



Clark Montessori High School
Bringing Education to Life

3 Secrets to Keeping a High GPA in High School

College applications ask for a lot of information about your academic career. You have to list your test scores (if you're not applying test optional) and any extracurricular activities you participated in, ... and yet the most important factor is your GPA!

Even though the GPA is important, a lot of students are still confused. They don't know what strategies they should be using to maximize their grade point average. It doesn't help that there's a lot of inaccurate information circulating, too.

Why is High School GPA Important?

Many students may prioritize the SAT or ACT over their school grades. However, **while test scores are important, the most important factor that college admission officers look at is GPA.** This is especially the case for colleges which have made the SAT/ACT optional.

The SAT and the ACT scores are important to a college application, but a student's GPA tells a much longer story — one that was four years in the making, actually. Based off of the grade point average, schools can see if a student was committed to their education from day one of their freshman year! They can also tell if the student has had problems with prioritizing school. A student's GPA gives the universities clues about attendance, and even the difficulty level of their classes.

Universities — especially top schools — care the most about a student's commitment to their education. Since a variety of factors are taken into account with a GPA (like honors and AP courses, earned credits and the number of classes dropped), a student's grade point average is the best way for the admissions board to pinpoint a successful student.

GPA Consistency Throughout High School

High school students may think their GPA is only important in their junior year. However, GPA is based on grades from all 4 years. A GPA is kind of like an average of all of the student's classroom scores, from the first semester of high school all the way to the last. This means that **every class counts** towards the overall grade point average. **If a student doesn't make good grades in their first two years of high school, they will find it extremely difficult to increase their GPA over the course of their last two years of high school.**

Students who don't worry about their grades until the 11th grade will not suddenly find themselves getting better scores. Most juniors and seniors continue on the same path they started in the 9th grade. This leaves students frantically trying to undo years of damage to their GPA — and often without success.

Asking for Help

Achieving and maintaining a high GPA in high school is difficult for a student to pull off without help. **At their age, students' brains are still undergoing major growth, and working to develop organization and planning skills.**

Every Teacher at Clark offers a help night. Ask your teachers when their help night is and attend help nights often.

How to Keep a High GPA

Because that GPA is so important to your college admissions and scholarship opportunities, here are three tips that can help you achieve a high GPA and keep it, too!

1. Don't be afraid of "looking stupid"

Students who are self-conscious about their intelligence often perform worse in the classroom. They tend to participate less in class and ask for help less often. On the other hand, students who ask more questions, find resources to help them, and look for ways to improve the effectiveness of their studying tend to see more success in the classroom and then, over time, with their college applications, too.

Let go of the idea that if you are smart things will always come easy to you or that you will never struggle or be confused. You are smart! And with work you can become even smarter!

As students transition from middle to high school, letting go of your academic fears is especially crucial. A student's environment changes a lot between middle school and high school. Lots of incoming freshman have issues adjusting. Adapting to the new routine can be challenging. This is especially true if the student will be attending a school known for its high performance requirements. Combined with the new pressure of maintaining a high GPA, and many students understandably struggle. Not to mention, you'll actually enjoy your classes more!

2. Have a quality study plan

Top performers in the classroom consistently have one thing in common:

Is it an extremely high IQ? *No.*

Is it a million hours of studying? *No.*

Is it a study plan? **Yes!**

Studying is all about quality not quantity. In fact, did you know that there is a point where more studying can become negligible? As in, it doesn't raise your score at all!

So, how do you come up with a great study plan? Here are a few tips:

PLAN AHEAD

Review your class assignments and know what is required in your classes. How many chapters will you have to read? How many exams do you have? When do you have papers due? What homework do you have? Map out what is required in your classes ahead of time, so you can effectively schedule when you will study and/or complete a task.

Planners or mobile calendar apps are incredibly useful, too! Some calendar apps will even send you automatic reminders so that you won't forget when to start studying for that next exam.

