

EMBRACE THE UNEXPECTED



HOW TO BE YOURSELF AND MAKE FRIENDS

Starting uni is one of the most exciting times of your life but it's totally normal to feel nervous about meeting new people. To reassure you - pretty much everyone will be feeling like this. That's why iQ has teamed up with leading relationships charity, Relate. One of their amazing counsellors, Sam, has some tips on how to be yourself and make new friends and embrace the unexpected.

THINK OF SOME CONVERSATION STARTERS

Preparing some opening sentences and practicing them will help you approach people confidently and open up dialogue. We've made some suggestions below but switch them up and use your own words and details, obviously.

- Hi, I'm Adam. I'm from Bournemouth and am studying drama. How about you?
- How are you finding it so far? I'm excited but a little nervous!
- So, who have you met so far on this floor?
- I love your shirt/ shoes/ hair/ sunglasses etc.
- Hey, how's it going? I'm making a cup of tea. Do you fancy one?/ I'm going to check out the common room if you fancy joining me?

USE POSITIVE BODY LANGUAGE

Of course, it helps to say the right things but body language can also reveal a lot about your feelings and emotions and will help you to connect with other students.

- Smile – nothing beats a smile for spreading positive vibes!
- Make eye contact – this helps you to seem interested and to build trust.
- Have a firm handshake (but not too firm!)
- Put your hands by your side – an open body position makes you seem more approachable. If you don't know what to do with your hands have something small to hold like a stress ball, Blu Tack or a fidget spinner!
- Relax your shoulders – this gives the impression that you're feeling comfortable.
- Mirror – gently matching the posture of the person you are talking to can help build rapport.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

We often judge people based on their appearances, their interests or their background. Try to cast these things aside when meeting people and keep an open mind. People with different perspectives can enrich your life in wonderful ways.

TAKE AN INTEREST

Listen to what the person is saying rather than focusing too much on what you want to say next. Be inquisitive and ask them questions. People like it when you take an interest in them.

BE HONEST IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND

If English isn't your first language and you haven't understood something, don't be afraid to ask the person to slow down and repeat it. Also, don't be afraid to have a go at another language – people would rather you try and mispronounce something than avoid talking to them.

DON'T PUT TOO MUCH PRESSURE ON YOURSELF

Remember that friendships take time to develop. If you don't connect with somebody, understand that's OK and move on.

STICK TO YOUR GUNS

It can be tempting to let down your boundaries or do things that just aren't you in a bid to fit in. If you don't want to drink or stay up late, politely explain this. If people are eating your food without asking or want to copy your work, don't accept it.

JOIN A CLUB

Whether it's a sport club or the curry appreciation society - whatever you're into it's likely there's something on offer. Friendships tend to develop naturally and organically through shared interests.



ATTEND EVENTS

Whether it's at your iQ, arranged by the students' union or a community run gathering, accept the invitation to attend events – it is a great way of meeting new people.

DON'T LOOK FOR PERFECTION

Not every friend has to meet all your needs. You may make one who you prefer to confide in and another you like to play sport with and somebody else who you have wild nights out with.

THINK BEYOND FRESHERS' WEEK

It's a great time to meet people but keep yourself open to the idea of new relationships throughout your time at uni. Friendships can form in the most unlikely places, so keep open to opportunities.

GIVE YOURSELF SOME LOVE

Find out where the student wellbeing centre is. They usually offer free counselling if you need it, and some run classes on confidence building.

REMEMBER YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Everyone else will feel lonely and homesick at some point. Share how you feel with others. It may be a conversation starter and lead to a connection.

We hope you find this information useful and are looking forward to putting some of it into practice. Do remember though it's only a guide – the most important thing is to be friendly and be yourself!

iqsa.com/iqunexpected

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