COMMUNICATING ON CAMPUS

A BRIEF GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Dear International Students,

Welcome to Drexel University! The faculty and staff of the English Language Center wish you success in your personal and academic activities at Drexel. If you have any questions, want to find out about our courses, or get some advice about English language or communication generally, please contact us.

We hope you find this brief guide to campus communication helpful. For more suggestions, revisions, or comments, please contact me at 215 895-2067 or hoekje@drexel.edu

With best wishes for a successful year,

Dr. Barbara Hoekje Director

I. Yo! Welcome to Philly!

Philadelphia (or "Philly") is an exciting place for language and academic study. Philadelphia is the home of the American dialect--with our pronunciation of "r" in words like "Fourth" (unlike Boston & New York) this is where the sound of America was born.

The Declaration of Independence was signed here on July 4th, 1776, so "76" is an important number around here, the name of our basketball team (usually called the "Sixers") and a major highway.

Our other sports teams are the Phillies (baseball), the Flyers (hockey) and the Eagles, our football team. (And don't forget in American football, you use your hands, not your feet!).

Special Philly words are "hoagie" for a meat and cheese sandwich on a long roll; "down the Shore" --an expression for going down to the New Jersey beach, and of course "Yo!" as a way to say hello.

Our city has multilingual neighborhoods where languages such as Italian, Vietnamese, Russian, Ukrainian, Albanian, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, French, Greek, Arabic, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Hebrew, Hindi, Marathi, and Hausa are spoken, to name just a few.

We use many different types of English too. We have formal, correct, and very polite styles, and we have informal, fast, and full of slang styles. Mostly our way of talking is fast, loud, and full of slang. We shorten words and leave out sounds: We say "Mornin" instead of "Good morning." We say "How ya doin" instead of "How are you doing?" We call our elevated commuter train the "El".

Talk, talk, talk

When you first come to the United States, you may be surprised by the flow of talk around you. Americans talk easily to others. We like to talk even when we don't have too much to say! Talk is a social activity that allows us to relate to other people. We say even "money talks" in the U.S.

We like to give friendly greetings to people--"Hi, how are you?" We also play with this greeting in many different ways: "What's up? What's going on?" "What's happening?" The answer to all these greetings is very simple: "Fine!" How are you?" or "Not much--how about you?" You can even just respond, "Hi, how are YOU?"

When we leave someone, we say, "See you later" or "Have a good day" or "Have a good one."

In general, Americans don't like silence when they are together if they know each other. While in the car together, or fixing dinner, or eating a meal together, or meeting people at a reception, we will often talk about light, interesting, but inconsequential topics. This is called "small talk." Talk about the weather, about movies, about courses, about the gym or new exercise activities, are all small talk. Talk about politics, religion, illness or other problems is usually reserved for more serious conversation.

If we can't find something to talk about, we will often turn on the radio or the TV.

Don't talk to strangers

In a big city such as Philadelphia, people do not usually greet each other on the street. Children are taught, "Don't talk to strangers!" When you are new to a big city, we advise that you follow this rule.

It is especially important to avoid eye contact with strangers because this can give the feeling of a challenge or the message that you want to talk with them. Even if someone seems nice, the street is not the right place to meet someone. Never bring home someone you meet on the street. We think anyone with experience in big cities all over the world will recognize the commonsense of this message. But if you are from a small town--even from a small town in America, you may need to learn the new rules of a big city.

But there is no need to be rude. If you accidentally bump someone, you should say, "Excuse me." If someone holds the door for you going into a store you should say, "Thanks" and do the same for the person following you.

If someone asks you for money on the street, it is best to say "Sorry" politely and keep walking. Do not stop to open your wallet or purse in the street.

Be careful of scam. For example, imagine if a stranger asks for your help on the street. The stranger will give you a lot of his money from the bank if you give him just a little of yours to put in the bank. DO NOT DO THIS! I know one international graduate student who lost one year of her family's tuition money because of this famous scam, called the "pigeon drop." If someone asks you for help, say, "Sorry" politely and keep walking.

If someone asks for help and you are worried that this person is in serious trouble, you can go to the nearest street corner and call "911" on your cell phone and say, "There is a person in trouble here at the corner of Arch and 32nd streets" (for example). If you are on the Drexel campus, you can use a blue phone to call Drexel security to explain the situation.

