



College Survival Guide

by College for Rural Wisconsin Rural Peer Ambassadors

This resource has been developed by current UW-Madison undergraduate college students to help high school upperclassmen and incoming first-year college students prepare for life after high school.

Tip #1: Finding your place

- Housing options: living at home, off campus housing and apartments, on campus housing and apartments, campus dorms.
- When deciding when to start looking for housing, the sooner the better! Leases in college towns tend to sign earlier than outside of college areas. It is generally recommended that you sign a lease nine months in advance, but this can vary depending on the area you are in. Talk to other students and staff for tips on where and when to start looking for college housing!
- Don't forget to consider the cost of utilities – electricity, internet, etc. – when factoring in your housing budget if you choose to live away from home. These are not always included.

Tip #2: Finding your people

- Making friends can be hard, but it is impossible if you don't put yourself out there! An easy way to do this is by studying outside of your room! Libraries, coffee shops, and campus common areas are great places to meet new people!
- If you do not find your best friends your first semester or year of school, don't worry! College is a time of growth, so friend groups are going to shift and change as everyone learns more about themselves and their interests.
- Don't be afraid to try new things! Stepping out of your comfort zone is a great way to meet people and learn about yourself!



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Tip #3: Figuring out finances

- Make a budget! Set aside what money you need for expenses first such as rent, utilities, groceries, and other bills, then calculate what you have left over. We recommend using a spreadsheet or online tool to help you keep track of your finances.
- Take advantage of free opportunities at school! Most universities will offer free events for students, especially during the beginning of the semester. Keep an eye out for events with free food too!
- Campus and student jobs are a great way to balance working a job while taking classes. Check out your campus website for a student jobs portal.
- Save money by renting books or checking them out at the library.

Tip#4: Succeeding in school

- Your professors and teaching assistants (TAs) want to help you! It is to your advantage to attend office hours, even if you don't have questions. This is a great way to build a relationship with professionals in your field of study.
- Tutoring and study groups are a great way to make friends while also getting additional support in your studies.
- Look into your campus' support early! Identity and disability resources are available for you, but you need to seek them out.

Tip#5: It's all about balance

- College is all about growing which can be difficult and uncomfortable. Be kind to yourself and embrace whatever comes your way!