



ACTIVITY GUIDE: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

FOR COLLEGE ACCESS PROFESSIONALS



INTRODUCTION

The transition from high school to a postsecondary institution is an important milestone. Students and families may experience enthusiasm, self-doubt, stress, and uncertainty. College access professionals can use this activity guide to help prepare students and families for the first year after high school, including what to expect and navigating everyday challenges.

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ACTIVITY IDEA: STUDENT ALUMNI PANELS

About: This activity is a way for students to hear from near peers about life after high school. Near peers are close in age to your students. Students often view them as more credible than non-peers such as parents and teachers. It may be more effective if adults are not present for this discussion as conversations may be more candid. Consider holding a family panel simultaneously in a different location. For this activity, "college" includes vocational and career schools, two- and four-year colleges, and universities. You can replicate this activity with adjustments for additional pathways like the military, workforce, or AmeriCorps.

Materials Needed:

- 3-5 high school alumni now in college or recently graduated.
- List student-generated questions or use [Common Questions from GEAR UP Students](#) (page 9).
- [College, armed services, & opportunity pennants](#).
- Riser, table, chairs, microphones for panelists.
- Sound system and microphone for facilitator or moderator.

Event Time Allowed: 60 minutes.

Sample Agenda:

- Welcome. Review format and expectations.
- Have panelists introduce themselves.
- The facilitator or student should select a question from the pre-selected list. Panelists should respond to queries, though; not every question needs a response from each panelist.
- After going through the pre-selected questions, open for audience questions.
- Self-reflection closing activity:
 - Exit Ticket: Ask students to write their name, what they learned, and any lingering questions on a blank card or "ticket." Before they leave, direct them to deposit their exit tickets in a folder or bin.

Directions:

- Schedule an evening, possibly in conjunction with 12th Year Campaign activities like Senior Signing Day. Add event to the school calendar.
- Reserve a space and make a promotion plan.
- Consider providing food, refreshments, and door prizes.
- Invite high school alumni who are now in college or recently graduated. Try to obtain a cross-section of postsecondary pathways.
- Ensure you have the panelists' phone numbers in case of an emergency.
- Invite high school seniors.
- Encourage panelists to wear college swag and/or display pennants to represent their higher education institutions.
- Have students write down questions anonymously beforehand and use the information to develop a list of pre-selected questions. Alternatively, you may select questions from [Common Questions from GEAR UP Students](#).
- Provide the panelists with a list of pre-selected questions, an agenda, and school expectations on discussing sensitive topics. Typically, it is recommended that they be honest and share at their comfort level.
- Welcome panelists and thank them for their support.
- Let them know where they may leave their items; where to park; nearest restroom.

ACTIVITY IDEA: POSTSECONDARY PATHWAY COHORTS

About: This activity allows students to identify which peers will attend the same institution. These students make up a cohort. They can meet and get a head start on building support systems for next year. This activity could be part of your school's Senior Signing Day. For this activity, "college" includes vocational and career schools, two- and four-year colleges, and universities.

Materials Needed:

- [Make Your College Plans A Reality](#) handout (page 12).
- Representatives from different institutions or pathways (optional).
- Icebreaker materials (optional).
- Growth Mindset Lesson Plan materials (optional).

Event Time Allowed: 60 Minutes.

Directions:

- Welcome. Review format.
- Divide seniors into groups based on their final postsecondary plans (including military and apprenticeships). If a student will be the only one attending a particular institution, place them with others who are the only attendee of similar types of institutions.
- Have institution representatives join corresponding groups or cohorts.
- Depending on the size of your school, you may place these different groups in classrooms.
- If needed, have the students in the cohort introduce themselves.
- Consider doing an icebreaker activity. See [GEAR UP College Knowledge Games & Activities for Students & Families](#) for ideas.
- Share the [Make Your College Plans A Reality](#) handout with college-going students.
- Have representatives share the next steps specific to their institution.
- Ask students to share contact information according to their comfort level.
- Consider building in a lesson on growth mindset. The Khan Academy collaborated with PERTS, Stanford's Research Center on Academic Mindsets, to create the [Growth Mindset Lesson Plan](#). It includes activities, videos, and links to helpful resources. Feel free to adapt and edit the activities provided to meet the needs of your students! [Download The Growth Mindset Lesson Plan \(pdf\) here.](#)
- Closing activity.

