

A

- **ADAPTORS / CONVERTERS (see, E: ELECTRICITY)**
- **AIRPORTS (see, T: TRANSPORTATION)**
- **ALCOHOL (see, C: CHILDREN AND THE LAW)**

B

BANKING: US

If you don't already do on-line banking, consider setting it up for all your accounts and US bills. It will greatly simplify handling your US funds.

Before your move, talk with your US bank about:

- Wire transfers: forms, process and timeline
- A reference (history of overdraft, late payments, etc): used to open your UK account.

NOTES:

HSBC has a premier account that can be active in the UK, the US, Canada and Mexico. Some employers allow you to split your paycheck, part to your US account and part to a UK account.

BANKING: UK

The procedures and regulations of UK banks are different from those in the US, and it is important to note that establishing accounts may take a bit longer. First, check with your employer to see if they have relationships with particular banks. This relationship, along with a letter of employment from your employer, can expedite the process. In order to open an account, you will need to provide proof of your identity. Two pieces of ID may be required. Acceptable proof includes a passport, residence permit and a driving license. You will also need proof of your UK address, so you will not be able to open an account until you have found a home. Tenancy agreements, a letter from your employer in the UK confirming your UK address, a utility bill or a UK pay slip (if you have already been paid here and your address is included on the form) are all acceptable documents for this.

If you plan to have a joint account, it is best to do this when you open the account as adding another person to an existing account can take a considerable amount of time and paperwork. Both parties must be present to open a joint account. It is typical in the UK that ONLY the person(s) on an account can inquire about the account, deal with issues, etc.

Some companies allow you to split your paychecks; part to a British account in pounds and part in dollars to a US

The UK has both banks and building societies (similar to US credit unions). Historically, building societies were known more for savings accounts and mortgage lending, today they have branched out and offer all of the services that you would normally associate with a bank.

CURRENT (CHECKING) ACCOUNTS

In the UK, checking accounts are referred to as Current Accounts.

When you open your account, you will receive your checkbook (UK: cheque book). Until you receive your Check Guarantee Card, you will only be able to cash checks at your bank.

Once you receive your card, you will be able to write cheques up to the limit embossed on the card itself. This card also serves as your ATM and debit card.

The bank monitors usage and additional cheque books will be sent to you as you use them. Cancelled checks are only returned if requested and you may have to pay a fee.

Most cheques are pre-printed with crossed lines and "Account Payee" on them. This indicates that the cheques must be deposited in the payee's account and cannot be exchanged at the bank branch for cash. You should write the same information on the Pay line and the Account Payee line.

NOTES:

Dates in the UK are written as: day / month / year. June 15, 2009 = 15 / 06 / 09.

When writing the amount you MUST write "pounds" and "pence", i.e.: Twelve pounds and twenty-five pence.

AUTOMATIC PAYMENTS

- **A Standing Order** is written approval for regular debits from your account for a defined amount. Your rental payment or car payment where the amount does not vary from month to month can be set up as a Standing Order.
- **Direct Debits** are similar to Standing Orders, but with the Direct Debit the payment amount can vary in amount from month to month. Direct Debits are commonly used to pay utility bills.

Both are free services provided by banks.

WIRE TRANSFERS

Dollar to pound wire transfers always initiate from the US source. Talk with your bank or credit union before moving to find out about their forms and procedures. Some banks, like HBSC, operate in both the US and the UK and transfers are quite simple. Some banks have more challenging wire transfer systems than others and it may be worth opening a US account just for wire transfer purposes.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

Banks carry limited amounts of most popular foreign currencies for immediate exchange. If you are traveling outside the UK, it is best to put in an order for the desired amount of currency a few days in advance.

If you are depositing a foreign check or doing a wire transfer from your US to UK bank, you will have to pay a commission fee, typically a percentage of the total amount. You can compare bank transfer fees on-line before setting up your account.

BOILERS (FURNACE)

Do not turn off your heating boiler (furnace) if you go away for a few days during winter. Pipes have a nasty tendency to freeze and you could return home to a flood.

Boilers can be complicated. Make sure that you have your heating / water system explained thoroughly when you take tenancy. Boilers must be inspected regularly for efficiency and you can ask for a copy of the most recent inspection.

If your gas or electric bill seems high, and your house is still cold, you may need help in understanding your boiler or your boiler's programmer. Contact your letting agent.

C

CALCIUM DEPOSITS

One of the other consequences of living in a hard water area is that items like: kettles and showerheads clog up with lime scale deposits. There are various lime scale removal

products available at the supermarket for use on showerheads, kettles, washing machines, etc.

NOTE: LimeLite is a good product to remove lime scale.

CARS: ALL INFORMATION (see D: DRIVING & CARS)

CELL PHONES (see M: MOBILE PHONES)

CHEMISTS (Pharmacy)

Each village has several chemists with regular hours. Most large supermarkets also have pharmacies and many are open until 10 p.m. during the weekdays. There are always chemists open for limited hours on Sundays for emergency prescriptions. These change each week and are listed in local newspapers, on the window or door of your local chemist, and at your doctor's surgery.

Prescription medications are free to children (under 18's) and people with certain medical conditions like: asthma, diabetes, etc. Ask your doctor or chemist for more information.

To find a chemist, visit www.nhs.uk/England/Pharmacies

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES: (see C: COMMUNITY CENTRES D: DISTRICT COUNCILS L: LEISURE CENTRES S: SITESEEING)

CHILDCARE

Childcare is always a challenge when you move. Each family has their own values and care preferences. Your district council will be able to offer you local information on programs and care givers. Information can also be found at: www.childcarelink.gov.uk

CHILDREN AND THE LAW

BABYSITTING AGE

There is no legal babysitting age but it may help to know that the UK Red Cross will not give babysitting training to youth under age 14.

LEAVING CHILDREN ALONE AT HOME

There is no legal age limit for leaving a child on their own, but it is an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk. Parents can be prosecuted for neglect if they leave a child unsupervised 'in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health' (Children and Young Person's Act).

The British government offers these guidelines:

The most important factor to consider is how mature the child is. For instance, it may be okay to leave a very mature or 'grown up' 12 year old alone for a day while you are at work, but not a 13 year old who is not mature.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) advises that:

- children under the age of thirteen are rarely mature enough to be left alone for a long period of time
- children under the age of sixteen should not be left alone overnight
- babies, toddlers and very young children should never be left alone

NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO

CHILDREN (NSPCC) www.nspcc.org.uk

The NSPCC has some excellent booklets with advice on leaving children home alone, understanding the law with regard to leaving children alone at home, and keeping children safe when out with you or out alone.

ALCOHOL

There are strict laws governing alcohol consumption in the UK, and it is important to check that you are not breaking the law by allowing your child to drink.

- **Under 5s:** It is illegal to give an alcoholic drink to a child under five except under medical supervision in an emergency.
- **Under 16's:** Children under 16 can go anywhere in a pub as long as they are supervised by an adult, but cannot have any alcoholic drinks. However, some premises may be subject to licensing conditions preventing them from entering, such as pubs that have experienced problems with underage drinking.
- **16 or 17 years old:** Young people aged 16 or 17 can drink beer, wine or cider with a meal if it is bought by an adult and they are accompanied by an adult. It is illegal for this age group to drink spirits in pubs even with a meal. In Scotland, 16 and 17 year olds can buy beer, wine or cider so long as it's served with a meal and consumed in an area used solely for eating meals.
- **Under 18 years old:** It is against the law for anyone under 18 to buy alcohol in a pub, off-licence, supermarket, or other outlet, or for anyone to buy alcohol for someone under 18 to consume in a pub or a public place.

Some towns and cities have local by-laws banning drinking alcohol in public.

