

# HIGH SCHOOL SURVIVAL GUIDE

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THE STUFF PEOPLE  
THINK WE KNOW BEFORE  
HIGH SCHOOL, BUT WE  
REALLY DON'T.

*Note: This guide is intended for Roslyn High School students, but many concepts apply to other schools as well.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>WHAT CLASSES AM I REQUIRED TO TAKE?</b> .....                            | <b>4</b>  |
| THE BASICS .....  | 4         |
| ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS .....   | 4         |
| <b>DO ELECTIVES AT HIGH SCHOOL DIFFER FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL?</b> .....         | <b>4</b>  |
| THE VARIETY.....  | 4         |
| COURSE PROGRESSION .....  | 5         |
| <b>WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CLASSES?</b> .....                      | <b>5</b>  |
| REGENTS .....   | 5         |
| HONORS.....   | 5         |
| AP .....  | 6         |
| CLASS WEIGHTING.....  | 6         |
| <b>IS CLASS ENVIRONMENT ANY DIFFERENT AT THE HIGH SCHOOL?</b> .....         | <b>6</b>  |
| FREE PERIODS .....  | 6         |
| PEOPLE IN YOUR CLASSES .....  | 7         |
| TRUST AND RESPECT.....  | 7         |
| <b>WHAT IS THE ABSENCE POLICY AT OUR SCHOOL?</b> .....                      | <b>7</b>  |
| POLICY .....  | 7         |
| VERIFIED V. UNVERIFIED ABSENCE .....  | 7         |
| <b>WHAT ARE THE EATING OPTIONS?</b> .....                                   | <b>8</b>  |
| AT SCHOOL.....  | 8         |
| OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL .....   | 8         |
| <b>HOW DO CLUBS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL DIFFER FROM THE MIDDLE SCHOOL?</b> ..... | <b>8</b>  |
| TYPES.....  | 8         |
| HOW TO CHOOSE .....   | 9         |
| LEADERSHIP POSITIONS .....  | 9         |
| <i>What are they, and why should I care?</i> .....                          | 9         |
| <i>What are the positions?</i> .....  | 9         |
| <i>How do I get a position?</i> .....                                       | 10        |
| <i>What are "Elections"?</i> .....  | 10        |
| <b>WHAT EXACTLY ARE HONOR SOCIETIES?</b> .....                              | <b>11</b> |
| HOW TO GET IN .....   | 11        |
| HOW TO STAY IN .....  | 11        |
| <b>WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY SERVICE REQUIREMENT?</b> .....                     | <b>11</b> |
| REQUIREMENT .....   | 11        |
| ROSLYN SUMMER SCHOOL .....  | 11        |
| ONLINE SYSTEM.....  | 12        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>WHAT ARE SOME OTHER EXTRACURRICULARS? .....</b>                 | <b>12</b> |
| WHY YOU SHOULD DO THEM.....  | 12        |
| <b>WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT SCHOOL EVENTS? .....</b>                 | <b>12</b> |
| PEP RALLY .....  | 12        |
| CHALLENGE DAY .....  | 13        |
| CLASH OF THE CLASSES .....   | 13        |
| OCC BARBEQUE .....   | 13        |
| <b>WHAT IS THE OCC? .....</b>                                      | <b>13</b> |
| WHAT THEY DO .....   | 13        |
| ELECTIONS AND WHY THEY'RE IMPORTANT .....                          | 14        |
| <b>WHAT ARE SOME PLACES TO STUDY ON CAMPUS? .....</b>              | <b>14</b> |
| LIBRARY .....  | 14        |
| STUDY CENTERS .....  | 14        |
| HALLWAYS .....   | 14        |
| COURTYARD .....  | 14        |
| <b>HOW ARE MIDTERMS AND FINALS DIFFERENT IN HIGH SCHOOL? .....</b> | <b>15</b> |
| MIDTERMS AND FINALS WEEKS .....                                    | 15        |
| WHEN TO START PREPARING .....                                      | 15        |
| <b>WHAT ARE AP TESTS? .....</b>                                    | <b>15</b> |
| WHO TAKES IT .....   | 15        |
| AP TESTING WEEKS .....   | 15        |
| WHEN TO START PREPARING .....                                      | 16        |
| SCORING .....  | 16        |
| INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE .....                                      | 16        |
| <b>WHAT IS THE PSAT AND PACT? .....</b>                            | <b>16</b> |
| <i>Why do I hear about the PSAT more than the PACT? .....</i>      | <i>16</i> |
| <b>WHAT ARE THE SAT AND THE ACT? .....</b>                         | <b>17</b> |
| THE SAT .....  | 17        |
| <i>What are the sections on the SAT? .....</i>                     | <i>17</i> |
| <i>How is it scored? .....</i>                                     | <i>17</i> |
| <i>How do I interpret my score? .....</i>                          | <i>17</i> |
| <i>How do I sign up? .....</i>                                     | <i>18</i> |
| THE ACT .....  | 18        |
| <i>What are the sections on the ACT? .....</i>                     | <i>18</i> |
| <i>How is it scored? .....</i>                                     | <i>18</i> |
| <i>How do I interpret my score? .....</i>                          | <i>18</i> |
| <i>How do I sign up? .....</i>                                     | <i>18</i> |
| HOW TO CHOOSE .....  | 19        |
| WHEN TO START PREPARING .....                                      | 19        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| HOW TO PREPARE .....                                       | 19        |
| <i>What are some resources to study for the SAT?</i> ..... | 19        |
| <i>What are some resources to study for the ACT?</i> ..... | 20        |
| WHEN TO TAKE THE TEST .....                                | 20        |
| <b>WHAT ARE SUBJECT TESTS? .....</b>                       | <b>20</b> |
| SCORING .....  | 21        |
| INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE .....                              | 21        |

