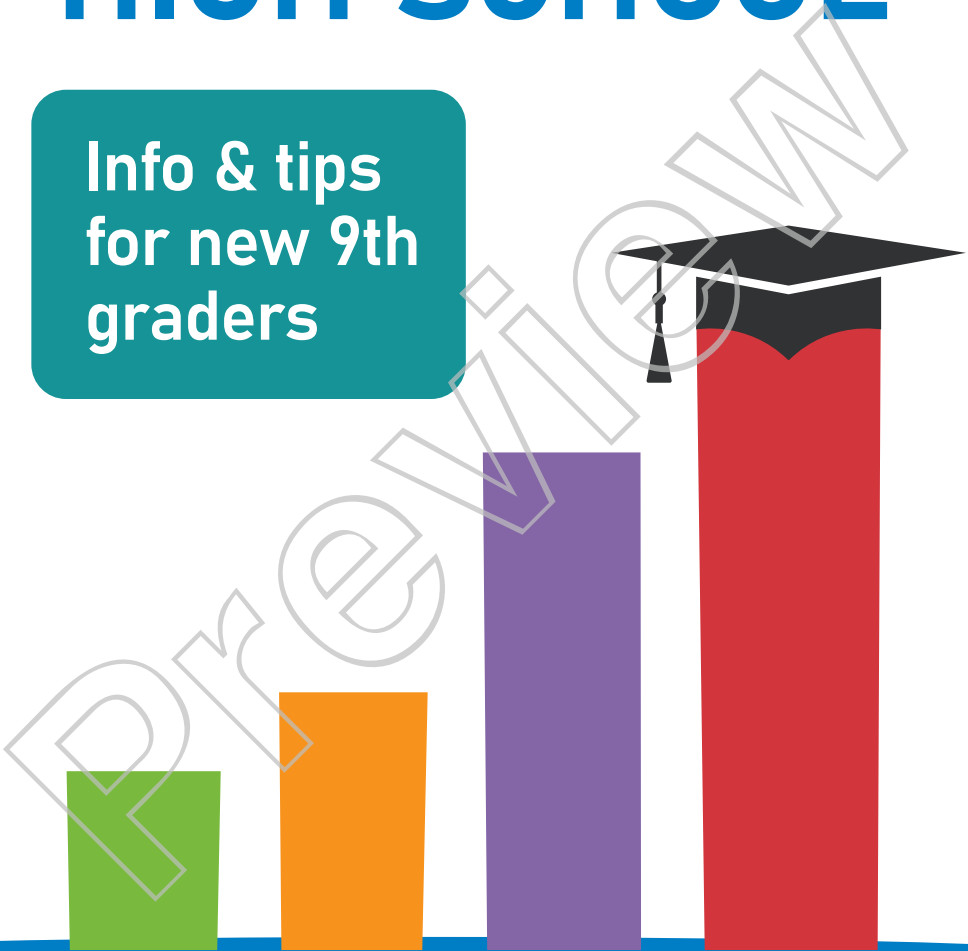


NEXT STEP HIGH SCHOOL

Info & tips
for new 9th
graders



Dear 9th graders,

Welcome to high school! During these next few years you'll study new subjects, make new friends, and develop new skills. You will also have a lot of fun!

Starting high school, however, can be a bit overwhelming...new students, new teachers, more challenging classes, and greater responsibilities.

But not to worry. This booklet is packed with information to help you make the transition to high school. It will also give you the best tips and advice ever, so that you can get your high school years off to a great start.

Enjoy this special time in your life!

NEXT STEP HIGH SCHOOL

Info & tips
for new
9th graders



Table of Contents

What to expect	4
9th grade matters—a lot!	5
Get organized	6
Manage your time	7
Succeed in class	8
Study smart	9
Get involved	10
Choose the right friends	11
Make good choices	12
Be smart with technology	13
Take care of your mental health	14
Know where to go for help	15

WOODBURN PRESS

Copyrighted Material
All Rights Reserved

what to expect



Whenever you start something new, it's helpful to know what to expect.

