TOP TEN TIPS

What seemed like a distant dream when you started secondary school is now here.

You’re slightly nervous. But you’re also excited about embarking on the best few years of your life, and taking the first steps towards a prosperous career. Read my top ten tips to get the most out of your Essex experience. Before you know it, the University of Essex will feel like your new home from home.

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01 Get house-trained
It sounds obvious, but you’ll now be fending for yourself. You’ll need to be able to use a washing machine, iron, wash dishes, cook and clean. Learn to not mix colours and white washes, know what you can and cannot put in a tumble dryer, and which setting the iron should be on for which fabric – and you’ll be a born again domestic god or goddess. If not, you’ll forever be subject to a life of shrunken, creased, off-white shirts.

02 Don’t miss the first week of lectures
Don’t roll your eyes, it really is important. Although these lectures mainly cover reading lists, course structure and other administrative elements, they are also the first time that you will meet your classmates and offer a great opportunity to meet new people. Also, from an academic point of view, your first week’s lectures will provide fundamental answers on how to achieve success in your university work. So if you’re feeling tired or a little worse for wear, jump out of bed, grab some breakfast, shake it off and get to class.

03 Check out the local area
The University is going to be your new home, so make sure you get a firm grasp on your local surroundings. You need to look for your local health centre, supermarket, laundrette. And make sure you know where your local pound store is – they are a student blessing. I’d recommend looking at what exactly the town is in the same boat. There are simple ways to encourage people to socialise, for example, propping your door open with a door wedge.

04 Be open-minded and join our global community
Representing 137 countries, our University has around 12,000 students who all have different backgrounds, cultures and ideologies that you can learn from. They will challenge your preconceptions, influence your ideas and develop your cultural understanding. No matter who you are or where you come from, you are soon to be a member of this global community and inspire those around you, so be different, be bold, and most importantly, be yourself.

05 Join a sports club or society
Hated football at school? Always last pick for netball? Now that’s a thing of the past. Our University has more than 50 sports with everything from archery to ultimate frisbee. At Essex you’re not just part of a sports team, you’re part of a sports club, each with their own bespoke social life, volunteering opportunities and fundraising events. If sports really aren’t your thing, we have more than 165 clubs and societies where you can enjoy fine cheese over a glass of wine, pick up a new language or tear up the virtual tracks with the Mario Kart society.

06 Manage your time
With this sudden wave of opportunities in front of you, it’s vital you become effective at managing your time. Create a timetable so you can physically see your academic and social commitments and make sure you don’t take too much on. Remember, you have years to fit everything in.

07 Step out of your comfort zone
University is your opportunity to grow as an individual. There are unique opportunities on your doorstep, a rich variety of people to meet and events taking place everywhere you turn so it’s key that you take a step out of your comfort zone and get the most out of your university experience. You may be nervous when you first arrive, but remember, everyone is in the same boat. There are simple ways to encourage people to socialise, for example, propping your door open with a door wedge.

08 Live for today, prepare for tomorrow
Make the most of your first few weeks and explore everything on offer. But, at the same time, make sure you remember to look forward to your future. Keep an eye out for job openings on campus to gain valuable work experience. Look at the frontline placements available on campus, talk to the careers centre to see about Easter/Summer internship opportunities and take part in the Big Essex Award to really stand out from the crowd when you graduate.

09 Don’t blow all your money in the first week
With so many events taking place in Welcome Week it can be easy to get carried away with your spending. Once your loan comes in, you’ll be tempted to buy rounds of drinks and shop online through the night – but don’t. Be sensible with your money, make the most of your first week but remember that there are multiple events, trips and performances still to come. Budget and you’ll be surprised how far your money can stretch.

10 Work hard, but have fun
People will be handing you advice left, right and centre, but remember that everybody’s university experience is different, so choose your own path. Find your feet; discover things about yourself, and grab your university experience with both hands. Inevitably, you’re going to make the occasional mistake and that’s fine. Everybody will. Just power through and enjoy your new life here as much as you possibly can. Because trust me, the time will fly by.

University of Essex