



## College



### Image Reinvention

#### How to re-create yourself at college

By Vicki Salemi

Article provided by [The CollegeBound Network](#)

The moment you've been waiting for is finally here! It's time to ditch the baggage of old high school cliques and reinvent yourself. Just think: College is the perfect time to start fresh, accentuate your strong features and quirky characteristics, and turn your weaknesses into advantages. We checked in with some experts and college students who have been there to share the scoop on making yourself over for college.

#### **Ditch the high school stuff**

John Gardner, executive director of the North Carolina-based Policy Center on the First Year of College, agrees. "Entering the first year of college can be compared to being reborn," he says. "It is one of the few times in life when you have the opportunity to begin with a clean slate." So, how exactly do you start over?

Just take it from Beau Bone, freshman at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. The first key, according to Bone, is leaving your high school persona at home. "[The trick to] leaving the old self at home is bringing the new self with more maturity," he says. "For example, nobody likes an obnoxious attitude or an immature kid." Among some of the things on Bone's no-no list are bringing along your varsity trophies or reminiscing incessantly about prom to your new college pals--major turnoffs. The key for Bone's successful transition was starting with an open mind and checking out different activities. "Transitioning is about noticing the changes and adapting to them to suit yourself," he adds.

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#### **To thine own self be true**

According to Rose Rothmeier, Ph.D., director of Student Services and Counseling at Austin College in Sherman, Texas, it's important for students to get out of their

comfort zone during their first year at college. "Since many students have indicated that they were not completely themselves in high school," she explains, "college is a time when they can become more comfortable with their real self and find others who can accept them as they are."

The trick to starting over, says Dr. Rothmeier, is less about changing weaknesses and more about building strengths. "Find out who you are in relation to your strengths, build on those assets, and place yourself in situations that will call upon your strengths," she advises. For instance, if you're quick on your feet and enjoy interacting with people, maybe running for student government would suit you well.

### **Everybody's doing it**

For Kristy Beagle, senior at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, having a support system helped her establish a new college identity. "At first, I was so scared people wouldn't like me that I was afraid to go out." As a senior, Beagle is happy to report that she's overcome her former shyness. The key to her confidence was finding friends who accepted her. "Your friends become your family and are an invaluable source for strength. They're transitioning too, so you can do it together."

In fact, Beagle recommends joining clubs and exploring various avenues you wouldn't have considered in high school. "Don't be afraid to try new things. You might like it. If you've always had long hair, cut it off. Try a new clothing style. College is the time to put away the high school labels [like] 'jock,' 'nerd,' 'popular' and 'loser.'"

### **Agree to disagree**

Meredith Sonnen, a junior at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania, agrees. "College is a time for change and for reevaluating yourself. You don't have to convert to someone else's point of view, but you should at least be aware of it."

Katie Burgoon, a junior from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, also became more understanding of differences among her peers. "In high school I thought, 'If you're not just like me, we might not agree and that would be bad.' In college, I've become more open to different types of people, more willing to try new things."

The key is adaptability. According to Sonja Montiel, president and founder of College Confidence, a college counseling company, new responsibilities and new adventures may foster apprehension and excitement. "With these new experiences, students need to embrace flexibility, independence, and uncertainty," she says. "It's a balance between being an independent and confident individual and being willing to be humble in a new experience."

Montiel recommends pursuing activities you enjoy, whether it's intramural sports or student clubs. This way, you'll meet other students who share the same interests.

Above all, remember that college is a chance to introduce a brand-new you. Xavier University senior Beagle advises, "You are no longer the person you were

labeled in high school. Remember, you're not stuck in the past; move forward and embrace college. You made it this far and that's the first step. Go with the flow and do not sweat the small stuff!"

### **Five steps to a new you**

Natasha Munson offers the following tips in her book [\*Life Lessons for My Sisters: How to Make Wise Choices and Live a Life You Love!\*](#).

1. Take time to get to know and appreciate yourself.
2. Trust your instincts and learn to listen to your intuition.
3. Get a support system. Even if you're still instant-messaging your friends from home, connect with friends on campus--they can keep you inspired and motivated every day.
4. Turn weaknesses into advantages. For example, if you are shy, that may mean you listen and observe more skillfully than the average person.
5. Improve your skills. You'll have multitudes of learning opportunities at your fingertips. Take advantage of them. If you're shy, join a public speaking club or take a speech class to learn new skills and help you gain confidence.