

## Freshman Year Survival Guide

### The **BIG** Idea

- What do I need to know to make the most of my first year living on my own?

### AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Will This Happen To Me? (5 minutes)
- II. What Tops Your List? (5 minutes)
- III. Who's Who At College (10 minutes)
- IV. What If? Then This! (20 minutes)
- V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

### MATERIALS

#### STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 140, Quiz: Will This Happen To Me?
- Student Handbook page 141, Who's Who At College Notes
- Student Handbook pages 142-143, What If? Then This! Worksheet

#### FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, Who's Who At College
- Facilitator Resource 2, What If? Then This! Answer Key

Overhead projector

Index cards (one for each student)

### OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, students will:

- Learn what to expect when living on their own next year.
- Understand the roles of freshman-friendly staff in college.
- Anticipate typical college problems.
- Identify steps and resources to resolve college, and real life, problems.

## OVERVIEW .....

In this unit, students explore what to expect next year when they're on their own, and how to prepare for it. They discover they have many resources—at college, in the workplace, and in the community—to help ease the transition to young adulthood.

In this lesson, students take a quiz to rate predicaments in which they might find themselves. They write down their greatest fears about next year. They learn which college personnel are available to help freshman, and they identify common college problems. They investigate resources to remedy a variety of situations. They discover tips for surviving—and thriving—in and out of the classroom.

## PREPARATION .....

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Make overhead transparencies of:
  - **Facilitator Resource 1, Who's Who At College**
  - **Student Handbook page 140, Quiz: Will This Happen to Me?**
- Arrange to hold class in the computer lab so students will have access to the Internet for **Activity IV, What If? Then This!**
- If Internet access is not possible for **Activity IV, What If? Then This!**, then print out college website pages from several schools that describe who-does-what on their campuses (suggested sites can be found on **Facilitator Resource 2, What If? Then This! Answer Key**). In addition, create a list of local community service and youth-based organizations. Make enough copies to hand out to all students.

## IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS .....

If you prefer, conduct **Student Handbook page 140, Quiz: Will This Happen to Me?** as a class discussion.

For **Activity IV, What If? Then This!**, you may let students complete **Student Handbook pages 142-143, What If? Then This!** in pairs or small groups.

If you feel pressed for time or do not have Internet access, conduct **Activity IV, What If? Then This!** as a class discussion. Distribute the handouts you've made to use as source material and field as many of the scenarios as time permits. Balance the discussion between college and non-college scenarios.

For **Activity V, Wrap-up**, you may choose to continue discussing students' answers for **Activity IV, What If? Then This!** instead of reviewing **Student Handbook page 140, Quiz: Will This Happen to Me?**

## ACTIVITY STEPS

### I. WARM UP: Will This Happen To Me? (5 minutes)

1. [As students enter the classroom, refer them to **Student Handbook page 140, Quiz: Will This Happen To Me?** Give them a few minutes to complete the sheet. ]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Today we start a new unit called “Next Steps”, because that’s what you’ll be taking next year, as you transition out of high school into college or the work world. You’ll be living on your own and making decisions by yourself, and you’ll face many of the typical challenges of young adulthood. So, during the next three classes, we’ll investigate good ways to handle them. You’ll learn about people and resources that can help you. You’ll get some tips on how to make the most out of college, and also, how to get ahead at work. But before all that helpful good stuff, let’s take a look in the crystal ball and see what you think—and feel—about what awaits you out in the world.
3. [Place the transparency of **Student Handbook page 140, Quiz: Will This Happen to Me?** on the overhead projector.]
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** With a show of hands, how many think it is likely that you’ll have a laundry disaster next year?
5. [Go over the quiz, question by question. Let students say how likely they considered each scenario, and also how upsetting they thought it would be. Be sure to get a representative mix of answers from those attending college next year, and those entering the work world.]

### II. What Tops Your List? (5 Minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** There’s no doubt about it; you’ll all face problems next year that you haven’t encountered before. And you probably have a mix of feelings when you think about it. On the one hand, you might be excited, because it will be a whole new chapter in your life, and a bold new step toward independence. But, for all the same reasons, you might be a little nervous or afraid. Some of you may be worried about making new friends in college, or handling college-level classes. Others of you may be afraid that you’ll end up with a boss at work who’s really a jerk and takes advantage of you.

