

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Mental Health & Wellbeing

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How to make new friends

Transitioning from high school to university is an endeavour, and it can be overwhelming when starting a journey in a new, big environment. When entering this next phase in your life, you may want to make new connections with the people around you. You may be wondering; how do I make more friends?

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What is friendship?

Friendship comes in many shapes and forms, and the meaning of friendship can vary between person to person. Friendship is typically viewed as part of one's support network, and can bring great meaning and memories, especially during university life. Creation of these connections provide a sense of belonging that can even extend into life after uni.

Friendships take time and can shape who we are as a person, so it is important to understand the value of it, and the meaning behind these human interactions. Friendship is based on a mutual recognition of the value of each person, and having the desire to want what is best for you and your friends. The quality of a true friendship is to understand and to be understood.

It is important to remember that friends can serve different purposes, situations, and interests. Having different types of friends is okay and normal, and can make our lives exponentially fuller and richer.

Types of friendship:

- ▶ Acquaintances
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Close friends
- ▶ Best friends

Friendship ultimately brings us happiness and can contribute to one's concept of their self-confidence and self-worth. Friendships bring us joy and a sense of care/belonging that can be particularly harnessed when we need it most. They can help us cope with stress and anxiety, providing experiences to understand one another better and even deepening existing bonds. Friendships can increase our sense of community and purpose and can play a significant role in improving your overall health.

Strategies to make new friends

- ▶ **How to start a conversation / keep it going:** Sometimes it is very difficult for someone to just walk up and start a conversation. Try having some ice-breaker lines prepared in your mind. You can always start with things that you have in common. For example, if you want to start a conversation with someone on campus, you can ask about their university life, what are they studying or what year are they in. You can train yourself by trying to talk to someone you trust
- ▶ **Be curious:** It is important to stay curious and try out new things. Try breaking your regular routine and joining different university events. Do something unusual to you. You may find it difficult to step out of your comfort zone. However, making friends can be dependent on who you meet and how often you see someone – the more time you get to meet with different people, the more likely you can get some new friends.
- ▶ **Be yourself and find your people:** People are drawn to others who are self-assured and at ease with themselves. Being aware of your social boundaries and what truly makes you happy can help you come off as genuine. It is also important to keep your hobby and find people that are in line with your interests. Try joining clubs and societies in the school and meet people with similar interests.
- ▶ **Make friends at university or workplace:** As a university student, the school and your workplace must be the place we have the most social interaction with others. You can try to engage in talking with your co-workers, classmates, or groupmates in group projects. You can try joining more special events organized by the workplace or the institution to provide yourself with more chances to make friends.

How to make new friends at university

- ▶ **Getting involved:**
 - Check out [WesternLife](#), in this virtual community, you can find all sorts of activities, clubs or societies. From joining clubs, volunteering, playing sports, attending exciting events; events for your well-being, or seeking help. You can explore a lot more! Make sure you follow the counselling team on WesternLife where we provide workshops and activities which focus on learning new skills and meeting new people.
 - You can also check out [MATES](#). It is a peer mentoring program for commencing and first-year students which helps you make friends with other new students and begin building your social network. Sometimes MATES organize speed friending events, you can email mates@westernsydney.edu.au from your student account for more information.
 - You can also go along to a [PASS](#) session to study with other students in your units.
- ▶ **Deepen your casual connections:** Is there someone you already knew? The classmate who always sits next to you in class? The friend of a friend who seems to have a lot in common with you? They could all be your potential friend. If there are people already in your life that you'd like to make friends with, invest in

those relationships and try to deepen those connections. Try asking them out for coffee or tea. If they are willing to join you, there is a good chance that you will become friends.

- ▶ **Join local events:** Most Australian cities and towns organise various food festivals, exhibitions, and other educational events during the year. You can check out the local events happening in your area and visit them and make friends with locals there. You can check out different major events on [this website](#). As Australia is a very diverse country, you can participate in a lot of different cultural events.
- ▶ **Student Village Activities:** If you are living in a student village, there are often plenty of activities held by the village. Pizza nights, movie nights, barbecues, and some other events in the common room. It is a great opportunity for you to meet someone who is also from another country and is adjusting to life in Australia. If you are planning to move into the student village, you can check out Campus living villages [here](#).
- ▶ **Volunteering:** Doing volunteer work can be a great opportunity to do something good for others and for ourselves. You can meet people who also have the common value of helping others. You can check out [Go volunteer](#) and [NSW volunteering](#) to check out some volunteer work in Australia.
- ▶ **Sign up for a social sport, hobby club, or class:** Put yourself out there and join clubs or groups where you're likely to meet people with shared interests. This could be anything from social tennis at your local courts to a book club at your local library. The best part is, you already know you have something in common to talk about, so striking up a conversation will be a lot easier.
- ▶ **Join Facebook groups based on your interests:** Facebook groups and online forums are other great ways to connect with like-minded people. Here, you can get involved in discussions on just about any niche you can think of. It can also provide the opportunity to meet other group members in person – just remember to **be safe** when meeting up with people you've met online.
- ▶ **Go to your place of worship:** If you hold a religion, the place of worship is a good place for you not only to connect to your faith/spirituality but also to connect with other people. There are many religious places you can visit to pray and make friends. You can talk to the organisations about how you can make friends there and attend the events organized by these places. You may also want to check out our school resources about chaplaincy and inclusive communities [here](#).

University Support

If making new friends is affecting your study or you want support to optimise your study then the WSU [Counselling Service](#), [Disability Service](#), or [Student Welfare Service](#) may be able to help.

▶ **WSU [Counselling Service](#)**.

