

FREE GUIDE

@DAVISWITHMAYA

A young woman with long, dark, wavy hair is smiling and looking slightly to her right. She is wearing a light-colored collared shirt under a dark jacket. The background is a sunlit path lined with large, leafy green trees, suggesting a university campus setting.

The UC Davis Starter Guide

WRITTEN BY AN ACTUAL UC DAVIS STUDENT, NOT THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE

25 things I wish I knew before coming to Davis

— by Maya

What's *in here*.

Read it front to back once. Then come back to the pages you'll actually need — the apps, the map, the year-by-year, the bucket list.



PART ONE · LANDING

Welcome to Davis	02
Your first week, handled	03
The unwritten rules	04
Getting around (bikes & buses)	05
Speak Davis: the glossary	06
The Davis year, month by month	07

PART TWO · EVERYDAY DAVIS

Apps & websites to bookmark	08
Making friends	09
When Davis feels boring	10
Davis essentials	11
Davis on a budget	12
Dorm & dining insider	13

PART THREE · SCHOOL & ADULTING

The quarter system, decoded	14
The stuff with deadlines	15
The DMs I get most	16
My freshman mistakes	17
Things nobody tells you	18

PART FOUR · ALL FOUR YEARS

Davis by the numbers	19
Campus, mapped roughly	20
Year by year (+ transfers)	21
Living off campus & your first lease	22
Research, internships, abroad	23
Taking care of yourself	24
Traditions & game day	25
Davis, in pictures	26

PART FIVE · BEFORE YOU GO

The Davis bucket list	27
Need more help?	28

Okay, so you're coming to Davis.

First: congrats. Second: nobody tells you the stuff in this guide, so I'm going to.



Hi, I'm Maya. I'm a design major going into my third year at Davis, and I run @daviswithmaya (and @dailyucdavis with my two roommates — more on them later). I came in overwhelmed, couldn't find clear answers to basic questions, and started writing things down. This is the free, broad version of all of it. It won't tell you which GE to take or which dorm has the good closets (I have other guides for that), but it will get you through fall quarter with way fewer mistakes than I made.

THINGS THAT SURPRISED ME

It is HOT in September. Like 100° during move-in hot. Then cold and foggy by January. Pack for both.

Everyone bikes. Not "some people bike." Everyone. Including your professors.

Davis is small, and that's the point. Compared to BIGG private schools, you'll see the same faces at the CoHo, downtown, and the Farmers Market — which is how you end up with friends.

The quarter system is fast. Ten weeks. Midterms start week 3. You will not "ease into it." Keep good habits, keep your non-negotiables to stay sane, and a little bit of work EVERY day.

Cows. Actual cows on campus. Also turkeys everywhere that do not move for cars or bikes. (actually got attacked by a turkey before lol) llamas, horses, sheep on campus :)

Sweetest People. Davis is small enough that a stranger will ask how your midterm went. It's a whole vibe. Treat everyone like you already know them. Say hi, be kind :)

How to use this: read it in one sitting, then screenshot the pages you'll need later (the apps page, the bucket list). Everything here is what I'd tell you over coffee at the CoHo — not what a brochure would say.

Your first week, *handled*.

Week 1 is the only week where everyone's equally confused. Use that. Here's what I'd do in the first seven days.

1

Walk (or bike) your classes before Monday.

Find the actual room, not just the building. Wellman and Olson are mazes, and "Sciences Lecture Hall" is not where you think it is. Ten minutes on Sunday saves you from walking into the wrong 300-person lecture.

2

Set up Duo and your apps now, not in line at orientation.

Duo two-factor is required for literally everything (Canvas, Schedule Builder, your grades). Do it on your couch at home. Full app list is on page 8.

3

Don't buy everything immediately.

Dorm stuff: Target and Trader Joe's are a 10-minute bike ride. The five things I actually used all year: a mattress topper, underbed bins, a clip-on reading light, Command hooks, and a backpack laundry bag. Everything else can wait. (My full packing list is on the last page.)

4

Prop your door open.

Week 1 is the only time it's socially normal to wander into a stranger's room and say hi. So many friends came from a hallway conversation/ studying in the common space and saying hi in September. Don't waste the window.

Real talk

I met both my roommates on the admitted-students Instagram page (@ucd.2028 for my year) months before move-in. We've lived together ever since. Find your class page, post an actual intro, and DM the people who seem like you. It works.

How to not be *that freshman*.

Nobody will tell you these to your face. They'll just know. Learn them now and skip the awkward part.

01 Never walk in the bike lane
The paths have a bike side and a walk side. Walking in the bike lane is the single fastest way to be identified as new. Also, dangerous.

02 Don't stop in a bike circle
Enter yielding, go counterclockwise, exit smoothly. If you need to check your phone, that's what the grass is for.

03 Say "Davis," not "UCD"
Out loud, everyone says Davis. "UCD" is for email signatures and your parents.

04 Don't bike through the Quad during Farmers Market or Picnic Day
Actually, don't bike through a crowd anywhere. Walk it. You'll get there.

05 Hold the CoHo table, then order
It's a line-then-table place only in theory. Send one person to claim, one to order. Don't spread to a 4-top alone at noon.

06 Lock to the racks, not the trees
TAPS will tag it, and eventually cut it. Also the trees have been here longer than you.

07 Move over on the Arb path
Runners, dogs, ducks, professors on a lunch walk. Stay right, pass left, say hi to the ducks.

08 Tip the Farmers Market vendors with your loyalty, not just cash
Buy from the same stand a few weeks in a row. They'll remember you, and the samples get bigger.

09 Respect the turkeys' personal space
They live downtown. They were here first. They will win.

10 Don't complain about Davis to people who chose Davis
Every town has a "there's nothing to do" crowd. Be the one who found something, then post it.

