



# Welcome to the University of Alabama at Birmingham, home of the UAB Blazers!

It is a great time to be in Birmingham. The population of the city center is increasing thanks to exciting new living and dining options in areas such as Parkside, the Loft District, and Lakeview, and we are proud of beautiful new green spaces such as Railroad Park, Rotary Trail, and Red Mountain Park. In 2022, Birmingham hosted the World Games which included 34 sports and 223 events! There is more to see and do in Birmingham than ever before, and our job at ISSS is to make sure that you have the time and peace of mind to enjoy every opportunity.

UAB was instrumental in Birmingham's urban renaissance and has helped the city transform from an industrial economy to one based largely on medical, legal, banking, and technical services. The international community plays a large and important role in the University's continued success and in Birmingham's international renown. We are glad to have you on campus!

Our dedicated staff has decades of experience advising international students and scholars on tax, immigration, and cultural issues. Please do not hesitate to drop by the international center or contact us.

International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) facilitates international exchange and understanding through multicultural programs and services. We are the principal administrative and advising office for all international students, scholars, staff, and clinical faculty. The role of ISSS is to expand and strengthen international ties between individuals and academic programs on campus and to encourage the exchange of ideas and information key to developing international awareness. Most importantly, ISSS advises individuals and academic departments on matters pertaining to federal rules and regulations affecting international scholars, including evaluating exchange program offer letters and funding, processing J-1 and H-1B immigration documentation, and providing orientation for newly arrived scholars.

All new international scholars face similar situations upon their arrival, including finding accommodation, making friends, and learning where things are. This guide has been prepared specially to help international scholars adjust to life in the US and contains information about services, policies, and programs at UAB. Please read it carefully and let us know if you have questions. We look forward to working with you!

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#### **BRIEF ALABAMA OVERVIEW**

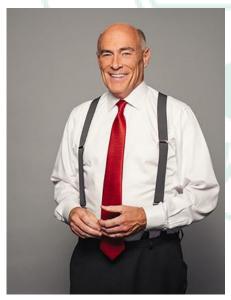
Alabama becomes a second home for people from all over the world as they experience the southern hospitality of our beautiful state. With a statewide population of over 4.8 million, our urban centers have a "big city" feel without the overwhelming pressure of living in a hectic environment. If you prefer the quiet of the country, that's available, too. Alabama has the comfortable pace of the south mixed with the cutting-edge science and technology of the twenty-first century.

Originally explored by the Spanish in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and later claimed by the French in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, southern Alabama reflects both French and Spanish influences in some of its traditions, architecture, and cuisine. For instance, Mobile has celebrated Mardi Gras since 1703. Southern Alabama is also a region of rare wetlands, sugar white beaches along the Gulf of Mexico, and biological restoration sites for sea turtles and other endangered species. Central Alabama is the home of Birmingham, with its major hospitals and research centers and historic sites from the Civil Rights era. Montgomery, Anniston, Selma, and Tuskegee share in this historic legacy.



Many state parks in central and north Alabama provide wonderful hiking, golfing, and camping options, giving our state the nickname "Alabama the Beautiful." In northern Alabama, Huntsville houses the NASA Space and Rocket Center; Florence hosts the WC Handy Jazz Festival; and nearby Tuscumbia preserves the birthplace of Helen Keller. Muscle Shoals is also famous for its recording studios.

# TIME, TEMPERATURE, & WEATHER



Birmingham is in the **Central Standard Time** zone. Average yearly temperatures range from 27° C/81° F in the summer to 9° C/33° F in the winter. Local meteorologist James Spann, weatherman for local TV Channel ABC 33/40, is something of a celebrity. He has his own app, blog, and 24/7 weather video stream. You can download the app from the app store on your mobile device or your TV (Roku, Amazon Fire, Apple TV, etc.) by searching Alabama Weather Network or you can check it out online at https://alabamaweathernetwork.com/.

When severe weather, like a strong thunderstorm, is headed toward the area, you may hear a siren in the downtown area. If this happens, simply move to a safe place indoors, and stay there until the weather has passed.

If you're listening to the radio, you might hear three quick tones followed by a bit of static. This just means the National Weather Service is jumping in to share an important weather update for certain areas and time periods.

The siren is also tested each month at around 10 AM on the first Wednesday. If you hear it at that time, it's usually just a routine test.



# **LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION**

Public transportation is not very well developed in Birmingham. Don't expect to find the same type of public transportation as in your home country, or in big cities like New York. Most Birmingham residents use their cars to get around.

# <u>AIRPORT</u>

Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport is about 20 minutes from downtown and offers direct flights to most major southern cities. For air travel outside the southeast, you will often need to make a connecting flight in Atlanta, or drive to Atlanta and fly directly from there (sometimes a less expensive option). The only international flights from Birmingham are to Mexico and the Caribbean. <a href="https://www.flybirmingham.com">www.flybirmingham.com</a>

# BUS

- Max (Metro Area Express) provides bus service throughout metro Birmingham and trolley car ("Dart") lines in the downtown area. For schedules and routes, visit <a href="www.bjcta.org">www.bjcta.org</a>. Adult bus tickets cost \$1.50.
   Carry exact change.
- o Greyhound provides bus service throughout the US and Canada. Call (205) 252-7190 or visit http://locations.greyhound.com/bus-stations/us/alabama/birmingham/bus-station-420156.
- Wanderu offers discounted tickets on multiple routes, including Birmingham to Atlanta www.wanderu.com

# CAR

- o **TAXI** (or "cab") companies operating in the Birmingham metro area include:
  - American Cab Company, (205) 322-2222
  - Yellow Cab Company, (205) 328-4444
- UBER and Lyft are smartphone app-based car service companies providing immediate pick-up from local, independent drivers. You must provide a credit card number to use these apps.
- Birmingham On-Demand This is a low-cost ride share service that offers transportation to different locations around the city. Please check the website for more information. <a href="https://maxtransit.org/ondemand/">https://maxtransit.org/ondemand/</a>

# **TRAIN**

**AMTRAK** provides daily passenger train service throughout the US. The train station is located at 1 19<sup>th</sup> Street North, Birmingham, AL 35203, 1-800-872-7245. Many Birminghamians take the Crescent train to New Orleans (known as the "Crescent City") for the weekend. For more information, visit <a href="www.amtrak.com/crescent-train">www.amtrak.com/crescent-train</a> and <a href="www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=am/am2Station/Station\_Page&code=BHM">www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=am/am2Station/Station\_Page&code=BHM</a>.



# **GETTING AROUND**

#### **BY CAR**

#### APPLYING FOR AN ALABAMA DRIVER LICENSE

It is illegal to drive in the US without carrying a state-issued photo identification known as a driver license. All international scholars who are lawfully maintaining their immigration status can apply for an Alabama driver license. You must provide a vehicle for the road test. If you do not have an International Driver License (IDL), you must find a licensed driver to drive you to the office. We highly recommend that you carry your IDL if you have one—Alabama authorities may not accept your home country driver license without an accompanying IDL.

In Birmingham, all non-US citizens must apply for an Alabama driver license at the Alabama Department of Public Safety located at:

908 Bankhead Highway West Birmingham, AL 35204 Phone: (205) 252-7445

http://dps.alabama.gov/home/DriverLicensePages/wfDLOffices.aspx

To obtain a driver's license, you must pass both a written test and a road test. You must provide a vehicle for the road test. Practice driving the vehicle in an empty parking lot prior to taking the road test so that you're comfortable driving before being tested. You must find a licensed driver who will drive you to the office and let you use the car for the road test. Proof of auto insurance is required.

During the road test, an examiner will inspect the car to see that it is fully functional (e.g., that the horn, lights, brakes, and turn signals work) and then will ride with you in your car for few minutes to ensure that your vehicle is in good condition, you understand how the car works, and you obey traffic rules. The examiner will also ask you to perform basic driving maneuvers.

The written and road tests are offered Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can schedule an appointment here: <a href="https://www.schedulealdl.com/SelfScheduler/Default.aspx">www.schedulealdl.com/SelfScheduler/Default.aspx</a>, or try your luck and show up as early as possible. Tests are administered on a first come, first serve basis. A study guide is available here: <a href="http://dps.alabama.gov/documents/manuals/driverlicensemanual.pdf">https://dps.alabama.gov/documents/manuals/driverlicensemanual.pdf</a>.

Bring the following documents with you to the Bankhead office to apply for the Alabama driver license:

- Valid passport with J-1 or J-2 visa
- Most recent I-94 card (print from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/consent.html)
- Social Security Card (or tax form W-2 containing your SSN) [or "denial letter" from the Social Security Administration stating non-eligibility if you are unemployed (see below)]
- Current, signed Form DS-2019
- Employment Authorization Document (ONLY for J-2s with an EAD—the license expiration date will be based upon your EAD)
- \$5 test or transfer fee (credit/debit card or cash only)
- Credit/debit card or cash for driver license fee (currently \$36.25)

For more information, see <a href="https://www.alea.gov/dps/driver-license">https://www.alea.gov/dps/driver-license</a> - look on the right side for the list of required documents.



# **BY CAR (CONTINUED)**

Be aware that many local government offices are severely understaffed. While this is no excuse, you may encounter stressed, impatient, or even rude employees who do not display sensitivity toward other cultures. Please remain patient and calm and try not to take such behavior personally.

If you do not have—or are ineligible to obtain—a Social Security Card (for instance, if you are J-1 who is not receiving any financial support from UAB or are a J-2 dependent who is not employed), you **must request a "denial letter"** from the local Social Security Administration office, located at 1200 Reverend Abraham Woods, Jr. Boulevard, Birmingham, AL 35285. (You should drive or bike there; it is too far to walk from the UAB campus.) The office is open from 9:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday, except holidays. The denial letter should state that you are ineligible for an SSN. Present the denial letter along with the above documents at the Bankhead Highway office.

