

Chapter 1: High School, College: Is There a Difference?

Understanding Expectations and Prioritizing Your Time

College courses are significantly different than the typical high school courses most of us completed in the past. Your commitments and schedules are probably vastly different now than they were when you were in high school.

College courses differ from high school in many ways including amount of actual class time, students in your class, the relationship between student and professor, expectations and responsibilities of students, testing, grading, and resources available. These aforementioned differences make a college course far more challenging and far more exciting.

To better understand how college courses differ from high school courses, a brief review of the above-mentioned points will be discussed.

Class time

College courses typically meet between three and four hours per week. An academic hour is only 55 minutes in length as opposed to our standard 60-minute hour.

A typical three-credit course may meet three times a week with each class period meeting for 55 minutes or twice a week with each class period meeting for 80 minutes or once a week with each class meeting for 2 hours and 40 minutes. Typically classes meet for fifteen weeks. In other words, you are in class far less time than you were in high school and the number of weeks devoted to each class is less than half of a school year. In college the material presented is far more challenging and covers a wider array of topics in greater depth. Therefore missing any class is detrimental to the learning process. Furthermore, missing a class that meets once per week is particularly difficult in terms of trying to catch up because one class is an entire week's worth of material. (See Chapter 3: How do I make the most of class time?)

Class offerings vary drastically in terms of time of day. Some classes begin as early as 7:45 am or as late as 7:45 pm. This adds a great deal of flexibility in your planning. You should consider your natural rhythm as you plan your class schedule. If you are not a morning person, it makes no sense to register for a 7:45 am class time. You can avoid time slots that you consider inconvenient by registering for your classes at the beginning of the registration period. Early registration will maximize your choices of class times.

Students in class

In high school it is likely that you saw many of the same students in your classes. All students were approximately the same age as you. There is a far greater diversity in the composition of the students in your classes. Each class you attend in college may be comprised of an entirely different group of students

To make the most of your class experience it is wise to get to know some of the students in your class. If on a rare occasion you must miss a class, the people you know can fill you in on what was covered in class or any announcements made in class. You can prearrange with a student to pick up an extra copy of any material distributed in class.

Professors and Students

In high school you had far more contact with your teachers. Your teachers may have coached sports and numerous extracurricular activities at school. It probably was not uncommon for you to stop by your teacher's office during the school day for extra help. All teachers were in the building during set school hours. College is different.

Your professor is typically on campus during specific times and days. These times may include the evening and weekend. At the beginning of the semester a syllabus will be distributed with the professor's office hours along with all information pertaining directly to the class you are enrolled. Put the syllabus in a location that will allow easy access during the semester. Note the days and times of the professor will have office hours. These are the times that the professor will be in his/her office such that you can stop by the office to ask for extra assistance or discuss any concerns regarding your progress with the professor.

If you see that the times noted on the syllabus conflict with your schedule, you can always make an appointment at a different time to meet with the professor. Many professors let their students know that the students can drop by their office any time. If your professor has such a policy and is available he/she will be happy to review material at times other than posted office hours.

Expectations and Responsibilities

The expectations for a student in a college class are different than high school in many ways. In college, you are responsible for your learning. You do not receive a passing grade for attending class: you are expected to come to each class without any guarantee of a passing grade. If you do on occasion miss a class, it is your responsibility to ask a classmate or discuss with your professor the material that was missed during your absence.

You should come to class prepared to take notes. You need to read your textbook both before class to preview the material and after class to aid in mastering the topics presented. The professor will most likely not guide the note-taking process. (See Chapter 2: How do I read a math textbook? and Chapter 4: How do I take and use notes?)

Classes may vary considerably in manner of presentation. Some classes consist primarily of lecture while others will combine lecture and discussion. Online or self-paced courses are also available. Group work may be used. Independent practice within class may be done in some classes. You should be flexible and be able to make the most of each class period. (See Chapter 3: How do I make the most of class time?)

Testing

Assessments in college can take many forms: traditional exams, out-of-class assignments or projects, portfolios, quizzes, midterms, and final exams. Traditional exams consisting of true/false questions, matching, multiple-choice, essay, or free response questions are commonly used for determining the weight of the final course grade. Other classes may rely heavily on out of class assignments, projects, or alternative forms of assessment (such as portfolios). These types of assessment will require a great deal more time management since the deadlines are often spread throughout the semester. Quizzes may be given each class period. Other classes may just use two preliminary exams and a final comprehensive exam.