So, what I want you to do, while I'm passing out index cards, is think about what your biggest worry is for next year when you'll live on your own. This could be a specific question about college; for example, what if I'm assigned to a roommate I don't like? Or it could be a question about living in your own place; for example, what happens if I can't pay my rent? What issue – or issues – tops your list of concerns?

2. [Distribute the index cards.]
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now that you've identified your #1 concern, please write it down on the index card. Do not put your name on the card; I want your answers to be completely anonymous. I'll collect the cards in a minute, and next week, we'll address some of these issues. No one will ever know which one was yours, so please be honest and share what you're really thinking.
4. [Give students a minute or two to write, and then collect the cards.]

### III. Who's Who At College (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Besides feeling a little nervous, there's something else that's very common among young adults living on their own for the first time. They tend to confuse independence with isolation. So let's explore this for a minute. What does it mean to you to be independent?
2. [Let students answer. Key points:
  - a. Make my own decisions
  - b. Handle situations on my own]
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** That's right. Being independent means you make your own decisions and deal with daily life on your own. But—and this is really important—successful adults don't make decisions by isolating themselves and shutting off communication. They do the opposite! They find out about their resources, learn how to get help, and, then, once informed, take action.

For example, here in high school, you take independent action every day, because you already know where to go to solve problems. For example, if you come to school late, and don't want to be marked absent, you know who to see in the office. Or, if you have a personal problem, you head to the guidance office. The same is true in the community. If you want to meet friends who share your faith, you know which church or synagogue in the local area to check for youth group activities. And if you'll be staying local next year, you'll be able to use these same resources.

But if you're going away to college, you'll need to find out how to resolve problems on your college campus. The good news is, no matter how big or small your school, most colleges recognize that you'll need help getting used to your new environment. So, many staff members have specific jobs designed to help freshman. Some will advise you on academics or financial matters, and others can help you with the personal and social issues that arise from the transition to college life. So let's take a look at "Who's Who At College", and learn about the resources available to you.

4. [Place the transparency of **Facilitator Resource 1, Who's Who At College** on the overhead projector. Tell students to turn to **Student Handbook page 141, Who's Who At College Notes** and takes notes as you go over each term.]

#### IV. What If? Then This! (20 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Okay! Now that we know who's who and what's what, let's take a shot at some troubleshooting and put what you've learned into action.
2. [Instruct students to turn to **Student Handbook pages 142-143, What If? Then This!.**]
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** On this worksheet you'll find several scenarios you might come across next year. Read through the list, and select four that seem most likely for you. Then, for each selection, do the following:
  - a. Go online to investigate the resources you might use to resolve the problem.
  - b. Write a short answer in the box next to it.

If you're heading to college next year, go online to your college website and look for resources there. For example, in the first scenario, if this happened to you, you would tell the RA, and then follow up as he or she suggests. Since a broken window is a problem in your dormitory, you might go online and look up "Residential Life" on your college website, and see what resources are listed there. On the University of Southern California's website, for example, there's a link to a page where you can submit a "work order" or request for repair, in case something like this happens.

If you're entering the work world and know where you'll be living, you can look at community websites for resources nearby. For example, if you're going to live here in town, and your laptop is stolen from your apartment, you would report it to the police, and check your insurance policy to see if you're covered. In your answer, I would like to see the address of the nearest police precinct, and the name of your insurance company.

One last note. It's okay to list traditional resources, like family members or clergy you already consult for advice. But pick at least one possible scenario that allows you to research, and widen your range of possibilities.

[Note: If Internet access is unavailable, distribute the handouts you made of college websites and local resources and tell students to use these materials.]

4. [Give students 10 minutes to research. Then, call on students to share their answers. Refer to **Facilitator Resource 2, What If? Then This! Answer Key** to inform the discussion. Keep this discussion to about 5 minutes.]

