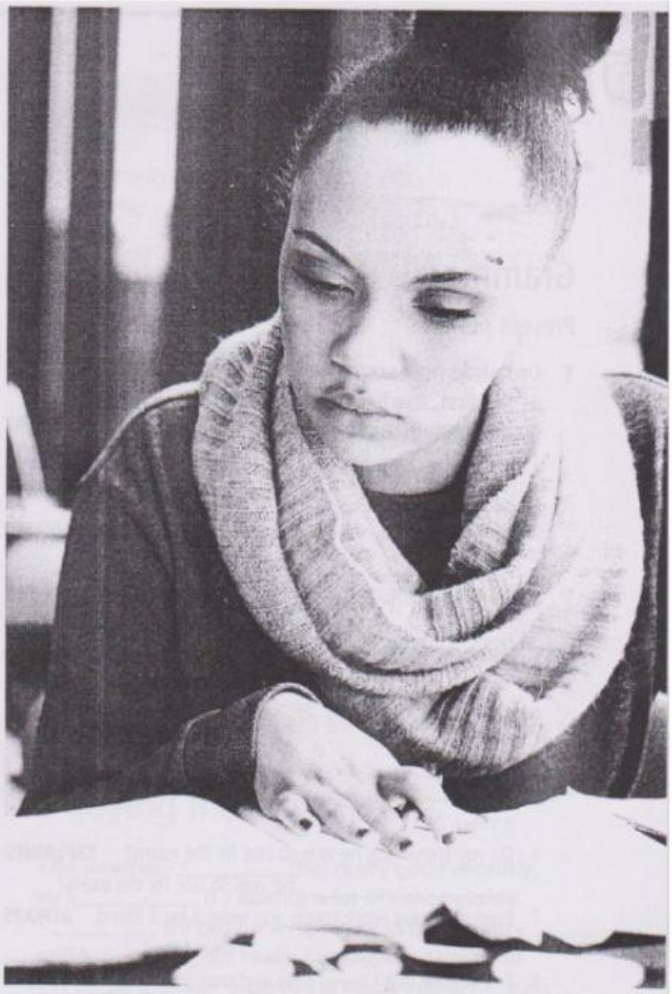
TAKING THAT BIG STEP

Thinking of going to university? Well, take some advice from those who've done it. Here are some tips collected from first-year university students, all put together by top blogger, Leon Hinckley.



1 Are your emotions ready?

This is a question only you can answer, but if you aren't ready, university life may not be for you. The emotional upset of leaving home, perhaps for the first time, and finding yourself among total strangers can be harder on some than on others. The truth is, a few people usually leave in the first weeks of university. They can have any number of reasons, but we've found that leaving home too soon is a big one. There are alternatives, and the best I can think of off the top of my head is to go on a gap year. You don't have to walk across the Sahara or spend a year in the Amazon rainforest – you can stay closer to home. After that year, the chances are that you will have gained a bit more independence and you will know if uni's right for you. There's more good news, and that's that most people find making friends a lot easier than they expected. Remember, everyone's in the same boat, more or less. Lifelong friendships are often formed in the first few weeks. There are usually a great many clubs and societies to join and, if you don't find anything you like, you can start your own. There is no other place or time in your life where meeting new people is made so easy for you.

2 Choosing

There's a world of choice out there and the selection process works likes this. The college or uni you want to go to will make you an offer based on the grades you get in your final exams. If you get those grades, you are fine, otherwise you may have to choose a different college. Check out the academic reputation of the uni or college. And choose a course that you're interested in. It might sound obvious, but you're more likely to do well if you enjoy the subject. Don't study something just because someone else tells you to – big mistake, that one. Where you go then depends on what you are like. If you love going out, you might choose a big city. Quieter types might opt for a smaller place, or even a place in the country. Do your research and contact students, like us, who've already done it. And don't forget to choose according to your circumstances. If you already have a family, you might consider studying part time. If you've just had a baby, it's not easy to study full time – at least, I wouldn't recommend it!

3 Finances

You should have a loan sorted out before you start a course. Unless you're extremely rich, you need financial help. Schools and local authorities can help you there. Then, it's all a question of common sense. You need to make your money last because you don't want to end up starving and penniless half-way through the term. Keep a close eye on your bills and your money. Students often learn to live cheaply, and you might have to learn a few tricks yourself – but you're in that environment where people happily share information about ways to cut costs.

4 And finally...

It really shouldn't be last on the list but remember that you're there to study. Start as you mean to go on and don't make a habit of skipping lectures. Your priority is getting your degree, so set aside time to study and read the books you're told to read. You can have a great time in your first year but it won't be much fun if you fail your exams and get kicked out. You can't go out every night, sleep all day and still expect to do well in exams. Be reasonable – there's plenty of time for fun – just don't forget why you're there.

1 Imagine you're going to university soon. Number the points in order of importance. 1 is the most important.

- ☐ Finding a university close to home
- ☐ Getting on a course that you find really interesting
- ☐ Having a quiet place to study
- ☐ Having an exciting night life
- ☐ Studying in a beautiful, interesting or historic place
- ☐ Having a lot of clubs and societies to choose from
- ☐ Finding a place with a good academic reputation
- ☐ Being with people you already know

2 Scan the text and find words or phrases that mean:

1 might not suit you (section 1)
2 it's likely (section 1)
3 relationships that last for ever (section 1)
4 choose (section 2)
5 logical thinking (section 3)
6 with no food or money (section 3)
7 save money (section 3)
8 missing (section 4)

3 Read the text again and circle the correct option.

1 The writer of the text says that
A a lot of people leave university soon after they start.
B most students find it extremely hard being separated from their families.
C some students leave home too soon and have difficulties.
D very few students find it easy to leave home.

2 What does the writer say about going on a gap year?
A It is not a good idea.
B It can help you recognise if you are suited to university.
C It will help you choose a more suitable university for you.
D It is only useful if you do something adventurous with your time.

3 According to the writer, making friends at university
A is very difficult.
B is quite simple.
C takes time.
D is not guaranteed.

4 What advice does the writer give about making friends?
A One way to make friends is to start your own club.
B Do not join clubs or societies until you see what they do.
C Friends do not have to be for life.
D Make friends quickly or you can be too late.

5 Which of these is *not* mentioned in section 2?
A Shy people should think about going to a university that is not in a big city.
B Getting a degree is all that matters despite the fact that a university is not very good.
C You might have to ignore someone's advice about what course to choose.
D Having a family presents different challenges when you go to university.

6 The writer suggests that students need to learn:
A that everybody needs help at one time or another.
B ways in which they can make money.
C that people might try to trick them out of their money.
D ways in which they can save money.

7 Which sentence best summarises the writer's advice in section 4?
A Don't let studying get in the way of having a good time.
B You should socialise less when you go to university.
C Get as much sleep as possible in preparation for your exams.
D Find a balance between studying and enjoying yourself.

4 Choose the best meaning, a) or b), for each word or phrase.

1 off the top of my head (section 1)
a) this is a bit crazy
b) from what I remember

2 everyone's in the same boat (section 1)
a) it's more difficult for some than for others
b) it's the same for everyone

3 Keep a close eye on (section 3)
a) something needs to be carefully monitored
b) someone might do something bad to you

4 Start as you mean to go on (section 4)
a) you need to make a positive start
b) you should work as hard as you possibly can.

5 get kicked out (section 4)
a) only do well in sports you play, not your studies
b) get asked to leave the university

SOURCE:SURE BOOK (HELBLING LANGUAGES BY MARTYN HOBBS AND JULIA STARR KEDDLE)