



Post-Secondary Survival Guide



REGISTERING FOR YOUR COURSES

So you've got the money -- now, how do you get into your courses? That depends on what kind of a program you're in. Carefully read the acceptance letter that you got from your school and any other information that was enclosed with it. (If you didn't get any registration information with your acceptance letter, CALL THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE and ask for some.)

In general, to complete your registration you must choose your courses and pay your fees. Some schools require that you do this in person on a certain day with the help of an academic advisor; others allow you to do it over the phone or by mail. In any case, be sure to follow the instructions they give you, and pay attention to deadlines. Missing a deadline or a fee payment may result in you being de-registered -- kicked out of your program.

COUNSELLING RESOURCES

No matter how well prepared you are, life can throw you a curve ball. Maybe you're lonely, or having difficulty with a class, or doubts about your career, or maybe you have been assaulted. In any case, you don't need to tough it out alone. Feelings and problems like this are common enough that there are lots of services available to help you out. And no one expects you to tough it out alone. Ask for help when you need it you are in an unfamiliar environment, with new challenges and opportunities, and sometimes asking for help can make all the difference in making this new experience rewarding as opposed to overwhelming.

OFF-CAMPUS

If you can't access your school's support services, there are also other resources that you can keep in mind. The inside of the front page of the phone book has a listing of 24-hour Emergency numbers for your area, including crisis and counseling lines (if you are worried about confidentiality, services that do not subscribe to call display are marked with an asterisk).

If your concern is not an immediate crisis, you can find personal and career counseling resources listed under "counseling" in your local Yellow Pages, or else in the Human Services section at the front of the White Pages. Call and make an appointment.

ABORIGINAL SERVICES

While all post-secondary institutions offer support services for the general student population some colleges also have programs designed especially for Aboriginal students.

Keyano College offers Aboriginal Services through their counseling office. An Aboriginal Counselor is available to provide personal, academic and vocational counseling.

At **NorQuest College**, customized programs are available for Ab-original students, including liaison services, workforce development and career training and academic preparation.

The **University of Alberta** also has an extremely impressive Aboriginal Student Services office -- (780) 492-5677) - that offers academic and social support, and co-ordinates a number of programs designed to "actively promote the access, participation and success of Aboriginal students." They also offer pre-admission counseling, financial aid information, career planning and host a number of Aboriginal student groups.

10 TIPS FOR AVOIDING DISASTER

Support Services are available if you need them, but wouldn't it be nice to avoid academic trouble altogether? Here are some tips to keep in mind:

1. Read the Calendar -- at least the first 40 pages. Yes, it will be the most boring 40 pages of your life, but while you're in school, your Calendar is The Law. You are responsible for knowing all the regulations and requirements contained in the General and program-specific sections.
2. When dealing with administration, get it in writing and keep a copy of all correspondence. This is the easiest way to keep track of who said what, when.
3. Keep all your receipts for at least one full calendar year. This may be the only way to avoid paying fines or tuition twice.
4. Know your options. If you're in trouble, you might be able to appeal a grade or have an exam remarked or even rewrite an exam. The information's all in the Calendar (see #1).
5. Talk to your professor as soon as you see trouble coming. It's easier to deal with problems (missed assignments, confusing lessons, etc.) sooner rather than later.
6. Pay attention to important dates and times. Deadlines -- academic and financial -- are very, very strict. If you need an extension on an assignment or a tuition payment, talk to someone BEFORE the deadline passes.
7. Be realistic. If you're dealing with major stress that's stopping you from doing well in your studies, check out your options. Talk to your professor, advisors, Student Services. They can help you find an option better than a failed course.
8. Confirm your course changes -- both original registration and course changes. There's nothing worse than discovering you're scheduled to write an exam for a course that you've never attended.
9. Use the services that are available. You'll be more successful with their help, and you paid for them as part of your fees. Get your money's worth!
10. Balance your social life with your academics. There are a lot of opportunities to party in college, and it's important to connect with your fellow students, but remember that you came to school to learn. Treat studying like a full-time job and you'll be fine.

STUDENT HOUSING

Are you looking for a place to stay while you pursue higher knowledge? There are many options for you to explore as a student in need of lodging. All of them have their pros and cons, so it's important that you weigh the options and decide which will work best for you.

If your family lives near enough to your school, you may not have to move out at all. Living with your folks has some obvious advantages: you don't have to move, it's cheap, there's always food in the fridge, and loneliness isn't so much of a problem!



Many students, though, move out in order to pursue their studies. In general, students must consider three things while looking for accommodation:

1. **COST.** Sure, we all want the swank condo right on the edge of campus, but can we afford it? Figuring out what you're willing to spend before you start your house search will save you time and frustration during the hunt.

