

Tertiary studies - settling in

Becoming a student at a university in higher education or technical and further education (TAFE) is exciting. However, it can be challenging to adjust to new academic requirements, unfamiliar surroundings and new people.

You also have to find a balance between study and other things like your personal health and wellbeing, friends and family. You may also need to find somewhere new to live, and you might need to find a new job or make changes to your current work arrangements.

Some students find these changes easier than others. Making new friends and leaving family can be stressful. Remember that plenty of support and advice is available on campus if you need it. Don't wait until you're really struggling – seek help early.

Feeling lost is normal

If you feel a bit lost when you start tertiary studies, you are not alone. There are many issues to sort through in your first few months of campus life.

Common issues of concern are:

- How to make new friends
- Loneliness, feeling homesick, and missing close friends and family
- Living and learning in new surroundings, a new culture or even a new country
- Sharing a house or living in a college or student residence
- Adjusting to an unfamiliar teaching environment
- Coping with the academic workload
- Concerns about money, debt and paid work
- Coping with new freedoms and responsibilities
- Family and friends understanding the changing demands that tertiary study may place on you.

Making new friends

Making an effort to mix and socialise in your new environment can help a lot. Tips on how to meet new people and make friends include:

- Attend the orientation activities organised by your faculty or campus.
- Check out the various clubs and student societies. Join a club that interests you or start your own club.
- Explore your university's web-based social networking options.
- Find out whether students can join professional associations attached to your field of study.
- Consider volunteering for leadership roles or university committees.
- Find out about campus sports clubs and teams or join the gym. Get involved in recreation or other leisure activities.
- Start a conversation with someone who is doing your course or similar subjects to you. You could suggest doing some study or a project together.
- Join a local community group or charity. Find details at your local library or online.

Dealing with shyness

Almost everyone feels a bit awkward about meeting new people in the beginning. Be patient and give relationships time to develop.

Remember:

- Many other new students may be feeling just as shy as you.
- Someone who appears distant and uncommunicative may also be shy – they may be waiting for you to start a conversation.
- Believe in yourself – your friendship will be valuable.
- Remember you don't have to be the life of the party and not everyone wants to belong to the 'in' crowd.
- Keep things in perspective. It may take time to meet people and even longer to build close friendships and relationships.
- You can learn skills to manage shyness or use self-help strategies from websites or books. Ask the student support services at your institution for more information.

Family relationships

If you live away from home, your homesickness will usually lessen as you become familiar with your new life and develop a routine. Stay in touch with your family through regular phone contact, letter or email. If possible, take time out to visit your family or organise a member of your family to visit you.

If you are living at home, it may take some time for everyone to adjust to your new role and routine as a tertiary student.

A new way of studying

Most students find the process of attending lectures and studying at university a new experience. School leavers often find their anonymity in lectures and the new freedom to manage their own study challenging compared to their secondary school experience.

Studying effectively at university is something you can learn with practice. It can help if you are patient and give yourself time to learn how to take lecture notes, prepare for tutorials, research and reference assignments, and submit work by the due date. You may want to ask about any workshops or assistance the university offers students to help with these skills.

Managing your time

Finding a good balance between study, work, friends, family and leisure is an important part of coping with university life. A good balance will keep you motivated and focused on your goals.

A study timetable should include your various academic commitments, but also time for breaks and fun.

Other issues with tertiary studies

Other issues can cause stress and anxiety when you start tertiary studies. These may include:

- **Housing** – finding cheap rent, sharing a house with strangers or living with a roommate.
- **Financial** – supporting yourself, managing on your student allowance or learning to budget.
- **Work** – finding suitable part-time employment and juggling work and study commitments.

Support is available for tertiary students

Seek support from student counsellors for any personal, social or study problems. They can help you find ways to make the transition to university life easier.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your local community health centre
- Student counselling and other student support services at your institution

- Find a doctor near you who specialises in mental health issues through the [beyondblue](#) website or the [beyondblue](#) Info Line Tel. 1300 22 4636

Things to remember

- Starting tertiary studies is a challenging experience for all new students.
- Being homesick and feeling stressed about making new friends are normal experiences as you adjust to your new environment.
- Seek advice from student counsellors at your institution if you're struggling to settle in or would like to develop further coping skills.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

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