If you do not receive your license after 30 days, call the Driver License Division at (334) 242-4400.

# **IMPORTANT**

A driver license cannot be renewed until within 30 days of its expiration date. To apply for or renew a driver license, you must have at least 160 days (not including grace periods) left in your immigration status as reflected by the program end date on your Form DS-2019.

# **BUYING A CAR**

#### Buying from a car dealership:

- You may buy a new car or used car from a car dealership. Some dealerships have a single "make" (brand) focus, such as Toyota or Honda, while others sell multiple makes and models.
- Used cars available for purchase at a dealership are trade-ins: someone sold their old car to the dealership and then bought a new car from the dealership (gaining the trade-in value).
- Dealership-owned cars may be more expensive than cars purchased from an individual.
- The "sticker" price is the price literally stuck to the windshield of the car. Never pay the sticker price! You can always negotiate the price of the car lower.
- A used car salesman is a running joke in American culture. Do not be scammed or pressured by sales tactics. Take
  your time, ask all the questions you want, and negotiate the best possible price. Do not opt in to "add-ons." These
  are likely unnecessary features that will raise the price of the vehicle.

#### Buying from an individual:

- People will advertise their car for sale online (such as at www.craigslist.com), by taping flyers to telephone poles, or by posting on bulletin boards throughout campus.
- Beware: not all advertisements are legitimate, so use caution. If the offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is. The best advice is to walk away from such ads.
- Check the car's value on Kelley Blue Book (www.kbb.com) or www.truecar.com to see if the advertised price is fair.
- Ask the seller for a CarFax report (<u>www.carfax.com</u>). If the seller refuses to provide one, ask for the car's VIN number and look it up online yourself. CarFax is <u>not</u> free, however it will provide information on the previous owner and reported car accidents.



# **BY CAR (CONTINUED)**

# Before agreeing to purchase a car:

- Visually inspect the car. If you are not sure whether the car is in good condition, ask the owner to meet you at a mechanic shop and ask a mechanic to inspect the vehicle for you. Specifically look for:
  - Leaks Look for dark stains or puddles under the car indicating that oil or brake fluid is leaking.
  - Body Look for any type of rust or "bubbling" under the car's paint. Check the wheel wells, door edges, and trunk floor and lid. Bring a small magnet and try attaching it to different exterior surfaces. If it does not stick, the car may have been repaired with temporary plastic parts, possibly after an accident.
  - Steering Before turning on the ignition, unlock and turn the steering wheel. There should not be a lot of motion or "play." When driving, the steering column should not vibrate.
  - Engine and Transmission The car should start and accelerate smoothly. If there is any bucking, skipping, hesitation, or noise, the car will probably need expensive repairs. Gears should shift smoothly and quietly.
  - Tires Bald tires, or multiple brands of tires, on a car whose odometer reads only 10,000 miles could mean that the odometer has been "rolled back" or disconnected. Check for uneven tire wear indicating an accident or alignment problem. Examine the trunk and spare tire equipment. Make sure all the necessary parts of the jack are there and that there are no water leaks in the trunk.
  - Suspension Push and pull the top of each front tire. If it moves or makes a noise, the bearings or suspension joints could be badly worn. Push down with your body weight on each fender and make the car bounce up and down a few times. Then give the car one more downward push and release it; the car should bounce back up and stop moving. If the car does not level off and continues to bounce, it may need repairs or new shock absorbers.
  - Interior Check window controls, seat belts, seat adjusters, warning lights, wipers, washers, radio, heater, and air conditioner. Check the seats for comfort, broken springs, and torn seat covers. Have a friend stand in front of and behind the car while you turn on the headlights, turn signals, parking lights, and brake lights. Look at the rubber pedal pads; if they are greatly worn or new, but the car has low mileage, ask questions. Check along window seams for water leaks.
  - Alignment Drive straight, through a puddle if possible, with a friend standing behind the car. The front
    and rear wheels should follow each other in a straight line. If the car moves even slightly to one side, then
    it was probably in an accident and has a bent frame. This is very expensive to repair. Do not buy the car!
  - o Brakes Drive the car at 45 mph on a quiet road and apply the brakes firmly without locking them. Do this three times. The car should come to a quick stop without swerving, and the brakes should not vibrate or grab. When you stop the car completely, push the brake pedal down. It should stop well above the floor. If it goes down close to the floor or feels spongy, there may be a brake fluid leak or problems with the master cylinder. These repairs can be very expensive.
  - Oil Use After the engine has warmed up, drive the car at highway speed and take your foot off the gas
    pedal for a few seconds. Then, press the gas pedal down hard for two seconds and have a friend look for
    exhaust smoke. Blue smoke means the car is burning oil. Black smoke means the fuel system may need a
    minor adjustment.
- Take the car on a test drive.
  - Check the odometer. Unscrupulous sellers will try to roll back the mileage on a car to make it seem younger or have less wear and tear on it than it truly does.
- Ask if the car has ever been in an accident.



# **BY CAR (CONTINUED)**

• Inquire about the car's title (record or chain of ownership). If the car has a "salvaged" title, it was in an accident and deemed a total loss by an insurance company. Cars with salvaged titles are difficult to insure in Alabama, and proof of auto insurance is required by law.



Do <u>NOT</u> provide any type of payment or deposit to see and/or test drive a vehicle! Pay for the vehicle only when you take possession of it.

<u>AUTO INSURANCE</u> - Alabama law requires all drivers to carry liability insurance to help pay for any damage or injury you cause to others in a car accident. Your policy must cover at least \$25,000 for bodily injury or death per person or \$50,000 total for bodily injury or death per accident. More information is available <u>HERE</u>.



If you are arrested for <u>Driving Under the Influence (DUI)</u> of drugs and/or alcohol, <u>YOUR VISA CAN BE REVOKED</u>. You may not be immediately notified of the revocation and may find out only after you travel abroad and try to re-enter the US.

Please do NOT endanger your life or your immigration status by participating in this illegal activity. Call a friend, a taxi, or use Uber or Lyft to find a ride home.



#### BY BICYCLE

Cycling is becoming an increasingly popular pastime and mode of transportation in Birmingham. Exercise caution when biking in the downtown area and stay within marked bike lanes. Biking on sidewalks is not allowed.

You will find ads for used bikes in the classified advertising section. See the *UAB Reporter*, *Kaleidoscope*, or *Thrifty Nickel* (<a href="http://birmingham.thriftynickel.com/">http://birmingham.thriftynickel.com/</a>). Used bikes are also sold at garage/yard sales, which are advertised by yard signs on street corners, flyers taped to telephone poles, and at <a href="http://classifieds.al.com/">http://classifieds.al.com/</a>.

You can also look into Veo scooters <a href="https://www.birminghamal.gov/transportation/shared-micromobility/">https://www.birminghamal.gov/transportation/shared-micromobility/</a>. To rent a bike or scooter, simply download either app on your smartphone and create an account to get started. It is \$1 to unlock then \$0.33 per minute. If you can't borrow a bike or buy one from a friend or colleague, the following businesses have a great selection:

Bob's Bikes 1944 28 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South Homewood, AL 35209 www.bobs-bikes.com  Cahaba Cycles (multiple locations, new and use 1724 27 <sup>th</sup> Court South St Homewood, AL 35209 http://cahabacycles.com/	ed)
Wal-Mart Supercenter Redemptive Cycles	
209 Lakeshore Pkwy 1305 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue North	
Homewood, AL 35209 Birmingham, AL 35205	
<u>www.redemptivecycles.com/</u>	

Birmingham Ride Share Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/bhamridefinder/

Redemptive offers weekly rides every Thursday at 6:00 p.m., rain or shine. <u>www.redemptivecycles.com/group-</u>ride-calendar

**AVOID THEFT!!** Locks are available at all bike shops and at department stores. UAB Police advise buying a lock that cannot be cut with bolt cutters and strongly suggest keeping your bicycle inside your house or apartment when you are home.

#### **Rotary Trail**

Birmingham's Rotary Club reclaimed a stretch of abandoned railroad track and opened a half-mile walking and biking trail. Look for the landmark "Rotary Trail in the Magic City" sign on 20<sup>th</sup> Street at the intersection of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South. www.traillink.com/trail/rotary-trail.aspx





# FINDING ACCOMMODATIONS

Unfortunately, **UAB does not provide on-campus housing for international scholars**. You must do some research and find a place to live. Most international scholars rent an apartment or house. A rental agreement is called a lease. Some leases are month-to-month (meaning you can leave after any given month, with no obligation to keep renting a particular dwelling for any specific length of time), some are for 6 or 9 months, and some are for a year or two. **Consider how long you want to live in a certain place before signing a longer lease.** Some rental companies will also allow you to move in or out only in certain months. Since this is a university campus, many companies will want you to start your lease in August or early September (when classes start) and move out the following July (after classes end). You may also have to pay a security deposit (usually equal to one month's rent) up front—the rental company will hold this money for repairs in the event you damage the apartment.

When visiting an apartment complex or rental house, ask the agent the following questions so that you can make the best decision on where to live, and for how long.

