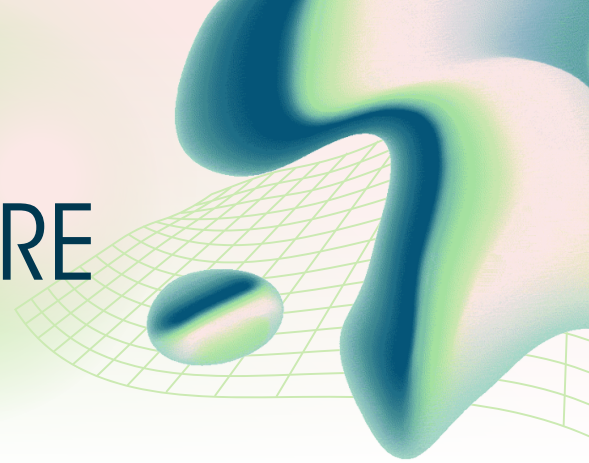


NAVIGATING THE UNIVERSITY ADVENTURE

A Comprehensive Guide to Thriving Away from Home



Preparing for University Life and Living Away from Home

Starting university is an exciting and transformative time in a student's life. It heralds the onset of a new chapter filled with opportunities for personal growth, academic exploration, and memorable experiences. Although embarking on the journey to university is both an exciting and daunting experience as you prepare to live away from home, there are several aspects to consider that will help ease the transition. We hope, at Bishop Luffa Sixth Form we have prepared you for this next step in your journey but this guide aims to provide comprehensive advice and tips to ensure you are well-prepared for this new chapter in your life.

If you're reading this then you've received your A-Level results and have confirmed your place at the University of choice or you may have gone through clearing, whichever route you've taken, IT'S EXCITING!



Once your place is confirmed and you know where you are going and what you are doing there will be lots of things to do and your university will communicate all of this to you. Make sure you read through ALL of this thoroughly as there may be forms to fill in and return to confirm student loans, university fees, organising accommodation in halls of residence etc. If you haven't already done so get a file and start to organise documents and a planner (digital or paper) to add important dates to. You won't remember and you won't know everything so be organised from the start.

Transitioning from Sixth Form to university can also be overwhelming, especially for first-year students. Carefully planning for university life is essential for a seamless adjustment. This article offers a comprehensive guide on preparing for university so you can settle into your university journey.

Academic Preparation

Research Your Course and University

- **Course Overview:** Familiarise yourself with your course curriculum, including the core subjects and electives available. Understanding course expectations can help you get a head start on your studies.
- **University Resources:** Explore your university's website to learn about available resources such as libraries, study centers, and academic support services.
- **Independent Study:** Develop strong independent study habits. This includes setting aside regular time for reading and reviewing course materials on your own, which is crucial for academic success at university. Even more so than when you were at Sixth Form you will have more time for independent study - use it wisely!

Time Management Skills

- **Create a Schedule:** Develop a study timetable to manage your time effectively. Allocate time for classes, studying, assignments, and breaks as well as all the other exciting opportunities that you will be faced with.
- **Set Goals:** Establish both short-term and long-term academic goals. This will keep you stay motivated and focused on your studies.



Financial Management

Finances

More so than ever you will need to be aware of your finances and with access to digital banking this is so much easier now. You may be fortunate that you have parents or carers who can help you finance your way through university, but for many students they will have to get a part-time job to help fund their time at university.

Setting up a student bank can provide numerous benefits, including larger overdrafts and perks like railcards - there are lots out there so research what works for you. You may need an over draft facility as they can be a lifesaver when you're low on money. However, don't treat your overdraft as free extra money to spend as you will need to pay it back eventually, **it's important to use it wisely for times when you might really need it (maybe that safety net)** and you don't want to have used it all up unnecessarily. These aren't essential though, but they're certainly helpful if you need it. Equally, some student know that having an overdraft would be too tempting to just spend and so don't have one - think about what you want and discuss with parents/carers at home.



