

High School vs College Assignments

Any college student, regardless of high school success or other achievements, can experience difficulties adjusting to college courses. Even when you understand the course materials, you must approach courses and assignments differently than you did in high school. Understanding course structure, grades, and scholastic honesty will help you succeed in college.

You can find the headings and subheadings for this handout by pressing Ctrl+F. This will reveal the headings and subheadings in a navigation menu.

Overall Time Management

Pace Yourself

Classes do not meet daily, and courses do not last more than sixteen weeks. Especially during the first semester of college, it is easy to fall into the mindset of, “I don’t have this class tomorrow. This assignment can wait.” Well, yes and no.

You must organize your tasks so that you can complete everything on time. Reading assignments can be lengthy. A short one might be difficult, so you will probably have to read it more than once to understand it. Writing assignments are typically between four and seven pages long, requiring outside research.

Unlike high school teachers, individual professors—not school boards—determine how quickly and thoroughly they go through the material. A high school teacher might spend a week discussing a chapter. By contrast, a professor might spend only one class period on a chapter and expect students to understand it well enough for an exam or writing assignment.

Falling Behind

If you fall behind too much, it is almost impossible to catch up to where you need to be on the syllabus and in time for your next major assignment. At the very least, the quality of your work will not be as good as it could have been, had you kept up with the syllabus. Always speak with your professor if you are having trouble understanding the course material.

Below are explanations of some of the most common college assignments.

Collaborative Learning Assignments

Collaborative learning is effective at helping students understand the course material and applying it real-world situations. Discussing topics with your peers allows you to add to your

understanding of the subject and gain new insights. This technique also helps foster class discussions among students and professors.

Collaborative learning mimics working with colleagues in the workplace. You learn effective communication skills and procedures in the classroom that carry over into a work environment. Many jobs require employees to work together to complete a task. Everyone must work together and hold each other accountable to complete the project.

In-Class Assignments

Quizzes and Reading Assignments.

Always read for the day. Often, your professor will not warn you of a quiz or in-class writing assignment. Likewise, a professor might give a quiz at the end of the class period, if (s)he believes people have not read the assignment. It is also a good idea to try to read a little bit ahead of schedule.

Outside Assignments

Presentations – Individual

Treat this like an essay. Pace yourself with research, writing, and revisions. Make sure you have time to test your PowerPoint, Prezi, or other multimedia component before the day of your presentation. Practice your entire presentation to make sure you have enough time to cover everything the professor asks of you.

Presentations – Group

On the day you are put into your groups, exchange e-mail addresses with your partners and figure out which days and for how long all of you can meet. You should plan for at least two meetings when everyone can attend. One person should be in charge of setting up a file-sharing folder through a program such as Google Docs or Dropbox.

As soon as possible, everyone in your group should discuss how to approach your topic and style choices. For example, does your professor want your presentation to be very formal? The person with the best grammar should be in charge of final edits to visual aids and printed materials. Make sure to give this person enough time to review everything and make necessary corrections. If your professor wants an essay with your presentation, consider having a tutor review your work.

See “Presentations – Individual” for more guidance.

Essays

Professors grade essays on content and structure. Even if you demonstrate that you understand the topic, professors will penalize you for grammatical errors and not following the essay's requirements, such as page length and number of sources. Likewise, even if the structure is fine, your professor will penalize you for not (completely) answering the prompt.

If you need to upload your essay to turnitin.com, give yourself time to attempt the upload more than once. Wait for the site's confirmation receipt before logging out of the site. If there was a problem uploading the file, "I thought it had uploaded!" is not an excuse about why your submission was late. Regardless of what your watch says, your professor uses the site's timestamp to determine whether a paper was submitted on time.

Grades

Keeping up with your performance in a course is your responsibility, regardless of who pays your tuition. Regardless of your age, professors cannot and will not discuss your grades with third parties, such as guardians, spouses, and employers. This is federal law for all colleges.

Always arrange to meet with your professor if you are struggling to understand course material or have questions about graded assignments and your overall course grade. A professor cannot help you, if (s)he does not know you are having problems. Do not wait until almost the end of the semester to ask for help, after struggling with the course material for weeks.

"I made an A on the assignment worth the most points in the course. Why didn't I get an A for the semester?"

Receiving a high grade for the largest project of the semester does not guarantee a high grade for the semester. All of your assignments contribute to your overall average to one degree or another. True, one grade can affect your semester grade. However, unless you fail a major assignment—especially with a zero—one grade cannot determine your final grade in the course. Read the weighting formula that your teacher uses, and ask questions if you do not understand it.

Professors consider other factors, such as homework grades and in-class assignments. For example, if your professor often assigns in-class work and you miss several classes or weeks of class, you will likely receive zeros for those assignments. Your final grade reflects your overall performance in the class, not just one assignment.

“I tried really hard. Why didn’t I get a better grade for my semester grade?”

You should always try your best in any course, but “trying” is not part of a grading rubric; it is an expectation for any course. Simply attending every class does not entitle you to a high grade in the course. Sometimes, even your best efforts might not result in the most favorable outcome. If you are struggling, arrange to meet with your professor as soon as possible.

Plagiarizing, Cheating, and Overall Scholastic Dishonesty

It is your responsibility to be aware of these rules. Not knowing them does not absolve you from the repercussions of committing violations.

Explanations and Outcomes of Scholastic Dishonesty

High school students are not expelled for plagiarizing or any other form of cheating, but college students can be expelled from the course and the college. At the very least, you will likely receive a zero for the assignment. Some professors report students to the Dean of Student Services.

Refer to HCC’s “Student Procedures” page and student handbook to familiarize yourself with examples of cheating and definitions for “plagiarism” and “collusion.” In short, scholastic dishonesty involves not doing your own work by yourself and trying to pass off work and ideas by other people as your own. The site also gives information about procedures and outcomes to academic violations: <http://www.hccs.edu/about-hcc/procedures/student-rights-policies--procedures/>.

Tutoring is Free and Convenient!

Receiving tutoring is not cheating. Tutoring is free for currently registered HCC students. HCC offers in-person (also referred to as “face-to-face”) and online tutoring. Click here to learn more about face-to-face and online tutoring: <http://www.hccs.edu/resources-for/current-students/tutoring/>.

All HCC campuses offer in-person tutoring, but hours of operation vary. You do not have to receive tutoring on the same campus where you attend classes. You are able to select your appointment time and tutor. Because you have limited time to meet with your tutor, come prepared with specific questions, your professor’s instructions, and any textbooks or course notes that will help your tutor understand the assignment. Click here for HCC’s “Find-A-Tutor” site and select “I want face-to-face tutoring.”: <http://ctle3.hccs.edu/alltutoring/>.

Online tutoring (Upswing) is available 24/7 and does not require an appointment. Tutors review work in the order in which it was received, so you cannot request a tutor. Simply submit your work and your professor's instructions through the online tutoring site: <https://hccs.upswing.io/>. A note at the top of the homepage indicates the turnaround times and a link to LibGuide for handouts and links to help you revise your work. Scroll to the bottom of the page for an instructional video about logging into the site and submitting assignments.

Tutors, whether online or on the campus, guide you through the assignment requirements to help you understand how to improve your work. Tutors do not "fix" your submission by making the corrections for you. If you have questions about the grade you received on an assignment, you need to speak with your professor.

This information was compiled and written for Houston Community College students using online tutoring. This is the intellectual property of Houston Community College.