



Relocating For Work: A Guide for Engineering Students

Introduction

The prospect of moving away for an internship or co-op opportunity can be really daunting for a lot of people, especially if they've never lived on their own before. You need to consider housing, the commute, planning your own meals, dealing with roommates; it can be really overwhelming if you only have a month or two before you need to move. However, when you open yourself up to the idea, you expand your pool of opportunities exponentially. You also stand to gain some valuable life experience along with the work experience.

Should you Move for Work?

It's important to carefully consider whether moving for work is the right choice for you. It's a big commitment and not one you can easily back out of once you're there! Consider the initial travel expenses and ongoing costs for rent, commute, and groceries. If these costs are significantly more than you will be earning in your position, it may not be worth it to make the move. The experience you gain will still be valuable, but it is up to you to decide whether it is worth working at a deficit. However, some employers may subsidize these a portion of these costs to make the move a more enticing option. Here's a list of pros and cons of moving for you to think about!

ADVANTAGES:

- + Some industries only exist in certain areas
- + New life experiences and skills
- + Build a wider social and professional network

DRAWBACKS:

- Costs associated with moving
- Separation from friends/family
- Hobbies / interests may no longer be accessible

Camp Work / Rotational Work

Camp work / rotation work is common for students partaking in fieldwork in remote locations such as mining sites and oil fields. Generally, camp work is completed in rotations where employees work a period that is much longer than a typical work week, then take an accordingly long break from work. Common rotational schedules include seven days on, seven days off; or two weeks on, two weeks off. These are just a few out of many different types of rotational schedules.

The considerations for Camp Work are a little different to a traditional position. Camp work is a unique style of work where employees are typically provided travel, accommodations, and food by the company. This is due to the remote nature of many of these work sites. Keep in mind that not only are you working multiple days in a row, but the scheduled work hours per day are also frequently 12 hours or longer.

Before the Move

So, you got the job. Congratulations on putting together a killer application package and acing that interview! You may have thought that the hard part was behind you, but don't rest easy because there's a lot of planning to do before you move across the province/country/world. Consider checking each of these things off one by one to ensure you have all your bases covered.

Visas

If you will be working internationally the first thing you need to do is obtain a visa to ensure you are legally allowed to move and work in the country. This will be unique to each country and will also vary depending on your nationality. For example, Canadian students looking to work in the United States need a J-1 visa. In some instances, your visa will have to be sponsored by the company that hired you. In every case, the best way to determine what visa you will need is to look at the destination country's official government website and reach out to the HR representative from the company that hired you. If you are registered in the Co-op program, then your Co-op coordinator will also be able to inform you of the necessary documentation.

Housing

The cost of renting has been rapidly increasing across much of Canada/USA, and depending on where you'll be living, it could account for quite a significant portion of your monthly budget. Regardless of where you move in, it is important to obtain a form of renter's insurance as well as traveller's insurance if you will be abroad. Accidents do happen and insurance provides the peace of mind that you won't have to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket in the event of an emergency.

Finding Housing

1. Online: Today most rental listings are posted online rather than in print. Common sites include Facebook rent/sublet groups for the area, Craigslist, or Kijiji (Canada specific). If you join a rental/sublet Facebook group, it is a good idea to make an introductory post about yourself and that you are seeking housing. Include information such as where you'll be working, the length of your stay, whether you're open to roommates, whether you smoke, and whether you have pets. By looking for housing online

you expose yourself to a certain level of risk, and you should familiarize yourself with common rental scams to avoid being defrauded when looking for housing.

2. Your Employer: It is also good idea to contact HR or your manager from your company and ask for resources for finding housing. Sometimes they might also have local lead on housing they have heard about, but more often they will direct you to similar online resources above, and there may be some area specific local websites.

3. Realtor: Using a realtor is also an option that cuts down the hard work considerably when looking for a place to rent, however there will be a cost associated with hiring a realtor.

4. Universities: If there is a university in the area, check to see if they have open housing for all university students. Universities will often do this in the summer when there is high interprovincial movement of students due to internships and co-op opportunities.

5. Short-term: Finally, AirBNB and some hotels/motels may offer an option to stay long-term. This option will likely be more expensive than a typical rental but can serve as a last resort if nothing else is available and tide you over until you find something more long-term.

