing at a Time – People do things one at a time. They stand in line; they expect undivided attention. Interruptions are bad; schedules, deadlines are important. Adherence to schedules is the goal. Plans are not easily changed.

Many Things at Once – People do many things at one time. People stand in line less. Divided attention is okay. Interruptions are part of life. Schedules & deadlines are considered a loose guide. Completing the transaction is the goal. Plans can be easily changed. (You will see many examples of this in American culture.)

Change

Progress is Inevitable – Change is usually for the better. Tradition is not always right. Technology is often the answer. Every problem has a solution. (You will see many examples of this in American culture.)

Progress is Not Automatic – Tradition is a good guide. Some problems cannot be solved. Technology does not have all the answers.

Typical American Attitudes

No one American is quite like any other American but there are values and beliefs that are representative of the national culture. These values and beliefs are the basis of the American cultural heritage although individuals may act differently in different situations.

Attitude Towards Age
The American emphasis on concrete achievement and “doing” means that age is not highly valued. Further, there is an emphasis on energy and enthusiasm at the expense of custom and history. Age is also suspect because new is usually better in American culture.

Fate and Destiny
Americans believe that you can be whatever you want to be; (“where there is a will there’s a way”) and that anyone who works hard can become wealthy. There are few givens in life, and people have little sense of external limits. With some exceptions, limits are basically the responsibility of the individual. Nevertheless, Americans recognize that there is a need to help those in trouble or those who are unable to help themselves, especially children.

Human Nature
Courts consider a person innocent until he or she is proven guilty. Americans believe that people should be given the benefit of the doubt; if left alone, people will do the right thing and there is always a reason for what “went wrong”.
People are considered basically and inherently good. If someone does an evil deed, Americans look for the explanation or the reason why. People can and should be trusted. Americans are open to strangers, and willing to accept them.

**Change**
Change is considered positive. Americans believe in progress and the pursuit of perfection. Traditions can be a guide, but they are not inherently superior.

**Taking Risk**
A low level of personal savings is typical. Americans believe in the motto “Nothing ventured, nothing gained”. A high level of personal bankruptcies is common.

There will always be enough opportunity to go around, so taking risks, involves no real danger. For the truly ambitious, failure is only temporary. Experimentation, trial and error, are important ways to learn or to improve your product or service.

**Suffering and Misfortune**
Because Americans believe they are ultimately in control of their lives and destinies, they have no excuse for unhappiness or misfortune. The American attitude is “If you are suffering or unhappy, take whatever action is necessary to be happy again”. If individuals are depressed, it is because they have chosen to be.

**“Face”**
It is important to be straight and honest with people. Confrontation is sometimes necessary to clear the air. Honesty is the best policy.

In individualist cultures, no premium is put on saving face because people can take care of themselves. What other people think is not so crucial to survival or success. Americans say what they think and appreciate directness.

**Self-Esteem/Self Worth**
In an individualist culture, you are what you have achieved. You create your own worth rather than receiving it by virtue of birth, position, seniority, or longevity. Your self-esteem comes from what you have done to earn self-esteem.

**Equality**
Americans try to treat everyone the same. The President of the United States is there to serve the people. Just because you have achieved wealth, does not give you a greater say in politics nor are your opinions necessarily better.

In a strong reaction to the class structure in Europe, Americans created a culture built around the notion that no one is superior to anyone else because of birth, power, fame, or wealth.
Formality
Americans tend to be casual and informal in social and professional interactions. Informality is also more necessary in a mobile society where people are always meeting new people. Americans do not stand on ceremony, and do not use titles or rank in addressing one another.

Degree of Realism
Largely because of the notion that the individual is in control, Americans are generally optimistic. They do not see things the way they are, but as better than they are, particularly when they are not so good. They feel it is important to be positive and that there is no reason not to be (“Every cloud has a silver lining”).

Action vs. Inaction
Individuals survive because they get things done, generally on their own. Words and talk are cheap; they do not put food on the table or a roof over your head. Pursuits not directly related to the creation of concrete results (e.g., academia, the arts), are less highly valued. What is practical and pragmatic is favored over what is beautiful and inspiring.

The Natural World
The natural world is a kind of mechanism or machine that can be studied and known and whose workings can be predicted, manipulated, and ultimately controlled. It is not to be feared. Science can understand the world and find ways to control or modify natural events.

Common American Traits
1. Limited sense of fatalism, of accepting things as they are
2. Tolerance for differences
3. Historical low level of saving
4. Self-reliance
5. A president (elected by and serving the people), not a king
6. Informality: “Call me Bob” instead of Mr. Jones
7. The cult of celebrities; biographies of the rich and famous
8. Little fear of failure
9. Modest limits on immigration
10. Accepting criticism or disagreement with authority figures
11. Emphasis on achievement
12. Checks and balances in the U.S. Constitution
13. Identifying with work or job
14. Idea of a second chance, of starting over
15. Minimal supervision from bosses
16. Egalitarianism – a belief in human equality especially regarding social, political, and economic rights and privileges
17. Virtue of change, of newness
18. Rags to riches syndrome: the self-made man or woman
19. Waste: the disposable society; little conservation of resources (Although this attitude is changing, Americans are more wasteful than most of the world)
20. Frequent job and career changes
21. Big cars, big houses, sprawling malls
22. Desire to be your own boss, self-employed
23. Optimism
24. Mobile society; people move frequently

**Communication**

Communication, the sending and receiving of messages, is an integral part of culture. There are many differences in communication styles from culture to culture. The most important and most studied distinctions are the indirect/direct, or high context/low context.

**Indirect/High Context** – In high context cultures, people carry within them highly developed ideas of how most interactions will unfold, of how they and the other person will behave in a particular situation. Because people in high context cultures already know and understand each other quite well, they have evolved a more indirect style of communication. They have less need to be explicit. They rely less on the literal meaning of the spoken word and more on nonverbal communication. Because these cultures tend to be collectivist, people work closely together and know what everyone else knows. The overriding goal of the communication is maintaining harmony and saving face.

**Direct/Low Context** – Low context cultures, like that of the United States, tend to be more individualistic and have evolved a more direct communication style. Less can be assumed about the other person, and less is known about others in a culture where people prefer independence, self-reliance and a greater emotional distance from each other. People can not depend on nonverbal communication to make themselves understood. They must rely more on words, and on those words being interpreted literally. Getting or giving information is the goal of most communication.

**Communication Styles**

**Degree of Directness**

**Direct**
People say what they mean and mean what they say; you do not need to read between the lines; it is important to tell the truth; honesty is the best policy; the truth is more important than sparing someone’s feelings. This is part of the U.S. culture.

**Indirect**
People are indirect; they imply or suggest what they mean; understatement is valued; you need to read between the lines; the truth, if it hurts, should be tempered.
**The Role of Context**

**Low context, heterogeneous and individualistic**
Little is already known; the message must be explicit and spelled out; words are the primary means of communication; nonverbal cues are not the key to understanding. This is part of the U.S. culture.

**High context, homogenous and collectivist**
Much is already known; the spoken word is not the primary means of communicating; much is implied but little needs to be said; nonverbal cues and the context are important; what is not said may be the most important part of the message.

**“Face”**

**Face Less Important**
The facts and expediency are more important than being careful about what you say; getting and giving information is the overriding goal of communication. This is part of the U.S. culture.

**Face is Key**
Face is paramount; saving face, not losing face takes precedence over the “truth”; maintaining harmony is the overriding goal of communication; confrontation is avoided; saying “no” is difficult; criticism is handled very delicately; what one says and what one feels often are not the same.

**The Task or The Person**

**The Task**
Do business first and then have small talk; establishing rapport/good personal relationships is not essential to getting the job done. The goal is accomplishing the task. This is part of the U.S. culture.

**The Person**
Begin with small talk and then move to business; personal relationship is a prerequisite to getting the job done. The goal is building the relationship.

**Workplace Values And Norms**
One of the key areas in which there are differences in culture around the world is in the culture of work. Keep in mind that there are different approaches to the relationships between managers and employees in different cultures, and the value that different societies place on work.

**Power Distance**

**Less Power Distance**
More interaction exists between the bosses and subordinates. The boss is more democratic and delegates responsibility. Subordinates taking action on their own is accepted. It is also
acceptable to disagree with or question the boss. Power is decentralized. This is part of the U.S. culture.

**High Power Distance**
Greater distance exists between the boss and subordinates. Power is centralized and generally not shared. The boss does not delegate responsibility, nor reward independence or initiative. The worker does not disagree with or question the boss.

**Uncertainty Avoidance**

- **Low Uncertainty Avoidance**
  It is okay to break laws for pragmatic reasons; it is permitted to bypass the chain of command if necessary. Conflict can not always be avoided. Taking risks is acceptable. Interactions are more informal. This is part of the U.S. culture.

- **High Uncertainty Avoidance**
  More laws exist and greater emphasis is placed on obeying laws and conforming. It is never good to break laws or bypass the chain of command, whatever the reason. Conflict must be avoided; risks are not attractive.

**Source of Status**

- **Achieved Status**
  Status is earned by your achievements. You get ahead based on merit. Status must be won, not automatically accorded, and it can be lost. This is part of the U.S. culture.

- **Ascribed Status**
  A certain amount of status comes with the family name and the groups you are affiliated with, and cannot easily be lost. Achievements are important, but you can have status even without them.

**Concept of Work**

- **Work As Part of Identity**
  Work has value in and of itself. Your job is an important part of your identity. People live to work, in the sense that getting things done is inherently satisfying. This is part of the U.S. culture.

- **Work As Functional Necessity**
  Work is the means to paying bills and meeting financial obligations. Life is too short to revolve around one’s work. Work is what you do, not who you are.

**Motivation**

- **Professional Opportunity**
Professional opportunity and success are important motivating factors. Job security is not so important as the chance to make more money and advance in one’s career. This is part of the U.S. culture.

**Comfortable Work Environment**
People are motivated by the desire to have a pleasant work setting and good relationships with coworkers. Job security is important, as is an organization that takes care of its employees. Having more time off to spend with family is also very motivating.

**Productivity**
**Results**
Focusing on the task ensures success. Harmony is nice but results are what count. If you get results, people will be more harmonious. Getting results is ultimately more important than how you get them. This is part of the U.S. culture.

**Harmony**
Working well with other people is the key to success in any enterprise. Harmony in the workplace will ensure eventual success. Results bought at the expense of harmony are too costly. How you get results is just as important as the results themselves.

**Ideal Worker**
**Technical Skills**
What matters most in a worker is his/her technical qualifications: education, work experience, and specific skills. Demonstrated competence is the key to being promoted. This is part of the U.S. culture.

**People Skills**
What matters most in a worker is his/her ability to work well with others. Age and seniority are important for being promoted.

**Adjusting to a New Culture**
Adjusting to another culture involves two transitions:

1. From living in one place to living in another place, and
2. From working in one job to working in a different job.

Newcomers go through somewhat distinct stages as they adjust to their host country, the host culture, and their jobs. Together, these comprise the cycle of adjustment, during which your awareness of and attitudes towards cultural differences change and evolve.

**Initial Enthusiasm (The Honeymoon)**
Exposure to country and culture is limited. Excitement and enthusiasm abound. Everything is exotic and quaint. Attitude toward host country is generally positive.

**Initial Country & Culture Shock**
Wider exposure to country and culture means more realistic and more mixed reactions. Enthusiasm is tempered with frustration. Feelings of vulnerability and dependence are common. Homesickness is frequent. Nothing is routine.

**Initial Adjustment**
Routines are re-established. Some aspects of the host country and culture are now seen as normal. Adjustment to the physical aspects of the host country is better. You are somewhat more self-reliant. You are more positive about your ability to function in the country. Adjustment is to the culture of training for your new position as well as to American culture.

**Further Culture Shock**
You experience post-training withdrawal symptoms. You are adjusting to being on your own in the United States. You are having your first encounters with the work-related aspects of culture, with initial surprises and frustrations. You are surprised that you still have to go through culture shock.

**Further Adjustment**
You are getting used to being on your own. You are making friends in the community. You are more effective at work because you understand the culture better.

**Coping Strategies**
Living and working in another country, especially in the beginning, is a series of stressful events, with occasional periods of calm. For the most part, this stress is the result of the many adjustments you make to:

- Learn new ways of doing things
- Learn to do things you’ve never done before
- Stop doing things you can no longer do
- Adjust to an entirely new set of people
- Get used to various new and unusual phenomena
- Learn to live without all kinds of familiar phenomena

Everyone has experienced stress before and has developed strategies for coping with it. Here are some coping strategies:
Things to Do With Other People

- Join/start a hospital newsletter
- Invite people over
- Go and visit someone
- Telephone someone
- Go to a movie, cafe, etc., with someone
- Play a game with someone
- Participate in a team sport
- Volunteer for a needy cause

Things To Do On Your Own

- Read (especially nursing news and professional journals – some are free, e.g., http://www.healthcaretraveler.com/, Nursing Spectrum, NurseWeek)
- Write an article about your experiences
- Maintain a journey manual
- Join some Internet listserves and ezines
- Listen to music
- Go to a movie
- Go to a restaurant or cafe
- Exercise
- Call home
- Write letters
- Watch television
- Play cards
- Cook a meal
- Go shopping
- Listen to the radio
- Make a tape to send home
- Take a ride
- Take a trip

Things to Remind Yourself Of

- This will pass
- It is not the end of the world
- You came here to experience a challenge
- You have been through worse than this
- It is natural to feel down from time to time
- No pain; no gain
- It is not just me
- Things did not always go well back home either
- You have taken on a lot; you should expect to feel overwhelmed from time to time
Join In
Perhaps the most natural way of learning about the culture around you is to actively participate in it, to become involved in the life of your community and its people.

- Join professional nursing groups (local, district, state, national)
- Donate your time and services as a volunteer to any organization public service, or institution that accepts volunteers, such as a nursing home or a local charity
- Participate in hospital functions, especially in your nursing unit, as well as state and national nursing meetings and conventions
- Offer to teach a skill you have that people might be interested in learning
- Become a member of a local church
- Offer to tutor students at the local school, or start a tutoring program
- Join a club
- Join a local sports team or club
- Help organize a special event such as a:
  - health fair
  - fund raiser
  - craft fair
  - beautification project
- Offer to help out with a local boys’ or girls’ club
- Join an organization affiliated with your workplace

Keep A Journal
Use a journal to record:
- the events of the day
- observations
- impressions and reactions
- events and experiences
- thoughts and emotions
- clinical experiences
- new technologies learned

Start simple, recording a few thoughts, ideas, questions in a 10-15 minute break at the end of the day. Do not think of your reader or your writing style. Write for yourself; otherwise, you stop the free flow of your thoughts and emotions while they are happening. Write when things are fresh in your mind, and you can recall details.

Learn From The Media And The Arts
In every country, a great deal about the culture is revealed by the media, which includes the following:

- Books/Poetry
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Radio
- Television
- Movies/Theater
- Songs and Music
B. Portrait of the U.S.

People

The United States has welcomed more immigrants than any other country – more than 50 million in all – and still admits almost 700,000 persons a year. In the past, many American writers emphasized the idea of the melting pot, an image that suggested newcomers would discard their old customs and adopt American ways. Typically, for example, the children of immigrants learned English but not their parents' first language. Recently, however, Americans have placed greater value on diversity, ethnic groups have renewed and celebrated their heritage, and the children of immigrants often grow up bilingual.

Native Americans

The first American immigrants, beginning more than 20,000 years ago, were intercontinental wanderers: hunters and their families following animal herds from Asia to America, across a land bridge where the Bering Strait is today. When Spain's Christopher Columbus "discovered" the New World in 1492, about 1.5 million Native Americans lived in what is now the continental United States, although estimates of the number vary greatly. Mistaking the place where he landed – San Salvador in the Bahamas – for the Indies, Columbus called the Native Americans "Indians".

During the next 200 years, people from several European countries followed Columbus across the Atlantic Ocean to explore America and set up trading posts and colonies. The transfer of land from Indian to European – and later American – hands was accomplished through treaties, wars, and force, with Indians constantly giving way as the newcomers moved west. In the 19th century, the government's preferred solution to the Indian "problem" was to force tribes to inhabit specific plots of land called reservations.

The territorial wars, along with Old World diseases to which Indians had no built-up immunity, sent their population plummeting, to a low of 350,000 in 1920. Some tribes disappeared altogether; other tribes lost their languages and most of their culture. Today they number about two million (0.8 percent of the total U.S. population), and only about one-third of Native Americans still live on reservations.

Countless American place-names derive from Indian words, including the states of Massachusetts, Ohio, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, and Idaho. Indians taught Europeans how to cultivate crops that are now staples throughout the world: corn, tomatoes, potatoes, and tobacco.
Immigration
The English were the dominant ethnic group among early settlers of what became the United States, and English became the prevalent American language. But people of other nationalities soon followed. Settlers came not only from Great Britain, but also from other European countries, including Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, Germany, and Sweden.

Between 1840 and 1860, the United States received its first great wave of immigrants. In Europe as a whole, famine, poor harvests, rising populations, and political unrest caused an estimated 5 million people to leave their homelands each year. In Ireland, blight attacked the potato crop, and in 1847 alone, the number of Irish immigrants to the United States reached 118,120. Today there are about 39 million Americans of Irish descent.

During the American Civil War (1861-65), the federal government helped fill its roster of troops by encouraging emigration from Europe, especially from the German states. In return for service in the Union army, immigrants were offered grants of land. By 1865, about one in five Union soldiers was a wartime immigrant. Today, 22 percent of Americans have German ancestry.

Jews came to the United States in large numbers beginning about 1880. Over the next 45 years, 2 million Jews moved to the United States; the Jewish-American population is now more than 5 million.

During the late 19th century, so many people were entering the United States that the government operated a special port of entry on Ellis Island in the harbor of New York City. Between 1892, when it opened, and 1954, when it closed, Ellis Island was the doorway to the United States for 12 million people. It is now preserved as part of Statue of Liberty National Monument.

Slavery
Among the flood of immigrants to North America, were Africans, 500,000 of whom were brought over as slaves between 1619 and 1808.

The process of ending slavery began in April 1861 with the outbreak of the American Civil War between the free states of the North and the slave states of the South, 11 of which had left the Union. On January 1, 1863, midway through the war, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which abolished slavery in those states that had seceded. Slavery was abolished throughout the United States with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865.

Even after the end of slavery, however, American blacks were hampered by segregation and inferior education. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, African Americans, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., used boycotts, marches, and other forms of nonviolent protest to demand equal treatment under the law and an end to racial prejudice.

A high point of this civil rights movement came on August 28, 1963, when more than 200,000 people of all races gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Not long
after, the U.S. Congress passed laws prohibiting discrimination in voting, education, employment, housing, and public accommodations.

Today, African Americans are 12.7 percent of the total U.S. population.

**Language And Nationality**

It is common to walk down the streets of an American city today and hear Spanish spoken. In 1950, fewer than 4 million U.S. residents were from Spanish-speaking countries. Today that number is about 27 million. About 50 percent of Hispanics in the United States have origins in Mexico. The other 50 percent come from a variety of countries, including El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia. Thirty-six percent of the Hispanics in the United States live in California. Several other states have large Hispanic populations, including Texas, New York, Illinois, and Florida, where hundreds of thousands of Cubans fleeing the Castro regime have settled. There are so many Cuban Americans in Miami that the Miami Herald, the city's largest newspaper, publishes separate editions in English and Spanish.

The widespread use of Spanish in American cities has generated a public debate over language. Some citizens are calling for a law declaring English the official American language. Recognition of English as the official language, others argue, would harm speakers of other languages and make it difficult for them to live their daily lives.

**Immigration**

In 1924, Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act. For the first time, the United States set limits on how many people from each country it would admit. The number of people allowed to immigrate into the U.S. from a given country each year was based on the number of people from that country already living in the United States. As a result, immigration patterns over the next 40 years reflected the existing immigrant population, mostly Europeans and North Americans.

In 1965, the United States began to grant immigrant visas according to who applied first; national quotas were replaced with hemispheric ones. And preference was given to relatives of U.S. citizens and immigrants with job skills in short supply in the United States. In 1978, Congress abandoned hemispheric quotas and established a worldwide ceiling, opening the doors even wider. In 1990, for example, the top 10 points of origin for immigrants were Mexico (57,000), the Philippines (55,000), Vietnam (49,000), the Dominican Republic (32,000), Korea (30,000), China (29,000), India (28,000), the Soviet Union (25,000), Jamaica (19,000), and Iran (18,000).

The United States population in 1990 included nearly 20 million foreign-born persons. The revised immigration law of 1990 created a flexible cap of 675,000 immigrants each year, with certain categories of people excluded from the limit. That law attempts to attract more skilled workers and professionals to the United States and to draw immigrants from countries that have supplied relatively few Americans in recent years. It does this by providing "diversity" visas. In 1990, about 9,000 people entered the country on diversity visas from such countries as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Peru, Egypt, and Trinidad and Tobago.
Geography
The so-called lower 48 states or continental United States (all states but Alaska and Hawaii) span 4,500 kilometers and four time zones. It is not unusual for the gap between the warmest and coldest temperatures on a given day in the United States to reach 70 degrees Fahrenheit (about 40 degrees Celsius).

This chapter examines American geography, history, and customs through the filters of six main regions:

- **The Middle Atlantic**, comprising New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland.
- **The South**, which runs from Virginia south to Florida and west as far as central Texas. This region also includes West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and parts of Missouri and Oklahoma.
- **The Midwest**, a broad collection of states sweeping westward from Ohio to Nebraska and including Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, parts of Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, and eastern Colorado.
- **The Southwest**, made up of western Texas, portions of Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and the southern interior part of California.

Note that there is nothing official about these regions; many other groupings are possible. These groupings are simply a way of getting acquainted with the United States.

Regional Variety
While American English is generally standard, American speech often differs according to what part of the country you are in. Southerners tend to speak slowly, in what is referred to as a "Southern drawl". Midwesterners use "flat" “a”s (as in "bad" or "cat"), and language in New York City features a number of Yiddish words ("schlepp," "nosh," "nebbish") contributed by the city's large Jewish population.

Regional differences also make themselves felt in less tangible ways, such as attitudes and outlooks. An example is the attention paid to foreign events in newspapers. In the East, where people look out across the Atlantic Ocean, papers tend to show greatest concern with what is
happening in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and western Asia. On the West Coast, news editors give more attention to events in East Asia and Australia.

New England
From the 17th century until well into the 19th, New England was the country's cultural and economic center.

The earliest European settlers of New England were English Protestants. Many of them came in search of religious liberty. They gave the region its distinctive political format – the town meeting (an outgrowth of meetings held by church elders) in which citizens gathered to discuss issues of the day. Only men of property could vote. Town meetings afforded New Englanders an unusually high level of participation in government. Such meetings still function in many New England communities today.

The Industrial Revolution reached America in the first half of the 19th century. In Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, new factories were built to manufacture such goods as clothing, rifles, and clocks. Most of the money to run these businesses came from Boston, which was the financial heart of the nation.

As some of the original New England settlers migrated westward, immigrants from Canada, Ireland, Italy, and Eastern Europe moved into the region. Despite a changing population, much of the original spirit of New England remains. It can be seen in the simple, wood frame houses and white church steeples that are features of many small towns, and in the traditional lighthouses that dot the Atlantic coast.

In the 20th century, most of New England's traditional industries have relocated to states or foreign countries where goods can be made more cheaply. The gap has been partly filled by the microelectronics and computer industries.

Middle Atlantic
A wide range of people settled the Middle Atlantic region. Dutch immigrants moved into the lower Hudson River Valley in what is now New York State. English Catholics founded Maryland, and an English Protestant sect, the Friends (Quakers), settled Pennsylvania.

Early settlers were mostly farmers and traders, and the region served as a bridge between North and South. Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania, midway between the northern and southern colonies, was home to the Continental Congress, the convention of delegates from the original colonies that organized the American Revolution. The same city was the birthplace of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the U.S. Constitution in 1787.

As heavy industry (iron, glass, and steel) spread throughout the region, rivers such as the Hudson and Delaware were transformed into vital shipping lanes. Cities on waterways – New York on the Hudson, Philadelphia on the Delaware, and Baltimore on Chesapeake Bay – grew dramatically. New York is still the nation's largest city, its financial hub, and its cultural center.
The South
Like New England, the South was first settled by English Protestants. Southerners were prominent among the leaders of the American Revolution, and four of America's first five presidents were from Virginia.

Especially in coastal areas, southern settlers grew wealthy by raising and selling cotton and tobacco. The most economical way to raise these crops was on large farms, called plantations, which required the work of many laborers. To supply this need, plantation owners relied on slaves brought from Africa, and slavery spread throughout the South.

Slavery was one of the issues dividing North and South. In 1860, 11 southern states left the Union intending to form a separate nation, the Confederate States of America. This rupture led to the Civil War, the Confederacy's defeat, and the end of slavery.

