



HOW IS COLLEGE DIFFERENT FROM HIGH SCHOOL?

High school is a TEACHING ENVIRONMENT in which you acquire facts and skills.

College is a LEARNING ENVIRONMENT in which you take responsibility for thinking through and applying what you have learned.

Understanding some of the important differences between high school and college may help you achieve a smoother transition.

The following outlines the differences between high school and college.

FOLLOWING THE RULES IN HIGH SCHOOL	CHOOSING RESPONSIBLY 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 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.	<i>You</i> 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, and differ from year to year. You are expected to know those that apply to you.
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, as well as for the consequences of your decisions.

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 and upcoming deadlines.	Professors may not remind you of incomplete work or due dates.
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.
Teachers carefully monitor class attendance.	Professors may not formally take roll, but they are still likely to know whether or not you attended.
Guiding principle: High school is a teaching environment in which you acquire facts and skills.	Guiding principle: College is a learning environment in which you take responsibility for thinking through and applying what you have learned.
TESTS IN HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES	EXAMS 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, usually in advance.
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.
Guiding principle: 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.	Guiding principle: Mastery is often seen as the ability to apply what you've learned to new situations or to solve new kinds of problems.

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 15-week semesters, plus a week after each semester for exams.
Classes generally have no more than 35 students.	Classes may have 100 students or more.
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 each week. Note: If you are taking 12 credit hours, this is 24-36 hours of study per week.
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, and actively read assignments, sometimes more than once.
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 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.
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—but they also may account for a substantial part of your course grade. You may be shocked when you get your grades.
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, but higher in many majors.
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.

The Student Counseling Service (SCS) at Texas A&M University is available to help make the transition from high school to college as smooth as possible. We provide a variety of services.

Academic Counseling

- Provides students with an opportunity to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enhance study and exam-taking behavior while decreasing anxiety related to academic performance. Other services include assessment of study behaviors, screening for learning disabilities, an extensive collection of study skills self-help resources, and workshops on topics such as time management.

Career Counseling

- Helps students in their career planning process. Career Counseling & Testing Services promote student development and self-knowledge which result in fulfilling career choices. Services include individual and group counseling sessions designed to help clarify life/career goals, improve understanding of the world of work, identify career options based on abilities, interests, characteristics, and values, and develop individualized career plans.

Personal Counseling

- Is a process that facilitates self-discovery and growth. It can help to increase self-confidence, improve relationships, enhance academic performance, achieve educational goals, and aid in making good decisions for emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual well being. The SCS provides individual, couples, and group counseling for concerns that are common among undergraduate and graduate students, and that often interfere with academic performance.