# CLASSES

## WHAT CLASSES AM I REQUIRED TO TAKE?

### THE BASICS

Similar to the middle school, there are some basic class types everyone must take: **math, science, social studies, English, and physical education.**

You may ask, "What about foreign language?"

Roslyn High School **only requires 3 years of high school foreign language.** Since 3 years of middle school foreign language classes counts as 1 year of high school foreign language, most people have fulfilled this requirement after 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

Many people in our school choose to stop taking a foreign language upon entering 11<sup>th</sup> grade. (However, do keep in mind that foreign language is a requirement in 11<sup>th</sup> grade if you would like to join World Language Honors Society. Don't worry if you don't know about honor societies yet, as it will be covered later.)

### ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

On top of the basic requirements, our school requires all students to take **a writing class, an art/music class, and Health.**

If you take **Research**, you don't have to worry about the writing class requirement.

People who do not take Research are required to take a class called **Writing Enrichment**, which most people choose to take in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

If you've already taken **Studio Art** in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, you have already fulfilled your art/music requirement.

Other than taking Studio Art or a **music class** in high school, you can also fulfill this requirement by taking **Drawing and Design for Production**, our school's introduction to engineering class.

**Health** is a required class for everyone. Most people take this class in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, but some choose to take it in their junior or senior year.

## DO ELECTIVES AT HIGH SCHOOL DIFFER FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL?

### THE VARIETY

The major difference between electives at the middle school and electives at the high school is the amount offered. **The high school has a large number of electives**, to the point where it can be overwhelming to only choose a few.

Unlike the middle school, **many electives in the high school are scholarly/academic rather than relaxed. Electives such as AP Statistics and AP Psychology run like a normal class with tests and homework.**

## COURSE PROGRESSION

One of the main differences between electives in middle school and electives in high school is that courses in the high school often have **prerequisites**. This means that before taking a certain elective, you may be required to take a different elective first.

For example, before you can take AP Computer Science A, you must have taken either AP Computer Science Principles or Intro to Java beforehand. There are some cases where people are exempt from prerequisites (because they've taken a class or already know the information), but this still applies for most students.