Today the South has evolved into a manufacturing region, and high-rise buildings crowd the skylines of such cities as Atlanta and Little Rock, Arkansas.

The Midwest
Starting in the early 1800s easterners moved to the Midwest in search of better farmland, and soon Europeans migrated there directly: Germans to eastern Missouri, Swedes and Norwegians to Wisconsin and Minnesota. The region's fertile soil produced abundant harvests of cereal crops such as wheat, oats, and corn. The region was soon known as the nation's "breadbasket".

The Midwest gave birth to one of America's two major political parties, the Republican Party, which was formed in the 1850s to oppose the spread of slavery into new states.

The region's hub is Chicago, Illinois, the nation's third largest city. This major Great Lakes port is a connecting point for rail lines and air traffic to far-flung parts of the nation and the world.

The Southwest
The Southwest differs from the adjoining Midwest in weather (drier), population (less dense), and ethnicity (strong Spanish-American and Native-American components). Outside the cities, the region is a land of open spaces, much of which is desert. The magnificent Grand Canyon is located in this region, as is Monument Valley.

Parts of the Southwest once belonged to Mexico. The United States obtained this land following the Mexican-American War of 1846-48. Its Mexican heritage continues to exert a strong influence on the region, which is a convenient place to settle for immigrants (legal or illegal) from farther south. The regional population is growing rapidly, with Arizona in particular rivaling the southern states as a destination for retired Americans in search of a warm climate.

The West
The West is a region of scenic beauty on a grand scale. All of its 11 states are partly mountainous, and the ranges are the sources of startling contrasts. To the west of the mountains, winds from the Pacific Ocean carry enough moisture to keep the land well watered. To the east, however, the land is very dry.
In much of the West, the population is sparse, and the federal government owns and manages millions of hectares of undeveloped land. Americans use these areas for recreational and commercial activities, such as fishing, camping, hiking, boating, grazing, lumbering, and mining.

Alaska, the northernmost state in the Union, is a vast land of few people and great stretches of wilderness, protected in national parks and wildlife refuges. Hawaii is the only state in the union in which Asian Americans outnumber residents of European stock. Beginning in the 1980s, large numbers of Asians have also settled in California, mainly around Los Angeles.

Los Angeles – and Southern California as a whole – bears the stamp of its large Mexican-American population. Now the second largest city in the nation, Los Angeles is best known as the home of the Hollywood film industry.

**History**

The first Europeans to reach North America were Icelandic Vikings, led by Leif Ericson, about the year 1000. Traces of their visits have been found in the Canadian province of Newfoundland, but the Vikings failed to establish a permanent settlement and soon lost contact with the new continent.

Five centuries later, the demand for Asian spices, textiles, and dyes spurred European navigators to dream of shorter routes between East and West. Acting on behalf of the Spanish crown, in 1492 the Italian navigator Christopher Columbus sailed west from Europe and landed on one of the Bahama Islands in the Caribbean Sea. Within 40 years, Spanish adventurers established a huge empire in Central and South America.

**The Colonial Era**

The first successful English colony was founded at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. A few years later, English Puritans came to America to escape religious persecution for their opposition to the Church of England. In 1620, the Puritans founded Plymouth Colony in what later became Massachusetts. Plymouth was the second permanent British settlement in North America and the first in New England.

By 1733, English settlers had founded 13 colonies along the Atlantic Coast, from New Hampshire in the North to Georgia in the South. Elsewhere in North America, the French controlled Canada and Louisiana, which included the vast Mississippi River watershed. France and England fought several wars during the 18th century. The end of the Seven Years' War in 1763 left England in control of Canada and all of North America east of the Mississippi.

Soon afterwards, England and its colonies were in conflict. The mother country imposed new taxes, in part to defray the cost of fighting the Seven Years' War, and expected Americans to lodge British soldiers in their homes. The colonists resented the taxes and resisted the quartering of soldiers.
All the taxes, except one on tea, were removed; in 1773, a group of patriots responded by staging the Boston Tea Party. Disguised as Indians, they boarded British merchant ships and dumped 342 crates of tea into Boston harbor.

Colonial leaders convened the First Continental Congress in 1774 to discuss the colonies' opposition to British rule. War broke out on April 19, 1775, when British soldiers confronted colonial rebels in Lexington, Massachusetts. On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted a Declaration of Independence.

At first, the Revolutionary War went badly for the Americans. The turning point in the war came in 1777 when American soldiers defeated the British Army at Saratoga, New York. Following the Americans' victory at Saratoga, France and America signed treaties of alliance, and France provided the Americans with troops and warships.

The last major battle of the American Revolution took place at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781. A combined force of American and French troops surrounded the British and forced their surrender. The war officially ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1783, by which England recognized American independence.

A New Nation
George Washington, the war's military hero and the first U.S. president, headed a party favoring a strong president and central government; Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, headed a party preferring to give more power to the states, on the theory that they would be more accountable to the people.

Jefferson became the third president in 1801. In 1803, he purchased the vast Louisiana Territory from France, almost doubling the size of the United States. The Louisiana Purchase added more than 2 million square kilometers of territory and extended the country's borders as far west as the Rocky Mountains in Colorado.

Slavery And The Civil War
After Abraham Lincoln, a foe of slavery, was elected president in 1860, 11 states left the Union and proclaimed themselves an independent nation, the Confederate States of America: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. The American Civil War had begun.

The Confederate Army did well in the early part of the war, and some of its commanders, especially General Robert E. Lee, were brilliant tacticians. But the Union had superior manpower and resources to draw upon. In the summer of 1863 Lee took a gamble by marching his troops north into Pennsylvania. He met a Union army at Gettysburg, and the largest battle ever fought on American soil resulted. After three days of desperate fighting, the Confederates were defeated.

Two years later, after a long campaign involving forces commanded by Lee and Grant, the Confederates surrendered. The Civil War was the most traumatic episode in American history.
But it resolved two matters that had vexed Americans since 1776. It put an end to slavery, and it decided that the country was not a collection of semi-independent states but an indivisible whole.

The Late 19th Century
Within a few years after the end of the Civil War, the United States became a leading industrial power. The first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869; by 1900 the United States had more rail mileage than all of Europe. The petroleum industry prospered, and John D. Rockefeller of the Standard Oil Company became one of the richest men in the world.

To limit competition, railroads merged and set standardized shipping rates. Trusts – huge combinations of corporations – tried to establish monopoly control over some industries, notably oil. To counteract them, the federal government took action. The Interstate Commerce Commission was created in 1887 to control railroad rates. The Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 banned trusts, mergers, and business agreements "in restraint of trade".

Industrialization brought with it the rise of organized labor. The American Federation of Labor, founded in 1886, was a coalition of trade unions for skilled laborers. The late 19th century was a period of heavy immigration, and many of the workers in the new industries were foreign-born. For American farmers, however, times were hard. Food prices were falling, and farmers had to bear the costs of high shipping rates, expensive mortgages, high taxes, and tariffs on consumer goods.

The Progressive Movement
While Americans were venturing abroad, they were also taking a fresh look at social problems at home. About 1900, the Progressive Movement arose to reform society and individuals through government action. The movement's supporters were primarily economists, sociologists, technicians, and civil servants who sought scientific, cost-effective solutions to political problems.

Social workers went into the slums to establish settlement houses, which provided the poor with health services and recreation. Prohibitionists demanded an end to the sale of liquor. In the cities, reform politicians fought corruption, regulated public transportation, and built municipally owned utilities. States passed laws restricting child labor, limiting workdays, and providing compensation for injured workers.

War And Peace
When World War I began in Europe in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson urged a policy of strict American neutrality. But, Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare against all ships bound for Allied ports. Congress declared war on Germany in 1917.

By the fall of 1918, Germany's position had become hopeless. Its armies were retreating in the face of a relentless American buildup. In October Germany asked for peace, and an armistice was declared on November 11. In 1919 Wilson went to Versailles to help draft the peace treaty. Although crowds in the Allied capitals cheered him, at home his international outlook was less popular. His idea of a League of Nations was included in the Treaty of Versailles, but the U.S. Senate did not ratify the treaty, and the United States did not participate in the league.
The 1920s were an extraordinary and confusing time. It was the age of Prohibition: in 1920, a constitutional amendment outlawed the sale of alcoholic beverages. Yet drinkers cheerfully evaded the law in thousands of "speakeasies" (illegal bars), and gangsters made illicit fortunes in liquor. It was also the Roaring Twenties, the age of jazz and spectacular silent movies and such fads as flagpole sitting and goldfish swallowing.

The United States was now a consumer society, with booming markets for radios, home appliances, synthetic textiles, and plastics. With profits soaring and interest rates low, plenty of money was available for investment. Frantic bidding pushed prices far above the underlying value of stock shares. Investors bought stocks "on margin", borrowing up to 90 percent of the purchase price. The bubble burst in 1929. The stock market crashed, triggering a worldwide depression.

**The Great Depression**

By 1932 thousands of American banks and over 100,000 businesses had failed. That year Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president on the platform of "a New Deal for the American people".

Within three months – the historic "Hundred Days" – Roosevelt had rushed through Congress a great number of laws to help the economy recover. Such new agencies as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration created millions of jobs by undertaking the construction of roads, bridges, airports, parks, and public buildings. Later the Social Security Act set up contributory old-age and survivors' pensions.

Roosevelt's New Deal programs did not end the Depression. Although the economy improved, full recovery began with the defense buildup preceding America's entry into World War II.

**World War II**

Again neutrality was the initial American response to the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939. But the bombing of the Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawaii by the Japanese in December 1941 brought the United States into the war, first against Japan and then against its allies, Germany and Italy.

American, British, and Soviet war planners agreed to concentrate on defeating Germany first. British and American forces landed in North Africa in November 1942, proceeded to Sicily and the Italian mainland in 1943, and liberated Rome on June 4, 1944. Two days later – D-Day – Allied forces landed in Normandy. Paris was liberated on August 24, and by September American units had crossed the German border. The Germans finally surrendered on May 5, 1945.

The war against Japan came to a swift end in August of 1945, when President Harry Truman ordered the use of atomic bombs against the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
The Cold War
A new international congress, the United Nations, came into being after the war, and this time the United States joined. Soon tensions developed between the United States and its wartime ally the Soviet Union. Soviet forces imposed Communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe. In 1949, the United States allied with Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom to form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

On June 25, 1950, armed with Soviet weapons and acting with Stalin's approval, North Korea's army invaded South Korea. Truman immediately secured a commitment from the United Nations to defend South Korea. The war lasted three years, and the final settlement left Korea divided.

In 1960 John F. Kennedy was elected president. Young, energetic, and handsome, he promised to "get the country moving again". In October 1962 Kennedy was faced with what turned out to be the most drastic crisis of the Cold War. The Soviet Union had been caught installing nuclear missiles in Cuba, close enough to reach American cities in a matter of minutes. Kennedy imposed a naval blockade on the island. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev ultimately agreed to remove the missiles, in return for an American promise not to invade Cuba.

Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. His death was a terrible shock to the American people. His successor, Lyndon Johnson, worked with Congress to enact laws establishing and expanding social programs. Johnson's "War on Poverty" included preschool education for poor children, vocational training for dropouts from school, and community service for slum youths.

During his six years in office, Johnson became preoccupied with the Vietnam War. By 1968, 500,000 American troops were fighting in that small country in Southeast Asia, previously little known to most of them. Although politicians tended to view the war as part of a necessary effort to check communism on all fronts, a growing number of Americans saw no vital American interest in what happened to Vietnam. Demonstrations protesting American involvement broke out on college campuses, and there were violent clashes between students and police.

Richard Nixon was elected president in 1968. He pursued a policy of "Vietnamization", gradually replacing American soldiers with Vietnamese. In 1973 he signed a peace treaty with North Vietnam and brought American soldiers home. Nixon achieved two other diplomatic breakthroughs: re-establishing U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China and negotiating the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) with the Soviet Union. In 1972 he easily won re-election.

During that presidential campaign, however, five men were arrested for breaking into Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate office building in Washington, D.C. Eventually, tape recordings made by the president himself revealed that the White House had been connected to the break-in and subsequent cover-up. On August 9, Richard Nixon became the only U.S. president to resign from office.
Decades Of Change

After World War II the presidency had alternated between Democrats and Republicans, but, for the most part, Democrats had held majorities in the Congress – in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. A string of 26 consecutive years of Democratic control was broken in 1980, when the Republicans gained a majority in the Senate; at the same time, Republican Ronald Reagan was elected president. If there was a central theme to his domestic policies, it was that the federal government had become too big and federal taxes too high.

Despite a growing federal budget deficit, in 1983 the U.S. economy entered into one of the longest periods of sustained growth since World War II. The most serious issue of the day was the revelation that the United States had secretly sold arms to Iran in an attempt to win freedom for American hostages held in Lebanon and to finance antigovernment forces in Nicaragua at a time when Congress had prohibited such aid. Despite these revelations, Reagan continued to enjoy strong popularity throughout his second term in office.

His successor in 1988, Republican George Bush, benefited from Reagan's popularity and continued many of his policies. When Iraq invaded oil-rich Kuwait in 1990, Bush put together a multinational coalition that liberated Kuwait early in 1991.

In 1992, Bill Clinton, a Democrat, became president. Two years later Republicans won their first majority in both the House and Senate in 40 years. During the Clinton administration, the U.S. enjoyed more peace and economic well-being than at any time in its history. He proposed the first balanced budget in decades and achieved a budget surplus. He was the first Democratic president since Franklin D. Roosevelt to win a second term.

After the failure in his second year of a huge program of health care reform, Clinton shifted emphasis, declaring, "The era of big government is over”.

In 1998, because of issues surrounding personal indiscretions with a young woman who was a White House intern, Clinton was the second U.S. president to be impeached by the House of Representatives. He was tried in the Senate and found not guilty of the charges brought against him.

In the world, he successfully dispatched peacekeeping forces to war-torn Bosnia and bombed Iraq when Saddam Hussein stopped United Nations inspections for evidence of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. He became a global proponent for an expanded NATO, more open international trade, and a worldwide campaign against drug trafficking.
**Government**

During the Revolutionary War, the colonies had formed a national congress to present England with a united front. Under an agreement known as the Articles of Confederation, a postwar congress was allowed to handle only those problems that were beyond the capabilities of individual states.

**The Constitution**

The Articles of Confederation failed as a governing document for the United States because the states did not cooperate as expected. When it came time to pay wages to the national army or the war debt to France, some states refused to contribute. To cure this weakness, the congress asked each state to send a delegate to a convention.

The resulting plan, or Constitution, which is the master legal document of the United States, set up a system in which some powers were given to the national, or federal, government, while others were reserved for the states. The Constitution divided the national government into three parts, or branches: the legislative (the Congress, which consists of a House of Representatives and a Senate), the executive (headed by the president), and the judicial (the federal courts). Called "separation of powers", this division gives each branch certain duties and substantial independence from the others. It also gives each branch some authority over the others through a system of "checks and balances”.

Here are a few examples of how checks and balances work in practice:

- If Congress passes a proposed law, or "bill”, that the president considers unwise, he can veto it. That means that the bill does not become law unless two-thirds of the members of both the House and the Senate vote to enact it despite the president's veto.

- If Congress passes, and the president signs, a law that is challenged in the federal courts as contrary to the Constitution, the courts can nullify that law. (The federal courts cannot issue advisory or theoretical opinions, however; their jurisdiction is limited to actual disputes.)

- The president has the power to make treaties with other nations and to make appointments to federal positions, including judgeships. The Senate, however, must approve all treaties and confirm the appointments before they can go into effect.
Bill of Rights
The Constitution written in Philadelphia in 1787 could not go into effect until it was ratified by a majority of citizens in at least 9 of the then 13 U.S. states. Many citizens felt uneasy because the document failed to explicitly guarantee the rights of individuals. The desired language was added in 10 amendments to the Constitution, collectively known as the “Bill of Rights”.

The Bill of Rights guarantees Americans freedom of speech, of religion, and of the press. They have the right to assemble in public places, to protest government actions, and to demand change. Because of the Bill of Rights, neither police officers nor soldiers can stop and search a person without good reason. Nor can they search a person's home without permission from a court to do so.

The Bill of Rights guarantees a speedy trial to anyone accused of a crime. The trial must be by jury if requested, and the accused person must be allowed representation by a lawyer and to call witnesses to speak for him or her. Cruel and unusual punishment is forbidden. With the addition of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution was ratified by all 13 states and went into effect in 1789.

The Constitution can be amended in either of two ways. Congress can propose an amendment, if two-thirds of the members of both the House and the Senate vote in favor of it. Or the legislatures of two-thirds of the states can call a convention to propose amendments. In either case, a proposed amendment does not go into effect until ratified by three-fourths of the states.

Since the original 10, 17 other amendments have been added to the Constitution. Perhaps the most important of the amendments are the Thirteenth and Fourteenth, which outlaw slavery and guarantee all citizens equal protection of the laws, and the Nineteenth, which gives women the right to vote.

Legislative Branch
The legislative branch – the Congress – is made up of elected representatives from each of the 50 states. It is the only branch of U.S. government that can make federal laws, levy federal taxes, declare war, and put foreign treaties into effect.

Members of the House of Representatives are elected to two-year terms. Each member represents a district in his or her home state. The number of districts is determined by a census, which is conducted every 10 years. The most populous states are allowed more representatives than the smaller ones, some of which have only one. In all, there are 435 representatives in the House.

Senators are elected to six-year terms. Each state has two senators, regardless of population. Senators' terms are staggered, so that one-third of the Senate stands for election every two years. There are 100 senators.

To become a law, a bill must pass both the House and the Senate. When a bill passes the House and the Senate in different forms, members of both bodies meet in a "conference committee" to iron out the differences. Groups that try to persuade members of Congress to vote for or against
a bill are called "lobbies". Once both bodies have passed the same version of a bill, it goes to the president for approval.

**Executive Branch**
The chief executive of the United States is the president, who together with the vice president is elected to a four-year term. Because of a constitutional amendment that went into effect in 1951, a president may be elected to only two terms. Other than succeeding a president who dies or is disabled, the vice president's only official duty is presiding over the Senate. The vice president may vote in the Senate only to break a tie.

As the chief formulator of national policy, the president proposes legislation to Congress. The president may veto any bill passed by Congress. The president is commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The president has the authority to appoint federal judges as vacancies occur, including justices of the Supreme Court.

Within the executive branch, the president has broad powers to issue regulations and directives carrying out the work of the federal government's departments and agencies. The president appoints the heads and senior officials of those departments and agencies. Heads of the major departments, called "secretaries", are part of the president's cabinet. The majority of federal workers, however, are selected based on merit, not politics.

**Judicial Branch**
The U.S. Supreme Court heads the judicial branch. It is the only court specifically created by the Constitution. In addition, Congress has established 13 federal courts of appeals and, below them, about 95 federal district courts. The Supreme Court meets in Washington, D.C., and the other federal courts are located in cities throughout the United States. Federal judges are appointed for life or until they retire voluntarily; they can be removed from office only through impeachment and trial by Congress.

The federal courts hear cases arising out of the Constitution and federal laws and treaties, maritime cases, cases involving foreign citizens or governments, cases between states, and cases in which the federal government is itself a party.

The Supreme Court consists of a chief justice (William Rehnquist) and eight associate justices. With minor exceptions, cases come to the Supreme Court on appeal from lower federal or state courts. Most of these cases involve disputes over the interpretation and constitutionality of actions taken by the executive branch and of laws passed by Congress or the states (like federal laws, state laws must be consistent with the U.S. Constitution).
The Supreme Court is the final arbiter of what the Constitution means.

In Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka (1954), the court held that deliberately segregated public schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause. The 1954 ruling applied directly only to schools in the city of Topeka, Kansas, but the principle it articulated reached every public school in the nation. The case undermined segregation in all governmental endeavors and set the nation on a new course of treating all citizens alike.

In several cases between 1962 and 1985, the Court decided that requiring students to pray or listen to prayer in public schools violated the Constitution's prohibition against establishing a religion. Critics of these decisions believe that the absence of prayer in public schools has contributed to a decline in American morals; they have tried to find ways to restore prayer to the schools without violating the Constitution.

In Roe v. Wade (1973), the Court guaranteed women the right to have abortions in certain circumstances.

Today, there are two major political parties in the United States, the Democratic and the Republican. The Democratic Party evolved from the party of Thomas Jefferson, formed before 1800. Abraham Lincoln and others who opposed the expansion of slavery into new states then being admitted to the Union established the Republican Party in the 1850s.

Democrats generally believe that government has an obligation to provide social and economic programs for those who need them. Republicans are not necessarily opposed to such programs but believe they are too costly to taxpayers. Republicans put more emphasis on encouraging private enterprise in the belief that a strong private sector makes citizens less dependent on government.

Americans do not have to join a political party to vote or to be a candidate for public office, but running for office without the money and campaign workers a party can provide is difficult. Minor political parties – generally referred to as "third parties" – occasionally form in the United States, but their candidates are rarely elected to office. Minor parties often serve, however, to call attention to an issue that is of concern to voters, but has been neglected in the political dialogue.

At the national level, elections are held every two years, in even-numbered years, on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November. State and local elections often coincide with national elections, but they also are held in other years and can take place at other times of year.
**Business**

**Farming**
At the time of the American Revolution (1775-83), 95 percent of the population was engaged in farming. Today that figure is less than 2 percent. Large stretches of level or gently rolling land, especially in the Midwest, provide ideal conditions for large-scale agriculture.

Readiness to embrace new technology has been characteristic of American farmers, and throughout the 19th century one new tool or invention followed another in rapid succession. By the time of the American Civil War (1861-65), machines were taking over the work of haying, threshing, mowing, cultivating, and planting – and, in doing so, increasing productivity.

Today, on the theory that overproduction is a chief cause of low farm prices, in some circumstances the government pays farmers to plant fewer crops. Deficiency payments reimburse farmers for the difference between the "target prices" set by Congress for a given crop and the actual price paid when the crop is sold. And a federal system of dams and irrigation canals delivers water at subsidized prices to farmers in western states.

**The American Style Of Mass Production**
In the late 18th century, American manufacturers adopted the factory system, which gathered many workers together in one place. To this was added something new, the "American system" of mass production. The new system used precision engineering to transform manufacturing into the assembly of interchangeable parts. This, in turn, allowed each worker to specialize in a discrete task.

The construction of railroads, beginning in the 1830s, marked the start of a new era for the United States. The pace of building accelerated after 1862, when Congress set aside public land for the first transcontinental railroad. The railroads linked distant sections of the country into the world's first transcontinental market and facilitated the spread of settlements. Railroad construction also generated a demand for coal, iron, and steel – heavy industries that expanded rapidly after the Civil War.

**A Postindustrial Economy**
The 20th century has seen the rise and decline of several industries in the United States. The auto industry, long the mainstay of the American economy, has struggled to meet the challenge of foreign competition. The clothing industry has declined in the face of competition from countries where labor is cheaper. But other manufacturing industries have appeared and flourished, including airplanes and cellular telephones, microchips and space satellites, microwave ovens and high-speed computers.

Many of the currently rising industries tend to be highly automated and thus need fewer workers than traditional industries. As high-tech industries have grown and older industries have declined, the proportion of American workers employed in manufacturing has dropped. Service industries now dominate the economy, leading some observers to call America a "postindustrial" society. These industries include entertainment and recreation, hotels and restaurants, communications and education, office administration, and banking and finance.
The ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993 confirmed the continuing American commitment to robust international trade.

**Labor Unions**
During the great surge of industrial growth between 1865 and 1900, the American work force expanded enormously, especially in the heavy industries. But the new workers suffered in times of economic depression. Strikes, sometimes accompanied by violence, became commonplace. Legislatures in many states passed new conspiracy laws aimed at suppressing labor.

In response, workers formed organizations with national scope. Samuel Gompers founded the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1886. Comprising craft unions and their members, the AFL had grown to 1.75 million members by 1904, making it the nation's dominant labor organization.

In the early 1900s, labor efforts resulted in the passage of state laws prohibiting child labor, limiting the number of hours women could work, and establishing workers' compensation programs for people who were injured on the job. At the federal level, Congress passed laws to protect children, railroad workers, and seamen, and established the Department of Labor in the president's cabinet.

Tensions within the AFL between skilled crafts persons and industrial workers led to the founding of a new labor organization, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The new organization grew rapidly; by the late 1930s it had more members than the AFL.

In 1955, the AFL and CIO merged as a new organization, the AFL-CIO. In recent decades, fewer workers have been joining unions. Among the reasons are the decline of heavy industries, which were union strongholds, and the steady replacement of "blue-collar" workers by automation. Even so, organized labor remains a strong force in the U.S. economy and politics, and working conditions have steadily improved.

**The American Economic System**
The United States declared its independence in the same year, 1776, that Scottish economist Adam Smith wrote “The Wealth of Nations”. Smith believed that in a capitalist system people are naturally selfish and are moved to gain wealth and power. Smith's originality was to argue that such activity leads to increased production and sharpens competition. As a result, goods circulate more widely and at lower prices, jobs are created, and wealth is spread. Though people may act from the narrow desire to enrich themselves, Smith argued, "an invisible hand" guides them to enrich and improve all of society.

