SUMMER’S OVER, AND SADLY YOU’RE SWAPPING THOSE LASY DAYS OF FREEDOM FOR JAM-PACKED HOURS OF REQUIRED READING. BUT BEFORE THE SUNNY MEMORIES START TO FIZZLE AND FIRST DAY FEARS FLARE UP, CHILL OUT WITH GL’S ULTIMATE SCHOOL SURVIVAL GUIDE. FROM TOUGH TEACHERS TO WARDROBE WOES, WE HAVE PLENTY OF WAYS TO CONQUER COMMON CLASS CONUNDRUMS.

FEAR FACTOR #1
THE UNWANTED CLASSMATE

“I just found out my ex-BF is going to be in almost all of my classes! How can I get through it?” —Julia D., 15

Oh, you heartbreaker, you. Well, it’ll probably be a scheduling nightmare to try to switch all of your classes now, so your other option is just to stick it out and face your former fella with a smile. Use your similar schedules to settle things once and for all: Next time you see him in class, casually bring up your first big history quiz, then tell him you hope things won’t always be so awkward. He’ll probably be relieved to hear you say it—and that way the two of you can focus on what’s being said at the front of the class, not the weird tension between each other.

FEAR FACTOR #2
THE SUPER STRICT TEACHER

“Of course I got our school’s meanest teacher. My friends tell me she’s really strict and never gives out A’s.” —Amlyn W., 13

Don’t be quick to pass judgment. Step into class with an open mind, then win her over by raising your hand during the first few classes and subtly showing your smarts. See if you can find something in common. Is she a die-hard Yankees fan? Comment on last night’s big win. Teachers are humans, too. And if you treat them with respect (that means showing up on time and leaving the chitchat for lunch), you’ll be standing on even ground.

FEAR FACTOR #3
THE INTIMIDATING OLDER PARTY CROWD

“I hear all of these stories about kids who party and drink on the weekends. How do I steer clear of that?” —Madison V., 13

Nervous about heading back? Relax. We’ve got the goods on dealing with any dilemma.

BY PATRICIA MCNAMARA
No doubt, your high school’s full of smarties (like you!). But there likely will be an occasion or two where your peers are making some not-so-wise moves (like partaking in underage drinking or illegal drugs). If they ask you to join in? Stay calm and simply say, “No thanks, it’s not my thing,” and that should be enough for them to leave you alone. But if the nagging’s not letting up or you’re feeling uncomfortable, tell them you have to make a call, then slip away and let your parents know it’s time for you to be picked up.

FEAR FACTOR #6
THE CLUB CLUSTER

“When I walk into a new club, will I like anyone or meet a room full of cold-shouldered strangers?” —Christina R., 14

Clubs are awesome ways to bond with new buds, but that definitely won’t happen the first day. It takes time to form a friendship—and to figure out if this particular club is right for you. But the good news is that everyone’s in the same boat, so you shouldn’t stress out about being a stranger. Plus, you all elected to join the same group, so you know you at least have that in common with everyone there. Try not to psych yourself out. Use your mutual interest to hit it off right with this new crew.

FEAR FACTOR #4
THE FRIEND DRIFT

“I’m going into high school and I’m worried I won’t see my friends as much. We all have different classes and interests. I’m afraid we’ll grow apart.” —Hannah B., 14

So your BFF’s on the cheerleading squad and you’re rocking a field hockey jersey? That doesn’t mean you can’t still hang. One of the fab things about true friendship is the different interests and personalities you each bring. So go out and do your own thing, but reserve plenty of hang time for your besties (like regular Saturday night sleepovers). And don’t forget to support each other as you try new stuff—ask her to show you the new touchdown dance or sit front row as she stars in the fall musical. As long as you’re still there for each other, your friendship will always stay strong. Besides, you’ve had way too many amazing times together to let something like different schedules or extracurriculs get in your way.

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NO MORE FIRST DAY FREAKOUTS!

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Mind reading is so not a prerequisite for class, cutie. Spend an hour or two before the first day digging around social media, or chat with friends for inside dirt. Still not prepped on summer’s big pairings? Just hit the halls with open ears. Go with the flow, starting convos with a simple, “How was your summer?” and act like you knew the news all along. Chances are, you’ll be up on the gossip before the final bell rings.

FEAR FACTOR #7

THE LUNCH DATE

“’I’m scared none of my friends will have my lunch schedule and I’ll end up eating alone.’” —Emily R., 14

This is always a gal’s greatest fear—but one that’s pretty easy to overcome. If you’re strolling into the caf solo, start simple: Overhear a pack saying they’re heading to lunch? Ask to join in. Or, if making the first move isn’t your scene, grab some grub and head to a table, whipping out a cool book or magazine. Someone’s bound to invite you over, or start a convo asking what you’re reading. While it would be nice to munch with your buds, seize this time to get to know new people.

FEAR FACTOR #8

THE NEW-GIRL STATUS

“I moved two summers ago and had a terrible year at my school. This month, I am moving yet again and want to be happier. Help!” —Katie H., 16

Think about what caused your less-than-stellar year. Was it your friends? Your crazy sched? Push it all aside and start with a clean slate. The great thing about being the new gal is no one knows your past. When you move this time, brainstorm a bunch of goals and ideas about how to achieve them. Looking for a fast way to meet others? Volunteer for the homecoming committee. Sometimes all you really need is a new outlook and attitude.

FEAR FACTOR #9

THE SCHEDULE SHUFFLE

“I’m worried I won’t have enough time between classes. My school is huge!” —Samantha S., 14

Plan, plan, plan. Practice with your locker combo before school, memorizing a little jingle for easy— and fast—opening. Load your bag with the morning’s books, then switch at lunch, sharing binders for two classes so you’re not lugging a heavy load. If you map your route right, you can even swap books with friends on walks to the next class. Consider it a challenge to get to class on time, every time. And as long as you don’t delay by chatting, you’ll be settled in your seat with time to spare.

FEAR FACTOR #10

THE WARDROBE WOE

“What should I wear the first day? I want to make a good impression.” —Samira E., 16

Newflash: it’s not what you’re wearing but how you wear it that’ll keep all eyes on you. Comfort equals confidence, so spend the weekend before the big day piecing together a cute but relaxed look (make sure you stick with the school’s dress code). And instead of splurging on an entire outfit, snap one new piece that will last all year long, like some cute sneakers or the perfect jeans. Or just swap stuff with your friends—their old threads will be new to you (plus it’s free!). The idea is not only to look good but to feel good, too.

FEAR FACTOR #11

THE BUS RUT

“Last year, my bus was filled with popular girls. They didn’t really want to talk to me.” —Angela R., 12

Nothing like starting (or ending) your day on a bus filled with bad vibes. But you have to get to school somehow, so try not to let this not-so-smooth ride ruin your day. How? Seek out your own bus buddy: Simply plop down with your bag on your lap, leaving space for someone to sit. If that doesn’t work, use the time to mentally prepare for or unwind from school; bring a book or listen to music. You’ll be pulling up to school before ya know it.


FASHION SHOPPING GUIDE

Credits for pages 18-24, 26, 32-39, 76-77, 84-85 and 87. All other credits on the page.

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