Out of all of the course progressions, I would only be concerned about the art track: most people do not know that **you can only take a portfolio art class in 11<sup>th</sup> grade; therefore, you can only take the AP class in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.** (If you want to take AP Art for sure, you **MUST** take the portfolio class in 11<sup>th</sup> grade.)

**If you're unsure if a certain elective has a prerequisite, check the school website:**

Go to [roslynschools.org](http://roslynschools.org) -> Schools -> Roslyn High School -> Academic Center -> Course Offerings

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CLASSES?

*Note: If you're debating between two classes, always choose the harder one- you can always drop the class without it affecting your average during the first few weeks of school.*

## REGENTS

Regents classes are the **basic level** of a course.

These classes run similarly to classes in middle school and are generally much easier than honors and APs.

A regents class is meant to prepare you for the NY State Regents Examination at the end of the year. The Regents Examination counts as a final test.

## HONORS

Honors classes are **slightly more difficult** than regents classes.

(There are a few exceptions to this, as certain honors classes I have taken were more difficult compared to certain APs I've taken. If you're worried about taking honors in 10<sup>th</sup> grade after taking Living Environment Honors, don't worry; that course is on the harder side of honors classes.)

Honors classes **prepare you for the regents** as well, but they focus on teaching above and beyond the regents curriculum. Many honors classes **prepare you for the SAT Subject Test**, which we will discuss later in this guide.

The Regents Examination counts as your final test.

## AP

AP classes are generally the **most difficult** classes that you can take.

Some may refer to certain APs as “an easy AP.” If you’re intrigued by this, it simply means that the general consensus of students is that the specific course is on the easier side of AP courses. The course, however, is still not nearly as easy as most honors classes. These courses are considered “easy” because what you put in is what you’ll get out of it: hard work determines your grade. “Easy APs” are mostly memorizing-based classes such as AP Psychology and AP Computer Science Principles.

**Tests in an AP class are mostly curved: based on how your class performed, your teacher may raise everyone’s grades accordingly.**

AP classes **prepare you for the AP test by the College Board**, which all students enrolled in an AP course at our school are required to take. Refer to the testing section later in this guide to learn more about the AP test itself.

If your AP is English or Social Studies, chances are that the Regents Examination will count as your final test. Other APs either have a final created by the teacher or no final at all.

## CLASS WEIGHTING

If you’ve never heard of class weighting before, the general idea is that since certain classes are harder than others, this is reflected in your weighted GPA. (In your weighted GPA, certain grades are boosted before averaging them in.)

Regents classes: the grade you got is the grade averaged in.

Honors classes: multiply your grade by 1.08 to get the grade averaged in.

Research honors classes: multiply your grade by 1.09 to get the grade averaged in.

AP classes: multiply your grade by 1.10 to get the grade averaged in.

This means that your weighted GPA can potentially be over 100%; isn’t that exciting?

## IS CLASS ENVIRONMENT ANY DIFFERENT AT THE HIGH SCHOOL?

### FREE PERIODS

Yes, the glorious free period. A thing that most, if not all, middle schoolers look forward to. Let’s get some facts straight:

You must wait 15 minutes after the second bell until you can assume that you have a free period. If you choose to leave before then, do yourself a favor and ask the chairperson of that specific department if you have a substitute teacher.

It is a complete lie that teachers will not mark you absent if the entire class doesn't show up. In my personal experience, there have been a few instances where the entire class assumed the teacher was absent but then the teacher showed up and marked the entire class absent.

## PEOPLE IN YOUR CLASSES

Especially as you move into sophomore and junior years, the class environment differs greatly from middle school. In middle school, pretty much anyone from your grade could be in your class.

However, in the high school, you **tend to have classes with people at the same academic level as you**. For example, if you only take AP courses, you are bound to be in classes with other people taking a similar amount of AP courses.

Another key difference between middle school and high school is that you will start having **classes with people from different grades**. This mostly occurs in elective classes where there is no grade requirement. For many people, this will be the first time they will make a large number of friends outside of their grade level.

## TRUST AND RESPECT

You are now high schoolers, which means a new degree of freedom.

