

# The First Year Experience

[00:00:12] Sid

G'day, welcome to Western Sydney University. I'm Sid Sharma and I've got things every student should know. Today, you're going to hear some wisdom that will put you miles ahead of your peers, from the best way to make friends, to how to juggle life and studying. You'll hear from a couple of students about five things they learned in their first year at Western.

I'm hanging out here with Pallavi and Mamun. Why don't you introduce yourselves?

[00:00:36] Mamun

Hello everyone, my name is Mamun. I'm a second year accounting student studying undergrad. I'm also an Ask Us Assistant, so I take every question from every new student in this uni.

[00:00:47] Pallavi

Hi, my name is Pallavi Verma and I'm from India. I have recently completed Masters of Information and Communication Technology Advanced and I currently work as a business analyst at the western Sydney University

[00:00:58] Sid

Pallavi. Why don't you tell me a little bit [00:01:00] about your experiences in your first year?

[00:01:02] Pallavi

Since like I mentioned I'm from India, education system in Australia is very different from what I have experienced in India and I always say it took me one semester to understand education system in life in University after coming to Australia. My life as a first year student at the Western has been amazing, but yes, it took me a while to understand and to settle into this culture.

[00:01:30] Sid

Mamun. What were your first impressions when you got to Western Sydney University?

[00:01:34] Mamun

I was blown away. Simply blown away by, by my campus, which is Parra City, which I also caught my second home as well. And so I just showed up. I'm like, wow, I'm gonna be here for three years better get used to this place and I became a pro at navigating Parra City campus.

[00:01:53] Sid

Well, awesome. Let's get stuck into number one.

Number one. Stay safe. [00:02:00] Do you guys have any tips on how to, I guess stay safe or just be smart when you're you know, moving through the place?

[00:02:09] Pallavi

Yes. I'm happy to share one which I often do. So I generally share my location with my maternal Uncle and Aunt. So whenever I reach University or reach work or wherever I am, I just send them a text message so that they are aware where I am. It gives me like a sense of comfort and they are also relaxed that like a daughter or niece is at a safe place in we are aware where she is. So I think it's very good to share our location or just letting someone, maybe friend or family member updated whatever what we are doing and where are we so, I think it's really good and important like from my point of view.

[00:02:44] Sid

Yeah. Yeah, definitely just good communication around that kind of thing. Right? Like it doesn't matter if you're an international student or if you're from here. I mean, that's just good practice wherever you are, right?

[00:02:53] Pallavi

Yes.

[00:02:55] Sid

Letting people know where you are you know, how you're moving through the world.

[00:02:57] Pallavi

I just want to add on one thing here. It's not staying safe [00:03:00] only when we are traveling in public transport or when we are in University. It's like safety when we are on beaches. We should swim between red and yellow flags, because being in a different country, we are not aware of the rules or what are some of the things which we should or which we need to follow. So I think it's better University also provide such information at the orientation day, so I think

being a first year student whatever Western fairs or Orientation days University arranges, students should attend those - they are they do provide a lot of good information.

[00:03:36] Sid

Number two. Making friends.

[00:03:39] Pallavi

I think whenever your regular and attending tutorials or classes, you get good friends to make so I think being active and class and attending all the tutorials or classes gives good opportunity to make new friends.

[00:03:56] Sid

That's really interesting, because I know that a lot of people when they go to class there you know, especially in [00:04:00] that first year they can be so kind of you know, they're in a new environment, they're studying a subject that they've never, you know, studied before and it can be a really kind of frightening experience especially to throw in having to make friends into that mix. Mamun, what was your experience of that? I mean, did you feel all those things?

[00:04:16] Mamun

Yes. I've - I'm quite familiar with that feeling. The first few thoughts that actually did run through my head and my first day, 'who am I, where am I? What am I doing here?' That was the most in certain moments like of my first day at Uni. My friends, well when I met them we're doing the same class, showed up awkwardly sitting on one table. "Hello, my name is Mamun. You can call me M, if that's easier." It's like and to make friends, well you have to be open more accommodating, you can't have opinions on anyone - not everyone's the same as you, not everyone had same childhood as you so you have to be open and that's how you build a synergy with them. Get on everyone's level, everyone gets on your level. Everything goes smooth.

[00:04:58] Sid

So how do you be open? What [00:05:00] does that look like?

[00:05:01] Mamun

Open, like be open to opinions mostly.

[00:05:04] Pallavi

I just want to add on to this thing said. Mamun raised a very good point that we have to be open, the reason being in Australia, we can experience people from multiple cultures, from multiple countries, religions and various cultural backgrounds. I think we should not be judgmental toward what other person is doing, thinking or saying, we should be open in terms of their values and just respect whatever they're doing or saying.

[00:05:30] Sid

Yeah, definitely and I think like the first step is just sitting down next to someone and saying "hey, my name's Pallavi, nice to meet you", you know.

[00:05:37] Pallavi

You're right.

[00:05:38] Sid

Yeah and taking that because everyone's uncomfortable, but it's just, you know, it's such a good environment to make friends. And, and why do you think that it was so important for you guys to make friends and participate in your tutorials in making friends in your first year?

[00:05:51] Pallavi

Being an international student, we have traveled so far away from our parents. I consider myself lucky, I live here with my maternal uncle and aunt [00:06:00] which give me a sense of belongingness and family, but I still believe that living away from parents is a very different and a difficult experience. It is really important that you interact with local people here so that you can get well with other things and you can get to know about various opportunities like working in Australia, how to engage well in terms of study, so I think it's very important to interact with people.

