

FRESHMAN SURVIVAL GUIDE

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1. Be generous with your friendship but stingy with your trust: The friends you have back home didn't get to be your friends overnight. The people you meet in your first few weeks of school may be great, some of them may turn out to be the best friends of your life. Every freshman class has its gems and its criminals (I'm not kidding, some of them are actually criminals). Which ones are which will come clear over the next few months. Wait until you get to know them a little before you loan them your car or share all your deepest secrets with them.

2. For the first few weeks live like a monk: Monks take vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Give yourself a chance to get acclimated to your new surroundings before you start taking chances. Those chances will most likely look a lot less attractive once you're feeling more comfortable.

- **Chastity:** College may be the place where you meet the love of your life but you probably won't know that in the first week of school, especially on Friday night after a couple of drinks. It's too soon to tell who's who, give yourself some time to get used to your new surroundings before adding a boyfriend or girlfriend to the mix.
- **Poverty:** Don't blow all your money your first weekend there. People will also want to give you credit cards. JUST SAY NO! Credit can be very dangerous.
- **Obedience: GO TO CLASS!** Seems obvious, it *IS* why you're at college but you wouldn't believe how many freshmen skip their way out of school. Do a little math and figure how much it costs for you to have your butt in that chair per hour. You'll be less willing to blow one off. Save your absences for the end of the semester when you've got mono and three papers due in the same week.

3. Helpful people: Depending on your question or problem there are any number of folks to help you through, including health services, counseling, your academic advisor, and your RA—to name just a few. If you find yourself behaving in ways that are contrary to your values or like you're in the bottom of an emotional pit and can't get out-get to the counseling center! Colleges seem to have caught onto the idea that the transition can be a rocky one don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it!

4. Find out about campus ministry: Many campuses have great Catholic parishes. Campus Ministry can be a great place to meet people with similar values, get connected with service and retreat opportunities, and can be a real life line if you find yourself struggling later in the semester.

5. Be yourself: Don't forget who you are just because you're in a new place. You're still you and it's gotten you this far! Your values, your likes and dislikes, the things you're good at haven't changed, hang onto those things, especially while you're getting used to this new environment.



6. Too much of a dangerous thing...: Underage drinking is a bad idea. Don't do it. A lot of you might be tempted to tune this advice out because you've heard it so many times before... **DON'T!** The statistics on the effects of college drinking are astounding, see for yourself at <http://www.collegedrinkprevention.gov/facts/snapshot.aspx>. If you're going to be an alcoholic, this will be the year you're really going to see the signs.

7. Your Mother was right: Wash your hands...Say your prayers...Go to sleep (at night).

8. Get involved...but not too involved. Every club, activity, and association will be vying for your time. Be choosey and if you're a "joiner" be careful not to over commit yourself. College is about so much more than classes. Campus activities and organizations are a great way to expand your horizons and connect with other students who share your interests.

9. Don't be afraid, just be smart! There's a lot to think about and a lot to be cautious about, but this is also the opportunity of a lifetime. You will probably make some of the best friends of your life, you will probably fall in love, you will probably grow more and learn more and discover more about yourself than you ever thought possible. You don't have to be afraid, just be aware!

— by *Nora Bradbury-Haehl*

BustedHalo.com is an online magazine for young adult spiritual seekers that publishes feature stories on the intersection of faith, culture, politics, and life. Based in the Catholic tradition and sponsored by the Paulist Fathers, the site is also a source of information about prayer as well as national listings of young adult spiritual resources.