

A Guide to Socializing at University

by Şebnem Yaren

Hi there, fellow introverts! Time to face your fears :) Today we will talk about one of the most challenging parts of starting university, socializing. No matter how positive and flourishing it may seem, moving on from one chapter of our lives to another can be hard. It is human nature to adapt and adjust to certain surroundings, so when we change what/who we are comfortable around, it inevitably creates a shock for our mind and body. We all react to this shock in different ways; some of us oversocialize to quickly get rid of the outsider feeling, while some of us move farther into their shell. Here are some tips to make your journey in a new environment a bit easier.

1. Join student clubs that interest you

When you first start at university, an orientation week is usually held in the first few weeks to introduce the school, the student clubs, the school teams, and so on. Make sure that you keep up with the schedule of the orientation week and join/learn about any sports teams or any student clubs that sound interesting. Do not be hesitant or limit yourself, go and attend meetings of as many clubs as possible, this way you can meet more like-minded people and truly figure out which clubs you want to be a member of, if any.

2. Talk to your seat-mates and fellow people from your major

Even before the social gatherings of entertainment elements of the school starts, you will attend classes and meet with your fellow major-mates. In these settings, try to be as talkative as possible; when you sit next to someone during a lecture ask them what their name and major is, because most probably they will also be struggling as a freshman and be delighted that you approached them as a friend. Do not be shy to text in group chats, this is the easiest way to approach people and let them know that you are there. Ask any questions you may have about the school to your department's group chat or join any smaller group chats that may form. You probably will have to interact with these same people until you graduate, so try to get to know them as much as possible.

3. Use meals as social get-togethers

Throughout attending your lectures and, if any, student club gatherings, you will meet a lot of people, but only on a surface level. To get to know these people more and possibly add them to your inner circle, you will need to spend more time with them. The easiest and most casual way to do this is to have meals together. For example, take that person you sat next to during a lecture in the previous bullet point, after some small talk you can ask them to have

lunch with you after the lecture. They will probably want to make friends as well so no need to be hesitant; they might even bring a few of their friends, which would create a larger social interaction for you. You can also attend any dinners/social events of different student clubs after their meetings, which would result in you meeting as many like-minded people in one setting as possible. Don't forget: people who eat together, stay together :)

In whichever way or at whatever speed you adapt and adjust to your new surroundings, it is totally valid and okay to go at your own pace. Do not force any interactions that make you uncomfortable or tire you; remember, the point is to socialize to have fun, not to wear ourselves out mentally or physically. Your first agenda is to be happy, don't forget that and good luck!