

Differences between High School and College

Postsecondary institutions differ significantly from high school. Understanding these differences can help students with the transition. Students with disabilities who know their rights and responsibilities are much better equipped to succeed in higher education.

Differences between High School and College	
High School	Postsecondary Education
Laws & Responsibilities	
*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 student's 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 are required to monitor their own progress and communicate their needs to 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 own connections with community support agencies.
High School	Postsecondary Education
Classes	
6 hours each day, 30 hours a week are spent in class.	Approximately 12-16 hours each week are spent in class.
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 Semester or Quarter system. Quarter systems meet approximately 11 weeks or 53-55 days. Semester systems meet approximately 16 week or 90 days.
Classes are arranged.	Each student decides his or her own schedule in consultation with an academic advisor. Schedules tend to look lighter than they really 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.	Classes vary greatly in size and may include 100 or more students.
Classes 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.	Greater flexibility of scheduling.
Students may take same subject all year.	Students will have new classes every quarter/semester and new textbooks.

General education classes 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. The average cost per year is over \$1,100 according to the College Board.
Guidance is provided for students so they will be aware of graduation requirements.	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.	Modifications that change course outcomes will not be offered.
High School	Postsecondary Education
Instructors	
Daily contact w/ teachers and support staff.	Classes meet less frequently, impacting access to instructors and assistance. Instructors are not always available to assist the student.
Review sessions are often held prior to tests. Test questions are usually directed at the ability to clearly 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 students' 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 in spite of 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 student of assignments, due dates, test dates, 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.
Often write information on the board or overheard 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 of class may vary (maybe as little as 1-3 hours a week).	Generally need to study at least 2-3 hours outside of class for each hour of class.
Someone is available to help plan study time (teachers, Spec Ed, parents).	Student responsible for setting and following through on all scheduling and study time.
High School	Postsecondary Education
Testing	

School district provides free testing, evaluation, and transportation to program.	Students must provide current and appropriate documentation as defined by the college. If documentation from high school is not adequate, student pays for additional evaluation/testing.
Frequent coverage of small amounts of material.	Usually infrequent. May be cumulative and cover large amounts of material. Some classes may require only papers and/or projects in lieu of exams.
Make up tests are often available.	Make up exams are seldom an option. 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 prior to tests.	Review sessions are rarely offered. May need to find 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 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 adverse effect on grade.	First tests are often "wake up calls" to let students know what is expected.
High School	Postsecondary Education
Other Factors to Consider	
The main office exists as the center of activity for school.	Students are responsible to know where to locate information, assistance, study support.
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, <u>not teachers, counselors or parents</u> , must be able to identify their disability, provide documentation, and request accommodations and supports.
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.