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Step Two

Know Your School

Most high schools have a handbook that explains their rules, dress code, attendance policies, etc. Make sure you understand your school's rules and that you know where to go for help.

School Calendar

Every school has a calendar that shows when each grading period begins and ends, when report cards come out, and when their school will be closed for holidays and vacations. Get a copy of your school's calendar and write the important dates in your student planner. Also put these dates on your calendar at home.



Attendance and Tardy Policies

All schools have policies that encourage regular attendance. Know what your school's attendance and tardy policies are. Also, know what you are supposed to do if you're ever absent or tardy. Does a parent need to call the school? Do you need to bring in a note? Do you need to report to the office first?

You are expected to be in school every day, on time, unless you are ill. If you have a health problem or an extended illness, have a parent call the attendance office or principal and explain the situation. If you are absent for more than a day or two, try to get some work to do at home so that you don't get too far behind.

It doesn't matter whether you are in high school, college, or working at a job, you're expected to be there every day, on time. You are expected to dress appropriately and be courteous to the people around you. You are also expected to give your best effort each day. School rules are really "rules for life."

Code of Conduct / School Rules

In order to provide students with a safe environment that encourages learning, schools need to have rules regarding student conduct and behavior. Most students understand that rules are necessary, and they follow them. For the students who don't follow the rules, there are consequences.

Consequences can range anywhere from detention to expulsion. The severity of the consequence generally depends on the seriousness of the offense and the past history of the student(s) involved. While school rules vary, no high school will allow weapons, drugs, violence, smoking, alcohol, intimidation, or bullying.

All students need to take an active role in making their high school a safe, inviting place to learn. If you ever feel threatened, or if you become aware of a situation that may put you or someone else at risk, tell a teacher, principal, or counselor immediately.

Principals and teachers make rules so that schools will run smoothly, and so everyone will be safe. *It's the students, however, who make their school a great place to be.*

"School rules are common sense. Just follow them." Josh

"It seems to me that school rules are only preparing us for what we'll have to deal with later." Megan

Athletic Eligibility



In addition to state athletic eligibility requirements, many schools have their own requirements that students must also meet in order to play a sport. Athletes, for example, may be required to maintain a minimum GPA in a certain number of classes.

At many high schools, these same eligibility requirements also apply to students who participate in activities such as cheerleading and student government. If you have a question or concern about eligibility, see your counselor, principal, coach, or athletic director.

"I have a friend who didn't get very good grades at the end of last year. Now he's ineligible and he can't play football. He was our best lineman too." Brad

Take good notes

- ▶ Pay attention and really think about what your teacher's saying.
- ▶ Recognize and write down important information.
- ▶ Take notes that are neat and easy to read.
- ▶ If you're absent, get copies of the notes you missed.

"I remember things better if I write them down, so I take notes whenever I can. Later, I go back over my notes and I highlight the information that's most important." Antonio

Know how to read a textbook

- ▶ Before you start to read, look over the headings and the words in **bold** and *italic* print.
- ▶ Read the entire assignment.
- ▶ Do a quick review of what you've read.

"I have a couple of classes with a lot of reading. I really try not to get behind - it's just too hard to catch up." Jacob

Study smart

- ▶ Find a good place to study.
- ▶ Organize your study time.
- ▶ Focus on one thing at a time.
- ▶ Break large assignments down into smaller parts.
- ▶ Do difficult assignments first, while you're still fresh and alert.



"Before I start to study, I make a plan. I figure out what I need to do and the order I'm going to do it in." Megan

Use test-taking strategies

- ▶ Have everything you need for the test (pencils, calculator, etc.).
- ▶ Before you start, look over the entire test and develop a plan.
- ▶ Mark the questions you want to return to.
- ▶ Check your answers, and use all of the time available.

"As soon as I get my test, I write anything I need to remember at the top. Then when I need the information, it's right there." Terrell



Step Five Set Goals

Setting goals is important for people of all ages. Get in the habit of setting both short-term and long-term goals.

Setting goals helps you determine where you want to go and what you want to accomplish. Goals give you focus, direction, and purpose. Having a goal also helps you determine a plan of action. For example, if your goal is to go to college, there are specific things that you must do in order to achieve your goal.

