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## A College Girl's Guide to Bar Etiquette

By Kirsten Ballard in [LIFE](#)

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Becoming an established member of a bar takes time, skill and a lot of confidence. Whether you just turned 21 or you've been hitting up bars for a year, Her Campus has 12 tips for you so you can become the best bar-frequenter ever.

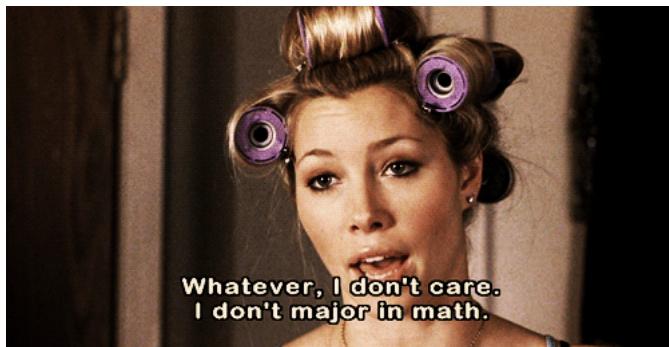
### 1. Know Your Drink



Ordering at a bar is just like ordering at a restaurant: before you flag down the bartender and hold up the line, [know what you want](#). Don't be afraid to try something new or ask for recommendations, but don't stand there and say, "umm..." It's always safe to know which type of wine, beer and cocktail you prefer.

"Do ask if there are any specials," recommends bartender Alex Norton, a senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "It could save a lot of money."

### 2. The Money Situation



Everyone has an opinion on whether cash or credit is better for the bar scene. If you're a cash person, have enough to pay for your drinks and tip generously. If you have a card, open a tab and hand it over early in the night so you don't waste the bartender's time. When you "open a tab," you give the bartender your credit card to have your drinks charged to it automatically throughout the night. At

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[Kirsten Ballard](#)

the end of the night, you “close the tab,” or go up and sign for the bill. Always make sure to close your tab (and leave a good tip!).

“Don’t open a tab and then leave it without closing,” Norton says. “Nothing is worse than standing in line for 20 minutes, finally getting to order your drink and then realizing your credit card is still at the last bar.”

### 3. Three is the Magic Number



If you are going to a bar to meet people, it may not be the best time to invite your entire sorority. A group of three is the perfect number for a night out, but it also makes you approachable because it makes it possible to couple off: When a guy approaches, you won’t be leaving one friend to fend for herself, and the guy also won’t have to fight through a pack of friends to get your number.

### 4. Blend In



Take in the scenery of the bar—is the music pumping, is the game on or is everyone speaking in whispers above smooth jazz? If you want to be a regular at a bar, work on blending in with the general atmosphere. Every song that comes on the speaker isn’t “your song”—especially if it’s not karaoke night. Keep the singing along to a minimum.

### 5. Patience is a Virtue



Fighting through the crowd and snapping your fingers at the bartender is not a good way to be a welcome customer. Leaning over the bar and slurring flirtations isn’t much better. You’re not going to get a free drink, and you’re not going to be put ahead of the rest of the people wanting a drink. Be assertive, not aggressive; be friendly, but not a floozy. And above all, be patient.

“Wait your turn at the bar, but don’t be a pushover or you’ll never get a drink,” Norton says.

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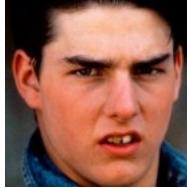
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## 6. Keep it Classy



A bar is not a frat party. The point is not to be puking in the bathroom; it's to enjoy the libations. If someone asks you to leave, you're not doing it right.

## 7. Play it Safe



Watch your drink and trust your gut. Be aware that [bars can be as dangerous](#) as they are fun. Don't leave a drink unattended, or you risk getting drugged. Watch the bartender make your drink, and definitely don't accept drinks from strangers unless you saw the drink being made. Overall, be smart!

Another important safety tip is to keep track of [how much you're drinking](#). Consider making a small pen mark on your finger or a discreet note in your phone to keep track; everyone will just assume you're checking your texts instead of your sobriety.

## 8. Own It



If you're out with a guy, it is not his job to buy you every single drink. Be willing and able to pay your own tab, and understand that he, too, is a college student with a college student's budget.

## 9. Closing Time



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The staff can't go home until you do. It's rude to stay after hours, and chances are the bartender is just ready to go home. Consider moving the party to a late-night pizza restaurant if you're really that set on staying out.

#### 10. This Isn't Starbucks



We're all adults here. A good customer does not overcomplicate things with their skinny, extra bitters, with-a-twist, shaken-not-stirred martini on the rocks. Throwing out excessive lingo and a ton of demands isn't becoming. Ask the wine bar for a glass of wine, and the dive bar for a beer. Don't be complicated.

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A friendship with a bartender is one of the most beneficial relationships you can have. If you're going to frequent a bar, be friendly and make an effort to build a rapport with the bartender. Soon, your new best friend will be recommending new, niche drinks and making sure your cup doesn't run empty.

#### 12. Do Your Own Thing



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ink beer, if you don't like complicated cocktails, don't

spend. This isn't a job interview, and you're not out to

win an Old Fashioned like Don Draper from *Mad Men* if

you like what you're drinking.

It's time to own your bar savvy. Be polite, have fun and be safe!

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