

Making friends & meeting people

Making friends and meeting people at university can be challenging for students for a variety of reasons. Settling into a new environment, adjusting to academic requirements, or being around new people in an unfamiliar environment may make some individuals feel uncomfortable or lacking in confidence. However, attending university is a great opportunity to meet new people, make lasting friendships and to create networks for your career. In addition, students who actively engage in making friends and social networks are more likely to feel connected to others and experience successful study outcomes.

'but it's hard to make friends'

Friendships are 'made' – they don't just automatically happen. They take time and effort to grow.

The more you practise making friends and meeting people the easier it will become. You may know people who seem to make friends easily... the secret is that they are working hard at improving their skills in making friends and can see the benefits of putting in the time and effort to grow relationships. It's normal to feel a little stressed or worried when meeting new people and making new friends.

How to do it!

Prepare to make friends and be 'friend ready' – be open to the idea of meeting new people and prepare yourself for the idea of working on making friends as a skill. Be open to social opportunities with others and make room for friendships that don't work.

- Show up – "80% of success is showing up" (Woody Allen).
- Smile and say hi to people. Mere exposure to people will enhance your perceived friendliness and likeability to others.
- Remember people's names when speaking with them.
- Say yes to invitations and opportunities to attend events and to socialise.
- Attend orientation and social activities organised by the University.
- Check out interest groups and clubs that you could join. Sports groups, interest groups, study groups, the gym, student committees.
- Can't find a group that interests you? Make your own group.
- Get involved in volunteering or peer mentoring.
- Join social networking groups online in your local area or at University.
- Increase your social network by making friends with the 'friends of friends'.
- Relax – don't be too pushy, or try too hard or rush things; building quality friendships take time.
- At uni it is up to you to make new connections and friendships. Your study success depends on it!

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Learn | Grow | Flourish



Ways to enhance social skills and get past shyness

- Believe in yourself and the qualities you may bring to a friendship. Think about how you can be a good friend.
- Listen to others, ask the person questions about themselves and be genuinely interested. Don't feel like you have to talk the whole time.
- Check your body language – are you closed off or open to the experience; do you look confident or shy? Ask someone close to you what they have noticed about your body language when you meet someone new.
- Be true to yourself; be authentic and real. People will then like you for who you are.
- Try not to talk about others behind their backs; respect friends' privacy. Don't engage in gossip. It will make you seem untrustworthy.
- Speak positively about others and your experiences – it will make you likeable and easy to be around.
- Work on your own self-awareness. Be aware of who you are, your values and beliefs, likes and dislikes.
- Talk to a counsellor about ways to improve your social skills and strategies for networking and socialising.

International students

Making friends and meeting people may be exceptionally challenging if you are an international student. The sooner you can spend time with others in your new environment, the more settled in and connected you will feel.

The best way to do this is to attend all events organised by the International Office and get to know as many other students as possible. You may not feel like you have much in common with your new friends but it is important to remain open to trying new things and doing social activities that you may not normally do

For example: be open to trying new foods, going out to different venues, going to the beach, playing outdoor sports, etc.

See the Southern Cross University Tip sheet on Adjusting to Uni for more ideas.

Social anxiety or social phobia is a fear of social situations that can be so bad that a person avoids social settings altogether. If you find yourself avoiding situations and this is negatively impacting on your day-to-day life and studies, please make an appointment to see the free and confidential Student Counsellor.

Southern Cross University Student Health Service, Counselling

Lismore: 02 6626 9131

Coffs Harbour: 02 6659 3263

Gold Coast: 07 5589 3252

The Hotel School Sydney: 02 8249 3200

Southern Cross University Out of Hours

Crisis Line: 1300 782 676

All other areas: 1800 111 890

scu.edu.au/studentssupportservices

www.scu.edu.au