[00:06:26] Mamun

Well, I'd say it's more survival.

[00:06:29] Sid

How so?

[00:06:31] Mamun

You find people, the right people, you build a team, you pull yourselves together, pull each other up work as a team, ace uni like "yeah, we did it boys and girls".

[00:06:47] Sid

Number three. Know your assessments.

[00:06:50] Mamun

Your assessment modules - that is very important to get familiar with. If you are not familiar with assessment module, you will be in trouble later on.

[00:06:58] Sid

So what's an assessment module?

[00:07:00] Mamun

Your assessment modules, like all your assessment tasks. So you'll have tests, quizzes, which most of them will be online, face-to-face, in class. So that's what mostly assessment tasks are.

[00:07:10] Sid

So basically anything that's going to get you marks. Right? Those are all assessment modules

[00:07:14] Mamun

Your treasure.

[00:07:14] Sid

What was your process of figuring out assessment modules in how to kind of balance that with your life?

[00:07:19] Mamun

Compartmentalising everything.

[00:07:22] Sid

Okay!

[00:07:23] Mamun

The Uni gives out session planners, weekly planners and daily planners. So you plan everything out. This is how this is this the day I'm going to do this, this this is due that day and that's how you work everything out and you just do it. Just hope to God everything goes well.

[00:07:39] Pallavi

So, University provides a lot of facilities to its students for example on Library website assessment planner is available. We can track that this is our assignment, it's due on this time, we can complete our searching at this time, we can prepare first draft, second draft at this time. So it is very helpful. And the second thing which I have been doing is preparing a time planner. [00:08:00] This is my assignment or this is my work does I have to do because along with my academics, I have been engaged with various events outside the University.

[00:08:10] Sid

Basically staying organised right? And like knowing all the different moving parts of University, but then all the other things that you want to do in addition to, which is a, I guess a really good segue into the next thing that I guess I want to talk about.

[00:08:27] Sid

Number four - balancing uni and life. What was it like for you guys having a life outside of university here, you know, like what did you do on the weekends or like when you did make those friends? How did you make those plans? And you know, what kind of insights do you have for that?

[00:08:42] Mamun

Mostly I spend my weekends hiking or reading. Go on really long hikes, because it helps me reflect on certain things and get in touch with my natural side.

[00:08:52] Sid

How did you find out about hikes? I mean, I know Sydney has some really beautiful parklands and stuff. But how did you discover that that was something a) that you wanted to [00:09:00] do and b) where to go?

[00:09:01] Mamun

It was introduced to me by one of the Uni programs. So I got to know about most of the Natural Parks, waterfalls and hiking trails around New South Wales, and I realised that it's kind of a pain to reach them.

[00:09:15] Sid

Ha. Ha. Ha. So what did you do about that?

[00:09:16] Mamun

Hmm. I was like, all right, if you want this, I want this so sure why not. Let's go through all the trouble just to get there. Probably I won't regret it. I'm sure I won't regret it and I didn't regret it.

[00:09:30] Sid

Pallavi. How about you?

[00:09:31] Pallavi

So talking about my weekends and holidays. I do believe that students need a break after studying for like five days a week. So talking about my weekends and holidays, I'm as I mention, I live with my maternal Uncle so I have been very fortunate that we generally visit city like on weekends and I have also been to University trips on weekends like to Blue Mountains, and to various other cities and I have - I love spending time with nature [00:10:00] and myself. So I generally spend my weekends on doing yoga and dancing which I do love the most and I have also been to various cities like Brisbane and Canberra. So it's good to go out in a different city and experience a different environment.

[00:10:19] Sid

Number five. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Getting around University, finding your classes or getting around Sydney, sometimes you need to ask for help, right? But that can also be really scary. How did you get around that? I mean, did you just jump in there and go you know what? I'm really stuck and I need someone to help me out.

[00:10:35] Mamun

So I was approached like, by volunteers on my first day. I was like very confused like showed up and like "where am I supposed to go? Where is this? Where do I? Where's Student Central?" And volunteers just showed up to me is like "do you need help? Are you alright?" I'm like "no, I need to find Student Central and make my student ID" then like one of the volunteers actually

took me all the way to Student Central then afterwards he gave me a whole tour of the campus.  
[00:11:00] I was like, wow, simply blown away by it.

[00:11:03] Sid

I mean people are really friendly right? Like they will help you out if you need it. What about your experiences Pallavi?

[00:11:09] Pallavi

I must admit, I have experienced very positive side of people in Australia and from that, I always say that Australia is full of positive and vibrant people and it's quite okay that if someone need help and we ask. I remember getting lost at places whenever I'm alone and I enter the nearby shop and asking "I think I need your help. Can you tell me where is this street? Where is this shop?" I think we should be open towards receiving help and visa versa, so if someone need help we should be open to give help.

[00:11:42] Sid

Yeah. Definitely. I mean like Google helps, but it's not a person.

[00:11:47] Pallavi

Yes, you're right.

[00:11:54] Sid

So there you have it - five ways you can start settling into life in Sydney just that little bit quicker. If you have any more questions, [00:12:00] head to [westernsydney.edu.au](http://westernsydney.edu.au) and make sure you check out the other episodes. Thanks for listening. I'm Sid Sharma. See you next time.