Waipapa Taumata Rau
University of Auckland

All Systems Go!

Tertiary Transition Toolkit

The ‘All Systems Go!’ programme supports Autistic students and their whānau with the transition from secondary school to tertiary study.

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Created by Learning Advisers at Inclusive Learning at Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland, this toolkit is designed to support autistic students as they transition to university study. Starting university often brings new routines, expectations, environments, and opportunities. This guide provides practical tools, strategies, and information to help you navigate these experiences. Throughout your studies and beyond, you can return to this resource whenever you need ideas, reminders, or support. While many of the links and resources in this guide are specific to the University of Auckland, similar support and information can usually be found at other institutions.

To request permission to share this resource, please contact: inclusivelearning@auckland.ac.nz

01 Transition to tertiary education

Understanding the shift from secondary to tertiary education

The transition from secondary school to tertiary education is a new and exciting time. You will explore your interests, make key decisions, build independence, understand your support options and become familiar with your new environment.

As a teenager, your parents/caregivers play an active role in providing practical support in goal setting, time management, life admin and socialising.

When you start university, you will become more responsible for your own decisions, and your parents/caregivers will play a less active role in daily activities.

Secondary school

- Your timetable is usually set by others.
- School is 9am–3pm plus homework.
- School is about 35 hours a week including homework.
- Teachers monitor your engagement with academic tasks and whether you have done your homework/assignments.
- Parents and teachers remind you about your priorities and responsibilities.
- Teachers will approach you if they think you need help.
- Classes might have 25-30 students.
- School staff can discuss information about you without you knowing.

Tertiary education

- Some parts of your timetable are set, otherwise you manage your own time.
- Lectures, tutorials and classes can be scheduled throughout the day and you may have big breaks between lectures.
- Full-time study is 40 hours per week. Up to half of this time is in class, and the rest is in your own time. It is possible to switch between part-time and full-time study.
- Academic staff won't monitor your engagement with academic tasks.
- You are expected to be responsible for your own time and priorities.
- Academic staff expect you to contact them if you need help.
- Lectures might have 100 or more students.
- Academic and support staff cannot discuss you with anyone (including your parents) unless you give consent.



Planning your pathway

Research more about:

- What you might want to do in the future
- Things you are good at
- Careers you are interested in
- The steps you need to take to do that job
- Key dates for academic planning
- Your study options

USEFUL LINKS

- Plan your career (careers.govt.nz)
- Study options at the University of Auckland
- CDES (Career Development and Employability Service) at the University of Auckland
- Important academic dates for the University of Auckland
- Limited full-time study
- Study planning help: Student Hubs - The University of Auckland
- How to apply for admission to the University of Auckland
- How to enrol in a course at the University of Auckland

Activity

Complete a career quiz to explore your interests, skills, and possible career pathways here>>>

Discuss the results and your future goals with a parent/caregiver or another trusted adult.

Explore university study options that align with your career interests.

Preparing for university

- Decide what and where to study
- Decide on full-time or part-time study by considering your other commitments
- Apply for admission to the university of your choice
- Decide where you will live (e.g., university accommodation, flatting or home). Consider factors like travel time, costs and personal support needs for each option. If needed, begin to make arrangements to secure accommodation
- When you receive your university acceptance letter, enrol in the courses you want to do
- Apply for your student loan or student allowance
- Begin exploring your university campus and find key locations
- Find out what the key support services are at your university and contact them
- Move into your accommodation before starting university
- Practise getting to and from university
- Find out when your university's orientation week is, and pick events to go to
- Purchase any required books or resources

USEFUL LINKS

- Enrolment
- Before you start checklist
- Digital tools and support
- Student loans and allowances
- Studylink

Before your first day

- Download any maps or apps you need to get around
- Get your student ID card
- Log your device on to the university intranet
- Explore the learning management system
- Log in to your university email
- Plan your trip into university
- Plan what you will eat and drink for the first day
- Make sure all of your devices are charged
- Check your timetable and class locations

On your first day

- Wake up on time
- Eat a healthy breakfast
- Do your normal self-care routine
- Pack your bag
- Aim to get to university 15-20 minutes early
- Connect to UoA-WiFi on your device.
- Set your phone to silent mode before the lecture starts
- We hope you have fun!

Setting up for success

Successful students know when and how to seek out support at university. Accessing support early may be the key to a positive and successful university experience.

Identify support services

- Refer to page 66.
- Universities have lots of students, and it can take time to see support staff (e.g. disability services).
- If you wait until you are experiencing difficulties to seek help, you may find that there is a delay before you can access support.

Apply for special conditions

- There is usually a cut-off date for applications. Check the university website.

