JCR Freshers' Guide 2022-2023

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Hi everyone,

Congratulations on your offers and welcome to Christ Church!

My name is Tia, I’m a second-year student studying French and Spanish, and I’m also the JCR President for this year. My job is to act as a representative for all of the undergraduate students, and so I’m really looking forward to getting to know you all. :) 

The term ‘JCR’ is one of those weird bits of Oxford slang, so don’t worry if you’re not familiar with it. It stands for ‘Junior Common Room’ and refers not only to the physical common room itself, but the whole undergraduate student body. Our JCR is among one of the largest in Oxford, with students coming from a variety of backgrounds to form a diverse and inclusive community, and I really hope you find Christ Church to be a welcoming place. Don’t worry if you feel daunted by the prospect of starting university; everyone will feel the same but no matter who you are, where you’re from or what you’re interested in, you will have a fantastic time here.

The JCR Committee is made up of lots of different representatives (reps) with a huge variety of roles – covering everything from welfare to student access and entertainment (entz). While you are here, it is likely that the JCR will form the basis of your social life, and the committee tries their very best to make you feel supported in college and put on a social calendar for you to enjoy. As well as maintaining the JCR (the physical common room), we organise a variety of activities throughout the year, including your Freshers’ Week, welfare events, Arts Week and bops (big, free college parties). Making sure people are happy is extremely important to us, so the welfare of our students is a top priority in college. We have JCR reps who are peer-support trained (both generally and for specific minority groups), so that you always have someone you can turn to.

Most JCR-related stuff will be sent to your Oxford email address, and we also share information more informally to the Christ Church JCR Facebook group, which you should all join before you arrive.

If I have any advice, it would probably be to get started on any preparatory work sent to you sooner rather than later. But, more importantly, do remember if the work is hard that the tutors gave you an offer for a reason and know that you’re capable. I’m sure that some of you will be feeling slightly nervous, but everyone quickly finds their people, and you have your college family too as an added support network. Coming to uni is not only an opportunity for you to explore your academic interests, but also just so much fun.

Finally, I think one of the most important parts of my role is to be available to all undergraduates at Christ Church, whatever their needs. This now includes all of you so please let me know if you have any questions or concerns and I’ll do my best to help out. You can all add me on Facebook and message me or drop me an email.

I’m so excited to meet you all, as are the JCR Committee and Christ Church as a whole. My first year at Oxford was so much fun, and you all have so much to look forward to – so get ready and I’ll see you all soon!

MuChCh Love,

Tia xx
Welcome to Christ Church!

Dear incoming freshers,

First of all, a massive congratulations and well done for meeting your offer! You should all be very proud of yourselves and we hope you are looking forward to starting at Christ Church in October.

We are Sam and Leeya, your Freshers' Representatives, who will be organising Freshers’ Week and ensuring that everything runs smoothly. We know from personal experience that starting university is a daunting task, even more so at Oxford, which may seem alienating with all its strange traditions, impressive architecture and long history. Christ Church, though one of the biggest colleges at Oxford, will quickly feel like home to all of you, and we hope that we can ease this transition through the fun and informative activities we have planned. We hope that by the end of Freshers’ Week, you will become more familiar with the college system, the town and with the friendly, open community at Christ Church!

