

# Finding new friends

*“Simply smiling at people can work wonders”*

**U**ni can be daunting when you don't know anyone or know just a handful of people. It can be a lonely time until you make new friends.

But don't worry, it is only temporary and there are plenty of things that can be done to speed up the friend-making process.

Find a club or group to join such as a study group, sports group or your special interest club. This will introduce you to a potentially large group of people and over time you will get to know lots of the other members.

Or consider joining the student union, newspaper or other similar organisation which allows you to come into contact with many new people on a daily basis.

Even volunteering to hand out orientation week brochures, guide books and other university related materials allows you to meet the students you are working alongside



and to introduce yourself to a large variety of new university students (who are most likely also seeking new uni friends).

If you reside on-campus then attending house activities such as film or trivia nights can lead to regular contact with your neighbours. Eating in the resident cafeteria also works for socialising

with your neighbours.

Most universities have several buddy volunteer programs that introduce a disadvantaged new student (such as an international or mature-aged student) with a local student. Participation in these programs is voluntary for both parties so you know that any buddy you get linked up with is keen to

spend time with you too.

Most universities campuses have on-campus businesses (such as café, bookstores, etc) which sometimes offer part time jobs to students. Most of these jobs provide the opportunity to meet lots of other students.

But simply smiling at people can also work wonders. If you regularly

bump into the same people, don't be shy. Give them a big smile. It can lead to regular greetings which can lead to conversation. Be friendly with all associates that cross your path. Associates have the potential to become friends down the track.

Striking up conversations is easy if you know how to do it. All you have to do is ask open ended questions rather than a closed question which only allows for a brief yes or no answer. For example, 'Are you heading to class now. What are you having for lunch. Do you have any plans for term break'. These are closed questions that do not allow room for further details.

Open questions allow for a broader range of answers to be given and in more depth. Examples of open ended questions are 'Where do you hope your degree will lead you, Why did you choose your subject, What are your plans for term break', etc.

And when you do establish a good friend network, don't become close-minded about meeting new people. Always keep on the lookout for new ways to extend your social network as the more people you meet, the more friends you will make.

**Lauretta Davies**

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