Consider disclosure early

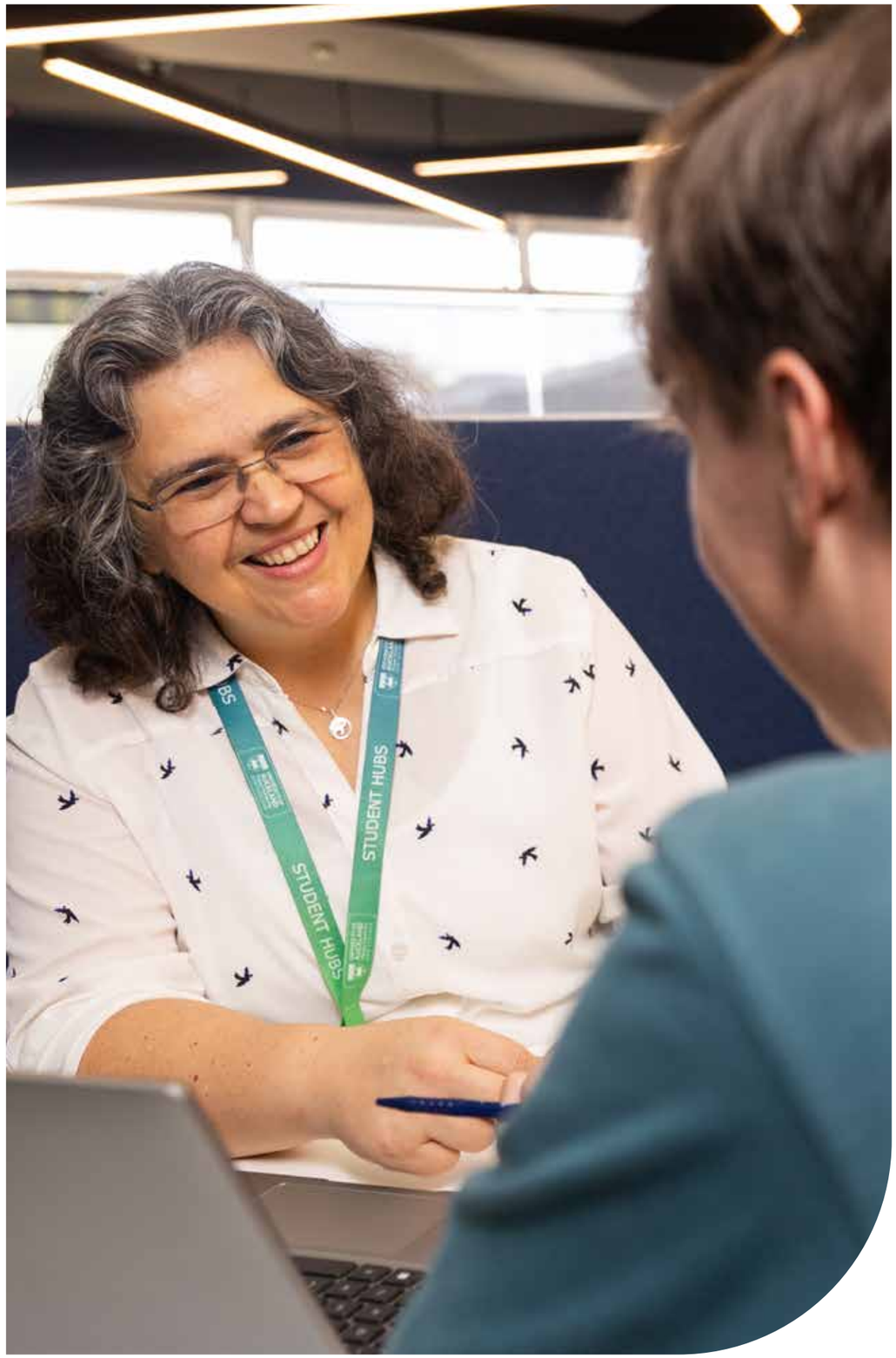
- Academic staff can provide support, but only if they know what your strengths and challenges are.
- If you have concerns about disclosing your diagnosis, student disability services or neurodivergent specialist services can support you.

Set up a study plan early

- As soon as you have timetables and access to your learning management system, you can create a study plan.
- If you need help to do this, access academic support services, or student disability services at your university.

USEFUL LINKS

- Student Disabilities Services
- Inclusive Learning
- Student Hubs
- Accommodation support



Navigating your new environment

Universities tend to be very big places, and your classes will be spread across the campus with lots of new places to see and people to meet.

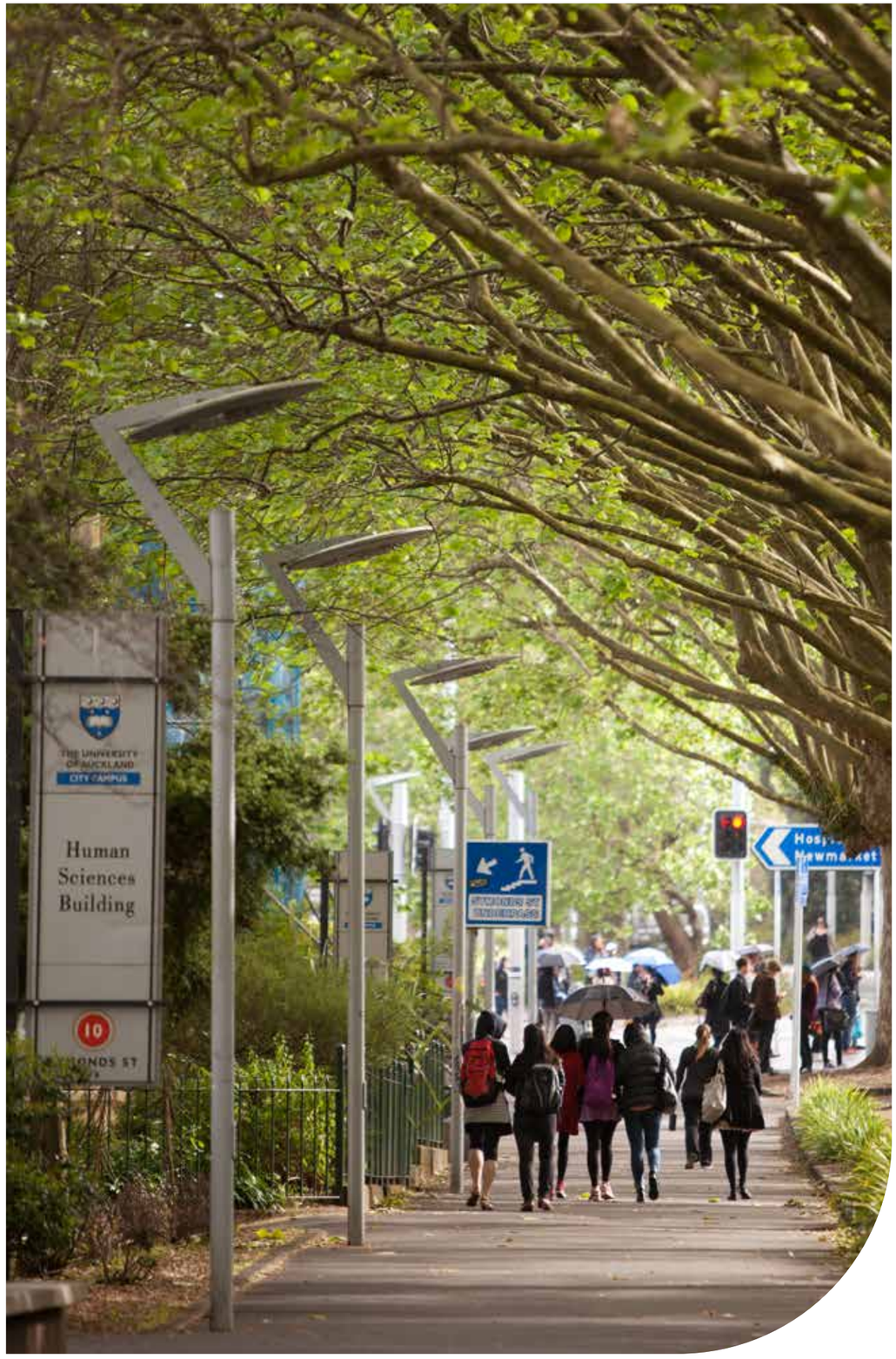
Before your first day of university, take some time to explore your new environment and to identify key places and amenities on campus.

