

HOW TO HAVE A

# *Horrible Time*

IN COLLEGE

& REAL TIPS FOR

*Making  
Friends,  
Doing Well  
in Classes  
& Growing in  
Your Faith*





## *So you're starting college...*

With InterVarsity's 80 years of ministry on college campuses across the country—and the many less (but still significant) number of years of experience of the writers of this guide—we know just how important the next few years of your life will be.

In this guide, we've compiled some of our best tips for getting through college. Speaking from our own experiences, we tell you how your college years can be the most horrible, most exhausting, and most boring time of your life, or how they can be the most joyful, growing, and transformative season of your life. We hope and pray you experience the latter!

Remember, college really is a uniquely opportune season to make friendships that can last a lifetime and become who God made you to be.

We're rooting for you!

**Ashlye, The University of Texas at Austin**

**Drew, Taylor University**

**Emily, University of South Florida**

**Nathan, Trinity International University**



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HOW TO BE A

# Friendless Hermit in College

## (and How to Actually Make Friends)



1. Stay in your dorm room as much as possible to ensure few people even know you exist.
2. Refuse every invitation to get to know others. Do so as rudely as possible.
3. During the first week of classes, approach every organization on campus to let them know how useless you think they are.

## But really...

We at InterVarsity believe that finding close friends and community is one of the most important parts of college. It's what we're all about! **Through quality friendships, you'll learn more than you could on your own, you'll gain new perspectives, and your walk with Jesus will grow.** And if you just avoid the "tips" above, we don't think you'll have too much trouble.

At the same time, we know making friends is intimidating. In high school, you might have had a tight-knit group you've built history with. Now you're entering a new world—a much bigger world full of strangers. It can be scary.

But you're about to spend four years surrounded by thousands of people who are in the same place as you. And the best part is that all of you want friends.

So, get excited! People you meet now can become **forever friends**, some of the most cherished people in your life. But it's going to take some effort.

Here are our *real tips* for making friends in college:

## 1. Relax & Remember

It's easy to feel like a number in college. But don't panic! Whatever worries you have about making friends are normal and temporary.

Remember that almost everyone enters college friendless. **You're not alone in your search for friends.**



## 2. Spark Up a Conversation

Depending on where or how you grew up, this could feel natural or totally awkward. Some people might look at you like you're from outer space, but others will be grateful you took the first step in making them feel seen. Don't overthink it. Not everyone enters college as a social butterfly, yet we all manage to make friends somehow.

If you see someone watching a Netflix show you love during class (for the record, we don't condone this in lieu of taking notes), make a comment. **Look for common ground.** Even going through the typical small talk with your desk neighbor isn't so awful: "What's your major? What dorm are you in? This professor really is as funny as ratemyprofessors said, huh?"

## 3. Say Yes to Unexpected Invitations

There's so much to gain from saying yes to meeting new people. Roommate invitation to the football game? Sure. R.A. hosting a dorm get-together? Okay, yes!

Sometimes you'll go to an event and feel zero chemistry with the people you meet. Keep trying! Eventually, you'll find "your people."

Keep in mind that you're likely to meet people who are very different from you in college. Don't be scared! **This is your chance to pursue diverse friendships.** If an invitation to a poetry slam night isn't something you'd normally go to, consider going anyway.







## 4. Take Advantage of What's Around You

Joining a student organization is a great way to make friends, and there are so many to choose from: volunteer groups, intramural sports teams, ethnic-specific orgs, etc. Most schools have an online database that'll help you find these groups.

**Obviously, consider connecting with InterVarsity's ministry on campus.** Not only is an InterVarsity community a great place to make friends, but you'll also get the chance to grow spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally while having a ton of fun! We study Scripture, reach our classmates with the gospel together, have hangouts, and so much more. [Sign up here if you haven't already](#), and someone from InterVarsity on your campus will reach out.

If InterVarsity isn't already established on your campus, you have two options:

1.

### **Check out another Christian community at your school!**

You can find them on your school's online database or [here](#).



2.

**You can start an InterVarsity community!** If your school has no gospel movements, and/or you feel compelled specifically by our vision and values, we encourage this! It'll give you great leadership experience, and you'll get tons of support from us.

