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## British International School Riyadh

### Starting University

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Freshers' week is essentially a rite of passage and it can be tumultuous, but never fear for Uncle Fresher is here to answer all of your more challenging questions



Freshers' week is as essential a rite of passage for students as getting drunk for the time, and pilfering traffic cones. Photograph: Alamy

**Why do people keep asking me which school I went to? Do they really know all the schools?** *Pete, via e-mail*

Pete, I'll level with you: these people are unlikely to become your friends. The

schools question is a form of social filing; a linguistic sorting hat, if you will, used exclusively by Slytherins to identify other Slytherins. You will, in time, meet some wonderful young wizards from the upper echelons of the private education system. These are not they. Do not take them seriously. If asked again, answer the question with a question: which school do you think I went to? This is almost impossible for them to answer without looking like an idiot. Bonus points if, whatever their answer, you enigmatically respond "Nice guess".

**Hello! Basically, I drank A BIT too much on the first night and THREW UP over a group of lads and I think I'm starting to get a reputation as THAT GIRL. What should I do?** *Sarah, via e-mail*

First of all, relax. You're a fresher. Coughing your innards up over a stranger is an essential rite of passage. You should be delighted to have managed it so quickly and so publicly. Just lie low for a while and before the week is out some poor soul will have eclipsed your embarrassment entirely.

**I don't like getting blind drunk, so I've been hanging out with the non-drinkers. They seem like a nice bunch, but yesterday I went to a barbecue with them and it was held at a church. Turns out they're all really, really Christian. Help.** *Nick, via e-mail*

Ah, the Trojan Christians. No freshers' week would be complete without them. Nick, be strong, for this is but a test. There are other freshers out there who are neither drunk nor devoutly Christian, but such rare individuals will take some time to reveal themselves. Head out into the desert. In four weeks' time, you will have found your promised mates.

**Me AGAIN! Basically, I took a guy home last night and the next day it turned out he WASN'T A STUDENT he was just some guy FROM THE TOWN who does this EVERY YEAR and now I'm definitely getting a reputation as THAT GIRL! How do I stop this happening?** *Sarah, via e-mail*

Once again, Sarah, chill. You can totally get over this. Everyone makes mistakes with their sex lives in the first week. Most people, in fact, continue to make them until at least the age of 45. Remember that everyone's putting on an act in the first week and pretending to be cool or foreign or whatever they think will make people like them. Use the next few days to counter your questionable image by being studious and aloof. People will assume the drunken antics were a nervous facade. You'll be fine.

**I asked a guy which school he went to. Turns out he went to a state school I'd never heard of and now he thinks that I'm a snob. I only asked because I was nervous and couldn't think of anything else to say. Can I turn this round? Anna, via e-mail**

Hi Anna. Don't worry. Around 95% of all freshers' week conversations will end in embarrassment for at least one party. Avoid him for a few days, then introduce yourself again as if you've forgotten the first encounter. If this second introduction goes equally wrong, repeat the process until you're happy with the results. Odds are he'll appreciate the chance to start again with a clean slate.

**Someone signed me up for the abseiling society as some sort of kooky joke. Now they're emailing me every day. Sometimes twice a day. Half the emails aren't even about abseiling and I'm pretty sure it's just this one guy. How do I make this stop? Dan, via e-mail**

Email him back asking to be removed from the mailing list. This is pretty basic stuff, Dan. The more pressing question would be: who gave them your email, and why? It could, of course, be a misguided lad's practical joke, but it could also have been a subtle indicator of romantic interest. Look out for an amorous abseiler in your social circle. They could soon be abseiling their way into your heart.

**Hey, Dan again. What did you mean by that abseiling into my heart stuff? That's a really weird image. Dan, via email**

Hi Dan. I have absolutely no idea. Soz.

**I can't stop asking people about their A-levels. It's boring. Why am I doing this? Nicola, via e-mail**

Worry not, Nicola. Dull though the conversation is, it is at least a conversation. You should applaud yourself for staving off the dreaded freshers' week silence, in which a group of as many as eight [students](#) stand in a circle avoiding eye contact and going "hmm" and nodding, for up to six minutes at a time. That said, do try and diversify; why not ask about their GCSEs? Or their Sats?

**Why do I keep DOING THIS? Basically, I was trying to make a lasagne for a party and I got DISTRACTED by this guy and then I left the oven on too long and the kitchen got filled with smoke and the fire alarm went off and like A HUNDRED PEOPLE had to stand outside IN THE COLD at 2am for AN HOUR and now I AM THAT GIRL. I've been here THREE DAYS. Is it TOO LATE to reinvent myself? Sarah, via e-mail**

Right, Sarah, it is starting to seem like the common factor here is you. Have you tried not doing this stuff? Because I think that might really improve the way people perceive you. Next time you do something that could easily result in humiliation, stop and ask yourself: could this easily result in humiliation? If it could, try not doing it. In answer to your question: no, it's never too late to reinvent yourself. You just have to work hard at it. Consider joining the Christian Union. Also, why are you making a lasagne at 2am? That's creepy. Stop that.