Distance to Work

This is one of the most important considerations for accommodations because it influences your daily commute. Keep in mind a one-hour commute will turn your eight-hour workday into ten. It is a good idea to look into the public transit system of your destination and see if it is accessible and affordable. If public transit is limited at your destination, you will need find alternative methods of transportation such as walking, biking, or investing in a car (if you are able to). Carpooling may be an option, but it's not something you can really plan before arriving and meeting your co-workers. Having a car will increase your livable radius from work and make running weekly errands much easier. If you do choose to drive, make sure that you'll have access to consistent parking, and the costs associated with driving such as gas and insurance.



Furnished vs. Unfurnished

Rental suites will either be fully furnished, semi-furnished, or completely unfurnished. This is an important consideration especially if you will not have access to a car. If the suite is unfurnished, you will have to procure all the furniture yourself. There will be a substantial cost associated with this and you will have to consider what you will do with the furniture after your work term.

Without a car, it can be extremely challenging to transport large items such as a mattress, bedframe, or a desk. If you will not be driving, then it might be a good idea to look for a fully furnished listing. Also be sure to clarify whether kitchen equipment and dishes are included as well. If not, you will have to bring or purchase your own pots/pans/dishes.

Roommates

You may be hesitant to live with a roommate because you prefer privacy and your own personal space. While you can vet your roommate by having a video call with them, there is no guarantee that the roommate will be completely aligned with your values (volume, cleanliness, politics). These are all completely valid concerns, and you should only live with a roommate if you are comfortable with doing so. However, roommates can present several benefits and potentially make your experience working away from home much more enjoyable. Typically, living with a roommate will cut down on rental costs significantly. It can feel isolating to live alone in a new city where you don't know anyone. A roommate provides an easy opportunity to make a friend who possesses a lot of local knowledge. Plus, if you end up stranded somewhere with a flat tire, then it's useful having someone you can call.

Arrival Date

Planning on arriving at least a week before your first day of work gives you time to unpack and settle in before you get busy with work. Once you decide on when you'll be arriving, you should consider how you'll be arriving.

Flying vs. Driving

If you're working overseas, then the decision is already made for you. However, if you will be working within North America, you may want to weigh the pros and cons.

Driving

- Generally Cheaper
- Able to bring more belongings
- Will have car at destination
- Cross-country moves may be very long

Flying

- Faster
- Distance is not a limitation
- Will need to pack less with you
- Can be expensive

If you do choose to drive to a cold climate, keep in mind you will have to invest in winter tires. You can get away with all-seasons in Vancouver, but winters get harsh the further North/East you go.

What To Pack

With the proliferation of online shopping and delivery services, it's not a huge disaster if you forget to pack something! It might be a good idea to pack light because this isn't a permanent move. A light load makes moving in and out a breeze. A great tip is to pack the essentials last, that way when you're unpacking, they will be on top and easily accessible to you. Just make sure you don't forget about them!

Clothes: Look up the average temperature for the seasons you will be working and pack accordingly. You don't need to pack a down jacket for a California summer. If you are moving to a cold climate, layering is essential. Being well layered will likely keep you warmer than a single expensive winter jacket, and probably be more cost efficient as well. Assuming you'll be doing laundry once a week, bringing enough clothes to last you a week and a half is a good idea. Also remember to bring any personal protective equipment you will need for the job. Usually these are provided by the company, but some may ask you to purchase them yourself and will reimburse a portion or the entire cost. Reach out to HR to clarify this.

Entertainment: Some places might not have much in the form of entertainment. If that's the case then it's good to bring along some of your own hobbies, whether that's a game console, books, a set of paints, or sports equipment



Food: Keep in mind that you may not be able to find the same variety of food or snacks at your destination, so it might be a good idea to bring along some of your favourite non-perishables from your hometown! Just make sure that if you're going over international borders that you are legally allowed to bring said foods, and if you can't find out then it's better to err on the side of caution and not bring it.

Miscellaneous: Towels, Bedsheets, personal hygiene products. These are all things you can repurchase after the move, but if you prefer your own or would like to save on the cost, then go ahead and bring them. It might be a good idea to pack a multi-bit screwdriver. You never know when something might break or need to be put together.