Places to find:

- Buildings where student support services are located
- Places to buy food and snacks
- Places to heat up your own food
- The library and Student Hubs
- Bathrooms/toilets
- Quiet spaces
- Study halls
- Places where you can charge phones or laptops
- Carparks, bike racks or where you can top up your bus card
- Shops
- IT services
- Green and blue spaces

USEFUL LINK

University of Auckland maps and wayfinding



02

Independent life skills

Independent life skills

Around the same time you begin university, you also begin developing independence in key adulthood tasks such as life admin, money management, self care and wellbeing, cleaning and house maintenance, and transportation.

On the next few pages, we will look at each of these key adulthood tasks and the skills you may need to carry these out independently.

You may be doing many of these things already, but if not, it is a good idea to work with your parent/caregiver or other adult to increase your confidence and independence.

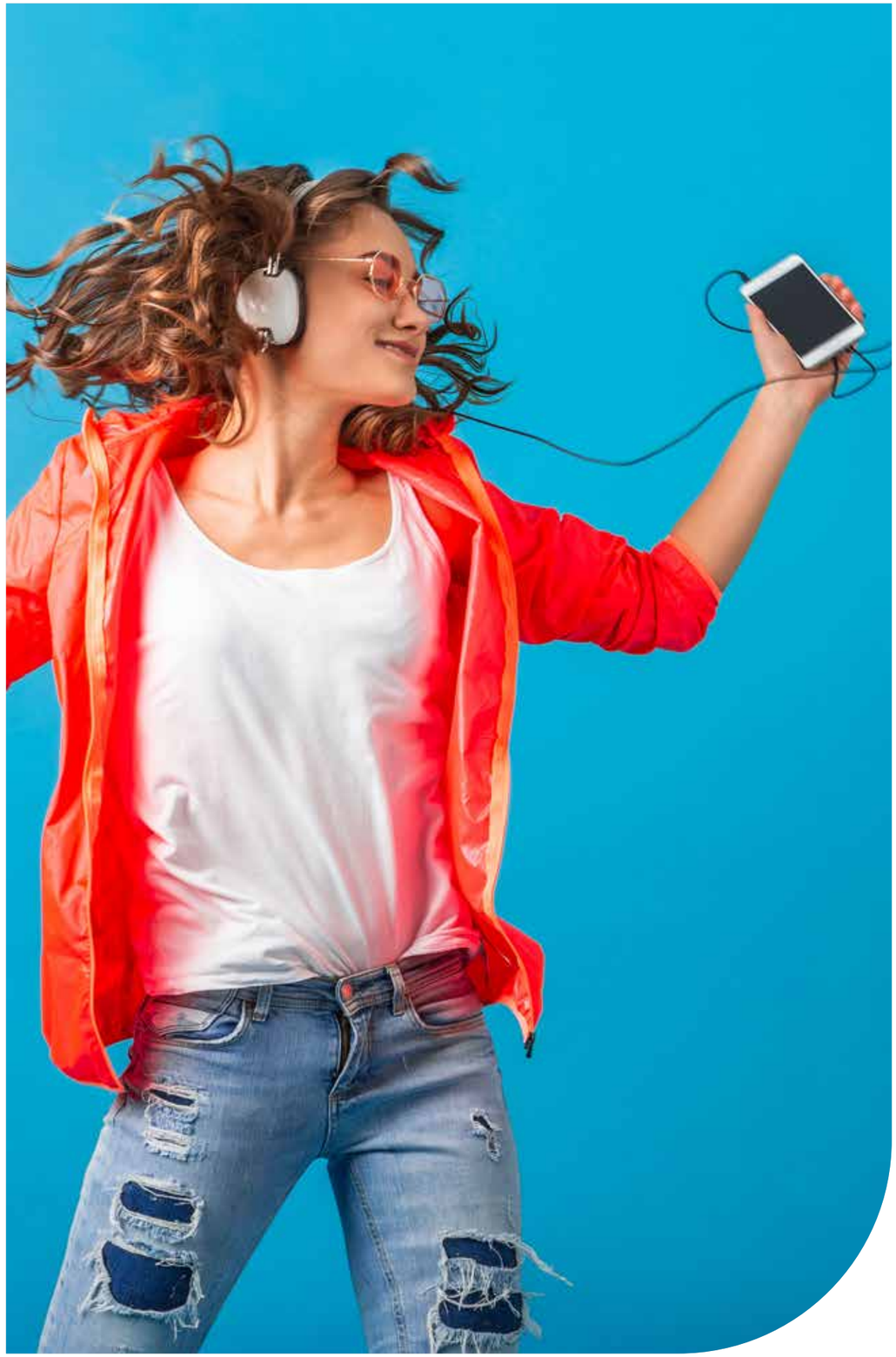
A great model for increasing independence in any skill is:

FIND OUT
Find out more about the skill and break it down into steps.

PLAN
Plan when and how you will practise the steps.

DO TOGETHER
Do the steps together with your parent/ caregiver.

DO ALONE
Do the steps alone. Ask for help if needed.



Life admin

A big part of the transition to adulthood is completing your own life administration tasks such as managing your personal information, communication with others, and managing your own finances.

Managing personal information and communications

A person is legally an adult when they turn 18 years old. This means that organisations like medical services, banks, universities and workplaces cannot share information with parents unless there is a *Protection of Personal and Property Rights* order in place. Some universities may share information with parents if the student gives their written consent.

Students need to know:

How to communicate appropriately by

- Knowing how their university might contact them e.g. which email or application to use
- Reading communications carefully so key information is not missed
- Responding to communication in a timely manner

How to store their personal information

- Birth certificate
- IRD number
- Diagnostic information
- Key education documents

How to solve administrative problems

- Finding and completing forms
- Responding to information requests
- What to do when they are not sure how to complete an administrative task

USEFUL LINKS

- Email etiquette – 11 rules for emailing others
- Organising your digital files
- How to fill in a form

Activity

Personal Communication

Discuss with your parent/ caregiver or other adult:

- How much are they managing your communications/life admin tasks?
- What communication do they receive for/with/about you?
- Where is this communication stored?

Think about which communications could be redirected to you personally.

