

HIGHER EDUCATION PREPARATION

YOUR FIRST WEEKS...

Starting your higher education studies is an incredibly exciting time, with new people to meet, new places to explore, and new experiences to try. This guide can help you plan your first weeks at university, including how to get the most out of this time and where to seek support to help you with the transition.

MOVING IN	 MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME Unpacking your belongings can help you feel more comfortable and settled in your new living space . You may also want to consider purchasing a TV licence .
	 MEET YOUR HOUSEMATES Keep your door open and hang around in the kitchen so that you can say hello to your housemates as they arrive. Remember that they're in the same position as you , and probably just as nervous! Our icebreaker suggestions overleaf may help with getting to know everyone. Once you have had an opportunity to introduce yourselves, you may want to discuss how you are going to organise your shared cupboard, fridge and freezer space.
	 EXPLORE THE LOCAL AREA If you have moved to a new location, start identifying where the local shops are located and how you will travel to and from lectures, seminars etc. Are you going to walk or take the bus ?
FRESHERSWEEK	 GO TO THE FRESHERS' FAIR An opportunity for you to discover the range of clubs and societies , such as sports teams, choirs, arts societies, fund-raising organisations, the student radio station and much more, available at your college or university. Businesses may also attend to advertise part-time job opportunities they have. Expect to receive a lot of freebies such as pizza, stationery and items to decorate your new room, so make sure to take a large bag with you! Why not arrange to go with your new housemates?
	 TAKE PART IN CLUB AND SOCIETY TASTERS Free taster sessions are typically offered during Fresher's week. These are fantastic opportunities to continue a hobby or try something different , all whilst meeting new people . If you decide to become a member , you could even join the committee and add this experience to your CV!
STARTING YOUR STUDIES	 EXPLORE THE CAMPUS Becoming familiar with the campus can help reduce the likelihood of being late for your first lectures, seminars etc. Make sure you know where to access your weekly set reading materials and what study spaces are available by visiting the library . Whilst you are there, explore the other facilities available to you such as the gym , cafeteria and the student union!
	 COMPLETE YOUR ENROLMENT Your college or university will send you instructions for when and where to confirm registration onto your course. As part of this you will receive your student card , which you may require in order to access certain facilities (and get student discount!).
	 CHECK YOUR TIMETABLE This is typically available online . Remember that your lectures, seminars etc. may not start at the same time as your housemates and friends ; you do not want to miss a key introductory session!
	 LOG ONTO YOUR ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM Here you can access module handbooks , reading lists , lecture slides , assignment briefs and a range of other study resources. As higher education study involves a significant amount of independent learning , it is important to become familiar with your college or university's online learning platform.
	 ATTEND WELCOME EVENTS Colleges and universities often schedule these to help you get to know your classmates and lecturers . You can also ask any questions you have before starting the academic year.
	 ARRIVE EARLY TO YOUR FIRST LECTURES This provides another opportunity to meet and chat with classmates whilst you are waiting to go into a lecture hall and/or before your lecture begins.

YOUR WELLBEING

ACCESS STUDENT SERVICES



Your college or university can **support** you with **transitioning** to higher education study and moving away from home. For example, they may assign you a **personal tutor**, pair you with a **mentor** and/or offer **mental wellbeing services** such as mindfulness sessions. Many offer a **'Nightline'** service, where you can **confidentially** and **anonymously** speak to student volunteers about how you are feeling and anything that is troubling you.

REGISTER WITH A GP



Signing up at a doctor's surgery during your first weeks can help **prevent delays in booking a doctor's appointment** if you need one during the academic year. Larger colleges and universities typically have a **health centre on campus**, but if this is not available then speak to **student services** about **local surgeries** they know of.

EAT HEALTHILY, EXERCISE AND GET ENOUGH SLEEP



The first weeks of university can be very busy, so **make sure you are looking after your physical and mental wellbeing**. If you are socialising at night with your new friends, make sure that you **schedule time to catch up on your sleep**. This will help ensure you do not **burn out** during the academic year.

KEEP TO YOUR BUDGET



Spending a lot of money is **particularly alluring** during Freshers' week when you are busy meeting new people and trying new activities, but remember that **what you have needs to last for the rest of term! Which? University** has a **student budget calculator** to help you with this: <https://bit.ly/2xYqDQT>. See our **'managing your money'** resource for further advice and guidance.

DO NOT PUT PRESSURE ON YOURSELF



Do not worry if you are not making best friends in your first week or if you do not go to as many parties as you thought you would. **You have all year to do this!** Feeling the **pressure to drink?** Not the **partying type?** **You are not alone!** Watch this video: <https://bit.ly/363OyLt>. The brilliant thing about your higher education experience is that **you can make whatever you want out of it**.

CALL FRIENDS AND FAMILY



It is normal to feel homesick during this time. **Arrange a call with loved ones** to catch up with them and raise your spirits. **Try to resist the urge to visit home for the first few weeks**, however, as this may only **delay your transition** to independent living.

ICEBREAKER ACTIVITIES



TWO TRUTHS, ONE LIE

Materials: none

Each person shares three statements about themselves, two of which must be true and one must be false. The other players must decide together which is false.



WORD CHAIN

Materials: none

The group picks a category (e.g. food) and the first player says a word that fits the category (e.g. soup). The next player must, within five seconds, pick a word that begins with the letter that the previous word ended with (e.g. peas). *Example word chain: soup - peas - sugar - rice*



WHO AM I?

Materials: sticky notes, pens

Each player secretly writes the name of a famous person on a sticky note, and places it face-down in front of the person next to them. Without looking, everyone picks up the sticky note assigned to them and sticks it to their head. Taking it in turns, players ask the group questions to help identify who the famous person written on the sticky note on their head is.



CARD GAMES

Materials: playing cards (you may need more than one pack depending on the number of players)

- ♦ **31:** each player receives three cards, face down. In turns, they pick up a card from a pile in the middle, add this to their hand, and then discard a card from their hand. The winner is the first person to have the value of 31 in their hand. An Ace counts 11 points, face cards (e.g. King) count 10 points, and all other cards count their face value.
- ♦ **Cheat:** all cards in the deck(s) are dealt to each player, one by one. Taking it in turns, each player places 1-4 cards, face down, on the top of the discard pile, and claims what they are. The player must claim the cards are of the same value (e.g. "three Kings"). The other players can challenge and call "cheat" if they think the player is lying about the value of the cards. If "cheat" is called, the played cards must be turned face up and shown to everyone. If the challenger is correct, the player must pick up all cards in the discard pile. If the challenger is wrong, they must pick up all the cards in the discard pile. If no challenge is called, the next player takes their turn. The winner is the first person to empty their hand.

