Sigma Nu Fraternity
EXCELLING WITH HONOR

Safe Spring Break Discussion Guide

Introduction

Spring break is a time for college students to retreat and relax from midterm exams and classwork before finishing the rest of the academic year. For some, this may involve returning home to decompress and recharge. For others, this may include socializing and planning trips away from campus with friends. This conversation starter will help facilitate conversations with members on ways to make safe and healthy decisions during spring break and avoid risk.

Questions to ask and points to make verbatim are in **bold**. Notes and instructions for facilitators are in *italics*.

Discussion

What are your plans for spring break this year?

Solicit responses from participants.

Responses may include: staycation, community service, camping/outdoor adventure, domestic trip, international travel, study abroad program, etc.

How can you plan for a safe spring break experience?

- Research your destination in advance.
- Share your travel itinerary with a parent, guardian, or friend who is not traveling with you. Provide contact information for those traveling with you in case they need to reach you in an emergency.
- If driving:
    - Have your vehicle checked or inspected by a mechanic for maintenance.
    - Create a backup plan if you have car troubles while on the road (e.g., flat tire, dead battery, engine overheating, etc.).
    - Map your route ahead of time.
    - Budget time for stops and breaks between driving.
    - Travel during daylight hours rather than at night.
    - Rotate drivers if traveling long distances. Plan to have at least one passenger awake with the driver at all times.
    - Lock your vehicle with your windows up when you are not driving.
- If flying or traveling abroad:
    - Take a copy of your identification (driver's license, visa, passport, etc.) and plane ticket in case the original gets lost or stolen.

  - Bring a small portion of funds with you in the local currency for emergency use.
  - Check for travel warnings before departure/arrival and when entering/exiting another country.
  - Verify your cell phone carrier service will work while abroad.
- If you plan to be outdoors, pack sunscreen, sunglasses, protective clothing, lip balm with SPF, and a water bottle.
- Bring appropriate attire for your destination.
- Leave expensive or valuable belongings secure at home or in your campus residence.

What are ways to ensure your personal safety and well-being during spring break?

- Follow all federal, state, and local laws. Educate yourself on any local guidelines that may be in place based on your location.
- Practice safe drinking if you are of legal drinking age. Strategies include:
  - Alternating alcoholic drinks with nonalcoholic beverages
  - Eating a meal before consuming alcohol and snacks while drinking
  - Monitoring your drink amount
- Keep your ID on hand, and always know where your driver's license is.
- Be discrete when using your credit card or an ATM in public places.
- Travel in a group with those you trust. Leave with the same friends you arrived with when traveling between sites.
- Only use taxis, shuttle buses, or ride-share services (Lyft or Uber) with people you know. Be alert and aware of your surroundings while en route.
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.
- Wear sunscreen. Reapply every 2 hours to prevent sunburns.
- Be cautious when swimming in open water. Do not swim alone, in the dark, or after consuming alcohol.
- Contact emergency personnel if you need help or immediate assistance.

How else can you make your spring break a safe and memorable one?

- Check in with those back home regularly and provide updates.
- Avoid sharing personal information with individuals you do not know or have just met.
- Protect your location on social media. Sharing too much information on apps (Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, etc.) in real-time may endanger your safety and others.
- Be mindful of what you post online. Even if your accounts are private or you delete the post later, what you share on social media may never go away.

- Understand the impact of your decisions. Although spring break is temporary, your choices and actions may have permanent outcomes.

Conclusion

These safety tips and strategies can help you and your members better prepare for safe spring break experiences ahead. Whether you travel far from campus or stay close to home, the goal of spring break is to return healthy, refreshed, and ready to end the year on a positive note!

Be sure to follow the #SafeSpringBreak hashtag and our social media campaign with Alpha Chi Omega, Pi Kappa Phi, Sigma Nu, and Zeta Tau Alpha to learn more personal safety tips to share with your chapter.

Resources

- "Safe Spring Break Survival Guide/Travel Safety" from the University of Illinois Springfield Counseling Center
- "11 Spring Break Safety Tips for College Students" from Collegiate Parent
- Spring break issue of the Ramapo College of New Jersey Department of Public Safety newsletter