- How much is the monthly rent, and on what day is it due?
- Can I pay rent online, or do I need to bring a check?
- Does the monthly rent include any utilities (e.g., water, electricity, gas, cable/satellite TV, internet)? If so, which ones?
- Do you require a security deposit? If so, is the security deposit refundable at the end of the lease?
- How long are your rental terms (month-to-month, 6 months, one year)?
- What will I owe if I must break my lease and leave the apartment before the end of the agreement?
- Does the lease renew automatically? If so, when will I be notified of any increase in rent?
- How much notice do you require if I plan to move out when the lease ends?
- Can I sublet (find another, temporary tenant whose name is not on the lease) the apartment/house if I leave the area for a brief period or the summer? If yes, what is the procedure?
- Are there laundry facilities? If not, where is the nearest laundromat (a public/community laundry facility)?
- Do you offer furnished apartments?
- Where is the nearest grocery store?
- Can I hang wall decorations with nails? (Some landlords do not allow this, or will deduct a certain amount from your security deposit to repair nail holes.)
- If parking is available, is it in a garage, parking lot, or street? Is the parking area secured?
- Is parking covered in the rent, or is there an extra charge?
- Are there an assigned number of parking spaces per unit?
- Are pets allowed? Is there a maximum size? Weight? Height? Type?
- Is there a pet deposit? How much is it? Is it refundable?
- Do you have childcare facilities? If so, what does it cost?
- Where is the nearest school or daycare?
- Where is the nearest playground or park?



# FINDING ACCOMMODATIONS (CONTINUED)

When looking for an apartment or house, find a place where you will be comfortable for the duration of your time renting. You will enter a formal agreement, called a lease, with a landlord (owner or manager of the apartment). A lease is a contract under which a landlord allows you (a tenant) temporary use of a dwelling in return for monthly payments (rent). A lease is a legally binding obligation. Make sure you feel safe, happy, and comfortable where you plan to live. If you make a bad decision and want to move before the end of the lease, you may have to pay the remaining months' rent to get out of your lease.

# Several groups on Facebook that can help:

- ISSS page https://www.facebook.com/UabISSS/
- UAB International page <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/uabinternationals/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/uabinternationals/</a>

Apartments and houses are for rent all over downtown and Southside. Below are some starting points for finding rental accommodation. ISSS does not endorse or recommend any rental company or apartment complex.

- www.rentmonster.net
- www.20midtown.com
- www.al.com
- www.apartmentfinder.com
- www.apartments.com
- https://bham.craigslist.org
- www.birmingham-apartment.com
- www.crowneontenth.com
- www.H2realestate.com
- www.uab.edu/studentmedia/kaleidoscope
- www.liveonhighland.com

- http://livewithdwell.com
- www.philbostanyrealty.com
- www.rent.com
- www.selectmyspace.com
- www.theplaceapts.com (University Place Apartments)
- http://uhbirmingham.com/ (University House)
- www.universityflats.net
- www.zillow.com/birmingham-al/apartments/

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in accommodation based on race, color, religion, sex, gender, national origin, disability, and family status.

Notify ISSS immediately if you experience discrimination during your housing search.



#### **DIFFERENT NEIGHBORHOODS IN BIRMINGHAM**

Several neighborhoods are close to UAB campus, with a blend of historic homes and newly constructed flats. They offer residents an urban feel and tend to be young professional and student oriented. A few international grocery markets are accessible. There are a lot of bars, restaurants, coffee shops, and parks within walking or cycling distance:

- Glen Iris
- Five Points South
- Parkside

- Highland Park
- Forest Park
- Loft District

Other neighborhoods are further away and require a car. They offer a suburban feel and tend to be more family oriented. Public schools in these areas are well-rated:

- Vestavia Hills
- Mountain Brook

Hoover

#### TIPS FOR FINDING A ROOMMATE

Finding someone to share your apartment or house is not only a good idea financially (you can split the rent!) but is also an easy way to meet new people, avoid loneliness, and share experiences. However, there are many cultural and lifestyle considerations to think about before asking a stranger to share your home. Before beginning a roommate search, describe the kind of person you would want to find in your home after a long day in the lab, at the library, or in lectures. Then describe the kind of person you would <u>not</u> want to find in your home.

Once you have an idea of your perfect roommate, post an ad on the department bulletin board, in the campus newspaper, on websites such as <a href="www.craigslist.com">www.craigslist.com</a> or <a href="www.roommates.com">www.roommates.com</a>, and on social media. Ask your friends and colleagues if they know anyone looking to share an apartment or house.

Before deciding who to live with, interview each potential roommate thoroughly. Discuss:

- Sleep habits: are you a night person or a morning person? Different schedules could negatively affect your sleep and studies.
- Visitors: especially during the week and on days when you have a morning class. This includes girlfriends/boyfriends and possible "sleepovers."
- Chores: Who will take out the trash? Are you a neat freak? Who will clean the bathroom?
- Personal belongings: Will everyone have use of the furniture in common areas? Who has a TV? Does someone
  have a special chair they don't want anyone else to sit in? Would you prefer your roommate and guests to remove
  their shoes when in your home?
- Smoking: If your apartment or house does not have a porch, deck, or patio, will you allow smoking in the house?
   Some leases will contain a no-smoking policy.
- Pets: number? Kind? Size? Does your house/complex allow pets?
- "Significant others" (boyfriend/girlfriend): If the potential roommate is in a relationship, clarify whether their partner will be moving in, too, and if so, what part of the rent they will pay.
- Allergies: Nuts? Dust mites? Dogs? Seafood? Your favorite spice? Citrus? Perfume?
- Religious dietary restrictions: Vegetarian? Kosher? Halaal? Alcohol? Can everyone agree on food storage and preparation and be respectful of each other's needs?



# TIPS FOR FINDING A ROOMMATE (CONTINUED)

Consider asking a potential roommate for the contact information of their previous landlords and/or employers, or for a list of personal references. Contact the listed individuals to learn more about the potential roommate, such as why their previous lease/employment ended, were any complaints received about the potential roommate, and whether they paid rent on time and in the full amount.

Discuss the amount of rent, the monthly due date, and any required security deposit before your roommate moves in. Remember: your best friend may not always be your best roommate! Living with someone can be very different from hanging out with them on weekends or chatting in the breakroom.

#### **YOUR RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

Every time you move, you <u>MUST</u> update your address by email the ISSS office within 10 days. ISSS must update your residential address in SEVIS (the government database where your DS-2019 is "housed") **within 10 days** of the change.

If you obtain an Alabama driver's license, you also must update your address with the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) using Form DL-99. Mail it to the address listed on the form:

www.alea.gov/Documents/Forms/AELA-ChangeOfAddressFillable(DL99).pdf.

#### **RENTER'S INSURANCE**

Many companies offer renter's insurance to students. For example, National Student Services, Inc. (<a href="www.nssi.com">www.nssi.com</a>) provides property insurance to students living in residence halls, off-campus apartments, and houses. Their Student Personal Property Plan covers clothing, textbooks, musical instruments, computers, furniture, appliances, technology, cameras and lenses, etc. Choose an amount of coverage that will allow you to replace all your most important items in the event of loss. ISSS does not endorse or recommend any rental insurance policy.

What would you do if all your personal possessions - laptop, TV, Xbox, cell phone, calculator, textbooks, clothing - were stolen or destroyed in a flood, fire, or burglary?

We hope you never experience such a loss, but just in case...

#### **GET RENTER'S INSURANCE!**



# **LOCAL SCHOOLS**

Choosing the right school in the Birmingham area requires carefully weighing factors like academics, community, extracurricular opportunities, and cost. Public schools in Birmingham, including those in the Birmingham City Schools district, serve a wide range of students and offer accessible education at no tuition cost. However, one important consideration is that students are generally required to attend the public school for which they are zoned based on their home address. This means that families cannot freely select a different public school within the district. As a result, the quality,



programs, and environment of your assigned school can be a major factor when deciding where to live. Some families explore suburban districts like Hoover, Vestavia Hills, or Homewood, where schools are often higher-rated, though housing costs may be higher to access those zones.

Birmingham also offers a broad range of private schools, giving families flexibility to choose based on academic rigor, religious affiliation, or specific programs. Well-regarded options include The Altamont School and Indian Springs School, known for strong academics and college-preparatory programs, as well as faith-based schools like Briarwood Christian School and Advent Episcopal School, which focus on character development alongside academics. While private schools come with tuition costs—averaging around \$11,500 in the area—they allow parents to select the exact school that best fits their child's needs, rather than being restricted by zoning.

Ultimately, deciding between public and private education in Birmingham comes down to priorities and resources. Public schools provide accessibility and community integration but are tied to zoning, meaning your home address largely determines which school your child will attend. Private schools offer more choice, smaller class sizes, and tailored programming but require financial investment. Families benefit from visiting schools, speaking with administrators and other parents, and comparing academic outcomes, extracurricular opportunities, and overall fit to ensure they make the best decision for their child's growth and success.

There is a bus system for public schools that will pick up and take home your children every day. Private schools often do not provide transportation to and from school.

US schools get the privilege of enjoying something that we call "Spring Break." All public and private schools and universities will get a Spring Break. This is a week-long vacation usually during the month of March when schools shut down and students get a break from classes. The dates vary from school to school. Learn when your child's Spring Break is so that you can plan accordingly.

Follow these links to research the school rankings in Birmingham to choose the best option for your child:

- https://reportcard.alsde.edu/SelectSchool.aspx
- https://www.niche.com/k12/rankings/public-school-districts/best-overall/m/birmingham-metro-area/
- https://www.schooldigger.com/go/AL/city/Birmingham/search.aspx



# **EMPLOYMENT FOR J-2 SPOUSES**

J-2 dependents may obtain work authorization (commonly called an "EAD") by filing an application with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). They must demonstrate that the income derived from their employment will be "used to support the family's customary recreational and cultural activities and related travel." J-2 income <u>cannot</u> be used to support the primary J-1 student or scholar.