After the Move

Touchdown! Hopefully you made it over in one piece. You're probably exhausted from all the packing and travel. It's fine, you have plenty of time to unpack and get ready for the new job, it's why you gave yourself that one week buffer before your job starts, so go take that nap! You earned it!

Familiarize Yourself

Once you arrive, you should ask your landlord for a quick tour of the place. Ensure you know how to operate some of the key amenities that are present including the dishwasher, washing machine, dryer, stove, shower, furnace, and where the circuit breaker is. Figure out where your nearest grocery store is and shortlist which local restaurants you might enjoy. If you like exercising, it's a good time to look up which nearby recreation centers will suit your needs, whether that's a gym, a court, or a pool!

Identify the local landmarks and where they are in relation to your residence. This will help you navigate the area without a map more easily. It might be a good idea to do a trial commute to your workplace before your first day. You don't want to show up late because you got lost on the way there!

Stock Up

Your first grocery bill will likely be the biggest one for the duration of your stay. This is because along with your weekly food, you'll also be stocking your home up with necessary miscellaneous goods. The following is by no

means a comprehensive list but gives you a general idea of some things that are better to have stocked before you need them. Making a thirty-minute trip to the pharmacy suddenly becomes the most miserable thing imaginable when you're running a high fever.

- Hand Soap
- Toilet Paper
- Paper Towel
- Tissues
- Toiletries
- Dish Soap
- Laundry detergent
- Kitchen Sponge
- A few non-perishable quick-cook meals (instant noodles, canned stew, frozen dinners)
- Painkiller/fever reducer (acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen)
- Bandages
- All-purpose cleaning solution for your countertops/sinks/bathroom
- Tupperware
- A fire extinguisher

Finding Community

When you don't have any friends or family around it's easy fall into a routine of work -> go home -> eat -> prepare for next day -> sleep. Focusing solely on work while isolated from family and friends can quickly lead to burnout and have negative effects on one's mental health. It's important to recognize the signs and take action to ensure your emotional and mental needs are being fulfilled. Engineering students also have access to number of campus resources for mental health and wellbeing, including an embedded counsellor who offers short-term counselling specifically to students in the Faculty of Applied Science. Humans are inherently social creatures and tend to desire a sense of community. Community can come in the form of a formal group, such as a book club, running group, or volunteer organization. It can also be informal, like a group of friends from work, or other students who may also happen to be in the area.



If you're not a particularly social person just try taking small steps like introducing yourself to your neighbours. If you open yourself up and take that risk, it can make the next few months go by much quicker. Also, consider making time for a weekly video call to see how everyone back home is doing and take the opportunity to share all the new experiences you've been having!

If community and being social aren't your idea of a good time, then consider picking up a new hobby; something you find relaxing and enjoy doing outside of work. Some areas are known for certain activities such as snow sports, or mountain biking, or hiking. It doesn't necessarily have to be outdoors either. See what your area has to offer, whether that be comedy clubs, plays, recreation centers, or otherwise. Plenty of hobbies can also be done from the comfort of your own home such as painting, video games, or maybe learning an instrument. Now that you're working full time you can enjoy evenings to yourself and do the things you want, rather than spending them doing homework.

Planning Your Meals

A big part of living on your own is feeding yourself. The cost of getting takeout for every meal adds up surprisingly quickly but cooking an extravagant meal every night can also take up a lot of your free time. To combat both these issues meal prepping is a good idea for most of the week on a single day. This is often in the form of making a large batch of food on Sunday, eating one portion that day, and portioning the rest for Monday-Thursday.

Breakfasts could be as simple as a slice of toast with a spread, and a sandwich and banana could serve as a quick lunch, and takes less than 10 minutes to prepare every night. It might be a good idea to allocate one night a week to ordering take-out or eating at a restaurant. On the weekends, since you will have more time during the day, there is the option of to preparing a potentially more elaborate meal. Now, this is just an example of a routine that can work but may not work for you because of your habits. The key is to find something sustainable for you, that will allow you to eat a healthy and balanced diet without bankrupting yourself. You may find yourself experimenting with different weekly strategies for your first few weeks.

Need More Advice on Relocating For Work?

Book a one-on-one session with one of the Engineering Career Peer Coaches today:

<https://experience.apsc.ubc.ca/get-experience/coaches>