Budgeting

Creating a budget before you go to university, so you don't spend all of your money at once might sound boring, but it is a great way to keep track of your money and restrict unnecessary spending. You could set yourself a spending limit each week which you can't go over. With digital banking you could transfer a fixed amount each week. Doing this periodically over a shorter time frame really helps to micromanage your money and cut out unnecessary spending. Remember three Costa Lattes on average a week at £4.30 each, costs £12.90 every week and £670.80 a year! With that in mind:

- **Create a Budget:** Outline your expected income (e.g., student loans, part-time jobs) and expenses (e.g., rent, food, utilities, insurance, mobile phone, music subscription). This helps in tracking your spending and avoiding financial stress.
- **Emergency Fund:** Everyone thinks 'it'll never happen to me' but you just never know so without fail set aside a small amount monthly for unexpected expenses (a flat tyre, a chance to travel somewhere etc). If at the end of university you've not needed to use it, then it's been a small way to save money towards celebrating your graduation!
- **Student Discounts:** Take advantage of student discounts on travel, food, and other expenses.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

- **Explore Options:** Research scholarships, grants, and bursaries that you may be eligible for. Many universities offer financial aid for students in need whether you are a Young

Carer or if you're the first in your family to go to university. There may be bursaries for those of you living at home and commuting to university.

- **Application Deadlines:** Keep track of application deadlines to ensure you do not miss out on financial opportunities. You'll really be kicking yourself if you miss that deadline for a £3000 grant or commuter fees help.
- If you don't have a car and travel by train look into student rail cards or student bus passes.

Living Arrangements

If you're anything like me when I started university, meeting new people can be intimidating, but it's an essential part of university life. Initially, start by talking to your flatmates, even if it puts you outside of your comfort zone. Maybe suggest going to welcome events together, you are going to be sharing the next year with them! Don't worry if you don't immediately click with your flatmates or make friends; there are many other opportunities to meet people. You'll eventually meet new people and grow into friendships.



Accommodation Choices

- **On-campus Housing:** Sometimes called PBSAs (Purpose Built Student Accommodation) or Halls of Residence - look at the options. Often the most convenient option for first-year students is to live in university accommodation or houses owned by them, explore the options. This option usually provides easy access to university facilities and a chance to meet other students.
- **Off-campus Housing:** If you prefer more independence, look for apartments or shared houses. Consider factors like location (can you realistically walk to university and the student union!), cost (does the cost include all the bills, cleaning etc), and accessibility to public transport. Will there be a quiet place for you to study in your room?

Roommate Considerations

When you move in there are still things to consider:

- **Communication:** Establish clear communication with your roommate(s) about shared responsibilities (keeping the kitchen clean, cleaning the bathroom, use of the kitchen etc), noise levels, and personal boundaries.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Be prepared to address conflicts amicably and compromise when necessary.

Travel

- As a student travelling from campus to town or if you live in a town and travel around then look into bus passes, rail card or even travelling around by bike. Invest in a good helmet and a strong lock as well as good lights and high vis when travelling around at night - it's important to stay safe.

Kit List

Your room (in university accommodation) will usually be kitted out with some basics, including a bed and mattress, a wardrobe, desk and chair. But you need to pack the things that make it feel like home. You should take:

- **Duvet, duvet cover and sheets** - Take a few of each so you don't get caught short on laundry day - and check what size you need!
- **Mattress protector**
- **Pillows and pillowcases**
- **Things to spruce up your room** - Maybe a rug or some cushions.
- **Decorations to make you feel more at home** - Photo frames, your favourite teddy (no judgement here) and fairy lights are some examples.
- **Photos, posters (and Command Strips!) - you won't be able to drill into the walls!**
- **Stationery and books**
- **Laptop, chargers, portable speakers and whatever other tech you need** - Make sure you do your research to get the right laptop that you can take to the library and lectures, and has enough memory for all the years of your degree.
- **Purse, cards, ID, passport, important documents etc**
- **Bags** - A small one for nights out, plus a bag big enough to fit your laptop and books in for uni.
- **Clothes, shoes, and coat hangers**
- **A TV if you want one** - But most people use their laptop or a PC monitor (remember to get your TV licence sorted).
- **An airer (heated if you can stretch to it) and laundry basket**
- **Medicines** - Paracetamol is a fresher's must-have! Also, remember to register with your local GP and check your vaccination are up-to-date.
- **A bedroom bin** - Double-check, as this might be provided!

TOP TIP - Don't pack your entire room off to uni - you'll want to come back and visit home so don't take it all! check your tenancy agreement with your accommodation to see what is included.



Kitchen

Most halls provide a toaster and a kettle (in addition to your oven), but check what you get before you go. Many won't provide things like microwaves or air fryers, and you might want to club in together with your flatmates for this once you're a bit more settled. The essentials you'll need are:

- **A few mugs and glasses**
- **A couple of saucepans, frying pans and a wok** - depends on what you like to cook
- **A chopping board and some baking trays**
- **Cutlery and some chopping knives**
- **Plates and bowls**
- **Bin bags, sandwich bags, foil, and cling film**
- **Any utensils you like using** - For example, wooden spoons, a spatula, corkscrew and pizza wheel.
- **Tea towels**
- **Tupperware**
- **Cupboard essentials** - Teabags, baked beans, and pasta are all good to get you through the first few days!