Most Americans believe that the rise of their nation as a great economic power could not have occurred under any system except capitalism, also known as “free enterprise” after a corollary to Smith's thinking: that government should interfere in commerce as little as possible.

In the late 19th century Americans began to modify their faith in unfettered capitalism. In 1890, the Sherman Antitrust Act took the first steps toward breaking up monopolies. In 1906, Congress enacted laws requiring accurate labeling of food and drugs and the inspection of meat. During the Great Depression, President Roosevelt and Congress enacted laws designed to ease
the economic crisis. Among these were laws regulating the sale of stock, setting rules for wages and hours in various industries, and putting stricter controls on the manufacture and sale of food, drugs, and cosmetics.

In recent decades, concerned Americans have argued that Adam Smith's philosophy did not take into account the cumulative effect of individual business decisions on the natural environment. New laws and regulations have been designed to ensure that businesses do not pollute air and water and that they leave an ample supply of green space for people to enjoy.

**Education**

**Many Choices**
Almost 90 percent of American students below the college level attend public elementary and secondary schools, which do not charge tuition but rely on local and state taxes for funding. Traditionally, elementary school includes kindergarten through the eighth grade. In some places, however, elementary school ends after the sixth grade, and students attend middle school, or junior high school, from grades seven through nine. Similarly, secondary school, or high school, traditionally comprises grades nine through twelve, but in some places begins at the tenth grade.

Most of the students who do not attend public elementary and secondary schools attend private schools, for which their families pay tuition. Religious groups run four out of five private schools. In these schools, religious instruction is part of the curriculum, which also includes traditional academic courses. (Religious instruction is not provided in public schools.) There is also a small but growing number of parents who educate their children themselves, a practice known as “home schooling”.

The United States does not have a national school system. Nor, with the exception of the military academies (for example, the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland), are there schools run by the federal government. But the government provides guidance and funding for federal educational programs in which both public and private schools take part, and the U.S. Department of Education oversees these programs.

In America, a college is a four-year institution of higher learning that offers courses in related subjects. A liberal arts college, for example, offers courses in literature, languages, history, philosophy, and the sciences, while a business college offers courses in accounting, investment, and marketing. A large university typically comprises several colleges, graduate programs in various fields, one or more professional schools (for example, a law school or a medical school), and one or more research facilities. (Americans often use the word "college" as shorthand for either a college or a university.)

Every state has its own university, and some states operate large networks of colleges and universities: the State University of New York, for instance, has more than 60 campuses in New York State. Some cities also have their own public universities. In many areas, junior or community colleges provide a bridge between high school and four-year colleges for some
students. In junior colleges, students can generally complete their first two years of college courses at low cost and remain close to home.

Unlike public elementary and secondary schools, public colleges and universities usually charge tuition.

Religious groups privately operate about 25 percent of colleges and universities. Most of these are open to students of all faiths. There are also many private institutions with no religious ties. Whether public or private, colleges depend on three sources of income: student tuition, endowments (gifts made by benefactors), and government funding.

Nursing education is discussed in Section 2 of this manual.

**Education, A Local Matter**

Each of the 50 states has its own laws regulating education. For example:

- All states require young people to attend school. The age limit varies, however. Most states require attendance up to age 16, some up to 18. Thus, every child in America receives at least 11 years of education. This is true regardless of a child's sex, race, religion, learning problems, physical handicaps, ability to speak English, citizenship, or status as an immigrant.

- Some states play a strong central role in selecting learning material for their students. For example, state committees may decide which textbooks can be purchased with state funds. In other states, such decisions are left to local school officials.

Although there is no national curriculum in the United States, certain subjects are taught in virtually all elementary and secondary schools throughout the country. Almost every elementary school, for example, teaches mathematics; language arts (including reading, grammar, writing, and literature); penmanship; science; social studies (including history, geography, citizenship, and economics); and physical education. In many schools, children are taught how to use computers, which have also become integral parts of other courses.

In addition to required courses – for example, a year of American history, two years of literature, etc. – secondary schools, like colleges, typically offer electives. Popular electives include performing arts, driver's education, cooking, and "shop" (use of tools, carpentry, and repair of machinery).

**American Higher Education**

The widespread availability of a college education in America dates back to 1944, when Congress passed a law popularly known as the GI Bill. (GI – meaning "government issue" – was a nickname for an American soldier, and the law provided financial aid to members of the armed forces after World War II was over.) By 1955 more than 2 million veterans of World War II and the Korean War had used the GI Bill to go to college.
About the same time, the percentage of women in American colleges began to grow steadily; in 1993 women received 54 percent of all degrees awarded, compared to 24 percent in 1950. With the end of racial segregation in the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans also entered colleges in record numbers. The percentage of African Americans who go on to college, however, is still lower than the general population. In 1992, 47.9 percent of African-American high school graduates were enrolled in college, compared with 61.7 percent of all high school graduates.

Science

A Good Climate For Science
Thousands of talented scientists have immigrated to the U.S. in search of a free, creative environment. They include the German theoretical physicist Albert Einstein, who arrived in 1933; Enrico Fermi, who came from Italy in 1938 and who produced the world's first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction; Vladimir K. Zworykin, who left Russia in 1919 and later invented the television camera; and Alexander Graham Bell, who came from Scotland in 1872 and developed the telephone.

American Know-How
The great American inventors include Robert Fulton (the steamboat); Samuel F.B. Morse (the telegraph); Eli Whitney (the cotton gin); Cyrus McCormick (the reaper); and Thomas Alva Edison, with more than a thousand inventions credited to his name.

Perhaps Edison’s most famous patents concerned the light bulb. Edison followed up his improvements of the light bulb by developing electrical generating systems. Within 30 years, his inventions had introduced electric lighting into millions of homes.

Another landmark application of scientific ideas to practical uses was the innovation of the brothers Wilbur and Orville Wright. In the 1890s they became fascinated with accounts of German glider experiments and began their own investigation into the principles of flight. Combining scientific knowledge and mechanical skills, the Wright brothers built and flew several gliders. Then, on December 17, 1903, they successfully flew the first heavier-than-air, mechanically propelled airplane.
The Atomic Age
After German physicists split a uranium nucleus in 1938, Albert Einstein, Enrico Fermi, and Leo Szilard concluded that a nuclear chain reaction was feasible. In a letter to President Franklin Roosevelt, Einstein warned that this breakthrough would permit the construction of "extremely powerful bombs". His warning inspired the Manhattan Project, which exploded the first atomic bomb in New Mexico on July 16, 1945.

The first U.S. commercial nuclear power plant started operation in Illinois in 1956. A 1979 accident at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania turned many Americans against nuclear power. The cost of building a nuclear power plant escalated, and other, more economical sources of power began to look more appealing. During the 1970s and 1980s, plans for several nuclear plants were cancelled, and the future of nuclear power remains uncertain in the United States.

Medicine And Health Care
The National Institutes of Health, the focal point for biomedical research in the United States, consist of 24 separate institutes, occupying 75 buildings on more than 120 hectares in Bethesda, Maryland. Its budget in 1997 was almost $13 thousand million.

The goal of NIH research is knowledge that helps prevent, detect, diagnose, and treat disease and disability – everything from the rarest genetic disorder to the common cold. At any given time, grants from the NIH support the research of about 35,000 principal investigators, working in every U.S. state and several foreign countries.

With the help of the NIH, molecular genetics and genomics research have revolutionized biomedical science. In the 1980s and 1990s, researchers performed the first trial of gene therapy in humans and are now able to locate, identify, and describe the function of many genes in the human genome. Scientists predict that this new knowledge will lead to genetic tests for susceptibility to diseases such as colon, breast, and other cancers, and eventually to preventive drug treatments for persons in families known to be at risk.

Perhaps the most exciting scientific development under way in the United States is the NIH's human genome project. This is an attempt to construct a genetic map of humans by analyzing the chemical composition of each of the 50,000 to 100,000 genes making up the human body. The project is expected to take 15 years to complete, at a cost of at least $3 thousand million.

Research conducted by universities, hospitals, and corporations also contributes to improvement in diagnosis and treatment of disease. NIH funded the basic research on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), for example, but many of the drugs used to treat the disease have emerged from the laboratories of the American pharmaceutical industry; those drugs are being tested in research centers across the country.
Emphasis On Prevention
While the American medical community has been making strides in the diagnosis and treatment of disease, the American public also has become more aware of the relationship between disease and personal behavior. Since the U.S. surgeon general first warned Americans about the dangers of smoking in 1964, the percentage of Americans who smoke has declined from almost 50 percent to approximately 25 percent. Smoking is no longer permitted in most public buildings or on trains, buses, and airplanes traveling within the United States, and most American restaurants are divided into areas where smoking is permitted and those where it is not.

Separating Church And State
The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which provides in part that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”, ordained separation of church and state.

The First Amendment sounds straightforward, but at times it is difficult even for American constitutional scholars to draw a distinct line between government and religion in the United States. Students in public schools may not pray publicly as part of the school day, yet sessions of the U.S. Congress regularly begin with a prayer by a minister. Cities may not display a Christmas nativity scene on public property, but the slogan "In God We Trust" appears on U.S. currency, and money given to religious institutions can be deducted from one's income for tax purposes. Students who attend church-affiliated colleges may receive federal loans like other students, but their younger siblings may not receive federal monies specifically to attend religious elementary or secondary schools.

Interpreting The First Amendment
Even after the adoption of the Constitution in 1787 and the Bill of Rights (which includes the First Amendment) in 1791, Protestantism continued to enjoy a favored status in some states. Massachusetts, for example, did not cut its last ties between church and state until 1833. (As written, the First Amendment applies only to the federal government, not to the states. The Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, forbids states to "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law". This clause has been interpreted to mean that the states must protect the rights – including freedom of religion – that are guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.)

The Supreme Court has ruled that laws banning the teaching of evolution violate the First Amendment's prohibition of establishing religion. Despite the Supreme Court's clear rulings, this and similar issues are continually debated in America. Religious conservatives argue that teaching evolution alone is antireligious. And even some thinkers who might otherwise be considered liberals have argued that the media and other American institutions foster a climate that tends to slight, if not ridicule, organized religion. Meanwhile, the trend toward removing religious teaching and practices from public schools has prompted some parents to send their children to religious schools and others to educate their children at home.
Although Catholics were never denied access to public schools or hospitals, beginning in the 19th century they built institutions of their own, which met accepted standards while observing the tenets of Catholic belief and morality. Many Catholic students attend public schools and secular colleges. But Catholic schools still educate many Catholic young people, as well as a growing number of non-Catholics, whose parents are attracted by the discipline and quality of instruction.

Catholics have long recognized that the separation of church and state protects them, like members of other religions, in the exercise of their faith. But as the costs of maintaining a separate educational system mounted, Catholics sought a way in which they might obtain public funds to defray their educational expenses. Parents who sent their children to other private schools, not necessarily religious, joined in this effort.

The legislatures of many states were sympathetic, but the Supreme Court ruled that most attempts to aid religious schools are unconstitutional. Too much "entanglement" between state and church, the Court held, violated the First Amendment's ban on establishing religion.

In the 1990 census, Protestants of all denominations numbered 140 million; Catholics, 62 million; and Jews, 5 million. The Islamic faith also has 5 million U.S. adherents, many of whom are African-American converts. It is estimated that the number of mosques in the United States – today, about 1,200 – has doubled in the last 15 years. Buddhism and Hinduism are growing with the arrival of immigrants from countries where these are the majority religions.

Principles of Tolerance

America has been a fertile ground for new religions. The Mormon and Christian Science Churches are perhaps the best known of the faiths that have sprung up on American soil. Because of its tradition of noninterference in religious matters, the United States has also provided a comfortable home for many small sects from overseas. The Amish, for example, descendants of German immigrants who reside mostly in Pennsylvania and neighboring states, live simple lives, wearing plain clothes and shunning modern technology, for generations.

The most controversial aspect of religion in the United States today is probably its role in politics. In recent decades some Americans have come to believe that separation of church and state has been interpreted in ways hostile to religion. Religious conservatives and fundamentalists have joined forces to become a powerful political movement known as the “Christian Right”. Among their goals is to overturn, by law or constitutional amendment, Supreme Court decisions allowing abortion and banning prayer in public schools.

While some groups openly demonstrate their religious convictions, for most Americans religion is a personal matter not usually discussed in everyday conversation. The vast majority practices their faith quietly in whatever manner they choose – as members of one of the traditional religious denominations, as participants in nondenominational congregations, or as individuals who join no organized group. However Americans choose to exercise their faith, they are a spiritual people. Nine out of ten Americans express some religious preference, and approximately 70 percent are members of religious congregations.
The Social Safety Net

The American economic system is based on private, free enterprise. The "self-reliance" that writer and lecturer Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 - 1882) advocated is a virtue much valued by Americans. But government help in many forms is available to those who are temporarily or permanently in need.

Affording The American Way Of Life

The level of income at which a family of four is considered “below the poverty line” is $17,050 in the U.S. for the year 2000. Many families below the poverty line receive welfare payments, sums of money provided by the government each month to those whose income is too low to obtain such necessities as food, clothing, and shelter. The most common form of welfare payment has been through a program called Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC). Originally designed to help children whose fathers had died, AFDC evolved into the main source of regular income for millions of poor American families.

The total cost of all federal assistance programs – including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and various welfare programs – accounts for nearly one-half of all money spent by the federal government.

The Debate Over Welfare

Certain aspects of the American welfare system – especially AFDC payments – came under criticism in the 1980s and 1990s, and the system itself became an issue in national elections. In his 1992 presidential campaign, for example, then-Governor Bill Clinton promised to "end welfare as we know it". Many middle-class Americans resent the use of their tax dollars to support those whom they regard (rightly or wrongly) as unwilling to work. Some critics argue that dependency on welfare tends to become a permanent condition, as one generation follows another into the system. Other experts maintain that unless the root causes of poverty – lack of education and opportunity – are addressed, the welfare system is all that stands between the poor and utter destitution.

A consensus in favor of broader action came together in 1996. A new law overhauled welfare by replacing AFDC with state-run assistance programs financed by federal grants. The law also limits lifetime welfare assistance to five years, requires most able-bodied adults to work after two years on welfare, eliminates welfare benefits for legal immigrants who have not become U.S. citizens, and limits food stamps to a period of three months unless the recipients are working.

American Medical Practice

Self-employed private physicians who charge a fee for each visit by a patient has been the historical norm for American medical practice. Most physicians have a contractual relationship with one or more hospitals in their community. They refer their patients as needed to the hospital, which usually charges according to the number of days a patient stays and the facilities – X-rays, operating rooms, tests – the patient uses. Some hospitals are run by a city, a state, or, in the case of hospitals for military veterans, the federal government. Religious orders or other nonprofit groups run others. Still others are run by companies intending to make a profit.
Paying Medical Bills
The United States has evolved a mixed system of private and public responsibility for health care. The vast majority of Americans pay some portion of their medical bills through insurance obtained at work. About five out of six American workers, along with their families, are covered by group health insurance plans, paid for either jointly by the employer and employee or by the employee alone. Under the most common type of plan, the employee pays a monthly premium, or fee. In return, the insurance company pays a percentage of the employee's medical costs above a small amount known as a deductible. Insurance plans vary considerably. Some include coverage for dental work and others for mental health counseling and therapy; others do not.

Another type of health care plan available to many workers is the health maintenance organization (HMO). An HMO is staffed by a group of physicians who provide all of a person's medical care for a set fee paid in advance. HMOs emphasize preventive care because the HMO must pay the bill when a person needs services that the HMO cannot provide, such as specialized treatment, surgery, or hospitalization. HMOs have grown in popularity and are widely viewed as a means of holding down medical costs. Some Americans, however, are wary of HMOs because they limit the patient's freedom to choose his or her doctor.

Meanwhile, American physicians have helped slow the increase in costs by reassessing the need for hospitalization. Many surgical procedures that once involved staying in a hospital, for example, are now performed on an "out-patient" basis (the patient comes to the hospital for part of the day and returns home at night). The percentage of hospital surgeries performed on out-patients increased from 16 percent in 1980 to 55 percent in 1993. Even when a hospital stay is prescribed, it is typically shorter than in the past.

Medicaid And Medicare
Although most Americans have some form of private health insurance, some people cannot afford insurance. They can get medical coverage through two social programs established in 1965.

Medicaid is a joint federal-state program that funds medical care for the poor. The requirements for receiving Medicaid and the scope of care available vary widely from state to state. At a cost of about $156 thousand million a year ($156 billion), Medicaid is the nation's largest social-welfare program.

Medicare, another form of federal health insurance, pays a large part of the medical bills incurred by Americans who are 65 and older or who are disabled, regardless of age. Medicare is financed by a portion of the Social Security tax, by premiums paid by recipients, and by federal funds. Medicare covers everyone who receives Social Security payments.

One of the most troubling health care problems facing the United States has been providing care for those who cannot afford health insurance and who are not eligible for either Medicaid or Medicare. It has been estimated that one in seven Americans is without health insurance at least part of the year.
Assisting these uninsured Americans was one of President Bill Clinton's priorities when he came into office in 1993. After widespread discussion and debate across the country, in 1996 Congress passed legislation designed to make health insurance more available to working families and their children. The new law expands access to health insurance for workers who lose their jobs or who apply for insurance with a pre-existing medical condition, and it sets up a pilot program of tax-deferred savings accounts for use in paying medical bills.

Although health care costs continue to rise, the rate of increase has leveled off in recent years, because of the proliferation of HMOs and other factors. In 1990 health expenses increased 9 percent over the previous year, and by 1994 that rate had fallen to 4.8 percent.

**Art and Culture**

The arts in America – music, dance, architecture, the visual arts, and literature – are a compromise between two strong sources of inspiration: European sophistication and domestic originality.

**Music**

Until the 20th century, "serious" music in America was shaped by European standards and idioms. A distinctively American classical music came when such composers such as George Gershwin (1898-1937) and Aaron Copland (1900-1990) incorporated homegrown melodies and rhythms into forms borrowed from Europe. Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" and his opera "Porgy and Bess" were influenced by jazz and African-American folk songs. Copland helped break the German domination on American music. He is best known for his ballet scores, which draw on American folk songs.

Unlike Europe, where it is common for governments to underwrite their orchestras and opera companies, the arts in America get relatively little public support. To survive, symphony orchestras depend largely on philanthropy and paid admissions.

Some orchestra directors have found a way to keep mainstream audiences happy while introducing new music to the public: Rather than segregate the new pieces, these directors program them side-by-side with traditional fare. Meanwhile, opera, old and new, has been flourishing. Because it is so expensive to stage, however, opera depends heavily on the generosity of corporate and private donors.
**Dance**
Closely related to the development of American music in the early 20th century was the emergence of a new, and distinctively American, art form – modern dance.

Martha Graham (1893-1991), whose New York-based company became perhaps the best known in modern dance, sought to express an inner passion. Many of Graham's most popular works were produced in collaboration with leading American composers – "Appalachian Spring" with Aaron Copland, for example.


In the early 20th century U.S. touring companies of European dancers also introduced audiences to classical ballet. Lincoln Kirstein (1907-1996) invited Russian choreographer George Balanchine (1904-1983) to the United States in 1933, and the two established the School of American Ballet, which became the New York City Ballet in 1948. America's other leading ballet organization, The American Ballet Theatre, was founded in 1940.

**Architecture**
America's unmistakable contribution to architecture has been the skyscraper. Made possible by new construction techniques and the invention of the elevator, the first skyscraper went up in Chicago in 1884.

Many of the most graceful early towers were designed by Louis Sullivan (1856-1924), America's first great modern architect. His most talented student was Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959), who spent much of his career designing private residences with matching furniture and generous use of open space. One of his best-known buildings, however, is a public one: the Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

European architects who emigrated to the United States before World War II launched what became a dominant movement in architecture, the International Style. Perhaps the most influential of these immigrants were Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) and Walter Gropius (1883-1969), both former directors of Germany's famous design school, the Bauhaus. Based on geometric form, buildings in their style have been both praised as monuments to American corporate life and dismissed as "glass boxes". In reaction, younger American architects such as Michael Graves (1945- ) have rejected the austere, boxy look in favor of "postmodern" buildings with striking contours and bold decoration that allude to historical styles of architecture.
Visual Arts
America's first well-known school of painting – the Hudson River School – appeared in 1820. As with music and literature, this development was delayed until artists perceived that the New World offered subjects unique to itself; in this case the westward expansion brought the beauty of frontier landscapes to painters' attentions.

The Hudson River painters' directness and simplicity of vision influenced such later artists as Winslow Homer (1836-1910), who depicted rural America – the sea, the mountains, and the people who lived near them. Middle-class city life found its painter in Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), an uncompromising realist who rejected romantic sentiment.

In the years after World War II, a group of young New York artists formed the first native American movement to exert major influence on foreign artists: abstract expressionism. Among the movement's leaders were Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), and Mark Rothko (1903-1970). The abstract expressionists concentrated on instinctual arrangements of space and color and demonstrated the effects of the physical action of painting on the canvas.

Among the next artistic generation were Robert Rauschenberg (1925- ) and Jasper Johns (1930-), who used photos, newsprint, and discarded objects in their compositions. Pop artists, such as Andy Warhol (1930-1987), Larry Rivers (1923- ), and Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997), reproduced, with satiric care, everyday objects and images of American popular culture – Coca-Cola bottles, soup cans and comic strips.

Literature
Perhaps the first American writer to produce boldly new fiction and poetry was Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). In 1835, Poe began writing short stories – including "The Masque of the Red Death", "The Pit and the Pendulum", "The Fall of the House of Usher", and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" – that explore previously hidden levels of human psychology and push the boundaries of fiction toward mystery and fantasy.

Herman Melville (1819-1891) wrote novels rich in philosophy. In "Moby Dick", an adventurous whaling voyage becomes the vehicle for examining such themes as obsession, the nature of evil, and human struggle against the elements. In another work, the short novel "Billy Budd", Melville dramatizes the conflicting claims of duty and compassion on board a ship in time of war.

In 1836, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), an ex-minister, published a startling nonfiction work called “Nature”, in which he claimed it was possible to dispense with organized religion and reach a lofty spiritual state by studying and responding to the natural world. His work influenced not only the writers who gathered around him, forming a movement known as Transcendentalism, but also the public.

Emerson's most gifted fellow-thinker was Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), a determined nonconformist. Thoreau wrote “Walden”, a book-length memoir that urges resistance to the
dictates of organized society. His radical writings express a deep-rooted tendency toward individualism in the American character.

Mark Twain (the pen name of Samuel Clemens, 1835-1910) was the first major American writer to be born away from the East Coast – in the border state of Missouri. Twain's style – influenced by journalism, direct and unadorned but also highly evocative and irreverently funny – changed the way Americans write their language. His characters speak like real people and sound distinctively American, using local dialects, newly invented words, and regional accents.

In the area of drama, there was no important American dramatist until Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953). Winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936, O'Neill drew upon classical mythology, the Bible, and the new science of psychology to explore inner life. One of his greatest works is “Long Day's Journey Into Night”, a drama based largely on his own family.

Another strikingly original American playwright was Tennessee Williams (1911-1983), who expressed his southern heritage in poetic yet sensational plays, usually about a sensitive woman trapped in a brutal environment.

After World War II, black writers came into the mainstream of American literature. James Baldwin (1924-1987) expressed his disdain for racism and his celebration of sexuality in “Giovanni's Room”. In “Invisible Man”, Ralph Ellison (1914-1994) linked the plight of African Americans, whose race can render them invisible to the majority white culture, with the larger theme of the human search for identity in the modern world.

**Popular Culture**

**Baseball**
The sport that evokes more nostalgia among Americans than any other is baseball. So many people play the game as children (or play its close relative, softball) that it has become known as "the national pastime”. Unlike football and basketball, baseball can be played well by people of average height and weight.

Baseball came of age in the 1920s, when Babe Ruth (1895-1948) led the New York Yankees to several World Series titles and became a national hero on the strength of his home runs (balls that cannot be played because they have been hit out of the field). Another noteworthy player was the Brooklyn Dodgers' Jackie Robinson (1919-1972), who became the first African-American player in the major leagues in 1947. (Before Robinson, black players had been restricted to the Negro Leagues.)
Basketball
Basketball originated in 1891 when James Naismith (1861-1939) had the idea of nailing up raised boxes into which players would attempt to throw a ball. Naismith drew up the rules for the new game; most of them still apply in some form today.

Many teams in the National Basketball Association now have foreign players, who return home to represent their native countries during the Olympic Games. The so-called Dream Team, made up of the top American professional basketball players, has represented the United States in recent Olympic Games.

The Movies
If moving pictures were not an American invention, they have nonetheless been the preeminent American contribution to world entertainment. Before World War I, movies were made in several U.S. cities, but filmmakers moved to southern California, particularly the Hollywood section of Los Angeles, as the industry developed.

