The Grad Assistant’s Unofficial Guide to Brown

From your International Graduate Student Assistants
Dear Incoming International Students,

Congratulations on your admission and, on behalf of the international student community here, we welcome you to Brown, your new home!

As the International Orientation graduate student assistants, we have compiled this guide to help ease your transition to Brown and life overseas. It contains useful information about getting to the university, tips on finding an apartment or roommates, navigating your way around the city, performing crucial admin-related tasks such as opening a bank account and getting a mobile phone, acquainting you with life in Providence beyond your academics, and much more.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of our lives including our ability to welcome you on campus in-person. However, Brown has a strong and vibrant international community and we are all here to help you settle in. Take your time to go through the information provided here so that you can make your first few days in Providence feel as familiar as possible. In the meantime, keep an eye on the Admitted Students and Orientation Guide and also join the Brown University International Graduate Students Group Facebook page to stay connected with your fellow international students.

Hope you to see you virtually!

Your IO Graduate Assistants team,
Joe, Sofia and Osama
Arriving on Campus & in Providence

By Air

Flying into Boston
If you are flying in from outside of the United States, the closest major international
airport to Brown University is the Boston Logan International Airport, which is
approximately a one-hour drive to campus. If you can drive and have a valid driver’s
license, various rental car options are available at the airport. Alternatively, both Uber and Lyft have been assigned dedicated parking
spots at the airport and can be used to travel to campus.

A typical Uber ride from Logan to Brown University Campus can cost between $60 to $75. Although costly, this mode of transportation
can make travelling with a lot of luggage easier and you can avoid the hassle of lugging it to a bus or train, which are otherwise more
affordable options.

Alternatively, it is possible to get a free shuttle bus (the Silver line) from Boston Logan to South Station Trainstation in Boston. From
there it is possible to take the Amtrak (American national rail) or MBTA (regional commuter rail) to Providence. Amtrak from Boston
to Providence starts at around $15, and takes just over an hour, but prices go up the closer to the date. The MBTA has a flat rate of
approximately $12 and takes about 90 minutes.

Another option is to get on a bus. Peter Pan bus lines go from Logan International terminal to
both Providence bus terminal and downtown Providence. The ride is 1 hour 10 min and costs
around $24. Once at Providence train station/ bus terminal, it is quickest and easiest to use
either Lyft or Uber to get to your apartment/Airbnb.

If you are flying in from another state, then T.F. Green Airport located in Warwick, RI is about
10 miles south of Providence (approximately 20 minutes). Uber/Lyft and car rental services are
available directly from the airport. Rail service is available in Warwick but the train station is
about 1.2 miles from the airport.

Tip: If you arrive after 6 pm you can also use Brown onCall - a free shuttle
that Brown University provides to travel
around Providence after dark - the
average wait time for the on-call shuttle
is 15 to 30 minutes. Shuttle times may
vary during University breaks (Please
note that using the shuttle service re-
quires a Brown ID).

Immigration at Airport
The typical Immigration experience for students at the airport should be rather straightforward. Make sure you have all the required
documents at hand especially your Passport (with valid US-Visa) and a valid Form I-20. At the beginning of the semester, there is a large
influx of students into the United States, so expect the airports to be busy and the immigration lines to be long: it may take up to two hours
or more to process a given flight. However, due to COVID-19 this processing time may vary as airports enact stricter safety protocols.
By Train

The Providence Amtrak/MBTA train station (100 Gaspee St, Providence, RI) is located very close to the Brown Campus (less than a mile). However, the campus is located on College Hill and the incline can prove to be a challenge if you intend to walk all the way with heavy luggage. Taxi pick up and drop off is available at the station to travel to the main campus or to Providence locations, however app services like Lyft or Uber are generally cheaper.

By Car

Brown is located near Interstate 95 and 195.

From the North or South on Interstate 95:
Take Exit 22A to Downtown Providence. Continue straight on Memorial Boulevard. At the fourth set of lights, turn left onto College Street. At the top of the hill, turn left onto Prospect Street. Take your first right onto Waterman Street. The Stephen Robert ’62 Campus Center will be on your right.