# **ITIN OR SSN?**

Depending on the type of financial support you receive while in the US, you will need to apply for one of two tax numbers: an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) or a Social Security Number (SSN).

To receive any type of scholarship/fellowship (trainee) payments from UAB, you will need an ITIN. If you have a graduate, research, or teaching assistantship, or other on-campus employment not classified as traineeship or fellowship, you should apply for an SSN. If you are not sure how your position is classified, please verify this with your department. (If you already have an SSN or are in the process of obtaining one, you are ineligible for an ITIN.) Regardless of which number you need, you must make an appointment with the ISSS Non-Resident Alien (NRA) Tax Analyst, who will assist you in completing the proper forms to make sure you can receive your payments and comply with US federal and state tax regulations governing international scholars.

If you need an ITIN, bring the following documentation to your appointment:

- Original passport, visa, Form I-94 (print from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94), and Form DS-2019
- Copies of biographical page and expiration date page of passport
- Social Security denial letter (must be obtained at the Social Security Administration office located at 1200 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Birmingham AL 35285)
- Copy of your departmental offer letter from UAB.

More information is available here: www.irs.gov/uac/about-form-w7.

If you need an SSN, bring the following documentation to your appointment:

- Form SS-5, Application for Social Security Number (www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf)
- Social Security On-Campus Employer Verification Form (your employer must complete page 1 <u>before</u> ISSS completes page 2)
- Original passport, visa, Form I-94 (print from https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94), and Form DS-2019
- Copies of biographical page and expiration date page of passport.

After meeting with the ISSS Non-Resident Tax Specialist, take all the above documents to the Social Security Administration office located at 1200 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.



# **TAXES**

There is no flat-rate tax system in the US. All income and scholarship proceeds are taxed according to tables based on total annual income for the previous tax year. Some of the taxes you will see deducted from your paycheck may include federal income tax, FICA taxes, Alabama tax, and local taxes.

Each January or February, you will receive a tax form from UAB necessary to begin preparing to file your tax returns with the federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Alabama Department of Revenue. Tax returns for the year ending December 31, 2022 are due on Monday, April 15, 2023. See the ISSS Non-Resident Tax Specialist for assistance in completing the proper forms to make sure you can receive your payments and comply with US federal and state tax regulations governing international students and scholars. Also read the weekly *Globetrotter* e-newsletter from ISSS for announcements about free tax preparation assistance.

# **IMMIGRATION MATTERS**

# **IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS**

Your passport, visa, Form I-94, and DS-2019 are the four most important documents for a successful stay in the US. If you lose any of these documents, contact ISSS immediately.

See table below:

<u>Visa:</u> This stamp is located inside your passport and allows you only to <u>enter</u> the US. (Do not confuse this with Form DS-2019, which allows you to <u>stay</u> in the US.) Don't worry if your visa expires after you enter the US; you must renew it only if you plan to travel outside the US and re-enter the US.

Visas have a specific number of entries indicated, such as 1, 2, or M. If your visa is stamped 1, you may enter the US only once before having to apply for a new visa. If your visa is stamped 2, you have only one entry remaining after you enter the US the first time. "M" stands for multiple (you can re-enter the US multiple times by presenting a recently endorsed DS-2019).





# **IMMIGRATION MATTERS (CONTINUED)**

<u>Passport:</u> Your passport must be valid during your stay in the US. Six months prior to its expiration, apply for an extension through your embassy. If your country does not have an embassy in the US, you must travel home to renew your passport. Your passport is your main form of identification in the US and should be always kept with you. It is a violation of your immigration status to remain in the US with an expired passport.



<u>I-94 Arrival Departure Record</u>: This is your entry/departure record with US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). It confirms your entrance date and states how long you are allowed to remain in the US. The I-94 should indicate that you have been admitted in J visa status for "duration of status" (D/S). Duration of status is indicated by the Program End Date on your DS-2019. Please print a copy of your I-94 from

https://i94.cpb.dhs.gov/I94/request.html and provide it to ISSS. If you misplace or lose your I-94, simply print it again.



#### Most Recent I-94

Admission (I-94) Record Number : Most Recent Date of Entry: 2018 July 10

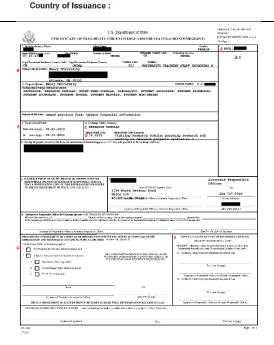
Class of Admission : J1 Admit Until Date : D/S

Details provided on the I-94 Information form:

Last/Surname :
First (Given) Name :
Birth Date :
Passport Number :

<u>Form DS-2019</u>: This document is your permission to stay in the US as a student or scholar exchange visitor. You are allowed to stay in the US for 30 days after the Program End Date shown on your Form DS-2019.

If you plan to travel outside the US, ISSS must endorse page 1 of the DS-2019 so that you will be allowed to re-enter the US. Alert ISSS at least 2-3 weeks before your planned departure to learn about any necessary requirements for travel or updates in immigration issues.





# **IMMIGRATION MATTERS (CONTINUED)**

# **MAINTAINING VALID NON-IMMIGRANT STATUS**

Maintaining status means that you are lawfully present in the US and eligible for all benefits available to J-1 scholars. Here are few easy steps to maintain your J-1 status.

- 1. Always keep your passport valid.
- 2. Attend the school you are authorized to attend or participate in the research program identified in your departmental offer letter. If you entered the US on a Form DS-2019 issued by UAB, you <u>must check in with ISSS</u> before UAB can transfer your SEVIS record to another institution.
- 3. Notify ISSS if you are unable to complete your program by the Program End Date specified on your Form DS-2019. You must obtain an extension within 30 days before the date of expiration.
- 4. Notify ISSS if you intend to transfer to another institution.
- 5. Update your physical residential address with ISSS within 10 days of moving. Do not keep a mailing address or PO Box at UAB.

# INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND VISA RENEWAL

#### INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Please consult ISSS at least 2-3 weeks before you make international travel arrangements. Depending on whether you have a visa stamp valid for re-entry, ISSS may need to issue you a new Form DS-2019. You will need the following documents to re-enter the US after international travel:

- Form DS-2019 with travel signature
- Passport
- Valid visa stamp
- Most recent offer letter to prove a continuous appointment with UAB.

# **RENEWING YOUR VISA**

Before traveling internationally and re-entering the US, most J-1 exchange scholars whose visas have expired will need to return home and apply for a new visa at the US embassy or consulate in their home country. Before leaving the US, make an appointment online via the embassy/consulate website. Bring your valid Form DS-2019, valid passport, financial support documentation, and all additional documents advised by the embassy/consulate website.

If there is not a US embassy/consulate in your home country, consult the <u>US Department of State website</u> to obtain information about locations and procedures for renewal.

Citizens of certain countries can renew their visa in Canada or Mexico. Ask ISSS if you are eligible. You will need all documents listed for travel, as well as a Canadian or Mexican visa to go there. If your visa is denied in Canada or Mexico, you must return directly to your home country (not back to the US).

You may be subject to a background check due to sensitive areas of research, which can delay visa processing time and further delay your return to the US. It is important to notify both your faculty advisor and your employer about your intention to travel and possible delays.



#### **HEALTH**

# **IMMUNIZATIONS**

UAB requires all J-1 exchange scholars - who will be participating in non-clinical research activities (including those involving working with mice or other lab animals) - to have proof of certain immunizations (Measles, Mumps, Rubella; Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Varicella, 2 Tuberculin Skin tests or 1 TB blood test; and, if you are 21 years old or younger, Meningitis).

Please complete the <u>Employee Health Enrollment</u> form sent to you by ISSS and coordinate with Employee Health. Your immunization records are protected and cannot be received by everybody. **Be sure to follow the instructions on the first page of the enrollment form.** 

# **HEALTH INSURANCE**

The US does not have a universal free healthcare system. **J-1 visa holders** <u>and</u> **J-2 dependents are required by federal law to maintain insurance at all times.** Specifically, federal regulations require Js to obtain <u>minimum</u> <u>coverage</u> of

- Medical benefits of at least \$100,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000
- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of exchange visitors to their home country in the amount of \$50,000
- Deductibles cannot exceed \$500 per accident or illness.

The UAB School of Dentistry offers a dental insurance plan (available only in the fall term), or you can purchase an independent policy. VIVA insurance does not cover dental expenses.

## **PHARMACIES**

In the US, many medicines cannot be purchased without a doctor's recommendation, known as a prescription. Pharmacies (also known as drugstores) are the only resource licensed to sell prescription medicines. Bring your prescription from a doctor to any local pharmacy or to UAB Student Health & Wellness. Pharmacies also sell cosmetics, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, magazines, non-prescription medicines (known as "over-the-counter" medicines for common illnesses such as a cold, cough, fever, and allergies), candy, drinks, and snacks. There are many pharmacies close to UAB's campus.

Pharmacy	Address	Phone
Birmingham Apothecary	1032 20 <sup>th</sup> Street South	(205) 251-4248
CVS	1431 11 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South	(205) 933-8374
<b>Harbin Discount Pharmacy</b>	521 Richard Arrington Blvd. South	(205) 323-2474
Walgreens	3020 Clairmont Avenue South	(205) 323-6823
	101 Green Springs Highway	(205) 942-3668
		(This location is open 24 hours a
		day)



# **LAUNDROMATS**

Laundromats are public laundry facilities with multiple washers and dryers, usually operated by coins. Bring a roll of quarters.