2. **LOCATION.** If you're studying, it's probably important that your place be close to school, but you should also consider how far it is from grocery stores, laundromats and other important amenities. If you're planning on taking public transportation to school, make sure that you check the frequency of the routes that run by your house: sometimes a place that looks "out in the boonies" on a map is actually closer (in terms of travel time) than a location only a few blocks away that doesn't have the same bus connections.

3. **LIFESTYLE.** This is a complicated one. If you're only going to be at home to sleep, then maybe you should just rent a room somewhere. If you enjoy cooking for yourself, then you'll definitely want a kitchen. If you get lonely easily, maybe you should explore a communal living situation (having roommates also makes renting cheaper). If you're easily distracted, maybe you shouldn't live with your friends. If you don't want to be annoyed by household responsibilities, then maybe student residence with a meal plan is the way to go.

LEGALESE-- The Landlord-Tenant Act

Tenant is responsible:

- to pay the rent on time (if not, tenancy can be cancelled).
- to be considerate of other tenants.
- not to endanger other tenants.
- not to do anything illegal on the premises.
- keep the premises undamaged and (reasonably) clean.
- move out when the rental agreement ends.

Landlord is responsible:

- to ensure that the premises is available for the tenant when the rental agreement takes effect.
- to ensure that the premises are habitable at the beginning of the tenancy.
- Not to disturb the tenant's peaceful enjoyment of the premises, and to enter the premises only with your permission (unless there is an emergency, or if s/he thinks you have abandoned the premises).



It is a good idea to have a written rental agreement or lease. DO NOT SIGN a lease unless you have read and understood it.

A Security/Damage Deposit (not exceeding one month's rent) can be requested by the landlord. The landlord must pay annual interest on this deposit, and return it (minus any damage costs) to you at the end of your tenancy.

This is only a guide, not an exact statement of the law. FOR MORE INFO:

Landlord and Tenant Act http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/landlords_tenants.cfm

Student Legal Services of Edmonton: (780) 492-2226

RENTAL CHECKLISTS

STARTUP COSTS

- Transport (borrow a truck, it's cheaper than renting one! If you have to use a rental company, shop around for the best deal!).
- Is it cheaper to ship the things you already have or buy new ones once you get to the city? Remember that you can often scrounge furniture or buy it cheaply second-hand.

RENT AND UTILITIES

- What is your rent?
- What is the damage deposit? (Remember: unless you damage the apartment, you should get it all back at the end of your lease.)
- Is there a lease? How long is it for? Does it allow sub-letting?
- Does rent include utilities? If so, which ones -- heating, cable, water, garbage/recycling?
- Does rent include parking?
- Sometimes insurance companies give students free or discount insurance of property (tenants' package).

Probably the most important thing to think about is people. Let's face it; we're social animals, so having the right social environment to keep you happy and productive is important. If you're quiet, for heaven's sake don't move into a well-known party house: you'll be miserable!

Compatibility isn't just a problem when you're moving in with strangers, either. No matter how great you think your best friends are before you move in together, if they don't pay their rent on time or never do their dishes, chances are you'll be complaining about them in less than a month.

To avoid broken friendships, it's a good idea to sit down with your roommates before you move in together to figure out what kind of a household you're going to have. Set a cleaning schedule; discuss what kind of behaviour is acceptable to everyone and how bills are going to be divided up; talk about each other's schedules and pet peeves; decide how you are going to deal with disagreements. By getting all of this out of the way at the beginning, when everyone is happy and excited, you make sure that any disagreements that happen during the school year -- when you and your friends will be stressed with exams and deadlines won't be nuclear disasters. And what your teacher told you in kindergarten applies now more than ever: treat people the way you want to be treated! It's the easiest way to make friends and avoid enemies!

Whoever you decide to live with, you have two main location options:

STUDENT RESIDENCE: Just call your school and apply to theirs. Since most residences have limited space, it's a good idea to apply early -- say, at the same time that you apply to study. I'd recommend touring any residence before you decide to live there; take the official tour AND give yourself an unofficial tour on a different day. Sometimes, you get a more realistic view of student housing if you're there without a tour guide.

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING: Check the local classifieds, bulletin boards, renters' guides and with your school's housing office, as many colleges offer listings of local rentals -- everything from houses to furnished rooms. Depending on what you're looking for, it can take quite some time to find a good place, so start your search at least two months before you plan on moving in.

RESPONSIBILITIES -- Landlord or tenant?

Who controls the heating?

Are overnight guests allowed?

Who is responsible for snow removal?

Are laundry facilities available? Do they cost extra?

Where are the fuse box and the water meter located?

Check that the stove, oven, fridge and toilet work, and that there's good water pressure.

How secure is it? Are the locks adequate and working? Do doorbells, smoke detectors and outside lights work? Are windows secure and fire exits clearly marked?

With your landlord, make a damage deposit report. Both of you should sign it, and you should keep it with your records so that you don't get charged for damage that was there when you moved in.