From the East on Interstate 195:
Take Exit 2 to South Main Street and continue for half a mile until the first set of traffic lights. Turn right onto College Street and then left at the top of the hill onto Prospect Street. Take your first right onto Waterman Street. The Stephen Robert ’62 Campus Center will be on your right.

From the Northwest:
Follow Route 146 to I-95 South then follow directions above (from north and south).

Parking on Campus

For Visitors
Visitors may find parking in Lot 68 Upper, also called the Power Street Parking Garage, located at 111 Power Street. The garage entrance is located at the intersection of Power and Thayer Streets.

*Disclaimer: All prices quoted in this guide are based on the experience of your fellow graduate students and Brown staff members. But please note that they are merely representative and actual prices may vary.
The garage has two gate arms which are left open. Please enter in the right lane and exit via the left lane. The Lot 68 Upper garage contains two pay stations, which are located at the front and rear of the garage. Please locate an empty parking space, purchase your visitor parking permit via a pay station and place your receipt permit on your vehicle dashboard.

*For Students*

Students can apply to reserve a spot in a Brown parking lot through the Brown Transportation Office. Both daytime and overnight parking are available, and annual rates range from $700 to $1,200.

**Parking Near Campus & in Providence**

Street parking on and near campus is tight; after 9 a.m. it can be difficult to find a spot that is closer than a 10-15 minute walk away. Most of the convenient blocks are metered. Overtime meter tickets are $25 or more. Many apartments and houses also include parking spaces, but not always. If parking is not available with a rental, it is often possible to rent space nearby. Typical rents for a parking space are between $50–$150 per month.

A Providence city ordinance prohibits parking on the street between the hours of 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. Overnight parking permits may also be purchased from Brown and the City of Providence.

On campus, Brown overnight parking is only available to graduate students who either live on campus or in Brown owned housing. Because of the scarcity of parking spaces around Brown, all members of the Brown community are encouraged to find alternate means of commuting to and from campus.

**Living in Providence/Accommodations**

Accommodations are plentiful in the greater Providence area, although the majority of options are not owned by the University. Brown does offer housing via the Brown University Auxiliary Housing Service. Monthly rental costs are usually higher with Brown owned housing and range from $1100/month to $1300/month for a studio or one-bedroom apartment respectively and $950/month for two-bedroom apartment (shared occupancy). Although expensive, this is a relatively hassle-free option for incoming first-year students. Brown does not run a credit check before offering you the apartment or ask you to pay separate utility bills and the apartments can be available immediately upon arrival on campus. Limited units are still available for the 2020-2021 academic year. Please contact Elizabeth Cotoia if you are interested in living in Brown-owned housing. The application process opens in March for leases that start the following summer, so we encourage students to apply early in future years. A limited number of units may be available for a spring move in date each year.
Many students, however, prefer to live in private rental properties in the Fox Point or Wayland Square neighborhoods – both are located around 10-15 minutes’ walk from the College Hill campus. Both neighborhoods offer a collection of restaurants and shopping areas.

Zillow, Craigslist and Apartments.com are other useful resources for searching for apartments online (or download their mobile apps). Alternatively, you can join the Brown University Housing, Sublets & Roommates facebook group page for information on off-campus housing. Another very useful resource is GSBB (Graduate Student Bulletin Board), where graduate students place all kinds of announcements including apartment listings and roommate searches. Once you have your Brown email activated you can put an ad there or track the ads by other students, who are looking for roommates. Here is more information on how to use the mailing list.

Also, be sure to check out the Guide to Off-Campus Living from the Brown Real Estate Office and a recording of the 2020 Incoming Graduate Student Housing Webinar (April 30, 2020).

Other towns to consider: Pawtucket, Cranston, Elmwood, Pawtuxet Village, East Providence, Johnston, and Seekonk are all within a 10-minute drive.

Where to stay when you arrive to Providence

Some students prefer to rent a room/apartment in advance, but finding a permanent place after you arrive is also an option. It usually takes 5 to 7 days when there are many open rentals with August 1 and September 1 move in dates. It may take slightly longer to find a place to live if you are starting in the spring, but there are always available rentals. The best option to find accommodation for the first several days is AirBnB. It will definitely cost less than a hotel.

