

Living in University Housing as an International Student

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Living on campus presents difficulties for all students, but international students face a number of unique challenges. You may be living thousands of miles away from your family and friends. You might have difficulty communicating with others if English is a challenge for you. You also might be attempting to navigate an unfamiliar culture.

Living with a roommate. Most students struggle sharing a space with others and living on floor with people they don't know. This can be even more complicated for international students, because your roommates and the other people living on your floor likely come from a different culture and may speak a different language than you. Keep in mind that your resident assistant (RA) is trained to help you navigate difficulties that come up between you and your roommates or the other people on your floor.

Food will be... different. One of the most frequent challenges that international students talk about is the adjustment to different food. American food might be prepared differently than you're used to and might taste too salty, too greasy, or too rich. While University Housing and Dining tries to prepare food that reflects different cultural traditions, it can be helpful to explore the many restaurants and food markets in the area.

Stay connected with people back home. It is especially important for international students to stay connected to their family and friends back home. In fact, international students are more likely to prefer talking to friends and family than seeking professional counseling help. For some international students, this means calling friends and family in the middle of the night. Set a regular time that you'll call or video chat with people back home to maintain a sense of connectedness with those people back home. Do this in moderation, though. Many international students report that it's hard to talk with people back home or see updates on social media, because it reminds them of all the things they're missing or how far they are from loved ones. So, balance how much who you communicate with folks at home with time spent establishing new relationships and exploring new places and ideas while you're at the University of Iowa.

Connect with other international students. Trying to establish a sense of belonging on a campus that is largely made up of domestic students can be a lonely experience. Therefore, it can be helpful to find other international students who you can relate to your experiences. Other international students can be support network who will help you find local food markets, groups on campus, and resources that will make living abroad easier. Many students find it helpful to look to international students from their country of origin for

support, because there may be less cultural and language barriers. Try to find a few international students from other countries to expand your support system.

Counseling can help with the transition. The University Counseling Service also offers service in Mandarin and in Spanish, as some international students prefer to speak with their counselor in a language other than English.