DRIVING

Young drivers must be seventeen years old. Make sure you have car insurance even for learner drivers. A white sticker with a red "L" must be on the car whenever a student driver is at the wheel and have passed their provisional test.

CAR SEATS / SEAT BELTS:

For the most up-to-date information go to: www.childcarseats.org.uk/law/index. Seat belts or the correct child restraint are required.

CHURCHES AND PLACES OF WORSHIP

The following is a list of websites to assist you in finding a place of worship in the UK.

Find-a-Church	www.findachurch.co.uk
Anglican Church	www.cofe.anglican.org
Baptist Church	www.baptist.org.uk
Catholic Directory	www.catholicdirectory.org
Jewish Synagogue, Chief Rabbi	www.chiefrabbi.org
London Central Mosque	www.iccuk.org
Lutheran Church	www.lutheran.org.uk
Methodist Church	www.methodist.org.uk
Roman Catholic Church	www.catholic-ew.org.uk
Swedish Church	www.swedish-church.org.uk
United Synagogue	www.unitedsynagogue.org.uk

CLOTHING AND SHOES

Clothing and shoe sizes may be shown in US, UK, or European sizing. You may also see children's clothing sizes in centimeters.

You'll probably find that the washing instructions are mostly symbolic. You have to understand the symbols in order to know how to properly wash your clothes; visit www.textileaffairs.com/lccommon.htm for assistance.

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

US	4	6	8	10	12	14	16
UK	6 or 8	8 or 10	10 or 12	12 or 14	14 or 16	16 or 18	18 or 20
Europe	36 / 38	38 / 40	40 / 42	42 / 44	44 / 46	46 / 48	50 / 52

WOMEN'S SHOES

US	5 1/2	6	6 1/2	7	7 1/2	8	8 1/2
UK	3 1/2	4	4 1/2	5	5 1/2	6	6 1/2
Europe	37	37	38	38	39	39	40

MEN'S CLOTHING:

US and UK sizes are comparable but men may find UK clothing cut narrower in the shoulders.

MEN'S SHOES

US	8	8 1/2	9	9 1/2	10	10 1/2	11
UK	7 1/2	8	8 1/2	9	9 1/2	10	10 1/2
Europe	42	42	43	43	44	44	45

CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

US and UK children's clothing sizes are comparable.

COOKING TEMPERATURE CONVERSIONS (SEE O: OVENS)

COOKING AND BAKING

Your first trip to a UK supermarket may be a bit perplexing. You may not be able to find many of the items on your list but do not assume they do not exist in the UK. Items are packaged and shelved quite differently from the US. Go to the customer service desk or ask a store employee to help you locate items. Also, not all supermarkets are the same and they do stock different selections of items. Costco is here and they do stock a variety of US items that you cannot find in local stores. A call to someone who has lived here a while may help you find the item you want or the UK equivalent.

FLOUR

There are six types of flour in Britain:

1. plain flour is the closest to US all-purpose flour
2. self-raising flour is the same as US self-raising flour
3. wholemeal flour is the same as US wheat flour
4. superfine plain flour is used in British recipes for baking cakes.
5. strong flour has a high gluten content, and is used to make breads and puff pastry
6. malted wheat flour has a distinctive texture and nutty flavor, and is brown in color.

SUGARS

There are a number of different kinds of sugar but be careful as some use US names but are NOT US equivalents!

1. Granulated: very coarse and generally used to sweeten tea, coffee, etc. DO NOT use for baking!
2. Caster sugar: closest to US granulated sugar American super fine sugar.
3. Demerara: Coarse, brown crunchy sugar usually used for tea or coffee or over cereals. Do not confuse this with brown sugar. It contains molasses.

4. Muscovado: a raw, soft and dark sugar used in here cooking.
5. Soft light or dark brown sugar: closest to US brown sugar.
6. Icing sugar is the closest to US confectioner's sugar.

CHOCOLATE

1. bitter: A dark bittersweet chocolate often used for covering candy.
2. plain: This is comparable to US semi-sweet chocolate.
3. Bakers Unsweetened: There is no equivalent in the UK, although it may be found in Selfridges Food Hall and other American specialty shops. It is expensive. As a substitute, 3 1/2 Tbsp. of unsweetened cocoa plus 1 Tbsp. of butter or margarine is equal to 1 oz. square of chocolate.

CREAM

Again there is a much larger variety here than in the US

1. half: Use this like Half n' Half (a US product.)
2. single cream: 18% butterfat and is slightly thicker than half cream.
3. double cream: 48% butterfat and is used to pour over fruits and desserts.
4. buttermilk: thicker with no visible butter fat
5. sour cream: 8% butterfat and is a bit thinner than its US counterpart.
6. crème fraiche: Less sour and a bit thicker than UK sour cream, which makes it a great replacement in recipes calling for sour cream.
7. spooning cream: 30% butterfat, used to spoon over desserts.
8. whipping cream: 40% butterfat, use for recipes that call for heavy or whipping cream.
9. clotted cream: 55% butterfat, delicious alternative to butter on scones.
10. Channel Islands milk (a.k.a. Guernsey or Jersey milk) rich, creamy whole milk that can be easily poured in coffee or tea. It is less thick than half cream.

There are some US cooking ingredients that have substitutes:

US Item	UK Equivalent
Chocolate chips	Polka dots (chocolate NOT chocolate flavored)
Cornstarch	Corn flour
Crisco	White Flora or Trex
Graham crackers	Digestive biscuits
Ham (picnic type)	Bacon Joint
Karo syrup	Lyle's syrup
Molasses	Dark Treacle Syrup
Monterey Jack cheese	Danish Havarti
Oil, peanut	Ground Nut Oil
Tomato paste	Tomato puree
Tomato sauce	Passata
Wax Paper	Greaseproof paper

SOME ITEMS YOU WON'T FIND IN UK STORES:

Plain Cheerios, grape jelly, boxed Macaroni and Cheese, dried onion rings, stuffing mix, ready-made pie crust, Saltine's, chicken noodle soup (or chicken with rice), Hidden Valley ranch dressing mix, onion soup mix, Rice-a-Roni, Lowrey's season salt, snack size Ziploc baggies, hand sanitizer, powder cleanser, Swiffer supplies and an ice scraper.

Most American products can be purchased on-line and delivered to your home but be prepared to pay 2 to 5 times what you would in the States. Some items may arrive close to their sell-by date as well. If you can, plan ahead and bring items you and your children like best with you.

COMMUNITY CENTRES

Districts and County Councils usually run local community centres that offer courses and activities for adults & children. Contact your local council for specific information. For information and resources on activities throughout the Thames Valley go to:
www.familiesonline.co.uk/contact/company/list/138

D

DENTISTS

If you are an NHS dental patient, you are expected to pay 75% of the cost of the work done. However, today most dentists have opted out of the NHS and only see private patients. Nevertheless, they do still tend to treat children on an NHS basis that includes free checkups.

Talk with friends and neighbors for referrals to dentists in your area.

DISHWASHERS

This is a very hard water area. Therefore, you will need to add dishwasher salt to your machine. You will also need to add Rinse Aid. See your operations manual to see how to add these to your machine. Dishwasher salt and Rinse Aid are both sold in the same aisle as dish soap.

TIP: If you do not add these, you may ruin your glassware and possibly the machine.

DISTRICT COUNCILS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The local District Council Office is equivalent in the US to the Town Hall, and takes care of a number of community services, including garbage and recycling, building permission, collection of local Council Tax, parking permits, local park maintenance, schools, etc. The Council is also a good source of information for local children's clubs, playgroups, etc. Office hours are generally 9 am to 5 pm. Visit www.direct.gov.uk or your specific council directly.

