

# New York - Midtown

## Student Guide

**2011**



**Welcome to our center!**

# Welcome

Welcome to Kaplan. This guide will help you make the most of your chosen course and will give you useful information that you can refer to during your stay.

## **So, what's studying at Kaplan really like?**

You have probably already imagined what your life will be like at Kaplan. You may have ideas about life in the United States based on films, television or stories from friends and family. This guide aims to make your transition into the USA as enjoyable and easy as possible and will tell you what to expect when you attend a Kaplan center. We hope that this information will help you to form realistic expectations and encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities ahead.

## **Will I be able to adjust to a new culture?**

At Kaplan we understand that your transition into life in a different culture may be challenging at times – but it will also be fun. You will soon meet people from around the world, try new things, and live in a different culture. One of the best ways to make sure that your transition goes smoothly is to maintain a positive attitude and stay healthy. View your new environment as a place to learn interesting things about yourself and others. Try to get enough sleep, eat right, exercise, and participate in social activities. Take time to observe and enjoy the new things going on around you and appreciate the differences you find in your host country.

## **I have more questions...**

Please contact your local representative if you have more questions before you depart. After you arrive, Kaplan staff at the center will be happy to help you with any problems that you have or any questions you want to ask.

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## Before you leave...

We understand that at times you may feel nervous when preparing for your stay in the USA. There are some important things you need to know before you leave that will make your life easier when you arrive. Use our checklist on the next page to ensure that you do not forget anything and are well prepared for the exciting times ahead of you.

### **Pocket money**

We recommend that you budget approximately USD \$250 for every week of your course. This should cover personal expenses, laundry, local travel and Kaplan activities. You will need additional money if you plan to rent a car, take weekend trips or travel. Bring USD \$150 with you in cash. You should also bring a debit or credit card. You will need to check with your financial institution to make sure you will be able to withdraw cash from a US ATM. Do not bring foreign currency. It is not wise to carry around large amounts of cash.

### **Clothing**

Students dress casually for classes. You should bring some nice clothes for going out to restaurants, nightclubs etc. You should also bring layers of clothing, so that you are prepared for both the fog and the sunshine as well as clothing for sports and outdoor activities. You can usually rent sporting equipment. The climate is changeable and may be very different from your own. The typical summer temperature is approximately 25C and in winter 0C to 6C.

### **Bank account**

If you are staying for longer than three months you may wish to open up a US bank account. The school staff will be happy to give you banking information and tell you how to set up an account.

### **Electrical current**

Standard voltage in the USA is 110 volts. To make sure that you are able to use all your electrical appliances bring a converter and an adaptor with you.



## Checklist

Use this checklist to make sure that you have packed everything you will need and that you are well prepared for your trip to the United States. Check off each item as you pack it, or complete the task.

- Passport and acceptance letter**  
Remember to bring your passport, driver's license and Kaplan documentation (given to you by your Kaplan representative) in your hand luggage so that it is easy to access on arrival. Bring these documents with you to your first day of class.
- Student visa and Minor form**  
Ensure that your student visa is with your passport and is stored in your hand luggage. Remember your I-20 form if you have an F-1 visa. Students under the age of 17 need a minor form signed by their parents. Bring these documents with you to your first day of class.
- Homestay/residential address details**  
Pack your homestay or residential address details in your hand luggage so they are easy to access on your arrival. You will have received these details from your Kaplan representative.
- Knowledge of local laws and customs**  
Quiz yourself about local laws and customs in the United States. Talk to your Kaplan representative about what you should expect and how you should behave in North America.
- Proof of Health and Travel Insurance**  
You must bring proof of your Travel Insurance and Health Insurance with you and store this information in your hand luggage. Also leave a copy with your family at home in case you lose any documentation during your stay. Bring these documents with you to your first day of class.
- USD \$150 in cash**  
Store this cash on your body or in your hand luggage. Try to avoid counting or pulling out your money in busy public places. Students should also ensure that they have the USD \$40 cash book deposit fee with them on the first day of orientation.
- Correct clothing**  
Pack something warm in your hand luggage and ensure that you are wearing layers in case you get hot.
- Adaptor for electrical appliances**  
Remember standard voltage in the USA is 110 volts. Remember that the plugs may differ from your home country so bring an adaptor too.
- Deposit if you are staying in residential accommodation.**  
A housing deposit is usually required if you are staying in a residence. Check the amount with your Kaplan representative or on the relevant residence factfile and have this money ready for when you first arrive at your accommodation.
- Prescription medication**  
Pack medication carefully in full packaging in case you are asked questions in customs on your departure or arrival. Remember to bring enough of your prescription medicine with you as US pharmacists will not fill a foreign prescription.
- Emergency information stored in your wallet or purse**  
This can be found on the last page of this booklet.