Laundromat Address

Wash & Go Coin Laundry	500 Palisades Boulevard	
	www.washngoalabama.com	
University Laundromat	1169 11 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South	
Aladdin Cleaners & Laundry	1632 Montclair Road, Suite 1200	
	2819 Cahaba Road <a href="http://aladdincleaner.com/">http://aladdincleaner.com/</a>	
Glen Iris Laundry	Corner of 11 <sup>th</sup> Place and 16 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	

#### **BANKS**

Banks offer a variety of professional services, including checking and savings accounts, certificates of deposit (CDs), automatic teller machines (ATMs), electronic banking, credit and debit cards, investment services, and estate planning. When selecting a bank, it is important to determine which of these services are needed. Shop around for the best interest rates and conditions of banking. Contact a bank's Newcomer Services department to determine which services are available. Make sure you understand all terms and agreements and receive adequate instructions on how to use the banking services.

You must provide certain information to a bank to open an account: photo identification (such as your passport), personal data, a mailing address, and money to deposit into the account. Banks may also request a Social Security Number (SSN). It is advisable to obtain an SSN as soon as possible to open a bank account. Banks will accept an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) if you are ineligible for an SSN.

# **Checking Account**

A checking account safeguards money while allowing for easy payment of expenses. Some banks require customers to maintain a minimum amount of funds in a checking account, and some charge monthly fees for the maintenance of your account. You withdraw and deposit cash into your checking account by inserting the ATM card provided by your bank into an ATM and entering your personal identification number (PIN). If you write a check or withdraw more money than is available in your account, you will be charged an overdraft fee. When writing checks, leave no areas blank.

# **Savings Account**

A savings account is used to safeguard money for a prolonged period. A low rate of interest is paid on the balance. Certificates of Deposit (CDs) earn higher interest rates than savings accounts, but you cannot access your money for a specific period of time. The longer the money is left in the CD, the higher interest it pays.



# **BANKS**

# **NOW Accounts**

Many banks offer NOW (notice of withdrawal) accounts that combine the features of checking and savings accounts. With a NOW account, the individual may write a certain number of checks each month; such accounts can be very handy for students who maintain a relatively high balance and write relatively few checks.

# **Credit Cards**

Many banks offer a credit card with a charging limit. Credit cards are very convenient, but individuals should use them with caution. The amount charged to the card must be repaid, often at a high interest rate. Credit cards are best reserved for emergencies.

# **Handling Money Safely**

Do not keep large sums of cash in your pockets, in your backpack or purse, or at home. Report a lost or stolen credit or debit card to your bank immediately so that no fraudulent charges will be put on your card.

#### **FOOD**

Birmingham's food scene is a vibrant blend of deep-rooted Southern tradition and bold, modern innovation. Long known for its barbecue culture and classic Southern comfort dishes, the city has elevated these staples with creative twists from a new generation of chefs. Smoky ribs, fried green tomatoes, and perfectly seasoned meat-and-three plates still reign, but they're now joined by inventive takes on regional flavors, farm-driven menus, and an appreciation for local ingredients that reflect Birmingham's culinary evolution.



In recent years, Birmingham has earned national attention thanks to its award-winning restaurants and celebrated chefs, many of whom bring global influences to the table while honoring Alabama's heritage. From bustling food halls and craft breweries to refined fine-dining establishments, the city offers a dining landscape that's both welcoming and adventurous. Whether you're strolling through Pepper Place Market, sampling upscale Southern cuisine in the heart of downtown, or exploring hidden-gem neighborhood eateries, Birmingham delivers a food experience that's rich, diverse, and unmistakably Southern.

Birmingham is a culinary destination in the Southeast. Below is a selection of only some of the fantastic locally-owned restaurants and coffee houses in the area. Restaurants marked with an asterisk (\*) are among the finest in the country (many of their chefs have been nominated for and/or received awards from the James Beard Foundation for culinary excellence) and are best suited for a special date night, graduation celebration, anniversary, or final interview dinner.



FOOD (CONTINUED)		
Restaurant	Website	Cuisine
Al's Deli & Grill	www.alsdeliandgrill.net/	Gyros/Mediterranean
Bamboo on 2nd	www.bambooon2nd.com	Sushi, Pho
Becky's South	www.allmenus.com/al/254897-beckys-south/menu/	Burgers
Bettola*	www.bettolabhm.com/	Italian
Birmingham Breadworks	www.birminghambreadworks.com/	Bakery/sandwiches
Bistro 218	www.bistro218.com/	French/American
Bottega*	www.bottegarestaurant.com/	Italian
Brick & Tin	www.brickandtin.com/	American
Café Dupont*	www.cafedupont.net	New American
Cantina Tortilla Grill	www.cantinabirmingham.com	Tex-Mex
Chez Fonfon*	www.fonfonbham.com	French
Chez Lulu/Bakery	www.chezlulu.us	French
De Vinci's Pizza	www.devincispizza.com/	Italian
Dreamland BBQ	www.dreamlandbbq.com/	Barbeque
El Barrio	www.elbarriobirmingham.com/	Tex-Mex
The Essential	www.essentialbham.com/	New American
The Fish Market	www.thefishmarket.net/#intro	Greek/Southern
GianMarco's	https://www.gianmarcosbhm.com/	Italian
Giuseppe's	https://www.giuseppescafe.com/	Italian
Golden Temple	www.goldentemplehealthfood.com/	Organic/vegetarian
<b>Grounds Coffee</b>	https://groundsbhm.com/	Coffee
Hot & Hot Fish Club*	www.hotandhotfishclub.com/	New American
Hungry Howie's	www.hungryhowies.com/	Pizza take-out/subs
Insomnia Cookies	www.insomniacookies.com/	Dessert
Jim 'n Nick's*	www.jimnnicks.com/	Barbeque
Jinsei	www.jinseisushi.com	Sushi
Little Donkey	www.thelittledonkey.com/	Tex-Mex
Makarios Kabob & Grill	www.makarioskabob.com/	Gyros/Middle Eastern
Mellow Mushroom	www.mellowmushroom.com/	Pizza
Mr. Chen's	www.mrchenshomewood.com	Chinese
Newk's Express Cafe	www.newks.com/	Sandwiches and salads
Niki's West	www.nikiswest.com/	Greek/Southern
O'Henry's	www.ohenryscoffees.com	Coffee
Ocean	www.oceanbirmingham.com/	Seafood/fine dining
Original Pancake House	www.originalpancakehouse.com/	Breakfast
Ovenbird*	www.ovenbirdrestaurant.com/	Spanish/Portuguese
Paramount	www.paramountbirmingham.com/	American/pub food
The Pita Stop	www.thepitastop.com/	Middle Eastern
Post Office Pies	www.postofficepies.com/	Pizza
Purple Onion	https://www.thepurpleonion.co/	Gyros/Mediterranean
Ranelli's	www.ranellisdeli.com/	Italian
Real & Rosemary	www.realandrosemary.com/	Sandwiches/salads
Red Cat	www.theredcatcoffeehouse.com/	Coffeehouse/Greek



FOOD (CONTINUED)		
Restaurant	Website	Cuisine
Red Pearl	www.superorientalmkt.com/restaurant.html	Chinese
Rojo	www.rojobirmingham.com	Tex-Mex
Saigon Noodle House	www.saigonnoodlehouse280.com/	Vietnamese
Saw's Soul Kitchen	www.sawsbbq.com/	Barbeque/Southern
Silver Coin	www.silvercoinusa.com/	Indian
Sitar	https://www.sitarindiancuisinebhm.com/	Indian
Slice	www.slicebirmingham.com	Pizza/salads
Surin West	www.surinofthailand.com/	Thai, sushi
Taj India	www.tajindia.net/	Indian
Trattoria Zaza	www.zazabham.com	Italian
Frothy Monkey	www.frothymonkey.com/	Coffee/sandwiches
Vino	www.vinobirmingham.com	Mediterranean

Many restaurants offer home delivery through websites and/or apps such as <a href="www.thetakeoutbham.com">www.thetakeoutbham.com</a> and <a href="www.tapingo.com">www.thetakeoutbham.com</a> and <a href="www.tapingo.com">www.thetakeoutbham.com</a> and <a href="www.tapingo.com">www.thetakeoutbham.com</a> and <a href="www.tapingo.com">www.thetakeoutbham.com</a> and <a href="www.tapingo.com">www.tapingo.com</a>. Uber Eats, Door Dash, Waitr, and GrubHub also deliver in the Birmingham area. You may not have to leave the house to have a great dinner!

# **Pizitz Food Hall**

The <u>Pizitz Food Hall</u> offers a variety of international and southern cuisine in a historic downtown department store building. Options include Ethiopian, Vietnamese, Japanese, Mexican, and a rotating restaurants.

# **Farmers Markets**

Birmingham's oldest and most established farmer's market is held daily from 6:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. at 344 Finley Avenue West, Birmingham, AL 35204 (<a href="https://www.alabamafarmersmarket.org/">www.alabamafarmersmarket.org/</a>). Farmers from all over the state bring the freshest and finest seasonable fruits and vegetables.

The Pepper Place market is open from 7:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. every Saturday (rain or shine!) from April



through December. In addition to the freshest Alabama produce, you can find ice cream, baked goods, flowers, herbs, handmade soaps, wooden handicrafts, jewelry, live music, and cooking demonstrations. Pepper Place is dog-friendly if you keep your dog on a leash and clean up after it.

There are several smaller weekly farmers markets as well. The Urban Cookhouse restaurant at The Summit shopping center hosts a farmers market on Thursdays from June through August from 3:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. The West Homewood Farmers Market runs June through August on Tuesdays from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at 160 Oxmoor Road (<a href="https://www.westhomewood.com">www.westhomewood.com</a>). Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church runs a farmers market every Wednesday from May through September from 7:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. at 2061 Kentucky Avenue. In Hoover, you can find a farmers' market at 4601 Valleydale Road (<a href="https://www.valleydalefarmersmarket.com">www.valleydalefarmersmarket.com</a>).