ACTIVITY IDEA: IDENTIFYING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

About: This activity can be done during an advisory class or as part of a workshop. The goal is to have students discover what resources and support services are available on campus. The focus is to normalize the first-year experience and counteract the imposter syndrome. The resource scenarios included in this activity can help set realistic expectations and build problem-solving behaviors needed to succeed in college.

Materials Needed:

- Computer lab.
- Handouts: Resources & Support Services To Navigate Your Way (page 15) and Resource Scenarios (page 17).

Event Time Allowed: 60 Minutes

Directions:

- If part of a workshop, divide the seniors into groups based on their final postsecondary plans.
- Welcome and introductions. Review format.
- Share with the student hard copies or electronic copies of the student handouts.
- Review common resources in college and why they are essential.
- Have students complete the Resources & Support Services To Navigate Your Way handout. This activity will require computers and internet access.
- In small groups, have students review the Resource Scenarios handout and discuss the options available at their postsecondary school.
- Facilitate a question and answer activity.
- Closing activity.

ACTIVITY IDEA: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

About: Students have questions and concerns about how college will differ from high school. Help set reasonable expectations to ease the initial transition to college by facilitating a conversation about the differences. Remind students that they have already identified resources to help.

Materials Needed: Differences Between College and High School (page 19) and the Information for First-Year Students (page 23) handouts.

Event Time Allowed: 60 Minutes.

Directions:

- Welcome and introductions. Review format.
- Facilitate a conversation about transitions. Sample guiding questions:
 - How was junior high or middle school different from elementary school?
 - How did you feel?
 - What were the challenges?
 - How did things improve?
 - What about the transition from middle school to high school?
 - How were things different?
 - What was difficult?
 - Was the work harder?
 - Was the routine different?
 - Did you have to make new friends? Did your friends change?
 - When did you feel more comfortable? Why?
 - What made you feel more comfortable in these new situations?
 - Reaffirm that students have a lot of experience with dealing with transitions. The first year of college is a time of change for everyone. Students may experience challenges with academics, social life, independence, time management, and finances. These challenges are common. It takes time and experience to feel more settled.
- Share the Differences between High School and College handout and discuss what students can expect in college in those areas.
- Share the Information for First-Year Students handout.
 - What concerns do they have?
 - What resources and supports have they identified to help them?
- Closing activity.

APPENDIX

- Common Questions From GEAR UP Students
- Handout: Make Your College Plans A Reality
- Handout: Resources & Support Services To Navigate Your Way
- Handout: Resource Scenarios
- Handout: Differences Between High School And College
- Handout: Information For First-Year Students

COMMON QUESTIONS FROM GEAR UP STUDENTS

College Choice

- How did you decide where to go to college? What is the most important thing to consider when selecting a college?
- How much did your high school friends influence your college choice?
- Is it better to pick a college near to or far from home?
- How many colleges did you apply to?
- How do you know if a college will be a good fit for you?
- Did your family support your decision to go to college?
- What was your biggest fear of going to college?
- What do you like most about the college you picked?
- What happens if a school offers you a good scholarship but doesn't offer your major?

Classes

- How complex are the classes? Which classes were the hardest for you?
- Was there a class you did not want to take but realized its value?
- Are there assigned seats?
- What happens if you are sick and cannot make it to class?
- What time are classes offered?
- How many classes do you have per day?
- Do you have class every day? How long is each class?
- How much time do you have between classes?
- How do you know which classes to take?
- Have you ever regretted taking a class?
- Can you switch classes?
- What happens if you fail a class?
- How many students are in each class?
- What is it like to take classes in the summer?
- Do you have to take a math class every year?
- Have you ever skipped class before?
- How important is attendance?
- Does the college call your parents to let them know if you miss class?
- How is a class in high school different from a class in college?
- Are online classes offered? If so, what are they like? What are the pros and cons of online courses?

