



9th Grade

Preview

Student Guidebook



Dear 9th Graders,

Welcome to high school! This is a very exciting time in your life, and for some, a little scary. New people. New opportunities. New challenges. And a lot more responsibility.

Your future is in your hands—now more than ever. The good news? Any future you can imagine is possible. The great news? You're in charge. The reality? Because you're in charge, your success depends on the actions you take every day.

If you develop healthy, smart habits this first year, you'll be successful throughout high school...and beyond.

Have a great year!

Seth Rockman





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9th grade matters—a lot!

Once you get to high school everything counts.

Now that you are a freshman, your courses earn credits that count toward graduation, your grades will be used to calculate your grade point average, and your attendance, grades, and credits will be on your permanent high school record.

Having an impressive high school record is very important because colleges and employers will use it to help them decide what kind of student and employee you will be.

Your grades are now more important, your classes are harder, you have more homework, and of course, you also have a social life to think about.

It's a lot to deal with. So, what do you do?

Many ninth graders are tempted to put their social lives before their academics, thinking they'll just catch up later. But this strategy is risky. Your freshman year is when you develop habits that will last all the way through high school. The smart thing to do is to establish good habits now so that you get high school off to a great start.



What you do this first year will help make your high school years really stressful...or really amazing!

develop good habits



Good habits are the behaviors you repeat every day that enable you to accomplish your goals.

To help you accomplish your goals and have a great school year, turn the following behaviors into daily habits:

Be in school every day.

Attendance is the #1 school success factor. Make it a point to be in school every day and get to your classes on time.

Complete every homework assignment.

In many of your classes, homework will be a big part of your grade. Make it a habit to get all of your homework done before you jump on your electronics, watch TV, or hang out with your friends.

Be actively engaged in your classes.

Get in the habit of asking and answering questions, taking notes, and participating in discussions. You'll learn more, get better grades, and the time you spend in class will go a lot faster.

Ask for help when you need it.

Most teachers are happy to help you, but you need to ask.

Most importantly, make it a habit to put forth your best effort every day. Remember, you're not working hard in school for your parents or your teachers; you're working hard to get good grades for you and your future.

get organized

As a freshman, you have more to juggle than ever before. And you are the one responsible for it all!

To keep **on top** of everything, you need to be **organized**.

Here are some tips to help you stay organized.

▶ **Use a planner every day.**

Use it 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, returned tests).

▶ **Eliminate clutter.**

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

▶ **Develop routines.**

Have a morning routine that gets your day off to a good start, and a nighttime routine that includes getting everything ready for the next day.

▶ **Create a study plan each day.**

At the end of each school day, look at how much homework you have, consider the time you have available, and make a plan.

▶ **Keep your backpack and locker clean and neat.**

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



expand your horizons



Of course your classes and grades are important, but high school is so much more than classes. High school is a time for you to make new friends, develop new skills, and expand your horizons.

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

Make new friends.

Go out of your way to talk to the students in your classes, those you see at lunch, and classmates involved in the same activities as you are. Smile, be friendly, and seek out students who share your interests and values.

Get involved.

Join something. Join a club or participate in a sport, even if you don't think you'll be very good at it. Chess or soccer. Drama club or track. Marching band or yearbook. Anything. This is the best way to make friends with other students who share your interests.

Try new things.

During the next several years, try lots of activities and different kinds of classes. This is how you find out what you enjoy, what you're good at, and what interests you want to pursue.

take responsibility for **your** choices

For most teenagers, entering high school means more freedom and independence. But, with this new freedom comes a very important truth.



You are responsible
for **your** behavior, **your**
choices, and **your** decisions.

In high school, there are countless opportunities to do great things, 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.

Pay attention to how you feel as you make choices. If you feel guilty or ashamed about a choice you've made, then you know that you don't want to make that choice again. If you feel proud after you've made a choice, then you know that this is a behavior you want to repeat.

High school can be a time of fun, growth, and accomplishment—with the freedom to try new things and make your own decisions. But you must be prepared to accept responsibility for your actions and for the choices and decisions you make.

Make your choices carefully, and make sure that your decisions and actions are consistent with your goals and values.

think about **your** technology use

Technology is everywhere. And now that you're in high school, you may have even more freedom and time to be on your devices.

To know if you're using technology and social media in a way that enriches your life, ask yourself the following questions:

- ▶ Do I get upset when I don't have access to my phone or the internet?
- ▶ Could the words or pictures I'm posting hurt anyone or invite conflict and negativity into my life?
- ▶ Am I spending enough time with the people who are important to me?
- ▶ Am I spending enough time outside in the fresh air, being physically active?
- ▶ Is the stuff I'm looking at online making me a better, smarter, healthier person?

As often as you can, pause what you're doing with social media and technology and check in with yourself. Take a look at how you're doing in school and how good your relationships are.

When you're done assessing how things are going for you, you'll know whether you're using social media and technology responsibly, or if you need to spend less time with your devices and more time with your head up—among friends and family in the “real world.”



choose the right friends



Friendships enrich your life, help you through difficult times, and make school more enjoyable.

