

# 30-DAY HOMESICKNESS AND BELONGING CHALLENGE

Small actions you can take every day to help you feel more settled, connected and at home at UK.

**Start with the basics:** *Get enough sleep. Eat regular meals. Practice self-care. Notice the people and places that feel comfortable to you.*

## Week 1

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| <b>Day 1</b><br>Create a routine before things get busy<br><br>Moving can be exciting, tiring and overwhelming. A simple routine can make an unfamiliar environment feel more manageable. Before trying to do everything, take time to understand what is coming and choose what matters most to you.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Review the K Week schedule in the UK Guides app. Decide when and where you will eat, take medications, wake up, wind down, and sleep. Add those times to your calendar before adding optional activities. | <b>Day 2</b><br>Start with the week in front of you<br><br>K Week can make it feel like you should be everywhere at once. You don't. Choose the experiences that genuinely interest you and leave room to rest.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Choose at least three K Week events that genuinely interest you and add them to your calendar. Include travel time, meals, and bedtime. Commit to spending 15 minutes there and talking to at least one person.                                                                                                                                      | <b>Day 3</b><br>Learn the basics<br><br>Small logistical problems can become stressful when you do not know where to go or what to do. Learning the basics now can help you feel more confident later.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Locate or complete the practical things you need, such as: download your BBNvolved event pass, purchase school supplies, look up dining locations, bus stops, gyms, the nearest pharmacy and University Health Service. Learn about residence hall resources.                                 | <b>Day 4</b><br>Make campus more familiar<br><br>Campus feels less intimidating when you have already walked through it and know where important places are.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Take a campus walk and find your classroom buildings, the Gatton Student Center, dining locations, the library, a quiet study space and a recreation or outdoor space. Take a photo or make a note of one place where you felt comfortable. |
| <b>Day 5</b><br>Explore interests, not expectations<br><br>You do not need to join every group or connect with every person. Focus on opportunities that match your interests, values, identity or goals.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Participate in Pick Your Path and identify one program, organization or resource you want to explore further. At Big Blue U, have one brief conversation or attend with someone you have recently met.                                                                                                | <b>Day 6</b><br>Find places where your people might be<br><br>Belonging often begins around shared interests. Student orgs and campus events give you a reason to be in the same place with people who may enjoy the same things you do.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Attend at least one student organization welcome event and identify one org you might want to visit. Then attend Wildcat WELLcome or another K Week activity for at least 30 minutes. Introduce yourself to one person, ask about the organization or event or say hello to someone you recognize from earlier in the week. | <b>Day 7</b><br>Talk about it<br><br>Share your feelings with someone you trust. Whether it's a friend or family member, expressing your emotions can help in coping with homesickness.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Tell one trusted person how the transition is really going. Ask them to listen rather than immediately fix it. You are not alone and many other students are feeling this way. The UK Counseling Center offers a homesickness support group that meets on Thursday afternoons. Consider attending this week. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## Week 2

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| <b>Day 8</b><br>A full syllabus is not a to-do list for today<br><br>Seeing an entire semester of assignments at once can make it feel as though everything is due immediately. The syllabus shows the road ahead; it does not mean you must complete the whole journey this week.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Enter every major due date into one calendar. Then only focus on the assignments due within the next two weeks.                                                                 | <b>Day 9</b><br>Build a routine from what is fixed<br><br>A routine does not need to be perfect. Start with the parts of your day that are already scheduled.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Add classes, meals, wake-up time, bedtime and two short study blocks to your calendar. Leave open space for rest and adjustment. Pick a campus space to study on Tuesday evenings outside your room.                                                   | <b>Day 10</b><br>Educate yourself about the area<br><br>Learning about the history, landmarks and interesting facts about your new location can create a sense of attachment and curiosity.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Research one area nearby you are curious about. Put together a plan for this upcoming weekend to explore this area by yourself or invite a friend. | <b>Day 11</b><br>Stay organized<br><br>Keep yourself organized and on top of tasks. Having a sense of control over your daily life can alleviate stress and feelings of being overwhelmed.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Review your planner and identify one time conflict, one missing study block and one place where you need more rest. |
| <b>Day 12</b><br>Notice what is working<br><br>Homesickness and positive experiences can exist at the same time. Noticing something good does not mean denying what is difficult.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Cultivate a habit of gratitude by regularly acknowledging and appreciating the positive aspects of your new environment. Keeping a gratitude journal or simply reflecting on three things you're thankful for each day can shift your focus from what you miss to what you have. | <b>Day 13</b><br>Create a comfort zone<br><br>Designate a place in your new space that feels comfortable and familiar. Arrange it with items that bring you joy and comfort.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Get out of your space and find a new study space by exploring campus. Find a place you feel comfortable to study: library, Gatton Student Center, etc. Study outside of your sleeping space at least 2-3 times per week starting today. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## Week 3

