

THE GUIDE BOOK
FOR FRESHMEN

Fresh START

Congrats!

You are officially
in high school.

**Overwhelmed? Anxious? Excited? Suffering from
“information OVERLOAD”?**

Well, you are in luck. A few upperclassmen wrote up some facts and tips they wish they had known when they started freshman year. That’s what you’ll find in this handy guide, which is yours to pocket, personalize, and rely on to navigate 9th grade and stay on track to graduation. Soak up its wisdom, use it to jot down notes and names, and keep it close by throughout the year. You’ll be glad you did.

Now, let’s get started.



1

FRESHMAN YEAR IS A BIG DEAL

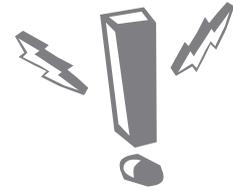
Freshman year is arguably **the most important year** of your high school experience. Here's why...

A **successful freshman year** establishes a track record that you are able to meet and even exceed academic requirements. It's easier to maintain good grades if you start out with good grades.

Developing good habits in your freshman year—like balancing time between homework, friends or after-school activities—are skills that you can utilize the rest of your life.

College admission teams and employers will look at your freshman year grades just as much if not MORE than your senior year grades.

Freshman year builds the foundation for a successful, happy and healthy life after high school. The process of envisioning your future and creating a concrete plan on how to get there begins in your freshman year.



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Ten NEED to know things!

2 SUCCESS

Success is meeting the goals you set at the beginning of the year. Starting off the right way, every day, is what helps you live up to your potential.

Below, write **three goals** (academic, life and/or organizational) for your freshman year. Keep this list with you to help you stay on track to meeting these goals. In fact, consider sharing it with your new counselor or a favorite teacher to gain their help and insight.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

 **Who is your new counselor?** Do you know where to find him or her? Jot this down here:

NAME LOCATION OF OFFICE OFFICE HOURS

 **Have you met your teachers yet?** Is there one you want to reach out to and share your goals?

NAME LOCATION OF OFFICE OFFICE HOURS

3 TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Here's a quick list of things some former freshmen think you should know.

Homework and Studying: It's your responsibility to do your homework, study for tests and ask your teachers for help. There are no dumb questions. Make sure to get your assignments when you miss school so you're not playing catch up or cramming for tests.

Behavior: You will have plenty of opportunities to socialize and have fun. Just remember, there is a time and a place for it. Being loud or disruptive in class or out brings consequences—principal-parent meetings, detention and suspension are not cool.

Getting to Class: In high school, you need to manage your time and be on time. You have only about five minutes to get to your next class. Make sure you know where your classes are and learn your bell schedule. Plan ahead. Carry the books you will need and figure out how and when to use your locker.

 **Dress Code:** Know it. There are consequences and penalties for not following it.

Have a question about taking on new responsibilities?

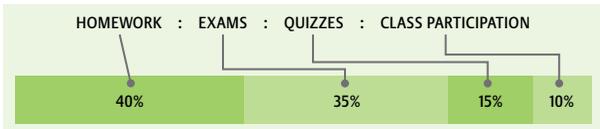
Write it below and make sure you follow up with a teacher or school staff during orientation.

For more on school behavior, check the **school's Student Handbook**.

4

GRADES

Understand how you are graded. Teachers use different things to calculate your class grades. Some count more than others and vary by school, teacher and class. Here's an example of how a teacher might calculate your class grade:



By this scale, if you aced all of your exams and quizzes and were tops in class participation but only earned 50 out of 100 homework points, you'd get an 80% in the class, a C average. To get the best grade, you have to do your best in every area. Remember, **your Grade Point Average (GPA) is the "grade of all grades"** and the one a college will be most interested in seeing. Here's how it works:

GPA Scale

A

4.0

B

3.0

C

2.0

D

1.0

F

0

Calculating a semester GPA

Let's use the following report card to calculate this student's G.P.A.:

A

ENGLISH

A-

MATH

C

SCIENCE

B

HISTORY

C

GYM

First add up all the grades ($4.0+3.5+2.0+3.0+2.0 = 14.5$) then divide the sum by the total number of classes—which in this case is 5—and you get 2.9 ($14.5 \div 5 = 2.9$). This student has a semester GPA of 2.9, which is equivalent to a B/B- average.

Other Notes:

- Check with your school's student handbook or school counselor to see if there is a specific grading system or extra graduation requirements at your school.
- Even though a passing grade for a class means at least a "D" average, you will find that NO ONE likes to see a "D" on anyone's report card—not colleges, scholarship funds, NCAA or employers.
- Students who are absent for 20% or more of their classes will not pass that particular course and will not receive credit.
- If you fail a course required for graduation, not only will your GPA suffer but you will also have to make it up in summer school or evening school. Your peers will tell you that taking classes at night or during the summer is not a fun way to spend your free time.

