

WELCOME TO
HIGH SCHOOL!

Resources to help you get high school off to a great start!

WELCOME TO HIGH SCHOOL

Welcome to high school. This is a very exciting time in your life! New people. New opportunities. New challenges. And a lot more responsibility. If you develop good habits and work hard in your classes, you're sure to have a great year!

Here's why it's important to get off to a good start in high school.

Everything counts

In high school, your courses earn credits that count toward graduation, your grades will be used to calculate your grade point average—and your courses, grades, and credits will all be on your permanent high school record. Colleges and employers will use this record to help them decide what kind of student or employee you will be, so doing well in high school is very important.

Put yourself on the path to success

Your freshman year is when you develop habits that will help you succeed in high school and beyond. The smart thing to do is to establish good habits now so that you get high school off to a great start. Do all of your assignments, pay attention in class, and do your best—right from day one.

For the top 10 habits of successful high schoolers, watch this short video!



GET OFF TO A GREAT START

Developing the following habits will help you succeed in your classes and have a great high school experience.

Do all of your homework

Doing your homework helps you stay on track in your classes, and homework is often a big part of your final grade. Make it a habit to get all of your homework done before you watch TV, go online, or hang out with your friends.

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 every paper—class notes, handouts, returned tests, homework.

Use a planner

A planner helps keep you organized and on top of things. Use it to record assignments, tests, quizzes, activities, appointments, and anything else you need to remember.

Develop good time-management skills

Use free time in school wisely, control time wasters, make to-do lists, and look for chunks of time during the day that are wasted.

Ask teachers for help

If you don't understand something in class, talk to your teacher. Don't risk falling behind! Most teachers are happy to help, but you have to ask.

Try new things

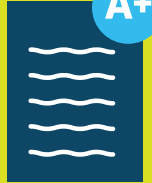
Try lots of activities and different kinds of classes. This is how you find out what you enjoy, what you're good at, and what interests you want to pursue.

TOP
10

REASONS TO BE IN SCHOOL EVERY DAY

1. Better grades.

The better your attendance, the higher your grades.



2. Less stress. When you miss school, you have lots of assignments to make up. That's stressful.

3. You learn more. Learning a little every day in class is much better than having to learn everything you missed on your own.

4. More likely to graduate. Students who have poor attendance are less likely to graduate.

5. Time with friends. When you're at school, you get to spend time with friends (and make new ones).



6. Good habits.

You'll develop good habits for success—like showing up every day and being on time.

To learn more, watch this video!



VIDEO

7. Mentors. Your school is full of people who can offer you advice and guidance, like your teachers and counselor. If you aren't at school, you don't have the chance to develop relationships with the people who are there to help and support you.

8. Preparation for your future.

The knowledge you gain and the skills you develop in school will help you be successful throughout your life.