What do you want from your friends?

Do you want support, respect, trust? Drama, excitement, 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 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.

Here's some advice as you build your social circle.

- ▶ **Be open.** Most friendships grow from everyday circumstances, like sitting next to someone on the bus or being in the same classes. Strike up a conversation with a compliment, *"I like your shoes,"* or a simple question, *"Who do you have for English?"*
- ▶ **Join something.** Participating in clubs or volunteering in the community is a great way to make friends with others who share your interests.
- ▶ **Don't compromise your values to "fit in."** We all want to be liked and to be part of a group. And there's nothing wrong with wanting to fit in, as long as you don't force yourself to become someone you're not. Because if this happens, you might become someone you don't like.

Remember, everyone in your grade is new to high school, and they're all learning how to navigate this new world, just as you are.

know how to handle bullies

Whether it's name calling, rumor spreading, or making cruel posts on social media, bullying is never okay.

If you are being harassed or bullied, keep the following in mind:

- ▶ Never feel like you deserve to be treated poorly. You deserve respect and to feel safe in school.
- ▶ Avoid bullies when possible; but don't allow a bully to keep you from doing the things you want or need to do. This is giving the bully what he/she wants.
- ▶ Never be too scared to speak up. Bullies want silence and compliance. Always speak up.
- ▶ Don't match aggression with aggression. Be firm and clear, but not confrontational. Let the bully know that it needs to stop.
- ▶ You are never powerless. If the student who is being cruel refuses to listen to you, reach out to an adult for guidance.
- ▶ Keep a record. Include dates, times, places, and the specific things that were said, done, sent, or posted online.
- ▶ If you're ever in physical danger, protect yourself (without resorting to violence yourself). Get out of the situation as quickly as possible and find help.



***Remember, you are the “gatekeeper.”
This means that you decide whose words get
inside and affect you, and whose don’t.***

stay healthy



To be at your best, you need a healthy body and an alert mind.

- ▶ Try to get at least eight hours of sleep each night—this means shutting off all of your electronics at a certain time every night, preferably at least an hour before bedtime.
- ▶ Eat something healthy for breakfast and lunch (not just crackers or chips) and move your body every day. Go on walks while listening to music or podcasts. Shoot some hoops or toss a Frisbee with friends.
- ▶ You've heard it before, but it bears repeating—stay away from alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. They will only cause you problems.

When you're living healthy, you feel good, you look good, and you have more confidence and energy.

dealing with stress

Whenever you're under a lot of stress, spend time with your family and friends and talk to them about what's going on. Talking is good because it helps you sort things out.

If you are ever under so much stress that you can't sleep or eat, or you feel depressed, talk to a parent or to your counselor. They can help.



step it up

All right ninth graders, brace yourself for a dose of reality. Everything is not going to be perfect this year.

As a freshman, you're going to have some hard classes, take some boring subjects, and have some teachers with whom you don't click. But this is a good thing.

Why? Because high school is about preparing you for adulthood, and after you graduate and go to college or get a job, you're going to have hard projects, boring tasks, difficult bosses, and annoying co-workers.

See a pattern here?

So, instead of getting frustrated when things aren't ideal, welcome these times as opportunities to develop important skills, such as:

- ▶ working hard even when you're bored.
- ▶ staying focused even when you're not "in the mood."
- ▶ showing respect, even when you're irritated.
- ▶ doing a great job, even when you'd rather be doing something else.

All through high school, and beyond, you'll need these skills to accomplish your goals. Of course, it won't always be easy to channel your frustrations into something positive. Just catch yourself whenever you're making excuses or blaming others, and ask yourself, *"What can I do to make the best of this situation?"*

know where to go for help

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

At some point in the ninth grade, 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.
- ▶ have a problem with your locker, aren't feeling well, or have lost something – go to the office.
- ▶ need help dealing with a problem, are having trouble in your classes, or aren't sure where to go for help – 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 don't feel that you can talk to a parent, reach out to another adult you trust.



plan for the future

It's not too early for you to start thinking about your future career.

You don't have to choose a career this year, or even in the next few years. But it's good to start thinking about it now—so when you do have to choose a career path and/or a college major, you're more likely to make a wise choice.

At this point, it's okay if you don't know what you want to be "when you grow up." Over the years your career goals will change, and the job market will change too. Just focus on who you are right now.

Think about your interests, abilities, and talents.

What are your favorite school subjects? What talents or skills do you have? What kinds of things do you most enjoy doing? Answering questions such as these can help you figure out what kinds of careers you want to consider.

Think about how you're going to prepare for a career.

Will you go to a four-year college, two-year college, a career school, or join the military? You have lots of choices, and now is the time to start gathering information and considering your options.

While every year in high school is important, ninth grade is often the most difficult because there's so much that's new. Get this year successfully under your belt and you can start your sophomore year with confidence—ready to build on the successes of your freshman year.





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This booklet is filled with helpful tips and expert advice on how you can have an amazing freshman year!



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