SCHEDULE DAILY STUDYING

Cramming for a test or finishing a 10 page paper in one sitting is stressful, exhausting, and ineffective. Chances are your GPA will suffer, and the only thing that you'll gain will be a piercing migraine.

Instead, schedule daily studying time so that it becomes a habit. One hour of studying a day beats pulling an all-nighter every time!

Plus, don't just plan the time – plan the place. Have a set place where you go to study (the library, the desk in your room, an empty classroom) that is free of distractions and clutter. **Put away your phone**, turn off Netflix, and focus only on your assignment. You'll actually spend less time studying because you'll be using your time more wisely.

HAVE REALISTIC GOALS

If you over pack your schedule, then all the careful planning and dedicated studying in the world won't be able to help your grades. You need to have a realistic idea of how much you can accomplish in an hour, a day, or a weekend. Try to accurately estimate how long it will take you to complete a task, and readjust as needed. If you consistently aren't finishing your "to-do" list, it's time to modify your expectations.

And of course, don't forget to schedule time to relax, refresh, and sleep! Knowing all of the answers means nothing if you fall asleep during the exam.

MAXIMIZE YOUR STUDY AND HOMEWORK TIME

There are two keys ways you can maximize your studying so you can maintain a high GPA.

The first is to break down your homework, test prep, or general studying plan into manageable tasks.

Don't just schedule "Write English paper!" on your study plan. Instead, make it something more like this:

- Review English paper assignment
- Review Notes from class about English assignment
- Review grading rubric for English assignment

- Brainstorm 3 ideas for paper
- Pick best idea for paper
- Write a general outline
- Write Introduction
- Write 1st body paragraph....
- ...all the way to Proofread final paper
- Double-check format requirements
- Print final paper

By breaking down your tasks, you make big assignments seem less intimidating, which should help cut down on procrastination and anxiety. You can also more easily estimate how long it will take you to complete the entire assignment and schedule accordingly.

Plus, when you have 20 small tasks to do rather than 1 large task, you'd be surprised what you can accomplish during short periods of time. Waiting for your ride after school? Complete 2 items. Finish a class assignment 10 minutes early? Use those 10 minutes. You may accomplish more than you think before you even get home from school!

Another way to optimize studying time is to break down your study time.

You've already scheduled time to study and broken down your *assignments* into small steps. The next step is to break down your *study time* into smaller chunks. Have you scheduled 2 hours to study and complete homework every day?

Take out your phone and set your stopwatch for 30 or even 20 minutes. Then try to accomplish a certain amount of tasks before the 30 or 20 minutes is up. Then repeat. Take 5 minute breaks as needed.

Studying this way will help you focus on your task and be more efficient, rather than aimlessly studying for hours.

3. Build a solid foundation

As you progress throughout high school, it makes sense that your classes tend to become more advanced – especially if you are on the right track. Pre-calculus becomes Calculus, Chemistry becomes AP Chemistry, and English becomes Honors English.

In order to thrive in any of these classrooms, you **MUST** build a solid foundation. This means that you have to understand the fundamental concepts behind any subject or concept.

As you complete an assignment or task, check in with yourself about core ideas.

When you're answering a question, writing an essay, or calculating a solution, do you have a hard time pinpointing why you're using a certain method? Do you feel like you only somewhat understand why the answer should be this, or why this should be

included in your essay, or why you should solve a math problem this way? Does it sometimes seem like you are just trying to memorize the way the teacher did it, but you don't really understand the method behind it? Or do you feel like you are somewhat groping in the dark, even though you generally come to the right answer or earn passable grades?

If so, you may have some foundational gaps in your knowledge, and attending your teachers' help nights will be important so you don't get confused or frustrated by the material.

When it comes to learning and your education, there's absolutely no shame in asking for help. You're preparing for your future!

Below is a GPA Calculator to help you track your progress

<https://gpacalculator.net/high-school-gpa-calculator/>