DRIVING & CARS

DRIVING LICENSES

As a new UK resident and holder of a US passport, you have 12 months in which to obtain your UK driving license or your insurance will be invalidated and your car impounded. You must take both a theory and a practical test, and it is recommended that you commence the process at least 6 months before your year-end date. These are the steps:

Go to your local Post Office and request form D1. This form will get you your provisional driving license. Fill the form out and return it to the DVLA in Swansea with your proof of ID (most likely your US passport) and the appropriate fee. Be sure to read and follow all instructions exactly. Photos or applications will be rejected if they do not comply absolutely. Non-UK citizens must mail their passport with the license application. There is a UK version of registered mail which allows tracking. If you include a self addressed registered envelope along with application it expedites the return of your passport.

They will send you your provisional license and a green document. **KEEP THE GREEN DOCUMENT** you will need it in order to take your theory test. Once you have your provisional driving license, you will need to schedule an appointment to take your theory test. "The Highway Code" and "The Complete Theory Test" are two government publications, which you should read before taking this test. Both can be borrowed from the club or can be purchased at bookshops or newsagents.

After you have passed your theory and hazard perception test, you are eligible to take your actual driving test. members say that they have benefited greatly from taking a few lessons beforehand from a driving instructor, and it is highly recommended that you do so.

If you already have a driving license from an EU country: Switzerland, Norway, Canada and a few other selected countries, then you may be able to exchange your license for a GB one. For more information, go to: www.dvla.co.uk

CAR TAX

A road tax is levied on automobiles each year and a current Tax Disc, showing proof of payment and expiry date, MUST be displayed on the passenger side of the windscreen (windshield). If you buy a car from a dealer, they will usually make sure that it is taxed for the first year. Otherwise applications forms are available from the post office, and renewal forms will be sent by post approximately 2- 4 weeks before the old tax disc expires.

When it is time to renew your tax disc, take your tax form, current proof of insurance and your payment (cheques are accepted) for either 6 or 12 months to the post office or renewal can be done by post (mail).

MOT

All cars which are 3 years and older must undergo a yearly inspection called an MOT. Most garages will do an MOT for you, and those who do, clearly advertise the fact. This MOT examination certificate will be required when you go to renew your tax disc.

CAR INSURANCE

The importance of obtaining a UK driving license within your first twelve months in the UK cannot be stressed strongly enough. After 12 months residence, if you have no UK driving license, your insurance is not valid. Also, the police will fine you for driving without a license and uninsured.

The question about the “1 year” issue always comes up. You do NOT restart your 12-month period every time you re-enter the UK. Residency is the deciding factor; if you live here for more than 185 day per year and have personal or vocational ties in the UK, you are considered a UK resident.

When you first arrive, you can obtain car insurance by providing details of your US state driving license. Ask your US insurance company to give you a hard copy of your claims history and driving record (in US called “Letter of Experience”). Having that in hand could speed up the insurance process. Many members have found some of the online UK insurance providers a quick and easy way to get their car insurance. You can get information on many insurance options at: www.compare.com.

You may wish to check with your US insurance company to see if they underwrite policies in the UK USAA and GEICO are two companies that do.

BREAKDOWN ASSISTANCE

There are two UK equivalents to the US AAA services. They are : The Automobile Association or AA, www.theaa.com, and the Royal Automobile Club or RAC, www.rac.co.uk.

DRIVING TIPS:

- Driving on the left can be a bit daunting at first. Just remember: “Driver in the middle of the road” (meaning the driver / steering wheel are next to the center line). This is true for driving anywhere in the world and can help when you switch between left and right side countries. Most people have the greatest challenge when making turns.
- Streets are not as wide as in the US and there are lot more parked cars on either side.

- You have the right of way if your side of the road is clear of parked cars, but drivers coming in the opposite direction will often pass cars on their side and come over the centerline into your lane of traffic. Keep as near to the left-hand side as you safely can.
- Street signs are sometimes difficult to spot. They are usually either very low to the ground on walls or on posts in front of bushes at corners or situated up high on walls of buildings.
- Be prepared to stop or yield to cars to your right as you approach a roundabout. You are allowed to simply slow down and keep going if there is no oncoming traffic.
- Zebra crossings are marked by large black and white strip lines perpendicular to the curbs with two or more posts, which may flash. Pedestrians ALWAYS have the right of way here and you must stop as soon as they step into the street.
- Look out for speed cameras. These gray or yellow boxes are mounted on high posts and placed on the sides of roads throughout the country. If you get caught speeding, you will receive a fine and have three or more points added to your license. Hash marks on the street signify a speed camera area and are used to calculate your speed.
- Do not exceed the speed limit in residential areas (usually 30 mph) even by a few miles or you will be caught on camera and ticketed. It is very easy to accumulate points, and you will lose your license once you have 12. Watch for fixed and mobile cameras.
- You can NEVER turn left on a red light.
- You will see large white stickers on the backs of some cars. The most common has a red "L" which stands for Learner Driver. The second has a green "P" which denotes that this driver has just passed their driving test. Please be patient with these drivers.
- Get into the habit of looking to YOUR RIGHT particularly when crossing streets.

E

EDUCATION

In the UK, full-time education is compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 16. Children enter school in the year during which they turn five. Children ages 3+ are eligible for a specified number of hours of free nursery. Contact your local council for specific information.

The choice of where to send a child to school in England is varied. You may choose from independent schools (also called "public schools") or state-run schools. In the independent category, there are schools, which follow the British curriculum, and there are also American and International schools. The individual family must weigh the pros and cons of each. Some considerations may be: length of stay in the UK, adaptability of the child, age of the child, school fees, transportation, school size, facilities and philosophy of education.

State schools must follow the National Curriculum set forth by the national government. Copies are available at school and at most libraries. These schools may be full or have preferences (i.e. religious). Individual schools are not required to take everyone who lives in their area so be sure to have a second and third choice ready. The local educational authority will find a place for every local child.

Independent schools often require a personal interview and an examination before granting a place to a child. They may also request reports from a student's former school along with the application, and in many cases, also comments from current teachers.

The government evaluates all schools regularly. For specific information on schools in your area, go to: www.direct.gov.uk , Education and Learning, or contact your local district council.

Parents should also be aware that some British independent schools still have Saturday morning school with sports in the afternoon. This is a non-negotiable part of the school week.

STATE RUN SCHOOLS

AGE	TYPE OF SCHOOL
2 - 5	Nursery
5 - 7	Infants
7 - 11	Junior
11 – 16	Senior
16 and over	6 th Form

INDEPENDENT / PUBLIC (PRIVATE) SCHOOLS

AGE	TYPE OF SCHOOL
2 – 5	Nursery
5 - 7	Pre - prep
7 – 11 (sometimes 13)	Prep
11 – 16 (sometimes 18)	Senior
16 and over	6 th Form

The following table should help you estimate your child's grade level in the British school system:

YEAR	CHILD'S AGE BETWEEN SEPT - AUG
Reception	5
1	6
2	7
3	8
4	9
5	10
6	11
7	12
8	13
9	14
10	15
Lower Sixth Form	16
Upper Sixth Form	17
	18

It is not necessary to send your child to an American or International high school in order to enroll him / her in an American University. A British education could classify your child as an International Student that may make the entrance requirement more flexible.

AMERICAN AND INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN THE AREA:

ACS International Schools has campuses in Cobham, Egham and Hillingdon. www.acs-england.co.uk

The American School in England (TASIS) has a campus in Thorpe, www.tasis.com/england

ELECTRICITY

SERVICE AT YOUR HOME

You can compare electricity rates in your area and usually set up your service via the Internet at: <http://energylinx.co.uk/energycalc.html?db=electric>. Whoever sets up your service: you, your spouse, your estate or relocation agent, be sure that service is listed in both your and your spouse's names. In many cases, only the persons whose names are on the account can call about changes, problems, etc.

