



## Advice from real students

We asked real university students: Looking back, what do you know now that you wish you had known in your first year of university? Here's what they had to say.

**Answer:** Looking back on my first year of university I wish I had known to get involved in as much as humanly possible. University is bursting with opportunities. It is a place for learning and growth – but not just inside the classroom. In class, you learn the theories, the concepts, the ideas – this provides you with a wonderful foundation. But outside the classroom, you get to apply all those things. So whether it's student government, community service, club membership, internships, research assistance, anything at all – if it interests you, go for it. Try new things, seek out new experiences – you never know what you could learn or how it could change you.

- *Samantha Coverde, Fourth Year, Honours Specialization Sociology with a Major in Dimensions of Leadership, Brescia University College*

**Answer:** Looking back, I wish I'd known in first year just how many diverse opportunities universities offer students, ranging from the ability to connect with professors, to practicums and work experiences, to student life engagement. When I started my university career, I was waiting for someone to swoop in and direct me where to go, to tell me what to do. It wasn't until I stepped up and began pursuing some of the many prospects available at my institution that I really started to get the most out of my university experience. This in turn has given me more direction in my academic and professional career than any hard line advice ever could have.

- *Hayley Woodin, Fourth Year, Bachelor of Journalism, Kwantlen Polytechnic University*

**Answer:** Take time to make friends with your classmates from other countries, join clubs that take you out of your comfort zone, and start debates in the cafeteria. The classes that you sign up for are the backbone of your university education, but the unofficial experiences will be the ones that give you life's best lessons. Dare to ask questions, and embrace the surprises.  
- *Dustin Eno, Fourth Year, Liberal Arts & Science, Quest University Canada*

**Answer:** Forget being shy or afraid and put yourself out there. First year is a whole new ball game, and it is so important to get out onto campus and meet new people. Never be afraid to start a conversation with someone who you have never met before because as cliché as it sounds, they may become your best friend — or at the very least you will walk away with a new acquaintance who can provide you with a new perspective on your ideas or challenges.

It's also important to forego your fear of failure and mistakes. From kindergarten onwards, we are trained to try our hardest to be perfect and never mess up. That still holds true for your exams, labs, midterms, and assignments, but don't let it carry over into the rest of your life. Don't get me wrong, mistakes are usually bad news, but every time you fall down, a chance to learn something about yourself or the world around you opens up.

Don't be afraid to fall flat on your face, or own up to your missteps, because they will undoubtedly happen. Nevertheless, when you do make a mistake, always remember that it's up to you to clean up the mess, and more than anything, to learn how to best avoid making it again in the future. Your years at university will be a huge transition, and to overcome that nagging fear of failure is to allow yourself the space you need to learn and grow as you move out and finally get a taste of what it means to be "grown-up."

- *Michael Watkins, BA double major in history and biology, Mount Allison University Class of 2013*



**Answer:** I wish I had known that I didn't know everything, that best friends are found in the most unexpected people, that you always get from a course what you put into it, and that there is no such thing as being "too cool".

- *Becca Dickinson, Fourth Year, Bachelor of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Quest University Canada*

**Answer:** I wish I had known how much my mind would develop, both physically and psychologically, in the first two years of university. There was a moment at which complicated things started to seem simple, but I had to put in a lot of work to get there. It would have been easier to put in the time if I'd known there was a reward at the other end.

- *Michael Luba, Fourth Year, Environmental Science, Economics, Political Science, Quest University Canada*

**Answer:** I wish I had known how personable my professors would be! If that were the case I would have spent more time in their company, and probably would have learned a lot more from them. The more time I spend in the offices of my professors the more I am convinced that they are genuinely invested in my personal growth, both academically and as a young adult.

- *Bradley Klees, Fourth Year, International Development, Quest University Canada*

**Answer:** First year is at the same time both the most and the least important year of your degree for precisely one and the same reason: it is a year of experimentation which will form the foundation of your university career. Don't be afraid to challenge yourself early on and give it your all from the get go. The worst that can happen is that you learn something sooner than you would have learned it otherwise. It's ok to take classes that are above your level. It's ok to ask questions before, during, and after class. It's ok to change programs (I did it twice), even to transfer to another university, and it's certainly ok to take more than the minimum time required (usually four years) to complete your degree.

Relax and go as slow as you need to enjoy and get the most out of school and your life. Often, this involves giving yourself over to an entirely new set of tasks and experiences. Be confident while you try new things but never forget that it's encouraged to ask for help if you feel you need it. You're not the first person ever to have problems or feel lost in university and you're never alone if that becomes the case.

In short, don't be afraid! Try things, go adventuring, and try to live a good life and live it well (keep in mind that this doesn't necessarily mean partying every night of the week). Remember who you are and to keep doing the things you love while you're experimenting.

- *Will Barton, Fourth Year, Honours in Early Modern Studies & German, University of King's College, Halifax, Nova Scotia*