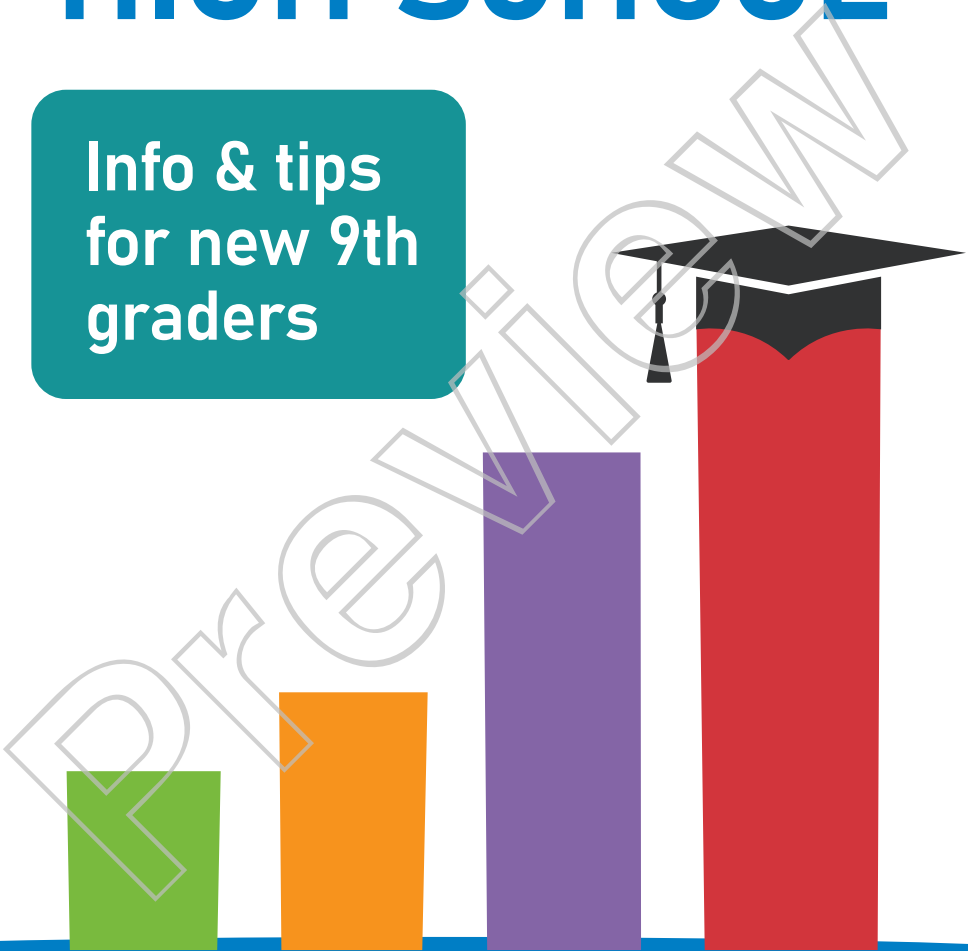
9. Personal development. The more you're in school, the more you learn. And the more you learn, the more intelligent, interesting, and capable you become.



10. Pride. When you're succeeding in your classes, your parents and teachers are proud of you. But most importantly, you feel proud of yourself—and that's a great feeling!

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



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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!

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Item 120

READY FOR

HIGH SCHOOL

**Activities to help
you get high
school started
off right**



Know your school

To get high school off to a good start, learn as much as you can about your school. From attendance policies to where you can go for help, there's a lot you need to know.

How much do you know?

- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I know what to do if I come to school late. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand my school's attendance policies. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I know the rules I need to follow. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I understand my school's dress code. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I have been to our school's website. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I understand my school's cell phone policy. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I have important dates (holidays, test dates, etc.) written in my planner and/or calendar. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Give yourself 2 points for each Yes answer. **Your Score** _____

If your score is 14, congratulations. If you answered "no" to any item, learn what you need to know.

Know where to go for help

- ▶ Your counselor's name _____

- ▶ Where is your counselor's office? _____
- ▶ How do you make an appointment with your counselor? _____

- ▶ Your principal's name _____

Evaluate your skills

All of your freshman grades will be on your permanent high school record, so your grades this year are very important. Having good academic skills will help you earn the grades you want.

The most successful students are strong in each of the skill areas listed below. Consider your skills and put a check mark in the column that best describes how you think you're doing in each skill area.

	Very good	OK	Not great
Organization	_____	_____	_____
Time management	_____	_____	_____
Homework	_____	_____	_____
Class participation	_____	_____	_____
Taking notes	_____	_____	_____
Preparing for tests	_____	_____	_____
Taking tests	_____	_____	_____

▶ Which one of these areas do you want to improve the most? _____

▶ What can you do to improve it? _____

Being in school every day is especially important in high school. The more you miss, the harder it is to succeed in your classes. How would you describe your school attendance up to now?

almost perfect very good fair poor

▶ If you marked "fair" or "poor," how can you improve your attendance?