Students can access free, short term, confidential counselling services. Face to face, Zoom or phone appointments can be made by telephoning 1300 668 370. Our office hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am - 4:30pm. Alternatively, or email counselling@westernsydney.edu.au

▶ **WSU [Disability Service](#)**.

The Disability Service is free to access with Disability Advisors assisting students to meet their full potential. If you have a diagnosed physical, psychological or medical condition that impacts on your studies, you may be eligible for an [Academic Integration Plan \(AIP\)](#), developed by the Disability Service. Contact the Disability Service on 1300 668 370, email disability@westernsydney.edu.au or make contact via [WesternNow](#).

▶ **WSU [Welfare Service](#)**.

Academic, Personal and Financial Hardship, International Support and Accommodation: 1300 668 370 or via [WesternNow](#).

▶ **Multifaith [Chaplaincy](#)**

Multifaith Chaplaincy can provide confidential conversation and care, support for stress management and anxiety with links to religious groups and faith communities. For more information, please call Daniel Jantos on 0402771543 or email d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au.

▶ **WesternLife**

[WesternLife](#) - Join thousands of students at Your Virtual Community to share experiences, learn new things, connect with new friends, and engage with events or discussions that interest you!

▶ **Disruption to Studies**

Consider applying for [Disruption to Studies](#) and [Requests for Extension](#) if you feel as though your studies have been significantly impacted.

▶ **Deferred Exams**

[Deferred Exam](#) – You can apply for a Deferred Exam no later than 5.00 pm on the second working day after your scheduled exam if you are unable to attend a final exam due to serious illness, misadventure or other exceptional circumstances beyond your control. Submit a [Student Form](#) and attach supporting documents online for application.

- ▶ **Withdraw Without Academic Penalty**

[Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty](#) is an option available after the Census Date of the teaching term provided that you meet eligibility.

- ▶ **Leave of Absence**

A [Leave of Absence](#) is a temporary break from studying. Once you have completed one or more subjects in your enrolled program, you can apply for a Leave of Absence. A Leave of Absence can be taken as either six or twelve months. The maximum amount of leave you can take during your program is twelve months. Please note, you must submit your application before the relevant census date

If you are considering any of these options, please reach out to the counselling service for support and guidance. If you are an international student, please make sure you seek advice particularly if you are considering withdrawing without penalty or taking a leave of absence as these may have [implications for your visa conditions](#).

Community Support

Community resources:

- ▶ [Lifeline](#) (24 hours crisis counselling) - **13 11 14**
Lifeline SMS Counselling Service - between 6pm- Midnight you can text **0477 13 11 14** and somebody will text you back! You can find more information [here](#).
- ▶ **Mental Health Telephone Access Line**
[Mental Health Telephone Access Line](#) - 1800 011 511

This Mental Health Line is staffed by mental health professionals that can help and provide you advice about your needs and discuss referrals to local mental health services. It is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Groups/community pages

- ▶ [Hidden Sydney](#) showcases events in the city that are exciting, new experiences that can be fun activities for you and new friends to explore
- ▶ [Foura](#) is a community that arranges hangouts for you and three other like-minded people who want to meet new people. Foura groups it's members with people who share similar values and interests. Outings range from cafes, bars, and activities that are outdoors or tunes into your creative juices, and more!

Articles

- ▶ ABC
 - Friendships can be the best part of uni. This is where they start
 - <https://www.abc.net.au/everyday/making-friends-at-univeristy/11923050>

Resources

- ▶ [Podcasts](#)
- ▶ [Videos](#)
- ▶ [Apps](#)

Podcasts

“Student Life #5: Making Friends at University”

Students Steph and Heppni from Leeds Beckett University talk about their experiences during university and how they made new friends through their accomodations, social media, and during a pandemic

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/student-life-5-making-friends-at-university/id1547786504?i=1000530854833>

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1y04kLken1tKBEmwHhNeD6>

“How do we make friends?”

Doctor and Youtuber Ali Abdaal talks about the strategies used to make new friends, from grade school, to uni, into adult life.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/in/podcast/021-how-do-we-make-friends/id1456538451?i=1000446100623>

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/7C03WscXgsk4QMJ4S1wFPS?si=e08d80cf43a742ac>

Videos

How to make REAL friends at Uni | Australia | 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0s80182xJQ>

How I learned to make more friends

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nm7OMGjbCgc>

When Do Friendships Expire and How to End Them | Kati Morton

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8x-rp_f1_xM

Apps

- ▶ **Meetups** Meet new people and groups who share your interests through online and in-person events.
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
- ▶ **Eventbrite** Discover popular local events and get event recommendations. Get tickets and quickly access all your Eventbrite tickets and event information from your iPhone.
 - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)

Still struggling?

If you are still struggling, reach out to the WSU counselling team for support and advice. If you prefer to seek support from a service outside of the university, it may be helpful to speak to your General Practitioner regarding a [Mental Health Care Plan](#) and referral to a psychologist, or you can speak to a counsellor or other health professional. Remember you are not alone and there will always be someone out there who is willing to stay with you through your hard times.

Please find the attached PDF document [here](#).

References:

[Western Sydney University- Disruption to Studies Policy](#)

[Western Sydney University- Withdrawing without academic penalty](#)

[Western Sydney University- Counselling Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- Student Welfare Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- WesternNow](#)

[Western Sydney University- Chaplaincy](#)

[Western Sydney University- TalkCampus](#)

[Beyond Blue- Online chat](#)

[World Youth Alliance – What is Friendship](#)

[Mayo Clinic – Friendships: Enrich your life and improve your health](#)

[Reach Out – What makes a good friend](#)