# **FOOD (CONTINUED)**

# **Grocery Stores**

Avoid shopping on Sunday afternoons, as grocery stores tend to be more crowded then, as people prepare for the coming week. The Lakeview stop on the Dart trolley car lets you off within two blocks of the Piggly Wiggly.

Store Address

Aldi	7400 Crestwood Boulevard	
	428 Green Springs Highway	
Fresh Market	549 Brookwood Village	
Golden Temple Health Foods	1901 11 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South	
Joujou's Pita Bakery & Import Foods	166 West Valley Avenue	
La Macarena	1955 Alton Rd	
La Mexicana Mexican Grocery	Montgomery Hwy	
Mediterranean Foods (halaal meat)	430 Green Springs Highway	
Mi Pueblo	813 Green Springs Highway	
Piggly Wiggly	3314 Clairmont Avenue	
Publix	411 Green Springs Highway	
	1325 Montclair Road	
	20 <sup>th</sup> Street and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue South	
Sexton's Seafood	3164 Heights Village	
Snapper Grabbers Seafood Market	521 Montgomery Highway	
Sprouts	5250 Medford Dr	
Super Oriental Market	243 West Valley Avenue	
Tienda La Mexicana #2	1633 Montgomery Highway	
Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market	312 Palisades Boulevard	
Wal-Mart Supercenter	1600 Montclair Road	
	209 Lakeshore Parkway	
Whole Foods	3100 Cahaba Village Plaza	
Wilson's Market	1401 15 <sup>th</sup> Street South	
Winn-Dixie	4476 Montevallo Road	

Birmingham-based start-up company *Shipt* will deliver groceries to your home. Visit <u>www.shipt.com</u> to set up an account (annual membership fee, free delivery on orders over \$35, no tipping allowed). Prices may be slightly higher via Shipt than if you go to the store yourself, but you save time and hassle via delivery.

## **Wholesale Clubs**

A wholesale club is a warehouse-style store offering everything from underwear to brie to high-definition TVs to lemons. Items often come in bulk (two-bottles of ketchup, 36 rolls of toilet paper, etc.), so you need a car big enough to transport them and a pantry big enough to stock them. Birmingham has two wholesale clubs: **Costco** (3650 Galleria Circle in Hoover) and **Sam's Club** (201 Lakeshore Parkway). The only credit card Costco accepts is Visa; annual memberships start at \$55. Sam's Club memberships start at \$45. The membership fees cover two family members over the age of 18 (so you or your spouse can shop). You can apply online or in-store. Membership in a wholesale club can save a family a considerable amount of money over the course of a year and is worth considering.



# **RELIGION**

Birmingham is in what is known colloquially as the "Bible Belt," a region of the southeastern and south-central US where Protestant Christian denominations have traditionally played a prominent role in social and political life. Although practitioners of nearly every faith live in Birmingham, do not be surprised if some of your American friends and colleagues born in the south adhere to a Christian faith tradition or embrace conservative values. Many smaller local businesses and restaurants are likely to be closed on Sundays.

Name	Website/Phone	Religion
Baha'i Center	www.birminghambahai.org	Baha'i
Bethel AME Church	(205) 871-8057	African Methodist Episcopal
Birmingham Alabama Temple	www.lds.org/church/temples/birmingha	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day
	m-alabama?lang=eng	Saints (Mormon)
Birmingham Friends Meeting House	www.birmingham.quaker.org	Quaker/Society of Friends
Briarwood	www.briarwood.org	Protestant – Presbyterian (PCA)
Cathedral of St. Paul	www.stpaulsbhm.org/	Roman Catholic
Church of Birmingham	www.uucbham.org	Unitarian Universalist
Avondale Church of Christ	www.avondalechurchofchrist.com	Church of Christ
First Church of Christ, Scientist	https://christiansciencebirmingham.org	Christian Science
Highlands United Methodist Church	www.fivepointschurch.org	Protestant - Methodist
Hindu Temple and Cultural Center	www.bhamhindutemple.org/	Hindu
Holy Trinity-Holy Cross Cathedral	www.holytrinity-holycross.org	Greek Orthodox
Homewood Masjid	www.bisweb.org	Muslim
Knesseth Israel	www.kicong.org	Jewish - Orthodox
Losel Maitri Tibetan Buddhist Center	www.loselmaitribuddhist.org	Buddhist
Sikh Temple of Alabama	www.sikhtempleofalabama.org/	Sikh
South Highland Presbyterian Church	www.southhighland.org	Protestant – Presbyterian (USA)
Southside Baptist Church	www.southsidebirmingham.org	Protestant - Baptist
St. Andrew's	www.standrews.dioala.org/	Episcopal
St. Elias	www.stelias.org/	Maronite Catholic
St. Paul's	www.usachurches.org/church/st-pauls	Protestant - Lutheran
St. Stephen the Martyr	www.stsbhm.org/	Roman Catholic
St. Symeon	<u>www.stsymeon.com</u>	Russian/Eastern Orthodox
Temple Beth-El	(205 <u>) 933-2740</u>	Jewish – Conservative
Temple Emanu-El	www.ourtemple.org/	Jewish – Reform
Pilgrim Church	www.pilgrimuccbham.org	United Church of Christ



#### **MEDIA**

# **Print/Electronic**

The most important media for international students and scholars is the ISSS weekly e-newsletter, the *Globetrotter*. It will arrive in your UAB email inbox every Monday afternoon. Please read it!!!

# GLOBETROTTER

Birmingham's local newspaper, *The Birmingham News*, is printed on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays. Its website, <a href="www.al.com">www.al.com</a>, is an alternate source. Another paper, <a href="www.weldbham.com">Weld (www.weldbham.com</a>), is published weekly and covers issues relevant to Birmingham politics. It also has a listing of concerts. Find it at area restaurants and in newspaper boxes on streets around town.

Three monthly magazines cover life in Birmingham: b-Metro (www.b-metro.com), Birmingham Magazine (www.al.com/bhammag.com), and Birmingham Home & Garden (www.birminghamhomeandgarden.com). Birmingham Parent (http://birminghamparent.com/) lists activities and information specifically for kids. Subscribe to the Birmingham Business Journal at www.bizjournals.com/birmingham for news about local politics, the economic climate, new developments at Birmingham companies, and entrepreneurial exploits. Several Birmingham suburbs also publish papers or newsletters, such as the Over-the-Mountain Journal (www.otmj.com), the Homewood Star (www.thehomewoodstar.com), and Mountain Brook's Village Living (www.villagelivingonline.com).

# Internet/Cable/Satellite TV

AT&T U-verse, Charter, Comcast, DIRECTV, Spectrum, and Dish Network all offer home media services (known as "bundles") in the Birmingham area, although not all companies operate in the same neighborhoods. Visit their respective websites to determine which services are provided in your specific area.

# **Mobile Phones**

You can often purchase a US SIM card to obtain service with no contract. Prices vary from \$35-75 per month, depending on the service/data plan you need. Any of the following providers can set you up.

o AT&T 1-844-723-0252 <u>www.att.com/local/alabama/birmingham</u>

o Boost Mobile www.boostmobile.com

o Cellular Express (carries T-Mobile, Boost, and Virgin), (205) 941-1144

Simple Mobile www.mysimplemobile.com

o T-Mobile <u>www.t-mobile.com/store/cell-phone-birmingham-al-819.html</u>

Verizon
 www.verizonwireless.com/stores/alabama/birmingham

o Virgin <u>www.virginmobileusa.com/#!/store/35205/1/</u>

Wal-Mart (offers many prepaid and no-contract options) www.walmart.com



SOUTHERN EXPRESSIONS/COLLOQUIALISMS		
Expression	Translation	
a good way off	a long distance	
ahead of the game	out in front/ahead of the rest	
ASAP	as soon as possible	
bat an eye	pay any attention to, be affected by	
blow it off	forget about it	
brand new	just bought/just purchased	
Coke	any soft drink	
crazy about	to like something/someone extremely much	
dead last	at the very end, last place	
feel free to	make yourself welcome	
from scratch	start all over from the beginning	
get a bug	get a virus on your computer or an illness/cold	
get a hold of someone	reach someone by phone or email	
get around to it	do it when you get the opportunity	
hang in there	do not quit	
head start	start something with an advantage, ahead of others	
hold on for dear life	hold tightly	
I'm fixing to	I'm about to	
in the nick of time	perfect timing	
jump right in	begin at your own pace	
keep an eye out for you	be mindful of your best interests, watch out for you	
keep in touch	continue contact/correspondence	
kick or get it in gear	to get prepared	
look into it	regard with scrutiny, learn more about	
my bad	my mistake	
out of line	out of place, in appropriate	
out of whack	out of the ordinary/broken	
over yonder	over there	
plug away	keep working at something busily	
pull up a chair/take a seat	sit down	
reckon	guess	
see to it	make sure it is done	
see you around	to meet later	
shut up	be quiet	
slammed	busy, overwhelmed	
step out of line	to get out of one's place, do something in appropriate	
stick with it	keep going until you finish the job	
take care of	make sure a goal or project is achieved	
this neck of the woods	in the area	
to count on someone	to rely/depend on someone	
What's up/what's new?	How are you?	
y'all	"you all" or "all of you"	
you bet	of course, yes	
zeroed in/zero in	focus on a particular idea or item	



# **RECREATION**

# **OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

Birminghamians are outdoors more than ever before. The city's flagship park is Railroad Park (<a href="www.railroadpark.org">www.railroadpark.org</a>) in the Parkside area of Southside near Regions Field. Railroad Park offers free exercise and cooking classes, 19 acres of green space, a skate park, pond, walking/running trails, and a playground.