Sam and Leeya
Hi, I’m Sam and I am a second year Chemist! I remember feeling apprehensive about the shift from school to university. Moving out for the first time and leaving behind family and friends can be really daunting but you very quickly settle in and make friends. Especially in the first few weeks, everyone wants to meet new people so my biggest piece of advice is to try and talk to as many people as you can - you never know who might be your best friend or even your future spouse! Oxford is famous for working its students hard, and it’s true that you’ll spend more time in the library than with your friends at other universities, but you’ll quickly learn that there are many more hours in the day than you once thought! There are a huge number of activities to get involved with both inside and outside of college. I myself am co-captain of the college rugby team, musical director of ‘The Oxford Alternatives’ (see pitch perfect!), an ambassador for ‘Movember’ and of course your Freshers’ Rep this year - all while keeping up my studies and going out with friends! The terms are only 8 weeks long so make the most of every second while you’re here and then rest when you get home. You are all in for an amazing time and I cannot wait to meet you all and show you the ropes! If you have any questions, please get in touch!
Hi, my name is Leeya and I am a second year historian. As well as being one of the two Freshers’ Reps, I am also History subject representative, so I am really happy to answer questions about anything to do with university life and specific History questions. When I was in your position, I felt especially worried about joining such a grand and rich college like Christ Church and being able to find friends from a similar background to me. Despite whatever you may have heard about Christ Church, it is a welcoming and friendly community with large enough year groups to find a good group of friends, while still feeling like you know most people. Though there is much work to be done, (which is why I encourage you to take up some access volunteering once you get here!) I was pleasantly surprised to be faced with a diverse community with people from all sorts of backgrounds. At Christ Church, it is next to impossible to not make any friends, with all the freshers living and eating together everyday, the social and welcoming atmosphere this creates is one of my favourite things about Christ Church. I really hope that you are all looking forward to joining and any anxiety about starting this new chapter of your lives is completely normal, but I hope we can facilitate this transition in Freshers’ Week and highlight what a lovely and welcoming college Christ Church is. I am always happy to stop for a chat or answer any questions you may have at any point, and I am so excited to meet you all!
Accommodation at Christ Church is really great, the eight week terms meaning you only pay for the time you're actually staying there. You are guaranteed college-owned accommodation for the whole duration of your degree, which really reduces the stress of hunting for a house or flat.

- Jack Cobb

One of the most important things for me was the size. At around 120 freshers per year, Christ Church feels small enough to know, or at least recognise, most people in the year, but large enough so as not to feel insular or claustrophobic. Despite being one of the larger colleges, Christ Church has a great community feel.

- James Macnab

As an English student, obviously I've read Harry Potter and it's really cool to live and work in the same place where many scenes from the movies were filmed. But beyond that, ChCh is a fun and welcoming environment. I know that the friends I've made here, especially on my course, will be friends for life.

- Natty Shah

Christ Church feels like the place I was meant to be! I really enjoy working in the library which has every book you could possibly need, and I've met some of the best people I will ever know here.

- Will Hawkins

Christ Church is just the best college by far! It's incredibly beautiful and is home to a thriving and diverse student body. I was quite nervous about joining, but everyone here is really friendly and you'll quickly make friends across all years. You have a solid support network from both your tutors and your peers who you can turn to for help at any point.

- Sam Prosser

Accommodation at Christ Church is right in the centre of Oxford, opposite supermarkets and a short walk away from many libraries.

- Rohini Gupte

Christ Church has very generous financial grants for every reason you could possibly imagine. From book and language studying grants, to travel grants so you can visit anywhere in the world, Christ Church ensures that opportunities are not limited by your financial situation. This generosity is echoed in the affordable meals at hall and cheaper accommodation.

- James Rafferty

I am a shy person so I was worried about making friends. But I quickly found out that ChCh is such a friendly college, the people around me who were strangers a few days ago quickly felt like family!

- Jen Egan

Christ Church is the place I was meant to be! I really enjoy working in the library which has every book you could possibly need, and I've met some of the best people I will ever know here.
The JCR is a big part of making Christ Church as friendly and inclusive as possible, and provides ways for people to get involved in different roles which range from a very small commitment that still has a big impact through to larger commitment roles on the executive committee.

JCR representatives are drawn from the student body, and candidates for positions submit a manifesto, and defend their positions at a relaxed, informal and often amusing hustings. Elections for different positions take place at various points throughout the year.

You can find a full list of the current JCR representatives on the Christ Church JCR website, so if you ever want to discuss any ideas or problems with them, their contact details are accessible.

The JCR also has regular meetings and serves as the hub for student politics at Christ Church. These are relaxed and informal. Students get together over pizza to discuss how to spend the JCR budget, discuss policy motions which are brought forward by students on a range of issues, and to elect student representatives.

Welfare is a big part of the JCR, and we have a team of elected Welfare Officers to champion student welfare, as well as peer supporters and liberation reps to champion underrepresented communities within the JCR.

TOM QUAD - Where the JCR is located
YOU MIGHT BE LUCKY ENOUGH TO GET A ROOM THAT FACES OUT ONTO THE MEADOWS, ONE OF THE PRETTIEST GREEN SPACES IN ALL OF OXFORD!

