Ten Easy Ways for First Year Students to Build International Skills on Campus

MY WORLD ABROAD
QUICK GUIDE

Welcome, first year students, to the exciting world of college life, where possibilities abound! Does the idea of living an international life entice you? Would you like to be someone who studies abroad for a semester, backpacks and travels through South East Asia for a summer, and eventually finds an internship or work in Paris, Rome, Rio, Bombay or Shanghai after graduation? How would you like to visit good friends living in Nairobi, Dubai or Amsterdam? You can do all of this and more by starting early. Your first years of college are, without question, the best place to start gaining international experience and building the international skills important in today's global economy. Here's how!

1. **Take international courses:** Register for international courses or write essays on international subjects in your field of interest. Consider taking courses on another country or region's history or politics.

2. **Contact professors who have international experience:** Tell your professors that you want to go abroad and be inspired by their advice.

3. **Read international news:** International people follow world events by regularly reading about world news. You can start by learning to locate the world's 194 countries on a map.

4. **Make friends with international students on campus:** Introduce yourself to international students in your classes and invite them to join your work teams. Join the buddy program at your International Students' Office.

5. **Join international student clubs:** Volunteer for their events and gain organizational and valuable cross-cultural work skills. Make friends and get exposed to new cultures.

6. **Attend international events:** Seek out public seminars by visiting scholars, attend study abroad fairs and International Education Week events (often in mid-Nov).

7. **Get information about going abroad:** Your Study Abroad Office can direct you to workshops on how to travel, volunteer, intern or study abroad. Befriend students who have been abroad and ask for their advice.

8. **Think about studying abroad for a semester or more in your third year:** Start thinking about studying abroad now so that you can be ready with financing or scholarships in your third year at school. It's worth it!

9. **Consider taking a gap semester abroad to volunteer, travel or learn a second language:** Consider taking a gap semester or gap year off from studies to gain international experience and graduate with a broad and valuable set of career skills.

10. **Succeed in finding an international internship or internationally-oriented work after graduation:** If you have done all of the above, this step will come naturally in your senior years at school or just after graduating.

Why You Need International Skills

Students with international skills have better job prospects when they graduate. The rise of internet technologies is driving a new global economy. Every size of business is being transformed – from large international corporations to small local firms in your hometown. Employers of all sizes are purchasing goods and services from around the world, and they are asking employees to work online with people located in other countries. Whether you work abroad or at home, you will need international skills to succeed. Start early! Better yet – start now!

Going international is fun and exciting. Explore the world! Make new friends! Gain skills that last a life time!

Advice About Going International

International skills are acquired step by step, starting in the first years of college. International skills are unique and the earlier you begin to build them, the better. You need to gain international experience over time to truly develop them. But, keep two points in mind: firstly, you can gain international experience before you even travel abroad, and secondly, that there's no limit to the possibilities once you have it.

People who succeed abroad like change and are naturally curious. When you travel abroad, everything is different: the food, the weather, the way you greet friends and what you have for breakfast. If you are curious, you will be driven to explore the world –discovering new cities, new cultures, and, best of all, new ideas. Do you like change? Are you curious? If yes, start planning to go abroad. You won't regret it.

People who are "international" are different from people who have not travelled: When you travel abroad for four or more months, and when you hang out with people from different cultures, you will learn new ways of seeing, thinking and living. With a growing international perspective, you will learn to have an open mind about new ideas and the people you meet.

International friendships are different: Recognize that when you make international friends, they will be different from your friends back home. Accept minor differences and a whole new world will open up to you.

Get involved, take small risks, and move forward: It takes a certain amount of courage to go abroad. It may seem difficult to take that first plane ride to a new and distant country, leaving friends and family behind. But with a little courage, the world will open up for you and the benefits of international experience will last a lifetime.

Good luck, and best wishes with building your all-important international skills!

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