Bonus rule: if someone's filming on the Quad, it's probably me. Come say hi. I mean it.

You will be judged by your *bike skills*.

5 Bike basics

- **Used over new.** Facebook Marketplace, the Bike Barn, or the Aggie Reuse Store. It will get rained on and possibly stolen. Don't bring the nice one.
- **U-lock, not a cable.** Cable locks get cut. Lock the frame, not the wheel.
- **Bike circles:** counterclockwise, yield on the way in, never stop inside one.
- **Get a bike license from TAPS.** It's required in Davis and cheap.
- **Lights at night.** Required, and yes, they ticket.

6 Unitrans basics

- **It's free with your student ID.** Tap it, don't fumble for it.
- **It's run by students.** Your bus driver might be in your chem class.
- **The double-deckers are real** and you should ride one before graduation.
- **Learn one line well** — the one from your dorm area to downtown. Then branch out.
- **Use the live map** (Unitrans site or app). Buses bunch up during passing periods.

7 Walking is fine. Mostly.

The core of campus is about 15 minutes corner to corner. But a 10-minute passing period from Wellman to the ARC side of campus? That's a bike. Plan your schedule with the map open.

8 Campus is bigger than it looks.

The Arboretum, the vet school, the dairy, the west campus fields — you can go a whole quarter without seeing half of it. Pick a random direction one Sunday and bike until you hit cows.

Flat tire?

The Bike Barn on campus fixes them cheap and teaches you to do it yourself.

Rainy season

Fenders are worth it. So is a cheap poncho. Your backpack will thank you.

Leaving town

Amtrak from the Davis station goes to Sacramento and the Bay. No car needed.

Words you'll hear in your *first week*.

9

Learn the nicknames before the real names. Nobody says "Memorial Union Coffee House." Ever.

MU — Memorial Union. Student union, bookstore, food, the bus hub out front. Center of the universe.

The Silo — the other food hub, south side of campus. Yes, it was an actual silo.

Shields — the main library. Also "I'm at Shields" means "I'm being productive."

The Quad — the big lawn by the MU. Hammocks, club tabling, people who look like they have their life together.

Eggheads — the big bronze head sculptures around campus. There are several. Finding all of them is a rite of passage.

Bike Barn — on-campus bike shop. Repairs, rentals, and the reason your flat tire isn't a crisis.

Picnic Day — the giant campus open house in April. Parade, dachshund races, cow-milking, the whole town shows up.

Aggie Pack — the student section at games. Free shirts get thrown. Go at least once.

Latitude — the dining commons that isn't tied to a dorm area. The andino bowls are the reason my roommates and I made a whole video.

10

Picnic Day is the one weekend you don't go home. Book nothing else for that Saturday in April.

CoHo — the Coffee House inside the MU. Student-run, huge, always a line, line moves fast. Order the Pachamama coffee.

ARC — Activities and Recreation Center. The gym. Free with your fees. Dead at 7 a.m., packed at 5 p.m.

The Arb — the Arboretum. A 3.5-mile strip of trees and a waterway along the south edge of campus. Best walk in Davis.

The Death Star — the Social Sciences and Humanities building. Concrete, confusing, named accurately.

TAPS — Transportation and Parking Services. Bike licenses, parking permits, and the tickets you'll try to avoid.

Segundo / Tercero / Cuarto — the three first-year housing areas. Each has its own dining commons and personality. (Full breakdown lives in my Dorm Guide.)

Whole Earth Festival — free student-run music and arts festival on the Quad in May. Very Davis.

Downtown — the grid just east of campus. Everything you need is within about six blocks.

Lawntopia — the spring concert on the Quad. Free, loud, and the best weekend of spring quarter that isn't Picnic Day.

What actually happens *when*.

Davis has seasons, and they hit different than the brochure. Here's the rhythm of a year so nothing surprises you.

Sep

Moove-in (yes, cow pun) in 100° heat. Welcome Week, Involvement Fair. Unpack the essentials, then go meet people.

Oct

Real classes. First midterms week 3–4. Cool Patch Pumpkins in Dixon has the world's largest corn maze — go with your floor.

Nov

Tule fog arrives. Causeway Classic (Davis vs. Sac State). Thanksgiving break is your first real breath.

Dec

Finals. Llamas on campus for stress relief. Shields runs late hours. Go home and sleep for a week.

Jan

Actual rain, for weeks. Fenders and a poncho. Winter quarter is the hardest one — everyone agrees.

Feb

Short, gray, grindy. Almond orchards around Yolo County bloom pink — bike out to see them.

Mar

Winter finals, then spring break. The weather flips to perfect almost overnight.

Apr

Picnic Day. Best month in Davis, no contest. Everyone is on the Quad. Nobody is studying.

May

Whole Earth Festival, Lawntopia, and the first 95° day. Sunscreen goes in your backpack permanently.

Jun

Finals, move-out, Aggie Reuse donation bins overflowing. It's emotional. You'll be back.

Jul–Aug

Davis empties out. If you stay for summer session it's 105° and weirdly peaceful. Sublets are cheap.

Every week

Sat Farmers Market. Wed Picnic in the Park (warm months). 2nd Friday ArtAbout downtown. Sunday Arb reset.

Bookmark these *now*.

Screenshot this page. You'll need every one of these in the first two weeks.

Schedule Builder

Where you register. Learn it before your pass time, not during.

Canvas

Every class, every assignment, every grade. Turn notifications on.

OASIS

Your degree progress, advising notes, and the forms you'll eventually need.

Aggie Advising

Book advisor appointments. They fill up before pass times — book early.

myucdavis

The dashboard that links to everything else. Your schedule, your ID, your holds.