Designed by renowned park planner Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., George Ward Park (<a href="https://www.friendsofgeorgewardpark.org">www.friendsofgeorgewardpark.org</a>) on the edge of campus has tennis courts, a disc golf ("frolf") course,



a dog park area, and softball fields. You will often find adult kickball (<a href="www.gokickball.com/birmingham">www.gokickball.com/birmingham</a>) and softball leagues sweating it out after work. The Olmsteds also designed Rushton Park along Highland Avenue in the Forest Park area of Southside.

Runners will enjoy Mountain Brook's Jemison Trail and the downtown Rotary Trail. The Birmingham Zoo (<a href="www.birminghamzoo.com">www.birminghamzoo.com</a>) and Botanical Gardens (<a href="www.bbgardens.org">www.bbgardens.org</a>) offer year-round family programming. Kayakers and canoeists enjoy floating one of the longest free-flowing rivers in the Southeast, the Cahaba, from any of several put-in points. Check out <a href="www.trekbirmingham.com">www.trekbirmingham.com</a> and <a href="www.outdooralabama.com">www.outdooralabama.com</a> for more activities.

#### **SPORTS**

Alabama is dominated by one sport, and one sport only: American football. Specifically, college football.

According to popular opinion, the only two teams on planet Earth are the University of Alabama Crimson Tide and the Auburn University Tigers . . . but we all know the UAB Blazers are the best! The regular season runs from late August/early September through November, with regional ("conference") playoffs determining who will play in various championship "bowl games" throughout December. Alabama and Auburn play in the Southeastern Conference ("SEC"). UAB plays in the American Athletic Conference (AAC). The season culminates with the National Championship in January.





# **SPORTS (CONTINUED)**

Do not underestimate the power of college football. You may be greeted with phrases such as "Roll Tide" (designating an Alabama fan), "War Eagle" (designating an Auburn fan), or "Blaze On" (designating a UAB fan). Just nod and smile. People plan their weddings around games, name their children and pets after players, host elaborate "tailgate" parties at their home or outside the football stadium, and do not speak to family members who do not support their team. That said, the best time to run errands is during a football game. The streets and stores will be deserted for four hours while people are glued to their televisions cheering for colleges some of them did not even attend.



Birmingham boasts a lively semi-professional sports scene anchored by passionate fan bases and a strong local legacy. The Birmingham Stallions energize football fans with their high-impact play and championship pedigree, while the Birmingham Squadron delivers fast-paced NBA G League action and showcases rising basketball talent. Soccer enthusiasm is strong thanks to the Birmingham Legion, whose dedicated supporters and competitive USL presence add global flair to the city's sports mix. On the ice, the Birmingham Bulls keep hockey excitement alive with hard-checking thrills and loyal crowds. Baseball tradition rounds out the landscape with the Birmingham Barons, a beloved minor league team known for its historic ties and family-friendly atmosphere. Together, these teams create a diverse, year-round sports culture that reflects the city's deep love of competition and community.



Birmingham is also home to the Birmingham Vulcans rugby team. They play at Erskine Ramsay Park on the corner of Country Club Drive and Montclair Road. See <a href="https://www.birminghamrugby.com">www.birminghamrugby.com</a> for season information.



UAB's Cricket Club offers students and community members a welcoming space to enjoy one of the world's most popular sports. Bringing together players of all skill levels and cultural backgrounds, the club focuses on building camaraderie, teaching cricket fundamentals, and competing in friendly matches and regional tournaments. The UAB Cricket Club competes in the Birmingham Cricket League, an area league consisting of 12 teams. You can learn more at <a href="https://www.facebook.com/UABCricketClub/">https://www.facebook.com/UABCricketClub/</a>.



#### **MUSEUMS & ENTERTAINMENT**

Birmingham is home to several nationallyrenowned museum collections, including the Birmingham Museum of Art (www.artsbma.org), home to the world's largest Wedgwood collection outside England), the Southern Museum of Flight (www.southernmuseumofflight.org), Alabama Sports Hall of Fame (www.ashof.org), Civil the Birmingham Rights Institute (www.bcri.org, a national park), the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame (www.jazzhall.com), Vulcan Park and Museum (www.visitvulcan.com), home of the largest cast iron statue in the world), the Negro



Southern League Museum (<u>www.birminghamnslm.org</u>), and the Barber Motorsports Museum (www.barbermuseum.org).

The Birmingham area also features a wide variety of music venues and concert halls. Classical music aficionados will enjoy hearing the Alabama Symphony Orchestra play at UAB's very own Alys Stephens Center (www.alysstephens.org). Iron City (www.ironcitybham.com), WorkPlay (www.workplay.com), Saturn (www.saturnbirmingham.com), and Oak Mountain Amphitheater (www.theoakmountainamphitheater.com) attract the nation's best bands. Hear live jazz or join in open mic/spoken word nights at the Carver Theatre (www.jazzhall.com/carver). Southside's legendary, windowless "The Nick" (www.thenickrocks.com) dive bar/pool room hosts country, rock, alternative, house, metal, and blues acts almost nightly. Saturn (www.saturnbirmingham.com) in Avondale brings in new alternative and classic rock acts. Birmingham's beautifully-restored Alabama (www.alabamatheatre.com) and Lyric (www.lyricbham.com) theatres lend oldworld glamor to chamber music, solo, pop artists, and comedians. The Alabama also hosts a popular summer movie series featuring classic American films (Jaws, Gone With the Wind, The Godfather, etc.), popcorn, and its famous Wurlitzer organ.

Catch live theatrical performances at The Terrific New Theatre (<a href="www.terrificnewtheatre.com">www.terrificnewtheatre.com</a>), Red Mountain Theatre (<a href="www.virginiasamfordtheatre.org">www.virginiasamfordtheatre.org</a>), and Virginia Samford Theatre (<a href="www.virginiasamfordtheatre.org">www.virginiasamfordtheatre.org</a>). The Opera Birmingham (<a href="www.operabirmingham.org">www.operabirmingham.org</a>) also features two-three concerts per season.

The social calendar in Birmingham is stocked year-round. Don't miss the Sidewalk Film Festival, Mercedes Marathon, Alabama Ballet's *Nutcracker*, Greek Food Festival, Secret Stages, Southern Makers, and Birmingham Restaurant Week—just to name a few!

Learn more at www.birminghamal.org/ and www.birmingham365.org.



# **CULTURE SHOCK**

Adapted from Rhodes, Gary. Culture Shock. University of California, Irvine, Center for International Education (2000).

Used with permission of the author.

You may experience many emotions while adapting to US culture, from excitement and interest to depression and fear of the unknown. The difficulties you may experience as you navigate American society can result of what is termed "culture shock." Most experts agree that culture shock, although often delayed, is inevitable in one form or another. However, adjusting to a foreign culture and living through difficult times of change can be a satisfying experience— worth the occasional discomfort and extra effort. Such feelings are perfectly normal. Knowing this, and with a bit of conscious effort, you will soon find yourself making adjustments (some quite subtle and perhaps unnoticeable at the conscious level) that will enable you to adapt to your new cultural environment.

The attitudes you bring with you to the US and those you form while here will have a great effect upon your perception of the American people and the southern way of life. It is very important for you to be aware of the role attitudes play in your US experience. Communication can break down when US cultural attitudes are fundamentally different than yours, and the results are often feelings of confusion and hostility on both sides.

You might be under the impression that cultural shock is some kind of disease that everyone catches after arriving in the US and, after a certain length of time, recovers from. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Some international students and scholars never recover from this condition no matter how long they spend in the US. This is because culture shock is actually caused by a mismatch of cultural attitudes—not by some virus, as the name implies. If you don't keep an open mind and don't invest any effort trying to understand American culture, you will always be in a state of shock.

There is no clear-cut way of dealing with culture shock. Simply recognizing its existence and accepting your vulnerability to it is an important first step. Remember that you are not the only one experiencing occasional frustration, irritability, and depression. Experiencing culture shock does not imply any psychological or emotional shortcoming on your part.

Undergoing culture shock is in itself a learning experience. It is a way of sensitizing yourself to another culture at a level beyond the intellectual and the rational. Just as an athlete cannot get into shape without conditioning, so you cannot fully appreciate the cultural differences that exist without first going through the uncomfortable stages of psychological adjustment.

An underlying cause of negative reactions to another culture is the tendency to label something that is different as inferior. It is important to be open toward the culture into which you are going, try to discard stereotypes, and read as much as you can about culture before your departure. If you educate yourself, you will better understand and appreciate your new surroundings much sooner. Before leaving home, learn about American history, natural resources, social customs, religions, art, and political structures. Find out the manners, expected behavior, and unspoken rules in play in the US. Read up on our present-day problems and current national issues. Learning about current affairs will help you get a sense of how people evaluate events from different perspectives. Talk to other students who have been to the US to learn what problems you may encounter.

Even with preparation, you will inevitably experience some symptoms of culture shock. If you understand the phenomenon and its possible causes, you can decrease its effects. Try to acquaint yourself with its signs.