Here are some things you can expect in high school—and some advice to help you get the year started off right.

New teachers and new classmates

Dealing with so many new people may seem overwhelming at first, but remember, everyone in your grade is in the same boat. In a few days, things won't seem so new, and you'll be on your way to knowing all of your teachers and new classmates.

A new schedule

Your schedule probably contains classes you've never taken before. Check your schedule carefully to make sure it's correct. If you think there's a mistake, or that you're in a class that's not a good fit for you, see your counselor right away.

More challenging classes with more homework

Your high school courses are likely to be more difficult, but know that you can handle them. It is, however, important for you to work hard in all of your classes—right from day one.

More extracurricular activities

Getting involved in school activities is a great way to meet new people, develop your skills, and have fun.

A lot more to keep up with

High school students have more work, activities, and responsibilities than they've ever had before. To keep up with everything, you need to be organized and have good time-management skills.

9th grade matters—a lot!

Once you get to high school, everything counts!

Your courses now earn credits

In high school, your courses earn credits that go toward fulfilling your high school's graduation requirements. Many schools also have specific requirements that students must meet in order to advance to the next grade. For example, a freshman who fails classes may not have enough credits to become a sophomore.



Freshman grades are part of your GPA

Your freshman grades will be used to calculate your high school grade point average (GPA). Your GPA is important because colleges and employers will use it in their admissions and hiring decisions.

Your permanent record starts now

Starting in ninth grade, the courses you take, the grades and credits you earn, and your test scores all become part of your permanent record, or transcript. If you apply to college, a copy of your transcript will be sent to the college, along with your application. *This transcript will have all of your freshman year courses and grades on it.*

Attendance is the #1 school success factor

To succeed in your classes, you need to have good attendance. When you miss school, you miss lectures, notes, class discussions, assignments, quizzes, and tests. You also miss being able to interact with your teachers and classmates.

get organized

Being organized saves you time and helps your day run more smoothly. When you're organized, you also have less stress and feel more on top of things. While being organized isn't hard, it is a skill that needs to be developed and practiced. Here's what you can do.

Use a planner every day

Regularly use a planner to record assignments, tests, quizzes, appointments, activities, and anything else you need to remember.

Have a system for organizing your papers

Whether you use folders, binders, or notebooks, the important thing is that you have a specific place for all of your papers (notes, handouts, homework, and returned tests).

Eliminate clutter

Put away or throw out anything you don't need.

Keep your backpack and locker clean

You'll be able to quickly find what you need, and you'll be less likely to lose things.

Organize and save computer work

Make sure you save your work often. Regularly back up, clean up, and organize your computer files.

Prepare for your day the night before

Before you go to bed, get everything ready for the next day. Put your backpack and anything else you'll need in the same place each night. If there's something you need to remember to do in the morning, leave yourself a note or set a reminder on your phone.



manage your time

With good time-management skills, you have time for the things you *need* to do, and for the things you *want* to do. Here are some tips for managing your time.



Use class time wisely

Use any extra time in class to start on your homework—and if you have a study hall, use it. Doing these things will reduce the amount of time you need to spend on homework at night.

Make to-do lists

Each day, make a list of all the things you need to do and then cross things off as you complete them. At the end of each day, add the tasks that didn't get done to the next day's to-do list.

Combine tasks

Study while you're doing laundry, go over a speech in your head while going for a run, or review your notes while waiting for a ride.

Create routines

Have a morning routine that includes getting up early enough to eat breakfast and get to school on time, and a nighttime routine that includes going to bed early enough to get 8–9 hours of sleep.

Limit time wasters

Social media, TV, and video games are fun, but they can easily take up too much of your time. Schedule small chunks of time for these activities, and stick to your schedule.

Don't overextend yourself

If you never seem to have enough time, identify activities you can eliminate, shorten, or postpone.

succeed in class

When you make the most of the time you spend in class, the time passes more quickly, you have less work to do outside of class, and you get better grades. Here's some advice to help make this happen.