- Use or create a new personal email address or user account.
- Communicate with others that communications will now go to you directly.
- Create your own files/ folders/system for storing communications.
- Create a plan for how often you will check/look for communications from others.

Personal documents and information storage

Discuss with your parent/ caregiver or other adult:

- Where are your personal documents and information currently stored?
- Create your own digital and analogue system for storing and maintaining personal documents and information.

Problem Solving

Discuss with your parent/ caregiver or other adult:

- How much would you like them to be involved with managing your personal information and communications?
- How will their involvement decrease over time?
- Who can you ask for help if you need support with communicating or managing your personal documents and information?

Money management

As an adult, your parents/caregivers will not be able to access or manage your financial information without your permission.

Skills you need to manage your own money:

- Generating income
- Understanding the difference between needs and wants
- Organisation and time-management e.g.
  - Paying bills on time
  - Filling in Studylink/income/tax forms before they are due
- Digital or analogue file storage
- Goal setting/saving
- Understanding and managing debt
- Understanding and protecting yourself from scams
- Managing your own online banking/bank account

USEFUL LINKS

- Student loans and allowances – the University of Auckland
- Studylink
- Applying for a job
- Money Basics – a comprehensive resource for neurodiverse adults to learn more about managing finances
- Managing your funds while studying
- Sorted

Activity

Discuss with your parent/ caregiver or other adult:

- How much do you manage your own money currently?
- Do you have a bank account and debit card and if so, who else has access to it?
- How do you keep track of your spending?
- Do you keep track of or pay any of your own regular bills (e.g. mobile phone bill)?

Look at the skills outlined on the previous page and explore the resources.

- Choose one or two of the skills and make a plan with your parent/ caregiver or other adult about how you could increase your confidence with this and begin doing it yourself.
- Discuss how you would like your parent/caregiver or other adult to support you as you learn and develop this new skill.
- When you feel confident with the skills you have chosen, choose another one!

Self care and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing tasks include:

- Making and attending medical and dental appointments
- Managing medication
- Meal and snack planning, healthy eating
- Personal hygiene and self care (e.g. brushing teeth and showering)
- Daily relaxation, doing what makes you feel happy
- Managing sleep routines
- Balancing doing tasks you **HAVE** to do, versus tasks you **LIKE** to do
- Socialising
- Exercising

USEFUL LINKS

- Doctors, dentists and prescriptions
- Creative ways to track your own medication
- Step-by-step cooking recipes for neurodivergent people
- Autism and healthy eating
- The importance of recovery and self-care for Autistic adults
- Free printable meal planners
- How to make a self-care checklist
- Find out what's on at the University of Auckland
- Find out more about where you can play video games on campus

Activity

Wellbeing checklist:

- Identify which health and wellbeing tasks you feel confident doing independently.
- Write down which of the tasks you might need to find out more about.
- With your parent/caregiver or another adult, use the links provided or Google to learn more about the tasks you are less confident with and record how you will practise each one.

Ideas include:

- Writing a 'how to...' set of instructions.
- Creating a daily schedule which includes health and wellbeing tasks.
- Putting tasks you want to practise in your diary or planner (e.g. order new medication on the last Friday of each month).
- Create a plan of how you will develop a new skill. e.g. cooking: Plan to cook once a week, including finding a recipe, writing a shopping list and buying ingredients etc.

Cleaning and home maintenance

Whether you are living with family, friends or in University accommodation, it is important to know when and how to do a range of cleaning and home maintenance tasks.

USEFUL LINKS

- Free printable cleaning checklist templates | Canva
- The ultimate cleaning checklist (realsimple.com)
- The 4 best house cleaning apps of 2026 (lifewire.com)

Activity

Post-it note brainstorm

With a friend or family member, write one cleaning or home maintenance activity per Post-it.

If you are stuck trying to think of tasks, Google home cleaning tasks.

Group your Post-it notes into four piles:

- Do daily
- Do weekly
- Do monthly
- Do sometimes

Set reminders to complete these tasks.

Some examples could be:

- Daily cleaning list to post on the fridge.
- Monthly or sometimes tasks go onto your calendar or timetable app.

Getting it done independently

Talk with a friend, parent or caregiver, or use Google to find out more about the cleaning or house maintenance tasks you are not sure how to do.

- Find out how to do the task.
- Decide when you will practise the task.

Organise your transport

Whatever mode of transport you plan to use to get to university, start using it as soon as possible.

Consider how you will get to university each day and think about the following:

Bus/Train

- Length of each part of journey
- Knowing timetables
- Keeping track of and topping up transport cards

Car

- Length of journey
- Maintenance
- Repairs
- Insurance
- Filling with petrol
- Paying for parking at university
- Traffic
- Filling with petrol or charging the battery

Bike

- Maintenance
- Repairs
- Location of bike racks

USEFUL LINKS

- Auckland Transport (at.govt.nz)
- Warrants and certificates | Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (nzta.govt.nz)
- Vehicle registration | Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (nzta.govt.nz)
- 8 tips for looking after your vehicle | Car Servicing | The NRMA (mynrma.com.au)
- Parking information – The University of Auckland
- Bike stores (custhelp.com)

Activity

1. Think about which mode of transport you might be using to get to University.
2. If you are not already using this mode of transport, take some time to explore the link on the right and make a plan to begin using this mode of transport to get places as soon as you can.

USEFUL LINK

- Transport in Auckland - The University of Auckland

03 Managing your study

Managing your study

There are many types of tasks you might be expected to do at university. Many students learn and grow these skills as they go, but it is helpful to be confident with as many of these skills as you can before arriving at university.



Academic tasks and skills for university

Tasks	What they are	What skills will I need?	
Lectures	– Where you get the course content (what you need to know for the course). – Usually large groups.	– Prepare for the lecture by previewing any course notes or lecture materials. Listen and take notes Summarise notes after the lecture	
Tutorials, seminars and labs	– Smaller class groups. – Provides course material that supports content of lectures. – Activity or discussion based.	Listen and take notes – Answer questions, discuss topics Work in groups	
Readings and course material	Usually provided through online platforms.	Know where to find information about your learning tasks. Complete readings and take notes	Assistive technology: Note taking apps Text to speech technology e.g. Speechnotes
Research	Finding out more information about a topic.	Use the topic words to search Choose appropriate sources Evaluate sources	Take notes / summarise Keep track of research sources
Assignments	Showing what you have learned about the course content through a written essay.	Read assignment questions Break assignments down into parts Create an outline	Draft/write Edit References
Exams	Showing what you have learned by answering questions in a timed environment.	Exams and tests – Mindmaps – Flashcards – Summaries/notes	
Presentations	Present what you have learned.	Create presentations	

Activity

Look at the skills section in the table and identify which skills you feel you are already good at, and which ones you could start practising at school now.

