The Pocket Guide for Students: Top Tips

This additional set of information to accompany *The Pocket Guide for Students* is all the resources from the book, plus many more, all designed to support you in your studies and mental wellbeing while you’re at university. This section caters for a variety of needs, so use the tips that work for you.

With all the digital recommendations within this section, obviously it’s important to stay safe online, password protect your phone (and make sure you don’t lose it!) and check safety and security certificates of apps you download. All apps distributed in the UK have to comply with the Data Protect Act (2018), so you should have reasonable confidence that your data is safe, however it is always best to err on the side of caution. Don’t share your passwords or login details, and don’t allow others access to your phone outside on an emergency.

For those of you who allow children to use games on your phones, consider putting all apps with confidential content, such as banking apps, in a digital folder on your phone, as well as all games suitable for your child/children in another. These are easy to set up and you may even be able to password protect these on some smartphones.

# Handy Hints and Top Tips

## Vanessa’s Top 10 Top Tips

1. Communicate with staff and each other
2. If you have questions – ask!
3. Turn up, take part, do the work
4. Get organised and plan ahead with your assignments
5. Embrace technology, but stay safe online
6. Budget your finances carefully
7. Learn to balance the professional and personal sides of your life
8. Look after yourself and your mental health
9. Don’t struggle or suffer in silence, always (always) ask for help.
10. Enjoy your academic journey!

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for making your money stretch further

* Work out how much money you have coming in and how much you have going out
* Look at your existing payments and direct debits
* Look for all available student discounts
* Download a budgeting app
* Consider getting a student account
* Download a banking app
* Consider setting up a standing order for yourself
* Set up a savings account

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for Fresher’s Week

* Keep your Student ID safe
* Get a waterproof (this is the UK!) bag/backpack with internal compartments for keys and purse/wallet
* Keep your phone in your pocket or in your bag
* If you have a bike, get a decent security lock
* Make your social media accounts private
* Let friends know where you’re going when you’re out and about
* Lock windows and doors when you leave your flat/house/halls
* Keep your belongings with you
* Put the Security Services and Campus Police numbers into your phone
* Make sure you are familiar with your campus!
* Don’t go out alone, and avoid walking alone at night
* Don’t feel pressured into doing anything you don’t want to do
* Learn local/national alert signals (e.g. Ask Angela)
* Stay vigilant, particularly if you’re out at night
* Make sure you know what to do if anything negative happens when you are out
* If you see anything suspicious, report it to the relevant person

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for making the most out of classes

* Turn up
* Listen
* Take part
* Write notes
* Do the reading

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for Engaging with Class

* **Do** show up on time.
* **Don’t** talk unless asked.
* **Do** write notes
* **Don’t** text your friends
* **Don’t** play games or watch shows on your phone/computer
* **Do** try to stay awake

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for Emailing Staff

* Basic greeting – e.g. ‘Hello’, or ‘Dear Vanessa’, or ‘Dear Dr Parson’ (or however your lecturers prefer being referenced)
* Include your name
* State which module/assignment your email is about (if you wish to talk about a module/assignment)
* Add a sensible subject line, e.g. ‘Question about Essay for Introduction to Psychology’
* Be clear what your question/message is
* Finish with a sensible and polite sign off with your preferred name, e.g. ‘Best wishes’

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for avoiding academic misconduct

* Read to understand not to copy
* **Don’t** copy when you write notes
* **Don’t** just copy your notes into your assignment
* If you use information that someone else wrote, say **WHO** wrote it and **WHEN** they wrote it.

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for recognising mental health struggles in yourself and others

* Decrease in daily functioning
  + Sudden drop in engagement, participation and performance in daily life and academic study
  + Finding tasks and academic study disorienting and difficult in a way not normally observed
* Difficulty thinking and concentrating
  + Finding basic interactions challenging due to difficulties speaking, remembering, concentrating and following logical trains of thought
  + Unable to cope with stress
* Withdrawal from social connections
  + Loss of interest in social activities and communications
  + Social withdrawal that is out of character
* Mood changes
  + Rapid or dramatic shifts in emotions that are not necessarily connected with external events
  + Depressed feelings and mood consistently
  + Prolonged anxiety and/or feelings of worry
  + Suicidal ideation
* Illogical thinking
  + Unrealistic and/or exaggerated thoughts and beliefs about the self or others, including illogical and magical thinking, or thinking at a level below their chronological age that is not otherwise typical of their cognitive development.
  + Extreme feelings of guilt or worthlessness
* Increased or decreased sensitivity
  + Notable change in sensitivity to sensory stimulation and avoidance of situations that is not otherwise explained (e.g. through pregnancy and changes in sensory sensitivity).
* Nervousness
  + Displaying changes in level of distrust and suspicion of others
  + Demonstrating uncharacteristic levels of nervousness around others
* Sleep and/or appetite changes
  + Sustained changes in regularity, amount and quality of sleep.
  + Sustained changes in appetite
  + Decline in, or heightened obsession over, personal self-care
* Apathy
  + Lack of desire and initiative to participate in events, activities or interactions
* Unusual behaviour
  + Behaving in a way contrary to normal patterns that is odd, uncharacteristic and possibly peculiar, which cannot be explained through alternative explanations.
  + Substance use and abuse.
  + Hallucinations

