



Oxford University Counselling Service Eleven Top Tips for Freshers

1. Give yourself time to settle in. Coming to university is obviously an important transition so don't expect that you will feel entirely at home after Fresher's Week is over and the inductions have finished. Give yourself permission to get used to things and find your feet.
2. Remember they didn't make a mistake. You do deserve to be here. You are not an imposter. There is a thing called 'the imposter syndrome' that people can suffer from here – not only students but tutors too. Even some professors apparently fear that their lectures will be interrupted by someone telling them they are a fraud and they need to leave. Give yourself time and allow yourself to belong and tell yourself, as much as you need to, that you are good enough to be here.
3. It is normal to miss family, friends, and things from home. It is important for most people to keep in touch but try not to rely on contacts from home too much and to the exclusion of finding new relationships here.
4. Don't be afraid to find some time for yourself, if you feel that you need to, amidst all the social activities in the first few weeks. You don't have to go to everything but try, on the other hand, not to hide away or avoid activities and events. Don't hold back from starting some work early(ish) in Fresher's week. You are here because you are good at work (and hopefully are interested in it) so don't deny yourself the chance to do something you value.
5. It sounds obvious, but try to establish some structure for your work: you may want to draft a clear but flexible work timetable for the week; work out your lecture schedule; you may want to find the place where you will do your independent studying. Remember that getting out of your room where there tend to be multiple distractions and going to a library, is often preferable. Just as importantly make sure that your schedule allows you to stop working and to enjoy yourself outside of work.
6. Allow yourself to be 'good enough' in your academic work and in other aspects of your life. You are, after all, here to learn and develop, and attempting to get everything absolutely right will just be counter-productive. Don't forget that striving for excellence is different from thinking that you have to be perfect. Striving for excellence requires you to risk, make mistakes and learn from them; harsh perfectionism demands that you become fiercely self-critical and tells you that you can never do enough or be good enough.



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7. Try to remember that your work is not you. You will get criticism (and hopefully some positive feedback) but this is intended to help you to learn, so try not to take it too personally. Learning is about being about to tolerate the frustration of not knowing something. You need to allow yourself to struggle with something in order to master it.
8. Remember everyone will be anxious to differing degrees and about different things. You are not the only one feeling it. Try to be kind to yourself and accepting. Anxiety tends to build when you get anxious about being anxious.
9. Give yourself time to make Oxford your own. It can sometimes feel that this institution is intimidating or impersonal or wants you to be or act in a certain way. Remember that there are lots of different 'Oxfords' and you can find your place with people you feel comfortable with, if you give it time. You will need to be open to being influenced and changed by your experience here too.
10. Look after yourself physically as well. Good (and enough) sleep, eating, some exercise and some balance with regard to lifestyle are the foundations for success.
11. If you would like to talk to someone about how you are feeling, do. Don't hesitate. You will probably find friends you can talk to. Don't be afraid to start to open yourself to people as you get to know them. There will very likely be peer supporters in your college. They are great to talk to. You might want to contact a member of the Welfare Team in college or the Counselling Service (www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling) or Disability Service. Remember that there are very many sources of support here.

Contacts

Student Welfare and Support Services 270300

- Counselling Service
- Disability Advisory Service
- Peer Support Programme

In colleges

- Welfare Officers and peer supporters
- Junior Deans
- Chaplains, Welfare Deans, College Nurses and Doctors