The problem of poverty has not been solved even in a very rich country such as the United States. Be assured that there are many good organizations trying to combat poverty in the United States. Many international students have helped volunteer in soup kitchens or food centers in Philadelphia. One good organization which uses volunteers is Philabundance (www.philabundance.org).

Waiting in line

In a service situation such as buying a train ticket or getting an ID, it is our custom to help people one at a time in an orderly fashion. "First come, first served" or "Take a number" all refer to the idea that you will be helped in order of the time you arrived. Even if you have a *very very little little* question, you need to wait your turn to ask it. The person working at the desk won't even look at you if you come up on the side because they are doing their best to give all their attention to the customer in front of them. Trying to "cut in" or "butt in" or "budge in" ahead of the others will really bother the other people in line.

If you are standing in a long line, and you see three or four of your best friends, you will really make the people behind you angry if you invite them to join you. Of course, you can always ask the people behind you, "Do you mind?" and see what they say.

Once it is your turn, of course, you can take all the time you need.

Asking other questions at a desk

If you need to ask a question of a service representative or a security guard or a ticket seller, we frequently start with the words, "Excuse me." For example, "Excuse me, can you tell me where the elevator is?"

Rules and regulations

The U.S. is a big country and we like to think that everyone (rich or poor) has to follow the same rules. If someone says, "That's the rule" don't try to argue with the person. The speaker has a job to do and has a set of rules to enforce as fairly as possible to everyone. You might ask the person, "Is there anything you can suggest that I do? or is there someone I can talk to?"

If the rule doesn't make sense to you, find out more information about it and try to get it changed if it isn't a good one. This takes time and organizational change. But the point is, the person who tells you the rule at the time probably can't change it. And no matter how much he or she would like to help you *personally*, it is his or her *job* or *role* to enforce regulations in a fair and uniform manner.

II. Making friends

Friendliness vs. friendship

Because of American friendliness in talk, you may expect that it will be easy to make friends in United States. Yes and no. While it is easy to meet people in the U.S., the process of making a friend is different. It takes time to get to know someone, find things in common, and build trust. Hopefully you will get to know a lot of people, and make a few lasting friends during your years at Drexel.

Be careful not to just "hang out" with people of your own background because you understand each other and share each other's culture and communication patterns. It's easier and safer, but ultimately, you will not benefit from the rewards of travel. Sometimes international students walk in small groups of three or four friends together and speak their home language together. This is a wonderful source of support--but don't let your friends from home be your only friends. Other people will find it hard to meet you if you travel in a group all the time. (This same advice, by the way, is true for Americans who come to Drexel from the same high school.)

Let's get together sometime!

When you are in the process of getting to know people better, you will often hear, "Let's get together sometime!" or "Maybe we can go for coffee sometime" or "Maybe we can study French together sometime." Your answer to this can be, "Sounds great!" But this is not yet an actual invitation. This is only a statement of potential interest to see if you are potentially interested too.

The next time you meet this person, you can say, "I'd really like to get together sometime" and hopefully the other person will say, "I'd really like that too." By this time, it might be time to exchange emails or cell phone numbers and start to try to find a real time to get together.

If you try to find an actual time to get together and the other person is always busy, it may be a signal he or she is not interested. Three tries is enough to know. If the other person keeps saying "Not now, but maybe sometime" it probably is not going to happen.

Invitations

You may also be surprised that no one invites you to their family's home or takes care of you during U.S. holidays. In your country, you might take care of an American student better than Americans will take care of you here. Please do not feel it is because something is wrong with you. It's not! It's just our cultural style. We are a big country filled with a lot of different people. Holidays are sometimes the only time families are all together. But that shouldn't stop you from being the first one to invite someone else to do something with you. That's the way a friendship starts.

Paying the bill

When you do go out with someone for something casual, be prepared to pay for yourself, no matter who finally managed to make the invitation that got you together. If you are standing in line at Starbucks, for example, you will order and pay separately. If you are at a table in a restaurant, you might hear your friend ask, "Can we have separate checks please?" If not, when the bill comes, you will be expected to split the bill ("go Dutch") according to what you have ordered, plus the tax and tip. Tips range from 15% to 20% of the check. So for example, if the bill with tax is \$15.00, you should leave between \$2.25 and \$3.00 as a tip unless you are dissatisfied with the service.