Unitrans live map

Real-time buses. Saves you from standing at a stop for 20 minutes.

Google Maps

Turn on the bike layer. Search building names — it knows "Wellman Hall."

Health-e-Messaging

Student Health's portal. Appointments, flu shots, counseling — mostly free.

Aggie Life / club pages

Every registered club and its events. Your "I'm bored" fix on a Tuesday.

- 11 **Know your pass times.** You register in two windows (Pass 1 and Pass 2). They're in Schedule Builder. Set an alarm. Have backups ready before it opens.
- 12 **Waitlists move.** A lot, and mostly in week 1. Stay on them, go to the class anyway, and check daily. Then drop what you don't need so someone else gets in.
- 13 **Rate My Professors and the UC Davis subreddit are useful *and* unhinged.** Read them for patterns, not verdicts. One angry review means nothing; twenty saying "the midterm is nothing like the homework" means something.

FREE STUFF I MADE, ALSO IN MY BIO

College Assignment Tracker

The Google Sheet I use every quarter. Copy it, drop in your syllabi week 1.

GE Checklist Sheet

Track which GE areas you've hit so you don't discover a gap senior year.

College Life 101

My free 8-module crash course on the parts of college nobody teaches you.

Nobody has friends yet *either*.



Everyone in your hall is faking confidence in September. That's the good news: the bar for starting a conversation has never been lower. I was nervous about putting myself out there too — the account you're reading this from almost didn't happen.

14 Pick one club fast. You can quit later.

The Involvement Fair is in the first weeks of fall on the Quad — hundreds of tables. Sign up for way too many, go to three, keep one. A club that meets weekly is a friend group with a schedule.

15 Talk to the person next to you in discussion, not lecture.

Lectures are 300 people. Discussion sections are 25 and meet every week. "Do you get this problem set?" is a friendship opener that also raises your grade.

16 Don't panic if you haven't found "your people" by week 2.

Most people I know found their actual friends winter quarter, not fall. Say yes to everything in October, even the awkward stuff. I found some of my best friends not until end of sophomore year. People will keep coming in. Don't be discouraged.

WHERE FRIENDSHIPS ACTUALLY START (MINE: A DESIGN CLUB, A CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, WOMEN'S CLUB BASKETBALL, A VIDEO TEAM — NONE PLANNED)

Dorm floor events (go, even the cringe ones)

ARC group fitness classes

Intramural anything

Cultural & religious orgs

The dining commons at 6 p.m.

Late-night Silo runs

Aggie Pack at a game

Study groups that don't study

Also: the person you sat next to at orientation and never texted? Text them. See who you vibe with :)

"There's nothing to do here" *is a skill issue.*

- 17 Davis is small on purpose.** Nothing comes to you here. Make the plan, send the text, be the one who says "Arb at 5?" Ask a friend you just met to join you to try a restaurant downtown!
- 18 Learn the weekly rhythm.** Saturday morning Farmers Market at Central Park, year-round. Wednesday evenings there in the warm months (Picnic in the Park). Thursday nights downtown. Sunday Arb walk to reset. During finals week, there are llamas. Pet the llamas!!!

There's random things to do:

- Picnic at the Quad with friends, find a random field, go to the farm (ruhstallar's)
- On-campus concerts (by ASUCD, 3 every year [this past yr dominick fike, don tolover, etc])
- Festivals/Markets all the time (downtown or on campus, always some sort of thing to check out with clothing, food, etc)
- Sports --> beach volleyball on campus, basketball courts, pickleball, ping pong/rock climbing/pilates at the gym
- EATTT --> so many good food spots downtown, so many student deals, favorite taco stand open till 2 am
- CLUBS --> 800+ student clubs, all of them have events going on 24/7. Get involved

- 19 Leave town sometimes.** Sacramento is 20 minutes. Amtrak from the Davis station gets you to the Bay. Tahoe and Napa are a friend-with-a-car away. Davis gets better when you come back to it.



Arboretum picnic

Blanket, snacks from downtown, the redwood grove or the gazebo by Lake Spafford. Free, always.



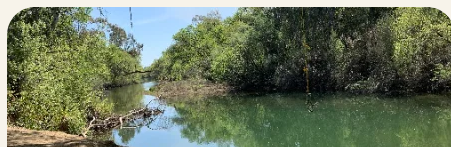
Downtown

Six walkable blocks. Bookstores, thrift, a movie theater, and enough boba shops.



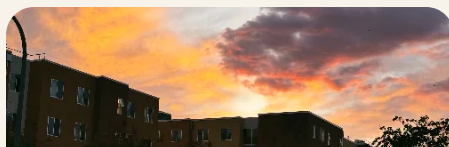
Farmers Market

One of the best in California. Go hungry. Bring cash for the pastry stand.



Putah Creek

Bike south past the Arb and keep going. Trails, shade, an actual creek. Feels like leaving Davis without leaving.



Sunset spots

Top level of a campus parking structure, the west end of the Arb, or any field on the edge of campus. Flat town, huge sky.



Campus events

Aggie games are free with your ID. Mondavi has cheap student tickets. Lawntopia in spring, Whole Earth in May, and brand pop-ups on the Quad where I've handed out free skincare to a line of 50 people.

The places everyone *ends up*.

Not my full 100+ list by category — that's the Life Guide. These are the handful of Davis institutions you'll be at within a month whether you plan to or not, so you might as well know them now.

Davis Farmers Market · Central Park

Saturdays year-round, Wednesday evenings in the warm months with live music. Go hungry, bring cash and a tote. This is the town's living room.

The CoHo · MU

Student-run, student-priced, and the default "want to meet up?" spot. The line looks bad and moves fast. Pachamama coffee, always.

