

100 Pieces of Advice for Emigrants

These tips were published for Danish immigrants in 1911 by Holger Rosenberg in *100 nyttige Raad for Udvandrere*. Each piece of advice was followed by a longer or shorter explanation, for the most part left out here. It provides a taste of what immigrants might learn before coming to this country.

Planning for and Equipping Yourself for Emigration

1. If you have decided to emigrate, don't wait a minute before learning a little English.
2. Choose your travel route with care and buy a ticket directly to your destination.
3. Purchase a ticket for the cheapest class of travel and order it in good time.
4. Decide not to travel to the major cities.
5. The Americans have tightened up their immigration law [in 1907]. Make sure, therefore, that you fulfill the following requirements for even getting into the country. Admission is refused to:
 - i. Idiots and persons with mental and physical deficiencies;
 - ii. Persons suffering from serious or dangerously contagious diseases;
 - iii. Persons convicted of disreputable acts;
 - iv. Polygamists;
 - v. Except for personal servants, persons who report upon disembarkation that they have a written or oral promise of work;
 - vi. Persons who are recipients of alms, who are unable to work, or deemed to become a burden to the government, especially those who are over 60, crippled, blind, deaf and dumb, unmarried pregnant women, mothers with illegitimate children, single women traveling along with minor children, and children traveling alone under the age of 16.

Under certain conditions, persons identified under vi. may be admitted, namely when they can show notarized documentary evidence from close relatives in the U.S. that these have the ability and desire to receive and support them.

6. Don't leave without forethought, but fulfill your military obligations before departure, so that it is not a hindrance for your revisiting your homeland.
7. Don't bother acquiring a passport or other documents. Just fill out the form given you by the steamship company agent carefully.
8. Don't be afraid of taking too much baggage, but don't take what you can buy much cheaper in the U.S.
9. Pack your baggage sensibly, and mark it carefully.
10. Don't take more ready cash with you than you need on the trip and to comfortably get to your destination.
11. A Danish newspaper will be comforting over there; it will be a faithful connection with

your home, and it can be sent to you everywhere. Subscribe to one before you leave.

12. Acquire a nice and solid pocket-book with a pencil.

13. Dress warmly for your journey, even if it's mid-summer. On the ocean it is cold in the evenings and even during the daytime.

During the Trip

14. Watch out for "parasites" in Copenhagen.

15. If you travel on the Scandinavian line, use the 3-4 hours that the ship is in port in Kristiania [Oslo] to see the town.

16. Make the ocean trip a pleasure trip. You yourself are partly responsible for this.

17. If you have grounds for complaint, see the purser.

18. Don't play cards for money or make wagers about the speed of the ship.

19. Don't be afraid of seasickness. With a little will power you can overcome it. If will power doesn't suffice, there is a physician, nurse and pharmacy on board.

20. If you take an English line across the Atlantic, contact the line's agents – and only them! – in the towns you pass through en route to the port from which you will leave.

Upon Your Arrival in the U.S.

21. Put your best foot forward when you land.

22. Immediately upon arrival find your baggage and stay with it until you have passed through customs.

23. Seek assistance and advice from the steamship line agent if you encounter difficulties at the immigration office. He speaks your language and will do his best to clear up any problems for you.

24. If you have a ticket to a place beyond the port, it is to be exchanged at the Ellis Island railroad station for an American train ticket. Here too your baggage will be tagged to your destination.

25. Be suspicious of the host of "friends" who lay in wait at the place you land to trick you out of your money.

26. Under no circumstances accept friendly invitations from unknown individuals to drink a glass of beer in a "bar" or "saloon."

27. You do not need to send a telegram about your arrival in the U.S. to your family. The steamship line will take care of that.

Staying in New York

28. No place in the U.S. is it as difficult to find work in as in New York, no place is it so easy to flounder. Don't stop here!

29. Let your baggage be taken care of by a "transfer agent" or an "express" man. Don't accept assistance from anyone else who offers to show you where to go or to carry your suitcase.