If you do want to pay for the other person, you can say, "My treat."

A "real date" is something different—beyond the scope of this guide. If you want to know about American dating behavior, find someone you like and respect, and ask his advice or her advice.

Be direct

Directness is seen as a virtue. We like people to "tell it like it is"--that is, speak from their own experience and according to their own ideas. When we think someone is stalling, hesitating, or being indirect, we have a lot of expressions to encourage them to be direct: "Get to the point!" "Don't beat around the bush!" and "Cut to the chase!"

We expect you to represent your point of view rather than trying to intuit and represent the other person's point of view.

Speaking directly does not mean you should be rude or unkind. When someone asks you what you think of their new haircut, and you think it looks bad, will you say: "That haircut looks terrible?" No--especially with a situation that cannot be changed, you will want to find a softer way to give a response, looking at the positive side: "I can see your eyes so much better now."

"No" means "no"

As a general rule, we do not say "Yes" when we mean "maybe" or "No" when we really mean "Yes" or "maybe." When we say "no," we mean "no."

- •If you are at someone's house for dinner, and the hostess asks you if you want more pie, if you say "no," you will not be asked again and you will get no pie.
- •If you want to buy dinner for your friend, and he says, "That's very generous of you, but no thanks," then that means no.
 - •If you want to kiss someone and she says "no," that means no.
- *If you want to borrow a reference book from the library and the librarian says "no," that means no.

Behind the back

There are many words in English to describe the behavior of someone who says one thing to someone's face and something else to other people. Being "two-faced;" "going behind your back;" "talking behind your back;" and in its extreme, "back-stabbing" all refer to two standards of information--one "to someone's face" and the other not. If you disagree with someone, or someone hurt you in some way, it is better to try to resolve it directly than to talk about it to someone else unless you can trust that friend completely.

This virtue of directness and plain speech comes from the history of the U.S. as a land of pragmatism and action, where "actions speak louder than words."

Privacy

In recent years, it has been common for people to divulge or "share" emotions or private problems like alcoholism in public and private settings. You should feel free to decide for yourself in any situation how much personal information you disclose about yourself even when other people are telling you their life history. Your privacy is yours to keep. Similarly, you should

respect others' privacy and talk about personal topics that they have already told you about. You can also ask them questions they have asked you about your life. For example, if someone asks you where you are from, you can return the question, "How about you? Where are you from?"

Facebook and other electronic networks are public forums that have information permanently available through archived records. When you write something on Facebook, it is permanently retrievable. Be aware!

Taboo topics

Do not make jokes or comments about other people's ethnicity, religion, race, or sexual preference, body size, body attractiveness, or anything else that turns them into an "object" to be commented upon.

When you refer to someone you do not know, do not use body or skin characteristics. Don't say, "The man with spots on his face." Say, "The man with the blue jacket."

Conversational talk

American conversation has been described as a tennis game, with one player hitting the ball to the other, back and forth. This is a very good image, because you have to get someone to hit the ball to you before it's your turn. How do you get the ball---that is, how do you join the conversation?

To show that you are ready to talk and join the conversation, you have to show that you are paying attention to the other speaker. You do this through nodding your head and making small sounds of agreement or encouragement such as "Oh, hmm, yeah.." If you watch other conversations, you will see these small sounds and motions of feedback. When you want to talk, you lean forward slightly and look the other speakers directly in the eye and they usually will conclude their thought and let you speak. If they just start speaking more loudly, it means they are not ready to give up "the floor" and you will have to wait.

But you probably won't have to wait long. Turns at talk are short, no more than a few sentences unless the speaker is telling a story. To gain practice listening to stories and other conversation in American English, you can listen to podcasts from "Storycorps" (see resources).

Even though Americans make a lot of face and head movements in conversation, we don't touch each other on the shoulder or give small pats on the arm. We keep about two to three feet of distance between us in a conversation.

When we meet for the first time, we usually shake hands (although some women do not). We don't kiss each other on the cheek.

Idioms, sayings, and references in everyday speech

The U.S. is a highly individualistic, competitive society and many expressions are related to winning or losing or sports. A lot of value is put on the attitude and work with which you go about doing an activity: the idea of "being a good sport" is very important. "It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game that counts" is one expression related to the idea of good sportsmanship. Many expressions come from baseball and football such as "Coming out of left field" and "doing an end run."

