

Thriving vs. Surviving: Tips for Success During Your First Year of College

ADJUSTING TO CAMPUS LIFE

- Go to every event during orientation, and introduce yourself to everyone around you.
- Ask a returning student to give you a personal campus tour.
- Try to meet at least one new person in each of your classes during the first week.
- Get involved in at least one extracurricular right away - join a club, join student government, or play a sport!
- If you commute to New Paltz, make an effort to connect on campus, and check out the [Commuter Resources](#) page.
- Explore events and opportunities on campus - check out the [Dorsky Museum](#), take a [group exercise class](#), volunteer, or go to events and programs. You can find info about these opportunities through talking to peers, flyer boards and TVs around campus, the [Center for Student Engagement](#), social media, or through your RA and RD (if you live on campus).

FOR THOSE LIVING ON CAMPUS

- Homesickness is natural, but try to stay on campus as much as possible while you're adjusting, and keep in contact via phone, video, or text instead. When you do make plans to visit your high school friends make sure to save some time to spend with your family... they probably want to catch up with you too!
- Take time to get to know your roommates, and talk early, openly, and often with them if issues arise. Roommate issues almost always start with some little thing that doesn't really matter. When it festers and builds, it is much harder to fix it and move on.
- Get to know your RA's and RD's! They all have office hours, and it's much easier to ask for help when needed if you already have a relationship.
- Sometimes it can be helpful NOT to live with people or friends you might already know. This way, you can get to know more people, and avoid losing important friendships over conflicting living preferences (ie, your bestie might be super supportive and have a great sense of humor, but do they take out the trash?).

ACADEMICS, ACADEMICS, ACADEMICS

- Become an expert on course requirements and due dates. Professors post the assignments — often for the entire semester — and expect you to be prepared. So buy an organizer, use an app, get a big wall calendar, use color coded pens for different classes — whatever it takes!
- Set helpful study habits early. Find a quiet and non-distracting place to study regularly (check out [study rooms](#) in the Library), form study groups with classmates, and take advantage of the [Center for Student Success](#) for tutors and peer advisors!

- College is NOT like high school. We have met with too many students who got straight A's without studying in high school, but are now struggling to keep up. Adjust your study habits and keep on top of small assignments like discussion boards and reading reflections.
- Building relationships early on can be invaluable, so meet with your professors during office hours. There are only upsides to getting to know them, especially if you run into some snags later in the semester. Your academic advisor can also help you with course conflicts, adding or dropping courses, scheduling of classes for future semesters, and deciding on majors and minors.
- Take at least 12 credits, and reach out to your academic advisor and the [Office of Student Accounts](#) if you're having concerns about course load and finances.
- Don't feel pressured to make a hasty decision about a career or a major.
- Go to class. Obvious, right? Maybe, but sleeping in and skipping that 8am class will be tempting at times. Avoid the temptation, and don't forget to take notes while you're there!
- Utilize any group chats that might exist in your class. If you have to miss a day, reach out to someone else for help catching up, or talk with a peer if you're having trouble. Or if you're the one doing great, try to help out one of your classmates!

MAINTAINING BALANCE AND SELF CARE

Be sure you set aside some time for relaxation and destressing, and give your brain a break!

***Practice letting go.** If something small is bothering you, make an effort to acknowledge it and then move through it. Don't let yourself spend too much energy on the little things.

***Breathe in slowly and deeply.** Before reacting to the next stressful situation that comes along, pause and take some deep breaths while releasing them slowly.

***Slow down.** Practice speaking more slowly than usual whenever you begin to feel overwhelmed by stress. You'll be able to think more clearly and react more reasonably, too.

***Cross one thing off your list.** Taking care of one pesky responsibility can be energizing and can actually improve your attitude.

***Go outdoors for a brief break.** Don't be discouraged by bad weather or a full schedule. Even five minutes outdoors can give you a boost of energy!

***Drink plenty of water and eat nutritious snacks.** Hunger and dehydration, even before you're aware of them, can actually bring on stress.

***Do a quick posture check.** Hold your head and shoulders upright and avoid stooping or slumping. Bad posture can lead to muscle tension, pain, and stress.

***Be kind to yourself.** Remember that you deserve time to recharge and energize yourself!

***Do that thing you love to do.** Listen to music you really love, play your horn, draw a picture, write in your journal, make a craft, go work out, make a call to someone who cares!

Stay healthy/eat right/sleep right: Focus on sustaining yourself in the long run, so that you can make it to class and keep up over time. Get up in time for breakfast every day, and work fruits and vegetables into your diet. For extra support, contact the [SUNY New Paltz Food Pantry](#) and/or the [Campus Dietician](#).

Party pressures: Peer pressure is real, but remember: You don't have to drink, most students don't. You don't have to smoke or take other drugs, most students don't. If you do decide to use substances, make a plan ahead of time, make sure you have buddy, count your drinks, and don't take anything if you don't know what it is. For more resources visit SUNY New Paltz's [Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention](#) website. And remember, cannabis may be legal in the state, but it's still not allowed on campus.

Relationships: It's not always like it is in the movies, and starting or maintaining relationships takes work. Whether you're planning to stay together with someone long distance, or hoping to find someone new at school, remember to continue to make time for meeting other people and building friendships. Also, remember what YOU want in a relationship and partner(s) – it's ok to grow and build communication skills, but don't change yourself too much for someone else. Likewise, don't expect someone else to be who they're not, and pay attention to actions just as much as words.

We strive to create a culture of active consent on campus, and The SUNY New Paltz community urges everyone to pledge their commitment to preventing sexual assault on our campus and all college campuses.

REMEMBER, YOU DON'T HAVE TO HANDLE IT ALL ALONE

Ask for help early and often. It can be scary, but talking to friends, classmates, RAs, and RDs can help. There are professionals and campus services to help too, such as the Psychological Counseling Center, [Disability Resource Center](#), [Health Center](#), [Oasis and Haven Peer Counselors](#), [LGBTQ+ Resources](#), [Title IX Coordinator](#), or the [Center for Student Success](#). Keep in mind that many others have been through this, and you are not alone.

Be prepared to feel overwhelmed. There's a lot going in your life right now. Expect to have moments where it seems a bit too much. As one student says, be prepared to feel completely unprepared. The trick is knowing that **you're not the only one feeling that way!** We know you are trying and we see that, doing your best is all we ask, talk to us when you need it and we will help!