Majors

- Do you need to pick a major before you choose a college?
- How do you pick a major?
- Can you change your major?
- Have you changed your major?
- Which majors make the most money?

Dorm Days

- Did you commute or live on campus?
- If you commute, how did you become involved on campus?
- What is it like to live in a dorm?
- Are all dorms the same?
- Do you pick which dorm you live in?
- Do you pick your roommate(s)?
- What do you do if you do not get along with your roommate?
- Do boys and girls live in separate buildings? Are girls allowed in boy dorms and vice versa?
- If you have a child, can they live with you on campus?
- Are you allowed to live off-campus, or do you have to live in a dorm?

- If you have a family or friend visit, can they stay in your dorm?
- Can you share your dorm room with a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- Are pets allowed in the dorms?

Financially Speaking

- About how much money would you say you spend a year?
- Did you get a credit card?
- Is it hard to work and go to college at the same time?
- How are you paying for school?
- Did you apply for and receive any scholarships?
- Did you get any financial aid?
- Were you worried about taking out student loans?
- Does your family help pay for school?
- How expensive is college?
- How do you get financial aid?
- How did you get a job as a student?
- Does every class or major cost the same?
- How do you know if you can afford to go to college?
- Did you ever experience money problems? How did you handle it?

Greek Life

- What is it like to be part of a sorority or fraternity?
- What are the benefits of being part of a sorority or fraternity?
- How do you become part of a sorority or fraternity? Does it cost money?

Homework, Studying, Grades

- Do you have homework every day?
- How many hours per day do you study or do homework?
- What is the latest you have ever stayed up studying?
- When do you find time to study and do homework?
- Where do you go for help with schoolwork?
- Are there report cards in college?
- Is it hard to get good grades?

Social Life

- Did you party a lot your first year?
- What happens if you get caught smoking or drinking on campus?
- Do parties happen on campus?
- Did you feel pressured to drink in college?

Athletics

- How do you get onto a sports team in college?
- Is it hard to be an athlete and a student simultaneously?

Families

- How often do you see your family?
- How hard is it to be away from home? Do you get homesick?
- Are your parents allowed to visit you?
- Do you have to go home during breaks?
- Is it normal to get care packages?
- How do you balance school and family?
- What if you have a child but want to go to school? How do you manage both?

Healthy Habits

- Is it true you gain a lot of weight in your first year of college?
- How much coffee do you drink a day?

- Have you ever taken something to stay awake?
- Do you have time to work out?
- What happens if you get sick?

Daily Routine

- Describe your typical day. How long is the school day? How busy is your daily schedule? How early do you have to wake up for school?
- Can you offer any advice on good time management?
- How long did it take you to become familiar with a new place to live?
- Was it hard to figure out where to go on campus? Did you ever get lost?

Professors

- Have the interactions between you and your professors been positive?
- Has a professor ever yelled at you or a classmate?
- Are professors strict?
- Do you get to interact with your professors?
- Do you have the opportunity to talk with professors if you need to?

Clubs and Friends

- Where do you find out about clubs or organizations? How many different clubs are there? Does it cost to join?
- Is it easy to make friends in college?
- What kind of things do you do with your friends on campus for fun?
- College sounds time-consuming. How do people have time to date in college?

College Credit

- Can you explain what college credit is? Why do the credits vary from class to class?
- How do you know how many credits you need to take?

High School

- If you could offer one piece of advice, what would it be?
- What is the most significant difference between high school and college?
- What do you wish you had done in high school to better prepare for college?
- How much does high school prepare you for college?

Graduating From College

- What is your biggest fear about graduating from college?
- What made you decide to pursue the career you have chosen?
- What are your plans after you graduate?

HANDOUT: MAKE YOUR COLLEGE PLANS A REALITY!

There are essential steps that need to be completed over the summer for you to be able to enroll in the fall. The tasks listed below are common to most colleges, but you should check your acceptance materials or contact your college to see if other tasks are specific to your college.