In first year, all students live together on site in college, which makes it very easy to make friends as you will get to know your neighbours and those living in the same building very quickly. Although you won’t have kitchen access in first year, you eat all your meals together in hall. We will speak more about this later, but the social aspect this provides is very valued amongst all years at Christ Church.

Unlike lots of other universities, all accommodation for first years is randomly allocated, with Freshers living in rooms in either Meadows Building, Tom Quad or Blue Boar Quad.

You won’t find out where you’re staying until you arrive, but almost all rooms are en-suite, while all rooms have a bed, desk with a lamp and chair, a fridge and a sink.

All rooms also have access to a ‘tea point’ which has a kettle, toaster and sink...
What to bring

- Duvet and covers
- Pillows and cases
- Sheets
- A set of towels
- Mugs and glasses
- Plates and cutlery
- Washing up liquid, sponges and a tea towel
- Kettle
- Tea, coffee, snacks
- Bottle opener/corkscrew
- Laundry basket
- Washing powder
- Laptop
- Extension lead/multi-socket
- Stationery – pens, pencils, highlighters, paper, hole punch, staplers, calculator. Drawing pins are useful as the only place you can put up posters is on your pin board!
- Files/notebooks
- Stuff to decorate your room – photos, pictures, posters, cushions, throws, you want it to be homely!
- Textbooks/set texts

We’ve compiled a list of the absolute essentials and commonly used objects that will be good to bring with you – panic not! Your room will already contain a sink, fridge, pin board and desk lamp, as well as all the usual pieces of furniture.
Testimony from a History Student

This year, there are around 12 of us studying History as a single or joint honours, making the college cohort one of the biggest in the university. In my first year, I studied a wide range of topics, from the French Revolution to the Crusades, and I really appreciated the wide range of options we could choose from. With History and other humanities subjects, it can be difficult at the beginning as you have fewer contact hours than science students, and can thus be tricky to organise your time well. You will get used to it quickly though! I spend the majority of my time reading and writing essays, which I get set three of every fortnight, before discussing them in tutorials. Christ Church is a great college for humanities students, and our history society is particularly active!

ACADEMIC

Testimony from a Chemistry Student

Chemistry is one of the degrees with quite a lot of contact hours at Oxford. On average, there are 10 lectures a week, with labs two days a week, three classes a week and a tutorial at college. Although this may seem like a lot, it quickly becomes manageable and I find that having lots of contact hours gives structure to my week.

At Christ Church, like the rest of Oxford, teaching is done through the tutorial system which is based on small group teaching sessions with a tutor discussing an essay or a problem sheet you have completed during the week. Tutorials work alongside lectures, classes, as well as labs for science subjects. The idea of tutorials seems daunting at first, but here at Christ Church we are lucky to have really friendly tutors who are always willing to help, and ultimately it is an amazing opportunity to have academic conversations with people who are just as passionate about it as you are!

Something else that makes academic life at Christ Church special is our amazing and well-equipped library. If the book you are looking for is not available, the friendly ChCh librarians will be more than happy to purchase a copy for you, or you can use the generous book grant to purchase a copy at no personal cost. The library is a great and spacious study place open from 8am-1am on most days, suitable for people with all types of working schedules. Furthermore, if you are a Law student there is the added benefit of a 24 hour library in Christ Church with access only for Law students!

Labs give you the opportunity to make friends with Chemists outside your college, whereas with subjects that are just lecture based, your interaction with students outside of your college are limited. After a lab, you are expected to write a lab report, which your tutor will give you feedback for. The science area is a little bit further from the centre, but I appreciate the walk can be quite peaceful and calming after some difficult lab days or classes. Though the Science Library is currently being refurbished, the science area is close to the Vere Harmsworth, a history library with a surprisingly sciencey feel! If I don't feel like working in my room or going back to the college library, the VH is a very convenient alternative.
At university it’s important to take care of yourself so that you’re able to keep up with the pace at Oxford, and Christ Church is aware of the importance food plays as a part of that. Although us first years don’t have kitchens ourselves, we have a very skilled team of chefs that keep the college going! The College provides breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day. Breakfast on Saturdays and Sundays is pushed back to the much-beloved brunch, a real favourite of students. Having meals in Hall is both convenient and it is lovely to catch up with friends at the end of the day. Christ Church offer generous food subsidies if your household income is below a certain level, you can get up to 50% off your season meal ticket! Even if you are not accorded a subsidy, the food in hall is among the cheapest out of all the Oxford colleges.

