

Tips for Making Friends at ACU

Going to college can be a daunting prospect for many students, but international students can sometimes have extra challenges. While all students are concerned about making friends in college, international students have cultural and sometimes linguistic barriers that can make them feel even more nervous when they think about interacting with other students. On this page, you'll learn a few tips that will help you overcome those barriers and make friends during your time at ACU.

1. Get involved. Seek out on-campus activities or groups that interest you.¹ When you find a hobby or an activity that you enjoy with a group, you will automatically be connected with other students who share your interests, and friendships can often spring from those shared interests. Go to school football games, on-campus plays and music concerts, or head downtown for Art Walk (on the first Thursday of every month) and enjoy a coffee at Monk's Coffee Shop. Visit the Grace Museum, the zoo, the Frontier Texas! museum, catch a movie at the Paramount Theatre, or visit the Historic Village in Buffalo Gap. Don't miss out on the rodeos in town, either! (Here's a list of the top ten things you have to do in Abilene: <http://www.tourtexas.com/content.cfm?ID=400>). If you see an off-campus activity that interests you, don't be afraid to go.
2. Seek out the multicultural resources ACU offers.² One of the best things that international students can do at ACU is become involved with the International Students' Association (ISA). Populated with people from all over the world, ISA convenes for chapel every Thursday at 11 a.m. and also offers small, informal social events (called cultural mixers) throughout the school year. Every Friday night international students get together for a free meal and time of fellowship. ISA also puts on a culture show in the fall semester in which various groups perform a dance or other cultural exhibit. So join a group and share a cultural experience with the rest of the student body. In the spring semester, ISA hosts a Food Festival in which groups will cook traditional food from their home countries. Additionally, ISA goes on a trip every spring. Join the ISA Facebook page to stay up-to-date on ISA activities.
3. Get out of your comfort zone.³ It's always easier to stick with people from your own country or to stay in your room when you don't know anyone else. However, this will make it more difficult for you to make friends. Ask to sit with people in the cafeteria (the Bean), especially if you see someone else sitting alone. Go to an activity that is new to you—college is about exploring and expanding your worldview, so you never know what you might discover that you like.
4. Say yes to people's invitations,⁴ especially during Welcome Week and the first few weeks of school. Don't stay home because you "just don't feel like going" or because you feel shy about going. Make studying a priority, but don't underestimate the importance of reaching out to people as well.
5. Smile.⁵ In U.S. culture, smiling makes you seem more approachable and will make it easier for other people to start a conversation with you or invite you out.
6. Don't be afraid of small talk.⁶ This is a way that Americans get to know other people, and engaging in "small talk," or light conversation about broad topics like

the weather, sports, or hobbies, is a way to start a potential friendship. Even if the topic is new to you, join in on a conversation with a comment or a question. Show a genuine interest in other people and in what they have to say. Also, if English is difficult for you to understand, don't be afraid to ask people to speak more slowly.

7. Leave your dorm room door open while you are present. This is a good way to allow people to feel comfortable chatting with you in your dorm.

¹ Julie Mayfield and Lindsey Mayfield. "5 Tips for U.S., International Students to Make Friends in College." www.usnews.com/education/blogs/twice-the-college-advice/2012/09/25/5-tips-for-us-international-students-to-make-friends-in-college.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "4 Tips for International Students to Make Friends in the U.S." blog.peertransfer.com/2013/01/02/4-tips-for-international-students-to-make-friends-in-the-u-s/.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "How to Make Friends Being an International Student." Blog.peertransfer.com/2013/03/29/how-to-make-friends-being-an-international-student/.