Pro Tip: To find out how to complete any of the tasks below at your college, call your admissions office or try a Google search for each task. For instance, if you are attending the University of New Mexico and want to appeal your financial aid, Google "University of New Mexico financial aid appeal."

LOG ON TO YOUR COLLEGE'S PERSONALIZED WEBSITE

- Most colleges now provide a website like my.collegename.edu, where you can check your financial aid status and other important deadlines.
- Your username and password were probably sent with your acceptance packet or in a separate letter/email.
- Contact your school's admissions office if you cannot find your username and password.
- Log on to your college's web portal. Most of the information colleges expect you to read and complete will be sent through the portal, not through the mail.

FINANCES

- Review your financial aid award and make sure you understand it.
- If you are considering an appeal, contact your financial aid office to ask how to appeal.
- Check your most recent award letter and your personalized website to see whether there are additional steps that you need to take to apply for aid.
- Review your tuition bill and make sure you understand it. Students often have questions about the charges on their tuition bills, and there may be expenses you can waive and not have to pay.
- Complete verification of financial aid, including loans.
- Talk with your counselor about how to pay whatever balance is left after your financial aid award.
- Develop a budget for college, including food and spending money.
- Learn where to go on campus for emergency loans/ financial support.

ACADEMIC

- Many colleges now hold mandatory summer orientations for all first-year students.
- Register for or attend orientation ASAP. You will learn more about the college, register for classes, and may meet with your advisor.
- Check what documents you are required to bring with you to orientation.
- Explore the possibility of a summer transition or bridge program. Some colleges and universities have special transition programs for students with disabilities or first-generation students. These programs can give you a head start and ease the transition.
- Set up an appointment to meet with your academic advisor.

ON-CAMPUS SUPPORT SERVICES

- Learn how to access tutoring and academic support services.
- Register for disability services, if needed.
- Locate and learn about TRiO program, if available.
- Locate and learn about mental health counseling services.
- Locate and learn about on-campus food pantry, clothing, and other supports, if available.

PLACEMENT TESTING

- Colleges often require placement tests in math, reading, and writing. Most colleges require students to complete placement tests before attending orientation or starting in the fall. Some need you to do the tests online or on-campus beforehand.
- Prepare for these tests. Your test results may mean that you can skip some introductory courses. Or they can show that you need more preparation before taking on college-level work.
- If you need more preparation, a college may require you to take a remedial/developmental class. While not unusual, you want to avoid it due to its cost and time. If placed at this level, consider preparing more and retesting.
- If a test fee is a financial hardship, don't be afraid to ask for a fee waiver.
- Complete required placement tests.

RESIDENTIAL HOUSING

- Complete any housing forms if you are going to live on-campus.
- Most colleges require you to pay a housing deposit and complete a housing form to be eligible for on-campus housing. Some colleges have limited housing, so do this step ASAP.
- Find the deadlines/timelines for finalizing housing commitment, when you can move into the dorm, etc.
- If you have unique circumstances, consider:
 - Ask if you can have your housing fees waived, deferred, or included in your financial aid package.
 - If needed, determine if there is year-round housing, including during school breaks.
 - Find out whether they offer LGBTQ-safe housing options.
 - Explore family housing, availability of childcare, and schooling for dependents on campus if you have a child.

HEALTHCARE

- Check your college's policy or requirements around health insurance. Colleges have different rules for which students are required to have health insurance and whether or not students are automatically enrolled in the college's student health insurance plan.
- If you already have qualifying insurance, you may be able to apply for a health insurance waiver.
- Know where student health services is located and what is offered there.
- Obtain proof of immunizations and documentation of a physical, if required.
- Explore college health plan requirements.

REQUIRED PAPERWORK AND DOCUMENTATION

- Your college will expect to receive proof of your high school completion. Submit your final high school transcript and an official indication of your graduation to your college's admissions office. Make sure that your AP/IB course credit is sent and accepted by the college. Make sure your dual enrollment transcript is sent and accepted by the college.
- If you plan to live on campus, your school's health services will require evidence of your immunizations. Submit immunization records to health services.
- Do you have the following records/documents that you might need for enrollment purposes?
 - Social Security Number or Federal ID Number.
 - Photo ID or driver's license.