USING US ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES IN THE UK

Most non-European electrical goods are NOT compatible with the UK's electrical supply. This is due to the voltage differences, which in the UK / Europe is 220/240 V and in the US is 110 V. If you try to use them in the UK, they will burn out unless you use a transformer.

ADAPTERS / CONVERTER

An adapter / converter is used to make US plug compatible with UK sockets but they do **NOT** change the voltage. Before using any electrical device with only an adaptor be sure it can handle both 110 and 220 volts. Cameras, computers, and similar devices are not usually a problem.

TRANSFORMERS

Transformers are sized from 30 to 15000 watts. Depending on the size, they can be used to power several appliances so you don't necessarily need one transformer for every electrical appliance. As a general guideline, if an appliance has been designed to create heat, it will require a more powerful transformer (i.e. kettles and toasters).

NOTE: Some analogue timers on appliances such as crockpots may not function properly on a transformer due to the wattage (not voltage) differences.

Because of the powerful voltage, most UK electrical outlets will have an on-off safety feature next to them. It is important to turn the outlet off prior to plugging in or unplugging an appliance.

TIPS:

- US lamps: can be used in the UK provided they are used with a converter or fitted with a UK plug AND you use UK light bulbs.
- US TV, DVD players and Game Consoles: There are different TV standards in the UK (NTSC in the US vs. PAL in the UK). US DVDs and games can only be played on US TVs. You can set up a US TV on a transformer and use it with your US DVD player and game console but the TV will not work as a television set. Dual TV and DVD systems are available. Bring along US multi-plug extension cords for your US TV system and that will allow you to run them all off of one transformer.
- Dual Voltage Appliances: Some appliances like computers and cameras are dual voltage and only need an adaptor. Check your user manuals for specific information.
- You will find life is much easier using UK appliances as opposed to bringing them from the States and having to run them off of transformers.

NOTE: It is illegal in the UK to have electrical sockets in bathrooms in the UK, except for electric razor sockets. Frequently, light switches are even located outside the bathroom.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

MEDICAL

For **EMERGENCIES ONLY**, dial 999

In the UK when you have a medical emergency the doctor and ambulance are often called separately. The doctor arrives in an emergency car and the ambulance may not be called until after the doctor has assessed the situation. The ambulance service has put out this information:

“In order to ensure that seriously ill and injured patients continue to get as fast a response as possible, we urge people whose call is not an emergency to consider other healthcare options rather than dialing 999. These include:

- self-care at home
- talking to your local pharmacist
- calling NHS Direct on 0845 4647
- attending a local NHS walk-in centre
- visiting your GP
- making your own way to your local A&E department—arriving in an ambulance does not mean you will be seen more quickly.”

POLICE

For **EMERGENCIES ONLY**, dial 999.

LOCAL POLICE STATIONS:

Ascot	High Street, SL5 7HG	01753 506 000
Bracknell	Broadway, RG12 1AD	0845 8505 505
Maidenhead	Bridge Road, SL6 8LP	0845 8505 505
Marlow	Dean Street, SL7 3AB	01628 898 343
Henley-on-Thames	Market Place, RG9 2AJ	01189 536 000
Reading, Rushey Way	Lower Earley, RG1 1LZ	0845 8505505
Slough	Windsor Road, SL1 2HH	01753 506 000
Windsor	Alma Road, SL4 3ES	01753 831 990
Wokingham / Camberley	Portesbery Road, GU15 3SZ	0845 1252 222

FIRE

For **EMERGENCIES ONLY**, dial 999

(in the UK, the fire department is the Fire Brigade)

LOCAL FIRE STATIONS

Bracknell	Downshire Way	RG12 4AA
Cookham	Berries Road	SL6 9SD
sMaidenhead	Bridge Road	SL6 8PG
Marlow	Parkway	SL7 1RA
Reading	Caversham Road	RG1 8AA
Reading	Dee Road, Tilehurst	RG30 4FS
Slough	Tuns Lane	SL1 2XAQ
Wargrave	Victoria Road	RG10 8BP
Windsor	St Mark's Road	SL4 3BE
Wokingham	Denton Road	RG40 2DX

F

FURNACE (see, B: BOILERS)

G

GAS SERVICE IN YOUR HOME

You can compare gas rates in your area and set up service via the Internet at: <http://energylinx.co.uk/energycalc.html?db=gas> . Whoever sets up your service: you, your spouse, your estate or relocation agent, be sure that service is listed in both your and your spouse's names. In many cases, only the persons whose names are on the account can call about changes, problems, etc.

H

HEALTHCARE (PUBLIC – NHS)

The UK has a government subsidized National Health System (NHS). As a resident of the UK, you are entitled to its services which are provided to you for little or no cost.

NHS services include doctor care, hospital care, family planning, childcare clinics for children under 5, immunizations, children's dentistry and eye care and subsidized prescriptions fees.

The first thing you need to do is register with a doctor in your area. You are free to register with any doctor, provided that you live in their area and the practice's quota of patients isn't already full. If you go to www.nhs.uk and put in your postcode, you will get a list of practices by distance from your home. You may want to start by calling the closest and then continue calling until you find an opening. If you are unable to find a practice, contact your local Primary Care Trust for assistance:

Berkshire:	01189 183 333	www.berkshirewest-pct.nhs.uk
Buckinghamshire:	01494 552 200	www.buckspect.nhs.uk

Once you complete the necessary forms at the doctor's surgery (office), you will receive your NHS number. Your NHS number identifies you as being eligible for free health care within county guidelines.

NOTE: your NHS number is not the same as your NI (national insurance) number.

If you wish to book an appointment, phone the surgery as you would the doctor's office at home. In multi-practice surgeries, if the doctor you are registered with is booked up, you will be given an appointment with another doctor in the practice.

Surgeries always hold back a certain number of time slots each day for emergency appointments. If you wish to see a doctor the same day, call as soon as the surgery opens in the morning, usually 8:30 AM. Some surgeries run a child drop-in service one afternoon a week. You meet with the health visitor (nurse) and can ask questions, get advice, etc. The health visitor can write prescriptions.

Your local GP will always be your first call. Pediatricians, gynecologists and other consultants (specialists) are only called in when needed. You need to obtain a referral from your GP before going to see one.

In the UK, general practitioners go by the title "Dr". Surgeons, medical consultants / specialists and dentists are referred to as: "Mr.", "Mrs." or "Miss". An operating room is referred to as a "theatre" and your local GP's office is his or her "surgery".

Visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk or call 0845 4647 for a wealth of medical information and immediate medical advice.

HOUSE CALL AND WEEKEND DOCTORS

Both during weeknights and on the weekends, practices have on-call doctors who are available to speak with you by phone. If they think it necessary, they may call on you at home.

IMMUNIZATIONS: (See p. 16: IMMUNIZATIONS)

HOSPITALS WITH A & E ROOMS (SEE p1: EMERGENCY INFORMATION)

HEALTH CARE – PRIVATE

Private health insurance is often an employee benefit but can also be purchased individually. BUPA and BUPA International are the two largest private health insurance providers. It is best to get specific advice from your HR department on your coverage and the procedures you need to follow.

Most local surgeries take private patients but as private patients are not the norm, you and they may need to learn how the system works together.