As with any larger city, there is crime in Providence and students should be aware and mindful of their surroundings at night. We can personlly recommend the Foxpoint, Wayland Square, Downtown and Federal Hill neighborhoods, but there are many other safe neighborhoods and areas. As another option, the Grad Student Mailing list can be really helpful to find a couch to crash for several days as well and it is going to be much cheaper than AIRBnB for sure.

Furnishing your apartment

Most apartments in Providence are not furnished. Brown University Auxiliary Housing does provide some basic furnishings (check their website for specifics).
but in most cases you will need to buy basic amenities such as a bed, mattress, bedding, study table and chair, (and others depending on your taste or requirement) so it is crucial to budget for this expense. The most affordable way is to buy furniture or other amenities you need from your fellow Brown students. At the beginning and end of every semester, and throughout the year as well, Brown students, especially those leaving or relocating, will use the GSBB mailing list or the Brown University Buying and Selling facebook page to advertise items they want to sell - at very affordable prices.

Alternatively, Walmart (51 Silver Spring St, Providence) and Target (79 Commerce Way, Seekonk, MA) are popular retail stores with dedicated sections for students that provide budget furnishing options. You can use the RIPTA bus service (see below for details) to travel to these stores. But please note that due to COVID-19 the opening hours as well as access to these stores may be restricted so be sure to check online before planning a trip.

**Traveling Within & Outside of Providence**

**Local Buses**

[Rhode Island Public Transit Authority](RIPTA)

RIPTA operates buses throughout the state and in Providence; service is dependable and all Brown students ride free. The central bus stop is located in the center of the city at Kennedy Plaza, a 10-minute walk down the hill from College Hill. Buses also run frequently with many stops along Thayer, Hope and North and South Main Streets to many of the nearby neighborhoods. Check schedules and maps at [www.ripta.com](http://www.ripta.com).

**Interstate Buses**

[Peter Pan](Peter Pan) buses run regularly to most points out of state, including Boston and New York. They have a stop in downtown Providence and at Exit 25A off I-95.

**Train**

Rail service to and from Boston and New York (as well as points in between) runs through the [Providence Amtrak](Providence Amtrak) and [MBTA](MBTA) (MBTA Home Page Massachusetts Bay/Transportation Authority) next to the State House. The MBTA also offers commuter rail service from Providence to both T.F. Green Airport and into Boston.
Brown University Shuttle

The Brown University Shuttle is free transportation service for the Brown community (students, faculty, and staff with a Brown ID). There are several routes that run Monday - Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and in the evening from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m. (Sun. - Wed.) and 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. (Thurs. - Sat.). Shuttle stops include the Rockefeller Library, gym, South Street Landing, the Alpert Medical School and several other locations. An on-call shuttle is also available after hours. An easy way to track the hours and shuttle locations is by downloading the BrownU app, then clicking the shuttle icon.

Bicycle

Cycling is another option for commuting locally in Providence with dedicated bike lanes on roads. Cycling is a very popular activity during the summer and a fun way to explore Providence and its surrounding areas as RI boasts a lot of scenic bike routes and trails to enjoy (Blackstone River Bikeway and the East Bay Bike Path).

Buying a new bicycle and its accompanying gear (helmet, bike lights, mudguards etc.) can be expensive ($400-500+), so it is advisable to buy a used bicycle from either a fellow Brown student (using the GSBB mailing list or the Brown University Buying and Selling facebook page) or from a bike shop near campus:

Legend Bicycle
181 Brook St, Providence
(401) 383-3070

Pratt Frameworks
409 Wickenden St, Providence
(339) 223-7703

Friendly Bicycle
83 Ives St, Providence
(401) 441-7818

Mission Electric Bike
198 Ives St, Providence
(401) 423-4400

Uber/Lyft/ ZipCar

Uber and Lyft are available in Providence and most of Rhode Island for commuting within and outside the city. If you already have a valid U.S. driving license or plan on getting one after arrival then Zipcar is also a very popular and useful commuting option (annual $15 fee and hourly rates
range from $8-$13 depending on the type of vehicle reserved). You are eligible for a discount with your Brown ID and you can pick up and drop off a Zipcar from various stations in and around campus:

- Lower level of Lot #68 the Power Street garage (entrance on Brook St. across from fire station)
- 217 Bowen Street, Lot #7
- 20 Olive Street, Lot #77
- Young Orchard Ave, Lot #54 (next to Orwig Music Library)
- Page-Robinson Hall, Lot #17
- Richmond Street, Lot #105 across from the front entrance of the Alpert Medical School

**Getting a mobile phone line**

There are a couple of things to note before buying a SIM card in the U.S. First, if you intend to use your existing phone then you will need to make sure that it is compatible with a mobile carrier in the U.S. Cell phone companies in the U.S. use two types of standards/protocols. Of the three main carriers, Verizon uses the CDMA standard, whereas AT&T and T-Mobile use the GSM standard. Therefore, if you currently have a GSM enabled phone and you do not wish to purchase a new one, then your options are limited to AT&T and T-Mobile. In the U.S., unlike other countries, carriers sell mobile phones that typically only work on their mobile system. So if you wish you can purchase a new mobile phone along with new mobile connections.

Mobile phone plans in the U.S. are generally expensive. Many mobile phone carriers offer both prepaid and mobile plans that are billed monthly, however, most monthly plans require a credit check and a Social Security number. Therefore, upon arrival, many students choose to enroll in a prepaid plan until they build up a credit history and are issued a social security number. Prepaid plans range usually from $40-$65 a month depending on the carrier and the amount of mobile data you wish to use. Prices are usually lowered if you sign up for two or more lines together so that is an option if you, or your friends wish to buy them together.

All three major carriers have retail shops in the Providence Place Mall (1 Providence Pl, Providence), which is about a 15-20 min walk from campus. Alternatively, Verizon (Authorized Retailer)
229 Waterman St, Providence, RI 02906
(401) 206-4066

*Pro Tip: If you have a compatible mobile phone then it is a good idea to buy a prepaid SIM from the airport upon your arrival. You might be charged a premium, but this will allow you to immediately have phone and internet connectivity upon arrival. You can always change your carrier or mobile plan after settling in.

**COVID-19 Tip:** Most retail shops are operating at modified opening hours and/or restricted access so be sure to check online or call ahead of time before planning your trip.
Opening a Bank Account

It is very important that you start the process of opening up a bank account as soon as you arrive in Providence, especially for supported students who will be receiving a stipend and want to set up direct deposit. Otherwise you will receive your stipend or other payments via check, which can take a couple of days to clear. Moreover, a bank check will include your address on it and can also serve as a ‘proof of residence’ before you acquire a state ID or a driving license.

There are several options available for choosing a bank but a useful tip for choosing a bank is to open your account in a branch that is in close proximity to your residence. Additionally, remember that you incur an additional transaction fee if you withdraw cash from an ATM that is not from your bank. Several ATMs are also available on/near on campus with two of them (Bank of America and Santander) located in the Stephen Robert ’62 Campus Center and another two (Bank of America) located next to the Brown Bookstore.

A (basic) list of documents required for opening a bank account:

1. Identification (Passport)
2. Proof of Address (Your lease agreement)
3. Proof of Employment (Admission Letter from Brown)

Banks near campus

Chase Bank
234 Thayer St, Providence, RI
(401) 824-0706

Citizens Bank
120 Waterman St, Providence
(401) 456-7050

Bank of America
100 Westminster St, Providence
(401) 228-0128

Santander Bank
131 Elmgrove Ave., Providence
(401) 521-4633

Many branch locations are open by appointment only due to COVID-19; check their website in advance and call ahead, if possible, before going to the location.

Pro Tip # 1: The list of required documents may vary from bank to bank so do not be afraid to walk into (or call) and ask. Most banks are expecting an influx of students in the fall and spring and are happy to accommodate you and sometimes accept delayed submission of documents.