## When you arrive

### Kaplan transfers

Kaplan can arrange a comfortable and stress-free transfer from any of the three area airports to anywhere in the city you'll be staying - whether you've chosen Kaplan housing or not.

Most students choose to fly in to John F. Kennedy International airport (JFK), but we will also arrange transfers from Fiorello La Guardia Airport (LGA) and Newark International Airport (EWR). Your driver will greet you outside of the baggage claim area in the airport holding a Kaplan sign. All of the details of your transfer will be confirmed and your confirmation number will be provided to you after you've provided us with your flight details. We can also arrange a transfer back to the airport when you have to return home.

### Independent Transfers

If you choose not to use the Kaplan transfer service, the famous New York "Yellow Taxis" are always available. In the airport, you can simply follow the signs pointing you in the direction of "Ground Transportation" to an outdoor waiting area where you'll wait in line for the next available car. The cost for a taxi from most NY airports is a flat fee to anywhere in New York City, so don't be alarmed if the driver doesn't turn on the meter.

A shuttle and bus service is also available at each airport and specific information about these services is available at the Ground Transportation waiting area.



Kaplan New York Midtown

## Your first day

On the first day of your course you need to report to the Kaplan center at 131 West 56th Street, at 9:00 am. Your first day will be a Monday unless there is a national holiday on the Monday - in which case your first day will be Tuesday.

### Your course will begin with an all-day orientation which will include:

- Welcome Breakfast/Speaking Test
- Staff Introductions
- Placement Test
- F-1 Orientation
- Housing Orientation
- Academic Orientation & Materials Distribution

### Please bring the following with you:

- Passport and I-94 form (a piece of paper you will receive upon arrival to the USA)
- USD \$40 book deposit (cash)
- I-20 form (certificate of eligibility), if required
- Your address in the USA
- Course payment/voucher, if available
- All of your Kaplan documents and a pen and paper for notetaking purposes.
- Passport-sized photo

At the end of the day you will receive information about your class schedule, classroom number, study level, elective course, and the hours you are to attend class. You will be assigned the most appropriate class for your level of English.

## Center Facilities

### Classrooms

The Manhattan International Center has 21 classrooms for group classes and two additional small-group/private tutoring rooms. All of our classrooms are clean and spacious with plenty of room for our students to spread out. The classrooms are equipped with tables and chairs – ideal for group and pair work exercises. Each room has access to audio/visual equipment.

### Multimedia and IT center

Kaplan has a computer lab, with more than 20 computers for student use. There is also free, wireless internet access throughout the building.

### Library

Our lending library has a wide variety of textbooks, dictionaries, specific-skill texts and reference materials for students to use for additional practice. We also have multimedia materials (CDs, DVDs and CD ROMs) for students to borrow and use during their structured study hours.

### Student Lounge

We have an enormous student lounge on the third floor that seats more than 50 people comfortably. Here you'll find public telephones, vending machines and microwave ovens. In addition, each floor has a small lounge area with comfortable chairs and small tables. We also have a prayer/meditation room on the sixth floor for those wishing to observe quiet times throughout the day.

### Cafeteria

While there is no on-site cafeteria, within steps of the center there is a variety of restaurants from fast food and deli to fine dining.

### Sports facilities

Sports such as running, soccer, baseball and kayaking are all available nearby.

### Gym facilities

Students can join a local gym located across the street and locations at or near their residence or homestay.

### Activities/Social Program

While it doesn't take much imagination to keep yourself busy in New York during the time you're not studying, Kaplan International Center Midtown provides a varied calendar of activities to fill your days. With workshops, parties, walking tours, museum trips, sporting events, Broadway shows and more, you'll discover parts of New York you didn't even know existed! These activities are lead by a member of the Kaplan staff and will help you to meet new people and discover the city.