Many expressions remain in English from its long European heritage of language and culture. Expressions such as "Pandora's box", "Midas touch," and the "Trojan Horse" refers to

mythical stories from Greece. Other expressions and references come from the Judeo-Christian heritage. Such figures as Adam and Eve, Noah and his ark, and David and Goliath are well known stories from this shared tradition that have made their way into common speech. There are also many references to popular movies, TV shows, and characters, such as Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz.

Whenever you find a reference to a name, it will be fun for you to try to find out what the story is behind it by asking someone or reading about it. The words and references in our language are a deep part of our culture.

Compliments

Americans give compliments freely. That's a nice handbag. Cute hat. I like your earrings. I like your jeans. Great presentation.

The best response is a simple "Thank you" and a few words about where you got the item. Compliments are one way to start a conversation with someone you want to talk to. Women use this more than men generally. Do not comment about someone's body or weight even if you mean it as a compliment because you do not know how the person will feel about it.

III Working things out

Apologies, disagreements, and resolving conflict

Apologizing for a mistake is one of the hardest things for most people to do. This is especially true for people who try hard to do everything right. Making a mistake, however, is inevitable in life. We all "goof up" on occasion.

The American English term, "I'm sorry" is used both to express personal responsibility in the case of a mistake and sympathy without personal responsibility. For example,

- (a) "I lost the book you lent me. I'm sorry."
- (b) "I heard your car got stolen. I'm sorry."

are both appropriate uses of the terms, "I'm sorry," but only (a) is an apology.

Sometimes people say things like, "I'm sorry you got upset when I lost your book." That is not an apology and doesn't make the other person feel better. Ways of expressing an apology include "I'm sorry; " "I was wrong;" I made a mistake;" Please forgive me; " "Please accept my apology."

Disagreements

People can disagree overtly in the United States. Ideally, people can disagree with others' ideas without disliking the speakers: We can "agree to disagree." When you are in a discussion with another person, how can you disagree politely? Here are some words and phrases that are useful.

"You may be right. But on the other hand..."

[&]quot; I see it a bit differently."

[&]quot; Some people might say that..."

Disagreements should never degenerate into shouting, name-calling or any personal words about the other person such as "Only an idiot would think that..." If disagreements escalate into these situations, they have gone too far and you should end the conversation.

Resolving conflicts

When you are having a conflict with another person, it is expected that you will try to resolve it yourself rather than going to another person (a third party). Go directly to the other person and ask if you can talk about the situation—but only when you are clear about your goals and are not angry or upset.

If going directly to the other person doesn't help, you may then consider going to another person for help. But please, don't go to the supervisor, boss, or president before you try to resolve the conflict face-to-face with the individual.

Important! The exception to the general rule of working conflict out directly is when the person is your supervisor and you are concerned about sexual harassment or other inappropriate personal behavior between you. If you have other concerns about the person with whom you have a conflict--for example, you are concerned that this person is mentally unstable--your best policy is probably to "walk away" from the conflict and notify the Counseling Center [see Resources] or a faculty member.

Resolving conflicts with your roommate

Living in a dormitory and sharing a room with a new person is one of the great adventures of going to college. In some cases, you will find yourselves to be instantly compatible, seeing "eye to eye" on all issues. It is more likely, however, that you will find your roommate (your "roomie") to have different habits and styles that will occasionally annoy you and may grow into real problems unless you find a way to work them out. For example, some people go to bed early, some late. Some like music, some like quiet. Some may even break rules, such as drinking alcohol in the room.

Some people avoid conflict and just wait out the year, making plans to get another roommate with a friend they meet. They may also go to the residential office and apply for a change of roommate. Unless you tell your roommate about the problems though, they will not know that you are dissatisfied and may feel you have gone behind their back.

Instead, you should try to communicate openly and honestly. It may help to have a meeting once a month between just the two of you, perhaps at a coffee shop. You can use it as a chance to plan improvements to the room (a new lamp) or any special events. You can identify problems and make suggestions for improvement. Frame your criticisms as "suggestions for improvement." Start with positives--things you really like about rooming together. Then give suggestions for improvement. Use "I" statements:

"When I don't sleep enough, I am too tired to do my work. Can we make a schedule for turning off the lights at night that works for both of us?"

