

Just Ask clubs & societies

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At the Freshers' Fair recently, I seem to have signed up for dozens of different clubs and societies. Now I'm on all their mailing lists and just don't know what to commit to and what to say no to... HELP!

Your student years are full of wonderful opportunities for exploring different interests, staying physically active and building strong relationships with peers. What a blessing to be able to develop interests and skills away from your medical or nursing training! But it's impossible to take part in all that's on offer; how do you decide what to get involved with and what to drop?

It's great to pursue extracurricular activities. Medics can be guilty of being too academically focused, which can be unhealthy. I would suggest it's a good idea to be involved in at least one club or society, besides the Christian Union. Aim to be committed on at least an annual basis, rather than spreading yourself too thin. Look for opportunities to build deeper friendships, rather than just knowing lots of different people's names (although this is also important!)

As to how to choose, do something you enjoy. We all have different God-given interests, personalities and abilities. *What are you good at?* You might want to do something highly competitive which you can take to a high standard, or challenge yourself with something you haven't tried before, or find something that's just for fun.

Be strategic about friendships. As a Christian, you have the opportunity to get alongside specific friends or individuals and share life with them. Later, this might lead to natural chances to share your faith. Being ready to invest in particular relationships may mean you settle on your second or third choice sport in order to get alongside your flatmate or classmate.

Get stuck in and commit. After taking time to decide realistically what is manageable with your schedule, make a good go of it. Be a reliable team member. Don't let people down if you can possibly help it; turn up to training sessions and matches alike.

If there are lots of different activities you want to get involved in, consider a time-limited commitment. Ecclesiastes 3:1 reassures us that, 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens...'; so for you that might mean rugby for two years, and the dramatic society after!

Be wise in thinking about how a particular activity might impact your Christian life. For example, are football games on a Sunday? Does the street dance clash with CU night? Does the hockey club have a culture of compulsory post-match drinking games, which you find hard to resist?

Be thankful for the opportunities! In my work as an east London GP I often reflect on the relative lack of low-cost social or physical activities for many patients who may be isolated or lonely. Conversely, taking my children on Wednesday afternoons to their weekly swimming lessons, it's a joy to see our local leisure centre filled with the Barts & the London Swimming Club, with all the accompanying banter and endorphin-release of sports practice! Whatever you opt for, make the most of it. ■

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