



# Navigating Friendships in College

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I'm sure that we have all experienced the shifts and changes of friendships throughout our lifetime. You've made and potentially lost connection with people along the way. While growing up it seems that friendships just "happen". You weren't in control of it because, after all, you can't force a friendship.

When you first start college the friendship dynamic that you were used to in high school is bound to change, because chances are you will no longer be around those individuals 24/7. You find that friendships don't just "happen" anymore. You find that, unlike your childhood, you will have to seek and form friendships. One of the best things about college is that there are tons of opportunities to do just that. You are surrounded by thousands of people you've never met before who are just as scared as you are and are seeking connection. The chances are that forming these relationships may be overwhelming and may not always be a smooth ride.



## **Take into consideration...**

There is no perfect way to approach meeting people in college, but here are a few things to take into consideration while navigating the social scene on campus..

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a black apron over a white shirt, is smiling and looking to her right. She is standing in a grocery store aisle, with shelves of products visible in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue and purple gradient.

## Be Open Minded

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When you are comfortably familiar with people, culture and traditions of your own home town, the social aspect of college can sometimes feel like a tornado of confusion and anxiety. The beauty of college is that you will be surrounded by people who differ in race, nationality, religious beliefs, characteristics, food preferences, and even slang. Rather than shying away from being social because of those differences, embrace the opportunity to experience things with people who hold differences.

## Accept Being Uncomfortable

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There is nothing easy about entering a new campus, classes and living arrangements. They are DEFINITELY all uncomfortable situations. So when you find yourself feeling uneasy, remind yourself that feeling is a good thing. Learn how to put yourself in uncomfortable situations, like introducing yourself to new people or asking someone in class to meet later for coffee. Those things may feel weird at first but they also help bridge the gap towards friendship. More importantly, they help you grow as an individual.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark apron over a light-colored shirt, is smiling and looking towards the right. She is in a store, with a bookshelf visible in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue and purple gradient.

## Find Common Ground

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The chances are that the places you found the most friends was in your school and neighborhood growing up. These were the places you spent the most amount of time. There are definitely exceptions to this. Perhaps you met someone and you admired how outgoing they were or they had a fantastic card collection. No matter the circumstances, you each had commonality whether that was marching band, classes, theater, or a passion outside of school. This still stands while making friends in college. Find people that have similar interests and situations as you.

## Spend One-On-One Time With People

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You've met, you've hung out in groups...and it seems to be going okay. Hanging out in a group is a lot of fun but it can be difficult to spend enough time talking with one person to really open up to each other and get past the surface level conversation. The best way to go from acquaintance to friend is to spend quality time talking and/or doing an activity together. It's a lot like dating! Keep things casual at first by messaging the person and suggest a meet up for coffee or lunch. These settings are great because they are low pressure and allow for easy escape if the conversation gets stale. From there you can suggest an activity you would both enjoy.



## Know That Some Relationships Are Just Meant To Be Temporary

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With the eagerness you feel to connect, you may latch on to the first person or group that you find common ground with. However, overtime you may realize that your personality, goals and values doesn't necessarily align. This can be upsetting but just because that person isn't right for you doesn't mean that the bond wasn't real or a waste of time. Some relationships are meant to be in your life for only a short period of time to teach you something beneficial about yourself or others. Whether you came to this conclusion because of a singular event or it was a gradual shift, the memories gained and lessons learned are a part of you and your experience. Don't focus on the "loss" - instead, acknowledge that season of your life and get ready for a new season.

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## Don't Be Afraid to Compartmentalize

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Not every friend has to be your BFF with whom you share your darkest and deepest secrets. It's absolutely okay to have friends who serve different purposes. There will be a person who will be great for keeping you on track academically, but you don't feel comfortable going to them about a breakup. On the other hand, you may have a person who you don't see or hang out with every day, but when you need a good laugh or to vent, they are the perfect person to turn to. You will be closer to some people than others and there is nothing wrong with that. This allows for healthy boundaries, which are needed for any mutually benefited relationship. It's also important to remember that in college, every person is there on a self discovery journey, practice being fair and understanding towards those you encounter, but most importantly, yourself.

## Be Observant

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When we first meet someone, we tend to overlook their negative traits and dismiss the gut feeling that it's a red flag. The hopes that these traits won't reappear is like putting on rose colored glasses. While it's important to avoid making rash judgements, it is even more important to be vigil about their habits that are displayed in your interactions with them. If they gossip about other friends around you, treat others with disrespect, or fail to be reliable, take these signs to be a direct reflection of their true character.

