



Back to

school guide

Helpful tips for students



CAMBRIDGE
OCR

Going back to school or college can bring up mixed feelings. You may be happy to see your friends, excited to make new ones, or glad to get back into a routine. But returning to school or college can be a difficult time for some students. There are many reasons why you may be worried about going back; for example, you might be nervous about meeting a new teacher or going up a year, leaving your family or having less freedom compared to the holidays.

These are all completely normal feelings, and in this guide, we share some top tips to help you settle into the new term and build resilience. Remember, if at any time you're feeling stressed, anxious or overwhelmed to look at our dedicated webpage for [managing stress](#) or speak to a trusted teacher or friend.

Getting back to good routines

It's important to follow a good routine. Planning time for study, exercise and socialising will set you up for the new term and can help you stay focused, positive and productive. To help you, here are some ideas for how to follow a good routine:

1. Have an outline of how your day and week will look – there are lots of online planners that you can download for free. Many of them allow you to create flashcards and practice quizzes.
 - a. Allocate time to your planner for homework, reading and revision.
 - b. Remember to factor in time to spend with friends and family.
2. Try to keep to a regular sleep schedule (aim for between 8 to 10 hours sleep).
3. Follow a healthy balanced diet and exercise regularly.
4. Remember, if things aren't working out for you and you're struggling to keep up, that's okay! It'll take time to get into a good routine that works for you, so don't put too much pressure on yourself.



Get enough sleep

It's normal for sleep routines to change during the school holidays, but the sooner you get back to a normal routine, the better it will be for your mental health and energy levels. Did you know that you should aim for 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night? Light from electronic devices slows the natural sleeping process, so aim to switch off mobile phones and laptops one hour before going to bed. Try and go to bed and get up at around the same time every day, including weekends. The [Teen Sleep Hub](#) has lots of information on setting sleep routines.

Schoolwork stress

If you're worried about keeping up with your schoolwork or keeping to a study routine, remember these tips:

1. **Give yourself enough time** – it's difficult to know how much time you'll need to spend on a piece of coursework, reading or writing. Every student is different and studies at their own pace. Try not to compare yourself to your friends. Give yourself a little extra time until you find out how much time you need to complete a task.
2. **Remember your routine** – and don't try to do everything at once or in a hurry. Plan your time around your homework and remember to factor in regular breaks to avoid stress or burnout. Our [guide](#) on how to manage your time can help.
3. **If you're putting things off** – or you're not making progress, check out our [guide](#) on beating procrastination.
4. **Take care of yourself** – it's easy to forget to get enough sleep, eat healthily and exercise regularly when we become too focused on studying. Here's our top tips [video](#) for managing stress.
5. **Ask for help** – if you think you need it. Don't feel embarrassed about asking for help; it'll be much more effective in the long run than keeping it to yourself.

5 ways to get support

1. Let a teacher know how you're feeling so they can try to help you.
2. Speak to your parents, carers or siblings – they may have experienced similar feelings when they were at school or college.
3. See our tips for [managing stress](#).
4. Get support from other students through the Student Room [forums](#).
5. Visit [Young Minds](#) website for support.



Healthy eating

A healthy diet will play an important role in your growth and development, improve your mental health and provide you with energy to maintain concentration throughout the day. Here are some top tips for healthy eating:

1. Don't skip breakfast – by the time you get up, it'll have been a long time since you ate, so breakfast will boost your energy.
2. Eat three meals a day – breakfast, lunch and dinner.
3. Drink plenty of water – particularly when it's hot weather or if you're playing sports.
4. Snack sensibly – aim for less sugary snacks/ chocolate and more fruit, nuts and vegetables.



Exercise

Your body and mind are connected, so looking after yourself physically also helps to prevent problems with your mental health (it works the other way round, too).

Activities such as running, walking, dancing, yoga or going to the gym are all great ways to improve your mental and physical health. The key is to find a form of exercise that you enjoy and feel comfortable doing. Setting a reminder to exercise or building it into a planner can help you stay on track.

Mental wellbeing

It's important to know that whatever your worries are, it's completely normal to feel this way; many other students feel the same. Having a trusted teacher, family member or friend to talk to or simply listen to your concerns can be helpful. They may have experienced similar feelings in the past and may be able to offer you advice on how they coped.

There are many mental health and wellbeing organisations out there to support you and offer advice, including: [Young Minds](#), [Childline](#), and [Mind](#).

Top coping strategies

Our students told us how they boost their mental wellbeing ...