Supplies

Pots, pans, cutlery, cooking utensils, plates, baking trays, lunch box, bed linen, towels - you will have to buy all these things when you live away from home. There are some companies that do it all for you like. Googling University starter kits will bring up lots of options and all done for you if you don't want to go shopping for it all.

Living at Home whilst at University

You don't have to move away from home to go to university. You can stay at home and just go to uni for lectures or to use the library.

There are lots of advantages to living at home while you study. You save money on rent and get to live with your family in an area you already know. You don't need to update your contact details with services like the bank, or find a new doctor or dentist. It's easier to stay in touch with school friends and keep up with hobbies and clubs you joined before your studies. And you can enjoy home comforts like sleeping in your own bed, eating home cooked meals and spending time with family and pets.

But it's not always a walk in the park. Living at home while you're at uni can be difficult. So you should consider the pros and cons before you decide where to live.

Challenges

- Depending on where home is, travelling to uni can take up a big chunk of your time. You might need to leave social events early to catch the bus or train home. You'll have to budget for getting to uni if you don't live in walking distance but some universities will allow you to apply for a commuting grant - research your particular university.
- Living with parents or guardians can be stressful and you won't have as much independence as if you moved away. Will they mind you getting in late, staying over at a friend's?
- You'll be entitled to a different loan amount - will that have an impact on your decision?
- Some of your 'home' friends may move away to university, so it might get lonely at home.



Study

Whether you're studying via distance learning or living away from campus and traveling to uni for your lecturers and seminars, you need to consider how you'll study during your course.

Studying away from campus

- Many students do some of their studying away from campus and there are plenty of resources to help you get the most out of revising at home.
- Hopefully you had a designated space whilst at university but if not then the dining room table isn't going to cut it now. If possible build a study space and have a desk, table, or area in your house available to you whenever you want to study. Keep your notes and work here, and ask everyone in the household to respect your space.

Studying on campus

- You can study on campus between lectures. Explore your university's study spaces and find out what you need to bring with you to revise – do you need to bring your laptop to campus every day, or can you use a university computer suite or borrow a laptop?
- Check the opening hours of your university library and other buildings to find a space that suits you. Most study spaces are available to all students but you may need to reserve particular labs, software or equipment to complete course-specific work. You can also book group study rooms at the Library. Find out what your options are.



Travel Options

- You should check your travel options before you decide to live at home during your studies.
- Depending on how far you are from your campus you could consider cycling to uni, or take public transport like buses or trains. Most university cities have limited parking so it's usually best to leave your car at home. If you do decide to drive make sure you know where you can park and any fees you'll need to pay.
- You'll receive your study timetable before you start your degree. You'll need to bring your resources and revision notes for all your daily classes if you don't have time to go home between lectures.

Whether you live at home or not make sure you join a society and make friends that way, getting involved with things at university will ensure you don't feel isolated.

Personal Well-being

Mental Health

- **University Counseling Services:** Familiarise yourself with the mental health resources available on campus. Most universities offer free counseling services.

- **Self-care Routine:** Develop a routine that includes activities you enjoy and that help you relax, whether it's exercise, reading, or meditation.



Physical Health

- **Health Insurance:** Ensure you have adequate health insurance coverage, especially if you are studying in a different country.
- **Doctors and Dentist:** It may be worth registering with a doctor locally. Dentists are hard enough to find so maybe stick with your current dentist and book those check ups when you are home during the holiday's. If you don't intend to make it back for the holiday's then start that search for one as soon as possible.
- **Healthy Lifestyle:** Aim for a balanced diet, regular exercise, and sufficient sleep to maintain your energy levels and overall well-being. You won't be able to afford a Costa coffee every day and a take away every night - remember you have to budget now!



Staying Safe

- **Campus Safety Resources:** Learn about safety measures and resources on campus. This includes knowing emergency contact numbers and understanding how to access campus security services.
- **Personal Safety:** Stay aware of your surroundings, especially when walking alone at night. Try to walk home the safest most well lit way and text your friend when you get home saying your safe.
- **Drugs and Alcohol:** You've had the talk about drugs and alcohol - you know the risks. The best advice is don't take any drugs and limit alcohol - you have to study the next day and

there will be no parent or carer getting you up for your lecture! Protect your drink when you're out - never leave it unattended.