[Check out this resource to start.](#)



God didn't create us to go through life alone. If ever you find yourself feeling crushed by the weight of loneliness, spend some time asking him to comfort you and remind you of his unfailing love. **You're never alone, and he's always there for you.**

And remember that making friends is a process. Some people will make friends quickly. Others need more time. Try not to compare your timeline to others. You'll get there eventually and find that the joy, laughter, and growth you experience in these new friendships will be worth every hurdle you jumped through to find them.

# RECIPES *(for When You're Broke, Have No Appliances, But Need to Eat)*

Another great way to make friends in college: make some food and invite others to eat it with you! And even if you don't invite friends, you still need food to survive (trust us!). If you live in a dorm, your options might be limited. So here are some resourceful ways to make a meal. Or you could rent out the community kitchen if your dorm has one ... nothing brings people together like food!



## A SMART, CHEAP RECIPE

### *Leftover Quesadilla*

This could work with leftover meat, tofu, or beans from any of the restaurants or dining halls on campus.

## Instructions

1. Heat your pan to medium heat and add your butter or oil.
2. Place one tortilla flat on the pan for a minute.
3. Flip the tortilla over and add your toppings—leftovers first, then your cheese and hot sauce.
4. Place another tortilla on top and cover the pan with a lid for one minute.
5. Flip the quesadilla one more time.
6. Once the cheese is melted, your quesadilla is ready. Remove from heat and enjoy!

Time: 10 minutes  
Servings: 1

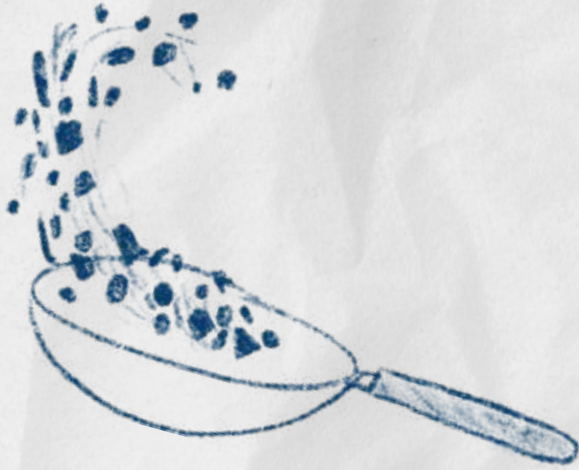
## Ingredients

- 2 large flour tortillas
- Cheese (as much as you want!)
- Hot sauce (optional)
- Leftover chicken or beef
- ½ tablespoon butter or oil

## PRO TIP FOR NO PANS/STOVES:

Make this in your microwave!  
Simply assemble your quesadilla  
and microwave for one minute.





Time: 30 minutes  
Servings: 2

## Ingredients

- ½ tablespoon vegetable oil
- ½ tablespoon sriracha
- ¼–½ head green cabbage
- 2 carrots
- 2 green onions
- ½ pound ground beef (or meat alternative)
- 1 clove garlic
- ½ tablespoon fresh grated ginger
- Salt and pepper to taste

## A HEALTHY, TASTY RECIPE

### *Easy Stir Fry*

This one will require access to a real kitchen.

## Instructions

1. Stir soy sauce, sriracha, and brown sugar in a separate bowl.
2. Cut your vegetables! Slice cabbage and carrots into thin slices. Mince (cut into small pieces—DON'T CHOP OFF YOUR FINGERS) the green onions, garlic, and ginger.
3. Heat a pan over medium heat and add vegetable oil. Once hot, add ground beef (or meat alternative), garlic, ginger, salt, and pepper. Cook for five minutes or until beef is browned, stirring occasionally to break up the meat.
4. Next, add cabbage and carrots and stir until the vegetables are wilted (shriveled like it lost its self-confidence).
5. Stir in the prepared sauce and enjoy!





## HOW TO LET CLASSES BECOME

# a Nightmare of Burnout & Exhaustion

*(and How to Actually Do Well in School)*

You've heard college horror stories: stacks of books to read, professors with high expectations, vague directions and having to wing assignments. These things might definitely happen in college. But it doesn't have to result in extreme burnout and stress.

