

BEFORE YOU GO, YOU SHOULD KNOW

Volume 2: Where will you live?

One of the most important steps in preparing for your arrival at your host institution is having a clear plan of where you will live or a clear plan of the steps that you will take to find housing after you arrive. If you have not done so already, you must get in touch with your supervisor to find out what housing arrangements he or she has planned for you or if you are expected to find your own housing. You should also consult your Terms of Appointment for information on your accommodations. You should not be wondering whether or not you have housing before you get on the plane to come to the U.S.

Each FLTA will have a unique living situation that may range from dorm housing, a shared apartment or a room in the international house. Gather as much information as you can about your respective living situation before you start imagining what it's like. In the past, many FLTAs have been disappointed to find that when they arrived they were not ushered into a beautiful room with a view. They were expecting a mint on the pillow when, in fact, there was no pillow at all!

Determine your situation

- ◆ Is your supervisor arranging your housing?
- ◆ Do you need to find your own housing?

If your supervisor is arranging your housing/If you are arranging your own housing

Obtain as much information as you can about your living situation or your potential living situation from your supervisor and host institution resources.

- ◆ Whether you are to find housing now or when you arrive, we recommend you visit your host institution's housing department (to be found on the website). They should have helpful advice and links to apartment listings.
 - If there was an FLTA at your host institution the year before, he or she may be able to offer helpful advice.

Consider these questions

- ◆ Do you have a choice of where you will live?
- ◆ Will you be living on campus; in a dorm, an international house or will you be off campus in an apartment or shared house?
- ◆ Will you have roommates?
- ◆ How far away from campus will you live?
- ◆ If you are off campus, how will you get to campus? Walk, bus, bike?
- ◆ Has the supervisor signed a lease on your behalf?
- ◆ Will you pay utility bills?
- ◆ Is the apartment/room furnished?
- ◆ What is the neighborhood like?
- ◆ How will you do laundry?
- ◆ Will your accommodations be available during the school's winter and spring breaks?
- ◆ Will you need to make alternate housing arrangements or be especially prudent with your budget during your school's holidays?

Focus on the information your supervisor has provided for you and use it to begin preparing for your living conditions for the coming year. Many host institutions have limited options for housing and may not be able to make changes. Focus on the positive elements of your unique set up and ways you can make your new arrangements feel like home!

Important information about leases

Read your lease carefully! Whether you sign it or your supervisor signs it on your behalf, it's a binding legal agreement.

Consider these questions

- ◆ What are the dates included on your lease? Do they match the dates of your program? If not, can you negotiate so that it does?
 - If you are expected to pay rent for the full month of May, but your program ends half way through May, you should plan to make the necessary budgetary arrangements to be able to pay for the entire month.
- ◆ What are the penalties if you are interested in breaking the lease?
- ◆ Are you expected to pay directly? How often?
- ◆ Do you need to put down a security deposit?

Piece of Advice:

Give it a chance. Even if the housing situation is not what you initially expected, give it a few weeks to see if you can adapt. Try to make it work before seeking options to change. Remember, FLTAs are expected to be adaptable to unexpected situations and changing circumstances. Overcoming challenges will be how you spend significant amounts of time throughout the year but most especially during your first few weeks on campus.