You will feel much better after you have had a chance to express yourself. And guess what! You will be surprised to find out that the other person has some suggestions for you too.

After making suggestions, end with positives: "I really like the way our room looks with the new posters. Thank you for getting them."

If you can keep a regular time and place to address small issues, they will not grow to be big issues. You will find your communication skills improving at the same time. If this is not possible, you may then need to go to the resident advisor (RA) to ask for help. That is why your RA is there.

III. Communicating in the Classroom

Communicating with your professor

What should you call your professor?

Many professors have doctoral degrees. You will know if you see the "Ph.D." after their name, for example, "Maria Sanchez, Ph.D." She should be addressed as "Dr. Sanchez." However, all your faculty can be addressed with the more general term, "Professor," as in "Professor Sanchez."

Emails

E-mail is an important form of communication between you and your professor and can influence the way he or she thinks of you.

When you write your professor an email, please use standard English. Do not use "u" for "you" or " "2day" for "today." Please give simple explanations: "I missed your class today because I was sick." You do not have to write, "I was vomiting all morning." Leave some details to the imagination.

Make sure you know how to spell your professor's name.

Use your official Drexel email when communicating with your professor. Don't use slang names such as "hotchick@gmail.com."

If you send your professor an email, give him or her time to get back to you (at least 48 hours). Even if you have just a simple question, don't expect an instant reply. Your professor teaches, does research, and has meetings throughout the day and may not get a chance to check email frequently.

Office hours

Your professor schedules regular office hours. That is a time for you to visit him or her privately to talk about any problems or questions you have. Even if you don't have any problems, it's a good idea to stop by to say hello and ask a few questions.

The classroom

The classroom in the U.S. university may look unlike any other classroom you have been in. You will see students come late, eat food in class, put their feet on the furniture, give uninformed answers in discussions, and text message their friends while the professor lectures.

What you will not see are those students' grades. Good performance in a class still depends upon coming on time, paying attention, doing the work, and participating thoughtfully in class.

Course attendance

Faculty have attendance policies for their courses and students need to meet that policy as it is stated in the syllabus. The syllabus is a sort of contract that gives the "rules" of the course so that it is fair for everyone.

You should always check the course syllabus to see your professor's rules about attendance. Many courses have a limit on how many classes you can miss without affecting the grade. You should try to schedule doctors' appointments and job interviews outside your regular class hours.

When students miss a class, they sometimes email their professor with the question, "Did I miss anything important?" Professors don't like to get that question because they think their classes are always important. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what happened in class by a) contacting another student in the class; or b) going to the professor's office hours.

If you have an ongoing emergency in your life that requires you to miss more than one week of classes, you should make an appointment with your advisor and with your professors to explain what is going on. If you need to withdraw from a course, you must do it before the end of the sixth week of the term. If you need an incomplete in the course, you must make arrangements before the end of the term regarding when you will be able to complete the course.

And finally, if you do have an unavoidable conflict, being pro-active means scheduling an appointment with your professor in advance to talk about your conflict to ask if there is anything you can do to minimize impact on your course. Your professor may not be able to accommodate your schedule and does not have to. But you can give it "the old college try" —that is, your best effort.

Classroom etiquette

If you have to enter a classroom late, do not knock on the door and wait to be invited in. Once the professor has started talking, class has started, and you should ease your way in as quietly as possible. Cell phones must be turned off.

If you need to go to the restroom, you may get up and ease yourself out of the room, opening and closing the door as quietly as possible. You do not need to ask permission.

You may bring food and drink to class, but delicious or strong smells will distract other students.

Raise your hand (palm out) to answer questions but put it down when other students are talking.

Classroom participation

Classroom participation is expected from students and is often part of the course grade. It is the culture of the university for faculty to draw ideas from students and use them to illustrate an idea or make a point. Therefore, you should not be afraid to answer a question if you can back it up with a reason from the readings or your own experience. Professors appreciate interest in their topic and will use your question or comment to stimulate further discussion.

Professors often address their questions to the class in an "open ended" style. That is, they ask, "Can anyone tell me the most important events of stock market history?" Then they look for students to volunteer by raising their hands or looking up at them. If you think you can answer the question, raise your hand or look directly at the professor and sit up. If the professor calls upon another student, put your hand down when that student is talking. Wait until the student is finished talking to raise it again.