Christ Church is one of the few fortunate colleges to have a formal dinner every day; they can be quite rare elsewhere! These consist of a starter, main, and dessert for the same price as an informal sitting, and it can be really lovely to dress up and enjoy yourselves on ‘Formal Fridays’. They are particularly popular for celebrating birthdays or events, but the new introduction of ‘family formal’ often gets a full hall and provides a great opportunity to talk to your college parents. Christ Church also offers a ‘Guest Dinner’ twice a term, where the food becomes Michelin standard and you can invite one of your friends or family-members for a stunning four course meal in hall!

As JCR ‘Special Diets Rep’, I understand that people with food and dietary requirements may feel some anxiety about eating at Christ Church, as there are limited catering facilities in first year. However, the kitchen is most reassuringly helpful with dealing with allergies and dietary requirements. There is always a vegan and vegetarian option available, and if you are vegan, or have any other dietary requirement (including but not limited to Halal, Kosher, pescatarian, allergies) the kitchen always accommodates these needs and ensures that the food is prepared safely.

Having dinner in Hall makes for a lovely excuse for a natter and a catch up with friends, and the choice provided by the College tends to keep everyone happy. There is also a feedback form sent at the end of every week, and college will always take constructive criticism and recommendations on board.

-James Rafferty, Special Diets Rep

The Hall at Christ Church was the inspiration for the Great Hall in the Harry Potter films!
Christ Church is among the most generous of Oxford colleges for financial support. The accommodation is well priced, and the fact that you only have to pay for the nights you are actually in residence helps greatly with the costs. Furthermore, depending on your household income, you could benefit from either 25% or 50% off the price of accommodation and the season meal ticket, and you may be eligible for a Crankstart or Oxford bursary from the university. Some students may also be eligible for college grants or hardship funds. Christ Church ensures that money will never be an obstacle to pursuing academic and research goals, with generous travel grants, study grants and year abroad grants. Everyone is also eligible for a £330 book grant for the duration of their degree, and the college offers reimbursement of courses taken at the language centre, if you would like to solidify your language skills or even take up a new one!

For more information about fees and charges, please visit this webpage: https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/current-students/stewards-office-information-undergraduates-fees-and-charges

The Financial Guide for Undergraduates contains lots of useful information, including information about banks. The document can be found on this webpage: https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/current-students/you-arrive

For more information about the support and assistance that is in place to help you manage your finances during your studies at Christ Church, please visit this webpage: https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/current-students/financial-support-and-assistance
Welfare

The welfare of students is taken seriously at Christ Church and there are many different people who are available for advice and support. There is health and welfare information on our webpages for freshers and also on our dedicated page for welfare support in Christ Church. Please visit the website to find out more: https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/welfare-support-christ-church

The JCR Welfare Rep is Yan (Jingyan) Yu: jingyan.yu@chch.ox.ac.uk

One of the most important members of the Welfare Team is Layla the Cockapoo! Layla lives on campus and enjoys being walked every day by students! There is even a ‘dog-walking rota’ that gets sent out every week in term time and so if you like dogs, you’re coming to the right place!

Layla drawn by Ophelia Yannaghias, former undergraduate
Diversity at Christ Church is certainly a priority: within the JCR there are designated ethnic and religious minority reps, gender reps and LGBTQ+ reps who are all there to help anyone who needs it! As well as this, the entertainment reps also host events such as cultural formal dinners.

Hiya! I’m Benjamin, one of the two LGBTQ+ reps for Christ Church. Christ Church is a large college and so there is a sizeable LGBTQ+ community here, which is great because there is always someone to go to if you need anything. As one of the LGBTQ+ reps, it is my job to ensure that fun events are happening for the community. I am a friendly face around college and offer support (and/or direct you to relevant support) if needed. Under my term as rep, we have done weekly Tea and Coffee (and snacks!!) breaks, have hosted a Eurovision screening and did a walk to Oxford Pride. Very excitingly, each year there is a Unity Dinner where LGBTQ+ members of the college are invited to a fancy meal (Dress Code: Gay). We also signpost events happening across the University, such as the ever-popular TuesGays with the LGBTQ+ Society. Above all, we are here if you ever need anything and are always open to suggestions for things to do!
As one of the largest colleges, there are plenty of clubs and societies that happen within college in addition to all of the university-wide societies. Christ Church is famous for its Rowing Club but there are also Netball, Football, Hockey, Rugby, Pool, and Chess Clubs!