SETTING UP HOUSE

TELEPHONE SERVICE

This is an important aspect and you will likely be using a cell phone. Most high school students have had a phone of their own for years, but this may be the first time you'll be paying your own phone. Most providers have a wide range of cell phones and cellular data packages. The one that fits you the best will depend on what you'll be using your phone for. **DO YOUR HOMEWORK.** Compare different companies and their products. **KEEP YOUR BUDGET IN MIND.** And use your phone wisely.

<http://www.comparecellular.ca/compare-plans-in-alberta/>

INTERNET

If you are moving into student residence, chances are there are already arrangements for Internet (ask the housing office when you are applying). If you are moving into your own house or apartment you will need to select an Internet provider and contact them online.

UTILITIES

To set up a utility account (i.e. for power or water), just look in the municipal section of your phonebook or online and call the companies that are listed. Once again, give them a week to get you hooked up.



URBAN TRANSPORTATION

Navigating in a new city can be difficult: even if you know the address, how do you get there?

BY BUS

Public transportation (bus or rail) is available in larger centers like Edmonton. Numbered bus routes cover most of the city, and rail transit runs regularly on set routes. Passengers can pay by cash, prepaid ticket or a monthly student bus pass.

It can be confusing to figure out which bus to take and what transfers you should make, but don't panic, help is available at the Edmonton Transit System web site: <https://www.edmonton.ca/edmonton-transit-system-ets.aspx>

Public transport is cheap -- and warmer than walking -- but it does have its down side. Buses and LRT (Light Rail Transit) stop running late at night, and don't run very often on the week-ends. Also, not all areas have bus service. For these reasons, some people complain that public transit is too inconvenient to use.

BY CAR

Most students dream of having their own vehicle. If you are one of the lucky ones, getting from point A to point B will be quicker -- especially if you have a map. Everyone who moves to a new city or town should at least visit the local Tourist Information Center or town hall to pick up a simple tourist map, which will give you a good idea of the layout of your new home (as well as things to do). If you have a car, it's probably worth spending a few bucks on a more detailed city map, usually available at gas stations. And, of course, there are always GPS systems available.

While having a car will make you the envy of your friends, who will be hauling groceries in their backpacks and transporting small IKEA furniture items on the bus, it does have its down side. Insurance and gas are expensive. It is also important to remember to budget for parking. If you're planning on driving to school every day, it'll be worth your while to buy a parking pass, which will let you park on university property at a flat rate. Before you invest in a pass, though, think hard: are you REALLY going to be driving as much as you think you will? Some students park their cars for the winter and take the bus or even (gasp!) walk most places.

BY FOOT

Yep, walking - it takes more time, but it's also cheap, easy and great exercise. If you worry about being alone at night (it's smart to be cautious), some schools, like the University of Alberta, have programs where students can call for co-ed escorts to walk home with them.

BY TAXI

Being quite expensive, taxis are usually only used by students for emergencies or special events. Offering chauffeured door-to-door service, they are quite convenient and often quicker than public transportation. They are also much more expensive.

BY BIKE

Bikes are a very popular way to commute. They're faster than walking, cheaper than driving or taking a taxi, and (unlike public transit) you can travel on your own schedule. For safety's sake, you'll at least need to invest in a bike helmet and a lock.

So... now that you know where you're headed and how you're going to get there, get going and good luck!

OH, NO I FEEL A LITTLE SICK!

You shouldn't wait until you're sick to find out what your post-secondary school offers for Student Health services and whether or not you've got coverage to access these services. As a student, you are often covered under your parents (or guardians) Alberta Health Care coverage and their private health insurance coverage if they have some, but don't assume this is true. Check it out before you go. In some post-secondary institutions, you will be required to participate in a student health coverage plan unless you can prove you have coverage under a different plan. If this isn't true at your school, you may want to apply for private insurance to cover the costs of prescription drugs, vision care, or ambulance requirements. All of these items can be a big drain on your finances without some kind of insurance. Once you're at your school, find out if there's a Student Health Services office, where it is and when it's open. And remember, it's easier to study if you're healthy, so don't put off visiting the Health Services office if you are sick.

So you've done it: you're attending classes in the program of your choice at the post-secondary institution of your choice... and you hate it. The classes aren't what you thought they'd be, you're not sure about your career choice, you're SURE about what you want to study but it's not the program that you're in. What do you do?

Since you've already read and paid attention to all of the tips in this booklet, we'll step right up to the biggy, which is....

RESEARCH!

Yes, as your professors/teachers have told you, research is the answer to all your problems! If you know what (different) program you want to study, talk to some students/teachers in that program to make sure that it's what you're hoping for. If you know what kind of a job you want but aren't sure how to become qualified for it, ask someone who does that job where and how they got their training. If you're STILL at a loss, try searching the Internet (university or college plus whatever you want to study is usually a good starting point for search engines).

Some students who are having doubts leave university for a short or long time to figure things out. This is a choice, but it's a fairly final one. Make sure that you've tried all your options before you drop everything to become a hermit in the Rockies.

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