Pro Tip # 2: The first days in any new country can be expensive so do bring enough cash with you to tide you over the first month. You can use your existing Visa or Mastercard but note that in most cases you will be charged a bank transaction fee as well as a currency conversion fee (especially if you have a non-USD account).

Pro Tip # 3: Please note that supported students will not receive their first stipend payment until the end of September/January.

Pro Tip # 4: If you are an iPhone user you should ask your bank to sign you up for Apple Pay so that you can have immediate access to your account without waiting for a debit/ATM card to arrive via mail. Similarly, check with your bank to see if Google Pay or other mobile wallet platforms are available.

Pro Tip # 5: You can of course use cash before your Debit/ATM card arrives. But any type of mobile wallet option will spare you from carrying a mound of coins, which can accrue very quickly if you pay in cash!
Obtaining a RI Driver’s License or State ID

You many consider applying for a RI Driver’s License or State ID, which can serve as a proof of identification, so that you do not need to carry your passport with you and allow you to more easily rent a car. OISSS offers a webpage with the steps required for the application process. Please note, the Department of Motor Vehicles (RI DMV) is currently open by appointment only, which can be challenging to obtain.

Meals & Groceries

Campus options: Brown has several large dining halls located on campus such as the Sharpe Refectory, Andrews Commons and Verney-Woolley that are open to all Brown students, but they are mostly used by undergraduates. However, the Blue Room and the Ivy Room are popular places for lunch and dinner – typical prices per meal range from $7 - $12. Meal plans are also available for graduate students. The BrownU app offers up-to-date information on hours and food offerings each day on campus.

Thayer Street, that runs right through campus, has a large collection of restaurants and shops that serve a variety of food options such as pizza, burgers, Chinese, Thai, Korean and Indian food – typical prices per meal range from $10 - $20.

Most graduate students prefer to cook themselves since it is usually cheaper than eating out. You can buy groceries from several supermarkets located near campus. Whole Foods Market and Eastside Marketplace are located within walking distance of campus. Trader Joe’s is located in Warwick, which is a 20-25-minute drive from campus and a popular and affordable option. Students usually share an Uber or a Zipcar to travel to the store. Stop & Shop and Shaw’s are two larger chain grocery stores located within a 10-15 minute drive from campus and offer lower prices.

Nearby Grocery Stores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Foods Market</td>
<td>261 Waterman St, Providence &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>601 N Main St., Providence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastside Marketplace</td>
<td>165 Pitman St., Providence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trader Joe’s</td>
<td>1000 Bald Hill Rd., Warwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop &amp; Shop</td>
<td>333 W. River St., Providence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaw’s</td>
<td>15 Smithfield Rd., North Providence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Popular Restaurants in Providence and the Surrounding Areas

Providence offers a range of food options for all palates. As you settle in and get comfortable with your surroundings we highly encourage you to venture out and take advantage of the cuisine that Providence and the surrounding areas have to offer. Some of our favorites include:

- Jacky’s Waterplace (Sushi/Cantonese)
- Pho Horn’s (Vietnamese)
- Bee’s Thai Cuisine
- Noodles 102
- Chengdu Taste (Chinese)
- Apsara (Cambodian/Thai)
- Wara Wara (Japanese)
- Heng Thai
- Khaosan Thai Street Food
- Sun and Moon Korean Restaurant
- Venda Ravioli
- Piemonte Pizza
- Pizza J
- Sicilia’s Pizzeria
- The District (Pizza)
- Rosa Mia (Pizza)
- Not Just Snacks (Indian)
- Rasoi (Indian)
- Indian Restaurant
- La Gran Parada (Dominican)
- Los Andes (Peruvian)
- Machupicchu Restaurant (Peruvian)
- Tallulah’s Taqueria (Mexican)
- El Rancho Grande (Mexican)
- Chilangos (Mexican)

Student Health

The Brown University Health Services (BUHS) is located centrally on campus (13 Brown St., Providence) and should be your first stop for health-related issues. Students should call Health Services at 401-863-3953 to make an appointment or discuss any questions or concerns (walk-in appointments are not currently available). Prior to arrival, BUHS requires you to complete a medical history form online. This determines if you require any vaccinations or medical tests (typically for tuberculosis) upon arrival.