HOLIDAYS

Holiday	Date
New Year's Day	January 1
Good Friday	March / April
Easter Monday	March / April
May Bank Holiday	1 st Monday in May
Spring Bank Holiday	Last Monday in May
Summer Bank Holiday	Last Monday in August
Christmas Day	December 25
Boxing Day	December 26

If New Year's Day or Christmas day falls on a Saturday or Sunday, an extra weekday holiday is given.

HOUSING

In general, houses and the rooms inside them are smaller than you are probably used to in the States. It is hard to find open plan homes mostly because they are hard to heat.

If you have a relocation agent, they will work you through the options and vocabulary for house hunting. If you are looking for a home on your own, there are some excellent websites that can help you:

www.findaproperty.com

www.primelocation.com

www.rightmove.co.uk

When calculating the monthly cost of living in a property, be sure to gather information on water, gas, electricity and council taxes. Feel free to negotiate: rent price, furnishings, and etc. but only rarely will utilities be included.

CONTENTS / HOUSEHOLD INSURANCE

Contents insurance covers your personal belongings against theft, damage or loss. Costs are comparable to the US. It is advisable to add accidental damage cover to your policy. This does not cost much more and pays out in case of accidental damage to your household items by children or visitors.

Once you have an address, you can do insurance cost comparisons on the Internet at sites like: www.moneysupermarket.com and www.tescocompare.com

Be sure to ask whether the policy has special conditions that you must satisfy in order for the insurance to be valid. Some companies require special locks on all windows and doors. Riders must be added if you expect your goods to be insured when you have them away from your residence.

I

IMMUNIZATIONS

Immunizations are on a different schedule from those in the US. Be sure to keep a copy of your and your children's immunization records when moving so that you can provide this to your doctor. If you will be returning to the US within a few years, you may want to keep your children on the US immunization schedule. This schedule is available at: www.aap.org/healthtopics/immunizations.cfm. Most UK doctors are happy to adapt to these guidelines if asked. Annual checkups are not standard practice in the UK for adults OR children. Track the immunization schedule for your children and call the doctor to make appropriate appointments.

The Varicella or Chicken Pox vaccine is not a standard vaccine in the UK but is readily available. Instead, British parents will often have "chicken pox parties" and invite their friends and family who have not had chicken pox so that they can pass it along. To have your child immunized, you just need to make the request.

Flu Shots are offered first to adults and children with chronic respiratory illness or asthma. If you would like a flu shot, you will need to request it as it will rarely be offered to you. NOTE: A shot in the UK is called a "jab".

INCOME TAX

US: Typically, your company handles this and they are your best resource. Normal due date: April 15 but extensions are easily obtained for Expats. Tax equalization is a common part of an Expat contract and something you need to discuss with either our HR department or your company tax advisor.

UK: Typically handled by your company. The British tax year is April 6 – April 5. Notification that you need to file a return will be given on April 5. Income tax rates are set in three bands: 10% (for an income of £0 - 2230, 22% (£2231 – 34,600) and 40% (all income over £34,600).

NOTE: Expat adults working in the UK need to keep a diary of days worked outside the US for both your US and UK returns.

**INSURANCE (CAR, see D: DRIVING & CARS)
(CONTENTS, see H: HOUSING)**

INTERNET

Most people bundle their phone and Internet services. You can compare packages and prices at: www.broadbandchecker.co.uk. Even if provided as a bundle, Internet service usually takes a minimum of 7 working days AFTER your phone service begins, to become active. Most public libraries have computers you can use for free or for a minimal charge and many offer free Internet access with your library card.

Nothing bonds expats like shared traumas over phone and Internet services! Expect to have up to 6 weeks with no phone or Internet service. iPhones or Blackberrys that provide both phone and Internet service can be a lifesaver while you wait for service to begin at your home.

L

LANGUAGE: AMERICAN / BRITISH TRANSLATIONS

It is said that the US and UK are “divided by a common language” and that can certainly be true. There are some pretty commonly known vocabulary differences (like apartment and flat) but when these are added to the myriad of accents, understanding and being understood can be a challenge at first. Eventually, your ear will adjust to the accents and all of these websites will give you US to UK “translations”: www.bg-map.com/us-uk.html, www.geocities/Athens/Atlantis/2284, and english2american.com. A small but fun British American dictionary can also be purchased in the gift shop at Westminster Abbey.

There is also a difference in spelling between American and British English. It is worthwhile to invest some time learning those as well (i.e.: color = colour, check = cheque, theater=theatre, finalize=finalise).

LAUNDRY

UK washing machines heat their own water so you may find that the washing cycle takes a lot longer than it did in the US. Some machines do not have a pure cold water cycle. There are also combination washer / dryers. This means you can either be washing or drying but not both at the same time. The drying cycle is usually quite slow and it helps to dry items one at a time rather all at once.

Laundry detergent choices are either Bio or Non-Bio. Bio contains biological enzymes to break up dirt and consequently gets clothes whiter. Non-bio does clean very well and is free of these enzymes and is therefore gentler on clothes, the environment, and less irritating to skin. Please note many British detergents already have bleach added so look for color safe detergents.

IF your machine can wash in cold water, be sure to buy detergent that works in cold water! Most British detergents are designed for 20 Celsius or above and will not dissolve in cold water.

Laundromats, called Laundrettes, do exist in the UK. They can be expensive and rarely have change machines or detergent vending machines. Most of these washers and dryers require 20P, 50P or £1 coins.

LEISURE CENTERS (see, S: SPORTS)

LIBRARIES

Besides a wide selection of reading material, the local libraries carry a wealth of information about leisure activities, general interest courses, local services, clubs, and organizations in your area. Most libraries also have computers with Internet access. Typically you can use

their Internet for up to 40 minutes for free. This is a great help when waiting for your home Internet service to get connected!

Opening hours vary from one library to another. Usually they are closed on one weekday plus Sunday.

To apply for a library card, you will need two items with your name and local address on them. The card can be used at any library in your county.

To find your local library, check out these sites:

Berkshire East:	www.readinglibraries.org.uk
Buckinghamshire	www.buckscc.gov.uk/libraries
Windsor and Maidenhead	www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/libraries.htm

LINENS & MATTRESS SIZES

UK and US mattresses have slightly different dimensions but you can use UK sheets on US if the mattresses are standard length and not a US king bed. While UK sheets may work, UK duvet covers will not work with US duvets as UK duvets are narrower and shorter. The following table converts US mattress sizes to their UK equivalent:

US	UK
Twin	Single
Double	Double
Queen	King
King	Superking
California King	Not readily available

M

MALLS & MAJOR SHOPPING CENTERS

The Chimes, Uxbridge

www.thechimes.uk.com

Located in Uxbridge town centre off junction 1 of the M40. It offers 76 stores, a 9-screen Odeon cinema and 11 restaurants, cafes and bars.

Chimes: 01895 819400

Odeon: 08712 244007

The Nicholsons, Maidenhead

www.nicholsonsshoppingcentre.co.uk

Located just off the A4 in Maidenhead, just a few minutes drive from Junction 9 off the M4. It offers over 60 retailers plus local independent shopkeepers and traders plus restaurants and cafes.

Nicholsons: 01628 783746

The Oracle, Reading

www.theoracle.com

Located in Reading town center about 5 minute drive from Junction 10 off the M4. It offers over 90 top name stores, 25 restaurants, cafes and bars and a 10-screen Vue cinema.

The Oracle: 01189 659000

Vue: 01189 6590000

Queensmere, Slough

www.queensmereobservatory.co.uk

Located on the A4 in Slough, just a few minutes drive from Junction 6 off the M4. It offers 124 shops, cafes and restaurants, a 10-screen cinema and a health and fitness club.

Queensmere: 01753 537654

Empire Cinemas: www.empirecinemas.co.uk

MEASURES & WEIGHTS

The British do body weight in stones: 1 stone: 14 pounds: 6.3 kilos (kg).