Midtown classroom



Midtown student lounge

### Sample Timetable

Your timetable may vary according to the type of course you book and the time of year, but an example timetable is given below:

|                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 9:00 am - 10:30 am  | General English Class |
| 10.45 am – 12.15 pm | General English Class |
| 12:15 pm - 1:00 pm  | Lunch                 |
| 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm   | Elective Class        |
| 2:45 pm - 4:15 pm   | Structured Study      |

## Local Information

### Transport - buses and trains

Most of the major New York City Subway lines have stops very near the Kaplan International Center Midtown location. The Yellow line (N,R,W and Q trains), the Blue line (A,C and E trains), the Orange line (B, D, F and V trains) and the Red line (1,2 and 3 trains) are all within a few blocks from the center. In addition, the New York City Bus System has stops throughout the city stopping just steps from the center's front door.

### Banks and Post Office

There are several banks within three blocks of the center. The closest post office is just 4 blocks away at 52nd street and 8th avenue.

### Restaurants and cafés

Just outside the entrance of the center you'll find many restaurants – from the inexpensive Burger Joint (located in the lobby of Le Parker Meridien Hotel) to the Carnegie Deli to the Russian Tea Room.

### Department stores and supermarkets

The Time Warner Center (a high-end shopping center) is just a 5-minute walk from the Midtown center. You could visit Armani, Benetton, Coach and Tourneau or have a sandwich at the Whole Foods Market (a grocery store with some of the freshest produce in the city).

### Telephone and Internet Café

The Midtown center offers students free wireless internet throughout the facility, with payphones available on the third floor to make both local and international calls (phone card for international).



Around Midtown



Students in New York City



Teacher and student at Kaplan Midtown



Kaplan students

### Cost of Living

Approximate prices in USD (subject to change)

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Sandwich   | \$6-\$8         |
| Lunch at a deli (take-away)<br>or low-end restaurant/diner | \$12-\$15       |
| Lunch at a moderate restaurant                             | \$25-\$30       |
| Hamburger  | \$6.50          |
| Tea/Coffee   | \$2.50          |
| at a high-end coffee shop                                  | \$4-\$5         |
| Tickets:   |                 |
| Movie  | \$12            |
| Bus/Subway   | \$2.25 each way |
| Weekly Transit Pass<br>(unlimited-ride MetroCard)          | \$27            |
| Monthly Transit Pass<br>(unlimited-ride MetroCard)         | \$89            |

### Sample Activities Schedule

Please note that this is a sample program and activities may change.

#### Week one

Monday - welcome new students and local area tour  
 Tuesday - visit the Statue of Liberty  
 Wednesday - bowling at Chelsea Pier  
 Thursday - night at a jazz club  
 Friday - happy hour and karaoke  
 Saturday - day trip to Philadelphia

#### Week two

Monday - welcome new students and local area tour  
 Tuesday - visit the Bronx Zoo  
 Wednesday - Broadway show  
 Thursday - pizza party  
 Friday - ice skating in Central Park  
 Saturday/Sunday - trip to Washington D.C.

# Homestay accommodation

Our homestay families reflect the diversity of life in the United States. They include young, senior and single parent families and couples with and without children. Hosts have varying ethnic backgrounds and different interests and lifestyles. Please refer to the United States of America homestay accommodation factfile for more details.

## Your life in a homestay

Living in a homestay will allow you to practice your English in a real-life setting. It is important to remember that you are both part of a family and a guest at the same time.

You may have to help with household chores, keep your bedroom tidy and make your bed each morning. Make sure that you always ask for permission to bring friends around and let your family know if you will not be at home for dinner or will be going away for the weekend! We want you to be comfortable with your family, but we cannot promise a family of a specific, age, gender, or ethnicity. Every family is different and will have unique lifestyles. Please make sure you understand your house rules upon arrival.

## Meals

Please tell your host if there are foods you like very much or do not like at all. Often, it is common for students to go with the host family to the grocery store to pick out food items.

**Breakfast:** Breakfast is usually a light meal consisting of cereal, fruit, toast, juice or coffee. Often these foods will be made available to you and you will prepare your own morning meal.

**Lunch:** You will be responsible for purchasing your own lunch at the center, a local restaurant or from the local stores. A refrigerator and a microwave may be available, or you may purchase your lunch in a nearby restaurant or cafeteria.

**Dinner:** Dinner may be a shared meal in the evening, or occasionally you may prepare your own meal with food supplied by your host. Leftovers, food remaining from a previous meal, are common to have at least once per week. It is polite to ask for a second helping if you are still hungry.

