

WAYS TO MEET INTERNATIONALS

It's usually very easy to meet international students and visiting scholars on the university campus. Some of these ideas are quite simple and others require more planning. As always, undergird all of your efforts with prayer and realize that the key to meeting people is being willing to take the initiative. Some new international students are more reserved than we might expect. Don't simply wait for internationals to come to you — step out of your comfort zone and go to them!

Here are 10 ideas to help you get started:

1. **Pick students up at the airport** — If the university's international student office accepts your help, offer to pick up new international students at the airport and bring them to campus. You can also contact international student clubs on campus (most are organized according to nationality or continental grouping) and volunteer to help transport new students from the airport. You might also be able to provide temporary housing in Christians' homes. (Be sure to give these hosts a list of tips on the best ways to show hospitality to internationals.)
2. **Set up a campus welcome table** — At the beginning of the year, set up a welcome table in a high-traffic area on campus, complete with a banner that says something like, "Welcome New International Students." At this table, offer a free gift bag to all international students including items such as: post-it notes, a pen, a mechanical pencil, a Bible, a granola bar, an invitation to your weekly meeting, a local map, etc. Ask those who stop by your table if they would be willing to fill out a simple registration form to learn about the activities you are sponsoring during the year.
3. **Sponsor a welcome picnic or welcome dinner** for new international students. To publicize your event, put up fliers around campus and provide some to friends who can invite new internationals- ex. faculty members and internationals you have known from the past. At your event, be sure to use contact cards or a sign-up sheet to help you contact people in the future.
4. **Watch for university-sponsored welcome events which are open to the public.** Many schools sponsor welcome events for the very purpose of encouraging the public to meet new international students.

5. **Watch the campus newspaper and check websites** (visit your university’s Student Organization website) for activities being sponsored by various international student clubs on campus. Go alone or take along a friend and see who you are able to meet!
6. **Sponsor a weekly “Coffee House”** on campus (or off-campus) where international students can practice speaking English with Americans. This will require a core group of Americans who are committed to taking part each week. Ideas for English content can be found on our Resource page.
7. **If you see someone who looks lost** and you think the person may be an international student, walk up and say, “Can I help you find your way?” (This is especially appropriate during the early weeks of a school year.) If possible, don’t just give directions, but walk the person to his or her destination.
8. **Offer to be a Language Partner** — Many schools offer programs which match internationals with Americans for the purpose of helping the international to practice speaking English. This can be a very rewarding activity, but it is also one which may require a long-term commitment (at least a semester).
9. **Be a friend** — This may seem obvious but... whether or not you live on-campus, simply stop by the rooms of international students and introduce yourself. Express genuine interest in their countries; let them tell you why they came to study in the U.S., and spend some time getting to know them. When you visit the dining hall, keep an eye open for students who are sitting alone. Many who are eating alone are international students who would enjoy some company.
10. **Learn to play ping pong, badminton or cricket** — These are among the sports that, depending on their nationality, many international students enjoy. If you can find a location where internationals play these sports, it is likely they will enjoy having you learn and play along with them.