During the so-called Golden Age of Hollywood, the 1930s and 1940s, Hollywood studios made many movies. The studio system succumbed to two forces in the late 1940s: (1) a federal antitrust action that separated the production of films from their exhibition; and (2) the invention of television. The number of movies being made dropped sharply, even as the average budget soared, because Hollywood wanted to offer audiences the kind of spectacle they could not see on television. Movies released today tend to be either huge successes or huge failures, depending on how well their enormous costs match up with the public taste.

The studios still exist, often in partnership with other media companies, but many of the most interesting American movies are now independent productions. The films of Woody Allen (1935- ), for example, fall into this category.

Popular Music
The first major composer of popular music with a uniquely American style was Stephen Foster (1826-1864). He established a pattern that has shaped American music ever since – combining elements of the European musical tradition with African-American rhythms and themes. Of Irish ancestry, Foster grew up in the South, where he heard slave music and saw minstrel shows, which featured white performers in black make-up performing African-American songs and dances.

Before the movies and radio, most Americans had to entertain themselves or wait for the arrival in town of lecturers, circuses, or the traveling stage revues known as vaudeville. The medium demanded a steady supply of new songs. Late in the 19th century, music publishing became a big business in the United States, with many firms located in New York City, on a street that became known as Tin Pan Alley.

Vaudeville and the European genre of operetta spawned the Broadway musical, which integrates songs and dancing into a continuous story with spoken dialogue.
Black composers such as Scott Joplin (1868-1917) and Eubie Blake (1883-1983) drew on their own heritage to compose songs, ragtime pieces for piano, and, in Joplin's case, an opera. Blake wrote the music for “Shuffle Along”, the first Broadway musical by and about blacks, and continued to perform well into his 90s.

**Jazz**

Jazz was the reigning popular American music from the 1920s through the 1940s. In the 1930s and 1940s, the most popular form of jazz was "big-band swing", so called after large ensembles conducted by the likes of Glenn Miller (1909-1944) and William "Count" Basie (1904-1984). In the late 1940s a new, more cerebral form of mostly instrumental jazz, called be-bop, began to attract audiences. Its practitioners included trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993) and saxophonist Charlie Parker (1920-1955). Trumpeter Miles Davis (1926-1991) experimented with a wide range of musical influences, including classical music, which he incorporated into such compositions as "Sketches from Spain”.

**Rock And Roll; Country**

In the early 1950s, a new form of pop music, rock and roll, evolved from a black style known as rhythm and blues: songs with strong beats and often risqué lyrics.

A magnetic singer with enormous appeal appeared in the person of Elvis Presley (1935-1977), who had grown up poor in the South. Besides an emotional singing voice, Presley had good looks and a way of shaking his hips that struck adults as obscene but teenagers as natural to rock and roll. One of his first big hits was "Hound Dog".

A few years after its debut, rock and roll was well on its way to becoming the American form of pop music, especially among the young. It spread quickly to Great Britain, where the Beatles and the Rolling Stones got their starts in the early 1960s. In the meantime, however, a challenge to rock had appeared in the form of folk music, based largely on ballads brought over from Scotland, England, and Ireland. Often accompanying themselves on acoustic guitar or banjo, such performers as the Weavers, Joan Baez, Judy Collins, and Peter, Paul, and Mary offered an alternative to rock and roll.

Like folk music, country music descends from the songs brought to the United States from England, Scotland, and Ireland. The original form of country music, called "old-time" and played by string bands (typically made up of fiddle, banjo, guitar, and base fiddle), can still be heard at festivals held each year in Virginia, North Carolina, and other southern states.

Modern country music – original songs about contemporary concerns – developed in the 1920s, roughly coinciding with a mass migration of rural people to big cities in search of work. Country music tends to have a melancholy sound, and many classic songs are about loss or separation – lost homes, parents left behind and lost loves. Like many other forms of American pop music, country lends itself easily to a rock-and-roll beat, and country-rock has been yet another successful American merger. Overall, country is second only to rock in popularity, and country singer Garth Brooks (1962- ) has sold more albums than any other single artist in American musical history.
The Media
A fundamental belief held by the framers of the U.S. Constitution is that a well-informed people are the strongest guardian of its own liberties. The press functions as a watchdog over government actions and calls attention to official misdeeds and violations of individual rights.

The First Amendment and the political philosophy behind it have allowed the American media extraordinary freedom in reporting the news and expressing opinions. In the 1970s, American reporters uncovered the Watergate scandal, which ended with the resignation of President Richard Nixon, and American newspapers printed the "Pentagon Papers", classified documents related to U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Press reports of official corruption that in some countries would bring arrests and the shutdown of newspapers are made freely in the United States. The United States is a land where the media cannot be shut down, where government itself cannot be lebeled, and where public officials must prove that a statement is not only false but was made with actual malice before they can recover damages.

Newspapers

Now, most American newspapers are available on the Internet, and anyone with a personal computer and a link to the Internet can scan papers from across the country in his or her home or office.

Radio
The beginning of commercial radio broadcasts in 1920 brought a new source of information and entertainment directly into American homes. President Franklin Roosevelt understood the usefulness of radio as a medium of communication: His "fireside chats," addresses to the public, kept the nation informed of economic developments during the Depression and of military maneuvers during World War II.

The widespread availability of television after World War II caused radio executives to rethink their programming. Radio could hardly compete with television's visual presentation of drama, comedy, and variety acts; many radio stations switched to a format of recorded music mixed with news and features. Starting in the 1950s, radios became standard accessories in American automobiles. The medium enjoyed a renaissance as American commuters tuned in their car radios on the way to work.

The expansion of FM radio, which has better sound quality but a more limited signal range than AM, led to a split in radio programming in the 1970s and 1980s. FM came to dominate the music side of programming, while AM shifted mainly to all-news and talk formats.

Barely in existence 25 years ago, talk radio usually features a host, a celebrity or an expert on some subject, and the opportunity for listeners to call in and ask questions or express opinions on
the air. The call-in format is now heard on nearly 1,000 of the 10,000 commercial radio stations in the United States.

**Television**

Since World War II television has developed into the most popular medium in the United States, with enormous influence on the country's elections and way of life. Virtually every American home has at least one TV set, and the vast majority have two or more.

Three privately owned networks that offered free programming financed by commercials – NBC, CBS, and ABC – controlled 90 percent of the TV market from the 1950s to the 1970s. In the 1980s, the rapid spread of pay cable TV transmitted by satellite undermined that privileged position. By 1994, almost 60 percent of American households had subscribed to cable TV, and non-network programming was drawing more than 30 percent of viewers. Among the new cable channels were several that show movies 24 hours a day; Cable News Network, the creation of Ted Turner, which broadcasts news around the clock; and MTV, which shows music videos.

In the meantime, a fourth major commercial network, Fox, has come into being and challenged the big three networks; several local TV stations have switched their affiliation from one of the big three to the newcomer. Two more national networks – WB and UPN – have also come along, and the number of cable television channels continues to expand.
C. General Information About the U.S.

Background

The United States became the world's first modern democracy after its break with Great Britain (1776) and adoption of a constitution (1789). During the 19th century, many new states were added to the original 13 as the nation expanded across the North American continent and acquired a number of overseas possessions. The two major traumatic experiences in the nation's history were the Civil War (1861-65) and the Great Depression of the 1930s. The economy is marked by steady growth, low unemployment and inflation, and rapid advances in technology.

Location

North America, bordering both the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Pacific Ocean, between Canada and Mexico

Area

Total: 9,629,091 sq km
Land: 9,158,960 sq km
Water: 470,131 sq km

Area – Comparative

About one-half the size of Russia
About three-tenths the size of Africa
About one-half the size of South America (or slightly larger than Brazil)
Slightly larger than China
About two and one-half times the size of Western Europe

Climate

Mostly temperate, but tropical in Hawaii and Florida, arctic in Alaska, semiarid in the great plains west of the Mississippi River, and arid in the Great Basin of the southwest; low winter temperatures in the northwest are moderated occasionally in January and February by warm winds from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains

Terrain

Vast central plain, mountains in west, hills and low mountains in east; rugged mountains and broad river valleys in Alaska; rugged, volcanic topography in Hawaii

Land Use (1993 est.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arable land</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent crops</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent pastures</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forests and woodland</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26%</td>
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Population
Total: 285,138,000 (September 2001 est.)
Living in Metropolitan Areas 226,000,000 (April 2000 est.)

Age Structure (2000 est.)
0-14 years: 21.25%
15-64 years: 66.11%
65 years and over: 12.64%

Population Growth Rate
0.91% (2000 est.)

Birth Rate
14.2 births/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Death Rate
8.7 deaths/1,000 population (2000 est.)

Infant Mortality rate
6.82 deaths/1,000 live births (2000 est.)

Life Expectancy at Birth (2000 est.)
Total population: 77.12 years
Male: 74.24 years
Female: 79.9 years

Total Fertility Rate
2.06 children born/woman (2000 est.)

Nationality
Noun: American(s)
Adjective: American

Ethnic Groups (1992)
White 83.5%,
Black 12.4%,
Asian 3.3%,
Amerindian 0.8%

Religions (1999)
Protestant 55%,
Roman Catholic 28%,
Jewish 2%,
Other 6%,
None 9%
**Language**
No official language; English, Spanish (spoken by a sizable minority)

**Government Type**
Federal republic; strong democratic tradition

**Capital**
Washington, DC

**States**

**Administrative Divisions:**

50 states and 1 district (*)

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<th>Alabama</th>
<th>Alaska</th>
<th>Arizona</th>
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<td>West Virginia</td>
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Cities

Ten largest cities:

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<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>U.S. State</th>
<th>Population (April 1, 2001)</th>
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<tr>
<td>New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>3,694,820</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>2,896,016</td>
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<td>Houston</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>1,953,631</td>
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<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>1,517,550</td>
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<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>1,321,045</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>1,223,400</td>
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<td>Texas</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>1,144,646</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>951,270</td>
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Government

Legal System

Based on English common law; judicial review of legislative acts; accepts compulsory International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction, with reservations

Suffrage (voting)

18 years of age; universal

Executive Branch

Chief of State: President George W. Bush (since 20 January 2001) and Vice President Richard B. Cheney (since 20 January 2001)

The president is both the chief of state and head of government

Elections: president and vice president elected from the same party by a college of electors who are elected directly from each state. Election last held 7 November 2000 (next to be held November 2004)

President and vice president serve four-year terms.

Election Process (The Electoral College)

The President and Vice President are elected indirectly by popular vote through an Electoral College. The Electoral College consists of 538 electors (one for each of 435 members of the House of Representatives and 100 Senators; and 3 for the District of Columbia). Each state's allotment of electors is equal to the number of House members to which it is entitled plus two Senators. The national census every ten years is used to reappoint the number of electors allocated among the states.
The electors meet in each state on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December (December 18, 2000). A majority of 270 electoral votes is required to elect the President and Vice President. No law requires electors to vote in accordance with the popular vote in their State.

If no presidential candidate wins a majority of electoral votes, the 12th Amendment to the Constitution provides for the presidential election to be decided by the House of Representatives. The House would select the President by majority vote, choosing from the three candidates who received the greatest number of electoral votes. The vote would be taken by State, with each State delegation having one vote. If no Vice Presidential candidate wins a majority of electoral votes, the Senate would select the Vice President by majority vote, with each Senator choosing from the two candidates who received the greatest number of electoral votes.

A list of the past presidents of the United States is shown below:

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<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>George Walker Bush (2001- )</td>
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George W. Bush is the 43rd President of the United States. Formerly the 46th Governor of the State of Texas, he was born July 6, 1946, and grew up in Midland and Houston, Texas. He served as an F-102 pilot for the Texas Air National Guard before beginning his career in the oil and gas business in 1975, working in the energy industry until 1986.

He served as managing general partner of the Texas Rangers baseball team until he was elected Governor on November 8, 1994, with 53.5 percent of the vote. He became the first Texas Governor to be elected to consecutive four-year terms on November 3, 1998, winning 68.6 percent of the vote.

Vice President Cheney was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, on January 30, 1941 and grew up in Casper, Wyoming.

When Gerald Ford assumed the Presidency in August 1974, Mr. Cheney served on the transition team and later as Assistant to the President and White House Chief of Staff, a position he held throughout the remainder of the Ford Administration.
Mr. Cheney also served as Secretary of Defense from March 1989 to January 1993. He directed two of the largest U.S. military campaigns in recent history – Operation Just Cause in Panama and Operation Desert Storm in the Middle East.

Legislative Branch
Bicameral Congress (two legislative chambers)

Senate
(100 seats, one-third are renewed every two years; two members are elected from each state by popular vote to serve six-year terms)

House of Representatives
(435 seats; members are directly elected by popular vote to serve two-year terms)

Judicial Branch
Supreme Court (the nine justices are appointed for life by the President with confirmation by the Senate)

Political Parties
Democratic Party; Republican Party; several other groups or parties such the Green Party and the Reform Party

Flag Description
Thirteen equal horizontal stripes; red (top and bottom) alternating with white; there is a blue rectangle in the upper hoist-side corner bearing 50 small, white, five-pointed stars arranged in nine offset horizontal rows of six stars (top and bottom) alternating with rows of five stars. The 50 stars represent the 50 states, the 13 stripes represent the 13 original colonies; known as “Old Glory”.

Economy
In this market-oriented economy, private individuals and business firms make most of the decisions, and government buys needed goods and services predominantly in the private marketplace. U.S. business firms enjoy considerably greater flexibility than their counterparts in Western Europe and Japan in decisions to expand capital plant, lay off surplus workers, and develop new products.

U.S. firms are at or near the forefront in technological advances, especially in computers and in medical, aerospace, and military equipment, although their advantage has narrowed since the end of World War II. The onrush of technology largely explains the gradual development of a "two-tier labor market" in which those at the bottom lack the education and the professional/technical skills of those at the top and, more and more, fail to get pay raises, health insurance coverage, and other benefits.

Long-term problems include inadequate investment in economic infrastructure, rapidly rising medical costs of an aging population, sizable trade deficits, and stagnation of family income in the lower economic groups. Domestically, the potentially most serious problem is the high level of stock prices in relation to corporate earnings.
GDP (1999 est.)
  Purchasing power parity - $9.255 trillion

GDP – Per Capita (1999 est.)
  Purchasing power parity - $33,900

GDP – Composition by Sector (1999)
  Agriculture: 2%
  Industry: 18%
  Services: 80%

Population Below Poverty Line (1999 Est.)
  12.7%

Labor Force (1999)
  139.4 million (includes unemployed)

Currency
  1 United States dollar (US$) = 100 cents
D. Time Zones in the U.S.

A time zone is a geographical region where the same standard time is used. The United States has four main time zones: Pacific Standard Time (PST), Mountain Standard Time (MST), Central Standard Time (CST), and Eastern Standard Time (EST). When it is 9:00 am in California (PST) it is 10:00 am in Denver (MST), 11:00 am in Chicago (CST), and 12:00 noon in New York (EST). Alaska is one hour earlier than California, and Hawaii is two hours earlier. Puerto Rico is in the Atlantic Standard Time zone, one hour after New York. If you are on the east coast of the U.S. and calling someone on the west coast, they are probably still asleep at 9:00 am your time (6:00 am their time). If you are on the west coast and calling someone on the east coast, they are probably eating dinner at 4:00 pm your time (7:00 pm their time).

The following table lists the states in each time zone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States Within Each Time Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mountain</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wyoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pacific</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table lists the hours ahead or behind Eastern Standard Time for cities around the world. Add the number to Eastern Standard Time to arrive at the time in the named city, or subtract it from the time in the named city to obtain Eastern Standard Time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Time Delta</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Time Delta</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Time Delta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addis Ababa</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>+0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Bogotá</td>
<td>+0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>+10:30</td>
<td>Brasília</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucharest</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Budapest</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>+10:30</td>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Town</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Caracas</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>Casablanca</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>+10:30</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Frankfurt</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Johannesburg</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karachi</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>Lima</td>
<td>+0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisbon</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managua</td>
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<td>Manila</td>
<td>+13</td>
<td>Marseilles</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecca</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>+16</td>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naples</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Oslo</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>+0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Prague</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>Rio de Janeiro</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>Riyadh</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>San Juan</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>+14</td>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>+13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>+16</td>
<td>Tangiers</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teheran</td>
<td>+8:30</td>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>Tripoli</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Vladivostok</td>
<td>+15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warsaw</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>Yokohama</td>
<td>+14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zurich</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Daylight Saving Time
At 2 a.m. on the first Sunday in April (in Springtime), almost all states in the U.S. set their clocks forward one hour ahead of standard time ("spring forward"). This gives an extra hour of daylight between the time people get off from work and the time it gets dark. It “appears” that an hour of daylight has been gained.

At 2 a.m. on the last Sunday in October (in “Autumn” or “Fall”), the reverse happens and clocks are set back one hour, returning to standard time. This “loses” the hour gained in the spring; there is one hour less of daylight between the time people get off from work and the time it gets dark. The phrase "spring forward, fall back" reminds people how to change their clocks.

DST is not observed in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the portion of the State of Indiana in the Eastern Time Zone, and by most of Arizona.

US starting and ending dates for DST are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>DST Begins 2 a.m.</th>
<th>DST Ends 2 a.m.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>October 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>April 6</td>
<td>October 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>April 4</td>
<td>October 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>October 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>October 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>October 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E. Holidays

Americans share three national holidays with many countries: Easter Sunday, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

Easter, which falls on a spring Sunday that varies from year to year, celebrates the Christian belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For Christians, Easter is a day of religious services and the gathering of family. Many Americans follow old traditions of coloring hard-boiled eggs and giving children baskets of candy. On the next day, Easter Monday, the president of the United States holds an annual Easter egg hunt on the White House lawn for young children.

Christmas Day, December 25, is another Christian holiday; it marks the birth of the Christ Child. Decorating houses and yards with lights, putting up Christmas trees, giving gifts, and sending greeting cards have become traditions even for many non-Christian Americans.

New Year's Day, of course, is January 1. The celebration of this holiday begins the night before, when Americans gather to wish each other a happy and prosperous coming year.

Eight other holidays are uniquely American (although some of them have counterparts in other nations). For most Americans, two of these stand out above the others as occasions to cherish national origins: Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July.

Thanksgiving Day is the fourth Thursday in November, but many Americans take a day of vacation on the following Friday to make a four-day weekend, during which they may travel long distances to visit family and friends. The holiday dates back to 1621, the year after the Puritans arrived in Massachusetts, determined to practice their dissenting religion without interference.

After a rough winter, in which about half of them died, they turned for help to neighboring Indians, who taught them how to plant corn and other crops. The next fall's bountiful harvest inspired the Pilgrims to give thanks by holding a feast. The Thanksgiving feast became a national tradition – not only because so many other Americans have found prosperity but also because the Pilgrims' sacrifices for their freedom still stir the imagination. To this day, Thanksgiving dinner usually includes some of the foods served at the first feast: roast turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes, and pumpkin pie. Before the meal begins, families or friends usually pause to give thanks for their blessings, including the joy of being united for the occasion.

The Fourth of July, or Independence Day, honors the nation's birthday – the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. It is a day of picnics and patriotic parades, a night of concerts and fireworks. The flying of the American flag (which also occurs on Memorial Day and other holidays) is widespread. On July 4, 1976, grand festivals marked the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence across the nation.

Besides Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July, there are six other uniquely American holidays.
**Martin Luther King Day:** The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., an African-American clergyman, is considered a great American because of his tireless efforts to win civil rights for all people through nonviolent means. Since his assassination in 1968, memorial services have marked his birthday on January 15. In 1986, that day was replaced by the third Monday of January, which was declared a national holiday.

**Presidents' Day:** Until the mid-1970s, the February 22 birthday of George Washington, hero of the Revolutionary War and first president of the United States, was a national holiday. In addition, the February 12 birthday of Abraham Lincoln, the president during the Civil War, was a holiday in most states. The two days have been joined, and the holiday has been expanded to embrace all past presidents. It is celebrated on the third Monday in February.

**Memorial Day:** Celebrated on the fourth Monday of May, this holiday honors those who died in American wars. Although it originated in the aftermath of the Civil War, it has become a day on which the dead of all wars, and the dead generally, are remembered in special programs held in cemeteries, churches, and other public meeting places.

**Labor Day:** The first Monday of September, this holiday honors the nation's working people, typically with parades. For most Americans it marks the end of the summer vacation season, and for many students the opening of the school year.

**Columbus Day:** On October 12, 1492, Italian navigator Christopher Columbus landed in the New World. Although most other nations of the Americas observe this holiday on October 12, in the United States it takes place on the second Monday in October.

**Veterans Day:** Originally called Armistice Day, this holiday was established to honor Americans who had served in World War I. It falls on November 11, the day when that war ended in 1918, but it now honors veterans of all wars in which the United States has fought. Veterans' organizations hold parades, and the president customarily places a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery, across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C.

While not holidays, two other days of the year inspire colorful celebrations in the United States. On February 14, **Valentine's Day**, (named after an early Christian martyr), Americans give presents, usually candy or flowers, to the ones they love. On October 31, **Halloween** (the evening before All Saints or All Hallows Day), American children dress up in funny or scary costumes and go "trick or treating": knocking on doors in their neighborhood. The neighbors are expected to respond by giving them small gifts of candy or money. Adults may also dress in costume for Halloween parties.

Various ethnic groups in America celebrate days with special meaning to them even though these are not national holidays. It is important to be aware of the holidays of people of other religious faiths. For example, important Jewish holidays include Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Sukkoth, Chanukah, and Passover. Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, and Sukkoth occur in the fall. Chanukah occurs in December, near Christmas. Passover occurs in March or April, near Easter.
Irish Americans celebrate the old country's patron saint, St. Patrick, on March 17. Many Americans wear green clothing in honor of the “Emerald Isle” on this high-spirited day.

The celebration of Mardi Gras – the day before the Christian season of Lent begins in late winter – is a big occasion in New Orleans, Louisiana, where huge parades and wild revels take place. As its French name implies (Mardi Gras means "Fat Tuesday," the last day of hearty eating before the penitential season of Lent), the tradition goes back to the city's settlement by French immigrants.

It should be noted that, with the many levels of American government, confusion can arise as to what public and private facilities are open on a given holiday. The daily newspaper is a good source of general information, but visitors who are in doubt should call for information ahead of time.
F. Cultural Elements of the U.S.

The United States is a land of many cultures. Citizens of the U.S. have come from every corner of the World. They brought elements of their culture with them. You may recognize some elements of the local culture, while others may be unfamiliar.

Freedom – Freedom is the cornerstone of American Culture. The Constitution of the U.S. ensures that the people retain certain rights and freedoms. It limits the influence the Government has on the personal lives of its citizens. Americans are free to work, play, worship, travel, and live as they please.

Family – American families are small by comparison to many of the World's cultures. The average American family has two or fewer children. Most American children live in two parent households. Sixty percent of American mothers have jobs outside the home. Parents of adult children generally live independently, maintaining their own homes though it is common for elderly citizens to live with their adult children late in life.

Religion – The majority of American citizens are Christian. The Constitution of the United States ensures a separation of Church and State. There is no religious requirement to be a citizen of the United States. All of the World's religions are openly and freely practiced here. However, given that most U.S. citizens are Christian, certain religious accommodations are made. Sunday is not included in the workweek and one religious holiday is recognized.

- Christmas (December 25th) is the only religious holiday celebrated nationally. It is a celebration of the birth of Christ. It is a one-day holiday for Federal and State Government employees. Most businesses are closed.

- Thanksgiving (the 4th Thursday in November) is a generic religious holiday. Many churches have services, but it is not an officially recognized holiday by any religion. It is a time for all Americans to give thanks for the blessings they have.

Food – You can get a good idea about American food preferences by looking at the menu of a typical American restaurant. Restaurants serve the food people are most interested in eating. You can see what Americans typically call Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner.

- Americans generally eat their largest meal of the day in the evening – dinner. These meals mainly revolve around some form of meat (mostly red meats or chicken) served with a starch (potatoes are most common, rice is readily available) and vegetables. Many evening meals start with a lettuce-based salad.

- The noon meal - lunch - is usually light. It is most often some form of sandwich.
• Americans who eat breakfast favor either some form of cereal or eggs served with pork-based meat (bacon, sausage, or ham).

**Daily Routines** – Americans typically use a 40-hour workweek, composed of 8-hour days, Monday through Friday. Actual working hours vary but usually begin before 9 a.m. and end before 6 p.m. Women account for 42% of the American workforce.

• Lunch breaks are usually an hour or less. That is why the evening meal has become the big meal of the day for many Americans.

• Most Americans sleep once a day from 10 or 11 p.m. until 6 or 7 a.m. Weekends are personal time although many Americans go into the office for some work on the weekends, usually Saturday.