Set goals

Goals give you focus, direction, and purpose. Having a goal also helps you develop a plan. Now is the perfect time to set goals for this year—and beyond!

Set short-term and long-term SMART goals

While goals can be short-term (get at least a B on your next math test) or long-term (graduate with a 3.0 GPA), every goal should be **SMART**: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound.

- ▶ Set a **short-term academic goal** for the start of high school. _____

What will you do to help you achieve this goal? _____

Is it a SMART goal? Check the boxes. S M A R T

- ▶ Set a **short-term personal goal** for the start of high school. _____

What will you do to help you achieve this goal? _____

Is it a SMART goal? Check the boxes. S M A R T

- ▶ Set a **long-term goal** to work on throughout high school and beyond. This can be an academic, personal, or career goal. _____

What will you do to help you achieve this goal? _____

Is it a SMART goal? Check the boxes. S M A R T

Develop a growth mindset

Sometimes your successes and failures are defined by how you look at them—and by the mindset you have. Having the right mindset as you start high school will put you on the path to success.

A **fixed mindset** is the belief that you either are or aren't capable of something. A **growth mindset**, on the other hand, means you believe that with effort, you can develop and improve any ability or skill.

Which mindset do each of these statements indicate?

Fixed Growth

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | No one in my family is good at that. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I'm going to figure this out. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is too hard for me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I'd really like to get better at this. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I'll never be able to do it. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | My brain doesn't work that way. |

Think about a tough situation you are dealing with now. Write down a fixed mindset way to look at it, and a growth mindset way to look at it.

Fixed Mindset _____

Growth Mindset _____

Believe in the power of “yet.”

When you're frustrated or you can't do something, adding the word “yet” reminds you to keep at it. See the difference?

I don't understand it.

I don't understand it yet.

Be tech smart

While technology can add a lot to your life, it can also have some negative effects, especially on things that truly matter—like your relationships and your future.

Think about your technology use

Like most people your age, you probably use technology a lot. Answer the following questions about how you use technology—and about how it might be affecting you.

Check the things you do every day.

- browse social media play video games watch videos
- listen to music watch TV other _____

Do you think you spend too much time using technology? yes no

Why or why not? _____

Research shows that social media is having some negative effects on the mental health of teens. How is social media affecting your mental health?

Take time to unplug

Counterbalance your technology use by periodically unplugging. Don't just mute phone—have times when you completely unplug.

What are some things you like to do that don't involve technology?

Take care of your mental health

Mental health refers to your social, emotional, and psychological well-being. While your mental health can be impacted by some things you can't control, you can control how well you look after it.

Stay calm and stress-free

Your first year of high school can be stressful. Having ways to stay relaxed and calm will help you deal with stress, and have a great 9th grade year.

There are many different ways to relax and be calm. You just have to find what works for you.

Which of the following make you feel calm? (Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> listening to music | <input type="checkbox"/> taking a walk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> reading a book | <input type="checkbox"/> playing with a pet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sitting alone in my room | <input type="checkbox"/> taking a bath |
| <input type="checkbox"/> watching TV | <input type="checkbox"/> being in nature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> working out | <input type="checkbox"/> writing down my thoughts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Have a plan

Write three ways you are going to take care of your mental health this year.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Make new friends

Having friends makes coming to school a lot more interesting and fun. Friends like you for who you are, and they are there to help you when you need it.

What makes a good friend?

Friendships should lift you up and make your life more enjoyable. However, sometimes friendships can be stressful—or even harmful. How do you know if someone’s friendship is making your life better or worse?

Check the box that shows the kind of friend each statement describes.

	Good friend	Not a good friend
1. someone with whom you can share your true feelings without fear of being judged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. someone who brings a lot of drama into your life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. someone who pressures you to do things you don’t want to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. someone who actively listens to you	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. someone you feel comfortable being yourself around	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. someone who talks badly about other friends behind their backs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

▶ What can you do to be a better friend? _____

▶ What social aspects of high school are you most looking forward to?
