

COLLEGE 101

A Christian
SURVIVAL GUIDE

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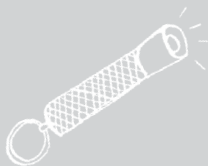


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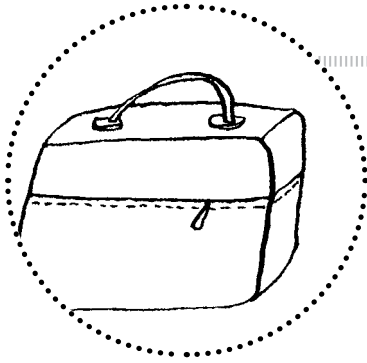
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introduction

Welcome to **College 101**. Perhaps you just graduated from high school or are preparing to graduate soon. Maybe you've already spent some time on a college campus. Whatever your situation, we're glad you decided to check out this resource.

College 101: A Christian Survival Guide was written with you in mind. In each chapter, our student authors share their real-life campus experiences. The author panel includes alumni from major universities, small private colleges, and everything in between. You'll learn from their successes as well as their mistakes. Most important, you'll hear firsthand what it means to be a Christian student on campus today.



Before You Go

Graduation celebrations are winding down, so now you look forward to a summer job and earning some cash before you take your next step toward freedom. Just a couple of years ago, I was in those same shoes, excited and scared about the next few years. I'm sure you're thinking that life is becoming more and more complicated every day as you approach your first day of college classes. You have high hopes for what the next few years have to offer, or perhaps you have many worries and reservations about the years to come. Before you even leave home, you face difficult decisions that will shape your college experience. What should you do to prepare? What roommate situation works best for you? What clothes do you take? What high school memories do you pack away as you fit your life into cardboard boxes? What do your parents expect of you in this new chapter of your life?

The good news is that you are not alone. All high school seniors face certain fears and questions as they prepare for independent adulthood. For many, this means taking the first step toward college or university. Don't panic. Take a deep breath and remember that your Savior will always be

with you as He walks right beside you (Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 23).

We will answer some of your questions to help form a clearer vision about what to expect in the months and years ahead. While I may not know you personally, perhaps you can learn from my experiences, both good and bad, as you make informed decisions before heading off to campus.

My parents are supportive, but I don't know what they expect.

Everyone has different reasons for going to college. For some, the decision is fueled by parental expectations. For others, it is based on individual dreams. Still others view their college choice as a combination of the two. Figuring out your true motives behind your college choice may be the most challenging thing you do before you head off to school. Hopefully, you are following your personal dream. In any case, you should talk to your parents to see what they expect from your college choices.

Take the time to sit down with your parents before you head off to school to see what they expect from you so you do not end up disappointing them unintentionally. A few topics you should include in your conversation are alcohol and drug use, grades, relationships, finances, and church attendance. These topics will be addressed in later chapters in this book.

I chose my roommate. Now what do I expect?

Choosing your roommate situation will be one of the first major decisions you have to make before you head off to school. The results of this decision affect your life on campus in a major way. With most schools, you have two options for choosing your roommate: room with someone you already know or take your chances with an open assignment.

If you choose to room with someone you already know, consider the following: How well do you know your future roommate? Does your future roommate share your Christian faith?

There are three possible answers to the first question: you know your future roommate very well; you know the individual a little bit; or he or she is an acquaintance. Knowing the depth of your relationship with this person will help you make an educated decision.

So what does it mean to know a person very well? In most cases, it means you consider this person your best friend, almost as if you are a brother or sister to the person. You share everything, and you spend a great deal of time together.

If you classify your relationship with your potential roommate as very close, rooming together may still not be the best choice. I've personally witnessed two potential outcomes for best friends who room together. The first is that you will end up becoming even closer. I have numerous friends who ended up strengthening their relationship by rooming with their best friend. But another possible outcome of choosing to room with your best friend is that you end up stressing your relationship to the point of causing a rift between the two of

you. Unfortunately, in the cases I've seen, this latter scenario is the more likely of the two. I know numerous cases where best friends have roomed together, but before the end of the first semester, they have changed roommates.

The second option, in my opinion, is the best choice—rooming with someone you know a little bit. Because you do not have as great an expectation for how the person will act as a roommate, you have the opportunity to get to know your roommate better and you can grow in your friendship. Two of my really close friends just barely knew each other in high school. They became best friends their freshman year of college, and they had no problem adjusting to each other. My freshman roommate was someone I knew in high school, but whom I did not know well. The living situation took some time for my roommate and me to get used to, but we eventually adjusted and became good friends.

