

# Repatriating Graduating Teens

---

**By: Robin Pascoe**

## **TIP SHEET FOR REPATRIATING GRADS**

Did you see the university first? Research has shown that one of the biggest complaints by repatriating grads is that they chose a college sight unseen. If this applies to you, all is not lost. There's still time during the summer vacation to at the very least have a good look at the campus and the surrounding town before classes begin. It may give you a better idea of what to pack, what's available locally, and provide a feel for the local community.

### **Loneliness**

If you will be living in residence, you will feel less alone initially, especially if you have a roommate for your first year. But other repat grads have reported that some of the new friends you make too quickly at the beginning turn out to share few of your common interests in the longer term. So move slowly. Distractions during the Freshman Week may also keep you busy, but don't be surprised if a few months into school, you begin to miss your old friends who understand you. That's perfectly common.

### **Homesickness for family members and their support**

Advice from others is that you might want to ensure one of your parents is state side for the first Parent Weekend. Also, if you choose a college because of extended family living nearby, don't be shy! Go and visit as many TCKs miss having a home (with a living room, refrigerator and clean bathtub) nearby for holidays and long weekends.

### **Alcohol and drugs**

This is college after all, where alcohol and the availability of recreational drugs will be a lot easier than in the UK. Binge drinking is a challenge faced by many freshmen. With parents far away, temptations will loom, but they do for most first year students away from home. Try to make good decisions.

### **Relationships**

Relationships can be more intense. Relationships can progress much faster than you may want, especially in residence when you both live on the same floor, each of you has a room (and only a roommate to get rid of). You may find yourself in intense scenarios too quickly so go again, move slowly.

### **Part time jobs**

Kids have them in high school now and many have to work in university too. However, if you have the luxury of not having to work, it's recommended that you defer working until the summer because you are experiencing re-entry shock on top of everything else. Make school work your work. It's valuable too.

## **Money and Budgets**

You're in charge now!

You have to pay attention and open all the envelopes that come addressed to you. Some quick tips:

- work out a reasonable and realistic budget ahead of time so you are not caught short
- keep in mind school books, cost of living, meals off campus, special weekends away, transport, joining organizations on campus or a gym
- keep a close check on the tuition payments (technology will help out on this as your notices will come by e-mail)
- consider paying your entire tuition and residence fees in advance if feasible.

## **Travel**

Again, you're in charge. If you don't want to be alone at Thanksgiving:

- arrange Thanksgiving weekend soon after arrival
- decide on winter break by Thanksgiving
- decide on spring break right after Christmas
- plan for the summer after spring break (as it won't be as straightforward if you want to stay behind and work).

## **Resources on Campus and Personal Responsibility**

There are typically tons of resources available to students but you are responsible for finding them.

You become a number at college. It's not like high school where between your teachers and your parents, someone arranged to have stuff fixed or medical appointments made or course planning made simpler. You have to be on top of things yourself and often double check that one person hasn't given you the wrong information. People will be willing to help, but you have to find them. Remember, your parents aren't there to nag you anymore.

## **Shocks on the education side of things**

You may experience the culture shock of a large institution with a bureaucracy.

Also, some repeat grads (and other gifted students coming out of high school) tell tales of their grades initially falling in the first term. It's a common theme as there are many university professors who will try to bring you down a peg and not coddle you. They are trying to weed students out and this is especially the case in the science faculties. Your marks will rebound if you work hard, don't worry.

## **Playing Catch up on Life Skills**

Coming from often sheltered expat communities, it's very important to learn to be aware of your surroundings and who you are with at all times. This is especially the case for young women who may start going out to clubs with large groups of students.

Safety is in numbers, but girls in particular (I'm not being sexist, honest) must be aware that they should never, for instance, leave a drink (even a Coke) unattended in case someone slips something

into it. In fact, it's a good lesson to never let anyone buy you anything to drink without watching the drink itself being poured.

It goes without saying that most repat grads want to have a driver's license! Sign up for a course in the summer. And in the meantime, learn about public transit. It's cool that you may know your way around Frankfurt or Paris airports or even Heathrow, but can you read a map? Take a subway?

Finally, looking after yourself is very important and this includes eating right and sleeping well. These are universal challenges but overseas, your mothers may have been more involved in your lives than they would have been at home and they were working. So now it's up to you.

Enjoy the exciting year ahead!

This article is reprinted with the kind permission of Robin Pascoe from the archives of [www.expertexpert.com](http://www.expertexpert.com)