

WELLBEING GUIDE

to settling into university life



University life

Welcome to the University of Reading

When you arrive at university it can feel exciting and overwhelming. Whether this is the first time you are living away from home and you've travelled many miles to be here or you're local to the area - you have chosen to be a part of life at the University and to develop and grow both personally and academically.

There is a lot to take in and adjust to. Finding your way around and meeting lots of new people can sometimes feel daunting. When we go through a period of change, it is also perfectly normal to feel anxious, uncertain, frustrated or disappointed if things don't turn out exactly how you expected.

Why do people feel homesick?

According to the National Union of Students (NUS), 50–70% of all new university students in the UK get homesick during their first few weeks.

Different things can bring on homesickness:

- ✓ **LACK OF FAMILIARITY** – when everything around you is new, it can be tiring to navigate. With time you should become more comfortable in your surroundings.
 - ✓ **'STRETCHED' EMOTIONAL BONDS** – we might be further away from our familiar support network, friends, or family and we might not be in touch as regularly, but they are still only a phone call away.
 - ✓ **ANXIETY** – new academic challenges and independent living can be overwhelming but with time you can adapt to these.
 - ✓ **SELF-ESTEEM** – it can seem like everyone else is having a wonderful time, especially on social media, but this is just a small snapshot and is often not the full, realistic picture.
 - ✓ **CULTURE SHOCK** – it can be extra challenging if you have moved here from overseas. We have an International Students' Advisory Team, based in the Carrington Building, who can offer specific help to you.
reading.ac.uk/essentials/International/International-Student-Advisory-Team
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Developing friendships

At first it may feel awkward and uncomfortable being in a situation where you do not know anyone. As you find your way around your new environment, you will gradually notice that things begin to feel more familiar and that you are getting to know other students who you can relate to.

Managing change

Starting university is a time in life when we must adapt to change. If you focus on the present, you'll find fresh opportunities to discover your strengths and build your resilience.

Communicating in English when it's not your first language

If English is not your first language you may be working harder to get used to doing everything in a different language. It might take some time to get used to how people communicate and you may feel self-conscious. Focus on practicing as much as you can and don't be afraid of making mistakes. If you don't understand something, ask. This will help build your language proficiency and you will gradually feel more confident.

Trust yourself! You've got previous experience of starting new things.

What can you do if you don't feel connected?

- ✓ **DON'T FORGET THE BASICS** – your health comes first – try to eat a healthy diet, have regular exercise, and adequate rest.
- ✓ **THINGS TO INCLUDE DAILY**
 - a routine you can stick to
 - plenty of time outside
 - something you enjoy.
- ✓ **JOIN IN** – If you already have a hobby such as playing a sport or other activities, there are ways to continue this at university.
- ✓ **TRY NOT TO PHONE OR GO HOME TOO OFTEN** – by planning your phone conversations and visits to see family and friends back home, you give yourself something to look forward to. This will help prevent homesickness by keeping you focused on the new experience at university.
- ✓ **YOUR NEW ROOM** – make it feel like your own personal space. Fill it with things from home: photos, posters, a favourite blanket, something someone important gave you.

✓ **FOCUS ON LEARNING** – you are here for your chosen course so if you are struggling with the changes that come with university life, going to your lectures and classes provide routine and stability.

✓ **ADJUSTING TO ACADEMIC WORKLOAD** – if you're feeling unsure about what is expected of you or feel like the workload is too much, pause and give yourself time to learn new strategies to manage your studies, to adjust and find out what works best for you. Contact your Academic Tutor and Study Advice for guidance if you are finding the workload difficult.

At first it may feel awkward being in a situation where you don't know anyone. Try not to let this get in the way.

What strategies are you going to try to help you settle into life at university? Use this space to make notes:

A large white rounded rectangular box with a thin grey border, intended for students to write down their strategies for settling into university life. The box is empty and occupies the lower half of the page.

Further help and support

Can't get settled? Try our resources

- **Essentials**

- reading.ac.uk/essentials

- **Life Tools programme**

- reading.ac.uk/lifetools

- **If you need further help**

- contact the Student Welfare Team and speak with one of our specialist Welfare Officers about your concerns
- email studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk If they think you need to speak to someone else, they will point you in the right direction

- **If you are in halls**

- you can talk to Hall Mentors and Wardens, or
- you can call the Halls Hotline on 0800 0291984

- **For study techniques visit**

- reading.ac.uk/library/study-advice

- **Student Minds provides lots of useful information on managing the transition to university**

- studentminds.org.uk/transitionintouniversity