

General Differences Between High School and College

Classes

| | High School | Postsecondary |
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| 1 | Usually follow a school-directed schedule and proceed from one class to another. | Individual students must manage their own time and schedules. |
| 2 | General education classes dictated by state/district requirements. | Class based on field of study; requirements may vary. |
| 3 | Typically a school year is 36 weeks long; some classes extend over both semesters. Summer classes may be offered but are not used to accelerate graduation. | Academic year is divided into two separate 15-week semesters plus a week for final exams. (Hint: Some institutions are on a trimester schedule.) Courses are offered fall, spring, and summer semesters, and summer classes may be used to accelerate graduation. |
| 4 | Class attendance is usually mandatory and monitored carefully. | Attendance policies may vary with each instructor. (Hint: Lack of attendance may impact performance.) |
| 5 | Classes generally have no more than 30-35 students. | Classes may have 100 or more students. |
| 6 | Textbooks are typically provided at little or no expense. | Textbooks can be expensive. (Hint: An anticipated range for a full-time student is \$200-\$400 per semester.) |
| 7 | Guidance is provided for students so that they will be aware of graduation requirements. | Graduation requirements are complex and vary for different fields of study. (Note: You are responsible for monitoring your progress and seeking advice.) |
| 8 | Modifications that change course outcomes may be offered based on the student's IEP. | Modifications that change course outcomes will not be offered. (Hint: Modified high school courses may not be accepted in the admission process.) |

Instructors

| | High School | Postsecondary |
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| 1 | Grade and check completed homework. | Assume homework is completed and students are able to perform on a test. |
| 2 | May remind students of incomplete assignments. | May not remind students of incomplete assignments. It's your responsibility to check with your instructor to see if requirements are being met. |
| 3 | May know student's needs and approach students when they need assistance. | Are usually open and helpful, but expect students to initiate contact when assistance is needed. |
| 4 | May be available before, during, or after class. | May require students to attend scheduled office hours. |
| 5 | Often provide students with information missed during absence. | Expect students to get information from classmates when they miss a class. |
| 6 | Present material to help students understand what is in the textbook. | May not follow the textbook. Lectures enhance to topic area. (Hint: You need to connect lectures and textbook.) |
| 7 | Often write information on the board or overhead to be copied for notes. | May lecture nonstop. If instructors write on the board it may be to support the lecture, not summarize it. (Hint: Good notes are a must!) |

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| 8 | Teach knowledge and facts, leading students through the thinking process. | Expect students to think independently and connect seemingly unrelated information. |
| 9 | Often take time to remind students of assignment and test dates. | Expect students to read, save, and refer back to the course syllabus. (Hint: Syllabi are your way of knowing exactly what is expected of you—when assignments are due, and how you will be graded.) |

Studying

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| 1 | Study time outside of class may vary (maybe as little as 1-3 hours per week per class). | Generally need to study at least 2-3 hours outside of class for each hour in class. |
| 2 | Instructors may review class notes and text material regularly for classes. | Review class notes and text material regularly. (Hint: Use the time between classes carefully.) |
| 3 | Expected to read short assignments that are discussed and retaught. | Substantial amounts of assigned reading and writing may not be directly addressed in class. (Hint: It's up to you to read and understand assigned material or access support. |

Testing

| | High School | Postsecondary |
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| 1 | Frequent, covering small amounts of material. | Usually infrequent (2-3 times a semester). Maybe cumulative and cover large amounts of material. (Hint: You need to organize material to prepare for tests.) Some classes may require only papers and/or projects instead of tests. |
| 2 | Make-up tests are often available. | Make-up tests are seldom an option and may have to be requested. |
| 3 | Test dates can be arranged to avoid conflicts with other events. | Usually, scheduled tests are without regard to other demands. |
| 4 | Frequently conducts review sessions emphasizing important concepts prior to tests. | Faculty rarely offer review sessions; if so students are expected to be prepared and to be active participants. |

Grades

| | High School | Postsecondary |
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| 1 | Given for most assigned work. | May not be provided for all assigned work. |
| 2 | Good homework grades may assist in raising over grade when test grades are lower. | Tests and major papers provide the majority of the grade. |
| 3 | Extra credit options are often available. | Generally speaking, extra-credit options are not used to raise a grade. |
| 4 | Initial test grades, especially when low, may not have adverse effect on grade. | First tests are often “wake up” calls to let you know what is expected. (Hint: Watch out! They may account for a substantial part of your final grade. Contact instructor, academic advisor, or student accessibility personnel if you do poorly.) |

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| 5 | Graduation requirements may be met with a grade of D or higher. | Requirements may be met only if the student's average meets the departmental standards. (Hint: Generally a 2.0 or higher.) |
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Laws and Responsibilities

| | High School | Postsecondary |
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| 1 | Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). | Section 504 and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). |
| 2 | Covers ages 3-21 or until regular high school diploma requirements are met. | Covers students with disabilities regardless of age; schools may not discriminate in recruitment, admission, or after admission solely on the basis of a disability. |
| 3 | Free, appropriate public education is mandatory. | Students decide to attend and will probably pay tuition. |
| 4 | Districts are required to identify students with disabilities through free evaluation and the individualized education program (IEP) process. | Student is responsible for revealing and providing current documentation of a disability. They must self advocate. |
| 5 | Students receive special education services to address needs based on an identified disability. | Formal special education services are not available. |
| 6 | Services may include specially designed instruction, modifications, and accommodations based on the IEP. | Reasonable accommodations and modifications may be made to provide equal access and participation. |
| 7 | Individual student needs based on the IEP may be addressed by program support for school personnel. | No formal program support for school personnel is provided. |
| 8 | Progress toward IEP goals is monitored and communicated to the parent(s) and the student. | Students are required to monitor their own progress and communicate their needs to instructors. |
| 9 | Schools assist in connecting the student with community support agencies if identified as a transition need according to the IEP. | Students are responsible for making their own connections with community support agencies. |

Other Factors to Consider

| | High School | Postsecondary |
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| 1 | State and/or district policies may determine eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities. | Postsecondary institution policies may determine eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities. |
| 2 | Parents typically manage finances for school-related activities. | Students are responsible for money management of basic needs and extra spending money. (Hint: Outside jobs may be necessary and one more "activity" to consider for time management). |
| 3 | Parents and teachers may provide support and guidance in responsibilities and setting priorities. | Students are responsible for setting their own priorities. |