Try to make at least one contribution to the discussion every class or every week. Perhaps it is simply to ask the professor to give more information about an assignment or course requirement. Sit near the front of the class. If you don't speak in class, try to come early or stay afterward to ask a question or give an idea to the professor. It is very important that you show that you are an active participant in the course, that you are doing the reading, and thinking about what you are learning.

Working in groups

Part of your grade may be based on a group project. If your professor says, *Find a partner*, what do you do? The easiest way is to turn to the person closest to you and say "Do you want to work together?" Then the two of you can find others. Do not just choose your friend to work with. Working with other students, especially American students, will help you learn the expectations of the work.

The first step is probably exchanging emails. Someone needs to take charge and decide how the work will be divided. You should volunteer for the parts that you can do best. Don't be afraid to ask one of the members if he or she could look at your first draft before you give it to the full group.

If you do not fully understand the assignment, go to the professor for more explanation either before or after class or during office hours. This is extremely important. The relationship between professor and student here is much more accessible than in many countries.

The presentation

Sooner or later you will be asked to make a presentation in your class. This may be with PowerPoint or posters. Please do your best to prepare and practice your presentation. Here are five tips for a good presentation:

- 1. Rehearse. Practice several times with a friend. Be sure you have time to cover your points without rushing. Do NOT RUSH! Mentally practice starting the speech, making your points, and finishing the speech successfully.
- 2. Keep to the time limit. If your presentation is supposed to be ten to fifteen minutes, you should plan to present for ten minutes and then answer questions. It takes organization to get your main point across in a short period of time so be sure to practice so you can do this without rushing.
- 3. Follow this starting sequence: Go to the front of the room or podium, breathe, look around, and smile. Then start talking.
- 4. Provide a good handout or other visual aid to support your speech. MAKE SURE your spelling is correct.
- 5. Start with an interesting introduction such as a question or an anecdote. Do not begin with an apology! End with a clear conclusion using words such as: *In conclusion, in short, in summary*. Then ask for questions saying, "I'd be very happy to answer any questions."

The English Language Center has a course for students listed under Humanities: HUM006: "Oral communication skills for nonnative speakers" that teaches students how to give good

presentations. The course COM230 ("Techniques of speaking") is offered in the Department of Culture and Communication to teach presentational speaking skills.

Writing on exams and papers

Learning good writing skills is extremely important as you will use them throughout your university years and in many jobs. There are rules for good sentences and also for ways of organizing the sentences into good paragraphs and essays.

Writing should show your own original thought as well as understanding of the topic from other points of view. Showing only other points of view is not enough. This is considered mere *regurgitation* of material. You must come to your own conclusion about the topic and the information you have read.

The style of writing used in the United States is deductive and explicit. You must give your main point or thesis in a *thesis statement* early in the essay (usually at the end of the introduction). Then you support your thesis through evidence.

Good writing is a process of drafting, revising, re-drafting and revising. Writing in academic English is very *reader-oriented*. When you first write, you are giving your ideas in a way that is clear to you, the writer. As you revise, you make your ideas increasingly clear to other people, the readers. It is very helpful to have other people read your writing and show you places where your ideas are not clear. The Writing Center is a place you should visit frequently for help in writing [see Resources].

Getting feedback from your professor

Your professor will try to give you encouraging feedback such as: "Good start on this paper. Your topic is interesting. Provide more examples and go more deeply into the background." This feedback shows that the professor likes what you have done so far, but you haven't done enough. Just because the professor writes, "Good start" does not mean the paper is finished now. In the American system, in general, we try to motivate students by supporting what they have done well so far. The important part for you as a student is to follow the suggestions given.

Plagiarism

Important! In all your writing, you must be careful not to plagiarize. Plagiarism is using other people's words or ideas without giving them credit. Plagiarism is considered dishonest, and you can lose credit on an assignment, fail a course, or get "kicked out" of college by plagiarizing. You must learn the rules [see Resources].

Cheating

Cheating means you submit work that you say is your own but really comes from someone else. This is wrong and can get you in academic trouble. But when you work with others, how can you draw the line between your own work and the work of others?

Generally speaking, when you prepare for a test beforehand with your classmates, and then take the test individually in class, that is not cheating. That is good preparation.