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for tackling academic stress

* Take things at your own pace
* Find a space to get some space
* Get some sleep
* Spend time with friends
* **Don’t**…
  + Drink too much caffeine
  + Put off starting your assignments.
* **Do…**
  + Talk to staff and ask for help

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for Time Management

* Plan ahead
* Use a diary or calendar
* Expect the unexpected

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for Motivation

* Work in advance.
* Set yourself realistic goals.
* Reward yourself when you complete tasks and assignments!

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for living in Halls of Residence

* Be considerate.
* Try to ensure you have a quiet space to work.
* Communicate with each other.
* Only eat the food you have bought.
* Clean up after yourself.
* **Don’t** bang on people’s doors at night unless there’s an emergency.
* No loud parties after midnight on weekdays.
* Try to avoid dangerous practical jokes.
* **Don’t** leave your valuables lying around, keep them safe in your room.
* **Don’t** forget your keys.

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for Living with Family

* Discuss your commute and share your university timetable
* **Do** your own laundry.
* Join in the cooking rota.
* Contribute to the household bills!
* Take your turn cleaning.
* **Don’t** bring other people back home with you after a night out.

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for maintaining relationships with others

* Make time to connect and catch up
* Respect each other’s boundaries
* Pay attention to them
* Think about how the things you say might impact them or make them feel
* Listen to understand what is being said, don’t just listen to reply
* Make sure you allow time for space from the relationship as well
* Trust in each other
* If conflict arises, try to remain calm and objective, and be thoughtful when resolving it
* Have their back when others are speaking about them
* Be honest

## RED FLAGS – things to look out for in the behaviour of others

* Always appearing where you are
* Responding negatively to messages
* Expecting you to drop everything for them
* Always expecting you to be the one making time for them, and always on their terms
* Saying negative things about you behind your back
* Saying negative things about you to others when you are present
* Dismissing your views and ignoring your feelings
* Commenting negatively about your other relationships
* Wanting you to always share your work
* Making fun of you, your beliefs, practices, actions, and/or feelings
* Not allowing you to make decisions for yourself, or making you afraid to do so
* Threatening you or making you feel threatened
* Embarrassing you and/or putting you down (privately or publicly)
* Manipulating or controlling you
* Disrespecting your sexual orientation and preferences
* Making you feel like you don’t have any personal space
* Isolating you from others you care about
* Behaving in a way that makes you feel nauseated and/or anxious when they are unhappy or irritated

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for interacting with university staff

* Introduce yourself if you have only recently met
* Be polite and respectful at all times
* If you need to see them in person, try to stick to their Office Hours
* Don’t be over-friendly and maintain a professional distance
  + Even if you see them out in the pubs and clubs, be polite, but don’t join them in a social situation
  + Don’t befriend them on personalised Social Media such as Facebook and Snapchat
  + Don’t swap phone numbers
* If you do need to confide in them, keep in mind it is a professional conversation, and they will remain objective while they are being supportive during your discussion.
* Be patient when waiting for email replies
* Don’t overstep professional boundaries

## Vanessa’s Top Tips for staying safe on a night out

* Tell someone about your plans
  + Who you are going out with and where, and let them know what time you’re expecting to get home
* Avoid going out straight from university when you have your laptop and any other expensive equipment
  + It’s not worth the risk, take your things home first
* Make plans for how to get home:
  + Keep taxi money in your bra/pocket away from your purse/wallet (and don’t spend it during the night!)
  + Make sure you have a local taxi number programmed into your phone and try not to wait for your taxi alone. If you find yourself on your own, then try to get to a taxi rank
  + Get the bus/tube/metro timetable cued up on your phone internet browser
* Find a safe walking route
* Make sure your mobile phone is charged (and has enough credit)
* Know your limits when it comes to alcohol (if you drink)
* Eat before you go out, this will help offset the effect of alcohol if you do drink
* **Never** leave your drink unattended
* **Don’t** accept drinks or drugs from someone you don’t know
* If you think your drink has been tampered with, ditch it, and get another one
* Try to avoid doing anything you wouldn’t do sober
* Keep tabs on your friends
* **Don’t** go near any large bodies of water, such as rivers or lakes, don’t climb anything, and don’t attempt any stunts
* Travel home with someone else and text your someone in Tip 1 to say you’re heading home
* **Never** give your address to someone you just met
* **Never** allow anyone to coerce you into making decisions you don’t want to make
* **Don’t** go home with anyone you don’t want to spend time with
* If you do end up spending a consensual night with someone new, take precautions and stay safe at all times
* Have fun!