## What to bring

The US has very diverse climates and weather can range from very hot to very cold, therefore please check the weather in the region you plan to visit and pack accordingly. Your host will provide you with bed linen and towels. You can purchase toiletries and other personal items locally, but you should plan to bring specific items with you such as prescription medications if you require them (in adequate supply).

## Telephone use

Be sure to discuss phone usage with your host family on arrival. Your host's telephone should only be used for local and incoming calls. Remember to notify your family and friends of any time differences to avoid calls in the middle of the night. Students are asked to limit their calls to no more than 20 minutes, as there is usually one telephone line per household. You should purchase a phone card or use a personal mobile telephone for all long distance or international calls since it is very expensive to make international calls from a home line. Nearly all cell phone providers in the USA offer pre-paid cell phones, which are affordable and can also be purchased after you arrive.

## Internet

Most families have either wireless or DSL Internet in their home. However, you should plan to bring your own laptop since many families will not have a computer for you to share. All Kaplan centers are equipped with computer labs as well, with free Internet access at the center during business hours!

## Laundry facilities

Be sure to discuss this with your host family after you arrive as laundry facilities will depend on your homestay option. If your family does not have washing facilities, please take your laundry to a laundromat to wash and dry - please do not wash clothes in the bathroom or hang them to dry in your bedroom or on cupboards. The average cost per load of laundry (wash & dry) in an American laundromat is USD \$5.

## Drinking

The legal drinking age in the US is 21 years old; please obey the law and do not drink if you are under-age. It is polite to ask your host family for permission to drink in their home even if you are legally permitted based on your age.

## Smoking

When you book your accommodation, please request a family that allows smoking if you smoke. Most hosts will request smokers to smoke outside. In most US cities, it is illegal to smoke inside public places. Please make sure you discuss these rules with your host family. It is also considered polite to ask someone for permission to smoke next to them (even if you are outside).

## Getting to and from school

Your host will help you find your way to and from school on your first day and also show you how to use public transport. Journey time will depend on the location of your homestay. On average, it takes students about 45 - 60 minutes by train or bus to get from their homestay to the Kaplan International Center.

## Things to remember.....

- You are a part of the family as well as a guest.
- You may have to take part in family chores.
- Purchase a phone card or a pre-paid cell phone for international calls.
- Do not bring or store food items in your bedroom.
- Ask permission before inviting guests or friends to your homestay.
- Notify your family if you are not coming home for the night or will be away for the weekend.
- Ask permission to smoke.
- Ask permission to drink alcohol, even if you are above the legal drinking age of 21 years.
- Speak with your host family as much as possible to get the most out of your homestay.
- Accompany your host on outings and family activities.
- Expect cultural and personal differences and be tolerant of them.
- Be willing to try new foods.
- Ask questions and become familiar with American customs.

**Note: For information about residence accommodation, please request the appropriate residence fact file.**

# Health and Safety

If you or a friend is seriously ill and needs an ambulance call 911 (911 can also be used to contact the Police and Fire departments for other emergency situations). Stay calm and describe to the operator on the line what type of assistance you need and your location. You may be required to describe any symptoms. Explain as much as you can, don't worry if you are not confident with your English - say as much as you can, as clearly as you can.

## Medical and Travel insurance

Kaplan offers you a low-cost Travel and Medical Insurance Plan that we advise you to take. If you are not taking Kaplan Insurance you are required to show proof of alternative medical insurance. Travel and Medical Insurance is compulsory at all Kaplan schools for the duration of your stay.

## If you get sick

If you get sick while you are in the United States you should visit a doctor. You can ask staff at Kaplan reception or your host family where the nearest doctor is. If you have a minor illness you can often ask staff at a local pharmacy for advice. If you are ill, make an appointment to see a doctor and take any relevant insurance or medical documentation with you. You may be required to register with your local doctor.

Medical costs are at the discretion of your local doctor or hospital. A guide to costs in the United States is as follows:

- A consultation with a doctor (minimum USD \$60)
- Prescriptions at a Pharmacy (minimum USD \$25 per item)
- Dental treatment (minimum USD \$150)
- Eye tests or new eyeglasses (minimum USD \$150)

## Protecting your belongings

If you are not using Kaplan Medical and Travel Insurance we strongly recommend that you take out insurance for your personal belongings, especially cameras, radios, MP3 players and laptop computers. Personal items cannot be covered by Kaplan homestay or residence. You can cover these items with your own personal travel insurance. Please ensure that you are properly covered in case of loss or theft.