- Birth certificate – showing date of birth and citizenship (if military, certificate of citizen born abroad); Naturalization/Immigration/Citizenship paperwork if applicable.
- Proof of residency for qualifying for in-state tuition (e.g., high school transcript with address).
- High school transcript, diploma, or GED certificate showing date of completion.
- Permanent contact information.
- Proof of disability diagnosis.
- Dependent or Ward of the Court verification.

TRANSPORTATION

- Organize transportation to campus.
- Make a plan for getting to campus the first time.
- Find out what local transportation options are available on campus.
- Make a plan for getting home and back on breaks.

SUPPLIES

- Determine what college supplies you will need (dorm and academic).

Adapted from SDP Harvard University: <http://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr-sdp/files/sdp-summer-melt-sample-nine-steps.pdf> and the SREB Go Alliance Academy.

HANDOUT: RESOURCES & SUPPORT SERVICES TO NAVIGATE YOUR WAY

Successful college students use various resources such as tutoring, informal student study groups, meeting with professors during office hours, meeting with an academic advisor, and asking for help when needed. Many free resources help students transition to college and get personal, health, financial, and educational support. If you are a first-generation student, meaning you are the first person in your family to go to college, colleges may have programs just for you.

- **TRiO Student Support Services Program (TRiO SSS)** is offered at many community colleges and four-year schools. This program is for students who are low-income, first-generation or have disabilities. TRiO provides tutoring, teaches study skills, and offers academic counseling. This program helps students navigate the college system and present social and cultural events to help students build a supportive social network.
- **College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)** helps students who are children of seasonal workers. CAMP offers counseling, tutoring, skills workshops, financial aid stipends, health services, and housing assistance.
- **Campus Disability Service Offices** help assist (placement testing, classroom, assistive technology, and more) students with disabilities.
- **First-Year Experience** is a program offered by many schools. This program can help students transition to college throughout their first year. It is free and open to all.
- There are also **free tutoring** and **writing centers, career counseling, and academic advising** for students at all schools. Most schools have a **mental health counselor** and **health facility** on campus.

MY RESOURCES	
This list identifies common student support resources found at college. Review your college or university's website. Identify what support you may need and what is available on your campus. You may add to or edit this list. NOTE: Each college website is different; however, there are usually four main tabs: Admissions, Academics, Student Life, and Student Services.	
SUPPORT AREA	DETAILS OR LINK TO INFORMATION
ACADEMIC	
Academic Advising	
Tutoring/Academic Support Services	
ON-CAMPUS SUPPORT SERVICES	
Disability Services	
LGBTQ Services and Support	
New Student Programs, like First Year Experience	
Peer Affinity Groups Like DREAMer, 1 st Gen Support Groups, etc.	
Student Advisors/Support Services Team/Liaisons	

TRiO	
Programs for Youth/Alumni of Foster Care	
FINANCES	
Fee Waivers (Applications, Activities)	
Financial Aid Office	
Scholarship Office	
Student Employment	
RESIDENTIAL HOUSING	
Gap Housing or Year-Round Housing Options	
LGBTQ Housing (Gender-Neutral Dorms, Alternatives to Campus Housing)	
On-Campus Family Housing	
HEALTHCARE	
Counseling Services	
Health Center	
LOGISTICS	
Campus Map	
Childcare Availability and Cost	
Computer Labs	
On-Campus Food Banks	
Transportation Support	
SOCIAL	
Diversity & Events Outreach	
Student Leadership Office/Student Life/Student Clubs and Organizations	

HANDOUT: RESOURCE SCENARIOS

The following are common scenarios that students encounter during their first year in college. Using your college or university's website and the handout: [Resources & Support Services to Navigate Your Way](#), identify what resource(s) can help in each scenario on your future campus.