UK recipes use weight instead of volume, for example 225 grams not 8 oz or one cup. A food scale (in grams) makes cooking with UK recipes and ingredients easier.

LIQUID MEASURES

Measurement	Ounces	ml (milliliters)
US / UK teaspoon	1/6	5
UK dessert spoon	1/3	10
US / UK Tablespoon	1/2	15
US cup	8	240
US pint	16	470
UK pint	20	585

DRY MEASURES

Ingredient	US	UK	Metric
Flour	1 cup	5 oz	140 grams
Sugar	2 T	1 oz	25 grams
Sugar	1 cup	8 oz	225 grams
Brown sugar	1 cup	6 oz	170 grams
Breadcrumbs / nuts	1 cup	4 oz	115 grams
Butter	2 rounded T	1 oz	25 grams
Butter	1 cup	8 oz	225 grams
Yeast	1 US pkg (2 ½ t)	¼ oz	7 grams

MOBILE (CELL) PHONES

There are two mobile phone payment plans available: set term and Pay-As-You-Go. Set term plans are the most cost effective for regular mobile phone users. Frequently, a phone is included when you sign a 12 – 18 month contract.

Pay-As-You-Go phones are good for people who use mobile phones as a back up or only for emergencies. You are not tied to a contract and can “top up” your phone at most supermarkets, newsagents and post offices.

You can find provider information at <http://www.reviewcentre.com/products3.html>

O

OPTICIANS

Eye examinations are free to children aged under 16 years or under 19 if still in full-time education. Under 16's are provided with a voucher toward the purchase price of a pair of eyeglasses. Most village centers have opticians. You may want to check with neighbors or friends for a recommendation.

Visit www.nhs.uk/England/Opticians or search under 'opticians' at www.yell.com.

OVENS

Ovens vary widely so read your owner's manual. Many of today's ovens have a fan or convection option. Remember that when using the fan, the temperature should be set 20 degrees lower than indicated on the recipe.

COOKING TEMPERATURE CONVERSIONS

Degrees C	Degrees F	Gas Mark	Description
110	225	01 / 04	very slow
125	250	01 / 02	very slow
140	275	1	slow
150	300	2	slow
165	325	3	moderate
180	350	4	moderate
190	375	5	moderate / hot
200	400	6	moderate / hot
220	425	7	hot
230	450	8	hot
240	475	9	very hot

P

PARKING

Always carry plenty of coins with you before attempting to park, as many car parks (parking lots and garages) are not attended.

In a "Pay and Display" car park, you must buy a ticket from a machine located within the lot and then stick this ticket inside of your car window BEFORE leaving your car. Tickets can be given if you leave your car just to get change for the machine!

In "Pay on Foot" lots, you receive a ticket upon entering and take it with you when you park and leave your car. However, before returning to your car, you MUST insert your ticket into a payment machine (usually near exit doors from mall, airports, etc), pay the amount due, and receive the paid ticket back. This ticket is then inserted into a machine upon exiting the car park.

Street parking can be challenging as signs can sometimes be hard to find. Basic guidelines:

Double yellow lines: NO waiting or parking at any time

Single yellow line: restricted parking during designated times. Look for a small sign posted with those times or the Controlled Parking Zone hours.

Double white lines are for loading and unloading only

PETS

It is now getting easier to bring your pet to live with you in the UK, with the introduction of pet passports also called the PET Scheme.

Visit <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/> for the latest details and requirements.

This process takes advanced planning and coordination. Please get the facts and begin the process as soon as possible. Be sure to travel with a full set of your pet's veterinary records and all PET scheme documents.

ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

The RSPCA has a 24-hour service. For emergencies, general enquiries, public complaints and donations, phone 0870 5555999 or visit www.rspca.org.uk.

PHARMACIES (see C: CHEMISTS)

POST OFFICE

www.royalmail.com for services and postal prices

www.parcelforce.com for information on shipping packages.

The post office offers many services to residents. Main offices are open from 9 AM – 5:30 PM, Monday through Friday, and from 9 AM – noon on Saturday. Smaller post offices are often located inside stores or newsagents. Post office hours at these in store locations may have different hours, including a half-day closing on Wednesdays.

In addition to mailing services, the post office provides the following:

- application forms for driving licenses
- motor vehicle registration
- EU travel health insurance: go to www.travelhealth.co.uk/advice/ehic.htm
- television licenses
- money orders
- banking services
- payment of bills (such as utility bills)

Main post offices are excellent for obtaining small amounts of foreign currency. They charge no commission and will buy back any excess on your return.

In the UK, you can buy 1st and 2nd class stamps. First class mail is ideal if you want your letter or packet to be delivered the next working day, including Saturday. Second class mail usually arrives by the third working day after posting.

Plan to ship your holiday packages early. Note that customs duties will be due (sending OR receiving) if the value is over a certain limit – even if they are gifts. For information on allowances, visit the websites www.britainusa.com or www.usembassy.org.uk and type in “gifts”.

R

REPAIRMEN / SERVICEMEN

Eventually, you will need to have a repairman (serviceman) call at your home. Don't be embarrassed to ask for identification and a badge. If a serviceman is going to be in your home, it is customary practice to offer him a cup of tea or coffee. It is not necessary to offer a tip unless the work has been more than originally anticipated or they have really gone out of their way to help you.

S

SHOPPING

Each village and town has an area that is referred to as “The High Street”. This is the area where most of the shops can be found. Shopping malls are becoming more prevalent and usually have large car parks. Most small shops close early by 6 PM but supermarkets and DIY (Do It Yourself – equivalent of Home Depot or Lowe's) stay open until 8 or 9 PM. On Sunday, the law allows stores to stay open for six hours. Be aware that some stores

advertise that they are open 24 hours but it does not include Sunday. Most stores, particularly chains, are open on Sunday from 10 AM to 4:00 PM. Prior to Christmas, other shops also open on Sunday and extend some evening hours. Most stores post their shopping hours on their websites.

VAT, or Valued Added Tax, is currently 15% that you pay on goods and services in the EU including the UK. Where VAT is payable it is usually already included in the listed price. For full details on VAT as well as a list of goods that are considered zero rate, go to: www.directgov.co.uk.

NOTE: when receiving shipments from outside the UK, customs may levy VAT charges on to the value of good received.

SUPERMARKETS & GROCERY STORES

There are several grocery store chains in the UK. Each offers a slightly different range of items. Marks and Spencer's is best known for its microwavable, ready to eat meals and desserts. Morrison's and Waitrose carry more unusual items. ASDA and TESCO Extra stores carry all the merchandise you would find at a Target or Wal-Mart.

All markets and shops are trying to encourage patrons to use "bags for life"; basically bags that are kept and re-used. These can be purchased at the market. Most markets also have a bin where carrier bags can be recycled. Some stores also give you point credit for bringing in your own bags.

The major supermarkets in the UK are:

ASDA:	www.asda.co.uk
Marks and Spencer Food:	www.marksandspencer.com
Morrison's:	www.morrisons.co.uk
Sainsbury:	www.sainsbury.co.uk
Tesco:	www.tesco.com
Waitrose:	www.waitrose.com/
Costco:	www.costco.co.uk

NOTE: Costco memberships are international so if you have a US card it will work here. Do note that in the UK regular members cannot enter until noon. TWAOC offers Trade Memberships (equal to a US Business Membership) that allows entrance at 10 AM.

You can grocery shop on-line and have your items delivered to your home. This is a great service when you need a lot of items like for a party or Thanksgiving. It is also very handy to set up a delivery for the day you return from a vacation.