## V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now that you've all turned into expert troubleshooters, and you're ready to take on the world next year, let's look back at the quiz you took during **Activity 1, Will this Happen to Me?** and see if we can find a few solutions to these issues.
2. Have students turn to **Student Handbook page 140, Quiz: Will This Happen To Me?** Go through the list, calling on students to suggest who they might turn to as a resource, and how they would approach resolving the problem.]
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Good job today, class. Next week we'll address some of your biggest fears about the transition to living on your own. If you think of any others you want to share during the week, feel free to bring them to class. See you next time!

## Who's Who At College

### 1. **First Year Experience Staff:**

Colleges know that the transition from high school is a big one! So many schools have dedicated staff, and often a curriculum course, to help freshman make the transition. Depending on your school, you may have an individual "FYE" counselor, or there may be an office you can drop into when you need advice on how to get used to the change.

Also, it's also common nowadays for schools to offer an Orientation Session, so incoming students can learn about the resources and opportunities available on campus. If your school offers this, definitely attend.

### 2. **Resident Advisor:**

This is an upperclass student who lives in your dorm and takes care of all aspects of life in the residence hall. He or she acts as your primary contact if you have a problem, question or concern, regarding the physical building, the social atmosphere, or your own personal college experience.

### 3. **Academic Advisor:**

This is the specific faculty member assigned to help you with your academic choices and problems. Go to him or her to deal with course conflicts, adding or dropping courses, scheduling of classes for future semesters, deciding on majors and minors.

### 4. **The Office of the Dean of Studies:**

Generally, the Dean is pretty busy. But this is usually the place to go if you need academic support, and also, in small schools, where you should check in if you qualify, or want to qualify, for disability accommodations.

### 5. **Disabilities Resource Center:**

This department will handle all your needs for any type of qualified disability, from accommodations to transportation. If you are a student with disabilities, you are not required to identify yourself as such, but you must do so to receive special services (for example, a longer time to take a test). Documentation (for example, recent psychological testing to diagnose LD/ADHD) is required.

### 6. **Bursar:**

If you have a problem with a college bill, or anything having to do with payments for tuition, room and board, and other college-related charges, the bursar is your contact.



**7. Financial Aid Office:**

You can go to the Financial Aid Office for questions, advice or problems regarding your financial aid, grants and scholarships.

**8. Registrar:**

The Registrar maintains your academic records, coordinates course information, provides registration assistance, produces transcripts and enrollment certifications, approves transfer and advanced placement credits, and processes students for graduation.

**9. Counseling Center:**

This is the place to go if you're struggling with social, emotional or psychiatric problems. Everything is confidential, and you'll receive professional mental health services. If you're suffering from general issues of transition to college, or if you feel depressed, anxious, or have personal or family problems, seek out Counseling Services.

**10. Office of Career Services:**

Perhaps you know what you want to be when you grow up. If so, Career Services can help you achieve your goal. And if you're still not sure, they will help you figure it out. Most colleges have a career counseling office, to help you plan and prepare for your future. They offer career counseling, and help you identify job and internship leads.

**11. Office of Campus Safety:**

These are the folks that keep you safe, and help you if you have a safety-related problem, 24/7. Your Campus Safety officers are usually trained in law enforcement, first aid, CPR, conflict resolution, diversity and investigative techniques. They organize campus safety alerts, emergency telephones on campus, and student-assisted safety escort services. Additionally, on some campuses, Campus Safety staff are trained in rape counseling, sex crimes prevention, and cyber crime investigations.

## What If? Then This! Answer Key

For each scenario, in the corresponding box, write down one or more resources you could use to find a solution. If you will be attending college next year, go to your college website and look on the home page or in the site index to find the specific department or staff member you would contact.

For example, if you go to the West Virginia University website ([www.wvu.edu](http://www.wvu.edu)), you can click on “Future Students” and find links to key resources (e.g. “Campus Life”, or “Our Community”). If you go to CUNY (City University Of New York) at [www.cuny.edu](http://www.cuny.edu) and Click on “Current Students”, you will find the same.