30. Go to a "boarding house."

31. If you want more freedom of movement and are sure you can manage it, rent a

furnished room and eat at restaurants.

32. If you want only a day or two to see what the situation in New York is like, it's most natural and reasonable to go to a hotel. Go to one of the few places recommended in this volume.
33. Look for work through the newspapers or labor offices.
34. If one fine day you stand on the street without resources, don't get blue. A few places where you can sleep a night or two are listed here.
35. If a Loan Society can help you out of a temporary financial difficulty, go to a proper office, such as the *Provident Loan Society*.
36. If you want the support of a good strong organization, join the YMCA.
37. Sign up for a class in English immediately.

Train Travel

38. Use the immigrant trains.
39. Make sure you are on the right train at the right time and in the right seat. In the U.S. no one will be watching out for you.
40. Bring along food for the long journeys. You may obtain free ice-water in the railroad cars.
41. Don't worry about your baggage. Once it has been tagged, it will come to your precise destination.
42. Should there be a railroad accident – far from rare in the U.S. – and you are injured, remember that you will receive a very handsome compensation from the railroad company.
43. Make sure that you arrive in the right town or city.
44. Don't ever forget that someone is sitting back home longing for a letter, even the shortest one, from you.
45. Write addresses on letters to the U.S. in the following manner:

Mr. H. Williams,
137 Olive St.
Philadelphia, Pa.
U. S. A.

46. Buy stamps in the drugstore. Mailboxes hang on light-poles, and you can find the post office by asking for "the post-office."
47. If you want to send money, use Domestic Money Orders.
48. A telegraph office can be found in the lobby of every large hotel.

Money

49. It is stupid elsewhere in the world, but it is even more stupid in America to tell just anyone you meet and who calls you a friend just how much money you have.
50. Become familiar with the currency and coinage and carefully note their appearance.

51. Watch out for counterfeit coins and currency that is too old.
52. Go to banks to exchange money. Money-changers can hardly be found in the U.S.
53. Don't keep a lot of money on you. Start right away using the American method of using banks as a safe.

Time, Temperature, Measures and Weights

54. Use the following chart to figure out what time it is (San Francisco: 3pm, Denver: 4pm, Chicago: 5pm, New York: 6pm; Copenhagen: midnight).
55. Don't get impressed when you learn that it is 80-90 degrees in the shade. This isn't an American boast, but only a consequence of another measurement system being used in the U.S. Start using it immediately.
56. Jump in with both feet; the sooner you learn the American measures the better. On the steamship begin studying the accompanying [Celsius to Fahrenheit] table and practice using it with your shipmates.

Life in Public Places

57. Cities and towns in the U.S. are arranged according to a certain plan. Once you've learned this, you can never get lost. Here is the key that unlocks the secret: [explanation of the grid system of streets follows].
58. Time is expensive in the U.S. and the cities are far too large that it can pay to walk from one place to another. Use the streetcars.
59. Don't waste money on cabs and automobiles.
60. Even if you find an American street to be a hellaciously noisy place, don't lose your head. Take it easy, and learn to protect your nerves.
61. Police officers in general are your good friends. Turn to one if there is anything you are having trouble with.
62. Another American institution that is most helpful is the "drugstore." If you need something, go there. You can get headache powders, matches, stamps and writing paper, the latest sensational novel, and the most wondrous patent medicines.
63. If you need a toilet, go to the hotels. They are free.
64. Avoid three places: hotels in alleys, 'gents-only' restaurants, and simple saloons.
65. Ice-water is a wonderful beverage! But it can be just as dangerous as a saloon beer. Don't ruin your health right away by drinking too much – even if it's ice-water.
66. Don't tip.
67. Brush your own boots.
68. Shave yourself.
69. In few places on earth does one have as much freedom as in the U.S. to do exactly what one wants to do. But even here there are certain rules of etiquette which should not be transgressed. Here are the most important ones: Don't stick your nose in other people's business; don't push between two people walking together on the street; when walking with a lady, walk between her and the curb; take your hat off indoors if a lady is present; otherwise, it can stay pasted to your head.