1. You are the first person in your family to go to college. You could use some help navigating your new world. You have heard about TRiO SSS. Does your school offer it? How do you apply? If not, where else can you find support?
2. You have a learning disability and need some academic accommodations. In high school, you received extended time for testing. Where do you go to find out how to request an accommodation? What sort of documentation do you need?
3. In the 4th week of classes, things start to pick up. You feel confident in most of your classes, but your English course is really challenging. You are struggling and want to get help before your grade begins to suffer. Where are some places you can go to get help?
4. Recently, you have started to experience some anxiety about balancing your classes and social life. You feel overwhelmed, depressed, and just want to sleep all the time. Where can you find support?
5. After the first couple weeks, you begin to feel those dreaded "impostor" feelings—as if you are here by mistake. You become discouraged. Who can you see, or where can you go for help and find support?
6. College seemed like a good idea, that is until you got there. You feel out of place maybe because of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, ability, religious background, language, etc. Your friends and family are not nearby, and you feel alone. When you tell your family you are homesick, they suggest getting out and meeting new people. Where can you go, or what can you do to make new friends and find support?
7. Midterms are beginning, and you feel terrible. The other day you had a fever. Now you have a bad cough. You wish your family could take care of you, but that is not an option due to upcoming exams. What should you do?
8. You used to be involved in clubs and sports in high school. Now you don't do much besides walking back and forth across campus. How can you get involved in something you love on campus?
9. You are assigned a research paper on an unfamiliar topic. You search for information on your own but begin to get discouraged. Who can you see or where can you go for help to write this paper?
10. After taking a class in a particular subject, you think you might want to major in it. You don't know much about the subject but enjoyed the course. You hope that whatever subject you major in will give you some direction for a possible career after graduation. Where can you go to learn more about majors? Careers?

11. You realize that you might not have been as prepared for your math class as you initially thought. Your grades are suffering, so you contemplate getting out of the course to save your GPA. What are your options?
12. You knew college would require more work than high school but did not expect it to be so challenging. You don't think you need tutors, but you could use study tips and help to get organized. Where can you get the guidance and assistance you need to get back on track to earn the grades you want?
13. You discover you are running low on funds. Your family cannot help you. Where can you go to find out about getting a part-time job on or nearby campus?

Adapted from materials from the University of Tennessee Knoxville.

HANDOUT: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

High School	Postsecondary Education
Classes	
Six hours each day, 30 hours a week, are spent in class.	Approximately 12-16 hours each week are spent in class.
The average class is 35-45 minutes.	Class times vary from 50 minutes to 4 hours.
Class is usually a semester or 90 days.	Colleges have a semester or quarter system. Quarter systems meet approximately 11 weeks or 53-55 days. Semester systems meet for approximately 16 weeks or 90 days.
Classes are arranged.	Each student decides their schedule in consultation with an academic advisor. Schedules tend to look lighter than they are.
Classes are structured and scheduled one after the other.	There are often hours between classes; class times vary throughout the day and evening.
Classes generally have no more than 35 students.	Class sizes vary from small to large. They may include 100 or more students.
Classes are generally held in one building.	Classes are held at many different sites on campus.
Classes meet daily.	Classes may meet 1 to 5 times a week.
Missing classes for various reasons is permissible and you may still complete the course.	Missing classes may result in lowered grades or failing the class, depending on course requirements.
Rigid schedule with constant supervision.	Students have more freedom and responsibility to create a flexible schedule.
Students may take the same subject all year.	Students will have new classes every quarter/semester and new textbooks.
General education classes are dictated by state and district requirements.	Graduation requirements are complex and vary for different fields of study.
Textbooks are typically provided at little to no expense.	Textbooks can be expensive. According to the College Board, the average cost per year is over \$1,100. Financial aid may cover costs.
Guidance is provided for students so they will be aware of graduation requirements.	With the help of academic advisors, students know and ensure they complete graduation requirements, which are complicated and may change.
Modifications that change course outcomes may be offered based on the IEP or 504 plan.	Modifications that change course outcomes will not be offered.
Instructors	
Daily contact with teachers and support staff.	Classes meet less frequently, impacting access to instructors and assistance. Instructors are not always available to assist the student. Students can go to office hours for help.
Review sessions are often held before tests. Test questions are usually directed at the ability to recall what has been learned. Make-up tests are frequently available.	Students must work independently to prepare for tests. Review sessions by professors are rare. Students often must be able to apply