**Greetings**

People coming to work or to meeting each other in a routine setting will usually use a verbal greeting and response. In small or rural communities, strangers simply passing on the sidewalk may exchange simple greetings. This is less common in larger cities where people are less likely to know each other and the pace of life is more hectic, but still may occur. Verbal greetings vary according to local custom in the U.S., and the familiarity of the people exchanging the greeting.

Simple verbal greetings can be said as an opening remark or repeated as a response.

- "Good Morning"/"Good Afternoon"/"Good Evening" – varies with the time of day. (Often shortened to "Morning"/"Afternoon"/"Evening" informally)
- "Hello" – Very common telephone greeting also used face to face.
- "Hi" – a shortened form of Hello, used informally, most often with someone you know.

Other common verbal greetings require a more advanced response and invite conversation. These may follow up a simple greeting.

- "How ya doin?" – an abbreviated form of "How are you doing?" a common response might be "Good, and you?"
- "What's up? – A way of asking how busy you are. Responses vary from "Nothing much" to "Working hard" followed by "What's up with you" or "How you doin?" This expression may be an inquiry or may require only a cursory response.

**Physical Greetings**

- A wave of the hand or nod of the head may be used to acknowledge a friend in situations where a verbal greeting is not appropriate.
- A handshake is a common greeting used by adults of either sex, however, it is generally used upon first meeting someone or greeting someone you have not seen for an extended period. It is also used in formal situations. Americans generally do not exchange handshakes daily.
- A hug or kiss on the cheek are common greetings among family members or very close friends of opposite sexes especially if they have not seen each other for an extended period.
**Timeliness**
Professionally, being on time is very important, though in social situations Americans are more understanding. If you are more than a few minutes late it is a good idea to apologize, an excuse is usually not necessary. If you will be more than 10 or 15 minutes late, it is considered polite to call and inform your host of your delay.

**Social Situations**
Someone you meet here may invite you to visit his or her home. Arriving on time makes a good impression.

Your host should tell you if food is involved. Let him or her know if you have any restrictions to your diet. You will not be expected to eat anything you do not want. Your host may serve you or allow you to serve yourself.

If you serve yourself, do not take more than you can eat. It is better to get a second serving than leave a large portion on your plate. Many Americans will offer a second serving (called "seconds") only one time. They will not usually force a second serving once it is declined. It is permissible to ask for a second serving, many Americans who cook think of this as a compliment.

Americans are indirect about when to end an evening. They may make a comment about how late it is getting or how early they might have to get up tomorrow. This is a sign that it is time to leave.

**Slang, Gestures And Non-verbal Communication**
In spite of the casual warmth many Americans are known for, they also value their own "personal space". This means they generally maintain a greater physical distance during conversation than do people of some other cultures. Two or three feet, or at least an arm's length, is the usual distance between acquaintances – closer if the person is an intimate friend or family member. On the other hand, an American may spontaneously pat you on the back or touch you briefly on the arm. These are nothing more than friendly gestures.

If you can maintain brief eye contact when conversing, your partner will assume you are sincere. Avoiding eye contact is sometimes construed as an indication you are uneasy or insincere.

In informal situations, people usually sit however they please – slouched, legs together, crossed, or apart. Feet may even be propped up on a desk or table, though never in formal or professional situations.

Slang is a personal form of communication based on common experience. Movies and television shows introduce many slang terms. The only way to learn and understand slang is to talk to people and ask questions.

Much communication is non-verbal. However, words are affected by the tone with which they are delivered and the gestures and mannerisms that accompany them. Many gestures have
different meanings in different parts of the world. Some gestures that may be offensive in your country may have no meaning here. Before you are offended by a gesture, be sure offense is intended. If you are not sure, ask. Sometimes close friends use offensive gestures as a way to tease each other. A gesture, which may be offensive between two people who do not know each other, can be funny between two friends.

**Some Common American Gestures**

To wave goodbye or hello to someone, raise your hand and wave it from side to side, not front to back. Wave the whole hand, not just the fingers. Waving the hand front to back or the fingers up and down means "no", "stop", or "go away". Holding your hand up with the palm facing forward but no movement means "stop". This can easily be confused for a wave of the open hand which means "Hello". You can tell which gesture is intended by the look on the individual's face. Hello is usually accompanied by a smile.

Holding your hand with the palm toward your body and waving the fingers toward the body means "come here". Holding your hand with the palm up with all fingers curled and repeated curling and uncurling the index finger means "come here".

If you want to point at an object, extend the index finger and use it to point at the object. It is not polite to point at people.

Thumbs up is a positive gesture means the outcome is good. If someone gives you thumbs up, with either hand, it means he or she approves of what you have said or done.

Thumbs down is the exact opposite of thumbs up. It shows disapproval or a negative result.

OK (Okay) is a gesture made with the tips of the thumb and forefinger held together to from an “O” or circle and with the other three fingers held together. It means that everything is all right or that you agree. This sign is generally not used in daily life; it is more a stereotype from the movies.

If you want the waiter to bring the check, make a writing gesture with one hand as the pen and the other hand as the paper. If you just want the waiter to come, make eye contact and raise your hand.

Shaking your head from side to side means no. Shaking your head up and down means yes.

Never show your fist with the middle finger extended. This is an insult. Shaking a closed fist at someone is also rude, especially if it is in his or her face, and is an expression of anger.

Winking at a woman is inappropriate because of the flirtatious nature of the gesture. In other circumstances a wink will signal amusement or that the speaker is kidding. Because of the potential for misinterpretation, winking should be limited.

When smiling, it is normal to bare your teeth, so long as the facial expression still looks like a smile, not a grimace.
Language Problems You May Encounter
Spoken English may sound very rapid to you at first. You may have trouble understanding what a person is saying simply because he or she speaks so fast or speaks with a regional accent. People speak with different inflections, accents and speed in different parts of the U.S. For example, People from Boston, Massachusetts, have a distinct accent in which “r”s are not distinctly pronounced. In New York City, New York, words are spoken more quickly than in the Midwest. Do not hesitate to ask people to speak slowly or to repeat what they have said.

People in the U.S. use slang and jargon. Some of these words you will not be able to understand without personal explanation. If you do not understand a word or phrase, ask to have the meaning explained.

Body Language
Every culture has certain body movements, gestures and facial expressions that express emotions, comments or reactions without words. These are called "body language”. In the U.S., people sometimes say "yes" or "no" using inflected grunts. “Uh-huh” is yes; “uh-uh” is no. It may take a while to distinguish the affirmative from the negative. "Hmm" or "mmm" is usually an expression of interest, not a request to repeat what has been said. Nodding the head up and down means "yes”; shaking the head from side to side means "no”. A form of greeting for many young Americans is to say, "How's it going?” This is a form of greeting, and not a question trying to figure out the individual's destination.

Customs And Courtesies: Greetings
A handshake, smile, and simple phrase such as "Hello, how are you? Or "I'm pleased to meet you" are appropriate greetings for either sex. If you would like to meet someone, feel free to introduce yourself. Simply say, "Hello, my name is ____________" (however you wish to be called). Most Americans are very informal about this, and they quickly begin to use first names.

Do not be surprised if someone you have never met smiles and says "Hello" or some other greeting. This is casual friendliness – nothing more. In fact, American informality and general disregard for rank or social position could be considered disrespectful in many other cultures. Although formality is somewhat more common in business and politics, Americans still seem to be more comfortable using given names rather than family names.

Americans generally do not embrace in public when they greet, but an embrace is not necessarily in bad taste. In America's "do your own thing" society, many things are permissible, providing they do not infringe on the rights of other people.

Visiting
Although Americans think of themselves as informal, they are extremely time conscious. They appreciate their guests arriving on time (meaning within two to five minutes of scheduled appointments). This is especially important if someone has invited you to dinner – since by arriving late, you may cause others to wait for your arrival before beginning the party.

Hospitality takes on many forms: a formal dinner served on fine china, an outdoor barbecue with paper plates, a leisurely visit with no refreshments. A good rule to go by is unless your host tells you an evening will be formal, you may assume your visit will be an informal one.
You may be greeted at the door with, "Hi (your first name)! Make yourself at home". Your host is telling you to relax and not to worry about being formal. Play with the children or join in an ongoing activity.

You are not expected to bring a gift when you are a guest. However, if you have been invited to dine or to spend the night, a small token like candy or flowers is a nice way to show your appreciation. Local shopkeepers can usually advise you on what to take. Most American homes do not have domestic servants. Everyone usually pitches in with household chores, so you may be expected to help a little in the home, especially if your visit is an extended one. If you are sleeping over, volunteer to make your own bed and to help with other family responsibilities.

At the end of your visit, offer your sincere thanks and compliments. If you are unable to return the hospitality, you may wish to send a note of appreciation following the visit.

**Eating**
Most Americans enjoy inviting friends over for a meal. In this way, they can introduce you to their families and friends and enjoy a relaxed visit in the privacy and comfort of home.

Americans normally offer something to drink before dinner. It is not necessary to accept. You can simply say, "No, thank you". During the meal, food will likely be served "family style". This means you serve yourself from dishes passed around the table. When there are many guests, "buffet" style may be used, which means that guests line up at a central serving table and serve themselves.

Most Americans are not particular about what style of eating their guests use. Such foods as hot dogs, fried chicken, fruit, hamburgers, and french fries are often eaten using fingers. When cutting food, most Americans hold the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left. For eating, the knife is placed on the plate, and the fork is returned to the right hand. Many Americans are not familiar with the Oriental style of eating with chopsticks. It is perfectly acceptable to ask how to eat certain foods.

If you are offered additional portions, your host will feel complimented if you accept, but the host will not be offended if you decline.

Elbows resting on the table and eating with excessive noise are generally considered bad manners. So is leaving directly after a meal. You may want to offer to help clean up after the meal. You should plan to stay for a while after the meal is over. The length of the visit will depend upon your hosts, but usually you are not expected to visit longer than an hour or so unless a special invitation is offered.

**Conversation**
Although Americans are known for their frank and outspoken manner, most of them are polite. They may openly share their views on self, family, religion, and politics, but they also respect another person's desire for privacy. Their intent is not to offend, but only to express sincere and honest friendliness.
If an American uses terms like "Tell it like it is," "Don't beat around the bush," or "Get straight to the point," they usually mean that they want you to be candid. Your real feelings on a matter may be more important than being courteous with your reply.

A good sense of humor is important to Americans. Laughing at themselves or their country is something they do very well. But they may not appreciate an international visitor doing the same, especially in a critical tone.

Because most Americans own television sets, they talk openly about current programs with varying opinions. They also discuss current movies, sporting events, politics, and almost any other topic imaginable.

Most Americans are not easily embarrassed. Yet, there are a few taboos even in American conversation. Asking how much money a person earns is one of them, as is asking a married couple why they have no children. Very personal questions about age, weight, personal habits, or previous marriages are also impolite. But if Americans choose to bring up these topics, you may assume they are willing to discuss them.

**Personal Appearance and Grooming**

Dress in the United States is very adaptable to personal preference. Slacks and dress denims are perfectly appropriate for women in most situations. Dress is generally more casual the farther West and South one travels: in warmer weather conditions, short shorts and brief tops are common attire. If in doubt about what to wear for a certain situation, ask locally for advice. Americans are very concerned with personal cleanliness. Men as well as women use deodorants. Perfumes and aftershave lotions are common.

The American attention to cleanliness is almost obsessive. Americans are attracted to those who are clean, neat and well dressed. Men are expected to keep their hair neat particularly if they work in offices. It is considered more important to dress neatly and groom neatly the more contact people have with others in the work environment.

Almost all American women shave the hair under their arms and on their legs. American men do not. Men are expected to be either clean shaven (no beard or only a mustache) or to have neat and trim facial hair.

Deodorants are used daily by the great majority of both men and women. It is considered offensive to have bad breath or to smell because of infrequent bathing. Neat dress is also important especially in business situations. Americans expect those they meet to wear clean clothes at all times.

**The Family**

Because of the increasing number of single-parent families, there is no "normal" American family of parents and children. Nonetheless, the average family of two parents and their children is still the predominant household arrangement.

With the increased number of women in the labor force, many men now share in domestic chores formerly performed only by non-working wives. According to recent statistics, however, women still do most of the housework, even when both husband and wife work outside the home.
The American family is perhaps one of the most mobile units in the world. Almost half the American population moves at least once every five years to new homes and jobs. Some might say American friendliness is due to mobility. Each time Americans move they leave behind many good friends; they try to keep in communication with these old friends and usually make new friends quickly.

Social mobility is also very common; it is one of the things America is famous for. America is often called the "land of opportunity". Americans feel they have the ability to attain the so-called good life, whatever and wherever their beginnings. Many of America's Presidents began life in very humble circumstances. Although there are many very rich and very poor individuals, most Americans fall into the middle-class range.

Many critics claim that Americans idolize their youth and ignore the aged. Rarely do grandparents live with the families of their children; generally, this is because elderly people still prefer to maintain their independence. When it becomes impossible for old people to care for themselves, they often live in nursing homes. In recent years, however, much publicity and attention have focused on the needs and life-styles of America's elderly. A wide range of volunteer and academic organizations supplement self-help groups.

**Attitudes**

Individual freedom is of utmost importance to Americans, as is tolerance of differing life-styles. They also have what some might consider an obsession with time and efficiency. The positive results of this "obsession" have produced many convenience devices such as digital clocks, dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, microwave ovens, and the like – which have helped to lighten many of life's routine inconveniences.

Americans have relatively little respect for rank or authority that is inherited or unearned. They admire those who have struggled through the ranks or overcome handicaps or challenges in life.

**Housing**

Owning one's own home has always been part of the "American dream". However, many families cannot afford their own homes because of rising housing costs and high interest rates. The median cost for a home today is over $100,000. At present, about 70 percent of American families own their own homes. Those who choose not to be homeowners or cannot afford to be homeowners generally rent homes or apartments.

Quite popular today are condominiums and town homes, which feature common walls and yards, yet are larger than most apartments. Some advantages of these types of dwellings are that they offer shared maintenance, recreational facilities, common security against crime, and freedom from yard care.
Diet
The large number of fast-food restaurants is evidence that Americans enjoy convenience foods. Most communities also have many fine restaurants as well. A hearty American breakfast might consist of cereal, toast or pancakes, bacon or sausage, eggs, fruit, and a beverage – milk, coffee, tea, or juice.

Lunches are generally a lighter meal eaten mid-day, often only a sandwich with soup or salad. Dinner is normally the main meal, and it is the largest meal of the day. Dinner is normally eaten between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. The main dish or entrée will generally be meat, poultry, fish, or a casserole which is accompanied by vegetables, salad, bread, and sometimes dessert. Americans eat a large amount of candy, ice cream, and other "sweets”.

Food in great variety is readily available in supermarkets. The variety of ethnic foods (for example, Italian pastas, Mexican enchiladas and tacos, and Asian specialties), reflects America's many cultures.

Recreation And Sports
In their leisure time, many Americans attend movies, watch television, read, go dancing, or attend cultural events. Almost all workers receive at least two weeks paid vacation a year (less than is customary in Europe) plus several one-day holidays. On vacations, some Americans spend time camping or traveling in or out of the country, while others spend this time "fixing things around the house", performing household chores, gardening, and attending family get-togethers.

Football, baseball, and basketball are major spectator sports; professional and collegiate competitions are regularly televised features. Other popular participant sports are tennis, jogging, golf, bowling, cycling, skiing, and racquetball. Soccer is becoming as popular with children as Little League baseball, football, and basketball.

American children amuse themselves with everything from video games and television to creative learning tools and futuristic toys, to name just a few.

Transportation And Communication
Most families own at least one automobile. Public transportation varies from city to city and ranges from excellent to nonexistent. Automobile, bus, and air travel are the most common forms of transportation in the U.S. Trains are used mainly as freight carriers except in the East and urban Midwest where they still carry passengers. Taxicabs are found in most cities, but are generally considered an expensive means of transportation. There are many rental vehicle agencies available.

America has a huge newspaper, book, and magazine publishing industry. Nearly all people have at least one radio and one television set, and about 80 percent of the population has at least one telephone. Although radio and television are chiefly private businesses, they are licensed and regulated by the federal government. Public broadcasting, which is often both educational and entertaining, is especially noted for its scientific and cultural programs.


G. Social Customs

Stereotypes
Do not believe all of the stereotypes you may have heard about Americans. Even the ones that are true in general may not be true about specific individuals or a large segment of the population. For example, although Americans tend to be louder and more boisterous than people from other cultures (especially at athletic events), many of the people you meet will be quiet and polite. Some people may be intolerant and afraid of strangers, but most will be pleasant and welcoming. Remember that American films and television exaggerate in order to generate excitement, and so present a rather distorted picture of what life in the U.S. is really like. Likewise, tourists are not always on their best behavior.

Americans do tend to be more informal than people from other countries. It is common for Americans to wear casual clothing to school and to greet each other by first name. Nevertheless, good manners and politeness are always appropriate.

However, there are situations and environments in which formality is the norm. Some businesses require their employees to wear a uniform or a suit. It would be inappropriate to wear a T-shirt and blue jeans to a job interview. Some of the more prestigious restaurants require a coat and tie. Americans tend to dress up for cultural events (the opera, theater and ballet) and to dress down for athletic events. Formal wear is required at weddings and funerals, or any other event with religious overtones.

Rid yourself of any preconceived notions of American behavior before you arrive. If you rely on the stereotypes, you will likely put yourself into an awkward and embarrassing situation and offend your American acquaintances. Some of the more common stereotypes of American citizens are that they are:

- Boastful and Arrogant
- Disrespectful of Authority
- Prone to Excessive Drinking
- Extravagant and Wasteful
- Generous
- Ignorant of other Countries and Cultures
- Informal
- Insensitive
- Lazy

- Loud and Obnoxious
- Promiscuous
- Racist
- Rich and Wealthy
- Rude and Immature
- Snobbish
- Stingy
- Egotistical (About Themselves and the U.S.)
- Uninformed about Politics
**Personal Space**
When two people are talking to each other, they stand about 30 inches (75cm) apart. The custom in many other cultures is for people to stand closer together. Each person has an invisible boundary around their body into which other people may not come. If someone pierces this boundary, they will feel uncomfortable and move away to increase the distance between them. (The major exception is family members and other loved ones.) This personal distance is not due to body odor or bad breath, but because closeness lends a sense of intimacy that is at odds with a person’s relationship to the other individual.

Interestingly, the average personal distance varies from culture to culture. Americans tend to require more personal space than in other cultures. So if you try to get too close to an American during your conversation, he or she will feel that you are "in their face" and will try to back away. Try to be aware of this, so if the person to whom you are speaking backs away a little, do not try to close the gap.

Also, try to avoid physical contact while you are speaking, since this may also lead to discomfort. Touching is a bit too intimate for casual acquaintances. So do not put your arm around their shoulder, touch their face, or hold their hand. Shaking hands when you initially meet or part is acceptable, but this is only momentary.

**Forms of Address**
American names are written and spoken with the given name first and the family name last. John Smith's family name is Smith, not John.

In a formal setting, address men as "Mister" (abbreviated as "Mr."), married women as "Misses" (abbreviated as "Mrs."), and unmarried women as "Miss" (abbreviated as "Ms."). These days many women (married or single) prefer to be addressed using the abbreviations Ms., pronounced "miz". If the person has an M.D. or Ph.D., they will often be addressed as "Doctor" (abbreviated as "Dr."). Faculty is addressed as "Professor" (abbreviated as "Prof.").

In an informal situation, Americans will introduce each other by first name, without titles, and occasionally by just the last name. If you are introduced to somebody by first name, you can address him or her by first name the next time you meet. The only exception would be for someone who holds an important position.

When in doubt, use the formal manner of address, since it is better to err on the side of formality. It is also appropriate to ask how they prefer to be addressed.
Demeanor
Americans are much more assertive than most international visitors. They use words as tools to express their opinions and to accomplish goals. Speaking for yourself and attempting to persuade someone to adopt your view are not taboo, but expected. The United States has a rather individualistic society, with less social pressure to conform. As a result, you will need to become more assertive and to speak out on your own behalf. Take the initiative and volunteer information that will be of interest. In an interview, talk about your goals and accomplishments. An American idiom expresses this requirement succinctly: “If you do not toot your own horn, who will?”

Accordingly, Americans begin a discussion with a focus on accomplishments and concrete facts, and later proceed to the abstract. So you should begin any conversation or proposal with the most important information. Be direct, and reserve the small talk for later. To quote another American idiom, “You have to put your best foot forward.”

It is acceptable to criticize someone's opinion, as long as you are providing constructive criticism. Eye contact is also important. It is not a sign of disrespect, but instead an indication of openness, honesty, and enthusiasm.

Toilets
A phrase you should learn is "Where can I find a toilet?" If you need to visit the toilet, nearly any word will do. All of the following words will work: men's room (women's room), restroom, lavatory, toilet, bathroom, little boy's room, potty, head, john, and water closet. The last four are less common, but will probably be understood. Americans will generally not understand the words “loo”, “earth closet”, and “usual offices”. The word "outhouse" is understood to mean a toilet located outdoors, such as a portapotty, not the English meaning (farm building). If you ask for the cloakroom, you will be directed to the place where you hang or check coats, not the restroom.

There are no public toilets on the streets in the U.S. Public toilets can be found in hotels, bars, restaurants, museums, department stores, gas stations, airports, train stations, and bus stations. Some businesses may reserve their restrooms for the use of their patrons.

In many airports, toilets and urinals do not have a flush handle, but instead flush automatically when an infrared sensor determines that you have left. If you do not see anything that looks like a flush handle, step away from the toilet and see if it flushes after a few seconds.

Tipping
A tip is a gift (also known as gratuity) or sum of money tendered for a service performed or anticipated. “Tip” is an acronym for "to insure promptness" and should not be considered an obligation. However, it is customary to give tips in certain situations, especially in restaurants, and it is important to remember that many people who provide you with services rely on tips for a good deal of their incomes.

Restaurants generally do not include a service charge in the bill and your waiter or waitress depends upon tips to make a living. Generally waiters and waitresses make a below minimum
hourly wage because they receive tips. You should only tip at restaurants with table service, which does not include fast food restaurants. It is also important to understand tipping in the U.S. because tipping etiquette varies from country to country.

1. Ask whether a gratuity or tip is included in the bill since some restaurants already include a gratuity for large parties.

2. Determine the amount of the tip after you receive the bill.

3. Fifteen percent is the average for tipping in the USA. If the service is slow, then some people will only tip 10 percent, and if the service is outstanding, then you could tip 20 percent of the bill.

4. Leave the tip on the table.

5. If your server is taking the bill for you to register, you can include the tip in the amount and tell them to keep the change. If you do not tell them to keep the change, they will bring change back to the table.

6. If you are paying by credit or debit card, then there will be a place for the tip on the receipt. Your server will bring you the receipt. Be sure to take your copy and write the amount of the tip on the receipt and add that to the bill.

Other kinds of tipping:

- Hairstylist/barber: 15 percent (Do not tip the owner unless they are doing your hair)
- Manicurist: $1
- Pizza Delivery: $1 or $2 for short distance, $2 or $3 longer distances and $5 for large deliveries
- Flowers: $2 to $5
- Hotel bellhops: $1
- Coat checkroom attendant: $1 per coat
- Valet parking attendant: $1
- Room Service Waiter: 15 percent of the bill
- Concierge: $5 to $10
- Taxi Driver: 15 percent of fare, no less than 25 cents
- Bartender: 10-15 percent of the bill
- Curb side baggage check at the airport: $1 per bag

Do not tip government employees or customs officials. This can be considered a bribe, which is illegal. You are not expected to tip bus drivers, gas station attendants, theater ushers, hotel clerks, or other persons who provide a general service to the public.
Federal regulations prohibit letter carriers from accepting cash gifts in any amount, or gifts worth $20 or more from customers.

If you are in doubt, ask whether it is appropriate to tip or whether a gratuity is included in the bill.

Bribery is not considered appropriate and is often illegal. Attempting to bribe a police officer may get you arrested.

Social Visits
Americans often plan social gatherings on short notice, so do not be surprised if you are invited to someone's home or to see a movie or baseball game without much warning. If the time is convenient for you, accept the invitation. But if you are busy, do not be afraid to decline, perhaps suggesting a time that would be better. Your host will not be insulted.

If a friend has invited you to drop by anytime, it is best to call before visiting to make sure it is convenient for him or her.

Invitations are usually issued in person or over the telephone. The main exception is for receptions and other formal occasions, in which case a written invitation will be mailed. You would normally receive a written invitation to a wedding or a bar mitzvah.

For a casual dinner invitation, do not arrive more than 5 minutes early, because your host may still be preparing for your visit. Arriving more than 10 minutes late is considered rude if very few people were invited. If many people were invited, it is OK (acceptable) to arrive a little late, even as much as half an hour late. For example, it is OK to arrive late for a party, for a potluck dinner or for a social gathering involving a large group of people. The main consideration is whether there are enough people in the group so that your late arrival will not be noticed.

At a party, do not be surprised if you are asked what you do for a living. This is a normal opening line of conversation.