While goals can be **short-term** (get a B on your history test) or **long-term** (graduate with a 3.0 GPA), every goal should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, and Timed.

Let's say, for example, that you've decided that your goal for the semester is to "try harder in math." This goal is not specific, it's not measurable, and there's no timetable. A much better goal would be to "get a B in math this semester." This goal is specific, it's measurable, and there's a definite time when it is to be completed. This goal is also action-oriented and realistic.

At the beginning of each term, set three academic and three non-academic goals for yourself. Once you've set your goals, make a list of the specific things you need to do to reach each goal.

"For every class I take, I set a goal based on what grade I think I can get. This gives me something to work for and it keeps me focused on what I want to accomplish." Maria

"I'm always setting goals for myself. My new goal is to save enough money to buy a used car by the end of next summer." John

Write your goals down. Studies have shown that you are more likely to achieve a goal that's written down.





Step Six Get Involved

High school is like anything else - the more you put into it, the more you get out of it.

Students who are involved in activities do better academically and they enjoy high school more. Being involved in school activities provides you with the opportunity to do the following:

Spend time with friends and meet new people

“Marching band has changed my life. We’re all friends and we just enjoy being together. It’s so much fun.” Amanda

Enjoy school more

“I didn’t really like school that much last year. This year I’m an office assistant and I’m on the track team. I know more people now, and school is a lot more fun.” Darnell

Become a leader

“Being on student council has helped me gain confidence and develop the skills that I need to be a leader.” Kate

Relieve stress

“I get rid of a lot of stress during basketball practice. It’s great to be with my friends and just forget about school for a while.” Megan



Provide a valuable service

“My work on the school newspaper is really important to me. I’ve made lots of new friends, and I feel like I am doing something useful.” Jasmine

Try something new

“My speech teacher told me that I should try out for the school play. I’d never been in a play before, but I ended up getting one of the leads.” Brad

Have activities to put on applications

“I take pictures for our school yearbook and I’m on the basketball team. My counselor tells me that my activities will look good on college and scholarship applications.” Maria

Develop a variety of skills and talents

“I play the cello in the orchestra. I’m not that great, but I’m getting better. And I’m having a really good time.” John



Have fun

“School activities are half the fun of high school.” Jenna

I have been a high school counselor for twenty years. Each year I ask all of my seniors to complete a questionnaire before they graduate. The last question on this questionnaire is, “What do you wish you would have done differently in high school?”

Every year for the past twenty years, the number one response to this question has been, “I wish I would have gotten more involved in school activities.” Mrs. Johnson

All high schools have some, if not all, of the following: theater programs, athletic teams, leadership organizations, music programs, service organizations, and special interest clubs. In most schools, students can also work as an office aide or a teacher’s assistant. *There is definitely an organization, club, team, or activity for everyone!*

Find out what activities are available at your high school and become involved in two or three. However, don’t take on more than you can handle. *Quality is much more important than quantity.*

If you don’t know what activities are available or if you need additional information, go to the office or talk to your counselor. Also listen to announcements and check your school’s website.



Step Seven - Make Good Choices and Decisions

When you make good choices and decisions, you reap the rewards. When you make poor choices and decisions, you suffer the consequences.

You are required to make lots of decisions in high school. To help you make decisions that are going to be right for you, go through these four steps whenever you have a difficult decision to make.

1. Determine what your choices are.
2. Write down the positives and negatives for each.
3. Make sure that you have all of the information you need.
4. Think about your choices, and then make a decision.

Ashley's Dilemma

There's a course that I was planning to take next year, but then I found out that I could take it in summer school. I couldn't decide what to do, so I made a list of the positive and negative things about each choice.

A. Taking the Course in Summer School - POSITIVES

1. I get the class out of the way in 3 weeks.
2. My best friend, Kara, is taking the class.

Taking the Course in Summer School - NEGATIVES

1. I have to get up at 7:30 A.M. for 3 weeks.
2. Summer school costs \$200.
3. There's no air conditioning, so it will probably be hot.



B. Taking the Course Next Year - POSITIVES

1. I like the teacher who will be teaching the class.

Taking the Course Next Year - NEGATIVES

1. It would make next year's schedule a lot harder.
2. If I take it next year, I won't have room for art.