

A Guide for Incoming Graduate Students

Tips on essentials, how to get around, ways to de-stress, and financial hacks

Graduate school is exciting but nerve-wracking, especially if you're new to Houston. UH's supportive Coog community can help ease the transition. Here are some tips.

Essentials to carry with you

Being prepared pays off. As a graduate student, there are a few essentials you'll always be glad to have. Here's what to carry in your backpack, trunk, or locker:

1. **A small umbrella.** Houston's weather is unpredictable, so keep a compact umbrella in your backpack for convenience.
2. **A first aid kit** with painkillers for the occasional headache.
3. **A few backup outfits.** Keep a suit or athletic wear handy for unexpected events like career fairs or workouts.
4. **A water bottle.** It's important to stay hydrated throughout the day, and fortunately, there are plenty of purified water stations around campus where you can fill up your water bottle.

How to get around

You may often hear that a car is essential to explore Houston. However, that may not always be the case. Here are a few ways to get around, car options included.

1. **Bike around.** A bike is a great investment, but if you're not ready to buy, [Lime](#) offers a convenient scooter and electric bike share. With the [Lime app](#), you can rent bikes or scooters on-demand to get around campus or explore Houston, all with flexible, dockless drop-off and pick-up. You can also access other parts of the city through the [Brays Bayou Path](#) and connecting bridges.
2. **Take the Metro.** UH connects to [METRO](#) buses and Rail, with discounted student Q-cards available for easy fare payment.
3. **Rent a Zipcar.** For longer trips or bad weather, [Zipcar](#) offers vehicles at University Lofts and Cougar Village 1. A \$35/year membership gives you access for an hourly fee.
4. **Join COAST.** [COAST](#) rewards students who use sustainable transportation with fare credits or vouchers for services like Uber and Lyft.

Ways to de-stress

Graduate school can be overwhelming, so it's important to take breaks and focus on yourself. Here are some ways to clear your mind and recharge:

1. **Explore campus.** Take a walk to discover new study spots and public art around UH. You might find a hidden gem! You can take a planned [route](#) or explore freely.
2. **Join a Group Fitness Class.** Exercise reduces stress, and UH offers free [group fitness](#) like yoga, Pilates, and Zumba to help you recharge.



3. **Visit the Houston Zoo.** UH students get [free admission](#) with a student ID—perfect for a relaxing break with Shasta!
4. **Attend a game.** Take a break by cheering on your Coogs at UH sports events—free admission with [registration](#).
5. **Attend “Let’s Talk.”** Get free, confidential consultations with CAPS clinician, Monday to Friday. Call 713-743-5454.
6. **Get Involved.** Balance work and life by connecting with peers and contributing to the community through organizations, events, and volunteer opportunities.

Figure out your finances

Graduate school comes with financial responsibilities. Plan ahead to manage your spending and tuition. Here are some tips to help financially:

1. **Work.** Balancing work and grad school can be tough, but it helps avoid debt. Ask the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid about [Work-Study](#) or [Graduate Assistantship](#) for part-time positions to help with expenses.
2. **Enroll in Cougar Cupboard.** [Cougar Cupboard](#), a partnership with the Houston Food Bank, offers free access to fresh food for enrolled UH students at the Campus Recreation and Wellness Center.
3. **Check out COOG\$ave.** [COOG\\$ave](#) offers discounts at retailers like Apple, Amazon, and Nike for UH students. It also provides access to PerksConnect, a free program with even more discounts.
4. **Open a Checking Account.** If you're working, you'll likely need a checking account. [TDECU](#), located in the UH Student Center, offers a fee-free account with no minimum balance and access to 55,000+ ATMs, plus free online and mobile banking.