If you are invited for dinner, it is appropriate to bring the host a bottle of wine, a gift basket of fruit, a box of candy, or a small potted plant or bouquet of flowers. Do not bring roses, as they have a more intimate connotation; men often give roses to women on a date.

If you wish to thank the host for his or her hospitality, it is appropriate to call or send a brief written thank you note the next day.
Business Visits
Business visits, on the other hand, tend to be extremely punctual. If you arrive late to a business appointment, it will reflect badly on you. So try to arrive on time, or even a little early. If you know that you will be arriving late, you should telephone ahead to let people know of the delay.

If a business meeting takes place over a meal, expect the business discussions to begin after everyone has ordered their meal, sometimes as soon as everyone is seated. Socializing tends to occur after the business is concluded, not before. This is in contrast with the practice in many other countries, where the purpose of the meal is to socialize with and get to know each other before any business is discussed.

Many American companies have women in management positions. So do not be surprised if the person who meets you is a woman, not a man. They are just as competent (if not more so) than their male counterparts.

When businessmen or businesswomen meet, they usually introduce themselves by shaking right hands. When you shake hands, do not crush someone’s fingers, but also do not hold their hand too lightly. A firm handshake is best.

Business cards are not normally exchanged upon meeting. If you need a colleague's contact information, it is OK to ask them for their card. It is also ok to offer someone your card. But there is not an elaborate ritual of exchanging cards as in other cultures.

U.S. business ethics preclude accepting payments or bribes to sweeten the deal.

Business Clothing
Proper business attire is extremely important in the U.S. If you dress inappropriately for an interview, for example, your chances of getting the position are significantly reduced.

Ask your American friends or professors for help in selecting a good set of business clothes. You can also ask the sales staff at the more expensive stores, such as Ann Taylor, Brooks Brothers, or Saks 5th Avenue, for advice. Even if you later buy your clothing at Sears or Caldor, it will give you a good sense of what is appropriate attire.

Men should have at least one suit, consisting of a coat and conservative tie with a white button-down shirt. Dark suit colors, such as navy blue, black, or dark gray, are best. The tie should match the suit and not be flashy. A geometric pattern with red, gray, black, and white elements is best.

Women's clothing is more difficult to describe. The goal is to achieve a conservative and professional look. Straight lines and dark colors are preferred.
Telephone Etiquette
When you call someone, it is polite to identify yourself. For example, if your name is John Smith and you were calling Robert Chen, you would say, "Hello, this is John Smith. May I speak to Robert Chen, please?"

When you answer the phone, it is OK to answer just "Hello". After your caller introduces himself, you would say one of the following:

- "Hi John, this is Robert. How are you?"
- "Speaking." or "Robert Chen speaking".
- "I'm sorry, but Robert is not able to come to the phone right now. May I take a message?"

It is not polite to call someone before 9 am or after 10 pm, unless it is an emergency. The only exception would be if he or she told you it is OK to call earlier or later.

Dining
Most Americans eat three meals during the day: breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Breakfast begins between 7:00 and 8:00 am, lunch between 11:00 am and noon, and dinner between 6:00 and 8:00 pm. On Sundays "brunch" is a combination of breakfast and lunch, typically beginning at 11:00 am. Visitors often enjoy a "study break" or evening snack around 10:00 or 11:00 pm.

Breakfast and lunch tend to be light meals, with only one course. Dinner is the main meal.

For breakfast Americans will eat cereal with milk (often mixed together in a bowl), a glass of orange juice, and toasted bread or muffin with jam, butter, or margarine. Another common breakfast meal is scrambled eggs or an omelet with potatoes (hash browns) and breakfast meat (bacon or sausage). People who are eating light might eat just a cup of yogurt. Lunch and dinner are more varied.

When eating at a formal dinner, the number of utensils may overwhelm you. How do you tell the difference between a salad fork, a butter fork, and a dessert fork? Most Americans do not know the answer either (it's the number of tines or prongs on the fork). But knowing which fork or spoon to use first is simple: use the outermost utensils first and the utensils closest to the plate last.

Gift Giving
If you are invited to a wedding, baby shower, bar mitzvah, or other celebration, it is expected that you will bring a gift. Unless you know the host very well, the gift should be modest in value, about $25 for a baby shower, about 2-3 times that for a wedding or bar mitzvah.

For a wedding, the bride will have "registered" at one or two local department stores, indicating the items and styling she prefers. You can buy the couple a gift that is not listed, but most people buy something listed on the registry. If you buy an item listed on the registry, be sure to tell the store that you are doing this, so that the couple does not receive duplicate gifts. For a baby shower, bring a gift appropriate for a newborn baby. For a bar (boy) or bat (girl) mitzvah, bring
a gift appropriate for a 13-year-old boy or girl. Bar Mitzvah gifts tend to be more formal in nature. For example, a gold-plated Cross pen is quite common. Personalizing the pen by engraving the recipient's full name will be appreciated.

If you wish to give a gift when you leave to return to your home country, the best gift is something that is unique to your country. It does not need to be especially valuable or rare, just reminiscent of your home. Possibilities include a book about your country, an inexpensive handicraft or piece of art, or something else that reflects your culture. If the children collect coins and stamps, they would be very pleased with a set of your country's coins or a selection of mint stamps from your country. Items that are common in your country but difficult to find in the U.S. are also good.

If you owe a debt of deep gratitude to an American host family, a common way of repaying it is to take the family to a form of entertainment, such as a baseball, basketball, or hockey game, the ballet, or to a good restaurant.

When giving gifts to a business acquaintance, do not give anything of a personal nature, especially to a woman. Do not give cosmetics. A scarf is OK, but other types of clothing are not. Something appropriate for the office is best. But gift giving is not as important in America as it is in other countries, so there is nothing wrong with not giving a gift.

If you need help selecting a gift, talk to a salesperson at a department store. Tell them about the person who will be receiving the gift and the reason for the gift, and they will help you find something appropriate and within your budget.

**Smoking**

Smoking has become socially unacceptable in the U.S., in part due to the health risks. Smoking is prohibited in government and public buildings, and many businesses, especially restaurants, will not permit smoking on the premises. Those restaurants that permit smoking will usually have a separate section for customers who smoke.

Tobacco products may not be sold to anyone under 18 years old, and federal law requires stores to ask to see a photo ID for anyone under 27 years old.

If you are a guest in someone's home, you should ask whether it is OK to smoke before lighting up. If there are no ashtrays in the house, it is a good sign that smoking is not acceptable.

Smoking on airplane flights within the U.S. is prohibited. There are severe penalties for smoking on an airplane or in an airplane lavatory. Smoking is also prohibited on interstate trains and buses.

Smoking is prohibited on public transportation, including buses and trolleys.

Smoking around children is inappropriate. Buying cigarettes for a child, or giving a child a cigarette is illegal.
It is extremely impolite to blow smoke in someone's face.

If you are smoking and someone coughs, it is often a polite way of asking you to extinguish the cigarette.

**Noises**
It is not polite to burp in public or to slurp your soup.

It is not appropriate to play loud music or otherwise disturb the peace late at night. If your stereo is loud enough that your neighbors can hear it, it is too loud.

**Numbers**
In the United States, the number 13 is symbolic of bad luck. Tall office buildings sometimes skip the number 13 when numbering the floors.

The number 7 is symbolic of good luck.

The word trillion means a 1 followed by 12 zeros, a British billion. The word billion means a 1 followed by 9 zeros, a British milliard.

A period is used to indicate a decimal point, not a comma. A comma is used to separate groups of three digits in large numbers, thus "$1,232.52".

**Calendar Dates**
In the United States, dates are written as month/day/year. This is the opposite of the British method, in which dates are written day/month/year. So while 4/3/67 would be March 4, 1967 in Europe, it is April 3, 1967 in the United States. It is best to write out dates using the month name to avoid confusion.
Temperature
Temperatures are most often reported in Fahrenheit, and occasionally also in Celsius. To convert Fahrenheit to Celsius, subtract 32 and multiply the result by 5 then divide by 9. The following table lists a few common temperatures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>°F</th>
<th>°C</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>212</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>boiling point of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>normal body temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>very hot summer day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>room temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>mild spring day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>warm winter day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>freezing point of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>very cold winter day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Climate varies considerably across the United States. You will probably need an umbrella, even in such sunny places as Las Vegas, Nevada or Los Angeles, California. In the northern cities, such as Boston, Massachusetts; Chicago, Illinois; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; New York, New York; Seattle, Washington; Denver, Colorado; and Minneapolis, Minnesota you will need cold weather and snow gear. In the southern states, such as California and Florida, summers may be very hot and the winters mild. Depending on the part of the country, temperatures during the summer will run from the 70s through the 90s.

No matter where you are in the U.S., you will probably need a sweater or jacket for part of the year. If you will be living in an area that gets snow, you will need a good winter coat, boots, and gloves. If the coat does not include a hood, you will need a hat that covers your ears. This can wait until after you arrive in the U.S. Clothing is relatively inexpensive in the U.S., and it may be easier to find appropriate clothing at your destination. Wait until you arrive, and watch what the natives wear.

Weights and Measures
The United States still uses the English system of weights and measures. The metric system is available, but people think quarts and inches, not liters and centimeters. The following charts convert between the English and metric systems for the most commonly used measures.

Length

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 inch</th>
<th>2.54 centimeters (cm)</th>
<th>1 yard</th>
<th>0.914 meters (m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 centimeter</td>
<td>0.39 inches (in)</td>
<td>1 meter</td>
<td>1.09 yards (yd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 foot</td>
<td>0.305 meters (m)</td>
<td>1 yard</td>
<td>3 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 meter</td>
<td>3.28 feet (ft)</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>1.61 kilometers (km)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 foot</td>
<td>12 inches</td>
<td>1 kilometer</td>
<td>0.62 miles (mi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>5,280 feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weight
1 ounce    28.35 grams (g)
1 gram    0.035 ounces (oz)
1 pound    0.4536 kilograms (kg)
1 kilogram    2.2046 pounds (lb)
1 pound    16 ounces

Volume
1 gallon    3.7854 liters (L)
1 liter    0.2642 gallons (gal)
1 mile/gallon    0.42514 km/liter
1 gallon    4 quarts
1 quart    2 pints
1 pint    2 cups
1 cup    8 fluid ounces
1 tablespoon    3 teaspoons
1 teaspoon    5 ml

Electricity/Electronic Equipment
Most electrical outlets in the United States operate with a voltage of 110-120 volts, 60 cycles. If your equipment requires 220 volts, bring a transformer and plug adapter. Videotapes recorded on foreign VCRs may not play correctly on American VCRs.

If you are thinking of buying a computer to bring with you, you may want to wait until after you arrive in the U.S. to get a computer. Computer and software prices are often less expensive in the U.S., and getting cheaper every day.

Religion
The U.S. Constitution guarantees religious freedom for all faiths. You will almost certainly be able to find a church, synagogue, or mosque near work for people of your faith. Freedom of religion also means that you are likely to be solicited by religious groups who want to invite you to their church. Some of these groups can be quite aggressive. Many Americans ignore them, and you should not feel obligated to engage them in conversation. Even if you are interested in their particular brand of religion, it may be best for you to seek out local churches on your own.
H. The U.S. Court System

The U.S. Constitution establishes a system of federalism under which the federal government is granted limited authority, with remaining authority left to the states. Under the dual federal/state court structure, the U.S. Supreme Court is the final authority of federal law, while the highest court of each state has the authority to interpret matters of the law of its state. The federal courts have the power to decide whether state laws violate federal law.

The vast majority of courts at both the state and federal level are "courts of general jurisdiction", meaning that they have authority to decide cases of many different types. There are no special constitutional courts in the U.S. – any court has the power to declare a law or action of a government executive to be unconstitutional, subject to review by a higher-level court.

Federal Courts

The U.S. District Courts are entry-level courts of general jurisdiction, meaning they hear cases involving various criminal and civil matters. There are 94 U.S. federal judicial districts, with at least one district court in each state. Although each district court has numerous judges, a single judge presides over each case.

The U.S. Court of Appeals is the intermediate-level federal court. Appeals may not be taken to correct perceived errors of fact, unless there is a clear error of law. After a three-judge panel has rendered a decision, litigants have several options: they may seek reconsideration of the decision by the same three-judge panel; they may seek rehearing of the panel's decision by all of the judges of that circuit sitting together; or they may seek review by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The U.S. Supreme Court is at the apex of the federal court system and consists of nine justices who hear and decide cases. Cases are decided by a majority opinion.

The Supreme Court can review cases on appeal from federal courts or state supreme courts whose decisions are based on an issue of federal law (for example, when a federal appeals court invalidates a state statute; or when a state court strikes down a federal statute). The Court also may decide specific legal issues referred to it by lower federal courts.

The Supreme Court also has original jurisdiction over certain limited cases: controversies between two states; controversies between the U.S. and an individual state; actions by a state against a citizen of another state or an alien; and cases brought by or against a foreign ambassador or consul.

State Courts

Most states have a three-tiered judicial system composed of a trial-court level (sometimes called superior courts, district courts or circuit courts), an appellate court (often called the court of appeals) and a court of last resort (usually called the supreme court). Some states simply have one level of appeal.

Cases decided by a trial court are subject to appeal to and review by an appellate court. The state supreme court generally reviews cases that involve significant matters of state law or policy.
Many states have specialized courts for traffic matters, family law matters, probate for the administration of decedents' estates, and small claims (for cases involving less than a specific sum of money). Rulings of these specialized courts are subject to appeal and review by state courts of general jurisdiction.

Local Courts
Local governments, like their state counterparts, have their own court systems, which are presided over by local magistrates, who are public civil officers possessing judicial power delegated under local governing laws. This may include the power to rule on laws relating to zoning authority, collect and spend local taxes, or establish and operate public schools.

Criminal and Civil Courts
There are federal courts for prosecution of violations of federal law, and state courts for violations of state law. Most crimes are violations of state law. Even the serious crime of murder, in most cases, is a violation of state law in the U.S. Defendants in the United States have many rights that come from the Constitution, whether they are prosecuted in state or federal courts.

Civil vs. Criminal Trials
There are major differences in procedure for civil and criminal trials:

• **Pleading.** The statement of the claim or charge is more precise and detailed in a criminal case.

• **Discovery.** The ability of each side – prosecution and defense – to gather information to support their position, is more limited in a criminal case.

• **Higher Burden.** In a criminal trial, a defendant must be proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. But in a civil trial, the plaintiff must prove the claim only by the greater weight (preponderance) of evidence.

• **Greater Protection.** A defendant in a criminal trial is accorded more procedural rights and safeguards than a defendant in a civil trial.

• **Right to Appeal.** If a criminal defendant is acquitted, the prosecution's right to appeal is almost nonexistent since a defendant cannot stand trial twice for the same crime. In a civil case, the loser has the right to appeal.
Criminal Trials and the Rights of Defendants

Criminal trials in the U.S. are rarely as dramatic as film portrayals, and are often slower and more deliberate. The judge is the manager of the trial and the final authority of the applicable law. The jury decides whether the prosecution has presented enough evidence to convict the defendant beyond a reasonable doubt. The prosecution and the defense team present their case, under the rules of procedure, in an adversary system. What is often amazing to overseas observers are the rights that surround a criminal defendant once he or she is accused of a crime. This is known in the United States as "due process of law". Those rights include:

- Prosecution only after a finding of probable cause based on credible evidence presented by the prosecution.

- Right to be brought into open court, where the charges are read to the defendant, who must then enter a “guilty” or “not guilty” plea.

- Right to counsel except in trials for minor offenses. This includes the right to a court-appointed lawyer at government expense if the defendant cannot afford one. The defendant also has the right to require the attendance of witnesses and to confront them – through his lawyer – at trial.

- Entitlement to a trial in open court by a jury of one's peers – in other words, fellow citizens.

- Only one trial for the same offense.

- Right against self-incrimination. In the United States, a defendant cannot be compelled to testify against himself. If a defendant chooses to testify, however, he or she must answer questions from the prosecution as well as the defense.

- Competence to stand trial. A defendant must be mentally competent to understand the offenses of which he is charged.

- A speedy trial. The Constitution guarantees a speedy trial by an impartial jury in the jurisdiction where the offense was committed.

- Pretrial Proceedings. A defendant has the right to adequate time to prepare a defense and can waive his right to a speedy trial. He also has the right to obtain any evidence in the possession of the prosecution that might prove his innocence. In addition, he has the right to interview witnesses before trial.
The Course of a Criminal Trial
A criminal trial begins with opening statements – first by the prosecution and then by the defense. The prosecution then presents its evidence and witnesses, who are subject to cross-examination by the defense. The court can dismiss the case at this stage if it believes the evidence does not prove the defendant committed the crime.

The defense then has the opportunity to present its evidence and witnesses. After the defense’s case has been presented, the prosecution may present rebuttal evidence. The judge supervises the proceedings and rules on disputes about admissibility of evidence. The trial ends with closing statements by both sides and deliberation by the jury, following instructions by the judge.

The jury must find the defendant guilty or not guilty on each charge. A verdict of not guilty terminates the proceedings and the defendant is freed. A guilty verdict requires the court to enter the sentencing process. In death penalty cases, the jury decides between death and a lesser penalty.

The sentencing process includes a pre-sentencing investigation and the filing of a report on all matters germane to the defendant's sentence. The defendant can review and comment on that report. The defendant also has the right to counsel at his sentencing hearing.

All defendants in criminal trials have the right to appeal to a higher court, including in some cases, up to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Course of a Civil Trial
A civil action begins with a written statement of a plaintiff's claim and the relief he seeks, called a "complaint". The court then issues a summons, asking for a response to the complaint within a specific timeframe after the defendant receives it.

The defendant must admit or deny each allegation and present any defense. He may also assert claims against the plaintiff, a co-defendant or a person not originally part of the case. He may also move to dismiss the suit for failure to state a valid claim.

The next phase is a broad "discovery process", which does not normally involve the court. A party seeking discovery, however, requests help from the court to compel a reluctant opponent or other person to give information. Similarly, a party from whom unreasonable discovery is sought may seek the court's protection.

Discovery may include: written questions to be answered under oath; oral deposition under oath; requests for pertinent documents; physical or mental examinations where injury is claimed; and requests to admit facts not in dispute. Before trial, either party may move for summary judgment on any issue the evidence does not support.

Civil cases sometimes concern grave crimes, including murder. Often, however, they concern less serious offenses, such as landlord-tenant disputes.
Civil actions are normally tried in a court open to the public before a judge and jury of six to 12 jurors chosen at random, unless the parties agree to a trial by a judge only. As in a criminal trial, the parties have the right to dismiss certain jurors.

After opening statements, the plaintiff, who has the burden of proof, offers his evidence. If the evidence does not sustain the claim, it is dismissed at this point. If the evidence is deemed sufficient, the defendant presents his case.

After both sides present their evidence, the judge may dismiss any or all claims that are not supportable. Jury verdicts requiring only a majority, however, are allowed in more civil trials than criminal trials. In a case tried without a jury, the judge decides the case.

Civil penalties are generally much less onerous than those imposed in criminal trials. In addition to financial recoveries, civil penalties may include ordering a party to perform or refrain from a specific act or other appropriate relief. The judge may also impose court costs on the losing party. Those costs are nominal and do not ordinarily include attorneys' fees. As in criminal cases, the losing party has the right to appeal the decision.
I. Health and Medical Services in the U.S.

Health care is the largest industry in the United States, accounting for more than 14% of U.S. yearly gross domestic product. Health care spending topped $1.1 trillion in 1998, up 5.6% from the previous year. The health care industry is increasingly market-based and price-driven, characterized by cost-cutting pressures, increased consumer power in making decisions, changing physician employment and payment systems, major restructuring of the hospital sector, and large differences in health care arrangements.

After World War II, as U.S. industry shifted from wartime manufacturing to producing consumer goods, the government froze wages and prices to promote stability and prevent inflation. Employers could not compete for workers by offering higher wages; they had to find other incentives. Health benefits were not considered income, so employers offered increasingly competitive health benefits to attract and retain workers. This strategy established the pattern of private health insurance that the United States. In the mid-1960s, the U.S. began its Medicare and Medicaid programs, establishing public health spending patterns. By the early 1980s, U.S. medical costs were out of control. To prevent a potential crisis, the industry turned to managed care.

Over the past 10 years, health maintenance organizations (HMOs) have enrolled more than 60 million U.S. citizens. In this highly competitive market, the number of fee-for-service plans continues to shrink as insurers seek to cut costs, primarily through capitation. In capitation, providers usually receive payment on a per-patient, per-month basis, rather than on a per-service basis. With managed care, medical costs have leveled at a rate equal to, or lower than, other consumer prices. Although managed care has successfully contained costs, it has raised concerns in the areas of access, quality, and patient choice.

The U.S. health care industry is a broad and complicated industry. Major industry sectors include:

- health services and supplies ($1.1 trillion gross annual investment), including personal health care, hospital care, professional services (e.g., physician, dentist), and home health care;
- pharmaceuticals ($122 billion);
- program administration ($94 billion);
- research ($20 billion);
- medical equipment and supplies ($16 billion); and
- construction ($16 billion).

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, National Health Expenditures (NHE) are projected to total $2.2 trillion and reach 16.2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2008. The HCFA projections are shown below:
The health care industry is adjusting to new government policies, insurance industry financing rules, and shifts to outpatient treatment and home nursing care options. Group practices and HMOs continue to absorb individual physician practices. Hospital closings and clinic consolidations continue to improve operating efficiencies. Hospital occupancy rates, which fell because of cost pressures and reduced lengths of stay, finally stabilized in 1998. In the U.S. today, there are approximately 6,500 acute care hospitals and 15,245 nursing homes with 1.7 million beds.

Nearly 1.5 million physicians, dentists, nurses, physician assistants, therapists, pharmacists, and other medical professionals provide health care in approximately 200,000 private medical offices and clinics around the U.S.

Payment for health care in the U.S. may be public or private. Medicare is the largest public health care payer. In 1998, the program financed nearly $217 billion for the health care of 38.8 million elderly or disabled people. For almost 50% of those who live in the United States, however, private employers fund health care. Beyond the government-sponsored and employment-based coverage, approximately 60 million U.S. residents are self-employed or otherwise elect to pay for health insurance on an individual basis. The 44 million U.S. residents who have limited or no medical insurance coverage include many young adults who choose not to purchase coverage, those who do not apply for Medicare/Medicaid benefits, and many children, who cannot afford insurance.
Most of the $1.1 trillion spent on health care in 1998 in the United States was on personal health care, including hospital care, physician services, dental care, other professional services, and home health care. Twenty percent of the total health care expenditures – about $230 billion – were for physician services. Private insurance took care of the majority of these payments (50.5%); public funds, about 32%; and self-paying consumers, 15%.

In 1998, for the first time in a decade, public spending decreased its share of total health care expenditures. This was primarily a result of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act, targeted to reduce fraud, waste, and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid programs. The most significant factor in this reduction was Medicare’s spending growth of only 2.5%, compared to 6% growth in 1997. Additional balanced budget provisions scheduled over the next few years will further reduce public spending growth through 2002.

In contrast, private spending for health care rose in 1998 because of higher health insurance premiums, which jumped from a 3.5% increase in 1997 to 8.2% in 1998. Insurers raised premium rates to cover higher costs, provide more benefits, and improve profitability. Significantly, U.S. residents spent more to treat chronic and acute diseases and considerably less for promoting health and preventing disease.

A combination of health issues presents significant challenges for the United States. For example, one study indicated that almost 40% of children aged 5–8 have at least one risk factor for heart disease. At least 25% of the nation’s youth are above desirable weight standards. Further, adult obesity has increased 50% over the past two decades. Costs associated with obesity (including medical and lost productivity costs) were estimated at $99 billion in 1995.

Also, only 64% of adolescents do the recommended amount of daily physical activity; only 15% of adults perform the recommended amount; and 40% of U.S. adults engage in no leisure time physical activity. Adding to the effects of lack of exercise and poor nutrition, almost 3,000 adolescents each day start smoking.

An estimated 20% of U.S. citizens suffer from mental illness during a given year – depression is the most common disorder. The estimated cost of mental illness in the United States in 1996 was $150 billion.

Major issues within the industry involve ethical considerations about appropriate health care treatments and strategies. Society has yet to come to grips with some fundamental questions – How much and what type of health care is affordable, and what is the best way to decide who gets it? Patients are demanding resolutions to issues of medical malpractice, medical errors, and protection of patient rights and privacy. A recent Institute of Medicine report estimated that medical errors cost approximately $37.6 billion each year and that about $17 billion of those costs are preventable errors. Adverse drug reactions are responsible for a high number of hospital admissions, and medication errors alone cause an estimated 7,000 deaths each year.

