

Differences Between High School and College

Following the Rules in High School

High school is mandatory and usually free.

Times is structured by others (teachers, family).

Students need permission to participate in extracurricular activities.

Students can count on parents and teachers to remind them of their responsibilities and to guide them in setting priorities.

Each day, students proceed from one class directly to another, spending approximately 6 hours each day (30 hours a week) in class.

Most of the classes are arranged for them.

Students are not responsible for knowing what it takes to graduate.

Guiding Principle: Students will usually be told what to do and corrected if their behavior is out of line.

Choosing Responsibility in College

College is voluntary and costly.

Students manage their own time.

Students must decide whether to participate in co-curricular activities and which ones.

Students must balance their responsibilities and set priorities. They will face moral and ethical decisions they have never faced before.

Students may have long periods of time between classes. Class times vary throughout the day and evening, and students spend only 12 to 16 hours each week in class.

Students arrange their own schedule in consultation with an advisor. Schedules tend to look lighter than they really are.

Graduation requirements are complex and differ from year to year. Students are expected to know those that apply to them.

Guiding Principle: Students are expected to take responsibility for what they do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of their decisions.

Going to High School Classes

The school year is 36 weeks long; most classes extend over both semesters.

Classes generally have no more than 30-35 students.

Students may study outside class as little as zero to two hours a week, and this may be mostly last-minute test preparation.

Students seldom need to read anything more than once, and sometimes listening in class is enough.

Guiding Principle: High school is a teaching environment in which students acquire facts and skills.

Tests in High School

Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.

Makeup tests are often available

Teachers frequently conduct review sessions, pointing out the most important concepts.

Guiding Principle: Mastery is usually seen as the ability to reproduce what students are taught in the form in which it is presented to them, or to solve the kinds of problems they were shown how to solve.

Succeeding in College Classes

The academic year is divided into two separate 16-week semesters, plus a shortened summer semester.

Classes may vary in number from a minimum of 8 to (in some schools) 100 or more.

Students need to study at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class for each credit hour of class.

Students need to review class notes and text materials regularly.

Guiding Principle: College is a learning environment in which students take responsibility for thinking through and applying what they have learned.

Exams in College

Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material. Students, not the professor, need to organize the material to prepare for the test. A particular course may have only 2 or 3 tests in a semester.

Makeup tests are seldom an option. Students have to work individually with a professor to learn the class policy (or consult the syllabus).

Professors rarely offer review sessions, and when they do, they expect students to be an active participant and come prepared with questions.

Guiding Principle: Mastery is often seen as the ability to apply what students have learned to new situations or to solve new kinds of problems.

Grades in High School

Grades are given for most assigned work.

Consistently good homework grades raise student's overall grade when test grades are low.

Extra credit projects are often available to help students raise their grades.

Initial test grades, especially when they are low, may not have an adverse effect on final grades.

Students are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed and often re-taught in class.

Class attendance is mandatory and monitored carefully.

Textbooks are typically provided at little or no expense.

Guiding Principle: Students will usually be told in class what they need to learn from assigned readings.

High School Teachers

Teacher's check for completed homework.

Teachers remind students of incomplete work.

Teachers approach students if they believe the need assistance.

Grades in College

Grades may not be provided for assigned work.

Grades on tests and major papers usually generate the final grade.

Extra credit projects are not common; and if available, typically are not ways to significantly raise a grade in a college course.

Watch out for the first tests. These are usually "wake-up calls" to let you know what is expected but they may also account for a substantial part of your course grade.

Students are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing, which may not be directly discussed in class.

Attendance policies may vary with each instructor.

Textbooks can be very expensive. Some subjects may require numerous textbooks.

Guiding Principle: It is up to the students to read and understand the assigned materials.

College Professors

Professors may not always grade completed homework; however, they will assume students can perform the tasks on tests.

Professors will likely not remind students of incomplete work or accept late work.

Professors are usually open and helpful; but most expect the students to initiate contact if they need assistance.

Teachers are often available for conversation before, during, or after class.

Teachers have been trained in teaching methods to assist in imparting knowledge to students.

Teachers present material to help students understand the material in the textbook.

Teachers often write information on the board for students to copy into their notes.

Teachers impart knowledge and facts, sometimes drawing direct connections and leading students through the thinking process.

Teachers often take time to remind students of assignments and due dates.

Teachers carefully monitor class attendance.

Students may graduate as long as they have passed all required courses with a grade of D or higher.

Guiding Principle: Effort counts. Courses are usually structured to reward a “good-faith effort.”

Professors expect and want students to attend their scheduled office hours.

Professors have been trained as experts in their particular areas of research.

Professors may not follow the textbook. Instead, they may expect students to relate the class information to textbook readings.

Professors may lecture nonstop, expecting students to identify the important points for notes. When professors write on the board, it may be to supplement the lecture, not to summarize it. Good notes are a must!

Professors expect students to think about and synthesize the class content.

Professors expect students to read, save, and consult the course syllabus. The syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of students, when assignments are due, and how students will be graded.

Professors may not formally take attendance, but they still likely know whether or not students attend.

Students may graduate only if their average in classes meets the departmental standard – typically at least a 2.0 (on a 4.0 scale).

Guiding Principle: Results count. Though “good-faith effort” is important in regard to the professor’s willingness to help you achieve good results, it will not substitute for results in the grading process.