There are a number of different student societies at Christ Church, which cater for all sorts of interests. Please visit our College Sports and Societies page for more information: https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/sports

If you are interested in choral singing, please read this letter from the Choir Director and Choir Manager: https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/current-students/christ-church-college-choir
One of Christ Church’s most beloved institutions is the Undercroft, affectionately known as ‘The Undie’, which is our college bar. The JCR ‘Undie Rep’ puts on many lively events in the bar throughout the term, such as karaoke and acapella concerts. After every Guest Dinner, the Undie is packed, with everyone migrating from hall for post-dinner drinks, which can be both alcoholic and non-alcoholic.

Another amazing thing about Christ Church are our fabulous Entz (entertainment) reps who put on loads and loads of events throughout term, from bops (themed college parties), quizzes, bar crawls, pumpkin carving, karaoke nights and of course help to organise all of the freshers week events for when students first arrive in October!

There are a range of activities for everyone: both drinking and non-drinking, so no matter who you are or what you want to do, there is something for everyone at Christ Church – it is definitely never boring!

Every three years, the college throws a Ball which is an amazing opportunity to get dressed up and enjoy a night of great entertainment, put together by a dedicated ball committee!
GLOSSARY

**Battels**
The bill you receive from College consisting of rent, hall charges, heating and electricity bills, JCR levies and many other weird and wonderful expenses. Although it can feel like some fantastic free credit card (especially when batteling wine from the Buttery), it’s always best to err on the side of caution, unless you want to be hit with a staggeringly huge bill next term.

**Blackwell’s**
Oxford's largest bookshop located in Broad Street opposite the Sheldonian Theatre – it looks tiny from the outside, but in fact it’s huge, and can be relied upon to be pretty comprehensive.

**Blue**
Sporting accolade won when you play against Cambridge in the Varsity match for the University 1st team in any of the major sports. Some sports award Half Blues instead.

**Bodleian**
The University's principal library, called the 'Bod' for short. Operates as a copyright library which means it automatically receives a copy of every book published in the UK. Also, as it is a mainly a non-borrowing library, you can pretty much guarantee that what you need will be there.

**Bod Card**
Your own little “Passport to Paradise” – gets you into colleges, libraries and even clubs. Best to carry it with you at all times, either in a wallet or phone case. You can’t even eat in Hall without it.

**Bop**
A massive college party held in the JCR, which is like a school disco but so much more fun.

**Buttery**
The bar located outside of the Hall (in the Ante-Hall), where you can buy bottles of wine and other drinks before and after meals.

**Cherwell**
A river running through Oxford; also one of the main student newspapers.

**Collections**
These come in two types:

a) The test your tutor sets you to be taken when you arrive back at College, usually on the Thursday or Friday of 0th Week. You must wear your gowns.

b) End-of-term Collections take place at the end of term for the majority of students. You are called in front of the Senior Censor, wearing your gown, where your tutors report to them on your term's work. There are also the more informal Tutor’s Collections, which is exactly the same thing, minus the gown, and the Senior Censor.

**'Come up', 'Go down'**
These are expressions still widely used in Oxford to mean arriving at the beginning of term and leaving at the end of it. No matter how far north of Oxford you live, you will always ‘come up’ when term starts, and ‘go down’ when it ends.

**Commoners**
All Freshers (except choral and organ scholars) are commoners and wear a short gown. You can be promoted to a Scholar or Exhibitioner, usually after a good performance in your first exams (Moderations or Preliminaries). Perks include a longer gown and money deducted from your battels. Plus, the unusual experience of reading the Latin grace for formal Hall.

**Crew Date**
Exactly what it says on the tin; societies, teams and clubs (or ‘crews’) of one college or sports club, meet up with the ‘crew’ of another for dinner, drinks and general social hilarity.

