

How is College Different From High School?

Southern Methodist University, Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center

PERSONAL FREEDOM IN HIGH SCHOOL	PERSONAL FREEDOM IN COLLEGE
* High school is <i>mandatory</i> and <i>free</i> (unless you choose other options).	* College is <i>voluntary</i> and <i>expensive</i> .
* Your time is usually structured by others.	* You manage your own time.
* You need permission to participate in extracurricular activities.	* You must decide whether to participate in extracurricular activities. (<i>Hint</i> : Choose wisely in the first semester and then add later.)
* You need money for special purchases or events.	* You need money to meet basic necessities.
* You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities.	* You will be faced with a large number of moral and ethical decisions you have not had to face previously. <i>You</i> must balance your responsibilities and set priorities.
* Guiding principle: You will usually be told what your responsibilities are and corrected if your behavior is out of line.	* Guiding principle: You're old enough to take responsibility for what you do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of your decisions.
HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES	COLLEGE CLASSES
* Each day you proceed from one class directly to another.	* You often have hours between classes; class times vary throughout the day and evening.
* You spend 6 hours each day—30 hours a week—in class.	* You spend 12 to 16 hours each week in class.
* The school year is 36 weeks long; some classes extend over both semesters and some do not.	* The academic year is divided into two separate 15-week semesters, plus a week after each semester for exams.
* Most of your classes are arranged for you.	* You arrange your own schedule in consultation with your academic adviser. Schedules tend to look lighter than they really are.
* Teachers carefully monitor class attendance.	* Professors may not formally take roll, but they are still likely to know whether or not you attended.
* Classes generally have no more than 35 students.	* Classes may number 100 students or more.

*You are provided with textbooks at little or no expense.	*You need to budget substantial funds for textbooks, which will usually cost more than \$200 each semester.
*You are not responsible for knowing what it takes to graduate.	*Graduation requirements are complex, and differ for different majors and sometimes-different years. You are expected to know those that apply to you.
HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS	COLLEGE PROFESSORS
*Teachers check your completed homework.	*Professors may not always check completed homework, but they will assume you can perform the same tasks on tests.
*Teachers remind you of your incomplete work.	*Professors may not remind you of incomplete work.
*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 assistance.
*Teachers are often available for conversation before, during, or after class.	*Professors expect and want you to attend their scheduled office hours.
*Teachers have been trained in teaching methods to assist in imparting knowledge to students.	*Professors have been trained as experts in their particular areas of research.
*Teachers provide you with information you missed when you were absent.	*Professors expect you to get from classmates any notes from classes you missed.
*Teachers present material to help you understand the material in the textbook.	*Professors may not follow the textbook. Instead, to amplify the text, they may give illustrations, provide background information, or discuss research about the topic you are studying. Or, they may expect <i>you</i> to relate the classes to the textbook readings.
*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. When professors write on the board, it may be to amplify the lecture, not to summarize it. Good notes are a must.
*Teachers impart knowledge and facts, sometimes drawing direct connections and leading 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); the syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of you, when it is due, and how you will be graded.
STUDYING IN HIGH SCHOOL	STUDYING IN COLLEGE
*You may study outside of 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 often need to read or hear presentations only once to learn all you need to learn about them.	*You need to review class notes and text material regularly.
*You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class.	*You are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing, which may not be directly addressed in class.
*Guiding principle: You will usually be told in class what you needed 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.
TESTS IN HIGH SCHOOL	TESTS IN COLLEGE
*Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.	*Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material. You, 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 often available.	*Makeup tests are seldom an option; if they are, you need to request them.
*Teachers frequently rearrange test dates to avoid conflict with school events.	*Professors in different courses usually schedule tests without regard to the demands of other courses or outside activities.
*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, one who comes prepared with questions.
*Mastery is usually seen as the ability to reproduce what you were taught in the form in which it was presented to you, or to solve the kinds of problems you were shown how to solve.	*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 help 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—but they also may account for a substantial part of your course grade.
*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 departmental standard—typically a 2.0 or C.
*Guiding principle: “Effort counts.” Courses are usually structured to reward a “good-faith effort.”	*Guiding principle: “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.

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