

# Deciding to Attend a Postsecondary Institution

Although 8th, 9th and 10th grades are early in your school career, they are important times to begin thinking about and planning for those things you will be looking forward to after graduation. You may want to continue your education or enter an apprenticeship program. Both of these options require career exploration and research. Most schools offer classes on career education. Make sure you are included.



*“Start asking now. Don’t let pride get in your way – ask for help while you can.”*

— Liz, college graduate with a learning disability

Once you have narrowed your career choices, it is important to find out the required training and education for your choice(s). If further education is required, you need to find which schools offer a major or certification program. Your school counselor and/or school librarian can help you with this research. There may be special requirements for specific programs.

## After high school, the rules change.

The following charts describe general differences in various areas between public high school and postsecondary education.

### LAWS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### HIGH SCHOOL

1. Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
2. Covers ages 3-21 or until regular high school diploma requirements are met.
3. School attendance is mandatory.
4. Districts are required to identify students with disabilities through free assessment and the individualized education program (IEP) process.
5. Students receive special education and related services to address needs based on an identified disability.
6. Services include individually designed instruction, modifications, and accommodations based on the IEP.
7. Individual student’s needs based on the IEP may be addressed by program support for school personnel.
8. Progress toward IEP goals is monitored and communicated to the parent(s) and/or the student.
9. Schools assist in connecting the student with community support agencies if so identified as a transition need according to the IEP.

#### POSTSECONDARY

1. Section 504 and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Accessibility and reasonable accommodations.
2. Covers students with disabilities regardless of age; schools may not discriminate in recruitment, admission, or after admission, solely on the basis of a disability.
3. Students decide to attend and will probably pay tuition.
4. Students are responsible for revealing and providing current documentation of a disability. They must be self advocates.
5. Formal special education services are not available.
6. Reasonable accommodations may be made to provide equal access and participation.
7. No formal program support for school personnel is provided.
8. Students are required to monitor their own progress and communicate their needs to instructors.
9. Students are responsible for making their own connections with community support agencies.

## CLASSES

### HIGH SCHOOL

1. Usually follow a school-directed schedule and proceed from one class to another.
2. General education classes dictated by state/district requirements.
3. Typically, a school year is 36 weeks long; some classes extend over both semesters. Summer classes may be offered but are not used to accelerate graduation.
4. Class attendance is usually mandatory and monitored carefully.
5. Classes generally have no more than 30-35 students.
6. Textbooks are typically provided at little or no expense.
7. Guidance is provided for students so they will be aware of graduation requirements.
8. Modifications that change course outcomes may be offered based on the IEP.

### POSTSECONDARY

1. Individual students must manage their own time and schedules.
2. Class based on field of study; requirements may vary.
3. Academic year is divided into two separate 15-week semesters plus a week for final exams. (*Hint: Some institutions are on a trimester schedule.*) Courses are offered fall, spring, and summer semesters, and summer classes may be used to accelerate graduation.
4. Attendance policies may vary with each instructor. (*Hint: Lack of attendance may impact performance.*)
5. Classes may have 100 or more students.
6. Textbooks can be expensive. (*Hint: An anticipated range for a full-time student is \$250-\$500 per semester.*)
7. Graduation requirements are complex and vary for different fields of study. (*Hint: You are responsible for monitoring your progress and seeking advice.*)
8. Modifications that change course outcomes will not be offered. (*Hint: Modified high school courses may not be accepted in the admission process.*)

## INSTRUCTORS

### HIGH SCHOOL

1. Grade and check completed homework.
2. May remind students of incomplete assignments.
3. May know students' needs and approach students when they need assistance.
4. May be available before, during, or after class.
5. Have been trained in teaching methods.
6. Often provide students with information missed during absence.
7. Present material to help students understand what is in the textbook.
8. Often write information on the board or overhead to be copied for notes.
9. Teach knowledge and facts leading students through the thinking process.
10. Often take time to remind students of assignment and test dates.

### POSTSECONDARY

1. May assume homework is completed and students are able to perform on a test.
2. May not remind students of incomplete assignments. (*Hint: It's your responsibility to check with your instructor to see if requirements are being met.*)
3. Are usually open and helpful, but expect students to initiate contact when assistance is needed.
4. May require students to attend scheduled office hours.
5. Have content knowledge but not necessarily formal training in teaching methods.
6. Expect students to get information from classmates when they miss a class.
7. May not follow the textbook, but lectures enhance the topic area. (*Hint: You need to connect lectures and textbook.*)
8. May lecture nonstop. If they write on the board, it may be to support the lecture, not summarize it. (*Hint: Good notes are a must or a tape recorder may be used.*)
9. Expect students to think independently and connect seemingly unrelated information.
10. Expect students to read, save, and refer back to the course syllabus. (*Hint: Syllabi are your way of knowing exactly what is expected of you, when assignments are due, and how you will be graded.*) The syllabus may be available on the course website.

## STUDYING

### HIGH SCHOOL

1. Study time outside of class may vary (may be as little as 1-3 hours per week).
2. Instructors may review class notes and text material regularly for classes.
3. Expected to read short assignments that are discussed and retaught.

### POSTSECONDARY

1. Generally need to study at least 2-3 hours outside of class for each hour in class.
2. Students should review class notes and text material regularly. (*Hint: Use the time between classes carefully.*)
3. Substantial amounts of assigned reading and writing may not be directly addressed in class. (*Hint: It's up to you to read and understand assigned material or access support, such as books on tape.*)

## TESTING

### HIGH SCHOOL

1. Frequent coverage of small amounts of material.
2. Make-up tests are often available.
3. Test dates can be arranged to avoid conflicts with other events.
4. Frequently conducts review sessions emphasizing important concepts prior to tests.

### POSTSECONDARY

1. Usually infrequent (2-3 times a semester). May be cumulative and cover large amounts of material. (*Hint: You need to organize material to prepare for tests.*) Some classes may require only papers and/or projects instead of tests.
2. Make-up tests are seldom an option and may have to be requested.
3. Usually, scheduled tests are without regard to other demands.
4. Faculty rarely offer review sessions; if so, students are expected to be prepared and to be active participants, or find study groups.

## GRADES

### HIGH SCHOOL

1. Given for most assigned work.
2. Good homework grades may assist in raising overall grade when test grades are lower.
3. Extra credit options are often available.
4. Initial test grades, especially when low, may not have adverse effect on grade.
5. Graduation requirements may be met with a grade of D or higher.

### POSTSECONDARY

1. May not be provided for all assigned work.
2. Tests and major papers provide the majority of the grade.
3. Generally speaking, extra-credit options are not used to raise a grade.
4. First tests are often "wake up" calls to let you know what is expected. (*Hint: Watch out! They may account for a substantial part of your final grade. Contact the instructor, academic advisor, or student accessibility personnel if you do poorly.*)
5. Requirements may be met only if the student's average meets departmental standards. (*Hint: Generally a 2.0 (c) or higher.*)

## OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

### HIGH SCHOOL

1. State and/or district policies may determine eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities.
2. Parents typically manage finances for school-related activities.
3. Parents and teachers may provide support and guidance and setting priorities.

### POSTSECONDARY

1. Postsecondary institution policies may determine eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities.
2. Students are responsible for money management for basic needs and extra spending money. (*Hint: Outside jobs may be necessary and one more "activity" to consider for time management.*)
3. Students are responsible for setting their own priorities.