## Strive For Balance

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Even though making friends is a priority you also need to remember that you are there for an education. So, make sure to find balance between getting involved on campus and making sure you are not only attending classes but also completing your assignments and projects on time. If you struggle to manage your time, set up a schedule that includes times for classes, studying, eating, sleeping and socializing.

A woman with blonde hair is sitting at a desk, smiling and talking on a black mobile phone. She is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. In front of her is a laptop. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a classroom or office setting with other people. The entire image has a semi-transparent purple and blue gradient overlay.

# Places to Find Friends in College



# Campus Events

These events are great places to meet people. They give you automatic talking points. Here are just a few types of events that are common at many colleges: guest speakers, karaoke nights, charity 5ks, concerts, music festivals, sporting events, dances, and cultural festivals.



# Campus Organizations

This is simple because there are so many of them. Whether it's a sport, a social cause, a recreational activity, or a career pursuit, there is probably a club for it. Clubs meet regularly so this gives you the opportunity to have repeated interactions with the same people.



# Classes

You probably spend around 12-15 hours in class each week. This is a huge chunk out of your week and a wonderful opportunity to make friends. Strike up a conversation with that girl that sits next to you in science class about how you like her outfit. Lean over and ask the people who sit around you in math class if they would like to have a study session before your exam on Monday. Some classes have labs or group projects, annoying as they may be, tend to work better since they give you more time to talk than a class that's just straight up lecture.



# Your Dorm

If you are not in class, the odds are you're in your dorm. Especially if it's your first year of college. The food may be gross, and the décor may look grungy but they are a great place to make friends even if it is just bonding over the bad lighting. Dorms are great because of the spontaneous social interactions that they invite. Whether it is hanging out in the common area doing homework, brushing your teeth in the community bathroom, it is ground for friendships to develop.



# | Informal Hangouts

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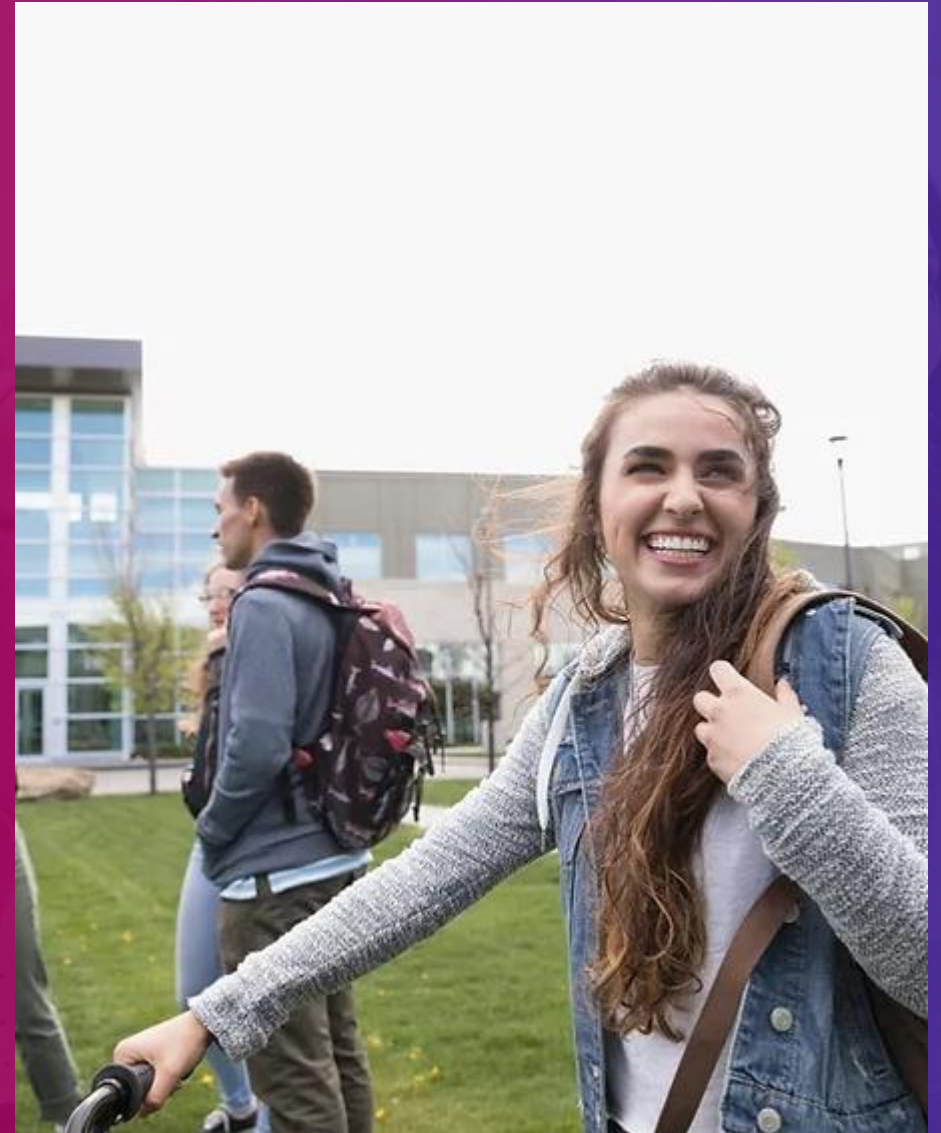
This includes everything from big house parties to dorm hangouts. What is great about these informal meetups is that they allow for lots of time to actually talk and get to know each other.