Honestly, few teachers check homework daily, as they trust that you have done it. HOWEVER, homework is an immense help to learning information. There's a reason that teachers assign homework. Do it.

In most classes, you can simply walk out to go to the bathroom. No asking. However, do a favor to others and come back quickly, or the teacher may end this policy.

## WHAT IS THE ABSENCE POLICY AT OUR SCHOOL?

### POLICY

**For half-year courses, you are allowed 10 absences** before you NCA the class. **For full-year courses, you are allowed 20 absences** before you NCA a class.

If you hear the term "NCA" being thrown around, it simply means that **you don't receive credit for the class**.

You can appeal to the school if you go over the absence limit, but this will only work if you're absent due to medical conditions or another serious reason. This will not work if you skip class daily.

### VERIFIED V. UNVERIFIED ABSENCE

At the high school, there are two different types of absences.

In simple terms, a verified absence is an absence that your parents have sent a note for or called in for. An unverified absence is not verified by your parents.

Unverified absences are generally considered as "cutting class." If you have a bunch of unverified absences, it'll be hard to appeal to the school and get credit for a class if you go over the absence limit.



# SCHOOL LIFE OUTSIDE OF CLASS

## WHAT ARE THE EATING OPTIONS?

### AT SCHOOL

The **food options at the high school are very similar to those at the middle school**. Your beloved hot lunches, rolls & wraps, curly fries, popcorn chicken, fruit parfaits, and PB&J sandwiches are all available at the high school.

There are **only a few additional options: pizza and paninis**. Paninis and wraps, by far, are the most popular options in the school cafeteria. A panini or wrap will cost you \$3.75, but you can customize it as you please.

Note: The cafeteria only serves food from 4<sup>th</sup> period until 8<sup>th</sup> period. Many times, they start cleaning up the food half way through 8<sup>th</sup> period.

To me, personally, the pizza isn't great. But you know what they say about pizza—a bad pizza is still pretty good.

### OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

There are a few eating options outside of the school. The most common places students walk to are Village Pizza and 7-11. Another option nearby is Bobo's Kitchen if you're in the mood for Asian food.

If you have friends that can drive, then go explore! The options are endless.

## HOW DO CLUBS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL DIFFER FROM THE MIDDLE SCHOOL?

*Note: Clubs typically take place at some time between 3:10 and 4:30 and meet for 40 minutes weekly.*

### TYPES

The clubs at our school can differ quite a bit. While most clubs are laid back, there are a few clubs that are extremely competitive.

Clubs are either **activity-based, competition-based, or both**.

**Activity-based** clubs are clubs where there is no competitive component, and members are doing activities with one another that relate to the club's goals. Some examples of activity-based clubs are Astronomy Club, Medical Explorers, Global Awareness Club (GAC).

**Competition-based** clubs are clubs that mostly focus on competitions, though there are varying levels of competitiveness. For example, Math Team is a competitive club, but it is much more laid-back than Science Olympiad or Forensics.

Some clubs have **both** an activity-based component and a competition-based component. Most of the time, the competitive side of the club is optional. Some examples of this would be Code Club, Robotics Club, and DECA.

## HOW TO CHOOSE

During freshman year, or any other year, you may find yourself asking how you could possibly choose between 50+ clubs.

The answer is simple. Join Code Club.

Just kidding (but seriously, join Code Club). **At the beginning of the year, before the club fair even starts, many clubs will have informational meetings which allow you to see what the environment of the club is like and what they do.** I personally recommend going to these informational meetings even before the club fair.

If you don't know what club fair is, it is a week where clubs come to the cafeteria and set up a table to tell you about what their club does. Do not depend on club fair to show you the club of your dreams.

Just go out and attend as many clubs you can during the first few weeks, when everyone else is checking out clubs as well. You can always drop a club, so don't worry!

**If you're considering joining a club because your friend is interested in it and not because you're interested in it, don't do it!** Find a club you actually like, because other club members end up becoming some of your closest friends during high school. I met most of my friends (99.99%) through the clubs I'm in!

If you're still having trouble choosing a club, **talk to older students** that have the same interests as you. Chances are that they're in a club that would be a great fit for you!