## ■ Things to remember.....

- Call 911 in case of fire, medical emergency or need for the police
- You must have Medical and Travel insurance to attend a Kaplan course. If you do not have Kaplan Medical and Travel insurance, you must provide proof that you are covered by another provider.

# Laws and customs

You may find that laws are enforced differently in the USA than they are in your home country. The USA's traditions of democracy place much responsibility on the individual. This means that you must obey the country's laws and respect its customs. It is important that you understand the laws, rules, and customs that you may encounter.

## Laws

- No one under the age of 21 in the United States may buy or drink alcohol, including beer and wine. It is against the law to buy alcohol for someone you know is under the age of 21.
- Cigarettes are for sale to persons aged 18 and over.
- Driving under the influence of alcohol is a very serious crime and police make regular random checks.
- Buying, selling and using drugs is illegal.

The police and Kaplan are very strict in enforcing these laws.

## Kaplan's rules

Kaplan has rules that must not be broken. These rules may apply to academic work at school as well as life in your residence or homestay.

- If you leave your Kaplan course, Kaplan has the right to revoke your student visa and advise you to return home.
- You must attend all classes. If you do not attend classes your representative and parents will be informed. If you do not improve your attendance, you will be sent home.
- Always tell Kaplan if you are going to be absent from school for any reason and tell your host family if you are going away overnight.
- If you commit a criminal offense or have to be severely disciplined you will be sent home and no refund will be given. We will also inform the immigration authorities.
- Be on time for all your lessons.

## Customs

Customs are an accepted way of behavior in a country. You need to know the customs of the USA to help you feel comfortable with people. Some important customs to know include:

**Women:** Women in the United States are equal to men and should always be treated fairly. Men and women share equally in household work and childcare.

**Lines:** Always stand in line and wait your turn when buying tickets, in a bank, post office or waiting for a bus. Keep to the right when standing on escalators.

**Friendliness:** Americans talk to strangers in public areas. This is a great way to practice English, but caution should be taken. You should not give out your address and telephone number, or accept inappropriate invitations. Although most people are friendly, some may be reluctant to speak with strangers.

**Please and Thank you:** These are very important words! Always use them if you ask someone to do something for you, or if they help you or give you information.

## Tipping

People in North America leave a tip for good service in restaurants, hair salons and other places. The tip rate at most restaurants is about 15 - 20 % of the bill and is not usually included. Fast-food service is not usually tipped unless it is delivered. Porters in stations, airports and hotels should be tipped USD \$1 per bag. Taxi drivers are generally given a 15% tip.

## Things to remember.....

- If you are under 21 years of age it is illegal to drink alcohol
- Buying, selling and using drugs is illegal
- Notify Kaplan if you are going to be absent from school
- Women are treated equally to men in the USA
- Remember to say please and thank you

# Important Dates to Remember

## National Holidays 2011

|                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Dec. 31, 2010                | New Year Holiday              |
| Jan. 17, 2011                | Martin Luther King Day        |
| May 30, 2011                 | Memorial Day                  |
| July 4, 2011                 | Independence Day              |
| Sept. 5, 2011                | Labor Day                     |
| Nov. 24-25, 2011             | Thanksgiving Holidays         |
| Dec. 26, 2011 - Jan. 2, 2012 | Christmas & New Year Holidays |

The dates above are the dates for national holidays for the year 2011. For holiday dates in other years, consult your Kaplan representative. If you arrive on a week where the Monday is a national holiday, your first day of school will be a Tuesday. Students enrolled in the Academic Year Program, or another long-term program, will also have a vacation during their stay. Please refer to the Kaplan brochure, or your Kaplan representative for further details of these holidays.

**We look forward to seeing you at Kaplan International Center New York Midtown. If you have additional questions please ask our staff on arrival.**

### Kaplan International Center New York Midtown

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**KAPLAN** INTERNATIONAL  
CENTERS

**Keep these numbers  
with you at all times!**

**Emergency Kaplan Number:**  
1-718-906-1045

**Emergency Number (Police, Fire, Ambulance):**  
911

Information in this guide is subject to change. Published Aug. 2010.