### Don't Do It

*"You have to get good grades. If you don't, you'll be a failure. You'll let yourself and your parents, even God, down ..."*

—Overachieving anonymous freshman (possibly you???)

This may sound extreme, but it's the perspective many subconsciously live by in college. Those of us who lived our college lives like this missed out. On a lot. Late-night hangouts, deep conversations, building strong friendships, and growing closer to God.

### We don't want you to miss out.

This isn't justification for never cracking open a book in the next four years. We're called to do our best, like we're doing it for God (Eph 6:7). **But classes and grades aren't everything.** For most of you, your GPA will play little to no role in you getting the job you want post-college. So our biggest tip for doing well in classes is to not let them completely consume you.



# Tips for Thriving

Below are some tips to help you find a healthy balance between school and fun, laughter and discipline. (Maybe you'll even discover that school itself can be fun too ...)

## Find What Works for You



Some people love studying with friends while some find it more distracting. Tons of people need background noise, like music or a show playing or coffee shop ambiance.

Each of us is different, and it's important to figure out what works best for you. If you're not sure how to do this, start by asking yourself one or two of these questions each week:

- What have you been enjoying learning?
- What have been some challenges? What can you do to work on this?
- On a scale of 1–10, how would you rate your study focus level? How can you improve?

## Get Organized



You can't ace an assignment if you don't know it exists. Stay on top of homework. Here are some different approaches. There's nothing like the satisfaction of crossing off another project!

- Use a planner to write down what you need to do each week.
- Make a to-do list on your phone where you can check off completed assignments.
- Print your class syllabus and cross things off every time you finish a paper or reading.





## Plan Ahead

Don't forget to budget time for upcoming major assignments to avoid a string of caffeine-induced all-nighters at the end of the semester—unless you're into that kind of thing.



## Ask for Help

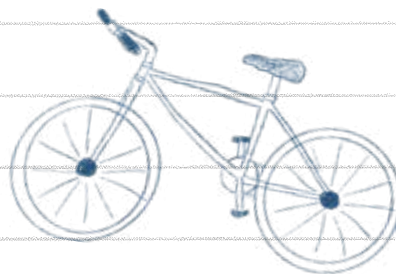
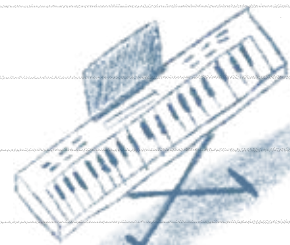
Professors assume you'll ask for help if you need it. Even though it can be intimidating to walk up to your teacher, do it. Your fellow classmates can also help, and study parties can be fun!



## Rest

Do your best to take a Sabbath day each week. That may sound crazy, but try having a day where you just spend time with Jesus, friends, and doing things you enjoy.

The theme of Sabbath rest is found throughout Scripture. Taking a Sabbath lets you and others around you know that no matter how big your problems seem, you believe that God is bigger. Productivity isn't everything. You can rest confidently in him.



## HOW TO HAVE A

# *Stale Relationship with Jesus* *(and How to Actually Grow in Your Faith)*

When Jesus said, “I have come that [you] may have life and have life to the full” (Jn 10:10), he actually, truly, 100 percent meant that. Many of us wish we’d known that when we started college. Maybe the faith you’ve brought to campus is a mix of a “chore list” and “suspicion”—stuff you know you’re supposed to be doing and stuff you’re not sure is worth doing.

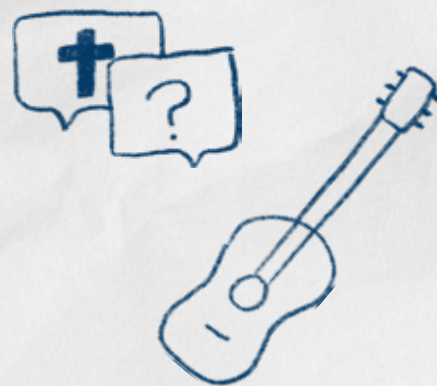
But Jesus said, “Life to the full,” and he meant it. Where your heart is insecure, fearful, tired, pulled in a thousand directions, **Jesus came to give you freedom, rest, confidence, purpose, and wholeness.** Life to the full. And by the time you graduate, you can actually, truly, 100 percent start having it. Here are some helpful ways to start.