Strategies to manage time

Decide how you will track due dates

- Calendar
- Wall planner/ display with days or weeks written in a row
- Diary
- Digital tools – e.g. Trello, Google Calendar

GANTT chart

Weekly study planner

Time management apps

Write down when things are due

Write key dates in whatever system you have chosen to use:

- Assignment due dates
- Exam dates
- Personal appointments, birthdays

Break down each task into steps

Write these down as a checklist or to do list.

Try doing a 'brain-dump' of steps you think might be involved, then put them in order.

If you have difficulty breaking tasks down into steps, try the 'magic to do list' at Goblin Tools.

Write down when you will do each step

Work backwards from each due date, and write down when you will do each step of each task.

Do the tasks

Look at your calendar at least once a day and do the tasks on the day/time you have planned to do them.

Some people find it difficult to start tasks, even when they have planned to do them.

Here are some strategies which can help with task initiation:

To do lists

Pomodoro technique

Gamification

Getting the ball rolling

Read the UoA resource about time management.

Activity

1. Look at the different ways you can track your due dates. Which one do you think might work best for you?
2. Complete the time management tasks in the table to create a system which helps you to track and complete academic tasks.
3. Try to complete tasks on time without prompting from teachers or parents.

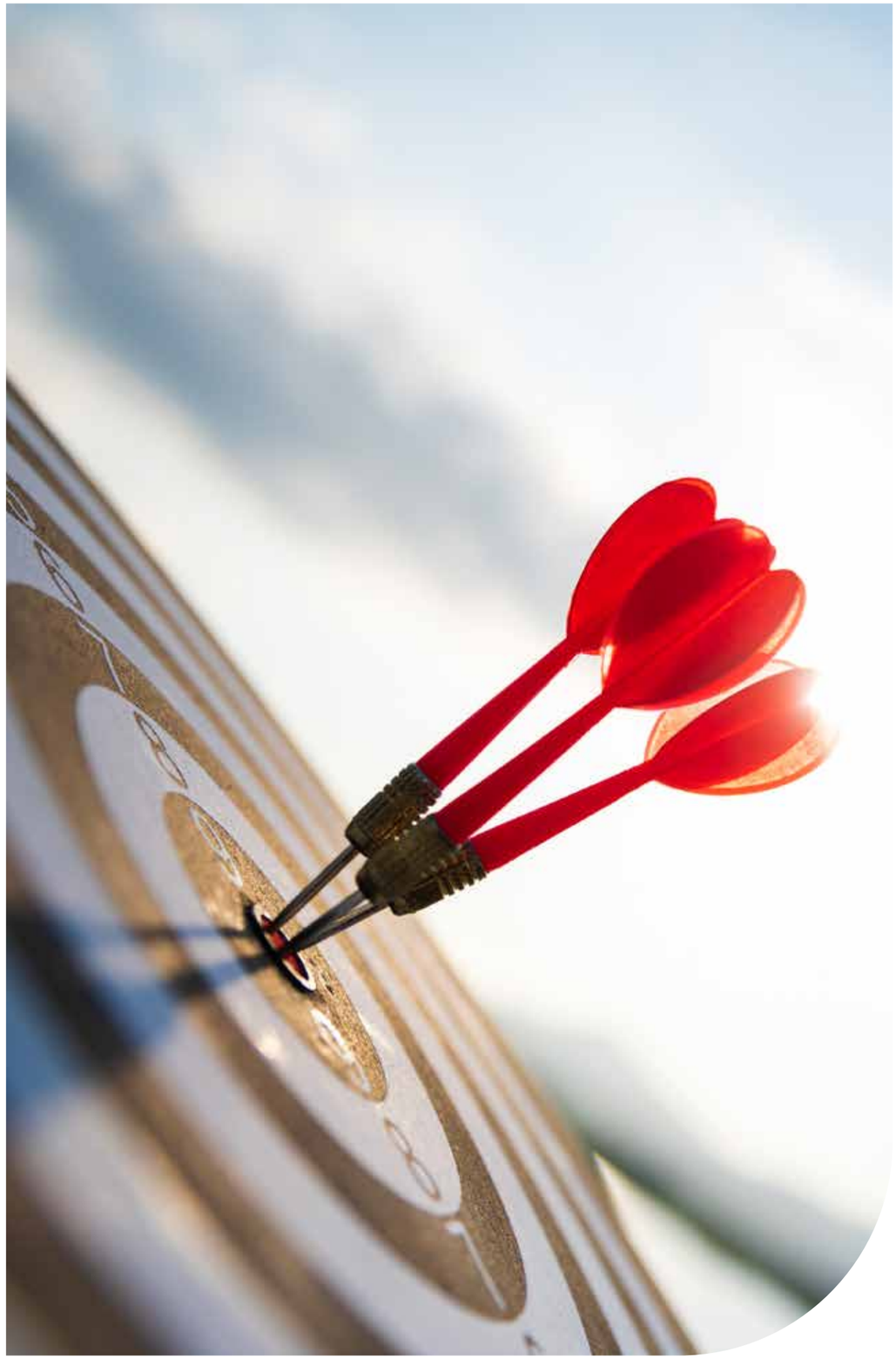
Task completion strategies

Develop strategies for improving academic performance.

- Break tasks down into small steps
- Pomodoro Technique
- Talk it out with someone
- Daily brain dump
- Use apps or websites
- When and where do you work best?
- Start with easy tasks
- Make time for things you love
- Use sensory tools as you work
- Try gamification

USEFUL LINKS

- Learning Essentials
- Gamify your life
- Pomodoro technique
- Goblin tools



Managing academic expectations

Being an active, engaged student means doing your best and seeking opportunities to grow and overcome challenges. Academic staff also expect that students will become autonomous learners.

An autonomous learner:

- Sets their own goals
- Independently completes tasks and manages their own time
- Is an active, engaged learner
- Is increasingly self-aware, reflective and self-improving
- Knows when and how to seek help

How do students show they are actively engaged in learning?

- Attend scheduled activities as much as they can
- Use strategies that help them start and complete tasks
- Seek out additional information about the content they are learning through online searching and research
- Proactively seek out and use strategies and resources that improve their academic performance

Self reflection is a big part of adult development. This is because as adults develop, mature and try new things, they make mistakes or become more aware of things they could be doing better.

