



Preparing High School Students for College

There are 2 critical aspects of college life that students must be aware of before they embark on the journey of a college experience – academic and social.

I. Academic:

- **Study skills:** Students need to learn how to study for tests. As high school students, they should get into the habit of taking AT LEAST one hour to study every night, whether or not they have homework. "Studying" could mean re-reading a chapter of a textbook on which they will be tested in the future. "Studying" could mean reviewing notes taken during class (read over them or rewrite them onto note cards). "Studying" could mean developing sample test questions and practicing one's responses to those questions. Students who do not have anything to study should at take that hour to read a book (preferably one that has been recommended by an English teacher or a librarian) or to practice writing an essay or research paper of his/her choosing.
- **Research:** Students who hope to be successful in college should be able to write 6 – 9 page research papers. In order to write this type of paper, students must have experience with developing thesis statements, writing outlines, taking notes, citing resources, using correct grammar and walking through the revision process. Students must know how to take notes as they read for research. In order to prevent plagiarism, students should always reword any notes right away, so they are not tempted to use someone else's words in their document. Students should also learn how to document all of their research using correct the format to cite any resources used. Many colleges use MLA format. Books explaining this format can be purchased in any book store, but are found in most high school libraries.
- **Reading skills:** Students who want to be prepared for college-level reading should be reading all the time. Students should practice reading a variety of materials, from novels to textbooks to newspapers to essays. Students should learn how to read for comprehension and retention. Students should learn how to use highlighters to identify key definitions and themes. They should also learn to take notes and develop time lines to capture the most important events and dates. Finally, students should try to take a speed-reading class, if possible, to learn the skill of absorbing large amounts of information in short amounts of time. The reading load in college is much greater than the reading load in high school. Students who have not practiced reading large amounts quickly will have a difficult time managing the workload of college reading requirements.
- **Note taking:** Note taking is an important skill in any class, from history to mathematics, English to chemistry. Students need to have some experience with note taking in high school so they can develop the format that best serves them as they prepare to write papers and take tests. Students should learn the value of an outline but must also learn which elements of a presentation or a text are the most important. Students need to learn how to take notes as they listen to a classroom presentation. Students who have a hard time paying attention to the lecture as they write may want to consider using a tape recorder, so you can listen to the lecture twice.
- **Time management:** Students need to practice good time management in high school in order to be successful in college. The schedule for high school students is scripted, whereas the schedule for college students includes hours of unscheduled free-time. High school students who are involved in athletics often have their entire days laid out for them from the time they wake up until dinner. College students may have anywhere from 2 – 4 hours of class a day, leaving most of the day open to spend however they wish. There is no one to wake students up, and no one will pressure them to be in class on time or at all. Although some professors take attendance, many do not. Students need to be self-motivated to get to class on their own. Often professors will give out a syllabus at the beginning of the semester with all the projects and exams listed for the term. Professors often will not remind students of these assignments. It is up to the students plan out these projects and to prepare on their own. Students should develop a system for keeping track of when assignments are due. Students may wish to use a large desk calendar, a day timer or a PDA to keep track of these assignments and be sure to begin their projects in a timely manner.

2. Social:

- **Classroom behavior:** High school students need to develop behaviors that will benefit them in college. College professors will not tolerate talking amongst peers during class and/or talking or texting on cell phones. College professors have invested a great deal of time to prepare lectures and do not wish to compete with students for that time. Students may be asked to leave a classroom if they choose not to abide by these expectations. Adult behavior is expected while in the classroom. Students must be punctual to class. College is now your job. Some college professors will not accept students in the classroom after the starting time for class. Furthermore, if a student is late, s/he will miss important material. Finally, there is no one who will make you attend class. In larger classes your professor may not even notice if you are absent. However, you cannot afford to miss class. Most of the material you will be tested on will come from classroom lectures. It will be up to you to make sure you get to class on time every day.
- **Interactions with professors:** Students need to learn how to communicate with their professors in order to get the help they need. College professors always have office hours during which time students can talk one-on-one with their professors. Professors are much like your high school teachers, although most will have a Master's Degree or even a doctorate, which should afford them even greater respect. Students should always call the professor by his/her title and last name, unless told otherwise. There are some professors who will ask students to call them by their first names. Students should only do this if they are given permission. When a student makes an appointment to see a professor, s/he should know exactly what s/he wants to ask. Professors are often busy, so their time is precious. Students who get nervous around authority figures should write down their questions, so they do not forget them. It would not be uncommon for a professor to have students over to his/her home for dinner or even to ask a student to babysit his/her children.
- **Relationships with peers:** College is an incredible opportunity to meet new people and try new activities. Students who enjoy sports but who are not playing for a college team will have a chance to play club sports. There will be cultural groups, creative arts groups and spiritual/religious groups to join. Many classes will even develop study groups students can join where they can work on projects and help one another prepare for exams. Unlike high school where parents can put some pressure on students to join this activity or that one, college students have complete freedom to choose their activities. There are some college campuses where partying is common. As in high school, students should be careful to avoid illegal behaviors and activities that will distract them from their ultimate job – to get an education. Young women should also be careful to not travel alone after dark. There are young men and older men who prey on the freedom and openness of a college campus. Many campuses now provide escort or security services for women who need to cross campus at night.