Internet access has enabled U.S. residents to become increasingly knowledgeable about health care issues and to demand more choice. They find traditional health care to be too intrusive, too stressful, and too expensive. In the future, patients are likely to take more responsibility for their own health and to work more closely with their health care providers. New studies confirm the effectiveness of health promotion and alternative medicine therapies.
Complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) are a growing field for providers, insurers, schools, and manufacturers. In 1997, U.S. residents spent $27 billion out-of-pocket for alternative health care, visited alternative medicine providers 629 million times (compared to 386 million primary care visits), spent an estimated $4 billion on herbal supplements, and paid $6 billion on 114 million visits to massage therapists.

The population of the U.S. is increasingly diverse – racially, ethnically, and genetically – and population aging presents additional health challenges. Today, the average life expectancy at birth is about 77 years (up from 47 years at the beginning of the 20th century). Life expectancy for every age group has risen. For example, those who are currently 65 years old can expect to live an average of 18 more years; today’s 75-year-olds can expect to live to 86. However, people in at least 18 other developed nations have a life expectancy greater than that in the United States.

Residents of the United States spent $122 billion on drugs and other medical non-durables last year. Over-the-counter drugs accounted for roughly $30 billion in spending, while prescription drug spending was more than $90 billion (a per capita spending rate of $335). Spending on prescription drugs accounted for a 20% share of 1998’s industry spending growth. Several factors have contributed to this increase in prescription drug spending – a greater number of available prescription drugs, higher costs for preferred brands, explosion of direct-to-consumer advertisements that increase consumer awareness and demand, and greater access to drug coverage with small co-payments available to the medically insured.

The Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA – now the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [CMMS]) estimates that prescription drug spending will increase 11% annually over the next 2 years. Pharmaceutical companies point to the high costs of research as the main reason for high drug prices. Interestingly, drug companies spend one to three times as much on marketing as they do on research.

There are approximately 570,000 physicians in the United States, with another 170,000 in medical schools. For each retiring physician, three new ones enter the system. The trends for physician availability over the next 20 years appear favorable, but as the supply of physicians increases, the demand may decrease. Medical practices are becoming more efficient because of their increased use of physician assistants and nurse practitioners.

Increased use of outpatient care and decreased use of inpatient care and facilities will continue. The home health care industry will prosper as medical technologies continue to mature. Diagnostic procedures, clinical tests, diagnoses, and consultation will be delivered in new ways, both digitally and virtually. Laboratory work may be self-administered in particular cases.

A major goal for any government is to ensure that its citizens have access to affordable, high-quality health care. Most significant among the trends that will influence access are changing demographics, rising health care costs, advances in information and biological technologies, rising consumer expectations, increasing concerns about patient rights, and the growing number of uninsured citizens.
Government policy on regulation, litigation, and financing continues to have the single largest impact on health care providers, payers, and the U.S. population’s health. Pressure for rational and coordinated government policy grows with increasing health care choices and demands, an increasingly unhappy population, and demand for cost containment.

In 1998, an estimated 44 million U.S. citizens, including 11 million children under the age of 18, were not covered by health insurance. Despite Medicaid coverage, 11 million people, or 32% of the poor, had no health insurance. Without some form of universal health insurance, the numbers of uninsured will continue to grow. Those with access to the U.S. medical system benefit from excellent medications and treatments, state-of-the-art technology and research, and unsurpassed medical practitioners. The uninsured have limited access. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 is a step toward providing uninsured patients with more options.

Access To Health Care And The Uninsured
An estimated 44.3 million people in the United States – 16% of the population – were without health insurance coverage during 1998, an increase of 1 million since 1997. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the key factors associated with lack of health insurance coverage are age, race and Hispanic origin, educational attainment, work experience, and place of birth.

Among the poor, 50% of full-time workers were uninsured. Hispanics were less likely to be insured than non-Hispanic whites, as foreign-born U.S. residents were less likely to be insured than native-born U.S. residents. One study estimated that 11% of the 15 million college students in the United States have no health insurance.

Health insurance is an important factor that often determines health care outcomes and access to the range of health care services. Uninsured persons are at least 50% less likely to have a primary care provider, to receive preventive care, or to have made a recent medical visit.

The growing numbers of uninsured are placing additional pressures on “safety-net” health care providers. The uninsured most often turn to the closest hospital when they need medical services. In 1994, U.S. hospitals incurred $16.8 billion in uncompensated care costs, received $3.3 billion in government subsidies against that cost, and lost $13.5 billion for uncompensated care, 4.7% of total revenues of $290 billion. To cover these costs, hospitals subsidize from other revenue sources, including private patients, Medicare, Medicaid, and other government sources.

The policy options for fixing the health care system, in general, and the uninsured problem, in particular, are grouped around four themes: (1) maintaining the status quo, (2) making incremental market-based reforms, (3) making incremental public sector reforms, and (4) pushing for universal health insurance coverage.

Status Quo. The United States stands alone among “high-income market-oriented democracies” in not mandating universal health coverage. At 14% of the gross domestic product, U.S. health care costs range 4%–7% higher than the percentage in other countries. Even without considering the effect of the uninsured on the economy and public health, the current status quo is not an acceptable option.
**Incremental Market-Based Reforms.** The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 provided options for individuals to maintain insurance coverage when they changed or lost jobs, became self-employed, or went to work for a company that did not provide health insurance. In addition, the act provided for a 4-year demonstration of medical savings accounts (MSAs), offering tax incentives to self-employed individuals and workers in small firms who purchase their own health care coverage.

Many policymakers propose using tax credits to reduce the number of uninsured. But the risk is that healthier workers will leave the employer-based health insurance pool, thus increasing insurance costs for the remaining workers. Despite many differences, almost all uninsured individuals are low income. By themselves, tax credits could be insufficient to substantially reduce the numbers of uninsured.

**Public Sector Reforms.** The basis for some incremental public sector reforms is expanding Medicaid and state coverage through the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Past Medicaid expansions reduced private-sector enrollment as Medicaid-eligible workers dropped employer coverage. Beyond reforms that cut the administrative costs of public programs or make them more efficient, expansions of current Medicaid programs would almost certainly result in negative consequences for the employer-based system.

**Universal Health Insurance Coverage.** About 44 million U.S. residents lack health insurance coverage, and fixing the system should be a national priority. Every high-income democracy, except the United States, has universal health insurance coverage. The United States could enact legislation that brings the nation closer to universal coverage by targeting those segments of society that currently lack insurance, beginning with the 11 million children who are currently uninsured.

**Population Health**

The U.S. health care system is moving from the traditional medical model of reactive, episodic, sickness-based care to a more efficient, proactive, prevention-based system.

The first step in a population-based health care program is to assess the needs and health of the population. A needs assessment separates population segments by disease states (e.g., no disease, sub-clinical disease, clinical disease) based on characteristics (e.g., age, gender, occupation, educational level), and needs (e.g., available preventive services, risk factors, health care use patterns). This information forms the basis for prevention and intervention activities within that population.

The backbone of population health initiatives lies in preventive services. The most common preventive services are immunizations and screening tests. Proactive delivery of preventive services keeps the population from progressing to a higher, frequently more costly, disease state. Primary preventive services keep well people well. Secondary preventive services are interventions with individuals and groups who have risk factors for premature illness, injury, death, or disability. Tertiary preventive services involve the treatment of individuals and groups with acute and chronic conditions in ways that produce high-quality clinical outcomes at reasonable cost.
The leading causes of death in the United States are heart disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease, lung disease, injuries, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Approximately half of all deaths in the United States in 1990 were attributed to behavioral factors, such as tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drug use; diet and activity patterns; motor vehicles; and sexual behavior.

The most promising role for prevention in population-based health care may lie in changing the personal health behaviors of individuals before clinical disease develops. Health promotion programs include lifestyle issues, such as physical fitness, nutrition, and stress management, as well as issues of preventing alcohol and drug abuse, preventing and stopping tobacco use, and preventing communicable and chronic diseases.

Population health programs need a stable enrollment system to accurately capture the size, characteristics, and unique needs of their patient populations. This is a particular challenge for health care systems that have frequent turnover in their enrolled population.

**Information Technology And Knowledge Management In Health Care**

Health care lags far behind other industries in adopting information technology and knowledge management. The challenge for government officials, chief executive officers, chief information officers, and vendors of information technology related to health care is to integrate information technology and knowledge management to improve care outcomes, reduce long-term costs, and increase customer satisfaction.

The major roles of information technology and knowledge management in the health care industry center around three areas: (1) health care recipients, (2) health care providers, and (3) the health care infrastructure.

**Health Care Recipients.** Information technology and knowledge management practices allow patients to choose health care providers, make informed decisions with their physicians, and direct their therapies. This transformation of patients – from passive recipients of health care to active participants – is a profound departure from the past.

The Internet has been a primary catalyst for this change. According to recent surveys, 72% of on-line consumers use the Internet to obtain health care information, and this market is expected to grow to $1.7 billion by 2003. The Internet allows the rapid flow of health care information.

Information technology poses new challenges for the health care industry – primarily privacy and security issues. Much of the data needed to identify cost savings and determine best clinical practices could readily come from electronic patient records, but many fear the possible misuse of personal health information. The Computer-Based Patient Record Institute was created to help deal with these issues, but patient record privacy issues will not be easily resolved.
**Health Care Providers.** Knowledge management gives providers opportunities to practice more integrated health care. Providers can receive better training at less cost through real-time knowledge management systems. Although telemedicine has existed for more than 40 years, the Internet may become a vehicle for its growth especially in remote areas where specialists are in short supply.

The Institute of Medicine has determined that using information technology can reduce medical errors, which are the eighth largest killer in the United States. Approximately 98,000 patients die each year because of treatment errors.

**Health Care Infrastructure.** Requirements for complying with regulations, reducing costs, identifying customer needs, increasing sales, boosting profits, accelerating growth, and gaining market share are just a few reasons that knowledge management is crucial to improving efficiency.

The Voluntary Hospitals of America (VHA), a national health care network that makes up 24% of the nation’s community hospitals, receives approximately 2,000 requests for information each month. The VHA’s knowledge management initiatives include a knowledge repository to improve customer service, a directory of “who knows what”, and communities of practice.

One of the major functions health care providers perform is the administration of health care activities in hospitals and other medical institutions. Information technology is an integral component of the administrative function. Decision support systems, a $330-million market, enable hospitals to set internal pricing, negotiate fees with providers, and review the clinical practices of their own physicians.

Information technology also plays a significant role in the physical security of hospitals and patients. In hospital pharmacies, for example, automatic dispenser systems, access cards, and personal identification numbers not only serve as preventive measures, but also record every entry and exit to the pharmacy area. To protect infants in newborn areas, some hospitals use electronic tags combined with photographs and footprints.

**The Health Care Employment Market**

The health care sector of the U.S. economy is a major employer. Excluding government employees, in 1998, over 9.8 million workers – 9.3% of private sector employees in the United States – worked in health services.

The table below shows health care employment in the U.S. in 1998:

(Employment in thousands)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Industries</td>
<td>128,008</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals, public and private</td>
<td>10,829</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing and personal care facilities</td>
<td>4,909</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices of physicians</td>
<td>1,762</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home health care services</td>
<td>1,853</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices of dentists</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices of other health practitioners</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and allied services, not elsewhere classified</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and dental laboratories</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Wage and salary employees exclude employees who are self-employed and those who do not receive wages working for their families.

The health services industry provided over 10.8 million wage and salary jobs in 1998. Almost one-half of all health services jobs were in hospitals; and another one-third were either in nursing and personal care facilities or offices of physicians. About 92% worked in the private sector; the remainder worked in state and local government hospitals.

Employment in health services will continue to grow for a number of reasons. The elderly population, a group with much greater than average health care needs, will grow faster than the total population between 1998 and 2008, increasing the demand for health services, especially for home health care and nursing and personal care.

As the baby boom generation ages, the incidence of stroke and heart disease will increase. Advances in medical technology will become larger and more complex, and will need more managerial and support workers. New technologies often lower the cost of treatment and diagnosis, but also allow medical personnel to identify and treat more medical conditions.

In addition to wage and salary workers, an estimated 446,000 workers in the industry were self-employed in 1998. Of these, about 70% were in offices of physicians, dentists and other health practitioners. Health services jobs are found throughout the country, but are concentrated in large states, such as California, New York, Florida, Texas, and Pennsylvania.
Shortage Of Nurses
Nursing is one of the primary areas in which shortages of employees, and particularly highly skilled employees, exist. The primary reason for the nursing shortage is that fewer and fewer potential nurses are going into nursing, preferring instead to go into other more profitable and easier careers. At the same time, the aging U.S. population is growing older and requiring more medical care. This shortage is not cyclical like previous shortages and is unlikely to go away.

The statistics below demonstrate the problems facing hospitals:

- Half the Registered Nurses workforce in the U.S. will reach retirement age in the next 15 years.
- U.S. nursing school enrollments dropped 20.9% from 1995 to 1998.
- Based on current trends, the Department of Health and Human Services projects that 750,000 nurses will be needed in the U.S. by 2020, but only 635,000 will be available.
- The Department of Health and Human Services projects that in 2000, the supply of BS-trained nurses totaled approximately 596,000, while demand was 854,000 – a shortfall of 258,000 nurses.
- The average age for RNs nationwide is 44, the oldest average ever; the average age of new RN graduates is 31.
- Nursing school enrollment fell 4.6% in the fall of 1999 according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing the fifth straight year of decline despite recruiting efforts targeted at the young.

The nursing profession has fewer young nurses than it used to, not only because of decreasing enrollment in nursing programs, but also because of an increasing number of second-career nurses. Older RNs, often diploma program graduates, are concentrated in operating rooms (ORs). Fewer young nurses are graduating from diploma programs and older nurses are now starting to cut back on hours or retire, creating a shortage in ORs.

Both the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the National League for Nursing (NLN) report a decline in enrollments for all RN programs. Enrollments are expected to continue to decrease.

You will find “Vision 2020 For Nursing” as well as several resources on nursing and it’s future in Section 4 of this manual.
Twenty-First Century Health Care Reform
The aging U.S. population and the millions of uninsured Americans will require more and better care and will demand attention and create political issues that must be addressed. Any health care reform in the first decade of the twenty-first century will have to address the following issues:

- Access to health services, including specialists such as obstetricians, gynecologists, and pediatricians, without referrals
- Guaranteed emergency care
- Banning gag rules and provider incentives to physicians to deny care.
- Securing privacy of medical records and medical information on patients
- Allowing tax credits to individuals and small businesses for long-term care expenditures
- Using the federal budget surplus to keep the Medicare program solvent
- Providing prescription drug benefits to Medicare recipients
- Allowing injured patients to seek redress in the courts
- Allowing choices and continuity of care
- Holding health care plans accountable to individual patients and the marketplace
Glossary

Access
The ability to obtain needed health care services.

Adjusted Admissions
A measure of all patient care activity in a hospital, including both inpatient and outpatient care. The sum of inpatient admissions and an estimate of the volume of outpatient services, expressed as the number of inpatient admissions that could have been produced with the same amount of resources.

Co-payment
A fixed dollar amount paid for a covered service by a health insurance enrollee

Deductible
A type of cost sharing in which the insured party pays a specified amount of approved charges for covered medical services before the insurer assumes liability for all or part of the remaining covered services.

Graduate Medical Education (GME)
The period of medical training that follows graduation from medical school; commonly referred to as internship, residency, and fellowship training.

Health Maintenance Organization (HMO)
A type of managed care plan that acts as both the insurer and the provider of a comprehensive set of health care services to an enrolled population. Benefits are typically financed through capitation with limited co-payments, and services are furnished through a system of affiliated providers.

Hospital Insurance (HI)
The part of the Medicare program that covers the cost of hospital and related post-hospital services. Eligibility normally is based on prior payment of payroll taxes. Beneficiaries are responsible for an initial deductible per spell of illness and co-payments for some services. Also called Medicare Part A coverage or benefits.

Managed Care
Any system of health service payment or delivery arrangement in which a health plan attempts to control or coordinate the use of health services by its enrolled members to contain health expenditures, improve quality, or both. Arrangements often involve a defined delivery system of providers with some form of contractual arrangement with the plan.

Medicare
A health insurance program for people over age 65, those eligible for Social Security disability payments, and those who need kidney dialysis or transplants.
**Point-of-service (POS) Plan**
A managed care plan that combines features of both prepaid and fee-for-service insurance. Health plan enrollees decide whether to use network or non-network providers at the time care is needed and usually are charged much larger co-payments for choosing the latter.

**Preferred Provider Organization (PPO)**
A managed care plan that contracts with networks or panels of providers to provide services and be paid on a negotiated fee schedule. Enrollees are offered a financial incentive to use providers on the preferred list but may use non-network providers as well.

**Premium**
An amount paid periodically to purchase health insurance benefits.

**Prospective Payment**
A method of paying health care providers in which rates are established in advance. Providers are paid those rates regardless of their actual costs.

**Supplementary Medical Insurance (SMI)**
The part of the Medicare program that covers the costs of physicians’ services, outpatient laboratory and x-ray tests, durable medical equipment, outpatient hospital care, and certain other services. This voluntary program requires paying a monthly premium, which covers 25 percent of program costs, with the rest covered by general revenues. Beneficiaries are responsible for a deductible and coinsurance payments for most covered services. Also called Medicare Part B coverage or benefits.

**Total Margin**
A measure that compares total hospital revenues with expenses for inpatient, outpatient, and non-patient care activities. The total margin is calculated by subtracting total expenses from total revenues and dividing by total revenues.

**Consumer Bill of Rights and Responsibilities**
Following is a summary of the eight areas of consumer rights and responsibilities adopted by the Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry which was appointed by President Clinton in March, 1997. Although not law, they provide an overview of how health care is viewed in the U.S.:

1. **Information Disclosure**
   Consumers have the right to receive accurate, easily understood information about health plans, professionals, and facilities. This information should include:

   - **Health plans:** Procedures for resolving complaints; licensure, certification, and accreditation status; measures of quality and consumer satisfaction; provider network composition; the procedures that govern access to specialists and emergency services; and care management information.
• **Health professionals**: Education and board certification and re-certification; years of practice; experience performing certain procedures; and comparable measures of quality and consumer satisfaction.

• **Health care facilities**: Experience in performing certain procedures and services; accreditation status; comparable measures of quality and worker and consumer satisfaction; procedures for resolving complaints; and community benefits provided.

2. **Choice of Providers and Plans**

Consumers have the right to a choice of health care providers to ensure access to appropriate high-quality health care. To ensure such choice, health plans should provide the following:

• **Provider Network Adequacy**: All health plan networks should provide access to sufficient numbers and types of providers.

• **Access to Qualified Specialists for Women's Health Services**: Women should be able to choose a qualified provider offered by a plan such as gynecologists, certified nurse midwives, and other qualified health care providers.

• **Access to Specialists**: Consumers with complex or serious medical conditions who require frequent specialty care should have direct access to a qualified specialist of their choice within a plan's network of providers.

3. **Access to Emergency Services**

Consumers have the right to access emergency health care services when and where the need arises. To ensure this right:

• Health plans should educate their members about the availability, location, and appropriate use of emergency and other medical services; and the availability of care outside an emergency department.

• Health plans should cover emergency department screening and stabilization services both in network and out of network without prior authorization consistent with the prudent layperson standard.

• Emergency department personnel should contact a patient's primary care provider or health plan, as appropriate, as quickly as possible to discuss follow-up and promote continuity of care.
4. **Participation in Treatment Decisions**
Consumers have the right and responsibility to fully participate in all decisions related to their health care. Health care professionals should:

- Provide patients with easily understood information and opportunity to decide among treatment options.

- Discuss all treatment options with a patient in a culturally competent manner, including the option of no treatment at all.

- Ensure that persons with disabilities have effective communications with members of the health system in making such decisions.

- Discuss all risks, benefits, and consequences to treatment or non-treatment.

- Give patients the opportunity to refuse treatment and to express preferences about future treatment decisions.

- Ensure that provider contracts do not contain "gag clauses" or other contractual mechanisms that restrict health care providers from communicating with and advising patients about medically necessary treatment options.

5. **Respect and Non-discrimination**
Consumers must not be discriminated against in the delivery of health care services because of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, or source of payment.

6. **Confidentiality of Health Information**
Consumers have the right to communicate with health care providers in confidence and to have the confidentiality of their health care information protected. Consumers also have the right to review and copy their own medical records and request amendments to their records. To ensure this right:

- With very few exceptions, individually identifiable health care information can be used without written consent for health purposes, quality assurance and payment only.

- Disclosure of individually identifiable health care information without written consent should be permitted in very limited circumstances.

7. **Complaints and Appeals**
All consumers have the right to a fair and efficient process for resolving differences with their health plans, health care providers, and the institutions that serve them. Appeals systems should include:
• Timely written notification of a decision to deny, reduce, or terminate services or deny payment for services. Such notification should include an explanation of the reasons for the decisions and the procedures available for appealing them.

• Written notification of the final determination by the plan of an internal appeal that includes information on the reason for the determination and how a consumer can appeal that decision to an external entity.

• Reasonable processes for resolving consumer complaints about such issues as waiting times, operating hours, the demeanor of health care personnel, and the adequacy of facilities.

8. Consumer Responsibilities

It is reasonable to expect and encourage consumers to assume reasonable responsibilities. Consumers should:

• Take responsibility for maximizing healthy habits, such as exercising, not smoking, and eating a healthy diet.

• Disclose relevant information and clearly communicate wants and needs.

• Recognize the reality of risks and the limits of medical care, and the human fallibility of the health care professional.

• Be aware of a health care provider's obligation to be reasonably efficient and equitable in providing care to other patients and the community.

• Make a good-faith effort to meet financial obligations.
J. Housing

Permanent Accommodations
The available options include renting an apartment, renting a house, or buying a house.

The cost of renting an apartment varies considerably depending on the part of the country and the local supply and demand. A one-bedroom apartment in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, might cost $400 a month while the same apartment in Boston, Massachusetts, or San Jose, California, will cost $1,200 or more.

Finding an Apartment
The public library will have information about local neighborhoods. Ask for this information at the reference desk. You should do a few things before you begin your search for an apartment:

- Ask about which neighborhoods are safe and which should be avoided.
- Decide whether you want to cut costs by sharing an apartment with a roommate.
- Get a detailed street map for the neighborhoods you are considering. You should be able to buy a map at most newsstands or grocery stores. Rand McNally maps tend to be very good. You will want to get a copy of the Rand McNally Road Atlas if you will be doing any cross-country driving. Another good source for maps is the AAA (American Automobile Association). AAA maps and guidebooks are free to members, one of many reasons to join the auto club even if you do not drive a car.
- Spend a few hours walking around the neighborhood to familiarize yourself with the area. Note the location of grocery stores and restaurants, since your most frequent trips will be to work and to buy food. Also, note the location of bus stops and other public transportation. It takes 15 to 20 minutes to walk a mile and 5 minutes by bicycle.

When looking for an apartment, ask friends if they know of a good apartment. Sometimes they will know someone who is moving out of a good apartment or may be moving themselves. Such desirable apartments are rarely advertised because they are rented very quickly.

The local newspaper will also have apartment listings. Buy a copy of the Sunday newspaper. It will have more apartment listings than a mid-week issue of the newspaper. You may be able to buy the Sunday newspaper as early as Saturday afternoon. There may also be a free weekly advertising circular that lists apartments. You can usually find such apartment listings at grocery stores, newsstands, and real estate offices.
The last resort is to contact a real estate agent. You are often better off going through the classified advertisements yourself. You should not pay for a list of available places, since such lists are often out of date.

You will probably need to look at only 3-4 apartments before you find one that you like and which matches your budget. But if you do not find a good apartment quickly, continue looking.

In the U.S., house numbers tend to be even on one side of the street and odd on the other. Other than that, there is usually no logic to the addressing scheme.

**Understanding Apartment Listings**
Apartments for rent are often described using abbreviations. You will need to learn to decode apartment listings to find a place that meets your needs.

Rental costs depend primarily on the size, condition, and location of the apartment, and whether utilities are included. Larger apartments and apartments which are closer to the work or shopping will cost more.

The first distinguishing characteristic is the size of the apartment. The different sizes are defined as follows:

- **Sleeping Room.** A sleeping room is a single room, usually furnished, located in a private home, with a shared bedroom and kitchen. This is the least expensive option, but provides little privacy.

- **Efficiency.** An efficiency is a single room with a private bathroom. The room will include a small alcove that serves as a kitchen and should provide a stove, refrigerator, sink, and cabinet space.

- **Studio.** A studio is somewhat larger than an efficiency, and has a separate kitchen and eating area.

- **One, Two, or Three Bedroom.** Regular apartments include a separate kitchen, bathroom, living room and/or dining room, and the number of bedrooms advertised.

New arrivals from Asian countries, especially Japan, may find apartments in the U.S. to be a bit too spacious. So, if the first two apartments you visit are too big, look at the next smaller type of apartment.
The next important consideration is what is included in the rent and what is not:

- **Utilities.** If the advertisement says that utilities are included, that usually means electricity, heat/gas, and water/sewage, but not telephone or cable Television (TV). If the advertisement does not specify any utilities, assume that you will be responsible for paying for them. Heat will cost you an extra $500 to $1,000 a year in the cold areas of the country and electricity a similar amount. If heat is included, this sometimes means that the landlord controls the temperature, not you. The landlord usually pays water and sewage fees, except if you are renting a house.

