



Social interaction

"The subtleties of communication can be elusive."
— Martin et al. 2008

Starting university is an exciting time. However, it also comprises a number of challenges that are not just academic. There are many practical issues associated with living independently, for example. One such challenge for the autistic student, can frequently be social interactions. Navigating all of the social and communication rules that govern interaction, can be exhausting and extremely stressful. Many autistic individuals describe working the rules out by cognition or rote learning, which can drain their personal resources.

"What was the most dreadful was probably what other students looked forward to...the breaks between lessons."
— Perner 2002

Top tips to help:

- Meet your tutors and lecturers as soon as possible.
- Find out what groups are on offer on campus. Shared interests can be a great way to make friends, helping to give you something to talk about.
- Seek out people and environments who accept you for who you are.
- Don't feel pressured by non-autistic norms...you really don't have to go to the student union bar!
- Find quiet spaces on campus where you feel safe and comfortable.
- Help others to recognise your communication needs by using a communication passport. (See resource from the West Cheshire Autism Hub)
- Schedule in down time to decompress after social interaction.
- Smaller supervision or tutor groups can be easier to socially navigate and less overwhelming than larger groups.

- Seek out environments in the local community where you feel valued and welcome.

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