T% (Tea Percent) · downtown

The boba that started a race between me and my roommate. There are a lot of boba shops here; you'll develop a strong opinion. This is mine.

Woodstock's Pizza · downtown

The post-game, post-midterm, birthday-you-forgot-to-plan place. Davis institution. Loud on purpose.

Davis Food Co-op · downtown

Real groceries, bulk section, and the hot bar when the DC is not cutting it. Student membership deals exist — ask.

Crepeville · downtown

Weekend brunch line, huge portions, parents' weekend headquarters. Order one crepe for two people.

The Arboretum · south campus

Free, 3.5 miles, redwood grove to Lake Spafford. Walk it when you're stressed, picnic it when you're not.

The Quad · center of campus

Involvement Fair, Whole Earth, Lawntopia, brand pop-ups, hammocks, and the reason your 2 p.m. class is half-empty in April.

Groceries on a bike

Trader Joe's on Russell, Target in east Davis (bike path the whole way), Safeway, the Co-op. Get a basket or a backpack. Rideshare for groceries adds up fast.

Late night

Downtown mostly closes early — this is Davis. Know which spots stay open past 10 before you need one. The Silo and CoHo hours change quarterly; check them.

Study spot rule

Have one on campus, one downtown, one nobody knows about. Shields alone will fail you by week 3. (Ranked by vibe, noise, and outlets in the Life Guide.)

Davis on a *budget*.

You are already paying for a lot of stuff through your fees. Use it before you spend on anything else.

20 Free because you already paid

- Unitrans — every bus, every day
- The ARC — gym, pool, classes, climbing wall
- Student Health & Counseling — most visits, flu shots
- Tutoring at the Academic Assistance & Tutoring Centers
- The Pantry — free groceries and toiletries, no questions
- Library laptop and charger loans
- Aggie sports games with your ID
- Printing credit at the library (check your balance)

21 Don't buy every textbook

First, check Equitable Access — it's the flat-fee program that gives you digital access to most of your course materials through the bookstore, and a lot of freshmen don't realize they're already in it. If a book isn't covered, wait for the syllabus, check library course reserves, or buy used from other students. You can also opt out of Equitable Access each quarter if your classes barely use textbooks — do the math.

22 Always ask "do you have a student discount?"

Downtown Davis runs on students. A lot of places knock something off with your ID and don't advertise it. Amtrak, Spotify, Amazon, and most software have student pricing too.

Aggie Reuse Store

Secondhand dorm stuff, bikes, and clothes from students who left. Cheap and on campus.

Meal plan math

If you're not a freshie & buying them... Don't overbuy swipes. Most people end fall quarter with extras. Start smaller; you can add.

Transportation

A used bike pays for itself in a month versus rideshares. Unitrans + Amtrak covers the rest. Honestly lots of people have FREAKING SCOOTERS THO

The full list of student discounts, job and internship links, and free events lives in the Davis Life Guide — this is the starter set.

Dorm life, the parts *nobody explains*.

Not the hall-by-hall breakdown (that's my Dorm Guide) — the stuff that's true no matter where you're placed.

Moove-in day strategy

Arrive at your time slot, not before. Bring a folding wagon or dolly — it's a hike from the car. Unpack the bed and the fan first. Build the rest over the week; go meet your floor instead.

The roommate agreement is real

Your RA will make you fill one out. Actually mean it: sleep schedule, guests, cleaning, the fan/AC war, food sharing. Ninety percent of roommate drama is a conversation that never happened.

Dining commons hacks

Each area (Segundo, Tercero, LatitudeCuarto) has its own DC, plus Latitude. 6 p.m. is a wall — go at 5 or 7. I even snuck in take out containers (don't tell). Rotate DCs, check the menus before you go; each one is good at different things.

Swipes vs. Aggie Cash

Swipes are for the dining commons. Aggie Cash works at the CoHo, Silo, and campus markets. Start with a smaller plan — you can always add. Most people end fall with extras.

Laundry, strategically

Weekday mornings are empty. Weekends are chaos. Set a timer, come back on time, never leave clothes in a machine overnight — they will end up on top of the dryer.

Your RA is not a cop

They're a sophomore who's been exactly where you are. Locked out, roommate stuff, homesick at 1 a.m., don't know how to do a thing — that's literally their job.

Packages

Deliveries go to your residential area's service desk, not your door. You get an email. Bring your ID. Don't order the 50 lb mini fridge before move-in.

Walls are thin

Quiet hours exist and mostly work. Noise-cancelling headphones were the best \$60 I spent freshman year. Also: your neighbors can hear you too.

Real talk

Which hall has the walk-in closets, which bathrooms are shared, what the rooms actually look like — that's the Dorm Guide, with photos. This page is what's true everywhere.

The quarter system, *decoded*.

Ten weeks. Three quarters. Everything moves faster than you think it will. Here's the shape of it.

Wk 1

Shopping week. Go to every class you're waitlisted for.

Wk 2

Drop deadline for 10-day-drop classes. Decide.

Wk 3–4

First midterms. Yes, already.

Wk 5–6

Round two. Pass times for next quarter open.

Wk 7–8

Projects due. Second wind or full crash.

Wk 9

"Dead week" is not dead. Nothing is cancelled.

Wk 10

Finals. Llamas. Then a break you've earned.

PTA numbers — Permission to Add. If a class is full or past the add deadline, the professor can give you one. Ask in week 1, in person, politely.

Pass / No Pass — You can take some non-major classes P/NP to protect your GPA. There's a unit limit and a deadline — ask your advisor before you rely on it.

Office hours are for introducing yourself — Not just for questions. TAs grade you. Professors write your recs. Go once with nothing to ask.

Counseling is free and normal — Student Health & Counseling has individual sessions and drop-in "Let's Talk" hours. Half your floor will use it. Go before it's a crisis.

