



Learning & Academic Resources Dept.  
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## College Readiness: Understanding the Difference Between High School and College

Successful college students seriously pursue the understanding of ideas, cultivate a spirit of curiosity, ask questions, and maintain a positive attitude towards learning.

This handout is a guide for students to explore potential differences between high school and college.

### Student Responsibility

High School “Teacher Supported”	College “Student Directed”
High schools and teachers require attendance.	<i>Successful students attend all classes although attendance may not be required.</i>
Teachers remind students of assignments, tests, & make-up work.	<i>Students complete assignments &amp; take tests on time.</i>
Teachers tell students what to learn.	<i>Successful students determine what to learn and know how to study using their own learning styles.</i>
Teachers... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize main ideas.</li> <li>• Outline notes.</li> <li>• Provide study guides.</li> <li>• Formulate questions.</li> </ul>	<i>Successful students...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use effective textbook reading skills to learn content.</li> <li>• Take effective notes &amp; study them regularly.</li> <li>• Create their own study guides, maps, and graphic organizers.</li> <li>• Generate questions &amp; answers from varying perspectives.</li> </ul>
Teachers guide research and the location of information.	<i>Successful students possess library and internet research skills.</i>
Teachers give students supplementary information.	<i>Successful students seek background information or supplementary resources.</i>
Teachers monitor student performance by providing grade sheets.	<i>Successful students monitor their own performance and set improvement goals.</i>
Teachers discipline inappropriate talking in class.	<i>Teachers do not tolerate inappropriate talking in class.</i>
Teachers usually require less outside studying than college.	<i>Successful students study 2-3 hours for each one hour of class time.</i>
Teachers provide in-class study time and students often study with many distractions.	<i>Successful students use study areas on campus and create an appropriate study area at home.</i>
Others schedule a student’s time for classes, sports, and	<i>Successful students must develop personal time</i>

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work.	<i>management systems for college classes, study time, work, and social life.</i>
Students often choose elective courses based on interest.	<i>Successful students choose courses based on program, degree, or transfer requirements.</i>

## Academic Environment

High School “Student Focused”	College “Content Focused”
Teachers give short lectures that often duplicate reading assignments.	<i>Teachers present extended lectures that supplement assigned readings.</i>
High school classes are usually limited to 30 or fewer students.	<i>College classes are usually larger with 40 – 100 plus students.</i>
High school classes meet daily.	<i>College classes meet 2-3 times per week.</i>
Teachers provide necessary background knowledge.	<i>Teachers assume students have background knowledge and skills.</i>
Teachers focus student learning with questions.	<i>Teachers expect students to generate questions.</i>
Teachers cover all content in class.	<i>Students are responsible for all material whether or not it is presented in class.</i>
Teachers provide organization.	<i>Students must have systems of organization for assignments, notes, and handouts (notebooks/ folders).</i>

## Resources & Support

High School “Teacher Directed”	College “Student Directed”
Students have daily contact with teachers and receive regular feedback.	<i>Successful students have limited contact with teachers and must seek feedback.</i>
Teachers and parents direct academic accommodations and services for students with special needs.	<i>Successful students seek out academic accommodations and special assistance.</i>
Teachers provide extra help.	<i>Successful students seek out peer tutoring and further academic assistance during instructor office hours.</i>
Friends and family support students.	<i>Students may not be in contact with a family support system and need to create a new support system.</i>

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High School "Teacher Structured"	College "Student Structured"
Teachers usually give structured assignments with explicit directions.	<i>Successful students organize and interpret assignments and conduct research independently.</i>
Teachers often use T/F, multiple-choice, and short answer test formats requiring knowledge and comprehension.	<i>Teachers give complex exam questions requiring analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of ideas and theories using multiple-choice and essay formats.</i>
Teachers give frequent tests and provide make-up tests and retakes.	<i>Teachers give fewer tests (2-3 per semester) and generally do not allow for make-ups or retakes.</i>
Grades are based on quality, completion, and effort given to all assignments.	<i>Grades reflect the quality of the product &amp; adherence to college-level thinking and writing.</i>
Teachers offer extra-credit opportunities to improve grades.	<i>Teachers may not offer extra credit.</i>

## Classroom Tips

**Attend all classes:**

- Arrive on time.
- Do not leave early.

**Be prepared:**

- Read and process text before class – formulate questions to have clarified.
- Review previous notes.
- Do problems, brainstorming, outlines.

**Sit close to the front:**

- Listen actively.
- Take notes.
- Ask questions.

**Seek assistance:**

- Visit instructor during office hours with questions/concerns.
- Get peer tutoring assistance.
- Get a study partner or group.
- Go to learning centers – reading, writing, or math.
- Do not use excuses to rationalize lack of preparation.



**Be realistic, use a calendar, and follow course syllabi:**

- Schedule assignments, tests, projects.
- Schedule study time – 2 hours of study for each hour in class.
- Honestly account for family, social life, work, class, study, and transportation.
- A 15-credit semester load = a full-time job.

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