**Cuppers**
Intercollegiate competitions, usually in sports, but also take place in things like dance and drama. Always fun for promoting college spirit and rekindling ancient college rivalries.

**GCR**
The Graduate Common Room – located just above the JCR in Tom Quad, but kitted out in much nicer furniture. It is known as the MCR in other colleges (M for Middle).

**Gowns**
You’ll be required to wear one of these on several occasions, especially in the first few weeks and also during exams. Unless you’re a choral or organ scholar, you’ll wear a commoner’s gown, which costs in the region of £20. You’ll also require a mortarboard, which is never worn until you graduate, but is great for a substitute pencil case in exams.

**Hilary**
The second term of the year. Unvaryingly cold and wet.

**The House**
This is Christ Church's traditional colloquial name, derived from the Latin name Aedes Christi which means “House of Christ”. Often used when cheering on our sports teams or just to be ironic!

**The Isis**
The name for the section of the Thames that runs through Oxford; also a termly student magazine.

**JCR**
The Junior Common Room, consisting of all the Undergraduates in college.
Junior Member
The term used to describe students at Christ Church.

Liddell (pronounced to rhyme with middle!)
Self-catering shared flats in the Iffley Road.

Matriculation
University matriculation is where you formally join the University in an early morning ceremony at the Sheldonian on the Saturday of 1st week. You have a photo with your whole year in sub fusc and then a lazy afternoon spent having a picnic/in the pub in ridiculously formal attire.

Michaelmas
The first term of the year, and over before you know it.

Mods, Prelims
These are the first official exams you take. For psychologists, lawyers and theologians they are at the end of Hilary; for others they will be towards the end of Trinity of your first year (except classicists, who take them in Hilary of their second year). In some subjects they are called Honour Moderations, in others they are called Preliminary Examinations.

Oxford Time
In Oxford, everything runs 5 minutes behind (according to the city’s exact location compared to the Greenwich Meridian). For example, 6pm Evensong in the Cathedral is actually at 6.05pm, and the same applies to lectures. Be warned – not many tutors accept ‘Oxford Time’ as an excuse for lateness to tutes.

OxStu
Short for The Oxford Student, the other student newspaper.

Peck
Short for Peckwater Quad, home of the coveted Peck Sets.

Pidge
Short for pigeonhole – where all your post arrives in the plodge. College and tutors will also use it to hand out notices and return work so you should check it at least once a day. Your name label is above your pidge, and you may have to share with another person – you just have to hope they pick up their mail regularly.

Plodge
Short for the Porters’ Lodge, your first port of call in many circumstances.

RAG
The University’s principal charity fundraising organisation, which stands for Raising and Giving. They run all sorts of great activities throughout the year, on a University and a college level through the RAG Reps.

SCR
The Senior Common Room - all of the Christ Church teaching staff are members.

Scout
The lovely people who empty your bins and clean your rooms. Always willing to have a friendly chat and a cup of tea – they really have seen it all before.

Sheldonian
A concert hall next to the Bodleian – used for official ceremonies including Matriculation and major concerts.

Students
For historical and pretty confusing reasons the Fellows are known as Students at Christ Church. We, on the other hand, are called Junior Members.

Sub Fusc
This is ceremonial dress, worn for matriculation, exams and graduation. See the University website https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/dress?wssl=1 for full details. Great for impressing tourists, some of whom are under the impression that we wear this every day! It is tradition during exams to wear coloured carnations (delivered to your pidge by your college parents); white for your first exam, red for the last, and pink for the ones in the middle.

Tabs
Students from Cambridge.

Tom
Can refer to the gate or the bell on top of it, ‘Great Tom’. It rings 101 times at 9.05pm (once for each of the original college scholars) to mark the curfew in times gone by...

Trinity
The last term of the year; filled with punting, Pimm’s and exams.

Trinity Exchange
Sporting competition with our sister, Trinity College, Cambridge.

Tute
Short for tutorial – attendance is compulsory.

Undercroft
The college bar, also known as the ‘Undie’.

Weeks
Terms in Oxford are split into numbered weeks. ‘Full Term’ (which is when teaching takes place) runs from 1st-8th week, but there are also 0th week, 9th week and even -1st week! Weeks start on Sundays (confusingly) and Freshers’ Week will start on the Sunday of 0th week.