

High School vs. College

Welcome to College!

You should be extremely proud of all that you have accomplished so far! Now you're ready for your next chapter in life: college. While you can draw on your past experiences to help you, you will quickly realize that college is different from high school. Below you will find an overview on the differences so you can prepare for this next stage of your life.

Freedom & Choices

Guiding principle: In high school, you generally were told what to do and your behavior was corrected if it was out of line. In college, you are expected to take responsibility for what you do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of your decisions.

High School	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 may need permission to participate in extracurricular activities.	You must decide whether to participate in co-curricular activities.
You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities.	You must balance your responsibilities and set priorities. You will face moral and ethical decisions you have never faced before.
Each day you proceed from one class directly to another, spending 6 hours each day--30 hours a week--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.
You are not responsible for knowing what it takes to graduate.	Graduation requirements are complex. You are expected to know those that apply to you.

Tests & Exams

Guiding principle: In high school, 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. In college, mastery is often seen as the ability to apply what you've learned to new situations or to solve new kinds of problems.

High School	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.

Grading

Guiding principle: In high school, effort counts and courses are usually structured to reward a “good-faith effort.” In college, results count. Though a “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.

High School	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.
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.

Succeeding in Classes

Guiding principle: In high school, you generally were told in class what you need to learn from assigned readings. In college, 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	College
Classes generally have no more than 35 students.	Classes may number 100 students or more.
You may study outside of class as little as 2 hours/week and do last-minute test preparation.	You need to study at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class <i>for each hour in class</i> .
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.
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.

Teachers & Professors

Guiding principle: High school has a teaching environment in which you acquire facts and skills. College has a learning environment in which you take responsibility for thinking through and applying what you have learned.

High School	College
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 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 any notes from your classmates for 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. Good notes are a must.
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.
Teachers carefully monitor class attendance.	Professors may not formally take attendance, but they are still likely to know whether or not you attended.

For more information and support, contact:

Academic Advising & Exploration Center: 262-472-5220, 2054 Roseman, advising@uww.edu

Resources: Adapted from Southern Methodist University

<https://www.smu.edu/Provost/ProvostOffice/SAES/StudentSupport/SASP/FAQs/NewtoSMU>