Social Life

Homesickness is a shared experience for many in the first couple of months and it will arguably be the toughest part of your university journey, but there are ways to manage it. Of course, keeping busy with new friends, societies and university work can help distract you from missing home. However, you will still occasionally find yourself not knowing what to do. Schedule regular calls with family and friends from home to stay connected. Having this scheduled routine may help ease this transition and don't be scared to talk to your flatmates or friends as they will likely be feeling the same way. The feeling usually fades as you settle into your new environment, you'll eventually settle in and the next thing you know you'll blink and the best three or four years have flown by!



Making Friends

- **Orientation Programs:** Attend orientation events and activities to meet fellow students and learn more about your university.
- **Join Clubs and Societies:** Participate in clubs or societies that align with your interests. This is a great way to meet like-minded individuals and expand your social circle.
- **Maintain Old Friendships:** Keep in touch with friends from Sixth Form. Regular catch-ups through video calls or social media can help you maintain those bonds and it's a good

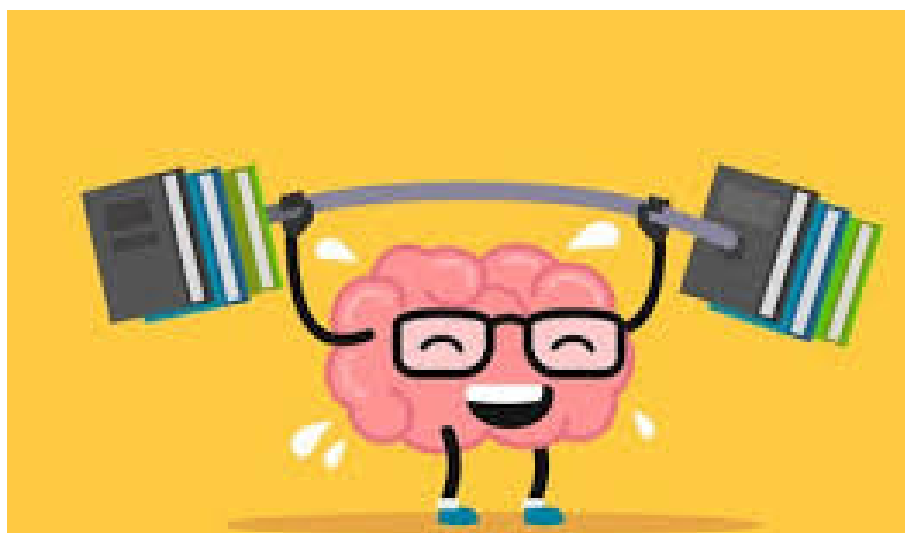
way to get to have mini breaks and go and visit your friends at their university.

Balancing Social and Academic Life

- **Prioritise:** While it's important to socialise, ensure it doesn't negatively impact your studies. Find a balance that works for you.
- **Time Management:** Use your schedule to allocate time for both academic responsibilities and social activities.



Practical Skills



Practical skills like cooking for yourself and washing your clothes, changing your bed linen and cleaning are all things that are your responsibility now. It is important to clean your room/student accommodation regularly. It's part of your tenancy agreement to look after your accommodation and keep your space clean, and it also prevents dirt from building up. Inspections are usually conducted throughout the year, so staying on top of this can save added stress as it is harder to remove stains and dirt the longer you leave them. Basic housekeeping can make your life much easier and make your living space nicer and more comfortable to live in.

Cooking and Nutrition

- **Basic Cooking Skills:** Learn to prepare simple, nutritious meals. This can save money and ensure you maintain a healthy diet.
- **Meal Planning:** Plan your meals for the week to avoid spontaneous and often unhealthy food choices and can reduce food waste.

Household Management

- **Laundry and Cleaning:** Learn how to do laundry and maintain a clean living space. Establish a routine to manage these tasks efficiently.

Staying Connected

Keeping in Touch with Family and Friends

- **Regular Communication:** Schedule regular phone calls or video chats with family and friends back home. This helps maintain strong relationships despite the distance.
- **Social Media and Messaging Apps:** Use these tools to stay updated on each other's lives and share your experiences.

Building a Support Network

- **Seek Support:** Don't hesitate to seek support from university services, mentors, or friends when needed.
- **Be Open:** Engage with new people and opportunities to build a supportive network in your new environment.



In Conclusion ... Embrace the Challenge

By taking the time to prepare for university life and living away from home, you can make the transition smoother and more enjoyable. Remember, this is an exciting opportunity for

personal growth and independence. Embrace the challenges and make the most of your university experience!



Please note that all information in this guide is gathered from across the WWW and various organisations and is by no means the only information out there but you will find more information on Google. Please do your own research and use this document as a platform to get you started.