Mistakes are a normal and important part of growing and learning.

Increasingly self-aware, reflective students:

- Independently reflect on situations, and identify their strengths and what they might need to improve
- They seek out and develop strategies that help them continue to improve where they need to



04 Navigating social and academic interactions

Navigating social and academic interactions

University is an environment in which you can expect to have many different interactions.

- Interactions with **professional staff**
- **Social interactions** with other students
- Interactions with others in your **living environment**
- Interactions with **academic staff**
- Interactions within **groups**

Interactions with professional staff

- Programme advice
- Administrative tasks
- Seeking support or advice
- Special assessment conditions applications



Socialising at university

University is a great place to get involved in activities and make new friends. It is also a place where you can be yourself and define what social success looks like for you.

Groups, clubs and events

All universities have a range of groups, clubs and events where you can find people who have similar interests. Support services may run groups and events for neurodivergent people.

Forming positive relationships

It is important that you feel safe and comfortable when making friends at university.

USEFUL LINKS

- University of Auckland events
- University of Auckland e-sports
- Making friends at university
- Relationships at university
- Healthy relationships
- University of Auckland Code of Conduct
- Chat the weird out

Activity

Discuss the following questions with a parent/ caregiver or other adult:

1. What is your definition of social success? Take into account:
   - Do you feel energised or drained when you are with other people?
   - How much time does it take you to recover after social interaction?
   - What types of interactions make you feel happiest? (online, in-person, events?)
   - What social experiences have you had where you felt very successful?
   - How often would you like to socialise with other people?
2. If you know which university you are going to, search their website for events, clubs and groups that might interest you.

Interactions in accommodation

Living in university accommodation is a great way to transition from living at home to becoming more independent, whilst having a support network around you.

If you choose to live in university accommodation, you may need to interact with others to:

- Communicate your needs or preferences
- Share spaces or items
- Socialise
- Complete daily tasks (especially if you need to use shared bathrooms or kitchen space)

It is important to:

- Remember that people will have different ways of doing things and different priorities to you
- Remember that it takes time to settle in. It is okay to go at your own pace while you get used to things
- Know what the rules and responsibilities are for accommodation residents.
- Know who to talk to if you are not happy in your accommodation or if you have specific needs
- Keep your room clean and tidy as there will be regular room inspections

USEFUL LINK

University of Auckland accommodation FAQs

Activity

Before you move into university accommodation, review links on the website to help you prepare.

With a parent, caregiver or other adult, find out who your Resident Manager is and ask them:

- Are there quiet spaces in my new home?
- Who is the best person to contact if I need help or support?

Review the communication toolkit Chat the weird out.

- Discuss with a parent, caregiver or other adult how you might use these to effectively interact with others in university accommodation.

Academic interactions

Ways to communicate with academic staff

- **Online discussion forums,** usually using the learning management system. A learning management system is a web-based computer programme that contains information related to your study.

  Different universities use various learning management systems, but they should all include course information, lecture recordings, assessment information and discussion boards.

- **Email** – lecturers' email addresses are usually found in your learning management system.

  Make sure your emails are brief and to the point. If you have not heard back in 2-3 days, try emailing again.

- **Face to face** – You can request a meeting via email or attend 'office hours'. 'Office hours' are usually posted in the learning management system and are times that academic staff are available for students to 'drop in' and ask questions.

Communicating your academic and learning needs

- Self-disclosure of your learning needs is your choice, but we encourage you to do it early, as it means you will be able to receive support when you need it.
- Many universities provide disclosure support.

Asking questions

Academic and professional staff receive many emails. Before emailing questions, try to answer them yourself:

- Google
- Search the university website
- Ask questions in class
- Use discussion forums in your online learning management system

Check daily

Learning management systems contain:

- Course information
- Lecture content
- Announcements and communications from academic staff

Student email address

- Direct communication from university staff will be sent to your student email address, not your personal email address.



Mastering groupwork

Groupwork can be a key part of study. This is because many careers and workplaces require skills in teamwork, collaboration and effective interaction with others. University is a great place to develop skills and strategies for successful teamwork.

In successful teams, members take time to decide:

- How the team will communicate (online platform, email, text)
- How often the team will meet
- The goals of the team
- The time frame for completing goals
- How progress will be tracked (e.g. spreadsheet)
- Individual roles and responsibilities (based on strengths and interests)

Successful team members

- Communicate their strengths and interests so that this can be considered when assigning tasks or roles
- Communicate challenges they may face and ask for support
- Meet or communicate regularly about the task

Effectively engage in group discussions by:

- Preparing before group meetings
- Listening actively
- Asking questions
- Taking turns to share thoughts or opinions

Managing challenges in groupwork

- Use communication and conflict management strategies
- Be prepared to have ‘courageous conversations’
- Talk out the conflict with a trusted friend or family member

It is important to tell your lecturer if:

- You find it challenging to keep up with group discussions
- You have too much work to do
- You feel you don’t have a say in group decisions
- You have concerns about how the group is doing the work

USEFUL LINK

Engaging in group discussions



05 Managing sensory needs

Managing sensory needs

Sensory experiences at university can feel very different from secondary school. New spaces, unpredictable environments and busy schedules can make it difficult to stay comfortable and focused.

Understanding your sensory patterns and planning ahead can help you feel more confident and settled.

Understanding your sensory patterns

Everyone has a unique sensory profile. You might be hypersensitive (very sensitive) or hypo-sensitive (under sensitive) to things you see, hear, smell, taste, touch or feel.