Being acquaintances is the final possible type of relationship you can have with your chosen roommate. This I would describe as almost a blind date. Perhaps someone refers another person to you that he or she thinks would be a good roommate for you. This is close to potluck, but you are matched up by a person who knows you well. This, I guess, takes the luck out of potluck. Most pairings like this turn out well because the referral allows you to be paired with someone who has similar beliefs or morals.

The other major thing I would suggest you consider in selecting a roommate is answering the question “Does he/she share my Christian faith?” The answer to this question will allow you to choose a roommate that you can know how to live with. If your roommate is a Christian, expect someone who will help keep you accountable to your beliefs. My first roommate was a Christian. At times, he would wake me up to talk about the Bible or a statement he heard in a study

group. While this may not be a typical course of action for a Christian roommate to take, you can expect someone like that to make sure you stay true to your faith.

If your roommate is not a Christian, you can expect a lot of exposure to situations you may have never even thought of. My second roommate is not a Christian, and this allowed me an opportunity to witness how my faith affects the things I do in my life. He has always been open to talking about my beliefs, and he has voiced his beliefs. But until I met him, I did not know such beliefs even existed in our world. As a Christian with a non-Christian roommate, be prepared for potential conflicts in values. Also watch out for the temptation to avoid talking about worship or other faith-sustaining practices. It is especially important to make sure that you surround yourself with fellow believers in a group Bible study or campus ministry so you have opportunities to meet with others who share your faith.

I do not want to know my roommate. What can I expect in choosing to live with a stranger?

Okay, so you have decided that you do not know anyone attending your college of choice who would work well as a roommate. What can you expect? First, I want to commend your courage. Don't worry—most of these situations work out well. From my experience, there are two potential outcomes from a potluck roommate assignment: you will gain a new best friend or you will become enemies.

Great! Okay. So now you're thinking, "I can become best friends with my new roommate." What a great attitude to have! More times than not, I have seen this housing situation

have positive results. You come in without any notions about what your roommate will act like, so you tend to be more open toward the person and his or her actions. This helps you develop a relationship with your new roommate that will take time to develop. Many of my friends did not know each other before they roomed together. Now they are returning as roommates for the second or third year.

Okay. So I've scared you, and you're thinking, I'm afraid my roommate will be intolerable. In some cases, this is a legitimate fear. Be prepared to handle each situation with class, and let Christ shine through you. Start out by talking to your roommate. Develop a set of guidelines to help avoid future misunderstandings.

Learn about your roommate.

Now it's time to get down to the nitty-gritty. Contact your roommate before move-in to discuss many issues. If you're rooming with someone you already know, this is easy. If you don't already know your future roommate, you may not know how to contact the person. Many universities provide either a phone number or e-mail of your future roommate. If they do not, you can check social networking sites to see if you can find your future roommate and discuss the upcoming school year.

When you contact your roommate, there are two topics I suggest you discuss. You should talk about guidelines and who is bringing shared items such as a refrigerator or television. Guidelines are fairly simple; they tell you what to expect of your new roommate and of yourself. This gives you a chance to start adjusting early so you can meet the guidelines you are setting for yourselves. Roommate guidelines

could include alarm-clock issues, expected study hours, and so forth. Basically, you have to mesh your two lifestyles for the next school year. For shared supplies, you need to figure out who is bringing what. My past two roommates brought refrigerators, but I supplied the microwave. Usually, you need only one refrigerator and one microwave in your room. Other things you might want to talk about bringing are televisions, game systems, and movies.



Okay, I get it. Now what do I bring?

By now you are either getting very excited or slightly panicked. Hopefully, it's more excited, but you are still wondering what is left to cover. In the past few years, I have developed a set of guidelines for myself that I would like to share with you in order to keep your moving list to a minimum. Each year I have cut the number of items I bring with me to school because I realize I do not end up needing everything I bring. Here is the quick reference to my set of guidelines:

- Golden Rule
- Rule of Fourteen
- Rule of Movies
- Time-Passer Rule
- Rule of Computers

Now I've probably confused you with my little rule names, but I created these names to help you remember the important stuff.

Golden Rule

The Golden Rule is simply to remember your Bible. Consider getting a new Bible to use at school, one that you can use as a study companion as you grow in Christ. Bibles such as *The Lutheran Study Bible* will help you gain insight to Scripture through the study notes and background information. You may not always be near a pastor or know how to find a specific reference or Bible passage, so having a Bible with easy-to-use notes and a good concordance is important. Also, having your Bible in your room offers a witness opportunity. I don't expect you to shove your Bible in everyone's face. Simply leave it out on your desk for others to see. Its mere presence can be a conversation starter as well as your opportunity to share your faith without forcing your beliefs on a friend or acquaintance. One other positive result of bringing your Bible is that you can have it as a study companion if you are unable to attend a Bible study regularly.

