

STUDENTS' GUIDE

to the First Amendment

This guide to the First Amendment will help you exercise your rights at a public college or university.



The First Amendment means you're free to:



FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Pray or not. Public colleges can't favor any religion or force you to follow one.



FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Speak up. Challenge other points of view.



FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Write, report, broadcast. Follow student reporters' stories.



FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Organize. Rally. March with other students to support your cause.



FREEDOM OF PETITION

Gather your classmates' signatures to ask the school to change its policy.

The First Amendment protects all students, regardless of their background.

These freedoms let you express yourself. Here are a couple of tips to keep yourself protected:

TIP 1 **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.**



If you disagree with the views of an invited speaker, you are free to speak up following the university's guidelines. But shouting them down to shut them up, sometimes called a **heckler's veto**, is not allowed. They'll likely be protected. You could be the one who is removed.



You can't express yourself anytime, anywhere and in any way. Public universities can limit your right to protest if people can't get to class or safety is threatened. These limits are called **time, place and manner restrictions**.



Location matters. Your protest rights are more protected in outdoor public spaces where protest typically occurs or which the school opens for protest. These are called **traditional or designated public forums**. Your protest rights are less protected inside residence halls, admin buildings and classrooms.



Authorities can't shut you down if they don't like what you're saying; that's called **viewpoint discrimination**. Free speech means that all ideas are worth hearing.



Offensive speech, or **hate speech**, is protected by the First Amendment. But you could be held accountable for *how it is delivered*. Your speech cannot harass, threaten, discriminate against a protected group or incite others to imminent lawless action.

TIP 2 **CHECK YOUR UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES** for free speech policies.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS. FIND YOUR VOICE.



Have more questions about your speech and protest rights? Scan here for more resources.

**Your essential freedoms.
Brought to you by the First Amendment.***

*Some restrictions apply.