10-day vs. 20-day drop — Every class is one or the other — Schedule Builder tells you which. Miss it and you need a Permission to Drop petition, which is a whole thing.

Units — 12 is full-time. 13–16 is normal. Four hard STEM classes in fall quarter is how people end up crying at the Silo.

AATC — Academic Assistance & Tutoring Centers. Free drop-in tutoring for math, chem, writing and more. Already paid for. Basically empty week 1, packed week 4.

Rotate study spots — Shields fills up by week 3. Have a second and third spot before you need them. (My full list by vibe is in the Life Guide.)

Which GE's are actually good, which to avoid, and why — 50+ of them, with descriptions — is the Davis Life Guide. This page is how the system works.

The stuff with *deadlines*.

Nobody sits you down for this part. Here's the year-one adult checklist, Davis edition — including the one thing that catches every single freshman off guard.

THE BIG ONE

Second-year housing gets signed in winter. Of freshman year.

Davis apartments lease for next fall starting around January–February. By spring the good places are gone. So in October, start noticing who you'd actually want to live with; by December, talk about it out loud; by January, tour. The dorm friends you've known for 10 weeks are the ones you'll be picking. Mine turned into a second family — and a whole Instagram account. Choose well.

FAFSA / Dream Act — California's priority deadline is March 2, every year. Miss it and you can lose state grants. Put it in your calendar now.

Health insurance — You're auto-enrolled in UC SHIP unless you waive it with your own plan. The waiver has a deadline before fall starts. Check which one you're on before you need urgent care.
<https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/insurance>

WarnMe alerts — UC Davis's emergency text system. Make sure your phone number is current in your account — it's how you'll hear about closures and campus alerts first.

Taxes — If you worked a campus job, you'll get a W-2 in January. If you got scholarships over tuition, that can be taxable. Free filing software exists; ask your parents once, then learn it.

Advisors: two kinds — Your major advisor (department) and your college advisor (L&S, Engineering, etc.). Different people, different questions. See each once in fall so they know your face.

Campus jobs — Handshake is where UC Davis posts them. The CoHo, Unitrans, the ARC, dining, and the library all hire students — and schedule around classes. Apply in September; they fill fast.

Urgent care vs. Student Health — Student Health & Counseling on campus for almost everything. Sutter Davis Hospital for real emergencies. Both are bikeable.

Bike theft happens — Register your license, photograph your serial number, lock the frame. If it's stolen, report to campus police — registered bikes actually get returned sometimes.

CalFresh — A lot of students qualify for monthly grocery money and don't know it. Aggie Compass will help you apply. It is not embarrassing. It is groceries.

Petitions and forms — Late drop, unit overload, major change — everything is a form on OASIS with a deadline. Read the deadline before the form.

Questions from *my inbox*.

Every summer my DMs fill up with the same ten questions from incoming students (and, honestly, their parents). Here are my real answers.

“Is Davis boring?”

It's quiet, not boring. If you need a city, Sacramento is 20 minutes and the Bay is an Amtrak ride. If you need a life, it's here — you just have to make the plan instead of waiting for one.

“Do I need a car?”

No. Genuinely no. Bike + Unitrans + Amtrak covers 95% of it. First-years mostly can't get parking permits anyway, and downtown parking is a sport you'll lose.

“Should I bring my bike from home?”

Only if it's cheap and you don't love it. Bikes get rained on, scratched, and stolen. Buy a used one here — Bike Barn, Marketplace, TAPS auction — and a U-lock.

“How hard is it to get classes?”

Freshman year: you register last, so yes, it's annoying. Have 3 backup schedules built before your pass time, waitlist aggressively, and go to the class anyway week 1. It gets easier every quarter.

“Is it safe?”

Davis is one of the safer college towns I know. Bike theft is the main crime. Use Topsy Taxi at night, keep WarnMe alerts on, lock the frame not the wheel.

“Do people go home on weekends?”

Some do in fall. By winter, almost nobody. If you're from SoCal, that's a long trip — stay, and you'll find the people who also stayed. That's where the friend groups form.

“How do I get a campus job?”

Handshake in September. CoHo, Unitrans, ARC, dining, library. They hire students, schedule around class, and your coworkers become friends. Apply before week 2. Also <https://vacancy.ucdavis.edu/> (student government keeps this job board posted to hire YOU).

“What if my roommate is random?”

Mine weren't — I found them on the class Instagram page — but random works too. Fill out the roommate agreement honestly, keep the door open week 1, and don't expect a best friend. Expect a decent human.

“When should I visit as a parent?”

Move-in (obviously), then Parents' Weekend in fall or Picnic Day in April. Picnic Day is the one that shows what Davis actually is. Book the hotel early — the whole town sells out.

“What do you wish you'd known?”

That the nervous first month is the same for everyone, and that the people who seem sorted are faking it. Start the thing. Say yes in October. Rest in November.

Learn from me, *please*.

Every one of these felt like a reasonable decision at the time. None of them were.

23

WHAT I DID

Took an 8 a.m. lecture because it "looked fine" in July. It did not look fine in November when it was 38° and foggy and I was on a bike.

WHAT I'D DO NOW

Be honest about who you are. If you've never once woken up at 7 by choice, don't schedule your GPA around it.

24

WHAT I DID

Didn't go to office hours until I was already behind, because I thought you needed a "real" question.

WHAT I'D DO NOW

Go week 1 with "I just want to introduce myself." TAs are usually alone in there. They remember the names they know when grading gets subjective.

25

WHAT I DID

Waited months to start the thing I actually wanted to do (this account) because I was scared of how people would perceive me.

WHAT I'D DO NOW

Start the thing. The hobby, the project, the sport. Nobody is watching as closely as you think, and the ones who are will turn out to be your people. The nervous version of me would not believe what it became.