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| <b>Day 14</b><br>Practice self-care                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Day 15</b><br>Create a vision board                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Day 16</b><br>Celebrate achievements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Day 17</b><br>Focus on your goals                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>Take care of yourself physically and mentally. Eat well, exercise, get enough sleep and practice relaxation techniques like meditation or deep breathing.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Visit the Johnson Center or Alumni Gym and commit to at least one gym session this week. See what activities they have: <a href="https://studentsuccess.uky.edu/campus-recreation">studentsuccess.uky.edu/campus-recreation</a>.</p> | <p>Visualizing your goals and aspirations in your new environment can be empowering.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Create a vision board with images, quotes and goals that represent what you want to achieve or experience while in college. Display it somewhere visible to remind yourself of your dreams and ambitions.</p>                                                     | <p>Acknowledge and celebrate your milestones and achievements in your new environment, no matter how small they may seem.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> You are halfway through your first month in college! Yippee. You got this! Call someone you love and tell them one thing that is going well. Share some of the strategies you are using to be successful.</p>                               | <p>Remind yourself of the reasons why you chose to be here at UK. Focusing on your goals can provide motivation and a sense of purpose.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Now that you've created a vision board, share your board with someone from home and one new college friend. Explain the significance of each element you chose.</p> |
| <b>Day 18</b><br>Stay active socially                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Day 19</b><br>Explore technology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Day 20</b><br>Engage in physical activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p>Make an effort to meet new people and build friendships. Having a support network in your new location can ease feelings of loneliness.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Look at upcoming events in BBNvolved and choose one to attend. Make a commitment to go by yourself or invite a friend.</p>                                                                                                                             | <p>Use technology to your advantage. Stay updated with news from home, follow your hometown's social media pages or participate in online groups related to your interests back home.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Choose one online UK social media page connected to an interest you enjoy. Spend 15 minutes exploring it, then find one related event or activity to attend.</p> | <p>You've been working hard. Exercise is not just good for your physical health but also your mental well-being. It can help reduce stress and boost your mood.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Try one Campus Recreation option you have not done before, such as a group fitness class, climbing wall session, open swim, intramural outdoor adventure. Choose one and put it on your calendar.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

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## Week 5

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| <b>Day 21</b><br>Volunteer or join a cause<br><br>Volunteer or join a cause Contributing to a cause or volunteering for local organizations can create a sense of purpose and connection within your new community.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Check out the UKY Community and Engagement page. Send an email for participation on at least one of the programs/events listed on this page. | <b>Day 22</b><br>Plan visits or trips<br><br>Plan visits or trips If possible, plan visits back home or trips with friends or family to break the monotony and give you something to look forward to.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Identify one low-cost campus or Lexington activity you could attend alone, with a roommate or with someone you are beginning to know. Explore UK Campus Recreation and add one event or class to your calendar.                     | <b>Day 23</b><br>Stay informed and connected<br><br>Catch up on news from your hometown or country through online newspapers, podcasts or social media groups. Be mindful of how much time you spend dwelling on news from home as it can amplify feelings of homesickness.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Choose one 30-minute window to catch up with home. When the timer ends, do one activity that brings your attention back to where you are now. | <b>Day 24</b><br>Create a support system<br><br>Create a support system Build relationships with people you see on campus regularly. They might be other newcomers who understand what you're going through and can offer support.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Join the UK Counseling Center homesickness support group to meet others having a similar transition experience as you. |
| <b>Day 25</b><br>Practice mindfulness<br><br>Mindfulness and meditation techniques can help ground you in the present moment, reducing anxiety and feelings of being disconnected.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Spend five minutes using Headspace, Insight Timer, another mindfulness resource.                                                                                              | <b>Day 26</b><br>Limit comparisons<br><br>Avoid constantly comparing your new environment to your old one. Accept that they're different and focus on appreciating the unique aspects of your current location.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Fold a piece of paper in two. On the left, title it UK and on the right, Home. Now list the strengths, qualities or positive aspects of each on their specific side. Continue to build the list on the UK side over time. | <b>Day 27</b><br>Manage anxiety<br><br>Hopefully you are feeling more comfortable with your new surroundings but likely are still feeling a bit anxious, which is normal. We all experience anxiety and there are some good strategies to utilize when anxiety arises.<br><br><b>Activity:</b> Try 5-4-3-2-1: name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell and 1 you taste. Take three slow breaths.                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

## Week 6

| Day 28<br>Walkabout                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Day 29<br>Create new traditions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Day 30<br>Look how far you've come                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| <p>Walking every day is good for our physical and emotional wellbeing. Spending time outside can support physical and emotional well-being.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Engage in activities that promote relaxation and wellbeing, such as yoga, art therapy or nature walks at the UK Arboretum. These activities can help reduce stress and promote a sense of inner calmness, making it easier to cope with homesickness.</p> | <p>Establish new rituals or traditions in your new location. This could be anything from a weekly movie night with new friends to exploring local festivities.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Review your calendar for this month. Identify new practices you have been doing that are working well for you. Put those on next month's calendar so you can continue to do what works.</p> | <p>Thirty days ago, much of this may have felt unfamiliar, overwhelming or lonely. You may not feel completely settled yet—and that is okay. Belonging is built gradually through small choices, repeated routines, familiar places and people who begin to recognize you. You have already done something brave: you stayed, adjusted and kept trying.</p> <p><b>Activity:</b> Write down three things that feel easier now, two people or places that help you feel connected and one habit you want to continue next month. Then plan one small activity to celebrate completing the challenge. Great job!!</p> |

### SEEK SUPPORT

If homesickness is interfering with class, eating, sleep, self-care or daily functioning, reach out for assistance from UK staff.

### TRACS

- 859-218-7227
- TRACS@uky.edu
- Complete a referral form through a UK Student Success "Get Help" page
- 2nd Floor, East Wing of Gatton Student Center

### OTHER SUPPORTS/CONNECTIONS

- Counseling Center Homesickness Group
- Let's Talk
- Residence Life
- Center for Support and Intervention
- Advisors
- Campus Recreation
- Student organizations