

# 11 things first-time arts boarding school students should know

Interlochen Arts Academy students, alumni, and faculty offer advice on arts, academics, and life on your own.



You've signed your enrollment agreement, bought your dorm supplies, and packed your bags. Now it's finally time to move into your home away from home.

Your first year of boarding school can be scary. You'll have to manage your own schedule, do your own laundry, and maybe even clean your own bathroom.

That's the bad news. Here's the good news: You're not alone. To help you get settled into your new home, we sat down with several Interlochen Arts Academy students, alumni, and faculty. Here's their advice on making the transition to life at an arts boarding school.

**1. MANAGE YOUR SCHEDULE.** "One of the hardest things about coming to boarding school is that students have to create a whole new routine for themselves," said Michael Kern, Director of Student Support Services. "Spend some time in your first month figuring out what your routine is going to be: When do you hang out with friends, practice your art, go to the gym, or do homework?"

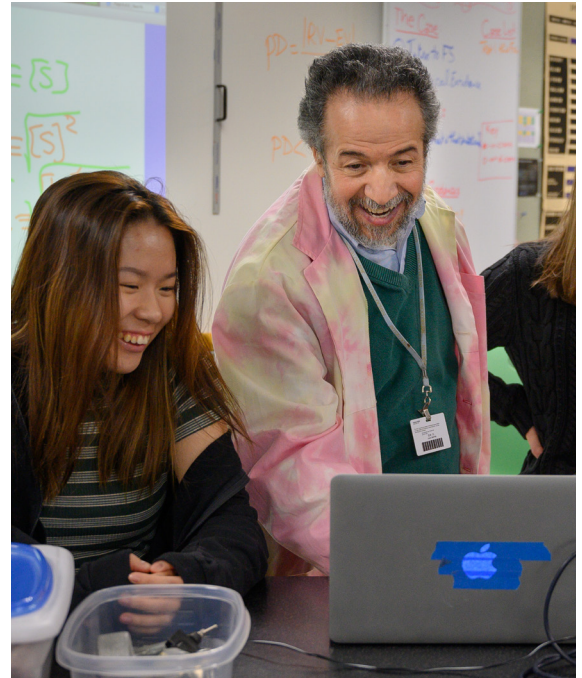
One of the most crucial parts of finding a routine is establishing a sleep schedule. "Even if you manage your own sleep schedule at home, it can be difficult to adjust to the independence of coming to boarding school," former Assistant Dean of Students Lydia Stoye said. "Set a goal for how much sleep you need at night to be at your best, and make plans to get enough sleep. Practice waking up to your own alarm, and consider a specialty alarm clock if you're a heavy sleeper."

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**2. BE NICE TO YOUR ROOMMATE.** Residence hall life is a central component of boarding school, but living with strangers is inherently challenging. “If there is ever an issue between you and your roommate, always try the path of least resistance and be willing to not get your way,” said Miracle Thornton, a four-year Interlochen Arts Academy senior. “But do stick up for yourself if anything is making you uncomfortable. If you can’t confront your roommate directly, there is always an instructor of residence life or residence hall assistant who is open and ready to talk with you.”

**3. FIND A HEALTHY BALANCE BETWEEN ART AND ACADEMICS.** “Never feel like you have to put your art over academics,” Thornton said. “They should have relatively equal footing on your scale of priorities. Both art and academic instructors understand the difficulties of balancing work, so keep an open dialogue if you feel like you are drowning.”

**4. TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH.** “Take advantage of our gorgeous campus, especially in the fall,” said Mary Ellen Newport, Director of the R.B. Annis Math and Science Division. “You can sign out with a friend to take a walk to Pines Side, Riley Woods, or Bud’s. Use the Dennison Center for Recreation and Wellness to balance out study and practice. Eat a balanced menu in Stone Cafeteria. Lots of greens—including some grown in our hoophouses—are available!”



**5. BE INVOLVED IN YOUR ACADEMIC CLASSES.** “Discussion, laboratories, group work, and projects are all occasions for you to share your insights, ask questions and invite your classmates into discussion,” Newport said. “Your academic classes are great opportunities to get to know students outside of your artistic major.”

**6. STAY ORGANIZED.** “Use tools like Google Tasks, Wunderlist, a bullet journal, or a planner to manage your time and tasks,” Stoye said.

Newport echoes Stoye’s advice: “Keep tabs on your Canvas calendar and campus email as well.”

**7. ENGAGE WITH YOUR TEACHERS.** “Instructors are always willing to help students,” said recent Arts Academy graduate Conor Dailey. “Talking with them can help you discover new and exciting passions.”

Cait Belland, a four-year senior, agrees: “Seek out your teachers because they are there for you and want to help you reach your goals.”

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**8. ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT.** “The most successful students are the ones who can get help when they need it,” Kern said. “The best part about our faculty and staff is that they really want to help students—but they need to know when a student needs help.”

Attending office hours or tutorials is a great place to start. “Your teachers, artistic and academic, are eager to talk with you about your ideas and provide help when you are uncertain or stuck,” Newport said. “Each academic teacher will have their own style for conducting discussions, but all of them will welcome your questions.”



**9. GO TO PERFORMANCES, EVEN THOSE OUTSIDE YOUR MAJOR.** “You are going to one of the top arts high schools in the United States, if not the world,” said Belland. “Take advantage of all the performances and art exhibitions taking place at your school. It’s a great way to support your friends and be inspired. Now is the time to fulfill your artistic mind and inspire your artistic soul.”

**10. LEARN FROM OTHERS.** “Observe and listen to the other students and faculty around you,” said Courtney Kaiser-Sandler, Associate Director of Contemporary Music and Collaborative Projects. “Watch them practice, and ask them how they use their practice time.”

Instructor of Oboe Dane Philipsen agrees. “Listen—to your studio teacher, to all of your teachers, to your peers, and to yourself,” he said. “But at the same time, don’t compare yourself to anyone else. You probably will, but practice and get better at avoiding those comparisons. It’s enough just to be you.”

**11. ENJOY THE JOURNEY.** “Remember to breathe,” Kaiser-Sandler said. “Interlochen is full of incredible young artists. You will meet so many amazing people, sharing stories of your life before Interlochen and your dreams for the future.”



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