SMALLER MISTAKES, RAPID FIRE

- Bought a cable lock. Bike lasted six weeks.
- No sunscreen during September move-in. Regret.
- Treated the quarter like a semester. Three midterms in week 4, zero notes.
- Only hung out with my floor until December. Branch out earlier.
- Didn't bring a fan. Even with AC, the top bunk is a sauna in September.
- Said yes to everything in year two and burned out. Rest is part of the schedule.

If fall quarter is hard, that's not a you problem. Everyone's fall quarter is hard. Winter is better. Spring is the reason people love it here.

Insider stuff, *rapid fire*.

None of this is in orientation. All of it will come up in your first year.

Safe Ride is FREEEE

ASUCD runs a free safe-ride service on weekend nights. Save the number before you need it.

TAPS bike auctions

Impounded bikes get auctioned off cheap a few times a year. Best way to get a bike that isn't cursed.

eduroam wifi

Log in once with your UC Davis email. It works at basically every university on Earth — nice for visiting friends. but don't expect GOOD wifi lollll

The Eggheads are by one artist

Robert Arneson made all of them. Bookhead outside Shields is the famous one. There are more than you think.

Outdoor Adventures rents gear

Tents, sleeping bags, kayaks, cheap. Tahoe weekend made easy and for beginners!

The Craft Center

Pottery, photography, woodworking, sewing classes at student prices. Nobody knows about it. Now you do.

Apple education pricing

The campus bookstore's tech desk does the student discount in person. Compare before buying online.

Turkeys will chase you

Downtown and around campus. Do not feed them. Do not make eye contact. They know.

Underpasses flood

In heavy rain, some bike tunnels become ponds. Take the long way. Everyone learns this exactly once.

2nd Friday ArtAbout

Downtown galleries and shops open late the second Friday of every month. Free, and a good first date.

Free flu shots

Student Health does them every fall. Your floor will get sick in week 5. Be the one who doesn't.

Aggie Compass + the Pantry

Free groceries, toiletries, and help with CalFresh. No questions, no stigma. Use it if money is tight.

The library lends more than books

Laptops, chargers, calculators, phone cords, even board games. Ask at the desk.

Sunsets are free entertainment

Flat town, huge sky. West end of the Arb, any top-floor parking structure, or the fields by the vet school.

The place you're about to *live in*.

Context for the size of this school, because "mid-sized college town" undersells it. Numbers are rounded — the point is the scale, not the decimal.

5,300

acres — the largest UC campus by land, by a lot

~40k

students total, about 31,000 of them undergrads

100+

undergraduate majors across four colleges

800+

registered student orgs. Yes, there's one for that

THINGS DAVIS IS GENUINELY FAMOUS FOR

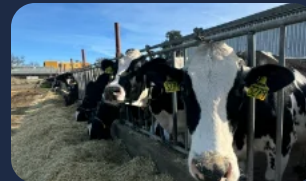
Veterinary medicine & agriculture — routinely ranked #1 in the world. The vet school is its own city on west campus.

Viticulture & enology — the wine program. Napa is 45 minutes away for a reason.

Bikes — one of the most bike-friendly towns in the country, with roughly 14 miles of paths on campus alone.

Picnic Day — running since 1909 and one of the largest student-run events in the country.

Founded 1908 as the University Farm. That's why there are still cows, and why "Aggies."



Town size

About 66,000 people in Davis — and a big chunk of them are students. In summer the town noticeably empties out.

Distances

Sacramento 20 min. SF about 90. Tahoe about 2 hrs. Napa 45 min. You are extremely well placed.

Weather

100°+ Septembers, tule fog winters, perfect springs. Almost never snows. Bring layers, not a parka.

Where everything *actually* is.

Not to scale, not official — this is the mental model I use. Campus runs east–west: downtown on the right, farms and the vet school off to the left, the Arboretum along the bottom.

WEST

Vet school, dairy, fields

Cows, horses, research plots. Bike out here once.

SEGUNDO SIDE

Segundo dorms + ARC

Northwest. Gym, Latitude, Segundo DC.

THE CORE

MU · CoHo · Quad · Shields

Wellman, Olson, Sciences Lecture Hall. You'll be here daily.

SOUTH-WEST

Tercero + the Silo

Newest dorms, closest to the ag side.

SOUTH-EAST

Cuarto + Mondavi

Across Russell. Performing arts, Buehler Alumni Center.

EAST

Downtown + Amtrak

Six blocks of food, thrift, boba. Train station at the corner.

The Arboretum — 3.5 miles along the south edge

Redwood grove · Lake Spafford · gazebo · out to Putah Creek

Schematic, not a real map. Use Google Maps with the bike layer on for actual routing.



BIKE TIMES, CORE TO CORE

Segundo → MU · about 5 min

Tercero → Wellman · about 7 min

MU → downtown · about 5 min

MU → the ARC · about 6 min

Campus → Target · about 15 min, bike path the whole way

Rule of thumb: 10 minutes between classes is fine on a bike, tight on foot, and impossible if you're crossing Russell in the rain.

This guide isn't just for *freshmen*.

Every year has one thing that matters most and one thing everybody forgets. If you're a transfer, your two years are roughly years three and four, plus a fast version of year one — read both ends.

1st EXPLORE

Focus: people and GEs. Say yes to things, take the intro classes, learn the town.

Forgot: that housing for year two gets signed in *winter*. See page 15.

One move: go to office hours in week 1 of something.

2nd COMMIT

Focus: declare or confirm the major, start upper-division prep, first apartment.

Forgot: that clubs have leadership applications in spring. Run for something.

One move: email one professor about their research.

3rd BUILD

Focus: internship, research, study abroad, or a real leadership role. Ideally two.