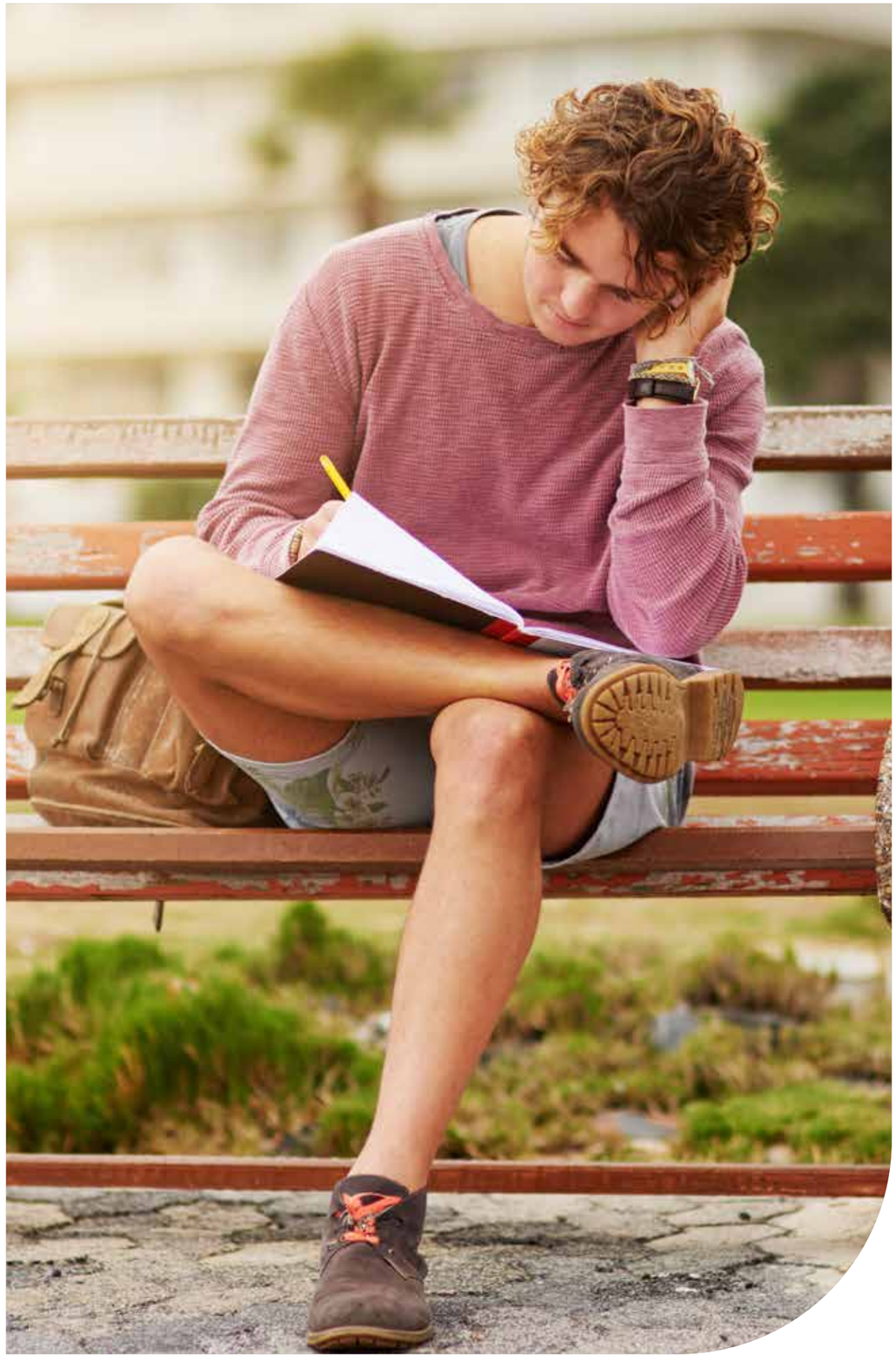
These experiences can change from day to day. Noticing your patterns helps you understand what environments feel comfortable, what situations feel overwhelming, and what helps you feel calm.

Create a sensory toolkit

Your sensory toolkit is a set of items or strategies you can use when you notice early signs of sensory discomfort.

It can include tools to remove sensory input (e.g. sunglasses, noise-canceling earbuds) or tools to create sensory input (e.g. fidget toys, strong flavours, weighted items).

The table over the page shows examples of tools you can include in your sensory toolkit. If you need extra support, talk to the student support services available at your university. They may be able to help you access or organise sensory-friendly supports.



Sensory Toolkit

	Tools to remove input	Tools to create input
Hear	• Noise-canceling headphones. • Earbuds with noise canceling feature. • Move out of the environment / away from the noise.	• Listening to your favourite music. • Tapping on or behind your ear. • Focusing on one sound in the room at a time.
Taste	• Avoid eating foods that you know are unpleasant for you. • Drink cold water (water bottle). • Attempt to replace taste with an alternative positive taste. • Put a flavour you like over the unpleasant flavour e.g. tomato sauce!	• Drink or eat strong flavours e.g. coffee, peppermint chewing gum.
Smell	• Leave the environment or move away from the smelly object. • Block nose. • Open the door or window. • Attempt to replace smell with an alternative positive sense e.g. create pleasant visual input.	• Essential oils. • Put on your favourite perfume/ body spray. • Drink or eat strong flavours e.g. coffee, peppermint chewing gum.
Sight	• Sunglasses. • Closing your eyes. • Focusing on one stable object.	• Watching a fidget spinner. • Rolling a pencil on your fingers and watching it spin. • Scanning images e.g. word finds, connect the dots. • Mindful colouring. • Kaleidoscope fidget toys. • Lava lamps.
Touch	• Avoid touching things you know will be irritating or uncomfortable. • Move out of the environment / away from the thing touching you. • Replace uncomfortable touch with pleasant touch or pleasant alternative sense e.g. pleasant visual or taste input.	• Fluffy key chains. • Fidget toys. • Push-pop fidget toys. • Sensory jewellery e.g. anxiety rings, sensory beads. • Chewing gum.
Balance/ proprioception	• Stay still. • Focus on one spot in your environment. • Slow deep breaths, breathe in for 4 seconds, and out for 7 seconds. • Locate and relax different muscle groups one at a time.	• Rocking, shifting your weight in your chair. • Tapping hands, feet. • Tensing and relaxing different muscle groups. • Slow muscle stretches. • Standing and walking or pacing. • Physical exercise, activity break. • Wear tight clothes. • Use weighted sensory tools.
Interoception	• Try to have a schedule for body functions, e.g. approximate times you eat and go to the bathroom. Routines can help to lessen the impact of interoceptive hypersensitivity. • Replace uncomfortable sensations with pleasant sensations or pleasant alternative senses e.g. pleasant visual or taste input.	• Wear tight clothes. • Use weighted sensory tools. • Exercise/activity breaks. • Close your eyes and mentally scan your body for sensations. • Tighten and loosen muscles. • Chew gum. • Drink cold water.

06 Student success and wellbeing

Navigating challenges

Starting university involves learning how to navigate new challenges and developing productive habits that help you stay organised, focused and balanced.

Understanding the support systems available on campus ensures you can access guidance, wellbeing resources and academic help when you need it.