Things to possibly consider when looking at clubs:

- Environment (laid-back v. stressful, what best suits you)
- Time-dedication (some clubs require more than just the weekly meetings)
- People (an advisor of a club could make or break the club for you)
- Opportunities (leadership, volunteering, summer programs, events, learning)

**TL;DR:** Visit as many different clubs as you can and have fun! Clubs should be enjoyable.

## LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

### WHAT ARE THEY, AND WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Every club has leadership positions. They typically **head the club and have larger input on the direction of the club.**

If you're passionate about a club, leadership positions are a great way to **turn the club into your dream club.** Take the club's future and your future into your own hands!

Leadership positions also **showcase your leadership skills** (duh). If you're looking a way to show colleges that you can be a future leader, this is a great way to do so! But please, for the love of god, please don't aim for a leadership position in a club you're not passionate about. Why are you even in the club?

### WHAT ARE THE POSITIONS?

Typically, clubs have the positions of **President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer**; but some clubs have other positions available such as PR, Community Outreach, and Captains.

**Treasurer** of the club manages the money of the club and generally is in charge of bake sales and other fundraisers. **Secretary** is generally in charge of attendance and sometimes paperwork. The job entailments of **President, Vice-President**, and any other position vary greatly depending on the club you're in.

There are different numbers of each position available depending on the club and the year, so don't be scared of applying for a leadership position even if another person is eyeing the same position!

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## HOW DO I GET A POSITION?

Once you've decided you want a position in the club, how do you actually get it?

In April/May, you will find a form called "**Club Leadership Application**" on the school website that needs to be filled out. On this form, you write all of the clubs and sports you are currently in and the positions you would like next year for each club.

Most clubs will require you to **write a platform for the position** you would like. If you're like me and have no idea what to write about on a platform, you summarize why you would like the position and what you would do once you are in that position. They just want to see that you actually care about the club, so writing a platform is pretty easy if you're passionate about the club! (If not, why are you even applying for a leadership position?)

Some clubs which have direct elections will have you **give a speech** in front of the club. This speech should be kept short and sweet and SHOULD NOT be a list of your accomplishments. If you're listening to a speech, would you rather hear someone list all of their accomplishments, or would you rather hear them talk about why they want the position and what they will do? Would you rather listen to a long, drawn out speech, or a short, concise speech?

Good luck, and hopefully you get the position you want!

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## WHAT ARE "ELECTIONS"?

The election process in clubs generally falls under one of the three types: **election, appointment, or both**.

The standard election in clubs is a direct democracy. Candidates for the positions write up a platform, give it to the club advisors, and then give a speech in front of the club. The club members will then vote on the positions.

In most clubs which use an appointment system, the advisor of the club and the seniors on the board will vote on the positions (but this can vary based on the club).

Some clubs take both into consideration. There will be a speech and election for the regular members of the club, but the advisor and the senior members have digression to not follow election results.

TL;DR: If people like you and/or you show your commitment to the club, you will most likely get the position!

## WHAT EXACTLY ARE HONOR SOCIETIES?

An honor society is an organization meant for “high-achieving” students.

It’s pretty much an organization that you need high grades to get into. What the organization actually does depends on the specific honor society.

The honor societies our school offers are National Honors Society (NHS), Science National Honors Society (SNHS), and World Language Honors Society (WLHS).

If you’re a freshman, don’t worry about it too much, since you can only join honor societies in junior year! Just focus on keeping your grades up.

## HOW TO GET IN

The requirements vary for the different honor societies.

According to the constitution of **National Honors Society**, you must have a minimum GPA of 95 and already have 40 hours of community service under your belt before junior year.

For **Science National Honors Society**, you must have a minimum science GPA of 99 and have a minimum GPA of 92.

For **World Language Honors Society**, you must have continue taking a language in your junior/senior year, have a minimum language GPA of 95, and a minimum overall GPA of 85.