- **Furnished or Unfurnished.** A furnished apartment will include a bed, chest of drawers or dresser, a couch or sofa, and a dining room table and chairs. A furnished apartment will also include a stove and refrigerator. An unfurnished apartment will include a stove and refrigerator but nothing else. A furnished apartment will cost you an extra $50 a month. You are probably better off renting an unfurnished apartment and buying used furniture. Most apartments are rented unfurnished.

- **Parking.** If you intend to own a car, an apartment that includes a garage or off-street parking is better than one that does not. It is sometimes difficult to find a parking space on the street, especially if many visitors with cars live nearby.

You should also ask whether there are any laundry facilities. In apartment buildings, there is usually a coin operated washer and dryer, but not always.

Common abbreviations include:

- Incl (included)
- Elec (electricity)
- 1 1/2 baths (one full bathroom and one with just a toilet and sink)
- A/C (air conditioning)
- W/W (wall to wall carpeting) h/w (hardwood floors)
- DW (dishwasher)
- Furn (furnished)
- Cpt (carpeted)
- Gar (garage for a car)
- Yard (includes a backyard)
- Eff (efficiency)
- Immed (available immediately)
- FP or Frplc (includes a wood-burning or gas fireplace)

A security building has a locked front door in addition to locks for each apartment.

Expect the rent to increase by about 5% per year.
Leases
A lease is a written contract between the tenant (you) and a landlord which allows you to use a dwelling for a designated period in exchange for monthly rent payments. The lease outlines the restrictions on the use of the dwelling and the responsibilities of tenant and landlord. A lease is a legal document and should be read carefully before signing.

The lease should specify at least the following:

- The amount of the monthly rent and when it should be paid. The lease might mention how the rent will increase in future years.
- Whether utilities are included in the rent, and if so, which ones. Heat and electricity are the most important.
- The time covered by the lease, usually one or two years.
- Restrictions on the number of unrelated people who may occupy the dwelling.
- The amount of the security deposit, which must be paid in addition to the first month's rent when you sign the lease. The security deposit can be as much as twice the monthly rent. If you have a pet, there may be a separate security deposit for the pet if the landlord allows pets. The deposit will be refunded at the end of the lease if the apartment is left in good and clean condition. If not, the landlord will use the security deposit to cover the cost of cleaning and repairing the apartment. Accordingly, if there are any problems with the apartment they should be noted on the lease, so that you will not be held responsible for them when you move out of the apartment.
- Restrictions on pets, children, and noise. Many landlords do not permit pets because of the potential for damage and noise. The lease may also contain a provision prohibiting noise from musical instruments, stereo systems, loud parties, and other sources.
- Landlord responsibilities, such as repairs to heating and plumbing facilities and fire or water damage that was not caused by the tenant.
- A clause about terminating the lease. This clause will describe the penalties to the tenant for breaking the lease. Such penalties can range from forfeiting the security deposit to being responsible for the remaining rent.
- A clause about subletting. This clause will either allow or forbid the tenant from subletting the apartment to another person during the term of the lease. It is best to have a lease that permits subletting. If you decide to move to a different apartment before the end of your lease, subletting allows you to rent the apartment to someone else. Otherwise, you will be responsible for the rent for the remainder of the lease.
- A clause about eviction proceedings. This clause describes the rights of tenant and landlord should the landlord want to force the tenant out of the property during the term of the lease. The most common reasons for an eviction include failure to pay the rent when due or causing significant damage to the property.

If the lease includes a wear and tear clause, this allows the landlord to charge you for repainting the apartment at the end of the lease.
Read the lease carefully before signing. If you do not understand part of the lease, ask the landlord or a friend to explain it to you. Do not be afraid to cross out provisions with which you disagree just because it is a printed form. Both you and the landlord must initial any changes to the printed lease. If the landlord promises to make certain repairs or there are pre-existing problems with the property, attach a list to the lease and have the landlord sign it. The list should include all problems, including leaking faucets, clogged drains, stains on the walls and rugs, peeling paint, cracks and holes in the walls and ceiling, non-functional kitchen appliances, and anything else you notice.

Most states have laws which do not permit you to sign away your rights, so clauses which have you waive the provisions of specific laws are usually void. Clauses which talk about money, dates when things happen, restrictions on the use of the property, and other clauses mentioned above, however, tend to be binding. If you have any questions about any clause, ask before you sign, not after.

When you pay for the rent and security deposit, get a receipt. Get a separate receipt for the rent and security deposit. It is best to pay the rent by check, and to use a separate check for the security deposit. You will need this at the end of the lease to recover your security deposit. To get your security deposit returned when you move out, return the key to the landlord and provide a forwarding address. Send this by certified mail, return receipt requested, so that you have proof the key and forwarding address were received by the landlord. The landlord then has 30 days to return your deposit or send you a list of the repairs, their actual cost, and any money left in the security deposit.

Although the landlord is obligated to return the security deposit to you if you leave the property in undamaged condition at the end of the lease, some landlords will try to take advantage of international visitors. After all, if you are moving back to your home country, you are less likely to protest if the landlord refuses to refund your security deposit. The best defense against this practice is to ask your fellow visitors which landlords have a reputation for such practices.

Be sure to write down the name, address, and telephone number of the landlord, as well as the handyman responsible for maintaining the property. You will need this information to turn on the utilities and telephone service.
**Moving In**

**Utilities**
Drinking water, sewage service, gas service and electricity are all considered required utilities. Phone service and cable television are also utilities, but these services are not as critical to daily life.

Once you have found a place to live, the first thing you need to do is get the utilities turned on so you can move in. Be sure to check with the landlord to see whether any utilities are already included with the rent. For example, the monthly cost of water and sewer are often part of the rent if you live in an apartment. In some cases, even the electricity may be included. You should also find out if the property needs gas heating service in addition to water, sewer and electricity.

Once you have determined the utilities you need to get for your home, you can then call the utility providers and find out what they require from you to set up service. To find out who provides utility service for your area, you may start by asking friends or colleagues. You can also find utility providers in the phone book. For example, you can usually find the electrical utility company in the yellow pages under "Electric Companies”.

In most cities in the U.S., the water and sewer services are grouped together and are provided by the municipality for a monthly fee. The gas, electrical, cable television, and local phone services are usually provided by private industry. In some areas, you may have a choice in who provides you with local phone service or electrical service, but in general, there is no choice in who you use for your utilities. One exception to this is long distance phone service. There are a variety of long distance phone service companies to choose from, and you should carefully weigh their options when choosing one.

**Deposits**
If you do not have an established credit history in the U.S., the utility provider may require a deposit. The amount of the deposit can vary, but you should expect to pay around the equivalent of one month’s payment for that service. For electricity, this can be over $100.

When it comes to deposits on utilities there are usually five options:

1. You may simply make a deposit with the utility company.

2. You may show that you have been a residential customer of the utility company within a specified amount of time (usually the last 24 months or so) and established a good payment record over the period in which the service was provided.

3. You may provide another customer of the utility company who is in good standing to guarantee payment of your bills up to a certain amount.
4. Some utility companies will allow you to get service without a deposit if you can show proof that you are a landowner within the county. However, if you are an unsatisfactory credit risk, you cannot establish your credit in this way and you must establish your credit in one of the three ways mentioned previously.

5. You may arrange a guarantee bond.

So, unless you can meet the utility provider's requirements, you should expect to pay upwards of $100 in deposits to set up your utilities.

Gas and electric companies typically provide two payment options. The first requires you to pay the full amount due each month. The other lets you pay an estimated amount each month, with any difference being reconciled at the end of the year. Some people find this more convenient, since gas and electricity bills can vary considerably during the summer and winter months.

Most utilities have programs which allow you to have the monthly bill automatically deducted from your bank account. You still receive a copy of the bill, but save the cost of a stamp to mail in the payment.

**Average Costs**

Some utilities have a fixed month-to-month cost. Local phone service, for example, is usually a flat fee and water and sewer generally do not change very much once your usage pattern is established.

In the case of local phone service, you can minimize the monthly charges by not adding services like voice mail (an automated answering service) or "caller ID" (which allows you to determine who has called you). One service you should consider investing extra money in is "touch tone" service. This service allows you to use a touch-tone phone on your phone line. Most phones you buy require touch-tone service, as do many businesses you may need to call who have automated attendants. The cost of touch-tone service is rarely more than a dollar or two a month.

On the other hand, some utilities can vary widely depending on a number of factors. Electricity is particularly prone to seasonal or monthly fluctuation.

Here are some things which cause fluctuations in electrical consumption over a year:

- Air conditioning
- A heat pump or "baseboard" electric heat
- Older homes or apartments that are not well insulated
- Electric clothes dryers
- Electric hot water heaters
- The season of the year

For instance, if all of your heating and cooling systems are electric, then your summer and winter power bills can be significantly higher, especially if the house is poorly insulated.
In general, gas is a more efficient way to heat air and water, but if you have poor insulation, the gains may be slight.

Knowing which utility controls the heating of the air and water in your house can help you determine how much higher your bills will be over the course of the year. To gain an accurate idea of what you will be paying, you can call your utility companies and ask what the average bill is over the past three years for your house or apartment.

Getting your major utility services connected is an essential part of moving into a new home. No matter whether you are renting or buying an apartment or home, getting utility service connected should be one of the first things you do after the lease or mortgage is signed.

**Telephone Service**

When you arrange for telephone service, you will have to choose a long distance carrier. The major carriers are AT&T, MCI, and Sprint. You can change the carrier later. After your service is installed, call each of the carriers and ask about their discount calling plans. You will need to be persistent in asking for the discount plan that offers you the greatest savings based on your calling patterns. Remember to mention that you will be making international calls.

The telephone company will ask you how you wish to be listed in the local telephone directory. Ask them to list your full last name but only the initial of your first name. You can also ask to have your number unlisted, but there will be an extra charge for this service.

The telephone company will also offer you a variety of optional services, such as Call Waiting and Caller ID. These services cost extra money and are not necessary. They will also offer a calling card, which you can use to bill calls to your phone number from any phone. The card is free, but calls billed to the card are charged higher rates. They may also offer a credit card with calling card features. Such credit cards often apply a small rebate of your purchases on the card as a credit on your telephone bill.

If your family back home has access to email, that is the least expensive way of keeping in touch. Otherwise, consider getting a fax machine, since international telephone charges can be expensive. It is still cheaper to call from the U.S. to a foreign country than vice versa, but the charges do add up. A basic plain paper fax machine will cost between $100 and $200.

You will also need to get a telephone. You can get inexpensive telephones from discount stores, department stores, pharmacies, and electronic stores. A basic telephone will cost between $15 and $45. Be sure to get one that provides touch-tone service.
You may wish to get a telephone answering machine, to record messages from callers when you are not home. Inexpensive answering machines can be purchased for under $50. When recording your greeting, do not provide your name or address. Instead, just say: "You have reached________. We are unable to answer your call at this time. Please leave your name, number, and a brief message at the tone."

Every telephone customer receives a copy of the local area telephone directory, and a new copy each time the directory is revised and updated. There are also telephone directories (also called telephone books) in public phone booths. There are usually two and sometimes three or more parts to the telephone directories. These parts are named for the color of their pages, the "white", "blue", and "yellow" pages.

The white pages are normally found in front of the telephone book. Listed here, alphabetically, are the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all subscribers, both individuals and businesses, in the telephone area – except those subscribers who do not wish to have such information listed. There is an extra charge for having an unlisted telephone number. Some large cities divide the white pages into two or more sections – one for residence listings, one for business listings, and some have general local area informational sections available.

The blue pages are normally used for various government agency listings – county, city, state, and federal governmental agency listings – in the area.

The yellow pages are normally found in the very back of the telephone book – or in large cities, it may be a separate book. The yellow pages list businesses, companies, organizations, services, etc., in alphabetical category order. For example, “Automobiles” will come before “Doctors” which will come before “Pharmacies”. There is usually an index of categories for the yellow pages. Under each category are listings of firms that provide different services. This is a highly informative and extremely useful means of finding a service or type of business when you do not have a telephone number or organizational name available.

Telephone numbers in the U.S. have seven digits, three digits first (called the prefix), then a dash and the final four digits. Preceding the number, in parentheses, is the area code. The area code serves a wide area, often the entire state. In the case of Florida, there are many area codes within the state that are broken down by regions.

The area code is only used with the seven-digit number when calling outside one area to another. For example, (561) 555-1212 is the telephone number for information in Palm Beach County, Florida. The (561) represents the area code. The next three numbers, 555, are the prefix, and 1212 are the last four numbers of the phone number.

Toll free numbers begin with an area code of 800, 888, or 877. Telephone numbers with an area code of 700 or 900 are for pay services and usually involve substantial per minute charges. You can ask the telephone company to block access to 700 and 900 numbers on your phone lines.

If you need someone's telephone number but do not have a telephone book, you can call Directory Assistance for the number. They will ask for the name and city of the listing, and tell
you the telephone number. They will charge you for each time you use this service. To reach
clocal directory assistance, dial 555-1212 or the three digits, 411, by themselves. To reach long
distance directory assistance, dial 1, the area code, and 555-1212. To find the toll free number
for a major company, call 1-800-555-1212; there is no charge for this call. There are also several
free searchable directories on the World Wide Web, such as 555-1212.com (http://www.555-
1212.com/), BigBook (http://www.bigbook.com/), Switchboard (http://www.switchboard.com/),
WhoWhere (http://www.whowhere.lycos.com/), Yahoo People Search (http://people.yahoo.com/),
and Zip2 (http://www.zip2.com/)

To make a collect call (reverse the charges), dial 0 followed by the area code and telephone
number. Tell the operator that you are making a collect call. You can also make collect calls by
calling 1-800-CALL-ATT (1-800-225-5288) or 1-800-COLLECT (1-800-265-5328).

**Internet Service**
The telephone company or any of a large number of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can
provide unlimited Internet access at modem speeds for fees of about $20 a month. Internet
service allows you to browse the web and to send and receive email. If your friends and family
back home has access to email, sending email can be a cost effective method of communicating.

Higher speed Internet access is becoming available in many major U.S. cities. There are two
main methods of providing high speed access, one using the telephone wiring (ADSL) and one
using cable television wiring (cable modems). The incoming bandwidth is at least twenty times
faster than modem speeds. Of the two, ADSL is a bit more secure and will ultimately provide
higher bandwidth.

**Renter's Insurance**
Many people obtain renter's insurance to insure their possessions against fire or theft. The
landlord is not responsible for your belongings if they are destroyed in a fire or stolen. Most
renters' insurance policies also protect you if someone is injured while in your apartment or if
you cause significant damage to the apartment. You can obtain a renter's insurance policy by
calling an insurance company listed in the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory. The cost
will be between $100 and $300 a year. Ask for replacement value coverage, so that the
insurance covers the cost of replacing the item, not just its depreciated value.

**Home Safety and Security**
If your apartment does not have a smoke detector, buy one and install it. If you have gas heat,
you may want to buy a carbon monoxide detector as well. Change the locks after moving in,
since you do not know who may have kept a copy of the old keys. You will need to give a copy
of the key to the landlord. Deadbolt locks are best, since they make your apartment less
attractive to thieves. Install window stops or locks on all the windows, especially if your
apartment is located on the first floor. You can get a 5% discount on your renter's insurance if
your apartment has a smoke detector and deadbolt locks.
K. Telephonic Communications

Until 1983, there was one telephone utility providing all U.S. telephone service. By court order, this large utility was broken up into seven regional companies. Afterwards, new long distance telephone companies entered the marketplace. As a result, there are now many choices to make when ordering telephone services.

For convenience and privacy, most international visitors prefer a private phone during their stay in the US. Remember that you will be responsible for the telephone bills.

When you decide to have a telephone installed or connected in your residence, ask and fully understand the procedures for arranging the service. There will be many choices to make – if you are confused or do not understand, ask for help in determining what service(s) best meet your needs.

Since the reorganization of telephone utility companies in the U.S., there are new companies, in addition to the local telephone company, that deal exclusively with long-distance services. These special long-distance services save money only if you make long-distance calls within the U.S. or abroad. Some of these systems do not allow direct international calls – so you must check with the company before you sign up for services.

Many local area establishments offer various prepaid "phone card" prices; it is important to "shop around" for the best deal for international calling. Prepaid phone cards are very similar to company calling cards except you pay "up-front" for a set number of calling minutes, rather than being billed for the usage.

It is important to write down emergency numbers (fire, police, doctor, paramedics), and work and home numbers. Always keep these numbers on your person and near your phone. Also, emergency numbers are given in the front part of the telephone book. Sometimes there are several districts for fire, police, and paramedic services – be sure you have the correct emergency numbers to serve you if you should ever need help.

Some people believe that if you dial "0" in an emergency, the operator will call for help. This is not always true. Often the telephone operator who processes your call is miles – sometimes many miles – away. In an emergency, you need local help, and usually, you need this help fast. You must have the correct telephone numbers readily available. Many cities and areas of the country offer "911" as an emergency number; however, this number should be used only in extreme emergencies.

There is a list of prefixes (area codes) that subscribers within the local calling area can dial without a separate charge in the front part of the telephone book. These charges are included in your monthly phone service fees. But if the phone call is out of the local area, it is a toll call and charges will be automatically recorded for the call. You can read about these differences in the front part of the telephone book.
There are several types of long distance telephone calls. You can find information on costs and procedures in the front part of the telephone directory. If you do not understand this information, ask the telephone operator or someone you know to explain it to you.

- **Direct Dial Call** – This is a call dialed directly, that is, without operator assistance. It is less expensive than most other types of long-distance calls. The cost of overseas calls differs with each long-distance carrier.

- **Prepaid Phone Cards** – Similar to a credit card, but the person purchases the card with so many minutes of calling time available. Prepaid phone cards come in various denominations, such as $5, $10, $20, and $100. A person can place calls with a prepaid phone card from any telephone. Be sure to shop around for the best calling rates for prepaid phone cards.

- **Person-to Person Call** – This is an operator-assisted call in which the operator connects you directly with the person with whom you wish to speak. If that particular person is not available, you do not pay for the call. If the person is available, charges begin when the operator determines the person is on the line. Person-to-person calls are expensive to place and expensive per minute of conversation, but if the person is difficult to reach, such a call may be worthwhile.

- **Collect Call** – A collect call is an operator-assisted call in which the charges are billed to the person who answers. If you place a collect call, the operator will ask your name and then will ask the person you are calling whether that person will "accept the charges," that is, allow the cost of the call to be put on his or her telephone bill.

- **Third-Party Call** – A third-party call is one made from a telephone other than your own where the operator must transfer the charges from the telephone you are using to your own telephone number. If, however, the telephone you are using is a pay phone rather than a personal telephone, the operator must verbally verify the charges. The operator will call your own phone number and someone will have to answer your phone and verbally accept the charges for the third-party call before you will be allowed to complete the call without paying by coin. The charges will then be billed to your home telephone number.

- **"800" "888" and "900" Numbers** – Telephone numbers with the area code 800 and 888 are toll-free to callers. As a courtesy, the businesses and providers pay the service fees for 800 and 888 numbers for customers. However, be careful with 900 numbers – there is a charge for calling these types of telephone numbers, and some of these 900 telephone numbers can be fraudulent in nature.
Long distance rates are affected by distance, time of day, type of call, length of the conversation, and the long-distance company you use. Compare information provided by the different companies regarding long-distance calls. Be sure to note times when rates are lowest; usually weekends, holidays, and the middle of the night are the best times to place long-distance calls. Telephone rates are listed in the telephone directory to major cities in the U.S. and some overseas locations.

**International Long Distance Calling**

Although the process may vary from country to country and from city to city within a country, there are generally two ways to make international calls. You can dial directly or use an operator. If you choose to dial directly, simply dial:

\[ 011 + \text{country code} + \text{city code} + \text{phone number} \]

For example, to call someone in Tokyo, Japan you would dial the following number:

\[ 011 + 81 + 3 + \text{XXXX-XXXX} \]

Note: The actual number of digits for each category can vary by country or city.

If you use an operator, dial:

\[ 01 + \text{country code} + \text{city code} + \text{phone number} \]

Be aware that operator assisted calls are generally much more expensive than calls dialed directly.

Remember that calls placed to Canada and the Caribbean are charged at international rates, even though it may seem that you are making a domestic long distance call by dialing 1 + the area code + the phone number. In other words, even though there is no country code to dial.

International rates can vary dramatically, based on the country called or the way you make the call. Generally, long distance calls are billed by the minute. In addition to offering "basic rates", telephone companies offer a variety of other ways to pay for international calls.

Calling plans, dial-arounds, pre-paid cards, and callback services often offer rates that are much lower than a company’s basic rates. In fact, even with the monthly fees associated with most discount calling plans, the cost of using these plans may be only a fraction of the basic rates.

When deciding how to make your call, you should compare features, including:

- Different day/night rates
- Minimum call lengths
- Range of monthly fees
- Weekday/weekend rates
- Connection fees
Unless you participate in a discount calling plan, or use a dial-around service, just picking up your phone and placing an international long distance call can be expensive. The difference between basic rates and discount calling plan rates is so great that even one relatively short call per month can be cheaper on a calling plan.

**Calling Plans**
A calling plan is a monthly agreement for service between you and your long distance carrier at a previously quoted rate, and usually includes a monthly fee. Whether you can benefit from a calling plan depends on your calling patterns. To determine whether a plan is right for you, first ask your carrier whether any of its international calling plans will lower your monthly phone bill, based on your calling history.

Next, get the facts. Find out if there are any flat rate fees associated with those plans (generally $3.00 to $8.00 per month). Ask whether the quoted rate applies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or only at certain times and days of the week (e.g., the calling plan rate applies only between 5 p.m. and 7 a.m., Monday - Friday).

Ask about taxes and other fees. Remember, if one plan does not benefit you or meet your international calling needs, keep shopping around for one that does. Also, the Internet is a good source to shop for a plan. Visit the Web sites of international long distance telephone service providers and compare their plans.

Operator-assisted calls, person-to-person, and collect calls can be made by dialing "0". You can generally find directions for placing international calls in front of the phone book, as well as many of the international country and city codes and rate charges. You should dial the operator if you:

- Need a country or city code not listed in the information on international direct dialing.
- Need help in completing a call.
- Have reached a wrong number or have a poor connection and wish a credit on the call.

**Pre-Paid Cards**
Pre-paid calling cards provide telephone time that you pay for before you make your calls. They may be purchased in a number of dollar or minute increments. Pre-paid calling cards contain a toll-free access telephone number and a personal identification number (PIN).

There are many advantages to pre-paid cards. First, pre-paid cards for international services generally offer discounted rates. In addition, they are sold at convenient places such as newsstands, post offices, and stores. Moreover, consumers who do not have residential long distance telephone service can use these cards. Some cards also have features such as speed dialing for frequently called numbers and activity reports for frequently called numbers.
Pre-paid cards sometimes have hidden costs. For example, some cards appear to charge by the minute, but also add a fee for each call. When choosing a pre-paid card, read the fine print on the card’s label.

Consumers need to be aware that many pre-paid cards contain expiration notices – for example: "This card expires on 12/31/02". Also, most pre-paid calling cards contain notices stating that the company issuing the calling card is not responsible for stolen or lost cards.

Call the company that produces the card to get information about all charges associated with international calling. Remember, because you pay in advance, you may lose money if you have problems when using these cards. Get all the information you can before purchasing these cards.

**Public Or "Pay" Phones**

These phones can be found at many locations in commercial areas. Directions for making calls are printed on the telephone. If you make long-distance calls from a pay phone and will be paying for the call yourself (rather than calling collect), be sure to have a large number of coins (quarters, dimes, nickels) ready to put into the coin slot when the operator tells you to do so. The most convenient and inexpensive way to use public/pay phones is to use a prepaid phone card.

Pay phones charge 25¢ to 35¢ for a one-minute local call. Charges for long distance calls are much higher. Most pay phones accept credit cards, either directly or by dialing a toll free number. For example, dial 1-800-CALL-ATT to charge a telephone call using AT&T long distance to your credit card. You may also purchase prepaid phone cards from many businesses, such as grocery stores and gas stations.

**Telegram**

To send a telegram or a telex message, call Western Union Telegraph Company by dialing the toll-free telephone number, (800) 325-6000. Tell the operator the name and address (including the country) of the person to whom you are sending the telegram. Then slowly repeat the message you want to send. You should also ask the operator to repeat the message back to you to make sure it was copied correctly. The number of words in the message and the distance it must be sent will determine the charges. Telegrams and telexes can be charged to your telephone number, or you can ask Western Union to charge your major credit card.

You can also use Western Union to send money, but the fees can be high. Call 1-800-225-5227 for more information.