Prepare for change

- Regularly checking online communication will help you to know when there has been an unexpected change (e.g. timetable changes).

Prepare to navigate unfamiliar situations

- Responses to email and online communication can take time.
- There can be waitlists for support services.
- Some things can't be changed, (e.g. exam timetables) so be prepared to problem solve around these.

Activity

Use the following tables to explore your strengths, challenges and current strategies for facing difficulties.

	My talents, skills and strengths
What I think I have:	
What my parents/ friends think I have:	

	My challenges and strategies for facing them

Discuss with a parent/ caregiver or other adult:

- What are you already doing to be successful at school?
- Where is the best place for you to complete schoolwork/ academic tasks? In a quiet space, away from others? With headphones on/off? With fidget objects nearby?
- What tools do you use if you find school work or activities challenging? Google? YouTube? Magic ToDo - GoblinTools?
- Who do you ask for help when you find school work or other activities difficult or confusing?

Being productive

Productive challenge is all part of the university experience!

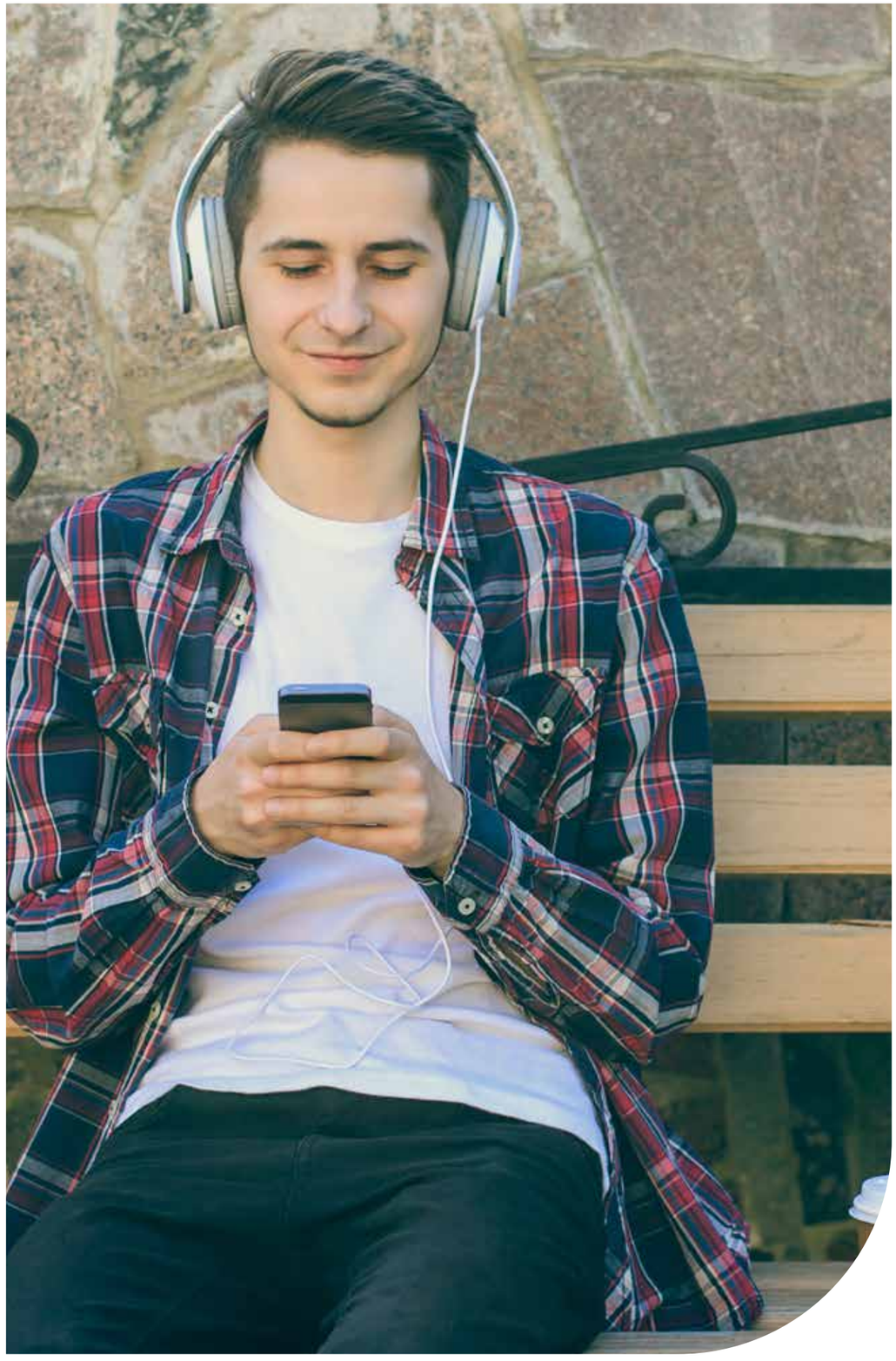
University-level study can be busy and challenging, but setting yourself up for success makes it easier to navigate. Being prepared for the normal 'ups and downs,' especially in the first semester, is important.

If you're finding it challenging yet still making progress, submitting assignments, and finding time for activities you enjoy, you're experiencing productive challenge – this is completely normal.

It is important to notice signs that things are becoming challenging and less productive for you:

- Missing deadlines, asking for a lot of deadline extensions
- Putting in a lot of effort but not getting tasks done
- Finding it hard to push the 'submit' button
- Feeling down, sad, lonely, anxious
- Being socially different to how you usually are (e.g. wanting to be alone more)
- Disinterest in activities you normally enjoy
- Finding it increasingly difficult to think about or focus on study

As soon as you notice signs of unproductive challenge, reach out for support.



Support systems at university

It is important to know what to do or who to ask if you find anything at university difficult or confusing.

Different universities offer various support services that can assist you.

While knowing how to get support is important, remember that you already have many strengths, skills, and strategies for managing challenges.

You can find advice on completing administrative tasks, seeking guidance, or accessing support services on your university's website.

This information usually includes an email address or a link to book an appointment with staff.

USEFUL LINKS

- Student Disabilities Services
- Campus Care
- Inclusive Learning
- University Health and Counselling
- Faculty Disability Liaisons

Activity

When you know which university you are going to attend, go to their website and look up their support services for:

- Neurodivergent students
- Students with disabilities
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Course information and advice
- Other services specific to your need – e.g. Rainbow, Māori, student groups and clubs.

Contact these services to discuss what is available, and the process for engaging with each service.



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