Participate in class

Participating in class makes the class more interesting, and it helps keep your mind focused. Ask and answer questions, and participate in discussions. You'll learn more, and your teachers will be impressed.

Come to class with your homework done

In many classes, homework is a significant portion of your final grade. Also, if you haven't read the short story that was assigned in English, you aren't going to get nearly as much out of the class discussion—and it might be bit stressful if your teacher calls on you.

Eliminate distractions

Put away anything that isn't related to what you're doing in that class.

Know your teachers

Different teachers have different rules, requirements, and pet peeves. Think about what's important to your teachers. Are they strict about rules? Do they give points for participation?

Ask for help

Teachers are usually happy to help you, but you have to ask. If you're struggling in a class, get help early.

To succeed in your classes, you need to have good notetaking skills. For tips on how to take good class notes, watch this short video.



study smart

Students who “study smart” often spend less time studying, and yet they get better grades. Here’s how you can study smart.

Get started

Getting started on your homework is often the hardest part. Don’t put it off until later, don’t make excuses, and don’t wait until you’re “in the mood.” Set a time to start studying and stick to it. If you have a hard time getting started, begin with something you can finish quickly or with a subject you like.

Have a good place to study

Your study area should be quiet, comfortable, well-lit, and have a surface for writing. Equip your study area with the supplies you need—pens, paper, pencils, calculator. *When you’re studying, turn off the TV and silence your phone.*



Create a study plan

- ▶ Before you begin studying, decide exactly what you want to get done and the order in which you are going to do it. Be specific.
- ▶ If you have a lot to do, prioritize your work. Start with the things that are the most important.
- ▶ If you have something to memorize, work on that first and come back to it at the end of your study session.

Break large assignments down

Use a planner to break large assignments down into smaller, more manageable parts. For example, if you have a paper due Friday:

Mon – create outline

Wed – revise and rewrite

Tues – write first draft

Thurs – write final report

Watch this short video for some additional tips on how to get the most out of your study time.



VIDEO

get involved

Students who are involved in school activities generally do better academically and enjoy school more. Being involved in school activities also gives you the opportunity to do the following:

- ▶ spend time with friends and meet new people
- ▶ become a leader
- ▶ relieve stress
- ▶ provide a valuable service
- ▶ try something new
- ▶ have activities to include on college applications



There is something for everyone

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

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

If you have questions or need additional information on the activities at your school, go to the office or talk to your counselor. Also, listen to announcements and check your school's website.

Try new things

Step out of your comfort zone and trying something new. This is how you find out what you enjoy, what you're good at, and what interests you want to pursue in the future.

choose the right friends

Friendships enrich your life, help you through difficult times, and make school more enjoyable. The right friends can make your high school years some of the best years of your life.

Make new friends

Look for opportunities to make new friends. Go out of your way to talk to the students in your classes, those you see at lunch, and the students who are in the same activities as you are.

Smile, be friendly, and seek out students who share your interests and values. If you're feeling shy, try pushing yourself a little—and remember, everyone in your grade is learning how to navigate this new world, just as you are.

What do you want from your friends?

Do you want support, respect, and trust? Drama, excitement, and popularity? Does it matter what kinds of people your friends are, or do you just need people to sit with at lunch so that you don't feel like an outsider? Maybe it's a little bit of all of these, and that's fine. But as time goes on, you'll want to be more selective and spend your time with those who enrich your life and support you.

So how do you know if someone is a good fit for you as a friend? Ask yourself these questions.

- ▶ Do we share similar interests?
- ▶ Do we laugh and have fun together?
- ▶ Do we agree on what's right and wrong?
- ▶ Do we respect and trust each other?
- ▶ Can I be my true self around this person?



"The greatest gift of life is friendship." Hubert H. Humphrey

make good choices

Being in high school generally means that you have more freedom and independence. But with this new freedom comes responsibility. In high school, you are responsible for your behavior, your choices, and your decisions.

Think before you act

There are countless opportunities to do great things in high school, like get on the honor roll, play a sport, or be an officer in a club. But there are also just as many opportunities to make poor choices. This is why it's important to think before you act.

