



International Student Services

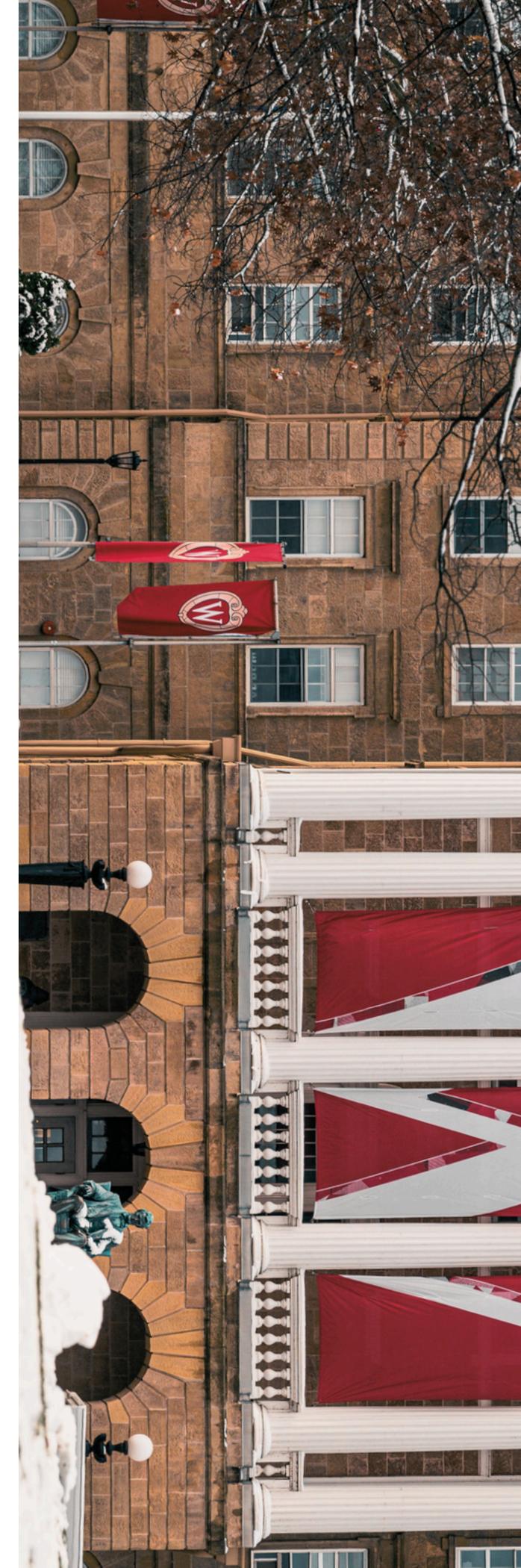
INTERNATIONAL DIVISION

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# A QUICK GUIDE TO U.S. CURRENCY



**2025-26**  
EDITION



# U.S. CURRENCY BASICS

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U.S. currency consists of both **coins** and **paper bills**. Coins are usually used for small purchases, while bills are for larger transactions.

## Different Types of Coins:

*Notes: 100 cents = 1 dollar*



Penny  
*1 cent*



Nickel  
*5 cents*



Dime  
*10 cents*

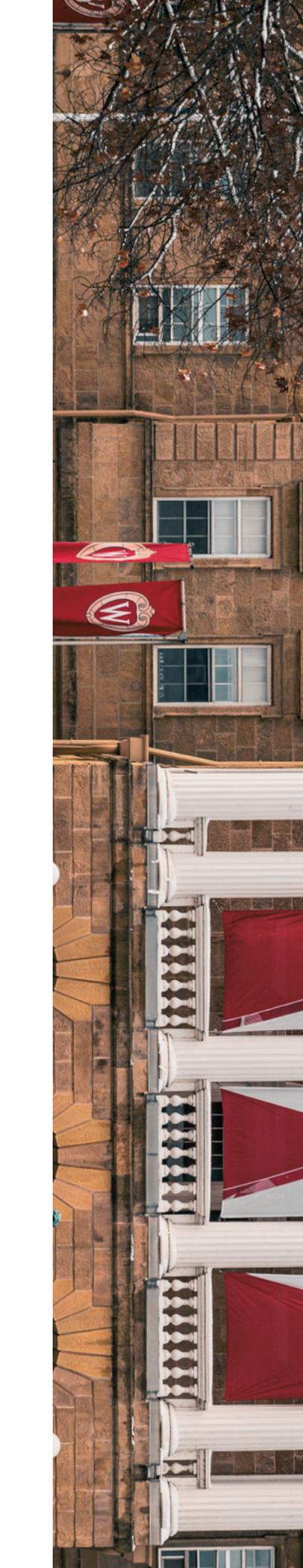


Quarter  
*25 cents*

Half Dollar Coins (50¢) and Dollar Coins (\$1) still exist but are rarely seen in everyday use.

## Dime Fun Fact!

Even though the dime is worth more than the nickel and the penny, it is actually smaller than both.



# U.S. CURRENCY BASICS

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## Different Types of Dollar Bills:

The U.S. uses bills (or “*paper money*”) for larger amount of money. Bills come in seven denominations:

- \$1
- \$2
- \$5
- \$10
- \$20
- \$50
- \$100

## Two Dollar Bills Fun Facts!

- In some cultures, the \$2 bill is considered lucky.
- *Misconception*: The \$2 bill is not rare. It is still printed but not used often. Because many people think it’s rare and keep it as a collectible, it becomes even less visible in everyday life.



# HOW TO ACCESS/EXCHANGE MONEY IN THE U.S.?

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Banks and ATMs are your main resources. At UW-Madison and around Madison, you will find a variety of banks, including UW Credit Union, Chase, U.S. Bank, and more.