In the same way, if you discuss homework together and then write the answers individually, that is a good support group. But one person doing the homework questions and giving the answers to other friends is cheating.

If you get *a take-home test*, it is expected that you will answer the questions individually. In fact, if the professor gets more than one answer that is worded exactly the same, he or she will regard that as cheating. In this case, both or all students with the same answers might be given an F.

However, the professor may think it is fine if you discuss the questions on the test together with classmates before you sit down by yourself to write the answer. You should clarify this with the professor in advance.

V. Making the most of your experience

The first term

Your first term is likely to be the most difficult as you "learn the ropes" of the academic schedule, meet new people, and adjust to the food and weather. In the first term, new students usually spend more money, gain more weight, and have more academic difficulties than in other terms. It won't always be so hard. You will learn to be successful here as you have been in your other school experiences.

Culture shock

Culture shock is the feeling of disorientation due to differences in culture and language. It can lead to feelings of anger, sadness, confusion, and depression. It is normal to experience some degree of culture shock in moving to a new country. As you become more familiar with the people, the food, the language, the expectations, and the routines of your new life, your feelings of culture shock should ease. If they persist and start to interfere with your ability to do your schoolwork or make friends, you should seek help. A good place to go is to the Counseling Center at 201 Creese Center.

Food and weather

Many students gain weight in their freshman year--in fact, the "Freshman Fifteen" refers to the average weight gain of fifteen pounds that occurs when students eat too much of the wrong kind of food. Pay attention to your eating choices so that you can stay healthy.

The weather in Philadelphia is highly variable. Check it online by zipcode (19104) and dress appropriately. If you come from a warm place near the equator, be prepared for the dark of the winter months. Ask your roommate or RA about how to dress warmly enough for the very coldest time outside and for the extremes of outside and inside the classroom.

English language support

If you are having difficulty managing the reading or other workload in your first term, you may be able to combine one English language course with a reduced academic load. See an international student advisor at the International Students and Scholars Services (ISSS) for this option. The ELC has courses to help support your academic English language performance throughout your time at Drexel but especially in the first term.

There are special sections of Freshman Writing (ENGL 101, 102, & 103) reserved for students who may benefit from smaller classes and more class time and individualized support for their writing in the freshman year. Ask your advisor about these classes or email Dr. Barbara Hoekje at hoekje@drexel.edu.

Final thoughts

We have seen many international students be successful in their classes and experience at Drexel. How do they do it? Here are three tips:

- 1. Pay attention to your physical and mental well-being. Living in a new country takes extra effort and energy. You must get enough sleep, eat healthy foods, and keep a positive, long-term view of your experience.
- 2. Don't isolate yourself. Participate in extra curricular activities. Keep a strong relationship with your home country friends but make friends with Americans and other international students too. Try new things!
- 3. Seek help quickly if you have academic or personal worries. There are many resources to help you. Here are places you can go if you need advice or help: Your faculty; your advisor; your RA; the Counseling Center; the English Language Center; the International Students and Scholars Services. See the resource list at the end of the guide.

Finally, good luck and happy communicating at Drexel University! We are happy to have you with us and we wish you the best in your time here.

Resources

English Language Center (www.drexel.edu/elc)

Storycorps <u>www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4516989</u> (has good podcasts for listening to personal stories)

Drexel Counseling Center, 201 Creese Center 215- 895-1415. www.drexel.edu/StudentLife/ch/CC main.html

Drexel International Students and Scholars Services, 210 Creese Center (<u>www.drexel.edu/isss</u>)

Drexel Writing Center /MacAlister 0032 http://www.drexel.edu/writingcenter/

Plagiarism website http://www.library.drexel.edu/resources/tutorials/plagiarism/plagiarism6.html

Glossary

"Coming out of left field"-(from baseball)—Having an unusual or strange idea that is not logically connected to the ongoing situation

"Doing an end run"—(from football) going around someone to ask someone with more authority

"Goof up"—Make a mistake

"Kicked out" of school--expelled

"Learn the ropes" -- learn how to do things in a new place.

"Money talks" -- an expression that means that people with money have power

"Old college try" –give your best effort

[&]quot;Scam" -- A fraudulent scheme to get your money or help

[&]quot;Sixers" --Shorthand for the "76'ers," Philadelphia's basketball team