House and Home

70. Living in America is expensive! If you've found a place where you think you will settle down, set yourself up as cheaply as possible.
71. Build a house as soon as you can.
72. Make the way you live follow that of Americans. This is best for your situation, and, you will soon learn, for yourself.
73. Let the clothes you wear at home be lighter, and those you wear out of doors, heavier, than in Denmark.

Looking for Work

74. Never fear, try again.
75. Don't expect people to give you a helping hand in the U.S. Rely on yourself.
76. Don't forget that the condition for your being able to enter the U.S. is that you don't have work arranged at the time you arrive.
77. Go west!
78. If you are young and healthy, don't be afraid to go to the more distant places, where new Danish colonies are beginning to emerge. [recommended places were "Dronning Dagmars Minde" in Montana; Askov, Minnesota; St. Andrews, Washington; Danevang, Texas; and Solvang, California]
79. In order to see how conditions are, Scandinavian immigrants are well-received in the U.S. for the following occupations: as servants, cooks, farm laborers, railroad workers, miners, ordinary laborers, artisans, factory workers, businessmen and office-workers.
80. No immigrants are as much in demand as Scandinavian servants at present. But wages are going down rather than up. Therefore, don't leave with far too high expectations.
81. If you want to raise yourself up as quickly as possible from farm laborer to an independent farmer, make your plan right away, along the lines of that presented in this book.
82. If you have a skilled craft, you should know that most likely you will only be a cog in the machinery. But if that is fine with you, you will find that you will fare well.
83. If you are going to the U.S. as a businessman or office-worker, you need something to support yourself with for a while.
84. If you are looking for a position, go to the newspapers, where you will find columns of jobs offered. Study these or put your own notice in.
85. Not everywhere is suitable for all workers. One place is good for cobblers, another for farmers, another for machinists, and one for seamstresses. [Elsewhere in this book is a guide to which places are best for various skills and lines of work.]

Holidays, Churches and Schools

86. Keep the Sabbath just as strictly as the Americans do. You will soon learn that this is necessary in order not to be worn out by the stressful social machinery.
87. Don't worry about not finding a Danish church if you follow our advice to go West.

88. American schools are unsurpassed. But if you want your children to be instructed in Danish, there are many places where this can be done. [See the list elsewhere in this volume.]
89. Use the libraries! In the Old World there is no matching the generosity with which millionaires in the U.S. have made books available to the masses.
90. Seek out public lectures. It is a useful exercise in English, and also will be a source of encouragement and education.

Doctors, Hospitals and Charitable Institutions

91. If you need to consult a physician, ask the advice of a friend or acquaintance. There are doctors in the U.S., but not all of them are of the kind that one would wish to entrust one's life and health to.
92. If you become seriously ill, there will likely be space for you at one of the excellent hospitals where care is free. Consult the Danish consul about these.
93. Don't be afraid to spend a little money right away by becoming a member of a solid institution that will support you should things go awry.

Becoming a Citizen of the U.S.

94. If you are serious about remaining in the U.S. and becoming an American citizen, it is sensible to start meeting the requirements right away.
95. Become familiar with your new country.
96. Every state has its own laws. It is useful to learn the most important, so that you won't run afoul of them, if you move to a strange state, but instead can reap the profits from them in certain circumstances.
97. Don't pay attention to the stories you may have heard about attacks and being "held up." There is nothing wrong with the legal system in the U.S.

Canada

98. Although Canada is not a part of the U.S., but of British North America, it is natural to provide some information about this country of the future, to which not so few Scandinavians are already emigrating.

And lastly

99. Don't massacre your mother tongue.
100. Travel home to old Denmark when you have increased your knowledge and bank account, and let all of this be useful to your motherland. Another young person can then travel over the Atlantic in your place.