Forgot: that summer internship applications open the fall *before*.

One move: run your degree audit in OASIS. Actually run it.

4th LAND IT

Focus: file for graduation, finish the requirement you've been avoiding, apply to things.

Forgot: letters of rec need a month of notice, minimum. Ask in fall.

One move: do the Davis things you kept postponing. All of them.

If you're a transfer student

You get two years, so compress: use the Transfer Reentry Veteran Center as your home base, join one club immediately, live with people (transfer housing or a group lease) rather than alone, and meet your major advisor in week 1 to confirm which of your credits landed where. Everyone assumes you already know the campus — you're allowed to ask.

The thing that's true every year

Fall is a scramble, winter is the grind, spring is why you came. Plan the hard classes for winter and the fun ones for spring if you ever get the choice — and don't schedule anything you care about the Saturday of Picnic Day.

Your first lease, *explained.*

Most people move off campus after freshman year. Nobody teaches you how, and the timeline is earlier than you'd ever guess.



The timeline

Leases for next fall open roughly January–February. Tour in winter, sign by early spring, move in September. Waiting until May means picking from leftovers.

Where people live

Big complexes near campus (bus-line convenient, party-adjacent), quieter east and south Davis houses, and downtown apartments — which cost more but you'll never need a car.

Check the bus line

Before you sign, look up which Unitrans line serves it and how often it runs. "20-minute bike" in January fog is a different sentence than in May.

READ BEFORE YOU SIGN

- **Joint vs. individual lease.** Joint means if a roommate stops paying, you owe it. Know which one you're signing.
- **What's included.** Water, trash, internet, parking, and whether there's AC (in Davis: non-negotiable).
- **Twelve months vs. ten.** Most Davis leases run a full year — you're paying through a summer you may not be here for.
- **Photograph everything** on day one. It's how you get your deposit back.
- **ASUCD Student Legal Services** will review a lease with you, for free. Almost nobody uses this.

Pick roommates on habits, not vibes

Ask the boring questions out loud in December: sleep schedule, guests, dishes, thermostat, how you split groceries. Your favorite person to hang out with is not automatically your best roommate.

Summer subleasing is a whole economy

Davis empties out in summer, so there's a constant market for sublets — in the Facebook housing groups and Davis student pages. Useful if you're leaving, and cheap if you're staying for a summer internship.

Furnish it secondhand

Every June, graduating seniors sell everything. Aggie Reuse, Marketplace, and the free-pile curbs of east Davis will furnish a room for under \$100 if you're patient.

Also real: you can stay in on-campus apartments (like the West Village area) past freshman year. Less flexible, way less paperwork.

Research, internships, *abroad*.

The stuff that turns a transcript into a story. You do not need to have this figured out freshman year — you do need to know it exists before junior year.



Undergrad research is easier to get than you think

Davis is a giant research university, which means labs constantly need hands. The move: read a professor's recent work, email a short specific note ("I read your paper on X, I've taken Y, can I help?"), and follow up once. The Undergraduate Research Center runs the conference every spring and can help you find openings. Paid options exist through work-study and program grants.



Internships: the calendar is the whole game

Summer roles are largely filled the previous fall and winter. Handshake is where UC Davis postings live; the Internship and Career Center does free résumé reviews and mock interviews. Go to a career fair in your first year just to watch how it works — no pressure, no résumé needed.

Study abroad

The Global Learning Hub runs quarter, summer, and year programs — and financial aid usually travels with you. Apply two to three quarters ahead, and check which courses transfer for major credit *before* you go.

On-campus jobs

The CoHo, Unitrans, the ARC, dining, libraries, and department offices hire hundreds of students and schedule around classes. Best first job on earth: you already commute there.

Internship credit & minors

Many majors let an internship count for units. A minor is often only five or six courses — check before senior year, when it's usually too late to add one cheaply.

One ask, twice

The single highest-return habit at a school this size: ask one person per quarter for 15 minutes about what they do — a professor, a TA, a senior in your major, an advisor. Nine will say nothing useful. The tenth changes your next two years.

Ten weeks is fast. *Pace yourself.*

The quarter system means the crash, if it comes, comes around week 6. Knowing where to go before then is the entire trick.

Student Health & Counseling (SHCS)

On campus, covered by your fees for most visits. Counseling appointments, urgent care hours, flu shots, sports medicine. Book through Health-e-Messaging — don't wait until it's an emergency.

Each college has an embedded counselor

Counselors sit inside colleges and programs, so you can often be seen faster than through the central queue. Ask your academic advisor who yours is. Also: 24/7 crisis support by phone through SHCS.

The Pantry & basic needs

Free groceries and toiletries, no questions, run by ASUCD. Aggie Compass helps with food, housing insecurity, and CalFresh applications — a lot of students qualify for CalFresh and never apply.

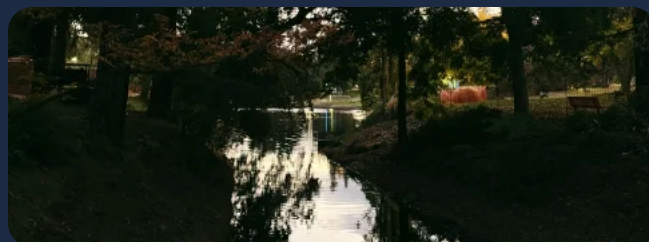
SDC, if you need accommodations

The Student Disability Center handles exam accommodations, note-taking, and more. Start the paperwork early in the quarter; it takes longer than you'd like and applies from approval forward.