When you're in a situation that requires you to make a decision, ask yourself:

Is this the right thing to do?

Is this a safe thing to do?

Will I feel good about myself if I do this?



If the answer to any of these questions is *no*, then what you are about to do will likely have negative consequences for you, and perhaps others. It's time to take a step back and reconsider.

It can be hard to focus on consequences when you're in a high-pressure situation. The excitement of a situation and/or pressure from peers can sometimes drive young people to act without considering the consequences. *This is why taking a few seconds to ask yourself the three questions above is so important.*

Be aware of peer pressure

Your peers can be a huge influence on who you are now and who you will become. This is why it's important for you to be aware of the influence your peers have on you. Regularly reflect on who you are and who you want to be. *Stick to your values and always think for yourself.*

be smart with technology

While technology can add a great deal to your life, it can also have some negative effects—especially on things that truly matter, like your relationships and your future. Here are some tips for being smart with technology.

Think before you post

To the casual observer, your posts online lack context and largely speak for themselves—so choose what you post carefully.

Avoid posting “racy” or party photos. Go with the “Grandparent Rule.” If you wouldn’t want a grandparent to see it, don’t post it. This goes for tagged photos as well.

Avoid controversy. Avoid posting controversial statements or opinions—you can’t know how they will be viewed by college admissions officers or prospective employers. They could raise a “red flag” and keep you from being accepted at a college or considered for a job you’d like to have.

Be kind online

Be extra polite online. People can’t see your expression or hear your tone of voice, so what you text or post can easily be misunderstood. And remember, cyberbullying is never OK. If you are ever cyberbullied, tell a parent or another adult at school.

Take time to unplug

Research shows that spending too much time online can have a negative effect on the mental health of teens. Take time to relax and do fun activities without your phone. The best moments of high school will be experienced when you are out in the world with others—appreciating all of the challenges and triumphs that come your way.



take care of your mental health

Mental health refers to your social, emotional, and psychological well-being. Although your mental health can be impacted by things you can't control, you can control how well you look after it. And when you take care of your mental health, you are more successful—and you enjoy life more. Here's what you can do.

Take care of your physical health

The amount of sleep you get, your diet, and how much you exercise all impact your mood. Go to bed at a regular time each night and make sure that you get at least eight hours of sleep. Also, try to eat a healthy, balanced diet and do something physical on a regular basis.



Reflect

Put your phone away, turn off the TV, and take time every day to rest, reflect, and relax. Try writing your thoughts in a journal, or just close your eyes and visualize being in a peaceful place.

Be grateful

Notice the things you are thankful for in your everyday life. Regularly reflect on—and feel grateful for—each of these things.

Deal with stress

Make a list of the things that stress you out and come up with a plan to deal with each. If something is out of your control, let it go.

Talk about it

Talking about your feelings is a great way to process them—and to put things in perspective. Talk to a friend or family member when you have a problem or if something is bothering you.

know where to go for help

High school provides many opportunities, but it also brings new challenges.

At some point this year, you'll likely find yourself feeling a little lost, confused, overwhelmed, or just plain stressed out. This is when it's important to do the responsible thing and communicate your feelings and needs.

If you...

- ▶ are having problems with a class—talk to your teacher.
- ▶ aren't feeling well or have lost something—go to the office.
- ▶ need help with a personal problem, are having trouble in your classes, or just aren't sure where else to go—see your counselor.
- ▶ are being bullied or harassed at school or online—tell a parent, teacher, counselor, or principal.

Never stay silent when you're struggling—there's always someone who can help you find your way.

The person who can help you the most...

The person who can help you the most with any problem or concern is a parent. If you're having a problem with a class, teacher, or another student, tell a parent right away. If you aren't able to talk to a parent, reach out to another adult you trust.



NEXT STEP HIGH SCHOOL

Info & tips
for 9th
graders



This booklet is filled with helpful tips and expert advice on how you can get high school off to a great start!

WOODBURN PRESS
woodburnpress.com
Item 120