#### PHASES OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Studies have shown that there are distinct phases of culture shock which virtually everyone who lives abroad goes through. These phases include:

Preliminary Phase: Awareness of the host culture, preparation for the journey, farewell activities, anticipation

**Initial Euphoria:** Thrill of being in a new place, happiness at being welcome, sense of independence and invincibility as you start classes and explore campus

**Irritability:** Frustration arising from acclimating to your new setting; difficulty coping with the elementary aspects of everyday life when things still appear foreign to you; focus shifts to the sometimes-troubling differences between the US and your home country; insignificant difficulties feel like major problems; tendency to associate mainly with others from your home country

**Gradual Adjustment:** Begin to orient yourself and become able to interpret subtle cultural clues; US culture and mannerisms become familiar to you

**Adaptation and Biculturalism:** Sense of "foreignness" diminishes significantly; you start to feel that you are a part of American culture.

**Re-Entry Phase:** Excitement about sharing your experiences accompanied by a realization that you have changed, although you may not be able to explain how; both your original and US-acquired sets of values may seem equally valid; difficulty re-adapting to the pace and scale of life at home; need to maintain contact with US friends and colleagues

#### TIPS TO EASE CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Here are some general tips to help ease cultural adjustment:

- Travel in a spirit of humility and with a genuine desire to meet and talk with local people.
- Do not expect to find things as they are at home--you left home to discover different things!
- Do not take anything too seriously. An open mind is the beginning of a fine international experience.
- Do not let others get on your nerves. Learn a lot, enjoy the experience, and be a good ambassador for your country.
- Read the information in the Compass, the Globetrotter, student handbook, and any departmental materials carefully. Those who have gone before you have good advice to share.
- Keep your passport with you at all times.
- Don't judge the entire United States by the one American you disagree with or who treats you disrespectfully. There are over 318 million of us, and we can all learn from you!
- Cultivate the habit of listening and observing, rather than merely seeing or hearing.
- Realize that other people may have thought patterns and concepts of time which are very different than yours.
- Be aware of the feelings of local people to prevent what might be offensive behavior.
- Make no promises to local, new friends that you cannot implement or carry through.
- Keep a journal and reflect on your daily experiences to deepen your understanding.
- Take steps to minimize emotional and physical ups-and-downs.
- Try to establish routines that incorporate both the difficult and enjoyable tasks of the day or week.
- Treat yourself to an occasional indulgence, such as a magazine or newspaper in your own language, a favorite meal or beverage, or a long talk with other students experiencing the same challenges.
- Keep yourself healthy through regular exercise and eating habits.
- Accept invitations to activities that will allow you to see other areas of Alabama and the south.



#### **FITTING IN**

Social customs differ greatly from one country to another. Be friendly and courteous. If you err on the side of being respectful, people will make allowances when you do not immediately understand or feel comfortable with things.

- POLITENESS: Offer a word of greeting to whomever you meet. For example, begin your conversation with, "Hello,
  good morning!" Become familiar with the appropriate expressions of gratitude in response to southern hospitality.
- **HUMOR:** While each country has its own brand of wit and humor, very few cultures are as direct, sarcastic, and occasionally gross as Americans. Don't take things literally or personally. If you are unsure if someone meant a comment as a joke or was serious, feel free to ask.
- SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE: Most southerners will have as hard a time understanding your accent (if you have one) as you will have understanding theirs. Don't be intimidated or inhibited when speaking English, even if you have only a limited command of the language. Also don't be afraid to ask Americans to please repeat themselves. Americans will use phrases that you have never learned in a textbook that may confuse or even embarrass you if you take them literally. Again, keep a sense of humor and ASK if you are confused!
- PHYSICAL CONTACT: Americans tend to shake hands when they meet each other (in business relationships) and mainly in the south give hugs or a pat on the back when they meet each other (in a more social relationship). Southerners are just very "touchy" people. Don't be afraid to let someone know if you prefer a different form of greeting, or if a common form of greeting makes you uncomfortable. Americans generally require more "personal space" (how far away they stand or sit when conversing with you) than other cultures. Observe your colleagues and friends at meetings and parties to see how Americans interact.
- **PERSONAL QUESTIONS:** Americans find it easy and quite appropriate to talk about themselves, which you may find impolite. Feel free to talk about yourself back to them! Remember: you have come here to get to know the US, its people, culture, and language! Try to maintain a sense of humor.
- DRINKING AND DRUNKENNESS: Americans enjoy social drinking, but drunkenness is neither amusing nor
  tolerable. There are severe academic and immigration consequences for drunk driving and misbehavior due to
  intoxication. American college campuses are also extremely sensitive to claims of "date rape" (taking advantage of
  someone sexually while they are incapacitated by drugs and/or alcohol). Know local customs, and your limits.
- **PRICE BARGAINING:** Except when buying a car or visiting a yard or garage sale, haggling and bargaining are practically never done in the US. Prices at farmers markets are non-negotiable as well. You may find some independent vendors who occasionally will let you argue for a lower price, but this is highly extraordinary. The published price is generally the price you must pay.
- TALKING POLITICS: Americans think they know everything about international affairs and generally stick to their opinion, however ill-informed it may be. Do not be surprised if your new friends try to engage you in political debate, and do not be surprised if they offer one-sided or even plainly erroneous arguments. Be discreet and rational when defending your own convictions and do your best to keep the conversation calm. Try to steer the conversation in another direction if it heats up.

One of the main benefits of studying and living abroad is developing a sensitivity to and appreciation for the people and customs of a totally different culture and way of life. Be flexible and receptive in dealing with these differences, and you will find your life greatly enriched.

The <u>International Student website</u> offers additional information about the way of life in the US, including helpful tips about culture shock, safety issues, social life, accommodations, etc.



	STUDENT GROUPS

Group	Contact
Asian American Organization	www.facebook.com/UABAAO/
Association of Indian Students	www.facebook.com/groups/181488011919086/
Chinese Student and Scholar Association	www.facebook.com/uabcssa/?ref=br rs
Cricket Club	www.facebook.com/UABCricketClub
Global Medical Brigades	www.facebook.com/UabGlobalMedicalBrigades/
Indian Cultural Association	https://www.facebook.com/ICAatUAB/
International Friends	www.intlfriends.org/
International Mentors	www.facebook.com/InternationalUAB
Ivorian Students Organization	www.facebook.com/isobirmingham/
Muslim Students Association	www.facebook.com/UAB.MSA/
Nepalese Student Association	www.facebook.com/groups/uab.nepali.students
Student Multicultural and Diversity Programs	www.uab.edu/students/diversity
Vietnamese Student Association	www.facebook.com/groups/uabvsa/

# **MAIL & SHIPPING**

A US postage stamp to mail a simple letter or card in the US currently costs \$0.78. Stamps are available at the Post Office locations below and at many pharmacies. Prices and shipping times for packages are available at <a href="https://www.usps.com">www.usps.com</a>.

#### Downtown

351 24<sup>th</sup> Street North Birmingham, AL 35203

Monday - Friday: 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday: Closed

# **UAB Post Office**

1720 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South Birmingham, AL 35294

Monday - Friday: 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday: Closed

# **South Highland**

1821 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue South Birmingham, AL 35205

Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Saturday: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Sunday: Closed

Other shipping options for large overseas packages include UPS, FedEx, and DHL.



BIRMINGHAM NUMBERS & WEBSITES TO KNOW	
Service	Contact
311 CALL CENTER	www.birminghamal.gov/311
ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES (DMV)	(205) 325-5171
Jefferson County Driver License Office	(205) 252-7445
	www.alea.gov/
Jefferson County Car Tag and Title Office	(205) 325-5300
	www.jccal.org/
BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU	(205) 558-2222
	www.bbb.org/CSAL/
BIRMINGHAM BUSINESS ALLIANCE	www.birminghambusinessalliance.com
BIRMINGHAM CITY WEBSITE	www.birminghamal.gov
COURTHOUSES	
Birmingham David J. Vann Municipal Justice Center	(205) 254-2161
	www.birminghamal.gov/municipal-court
Jefferson County (10 <sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit)	(205) 325-5300
	www.jccal.org/
United States District Courthouse for the Northern District	(205) 278-1700
of Alabama	www.alnd.uscourts.gov/court-info/court-locations
CRISIS CENTER BIRMINGHAM	(205) 323-7777
	https://www.crisiscenterbham.org/
EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE	911
Birmingham Fire & Rescue Service – Non-Emergency	(205) 254-7540
	https://fire.birminghamal.gov/
Birmingham Police Department – Non-Emergency	(205) 328-9311
	https://police.birminghamal.gov/
UAB Police Department	Emergency (205) 934-3535
	Non-Emergency (205) 934-4434
	www.uab.edu/police
<b>LIBRARIES</b> (free membership at all branches with proof of Jefferson County residence)	
Birmingham Public Library	(205) 226-3600
	www.bplonline.org/services/LibraryCards
Southside Library	(205) 933-7776
	http://www.bham.lib.al.us/locations/branch/southside



BIRMINGHAM NUMBERS & WEBSITES TO KNOW (CONTINUED)	
Service	Contact
PUBLIC UTILITIES – NEW SERVICE	
Alabama Gas Corporation	1-800-292-4008
	www.alagasco.com/Start-Gas-Service-497.html
Southern Company (electricity)	1-800-245-2244
	www.southerncompany.com/
Birmingham Water Works	(205) 244-4000
	www.bwwb.org/requestservices
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION – Max Buses & Dart Trolley	(205) 521-0101
	www.bjcta.org/
SCHOOL SYSTEMS	
Birmingham City Schools	(205) 231-4600
	www.bhamcityschools.org
Jefferson County Schools	(205) 379-2000
	www.jefcoed.com
Social Security Administration – Birmingham Office	1-800-772-1213
(parking entrance is on 12th Street)	1200 Reverend Abraham Woods, Jr. Boulevard, 1st Floor,
,	Birmingham, AL 35285