FREE-WITH-YOUR-FEES, WELLNESS EDITION

- ARC group fitness & climbing wall
- Outdoor Adventures trips & gear rental
- Tutoring at the AATC + drop-in workshops
- Intramural leagues, any skill level
- Equestrian center & sailing at Lake Berryessa
- Bike Barn repair clinics

If you're paying for something that campus already gives you, that's just a subscription to not walking ten minutes.



The winter thing nobody warns you about

Tule fog can sit over Davis for days and it genuinely affects your mood. Get outside at noon anyway, keep one warm social thing on the calendar every week, and don't diagnose your whole college experience in January.

Homesickness peaks around week 4 and again after winter break. It is not a sign you picked wrong. Text home, then go to dinner with someone anyway.

Being an Aggie, *out loud.*



Picnic Day, April

The whole campus opens up: parade, dachshund races, cow milking, the sheep dog trials, every department showing off. Student-run since 1909. Invite your family — this is the day to.



Aggie Pack & the Causeway Classic

Games are free with your student ID. Aggie Pack is the student section — free shirts get launched into it. The Causeway Classic against Sac State every November is the one to show up for.



Whole Earth Festival, May

Free, student-run, on the Quad since 1969. Music, art, food, drum circles, tie-dye. Extremely Davis and worth going to at least twice — once to gawk, once to enjoy.

Gunrock & the mustang — the mascot is a mustang named Gunrock, after an actual horse the Army stabled here in 1921. Now you know more than most seniors.

Egghead hunting — five Robert Arneson sculptures around campus, including Bookhead outside Shields and Yin & Yang by the MU. Finding all of them is a real rite of passage.

Finals-week llamas — plus therapy dogs and free snacks at the libraries. Genuinely restorative. Go.

"Go Ags" — the standard sign-off. Aggie Blue and Gold are the colors; wear them on game days and Picnic Day.

Lawntopia — the spring concert on the Quad, put on by student government. Free, loud, best non-Picnic-Day Saturday of the year.

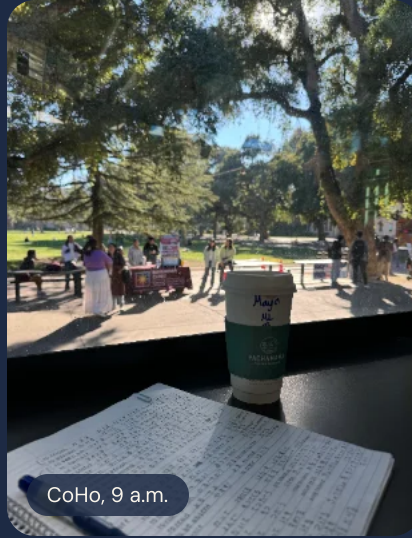
The Yolo Causeway bats — hundreds of thousands of them fly out at dusk in summer. It's a 10-minute drive and looks unreal.

Davis, *in pictures.*

A YEAR HERE · 26



SunsetFest – \$15 concert on campus (3 every year)



CoHo, 9 a.m.



Farmer's Market



Davis – on a bike rideee



Beach Volleyball on campus



Getting quesadillas at 1 am on the corner of AMPM



Night picniccc w friends

Send me yours.

Tag [@daviswithmaya](#) — I will see them and repost Davis photos!! Love to see that I could help you guys somehow :) Or see you have funnnn

Drop your own photos into these frames before you send this to a friend — it hits differently when it's your Davis.

Do all of these before you *graduate*.

Screenshot this. Check them off. Tag me when you finish — I actually want to see it.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Picnic in the Arboretum | ☐ Go to Picnic Day (all of it, including the parade) |
| ☐ Ride a Unitrans double-decker | ☐ Saturday Farmers Market, go hungry |
| ☐ Find all the Eggheads | ☐ Bike somewhere just because |
| ☐ Whole Earth Festival on the Quad | ☐ Aggie Pack at a football or basketball game |
| ☐ Watch the sunset from the west end of the Arb | ☐ See the cows (and say hi) |
| ☐ Bike out to Putah Creek | ☐ Lawntopia on the Quad |
| ☐ Take Amtrak from the Davis station somewhere | ☐ Watch the bats fly out from the Yolo Causeway at dusk |
| ☐ Pachamama coffee at the CoHo before an 8 a.m. | ☐ Pet the finals-week llamas |
| ☐ Race a friend for boba downtown | ☐ Bring someone from home and show them all of it |

Tag @daviswithmaya when you finish one.

That was the starter.

Here's the rest.

Everything in this guide is the broad version. When I needed the actual details — which dorm, which GE, where to study when Shields is full — I couldn't find them anywhere, so I wrote them down. These are those.

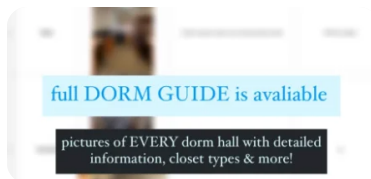


PACKING THIS SUMMER?

Full Dorm Packing List

Everything I actually used freshman year, Davis-weather-proofed, with links to the exact items and a leave-at-home list.

\$3



MOVING INTO THE DORMS?

Inside the Dorms Housing Guide

Every UC Davis residence hall, with photos. Closet types, bathroom setups, room sizes, roommate info — the stuff you can't tell from the housing website.

\$6



WANT MY GIANT DAVIS LIST?

Davis Life Guide

50+ GE courses (recommended and not), 100+ food and study spots by category, student discounts, job and internship links, events, and every resource I use.

\$7

DORM GUIDE + LIFE GUIDE TOGETHER

Housing plus everything after move-in.

\$11 \$13

Open this to see where to get these...

Otherwise, enjoy this FREE MASTER DAVIS GUIDE!

And check out other resources in linktree & my insta page :)

[Open the link →](#)

@daviswithmaya

DMs are open — Davis questions, life/faith, etc. Love you guys, see u on campus :)