What can I expect once I start high school?

How can I prepare myself for 9th grade?

What are the differences between middle and high school?

MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

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Moving on to 9th Grade!: A guide for 8th grade students

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8TH GRADE MATTERS!

- WHAT YOU ACCOMPLISH THIS YEAR WILL AFFECT HOW PREPARED YOU ARE FOR 9TH GRADE.
  - 8TH GRADE STUDENTS WHO FAIL CLASSES OR HAVE A LOT OF ABSENCES ARE MORE LIKELY TO REPEAT THE 9TH GRADE. [1]
- IF YOU PRACTICE GOOD STUDY SKILLS NOW AND WORK HARD TO MASTER THE MATERIAL IN YOUR 8TH GRADE CLASSES YOU WILL BE WELL PREPARED FOR HIGH SCHOOL.
  - 8TH GRADE STUDENTS WHO SCORE HIGHER ON GRADE LEVEL TESTS PERFORM BETTER IN THE 9TH GRADE. [2]
- HAVING A ROUGH TIME THIS YEAR IN SCHOOL? **IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO IMPROVE THINGS!**

What can I do now to prepare?

- Your 9th grade self will thank you if you start making good choices now. If you're struggling with attendance, grades, or social issues in school, you have options!

See the counselor!

Attend tutoring!

Talk to your teachers about how you can improve your grades.

Keep an agenda with a daily to do list.

Important High School Terms

- A new school means a bunch of new words to become familiar with! Here are some terms you'll want to know:
  - **AP:** Advanced Placement. These courses are taught in the high school but at college-level difficulty. Scoring highly on a test given at the end of an AP course can earn you college credit!
  - **Honors course:** Honors courses are challenging classes for highly motivated students. Colleges love seeing that students have selected honors courses!
  - **Credit:** A credit is a unit earned after successfully completing a course.
  - **Elective course:** An elective course is a non-required course that is chosen based on a student's interests. Usually students must take a certain number of electives to graduate high school.

More High School Terms

- **GPA:** GPA stands for Grade Point Average. It is calculated based on the number of classes you complete and your grade in each class. For example, a 4.0 GPA means you have an A average of all completed classes.
- **Class rank:** Your class rank is where your GPA stands in comparison to the other students in your graduating class. If you're ranked #1, you have the highest GPA of all students graduating in your cohort!
- **Required course:** A required course must be completed and passed in order for graduation. English, math, science, and social studies are some examples of required courses.
- **Transcript:** A transcript is the official report of grades earned in each of the classes you have completed in high school. A transcript can also include attendance information, test scores, and GPA.

Can you "blow off" freshman year?

- The answer is no! While starting high school will be an adjustment, it should not be seen as an easy year or a throwaway year. The decisions you make during 9TH grade will affect your ability to graduate, to attend the college or university of your choice, and to earn scholarship money.

- If you do not complete all of your required credits by the end of your graduating year, you **will not graduate until the credits are completed.** This means that if you fail classes freshman year, you must retake them until you earn a passing grade.

- Your freshman year grades are all included on your transcript and are never removed. If you fail a class, you must repeat it to replace the lower grade on your transcript. When you apply for college or university schools will see ALL of your high school years, so make them all count!

Other Tips for Incoming 9th Grade Students

- Get involved! Students who are in an extracurricular (like a sport, club, or team) get better grades and have better attendance.[3] It also looks great when applying for jobs or college and university!
- Stay organized. Find a method that works for you and use it consistently, whether it's keeping classwork organized in a binder for each subject, using an online calendar to track due dates, or making a paper to-do list each day.
- Manage your time. When you get home, set a specific amount of time that you will focus on school and only school. Minimize distractions—this may mean turning off your cell phone! If you get in the habit of studying daily you won't be able to procrastinate or end up having to cram at the last minute for each test.

Even more tips

- Ask for help if you need it. High schools are full of adults who can assist you! Raise your hand in class, go to after-school tutoring hours, or make an appointment with the school counselor. Don't let yourself fall behind when you have resources that can help you stay caught up.
- Keep good grades as your goal! You will have many more opportunities after graduation with a transcript full of As and Bs than one full of Cs and Ds.
- Start planning for the future. Think about different career options that excite you and research what kind of education you need to get there. Senior year is too late to prepare!

Your Thoughts on High School

- Take out a sheet of paper and finish the following sentences:

1. The thing I am most excited about for 9th grade is _____
2. The thing I am most nervous about for 9th grade is _____
3. A question I still have about starting high school is _____

References

- Neild, R. C., & Balfanz, R. (2005, November 30). *An extreme degree of difficulty: The educational demographics of urban neighborhood high schools.* Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk. https://eric.ed.gov/?q=Balfanz&pg=4&id=EJ736311

- O'brien, E., & Rollefson, M. (1995, June). *Extracurricular participation and student engagement*. Extracurricular Participation And Student Engagement. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs95/web/95741.asp