## HOW TO STAY IN

Staying in an honor society is pretty simple: **keep up your grades, attend the meetings, and complete the community service requirement.**

Apart from the community service you’ve already done during high school, many honor societies require a specific type of community service. For example, NHS requires 30 hours of tutoring over the course of junior and senior years.

## WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY SERVICE REQUIREMENT?

### REQUIREMENT

The school requires 40 hours of community service in order to graduate. (However, most people do well over 100 hours of community service.)

However, if you’d like to join NHS, make sure these 40 hours are completed before junior year!

## ROSLYN SUMMER SCHOOL

The Roslyn Summer School is a free summer school for children to learn material in preparation for the next school year.

Volunteering to be a counselor/teacher assistant at the Roslyn Summer School is a great way to see some teachers from the elementary school and middle school that you might've missed, meet some great little kids, and get your community service hours!

**With one summer of the Roslyn Summer Academy, you will have completed the community service requirement. I recommend it whole-heartedly!**

In addition, the school will automatically give you the hours- no hassle with the online system or paperwork.

## ONLINE SYSTEM

Our school has recently switched from paperwork to an online community service system called Volunteer Access (<https://www.volunteeraccess.com/home/roslynhs>).

Just click the "Claim Service" button in the top-right corner of the screen and fill out the needed information.

## WHAT ARE SOME OTHER EXTRACURRICULARS?

Some other options for extracurriculars can be a job, babysitting siblings, internships, taking a summer course, creating your own business, etc.

**You're not just limited to sports, clubs, and basic community service!**

## WHY YOU SHOULD DO THEM

If you're someone obsessed with college admissions, these other extracurriculars look wonderful for you. It shows that you go out of your way to find things you're interested in, you take advantage of opportunities given to you, and you generally take initiative!

Pretty much, all the qualities colleges want you to have are shown through doing an extracurricular that isn't something offered at your school.

If you're like me, chances are that you'll find something you're truly passionate about! Worst case scenario is you hate the extracurricular and stop doing it.

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT SCHOOL EVENTS?

### PEP RALLY

Before homecoming, we have a pep rally at the school!

Classes are shortened that day, and then for an hour at the end of school the marching band performs for the school. It's just a great time to hang out with your friends and watch our school's amazing marching band.

## CHALLENGE DAY

Ahh, the infamous Challenge Day.

During your freshman year, around November, you will partake in a day called "Challenge Day." It's a day where you are excused from your classes to partake in bonding activities with other people from your grade.

You may have heard that it's an emotional day. But don't worry: it's not like you enter the room and everyone's sobbing.

The day starts off with light-hearted fun like dancing with teachers, musical chairs, and giving people hugs. (This day might be painful if you like hugs; there's a lot of hugging). Slowly, everyone becomes more comfortable around each other and start to become more vulnerable towards each other, sharing stories that might change your opinion of them.

It isn't necessarily a depressing day, it's a day of bonding!

## CLASH OF THE CLASSES

Leading up to Clash of The Classes is Spirit Week, where each day you're supposed to wear something in that day's category.

Clash of the Classes is a day when volunteers from each grade are pitted against other grades in activities such as obstacle races, musical chairs, and tug of war.

Like the Pep Rally, the regular school day is shortened in order to leave an hour available at the end of the day for Clash.

## OCC BARBEQUE

Towards the end of the year, the OCC always holds a barbecue meant for students. Like the Pep Rally, the school day is shortened to make time for the OCC Barbecue at the end of the day.

It's a great time to eat some food with friends.

Oh, did I mention that there's also free ice cream?

## WHAT IS THE OCC?

### WHAT THEY DO

The OCC is in charge of organizing the school events we know and love, such as Clash of the Classes and the OCC Barbeque.

What many people don't know, however, is that the president of the OCC attends board meetings. **The OCC president is the bridge between the students and the board of education!**

## ELECTIONS AND WHY THEY'RE IMPORTANT

If the president of the OCC is so important, you can imagine that elections are important.

Every year, the candidates for president and vice-president give speeches in front of the entire school. The entire school then votes on who they believe is best for the position.

Your vote (or lack thereof) will directly change the future of your school life!