Tesco on-line is:	www.tesco.com
Waitrose on-line is called OCADO:	www.ocado.com

ORGANIC FOOD/FARMERS MARKETS/FRUITS & VEGETABLES

A great resource for finding all things organic is www.whyorganic.org, the Soil Association website, where you can locate for farmers markets in villages around your area.

Most High Streets have a health store that stocks organic and health foods. Holland & Barrett and Revital are a few health food stores in the greater London area. Also, most big supermarkets now have extensive ranges of organic products. Waitrose and Sainsbury are especially good.

For organic food delivery to your home, go to: www.revermene.co.uk

STORES THAT WILL HELP YOU GET SETTLED:

JohnLewis Home & Leisure Store, High Wycombe
Daniel's, Pescod Street, Windsor

IKEA

Argos Catalogue Store

Lakeland: Kitchen and organizational supplies (several American brands), Windsor

COSTCO: US membership is good in the UK

Hardware stores: Homebase

B & Q

NOTE: American Women's Clubs are a great resource for purchasing: used household goods, cars, etc.

MALLS (see M: MALLS)

SITSEEING

England has a wealth of country walks, museums, famous sites, stately homes and much, much more. To learn more about your options and save money on your visits, it is advisable to join:

The National Trust: www.nationaltrust.org.uk

English Heritage: www.english-heritage.org.uk

Historic Palaces: www.hrp.org.uk

All memberships come with an annual guide to all their properties and quarterly magazines.

Few historic properties are not a part of one of these organizations.

Many tourist locations are closed from November to March or will have variable hours. Always check before heading out during that time.

For a complete, up-to-date list of what's going on in London: theatre, concerts, museum displays, nightlife, etc. pick up a copy of Time Out magazine or go to their website:

www.timeout.com/london

NOTE: Entrance to most London museums is free.

The West End is the theatre district in London. You can purchase tickets on line, at the box office or at the Half-Price ticket booth in Leicester Square. Tickets from the Half-Price ticket booth are for the same day and not all shows are on offer.

For what's on in the West End visit <http://www.officallondontheatre.co.uk>.

Hiking or rambling is fabulous in the UK. Public footpaths criss-cross the entire country. For information, go to: www.ramblers.org.uk or www.countrywalking.co.uk

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Look for the following books to help you find fun places to visit:

Children's London, Take the Kids London, Take the Kids England, and Let's Go with the Children – Berks / Oxon / Wilts AND Beds. /Bucks. /Herts.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Listed here are only a few of the local attractions but they will keep you busy until you are comfortable in the area!

Bekonscot Model Village - New Town Beaconsfield, 01494 672919

Chiltern Open Air Museum - Chalfont St. Giles, 01494 872163

Canal Cruises, Uxbridge Canals: Denham Locks 01895 812130

Legoland, Windsor, www.legoland.co.uk

Odds Farm Park, Wooburn Common 01628 520188

The Old Shire Horse Centre, Littlewick Green, Maidenhead, 01628 828801

Roald Dahl Museum, Great Missenden, 01494 892192
Windsor Castle and Great Park, Windsor

SPORTS & LEISURE CENTRES

A leisure center is similar to family fitness centers in the US. They are often owned and operated by a borough (so supported by local taxes) and offer a wide variety of activities including: swimming (recreational and lessons), gym facilities and exercise classes, sport teams, toddler and children's classes and childcare (crèche) facilities. Most boroughs have at least one leisure centre. The largest ones local to the Thames Valley are:

- Magnet Centre, Maidenhead, 01628 633899, www.rbwm.gov.uk
- Rivermead Leisure Complex, 01189 015000, www.reading.gov.uk
- Windsor Leisure Centre, 01753 850004, www.rbwm.gov.uk

T

TAXES

- **CAR TAX (see, D: DRIVING & CARS)**
- **COUNCIL TAX / COMMUNITY CHARGE**
- This charge is to fund local services such as roads and rubbish collection and is payable by all adults in a community. The charge varies depending on the location and size of the property. Bills are typically paid in monthly installments from April to January.
- **INCOME TAX: (see, I: INLAND REVENUE)**
- **VAT (see, S: SHOPPING)**

TELEPHONE SERVICES

Acquiring a new phone can take a long time. If you are moving to a home where there is already phone service, *do not disconnect it*. Simply request that the number be transferred to the new name and account.

BT (British Telephone) is the main provider for telephone connections. There are many other service providers besides BT who might offer cheaper solutions on national and international calls. You can comparison shop at: www.homephonechoices.co.uk. Bundles that include phone, Internet (see I: Internet) and even TV are available. Many providers offer very low cost international calling programs so be sure to include that in your enquiries.

Bills are sent quarterly and can be paid by direct debit, cheque or credit card and on-line. Often bills will not be itemized unless you specifically request this service.

BT will send you a free copy of your local Phone Book on request. A copy of any other phone directory can be ordered for approximately £5.50 a copy. The Thompson Directory for your area is also free by calling 01252 555555.

DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE

Directory assistance in the UK is now available from a variety of providers at differing prices. Some commonly used numbers are 118 500 and 118 118. If requested, the service will send a message or text confirming the number.

INTERNATIONAL CALLS

One great resource for comparing phone services and international calling rates is www.niftylist.co.uk. You may also want to consider SKYPE a service for making free international calls via your computer. More details are found at www.skype.com

MOBILE (CELL) PHONES (SEE M: MOBILE PHONES)

PAYPHONES

Although some payphones take coins, an increasing number only accept prepaid phone cards. Phone cards can be purchased from most newsagents and post offices.

TELEVISION

“If you use or install television receiving equipment to receive or record television program services, you are required by law to obtain a television license,” according to the official website. The TV license is the government’s way of funding the BBC, which accepts no advertising. **THE LICENSE IS NOT OPTIONAL.** Inspectors with tracking equipment do travel neighborhoods and can impose fines of up to £1000.

The current cost is approximately £135. per year. You can pay quarterly by Direct Debit or annually in one lump sum. An application can be picked up at your local post office or you can pay on-line. For more information, go to: www.tvlicensing.co.uk.

If you would like a few more TV channels (as well as radio station), you can install a Freeview box that works through an aerial. There is no monthly charge; you simply have to buy the box that costs approximately £60. Before purchasing a box, check that reception is available in your area by going to www.freeview.co.uk.

For those interested in lots more channels, satellite and cable are available. Satellite viewing is available via Sky (www.sky.com) and cable TV has a variety of providers including NTL (www.ntlworld.com) and British Telecom (www.bt.com).

For the sports fan, consider a subscription to NASN, the home of North American sports in Europe (www.nasn.com) or Sky Sports.

TEMPERATURE CONVERSION

Temperature is typically reported in Celsius or Centigrade, not Fahrenheit.

- To get a rough idea of the temperature in Fahrenheit, double the Celsius/Centigrade temperature and add 30.
- For an accurate calculation from Fahrenheit to Centigrade:
 - subtract 32, multiply by 5, and divide by 9.
- For an accurate calculation from Centigrade to Fahrenheit:
 - multiply by 9, divide by 5, add 32.

Fahrenheit	Centigrade
0	- 17
32	0
50	10
70	21
98.6	37

TEMPERATURE CONVERSION – COOKING (SEE O: OVENS)

TIME

In the UK, time is generally reported in the military format or 24 hour clock. This means that time after 12:00 noon continues with 13:00 (1 PM), 14:00 (2 PM), and so on. To quickly convert to a 12-hour clock, simply subtract 12 from whatever the time is past noon, i.e. 14:00 – 12 = 2 PM. The UK does move its clocks forward 1 hour in the spring (BST: British Summer Time) and back 1 hour in the Fall (GMT).

