

## SEMESTER BREAK

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[Assignment: Chances are you have experienced many changes in the last six months or so, changes that can't help but have given you opportunities for growth. In this essay, compare that person you were when you arrived at school in August with the person you are today. This may give you occasion to tell your reader some stories; use those strategies of storytelling you have already developed to make those stories both vivid and purposeful. Give this comparison a symmetrical shape such as we have practiced in class.]

My late night Target runs were becoming more and more frequent as August 18th rapidly approached. Would I be prepared to leave? Would I have enough clothes to wear? The seven cardboard boxes bursting with jeans and sweaters just didn't look like enough. I would need to bring every article of clothing that I owned because I was not planning to wash more than twice a semester. Also, I wasn't going to be back home for three and a half months. That is the longest that I had ever been away from home; last summer I had gone to a soccer camp out of state for five whole days and I thought that was a long time. That is why I had to be very prepared; I would not feel really homesick if I could bring all the comforts of home along with me.

I started shopping for my "necessary" items about the second week in July. I stocked up on socks, cotton balls, hangers, calendars, toothbrushes, candles, fingernail polish, razors, stamps, and Tupperware. But that was not even the beginning. I went to Sam's Club and bought shampoo, deodorant, soap, toothpaste, Kleenex, and Advil. The sad thing is that I did not just buy one or two tubes of toothpaste but instead I bought nine! And I had enough bars of soap to last me through grad school. I had this perception that once I went away to college I was never coming back, so I had better stock up on things now because soon I would have to support myself. And I did not even know if there were any stores in Valparaiso. Heck, I did not even know Indiana had anything besides farms and basketball players. I was nervous, I was clueless . . . I was a freshman again.

The ride to school was a blur; I kept thinking that I had forgotten something. What could I be forgetting? I brought my CD player, a closet organizer, a toaster, a beanbag, a telephone, carpeting, a fan, sheets, and about twenty plastic crates. Along with my clothes for every season and my goodies from Target there was not really much room for anything else that I could have forgotten. When I arrived at Valpo with my family, we located Alumni dorm and trekked up the stairs to my room, number 335. I was quite shocked when I saw my new room; I did not think it would be so . . . so . . . small. Trying to cram all of my stuff into the family car was nothing compared to trying to stuff everything into my tiny dorm room. Tears welled up in my eyes when I realized that there was no way that I was going to fit everything into this room. I think my parents felt bad for me because they stayed until I unloaded and somewhat unpacked all of my stuff. Then they uneasily said that they better get going because they wanted to beat Chicago traffic and get home before dark. I walked them to the car and tearfully said my last goodbyes. After the green Jeep Cherokee drove off, I slowly turned and started walking to my dorm, not knowing when I would see my family again.

Fortunately, I did see my family again and before I knew it the semester was over. I brought a lot of things back home with me like the ironing board and the surplus of deodorant soap that was beginning to smell up my closet. Over Winter Break, I received many Christmas presents but I vowed not to overpack, since I would be switching rooms at the beginning of the second semester. And this time I would make the whole "moving in" process smoother, and a lot simpler. The first difference was that I drove myself to school, and by doing so I shaved 35 minutes of traveling time. When I got to school, I threw both of my bags on the floor of my room and hugged my roommate. Within minutes the stereo was blaring and people began roaming in and out of my room. I did not get a chance to unpack that night because I was too busy socializing with friends I hadn't seen for weeks. It was complete chaos! But it was nothing compared to the confusion that I felt at this time first semester. In fact, I was kind of enjoying it! The next thing I knew it was three in the morning and people were leaving, so I decided to crash for the night. The next morning I awoke to the sunlight streaming through the half-open curtains. I was lying on top of my unmade bed, with my unpacked bags still on the floor and the remains of food from last night's party all over the room. I never felt more at home.