Have a question about the grading process? Write it below and make sure to follow up with a teacher or school counselor.



PATH TO GRADUATION

In high school, you are expected to take ownership of your class schedule. Make sure you are taking the classes you need to graduate and meet your post-secondary goals. Whenever in doubt, ask your counselor!

Credit Bearing Requirements

Below is the list of subject requirements and minimum number of credits you will need to successfully earn in each subject to obtain a high school diploma. For each semester class you successfully take, you earn .5 credits, so two full credits in a subject actually means four semesters or two years of that subject.

Subject	Minimum Credits
ENGLISH	4
MATHEMATICS	3
SCIENCE	3
SOCIAL SCIENCES	3
WORLD LANGUAGE	2
FINE ARTS (MUSIC AND ART)	2
CAREER EDUCATION OR ROTC	2
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	2
ELECTIVES	3
TOTAL MINIMUM CREDITS	24

*Need 5+ credits
Freshman Year!!*



Some school programs, like College and Career Academies, JROTC, and others may have additional requirements. Please check with your counselor for details.

Non-Credit Bearing Requirements for CPS Graduation

In addition to your class requirements, there are other things you need to complete in order to graduate from high school.

- **Service Learning:** 40 hours of approved service-learning projects through classroom-based, after-school or individual projects (20 hours must be completed by the end of your sophomore year).
- **Consumer Education:** Complete a course that integrates the consumer education curriculum.
- **Public Law 195:** Demonstrate knowledge of U.S. and Illinois constitutions and the system of laws and individual rights.
- **PSAE:** Take the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), which is usually taken Junior year.
- **Drivers Education:** Complete a course that integrates driver's education.

Promotion Requirements

- From freshman to sophomore you'll need five credits—and not just any five credits. Students have to pass at least three of their core subjects during BOTH semesters.
- From sophomore to junior you'll need a total of 11 credits, at least three of these have to be in core subjects. And don't forget the 20 Service Learning hours.
- From junior to senior, you'll need 17 credits.



HERE TO HELP

The adults at your school want to see you succeed and are there to support you through to the finish line. According to former freshmen, you will be in a much better place if you know where to find your adult allies.

School Counselor

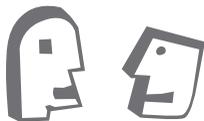
Your assigned counselor can help you with pretty much anything, but is mainly there to help you follow the path through high school and beyond. Make it a point to reach out to your counselor and develop a relationship.

Your teachers

The more comfortable you are with your teachers, the easier it becomes to adapt to their teaching style, ask questions and participate in class—all essential to an awesome learning experience. If you can, try to get some time with each of your teachers outside of classroom time to introduce yourself and get to know them.

After-School Program leaders

Whether it's a coach or a school staff member overseeing a club, some of your best allies can be found in after-school programs. These individuals are there to help mentor you in programs that enrich your academic experience and are advocates for your success in school.



Write down 3-5 names of adults on campus you plan to introduce yourself to and get to know better—your principal, counselor, teacher, coach, or others.

Name:

WHERE THEY CAN BE FOUND ON CAMPUS (Classroom/Office/Place):

OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION:

Name:

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CPS Resources

STUDENT SAFETY CENTER

1-773-553-3335

GRADUATION- AND POST-SECONDARY-RELATED INFORMATION

CPS Choose Your Future: www.chooseyourfuture.org

CPS RESOURCES FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS

Office and Language and Cultural Education – World Languages Unit

www.olce.org 1-773-553-1930

RE-ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

www.cps.edu/Programs/Pathways_to_success/Alternative_education_and_transition

Hotline: 1-773-535-4777

OFFICE OF STUDENTS IN TEMPORARY LIVING SITUATIONS

1-773-553-2242

Out-of-School Time Activities and Employment

After School Matters: www.afterschoolmatters.org

After-School Program Locator: www.afterschool.chicago.org

Youth Ready Chicago: www.youthreadychicago.org

The Mash: www.themash.com

City and State Youth Support Services

Chicago Department of Family and Support Services:

www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/fss.html

National Runaway Switchboard:

www.nrscrisisline.org Hotline: 1-800-RUNAWAY

Center on Halsted (LGBT support): www.centeronhalsted.org/cohyouth.html

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services:

www.state.il.us/dcf Hotline: 1-800-232-3798

Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois: www.silcofillinois.org

Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois: www.ccdionline.org/youthissues.php

Homeless Youth Agencies: www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=32524

CHICAGO
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

CPS

Chicago Public Schools
Office of Student Support and Engagement
125 South Clark Street, 12th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60603