Whatever the form of assessment used, be sure to be prepared by keeping up with the class material. Studying right before an assessment or trying to complete a project in one evening will not be beneficial. Apply the strategies for test-taking to maximize your score. (See to Chapter 7: Studying in Perspective and Chapter 8: How do I do my best on a test?)

Grading

The grading policy for the course should be stated on the syllabus that you receive during the first class period. The syllabus can be viewed somewhat like a contract. If the syllabus states that an 'A' grade requires an overall weighted average of 90% or above, then you will need a 90% or above to receive the 'A' grade. In high school an average of 89% may have been rounded to the next letter grade – this typically is not the case in college.

The majority of classes will use exams grades only to determine the grade for the class. Unless specifically stated on the course syllabus, attendance does not add points to your course average. You are expected to do your homework so homework is not commonly awarded points nor is it submitted and graded on a per class basis. (See to Chapter 5: How do I make homework work for me?)

In MATH 082 the only grades that are awarded are A, B, C, and F. A passing grade will only be issued to a student who has attained an overall weighted course average of 70% or above. This policy is set by the Mathematics Department and is strictly followed by the faculty.

Resources Available

At CCBC there are many resources available to aid in the mastery of the material presented in MATH 082. Each campus has a Tutoring Center. There is also a drop-in Math lab available on the Catonsville Campus. (See to Chapter 6: Can someone *HELP* me?)

OK...College is very different than high school. What can you do to be successful?

The Plan

To be successful you need a plan. You should plan your class schedule to fit into your life and other commitments such as work and family. Before the semester begins, before you register for your classes, you should layout your schedule. A time tracker or a simple outline like the one below can be a useful tool to study your time usage during a regular week without classes. Using the outline below, you can mark the activities and commitments you now have such as work, family duties, volunteering, etc. You can then analyze how much and when your time for classes and studying will fit into your schedule. Since classes are offered at so many different times, this exercise of tracking your time for a week or two will be well worth the time investment.

Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8 - 9							
9 - 10							
10 - 11							
11 - 12							
12 - 1							
1 - 2							
2 - 3							
3 - 4							
4 - 5							
5 - 6							
6 - 7							
7 - 8							
8 - 9							
9 - 10							
10 - 11							
11 - 12							

Once you determine activities in your life that are not flexible, you can begin to be realistic about the time you can spend in class and studying. Although some activities may be viewed as flexible, you must also consider the priority you give the activities you do each week. You may volunteer for an after-school program that although is flexible, you are not willing to change.

You may realize that you have far more free time in you life than you originally thought – or – the reverse may be true. A simple rule of thumb is that for every class hour you should plan on studying three hours outside of class. This means that if you are planning on registering for six credits in the semester, you should have available 18 hours per week to study and prepare for classes. The 18 hours includes everything from working on projects, homework, copying notes, and preparing for exams.

Ideally, your studying should be distributed throughout the week. Studying for one day a week in a twelve-hour block is not the best idea unless you know this is how you work the best or there is no other option. Study time can be scheduled for short periods of time. You may decide that you will use your afternoon fifteen-minute break to review formulas for your class. At the end of the workweek this will amount to over one hour of study time. Having flashcards available in your car can amount to using

your time efficiently when stuck in traffic or waiting for a friend after work. These unused periods of time can amount to hours at the end of the week.

Having a plan in place before the semester starts will eliminate conflicts with time. If you plan ahead, you will have the appropriate amount of time to dedicate to your studies. The investment in time will maximize your potential for success.

Always remain positive. Research has shown that a positive attitude and outlook is needed for success. There may be times when the material is difficult to understand when first presented, but with practice and assistance, you can succeed. You enrolled in the class to succeed. MATH 082 is the stepping stone for MATH 083 and subsequent courses required for your major. The skills you acquire in this course will serve as the foundation for your future studies of mathematics.

Welcome!

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Review Questions

1. Typically how many weeks does a college course meet? How is this different than a high school course?
2. Why is it a good idea to get to know some of the other students in your college course?
3. Where can you find your professor's office hours? What are your professor's office hours for the math course you are currently taking?
4. How do expectations change between high school and college?
5. What is the grading policy for the math course you are currently taking?
6. Why is it a good idea to have a plan? How to you design your own plan?