Rule of Fourteen

The Rule of Fourteen is simple. I suggest that you bring fourteen days' worth of clothes with you to school. Admittedly, this rule is easier for me as a guy. For an average person, this would include fourteen sets of clothes (underwear, socks, shirts, pants). Athletes who work out or run each day will probably need a few more outfits. The Rule of Fourteen does not take into account church or "dressy" clothes, only those for daily wear. The reason for fourteen sets of clothes is to force you to do your laundry every two weeks. This keeps your room from smelling and/or your clothes from beginning to rot away. Perhaps you think "rotting" is a bit of an exaggeration, but my freshman year, my roommate and I did not do laundry until the end of the first month. You could smell our room through the closed door. We had brought way too

many clothes, so the laundry just piled up. This past year, I readjusted my clothing plan, which forced me to do laundry every two weeks. This kept my room from smelling nasty and kept my dorm mates happy.

Rule of Movies

The Rule of Movies is fairly simple. I suggest you pick just five to ten of your favorite movies to bring to college. You really don't need your entire 100+ movie collection with you at school. If you need a movie, you can pick it up from the library or rent it. For the most part, you will have time to watch only your favorite movies. I made the mistake of bringing my entire movie (and game) collection my freshman year. This took up a huge amount of the very limited space in the van (for the trip to school) and then in my room.

Time-Passer Rule

I recommend bringing the equipment for one or two activities that you love to do in your free time. Bringing these items helps you escape from the stressful situations you are bound to experience while at college. I bring my running shoes. My friends know when I am stressed because they see me walking down the hall in running shorts and a T-shirt, ready to go on a run.

Your time-passer equipment also allows you to have a short break between study sessions. I have been encouraged by many people to take a fifteen-minute break between two-hour study sessions. This break helps me retain more of what I am studying. During that break, I pick up my guitar and play. Now I'm sure some of my friends consider my guitar breaks a plague, but they help me relax before I go back to straining my brain.

Rule of Technology

The final rule is the Rule of Technology. Most students bring a laptop to college, although as tablet computers add more features that may be an even more flexible choice. Check with upperclassmen at your college or university for suggestions on the best option.

Though most of your work will be done in your dorm room, laptops and tablets offer the flexibility to work on your homework and papers in other places. Consider bringing your own printer. The network printing center in your dorm might be closed or the printer out of order when you have a paper due for your next class in thirty minutes. Having your own printer as a backup is a good idea.

Leave It Behind

There are some items I would recommend you avoid bringing to school. Leave your video game system at home. These games can be a huge distraction when your primary task at school is to study. I would also avoid bringing furniture. Most dorms provide you with all the necessities. Adding furniture to a room that is already pretty full will clutter your space. It seems I always had some type of chair that just got in the way of the flow of the room, and my room seemed to shrink very quickly. Friends who stopped by commented that their room was much bigger, even though the floor plans were identical.

Finally, you have all your stuff ready to go, but not everything will fit into your parents' car. You've followed my advice, but now you're stuck and you don't know what to cut. I would recommend first cutting your distractions. You are not at school to learn to play video games or guitar (unless, of course, you're a music major).

I think I'm ready. Anything else?

So we've talked about possible roommate situations, what to bring and what not to bring, and what to talk to your parents about. You may be thinking there's nothing else to really think about before you head off to college. However, there is one last thing you need to think about before you go: how to bring Christ along to college.

I realize it's not literally possible for you to leave Christ behind, because He promises to be with us wherever we go: "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). However, you will face many people who are not Christians. You may or may not know how to handle each situation that you face. If you prepare for your college experience with Christ, you will be equipped to adjust and handle these situations much more easily than had you not prepared. Consider this three-part plan as you get ready for your life on campus:

Dig into the Scriptures

This summer, get to know your Bible better than ever. Even if it has been a while since you seriously read the Scriptures, take the time to read God's Word, even just fifteen minutes a day. If you want an organized plan for reading through the Scriptures, check out the resources available from your local congregation or www.cph.org/lutheranbible.

Attend or Host a Summer Bible Study

Consider being part of a summer Bible study group. You might ask your pastor or someone else at your church to conduct a special Bible study group for students just entering or already attending various universities. Most students return home during the summer months to work or visit families. This offers a perfect opportunity for you to get acquainted

with students already in college as you grow in your understanding of God's Word.

Identify Your Campus Church Home

Many colleges and universities host special orientation sessions during the summer months. Use this time to check out the campus ministry you plan to attend. In some cases, this may be a campus chapel affiliated with your church body. In other cases, it may be a local church that welcomes students to be part of their congregation during the school year. If you have questions, your home pastor can help you locate and connect with a church home while at school. You can also visit www.lcms.org/LCMSU to find the campus ministry connection for your campus.