

Tips on the Academic Differences between High School and College

Following the Rules in High School	Choosing Responsibility in College
High school is <i>mandatory</i> and usually <i>free</i> .	College is <i>voluntary</i> and <i>expensive</i> .
Your time is structured by others.	You manage your own time.
You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you.	You must set your responsibilities and priorities and are primarily responsible for yourself.
Each day you proceed from one class directly to another, spending six hours each day in class.	You often have hours between classes; class times vary throughout the day and evening and you spend only 12 to 16 hours each week in class.
Most of your classes are arranged for you.	You arrange your own schedule in consultation with your advisor. Schedules tend to look lighter than they really are.
Guiding principle: You will usually be told what to do and corrected if your behavior is out of line.	Guiding principle: You are expected to take responsibility for what you do and don't do.
Going to High School Classes	Succeeding in College Classes
The school year is 36 weeks long; some classes extend over both semesters and some don't.	The academic year is divided into two separate 16 week semesters.
You may study outside class as little as 0 to 2 hours a week, and this may be mostly last-minute test preparation.	You need to study at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class for each hour in class.
You seldom need to read anything more than once, and sometimes listening in class is enough.	You need to review class notes and text material regularly to keep up with class material.
You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class.	You are assigned substantial amounts of reading which may not be directly addressed in class.
Guiding principle: You will usually be told in class what you need to learn from assigned readings.	Guiding principle: It's up to you to read and understand the assigned material; lectures and assignments proceed from the assumption that you've already done so.
High School Teacher	College Professors
Teachers remind you of your incomplete work.	Professors may not remind you of incomplete work or assignments you still need to turn in.
Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance.	Professors are usually open and helpful, but most expect you to initiate contact if you need help.
Teachers provide you with information you missed when you were absent.	Professors expect you to get from classmates any notes or information from classes you missed.
Teachers often write information on the board to be copied in your notes.	Professors may lecture nonstop, expecting you to identify the important points in your notes; therefore, good notes are essential.
Teachers often draw direct connection about a topic and lead you through the thinking process.	Professors expect you to think about and synthesize seemingly unrelated topics.
Teachers often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates.	Professors expect you to read, save, and consult the course syllabus (outline) to know when assignments and papers are due.

Teachers carefully monitor class attendance.	Professors may not formally take roll, but they are still likely to know whether or not you attended.
<i>Guiding principle:</i> High school is a teaching environment in which you acquire facts and skills.	<i>Guiding principle:</i> College is a learning environment in which you are responsible for your learning experience.
Tests in High School	Tests in College
Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.	Testing is usually infrequent and may cover large amounts of material. A particular course may have only two or three tests in a semester.
Make-up tests are often available.	Make-up tests are seldom an option. If they are, you need to request them.
Teachers frequently conduct review sessions, pointing out the most important concepts.	Professors rarely offer review sessions, and when they do, they expect you to be an active participant.
<i>Guiding principle:</i> Mastery is usually seen as the ability to reproduce what you were taught in the form in which it was presented to you.	<i>Guiding principle:</i> Mastery is often seen as the ability to apply what you've learned to new situations or to solve new kinds of problems.
Grades in High School	Grades in College
Grades are given for most assigned work.	Grades may not be provided for all assigned work.
Consistently good homework grades may raise your overall grade when test grades are low.	Grades on tests and major papers usually provide most of the course grade.
Extra credit projects are often available to help you raise your grade.	Extra credit projects cannot, generally speaking, be used to raise a grade in a college course.
Initial test grades, especially when they are low, may not have an adverse effect on your final grade.	Watch out for your <i>first</i> tests. These are usually “wake-up calls” to let you know what is expected.
You may graduate as long as you have passed all required courses with a grade of ‘D’ or higher.	You may graduate only if your average in classes meets the standard of a 2.0 or a ‘C’ average.
<i>Guiding principle:</i> “Efforts counts.” Courses are usually structured to reward a “good-faith effort.”	<i>Guiding principle:</i> “Results count.” Though “good-faith effort” is important in regard to the professor’s willingness to help you <i>achieve</i> good results, it will not <i>substitute</i> for results in the grading process.