



Welcome

Starting Out in Mainstream America offers information about life in the USA today. Adjusting to any new culture can be slow, difficult, and painful. If you are entering or preparing for re-entry into mainstream American life after a long absence, or perhaps for the first time, you may have many questions about where to find and how to do things.

This book provides practical solutions for people with needs like:

- getting a driver's license
- finding a place to live
- finding a job or job training
- getting health care
- finding your way around the legal system

and information about broader concepts like

- Abuse and neglect
- Communications skills

- Relationships
- Parenting skills
- Aspects of mainstream culture like music, movies, and sports

How to use this book

The book offers "how-to" information, guidelines, and suggestions. The best way to use it is to look up one topic at a time, like "higher education," or "withholding income." There are three different ways to find what you are looking for:

- Click on a section heading on the left of the screen. You will then see the beginning of each section and a list of the topics covered in that section. Click on the topic that seems to meet your need.
- Type a search term into the box at the top right of the screen.
- Browse the [Table of Contents](#), which has brief summaries of each section.

You will often be referred elsewhere for more or more specific information. For example, the book tells you how to find out where your local post office or public

library is, but doesn't list the addresses of all the libraries and post offices in the country.

Details may differ, depending on where you live. For instance, different states require different documents for you to get a photo ID.

Starting Out tells you how to get key documents you may need, but refers you to your state's Web site to find out exactly what those documents are.

The chapter on **Getting Information** describes two key sources of free information: the Internet and the public library. Using those tools, you can learn about practically anything you want. You can read that chapter first for a solid base to build on, no matter what your specific needs.

Even though you may want to read a whole chapter, or look up several topics, it's a good idea to take breaks if you are getting a lot of new information.

Trying to understand more information than your brain can readily absorb may result in **information overload**. Resting gives you time to think and helps you decide what to do next.

Starting Out has links to many Internet Web sites. Some of those links may contain advertisements and referrals to other Web sites, not to mention Web sites that you find on your own. It is often hard to know whether you can trust the information on a particular Web site. You can read [Checking Reliability](#) for ideas about evaluating the quality of a given Web site.

You are welcome to download and/or print any part of the book, provided you do not change or charge for any of the content.

We want to know about mistakes, updates, or missing information; and we welcome ideas about improving the book. Please click on [Feedback](#) at the left of the page to send information and ideas.

Starting Out is a project of the [International Cultic Studies Association](#), a non-profit network of people concerned about psychological manipulation and abuse in cultic groups, alternative movements, and other environments. ICSA is tax-exempt, supports civil liberties, and is not affiliated with any religious or commercial organizations.

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