Banks can help you:

- **Exchange currencies** between U.S. dollars and other currencies.
- **Deposit cash** into your U.S. bank account (if you bring cash with you).
  - *Note: The U.S. Customs allows you to transport up to \$10,000 at one time to and from the U.S.*
- **Withdraw cash** at ATMs or bank counters.



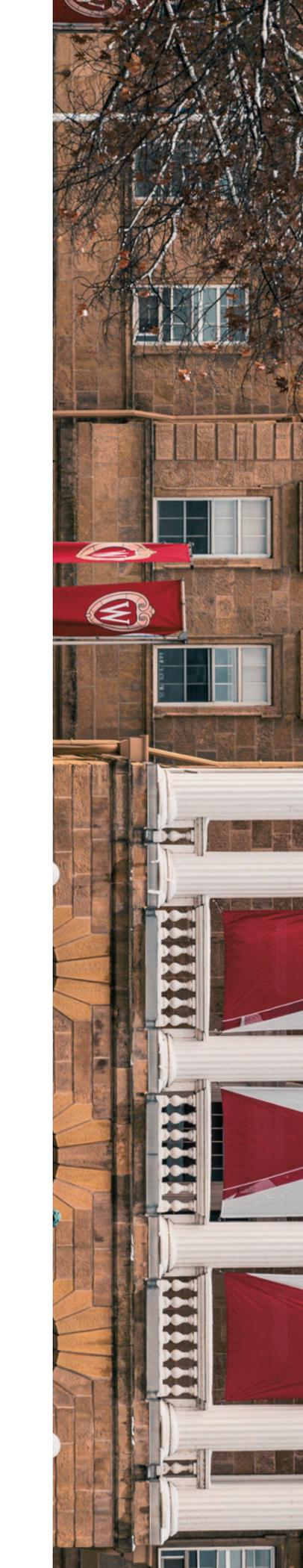
# HOW TO ACCESS/EXCHANGE MONEY IN THE U.S.?

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- **Wire transfer** money or receive transfers to and from family, friends, or others.

*Tips:*

- *Most students open a U.S. bank account for easier access and to avoid international card fees. (See our Banking Options Resource Guide for more details.)*
- *International transfers may take several business days and often include service fees.*

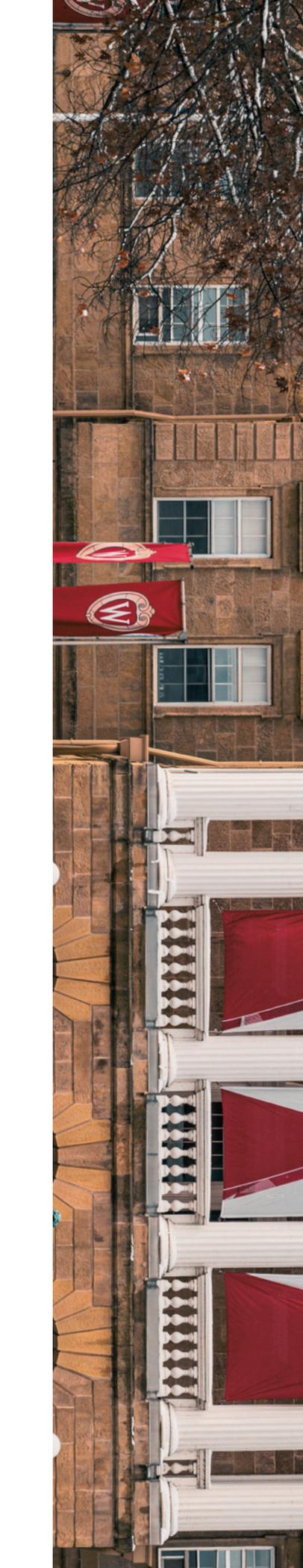


# HOW IS MONEY USED IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE U.S.?

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**Cash Uses** - Although cards and digital payments are common, cash is still useful in certain situations:

- **Laundry:** Many machines still require quarters (though some take cards or apps).
- **Buses/Public Transportation:** Some buses accept \$1 or \$2 bills, while others may also accept cards or transit apps that can be reloaded with cash.
- **Restaurants:** Tips are usually given in cash if not added to the card payment.
  - *Standard tipping is 15-20% of the bill before tax.*
- **Markets/Small Vendors:** Small street vendors may be cash-only, especially in smaller towns.



# HOW IS MONEY USED IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE U.S.?

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**Cashless Payments** - Other common payment methods include:

- **Credit/Debit Cards:** These are widely accepted, though international cards may charge conversion fees.
- **Digital Wallets:** These link to your card (such as Apple Pay or Google Pay).
- **Money Transfer Apps:** These allow peer-to-peer transfers (such as Zelle, Venmo, or Cash App).
- **Checks:** These are often used for large payments such as rent or tuition.
- **Online Payment Platforms:** These are secure services for tuition payments (such as Flywire or Convera).



# HOW IS MONEY USED IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE U.S.?

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*Note: Your tuition and living expenses are expressed in U.S. currency. Credit/debit cards, checks, and approved online payment platforms are common and accepted options.*

Payment on UW-Madison Campus:

- **Wiscard:** You can deposit funds and use it on campus for dining, bookstore, printing, and many more, with discounts and tax-exempt benefits.
- **Bus Pass:** UW-Madison students receive a bus pass for unlimited rides on Madison Metro buses.



# OTHER THINGS TO KNOW

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- **Bargaining:** Negotiating prices is generally not allowed in U.S. stores.
- **Sales Tax:** Prices on tags usually don't include tax, so the final amount will be higher.
- **Tipping culture:** Common in restaurants, taxis, and some services. 15-20% is standard for dining.



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# Welcome, Badgers!



Information collected and shared by  
UW-Madison ISS Global Engagement Interns