







# American Culture Tips

## Car Culture

- Most people in the U.S. need a car to get to work and buy necessities like groceries. 
- Americans drive on the right side of the road and generally follow traffic laws.
- In some countries, honking is polite. In the U.S., using the horn is to avoid accidents or to get a driver's attention.
- Students with cars at UofSC have designated parking lots and garages. Visit the [Parking and Transportation Services](#) website for info on parking passes. 

## Money Culture

- Stay safe by carrying a small amount of cash and a debit/credit card. 
- International students can apply for some credit cards but often need a SSN to receive a credit score.
- Sometimes personal checks are used to pay rent, to give a gift, or avoid fees.
- Americans typically pay for goods with dollar bills or cards, not coins. 

## Language and Greetings

- It's polite to greet someone with a firm handshake and to maintain eye-contact. 
- When Americans say, "How are you?" they often expect to hear "I'm good" in response.
- Idioms are a common feature of American English. Visit <https://bit.ly/2ZhBtNo> for phrases and explanations.
- It's common for people to say hello and smile at strangers, especially in southern states. 

## Food Culture

- Gratuity is expected at many sit-down restaurants; most add a 20% tip to the bill. However, tips are optional for service at a counter.
- American drink and food portions are large compared to many countries. 
- The legal drinking age in the U.S. is 21, while it is 18 in other countries.
- A few popular grocery stores include Food Lion, Publix, Walmart and Kroger. 