For medical emergencies, please contact EMS at 401-863-4111 if you are in the Providence campus community. If you are out of the area, please call 911 for emergency services in your area.

COVID-19 Tip: Be sure to check out the FAQs and information from BUHS both for the return to campus.

Nursing advice is available 24/7 by calling 401-863-1330. Our nursing staff will follow-up on all after hours calls during regular business hours.

Pharmacy: The BUHS also has a pharmacy where you can order prescription drugs and sexual health supplies.
Pharmacies in the Nearby Community:

CVS Pharmacy (Located in Wayland Square)  
481 Angell St., Providence  
401-521-4340

Walgreens  
135 Pitman St., Providence  
401-861-4846

CVS (open 24 /7)  
640 Warren Ave., East Providence  
401-438-2272

*CVS also has a location on Thayer Street where you can purchase over the counter medicines, but they do not have a pharmacy.

Mental Health

Moving to a new country to start a fresh academic adventure is certainly an exciting opportunity but it can also be a stressful experience since settling into a new cultural environment takes effort, patience and a certain period of adjustment. Additionally, graduate degree programs are typically more rigorous and time consuming than undergraduate programs. Thus, the ‘culture shock’ together with added academic responsibilities can often result in stress and in worst cases lead to burn-out. However, know that you are not alone - Brown has a thriving international community that serves as a fantastic support structure. We encourage you to reach out to your peers and Brown faculty and staff in times of stress or need. Additionally, Brown’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers support regarding a host of issues and is particularly useful if you wish to discuss matters privately.

Key Items to Bring with You (or Buy)

- Umbrella + Rain Jacket/Coat: Brown is located near the coast so rain is both frequent and unpredictable.
- Stationery: It is more expensive in the U.S. and therefore it is recommended that you bring some basic things, such as pens and refills, highlighters, calculators and writing pads.
- Winter Wear: During Fall, a windbreaker or a light coat/jacket along with a few jerseys/sweaters will help you tide over, but eventually you will have to buy an insulated jacket(s) to cope with the New England winter.
- Toiletries: It is a good idea to bring useful items such as shampoo, body wash, conditioner, toothpaste, etc. to tide you over for the first few days.
- Power Adapter/ Travel Adapter: The U.S. uses type A and B power sockets and if these are different from your country then be sure to bring appropriate power adapters so that you can charge and operate your electronic devices.
Places to Visit in Providence and the Surrounding Areas

- Blackstone Boulevard and Park
- India Point Park
- Roger Williams Park Zoo
- Waterfire
- RISD Museum
- Ladd Observatory
- Farmer’s markets

Also check out the Providence, RI page on the Graduate School website for more information about the city and greater RI area. The Boston Globe also wrote a glowing review of Providence during COVID-19 times.

Brown University Lingo

- Main Green = Officially College Green, a grassy quadrangle in front of the Stephen Robert ’62 Campus Center
- Quiet Green = A grassy area between the Van Wickle Gates and University Hall
- GBC = Global Brown Center
- BBC = Brown Business Center
- GCB = Graduate Center Bar
- GSC = The Graduate Student Council
- The Sci-Li = The Sciences Library
- JCB = John Carter Brown Library
- The Rock = The Rockefeller Library
- B&H = Barus and Holley
- CIT = Thomas J. Watson Sr. Center for Information Technology
- The Watson = Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs
- WC = The Writing Center
- The Ratty = Sharpe Refectory (Dining hall)
- V-Dub = Verney Woolley (Dining hall)
- Page-Robinson = Page-Robinson Hall
- OMAC = The Olney-Margolies Athletic Center
- The Pitz = The Paul Bailey Pizzitola Memorial Sports Complex
- OISSS = Office of International Student and Scholar Services
- RISD = The Rhode Island School of Design
Useful Websites and Resources

- Global Brown
- OISSS
- Academic Calendar (Registrar’s Office)
- Libraries
- Campus Map
- Courses at Brown
- Canvas