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# Around Campus

Basically, everywhere that is not class. Some examples include: the gym, the student center, waiting in the hall for class to start, and walking around campus. This requires you to initiate conversations with strangers but it is a great way to overcome shyness and increase your confidence.



# | Online

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This can take different forms, but the most obvious is any Facebook group associated with your class or school. You could potentially become friends with people online before the semester even begins.

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# Jobs

In the “professional world”, people often talk about having “work friends”. But this isn’t something that requires you to have a full-time job to take advantage of. Jobs are a cool way to meet tons of people.







For those who are shy, introverted or just uncomfortable meeting new people, the concept of making new friends on campus can seem very overwhelming. Fortunately, college is one of the easiest places for shy or introverted people to make new friends. Of course, it will take some effort, but it can be done.

Here are a few tips to get you started:



## Set Goals

Make it a point to talk to at least one new person each day. Challenge yourself to say hello to people as you walk to class. This will help build your confidence and might even open a door or two in the friendship department.

## Host People

If you see a lot of the same people in your classes or people that share your major, consider inviting them to your dorm or the library for a study group. Even though introverts prefer to study alone, this will give you a good opening to make new friends with the security of picking a place that feels comfortable for you.

## Introduce Yourself

Every time you sit down somewhere, whether it's in class, at dinner, or in a coffee shop, introduce yourself. Of course, it might feel a bit awkward but you have to practice being brave so that your confidence grows.

## No Excuses

It is very important to stay on top of schoolwork, but do not use this as an excuse to avoid going out and meeting people. Even though it is uncomfortable at times, you need to challenge yourself to go out and do things. You don't have to leave the dorm every night but try to get out on a regular basis.

## Make Eye Contact

Looking up from your phone, tablet, or your book can be really challenging especially for introverted people that enjoy escaping into their own thoughts. But, making eye contact is the first step in meeting someone new. It shows them that you are welcoming and approachable.

## Avoid Worrying


Not making friends right away is completely normal. In fact, friendships take time to form and grow. So, don't feel discouraged.



## How do I stay in touch with my friends from high school when I'm in college?



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This one is tricky and depends on your circumstances. If you go to college near your home town where most of your friends still live, it's just a matter of meeting regularly. However, if you and your friends are scattered all across the country at different colleges, you have to be more deliberate in your intention of connecting. You can make it a point to always get together during breaks or take summer break trips. You, of course, can text, call and FaceTime regularly. You should prepare for the possibility that you'll drift apart from some of your high school friends. People change quite a bit after high school. The gap between life stages widens or at least it is more visible than it was before. On the other hand, if you were unsatisfied with the friendship you had, college is a place for a fresh start.



None of my friends ever  
want to do anything.  
What should I do?

Become the organizer. Take an active role in planning things for you all to do. Generally, it's not that your friends don't want to hang out. They're just in the same position as you, looking for someone to nudge them toward an activity. Help move things along.



At the end of the day, remember to pick your friends wisely. Never compromise who you are in order to fit in. Feeling lonely and homesick are very real but normal part of college. If you are feeling lonely, it is important that you take action and get involved. Join a club, sport, or religious group. Attend campus-organized functions. Ask people to join you for a coffee or to study together. Doing these things will keep the loneliness at bay. If you find yourself struggling with depression or anxiety, don't delay in reaching out for help. There is nothing to be ashamed of and with the proper mental health care, you will be able to cope and feel better in time.

Remember that you never achieve anything by staying in your comfort zone and this includes making friends. Push yourself to be uncomfortable and to take risks. Strike up a conversation. Compliment someone on their outfit. Invite someone to join you for lunch, have coffee, or to study together. Be polite. Smile at people when you cross paths. Say hello when your eyes meet. Most importantly, just be yourself. Just as your friends in high school appreciated you for who you are, so will your college friends.

