

# End the Blackout: Let Freshmen Breathe, Not Just Survive

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At IIT Bombay, the "blackout period" bars first-year students from entering senior hostels or participating in many campus activities for their first few weeks. Officially, it's meant to "help them settle in." In reality, it cuts them off at the very moment they're most in need of connection.

Imagine being 17 or 18, having just left home, tossed into a sea of unfamiliar faces and intense academics. You want to talk to someone who's been through it, ask how they managed, or even just hear that it gets easier. But you're told: *not yet*. No visits, no casual chats, no community.

Instead of easing the transition, the blackout amplifies the loneliness. Many freshers spend those early weeks feeling out of place—nervous, uncertain, and completely alone. The informal support of seniors—through conversations, mentorship, or even shared meals—could help them feel seen. Instead, we isolate them further.

Yes, ragging is a real concern. But isolating freshers isn't the answer—it's avoidance, not protection. Strong anti-ragging policies and active hostel oversight work better. We shouldn't be guarding freshers *from* the community—they should be welcomed *into* it. Ending the blackout doesn't mean chaos. It means connection, guidance, and trust.

IIT Bombay calls itself inclusive and forward-thinking. The blackout feels like a leftover rule from another era. Let's retire it—and replace it with something better: openness, mentorship, and a campus where no one has to feel alone on their first night.