<b>What if this happens?</b>	<b>Then I will do this.</b>
A Frisbee breaks my dorm window	Tell the RA. Follow up as he/she instructs. (e.g., Notify Campus Safety and the Office of Residential Life)
A baseball breaks my apartment window	Tell the super. Ask for a timeline when it will be fixed, and make a note of this.
I can't get in the class I want	Talk to my Academic Advisor.
I feel homesick	Talk to the RA or someone in the First Year Experience office.
I need a book I can't find	Ask the reference librarian for help.
Someone steals my laptop from my apartment	Report it to the police. Check insurance policy to see if I'm covered.
Someone steals my laptop from my dorm room	Call Campus Safety. Call home and/or check insurance policy to see if I'm covered.
I get a tuition bill I already paid	Make a copy of the payment (e.g., cancelled check or electronic copy), and go see the Bursar.
I get a late notice on a cable bill I think I paid	Check records. Call the cable company, follow their procedures. If needed, make a copy of the cancelled check or record of online payment. If not paid, pay it, along with the late charges (if any).

I feel depressed or panicky	Seek counseling services. On campus, visit Counseling Services. In community, check local resources for community-based mental health services (often available on a sliding scale based on income). Check insurance policy for coverage and network providers.
I miss having a religious life here at college	Visit the Office of Campus Life and find out what's available on campus or in the community.
I want to find a church or synagogue to attend near where I live	Look in the local paper or phone book. Go online, and use a search engine to check for churches or synagogues in your community.
I didn't get my grades this semester	Contact the Registrar.
I need extra help or I'll flunk	Talk to the RA or visit the Office of the Dean of Studies.
I might want to be a doctor, or maybe a singer	Make an appointment with a Career Counselor, look into local internships.
I can't get all my school work done	Ask in the First Year Experience or Dean of Studies office for help with time management.
I have a disability and need to know how to get more time to take tests	Go to the Office of the Dean of Studies or Disabilities Resource Center.
My federal grant didn't show up on my bill and the school says I owe more money than I do	Talk to the Bursar and/or Financial Aid Office.

## Quiz: Will This Happen To Me?

Using a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least likely and 5 being the most likely, rate:

- 1) how likely the following is to happen to you next year
- 2) how upsetting each of these events would be

Event	How likely	How Upsetting
You create a laundry disaster that turns your white clothes a weird color		
Your heart gets broken by a romantic interest or friend		
You have an argument with your roommate		
You do something fun instead of studying, and regret it later		
You miss your family and friends		
You forget to pay a bill, and end up in big trouble		
You get lost on your way to school or work and show up late (if at all)		
You lose your keys and can't get into your room or apartment		
You want to sleep and your roommate is having a party		
You're having a party and your roommate wants to sleep		
You feel overwhelmed		
You feel like you don't fit in		

## Who's Who At College Notes

Colleges are communities designed to help students, so you'll have many resources at your fingertips. It's good to know who's who and what's what at the school you're attending, so when you need to troubleshoot you know where to go. The office names and titles may differ from school to school, but here is a general guide to the departments, staff, faculty members and student advisors most likely to deal with your problems freshman year.

As your teacher discusses the following college terms, take notes below so that you can find the right resources when you need them next year.

**First Year Experience Staff:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Resident Advisor (RA):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Advisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Office of the Dean of Studies:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Disabilities Resource Center:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Bursar:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Financial Aid Office:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Registrar:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Counseling Center:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Office of Career Services:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Office of Campus Safety:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## What If? Then This!

For each scenario, write one or more resources where you could find a solution. If you will be attending college next year, go to your college website and look through the site index to find the specific department or staff member you would contact.

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A Frisbee breaks my dorm window	Tell the RA. Follow up as he/she instructs. (Example: Notify Campus Safety and the Office of Residential Life)
A baseball breaks my apartment window	
I can't get in the class I want	
I feel homesick	
I need a book I can't find	
Someone steals my laptop from my apartment	
Someone steals my laptop from my dorm room	
I get a tuition bill I already paid	
I get a late notice on a cable bill I think I paid	

I feel depressed or panicky	
I miss having a religious life here at college	
I want to find a church or synagogue to attend near where I live	
I didn't get my grades this semester	
I need extra help or I'll flunk	
I might want to be a doctor, or maybe a singer	
I can't get all my school work done	
I have a disability and need to know how to get more time to take tests	
My federal grant didn't show up on my bill and the school says I owe more money than I do	