## Start Together

If you struggle to read the Bible and pray on your own, **start with group practices instead!** Join a campus ministry like InterVarsity and make prayer meetings, communal Bible studies, and worship nights the foundation of your spiritual life. Start with “together” first and grow your personal rhythms from there.



## Small Habits



Whatever is literally the smallest amount of daily prayer and Scripture you can manage each day, do that. Start with saying the Lord's Prayer and reading ONE Psalm each day. **Set an alarm on your phone as a daily reminder**—whatever part of the day works best for you!

If you need a guide, use apps like YouVersion (just search “InterVarsity” for free Bible studies) or Lectio 365.

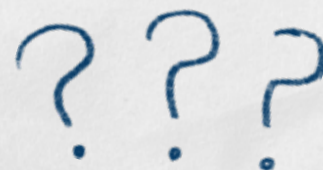
## Nail the Basics



**Fundamentals are the foundation for anything, including your spiritual life.** If you go through college with consistent practices of Scripture, prayer, worship, and serving others, you'll barely recognize yourself by the time you graduate compared to your first day on campus. Even better, you'll have a foundation that sets you up for more of God's transformation in the future. NAIL. THE. BASICS.

## Learn About Yourself

Deep transformation begins by exploring the terrain of your heart. **Get curious about your inner life**—ask questions like “What am I feeling right now and why?” and “Does my self-talk reflect how God sees me, and if not, how did I learn that?” Together with Jesus and your community, learn to understand your story, how it's shaped you “under the surface,” and where God might want to bring healing or set you free.





## A TASTE OF *InterVarsity* *Bible Study*

InterVarsity's ministry centers around manuscript Bible study, invented in the 1950s. It has three aspects: **observation**, **interpretation**, and **application**.

In this kind of Bible study, leaders are facilitators who pass out printed passages of Scripture, and members engage in communal discovery—generating questions together, sharing what they see and think, and discovering Scripture's meaning for themselves.

*"In the way we study the Bible with InterVarsity, everyone's on the same page ... no one knows more than someone else. We're all starting off at the same level."*

—Tori, Meredith College in North Carolina

Try a small taste of InterVarsity Bible study on your own below. We really think it's one of the best ways to learn more about Jesus and grow your faith. And if you like your experience, join an InterVarsity small group Bible study on your campus!



## Luke 10:38–42

<sup>38</sup> Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. <sup>39</sup> And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, <sup>42</sup> but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."



### *Observation: What does it say?*

Take a pen or even pens of multiple colors and **mark what stands out to you in the passage**. Who are the main characters? What are their actions and reactions to each other? Notice locations and time. Are there repeated words or phrases, comparisons, cause and effect?



### *Interpretation: What does it mean?*

In a small group, you'll come up with questions to get to the heart of the passage together. **The best questions can be answered through the text itself and context**. Remember, you're not necessarily trying to come up with the one right answer. Here are examples of questions that could come up:

- What might Martha's reaction reveal about her and her perspective of Jesus?
- What do you think Jesus means by "one thing" and "the good portion"?
- Why isn't Martha praised for what she's doing? What do you think Jesus' reaction to her says about his perspective on the things she and Mary were doing?



### *Application: What do I do now?*

Bible study should result in **action and transformation, not just knowledge**. God moves and speaks through his Word.

What habits can you begin during your first semester of college to sit at Jesus' feet and focus on the "one thing"?



## *More Resources*

Want more resources on how to survive college? InterVarsity Press publishes thoughtful Christian books on theology, spiritual disciplines, culture, and more.

Check out their list of the 25 best Christian books for college students to continue learning how to navigate the next four years.

[ivpress.com/pages/the-25-best-christian-books-for-college-students](http://ivpress.com/pages/the-25-best-christian-books-for-college-students)