	information in new contexts. Make-up tests are unusual.
Students are usually corrected if their behavior is inappropriate.	Many moral and ethical decisions will arise. Students must take responsibility for their actions and decisions as well as the consequences they produce.
Students generally receive assignments in both written and oral form and may hand those assignments in during class time.	Students are often required to use email and the Internet for communication, class projects, submitting assignments, etc.
Teachers approach you if they believe assistance is needed.	Professors expect the student to initiate contact if assistance is needed.
Teachers are often available for conversation before, during, or after class.	Professors typically have scheduled office hours for students to attend.
Teachers closely monitor a student's progress.	Professors may not monitor a student's progress but will grade based upon the student's work or may not make any effort to discuss a student's performance despite failing scores.
Teachers provide information missed if you are absent.	Professors expect students to obtain notes from their classmates if they miss class.
Teachers remind students of assignments, due dates, tests, and incomplete work.	Professors may not remind students of incomplete work. They expect students to read, save and consult the course syllabus (outline); the syllabus spells out exactly what is expected when it is due and how it will be graded.
Teachers often write information on the board or overhead for notes.	May lecture nonstop. If they write on the board, it may be to support the lecture, not summarize it.
Teach knowledge and facts, leading students through the thinking process.	Expect students to think independently and connect seemingly unrelated information.
High School	Postsecondary Education
Studying	
Students are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed and often re-taught, in class.	Students are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing, which may not be directly addressed in class.
Instructors may review class notes and text material regularly for classes.	Students should review class notes and text material regularly.
Study time outside class may vary (maybe as little as 1-3 hours a week).	Students generally need to study at least 2-3 hours outside of class for each hour of course.
Someone is available to help plan study time (teachers, Spec Ed, parents).	Students are responsible for setting and following through on all scheduling and study time.
High School	Postsecondary Education
Testing	
Frequent coverage of small amounts of material.	Usually infrequent. It may be cumulative and cover large amounts of material. Some classes may require only papers and/or projects instead of exams.
Make-up tests are often available.	Make-up exams are seldom an option. It may have to be requested.

Test dates can be arranged to avoid conflict with other events.	Usually, tests are scheduled without regard to other demands.
Frequently conducts review sessions emphasizing important concepts before tests.	Review sessions are rarely offered. May need to find a tutor or study group.
High School	Postsecondary Education
Parent/Guardian Involvement	
Parents and teachers may provide support, guidance, and set priorities. Additionally, parent permission required (until 18 years of age).	Students are considered adults with decision-making authority. They set own priorities. Parent permission is not required. Due to FERPA, an institution cannot discuss with parents any student's information without permission from the student.
Parents and teachers often remind students of their responsibilities and guide them in setting priorities.	Decision-making is largely the student's responsibility. The student must balance their responsibilities and set priorities.
Parents typically manage finances for school-related activities.	Students are responsible for money management and basic needs.
High School	Postsecondary Education
Grades	
Good homework grades may assist in raising the overall grade when test grades are lower.	Tests and major papers provide the majority of a student's grade.
Extra credit options are often available.	Generally not offered.
Initial test grades, especially when low, may not have an adverse effect on grades.	First tests are often "wake-up calls" to let students know what is expected.
High School	Postsecondary Education
Laws & Responsibilities for Students with Disabilities	
*IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) focuses on Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), 504 (Section 504, Rehab Act, 1973), ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990).	*504 (Section 504, Rehab Act, 1973), ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990) focus on accessibility and reasonable accommodations.
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 based on a disability.
School attendance is mandatory.	Students decide to attend. Most likely, pay tuition.
Districts are required to identify students with disabilities through free assessment and the IEP process.	Students are responsible for revealing and providing current documentation of a disability. They must self-advocate.
Students receive special education and related services based on an identified disability.	Formal special education services are not available.
Services include individually designed instruction modification and accommodations based on the IEP.	Reasonable accommodations and modifications may be made to provide equal access and participation.
Individual students' needs based on the IEP may be addressed by program support for school personnel.	No formal program support for school personnel is provided.