TIPPING

Tipping in the UK is changing. It used to be that a service charge was included in the bill and if you wanted to add something to that you could. Some places still do have a service charge but ask the person serving you if that actually goes to them.

Traditionally, on Boxing Day (the day after Christmas), the English tip some of the people who provided them with regular home services during the year such as: house cleaners, newspaper delivery, bin men (garbage men), milkman, etc. This is not obligatory and can be done by leaving out a card with a token amount like £10.

Normal tipping amounts:

Hairdresser / barber	10%
Taxi	10 – 15 %
Waiter/ Waitress	10 – 15%

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES

The following is a list of websites to assist you finding information about the attractions and sites to visit in England.

British Tourist Authority	www.visitbritain.com
Buckinghamshire Tourist Board	www.visitbuckinghamshire.org
English Heritage	www.english-heritage.org.uk
English Tourist Board	www.enjoyengland.com
National Rail	www.nationalrail.co.uk
National Trust	www.nationaltrust.org.uk
Ramblers Association	www.ramblers.org.uk
South East England Tourist Board	www.visitsoutheastengland.com

TRANSPORTATION

Public Transportation is easy, usually quick and efficient in the UK. Trains services connect outlying areas to the nearest city. The London Underground, or Tube, has 12 lines that connect most areas of the city.

TRAINS

Southwest Trains and First Great Western cover the Thames Valley area. Both connect in to Paddington Station in London. Your local train station can provide you with a copy of the timetable or you can access the website: www.trainline.com or call National Rail 08457 484950. The train schedules usually change more than once a year so it is best to double check times before you travel.

Fares are dependent on the class of travel and the time of the day. There is 1st and 2nd class travel. Cheap day return or off-peak tickets offer big savings if you can travel after 9:30 AM. If you commute regularly (at least 3 times per week) then you should investigate travel cards or passes. Travel cards can be purchased that provide you service to and from London on the train and use of the Tube and busses while in London. These are usually much less expensive than separate train and Tube tickets and are available for adults, children and

OAP's (Old Age Persons / senior citizens). Travel cards are available on weekdays after 9:30 and all day on weekends.

Talk with the Ticketmaster about the Family and Friends Rail Card and other discount passes that might suit your family: www.familyandfriends-railcard.co.uk

For safety sake if you are traveling alone, always ensure that there are several people in your carriage. Muggers have been known to jump on and off at stations.

LONDON TRANSPORT

The London Underground, or The Tube, is served by 12 lines. Each line has its own unique color, so you can easily follow them on maps and signs throughout the system.

Trains and platforms are described as eastbound, westbound, northbound or southbound depending on the direction of the line. The front of each train will show the ultimate destination of each train that isn't always the last stop on that line. At the entrance to each platform is a sign that shows the stops for each train on that platform. Be sure to check the platform sign and if trains for more than one destination are served from that platform, check the sign on the front of each train to insure you are on the correct train. Inside each carriage is also a map that shows the stops for that tube and these are usually also announced.

You can pay in several different ways. You can purchase:

- Individual tickets
- One-day Travelcard (good for the day on all Tubes and buses)
- Or if you are in London frequently, consider an Oyster card. You put a certain amount of money on your card and top up as needed.

There are self-service ticket machines and ticket booths available at all stations.

Since the Tube is an underground service, most stations have escalators to and from platforms. A few have elevators. There is escalator etiquette in the Underground: stand to the right in single file so that those in a hurry can walk and pass you on the left.

For more information, go to: www.tfl.gov.uk

EUROSTAR

Eurostar is the train service from London to the continent. Passengers can leave from St Pancras station in London. Travel time from London to Paris is 2 hours and 35 minutes. The train also has stops at Lille and Brussels. If you are traveling with your car, you pick up service in Folkestone and the trip to Calais takes 35 minutes.

For ticket sales and enquiries, phone 0870 518 6186 or go to: www.eurostar.com.

AIRPORTS

Five (5) airports service the London area. For airport information, visit BAA (British Airports Authority) website at www.baa.com. Useful information includes live flight details, travel to and from the airport, airport facilities and which terminals service which airlines.

Or, for general information:

- Gatwick 0870 000 2468
- Heathrow 0870 000 0123
- London City 020 7646 0088
- Luton 01582 405 100
- Stanstead 0870 000 0303

For information on traveling to the airports by train visit:

www.heathrowexpress.com, www.gatwickexpress.com, www.stanstedexpress.com or www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk (Luton)

TAXIS AND PRIVATE CAR HIRE

Taxis are available for hire for local and long distance runs. The famous 'black cabs' in the London area are monitored regularly for safe drivers and vehicles. Other Taxi Service, Minicabs and Car Hire are available in London and most other areas but are not regulated to the same standard. Only use **licensed** cabs! Outside London, you can negotiate the fare ahead of time. To locate services in your area, visit www.yell.com

TRASH (RUBBISH)

RUBBISH PICKUP AND LANDFILLS

Rubbish is collected once a week, and you are usually given one (1) garbage bin per household. To find out your rubbish collection day, get bins or get answers to any of your rubbish questions, call your council office.

If you have excess trash, or bigger items that do not fit into your wheelie bin, you can drive to a community Household Waste Disposal site (referred to as the "tip") in your district. Use of these is usually free if you come in a private car.

RECYCLING

Recycling is increasingly encouraged in the UK and home pick-up of recyclables varies by district. Call your district council office and they will send you specific guidelines and arrange to have your recycle bins delivered. Most boroughs also have recycling centers with large bins for: paper, cardboard, brown, green and clear glass, and plastic bottles.

W

WATER

Only about 10% of private households have a water meter – mainly new houses. Charging estimates are generally based on the size of the property, rather than actual consumption rate. The two main suppliers of water service to our area are listed below; check their sites to see which one services your particular home.

Thames Water www.thames-water.com

Three Valleys Water www.3valleys.co.uk

Whoever sets up your service: you, your spouse, your estate or relocation agent, be sure that service is listed in both your and your spouse's names. In many cases, only the persons whose names are on the account can call about changes, problems, etc.

WEIGHTS (see M: MEASURES AND WEIGHTS)

WIRE TRANSFERS (see B: BANKING)

WOMEN'S CLUBS

You may never have belonged to a club in your life or may feel you are not a "club" type. This is a new situation for you, however, and you may find the answers to questions and the support you and your family need through your local American Women's Club. While the majority of members have close ties to North America (citizens, employees of North American companies, lived in the North America, attend an American school, etc), most welcome anyone in the area who would benefit from club membership. All clubs hold a general meeting once a month, and additionally offer a variety of activities throughout the month that may interest you. For further details, contact the club in your area.

Thames Valley American Women's Club www.tvawc.com

Chilterns American Women's Club www.cawc.co.uk

American Women of Berkshire and Surrey www.awbs.org.uk
American Women's Club of London www.awclondon.org
American Women of Surrey (Cobham) www.awsurrey.org

WORSHIP (see C: CHURCHES AND PLACES OF WORSHIP)

OTHER RESOURCES:

USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

Magazines:

“American in Britain” magazine

www.theamericanhour.com

“Expatriate” magazine

www.expatriateliving.com

Books:

“Brit-Think, Ameri-Think” by Jane Walmsley

“Notes from a Small Island” by Bill Bryson

“Rules Britannia” by Tori Summers Hargis

“Watching the English” by Kate Fox

OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES

American Expats

www.americanexpats.co.uk

The American Hour

www.theamericanhour.com

BR Anchor Publishing

(specializing in books on international relocation) www.branchor.com

Expatriate Agency

www.expatriateagency.com

Expatriate Living

www.expatriateliving.com

Tales from a Small Planet

www.talesmag.com