Progress toward IEP goals is monitored and communicated to the parents/guardians and the student.	Students must monitor their progress and communicate their needs to an instructor.
Schools assist in connecting the student with community support agencies if so identified as a transition need according to the IEP.	Students are responsible for making their connections with community support agencies.
High School	Postsecondary Education
Other Factors to Consider	
Through vehicles such as the IEP, students, parents, teachers, counselors, and support staff work together to ensure that student needs and accommodations are provided.	Students, not teachers, counselors, or parents, must be able to identify their disability, provide documentation, and request accommodations and support.
Transition planning and timelines exist to clarify students' vision, identify programming choices and coordinate appropriate coursework options.	Students make course selections with some assistance from advisors or instructors.
Personal services for medical or physical disability are required.	No personal services are required.**

* Although responsibility lies with the student, Disability Support Services works closely to develop Accommodation Requests and will advocate for student if difficulty arises.

**Disability Support Services may assist students in efforts to advocate for such services.

Sources: [University of Washington Disability Resources for Students](#), [Bellingham Technical College Accessibility Resources Office](#), and Chicago GEAR UP.

The First Year in Five Stages. The transition from high school to college is an important milestone. Many students who live on-campus or commute experience a wide range of emotions during their first year at college. *These emotions are normal and often occur in five stages.* The following timeline includes examples of things students commonly face during their first year of college.

1. The Honeymoon Period. When you begin school, you may experience anxiety, anticipation, and an initial sense of freedom. Homesickness and the desire for frequent contact with family are shared. You may be getting to know roommates, making new friends on campus, and finding your way around. This period tends to be when you might incur many expenses for items such as textbooks, school supplies, and room decorations/furnishings.

2. Culture Shock. You begin to grasp the realities of adjusting to college. You start to get feedback on your progress in class. You might experience shock at the workload, grades on first exams, or time management problems. You may feel out of place and anxious. For example, you might be dealing with the following items for the first time:

- Sharing a room with strangers.
- Budgeting time and money.
- Finding support and being a self-advocate.
- Managing a commute from home to school.
- Navigating a new community.
- Managing challenging coursework and a job.

This phase will pass. This feeling is very typical. There are free resources on campus to help--you just need to ask.

3. Initial Adjustment. As the year goes on, you will begin to develop a routine. You will become familiar with campus life and new academic and social environments. If you are living on campus, it is also entirely normal for conflict to develop between roommates. You may be sharing a room with someone quite different from you. Most students can work things out when they discuss issues directly with one another or with a Resident Advisor.

If you are a commuter, you may feel like you don't fit in with the campus community or

know the campus, its resources, and your peers. Commuters also must balance their responsibilities at home and school. You must work to build relationships with your instructors and classmates. You can depend on external support systems and access the school's academic and social services.

You may reassess your time-management strategies, begin to explore majors or careers and make plans with academic advisors. You might start to plan to move off-campus for next fall.

4. Homesickness or Loss of Confidence. With final exams finished, many students return home for winter break, and there may be concerns about how you will adjust to routines at home. For many, winter break is an opportunity to catch up on sleep and reconnect with old friends. You will also begin to receive your first-semester grades and may experience joy, disappointment, or relief. Homesickness often occurs right after a vacation. You may become a bit insecure and misgivings about your new environment. You might wonder if you belong at college or if college is all it is supposed to be. Homesickness is normal. As with any significant transition period, students will have ups and downs. Many students feel homesick at one time or another during their first year.

5. Acceptance and Integration. You finally feel like you are a part of the college community. You begin to think of it as home. You feel more confident with your time-management skills and experience less stress with exams. You will also be enrolling in classes for the fall and considering options for the summer. You might have mixed feelings about leaving for the summer and decide to stay to take classes and/or pursue summer work opportunities.