## WHAT ARE SOME PLACES TO STUDY ON CAMPUS?

### LIBRARY

The library is a great place to study, especially after it has been remodeled.

It has computers for you to do assignments, textbooks for every class, and stations to charge your iPads. The only downside is that the library isn't always open—many times the library is closed during the last few periods of the day.

### STUDY CENTERS

Study centers are always open.

Even if it's midterm or finals week when no classes are taking place, you can always find an open study center to study inside of.

The most common study centers used by students are the English and social studies study centers. The math and foreign language study centers are less popular.

And science? Science doesn't have a study center. Don't ask me why.

### HALLWAYS

This might sound ridiculous to you, but hallways without wifi are studying places that some students couldn't live without.

Since some of the hallways don't have wifi, might as well make use of it, right? If you're a student that gets easily distracted, this could be your new favorite spot to study. Might I mention that it's much quieter than a study center or library most of the time?

If you're interested in a comfy hallway without wifi, some spots to check out are the staircases and the skywalk.

### COURTYARD

Not many people study here, but my friend Daniel swears by it.

It's peaceful without distractions and just a good place to enjoy the weather.

# TESTING

## HOW ARE MIDTERMS AND FINALS DIFFERENT IN HIGH SCHOOL?

### MIDTERMS AND FINALS WEEKS

Midterms and finals weeks are quite different from the middle school.

**Classes don't take place during midterms and finals weeks.** You heard me right, no classes. This means that you only come in on the day you have a test (which also means your last final is your last day of school)!

Buses still come at normal times during midterms and finals weeks, so if you don't have any other way to get to school, you may have to wait at a study center or the library before/after your test.

### WHEN TO START PREPARING

It really depends on the person/class, but **I recommend studying at least 2 days before your test.**

I have gotten away with studying the day before a midterm, but I was completely miserable. If it's a regents test, however, you can get away with a little less studying (especially if you're taking an AP or honors class).

The most important thing is to plan out how much time you'll need to study for each test and schedule accordingly. It can be a mental schedule, but **planning your time is a must.**

## WHAT ARE AP TESTS?

### WHO TAKES IT

**If you're taking an AP course at RHS, you are required to take the course-specific AP test.**

It's a test that is **like a final for AP courses, except the grade on the test doesn't contribute to your GPA** in any sort of way. It's to show colleges that you can handle college curriculum, as the AP test is a standardized test given to all students nationwide that are studying the AP curriculum.

In addition, **you can get college course credit** if you get a decent score on the AP!

### AP TESTING WEEKS

Since there are many different AP tests (just like the Regents or Subject Tests), there are two weeks during the year where AP tests take place.

**AP testing weeks take place during May every year,** though the exact dates can vary.

Unfortunately, **classes still take place during AP weeks. However, if you're taking an AP test, you are excused from all of your classes on the day of your test** (no, you are not excused the entire two weeks).



## WHEN TO START PREPARING

The AP tests are difficult. For certain subjects like Computer Science Principles, the AP test might be easier, but most subjects are very difficult.

For this reason, **I recommend giving yourself at least two weeks before AP week begins in order to study for your tests.** For social studies/history APs like Art History, European History, and U.S. History, give yourself a month to study. Those tests are memorization-heavy.

## SCORING

Your score on the AP is **on a scale from one to five.** Five is the best score you can get, while a one is the worst score you can get.

## INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE

**Most colleges give you college credit for a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP test.** If it's a harder to get into college, they generally accept a 4 or 5. There are exceptions though: some colleges won't give any credit based on AP tests.

A 3 on an AP test means you understood the curriculum enough and have a basic understanding of the course. A 4 means that you have a decent understanding of the course. A 5 means that you almost mastered the course (5s are pretty hard to get, especially in a subject like English Language or Physics 1)!

## WHAT IS THE PSAT AND PACT?

The PSAT and PACT are **practice tests for the SAT and ACT, respectively.** You're supposed to take them before you actually take the SAT/ACT, in order to familiarize yourself with the types of questions and get used to the testing environment.

You generally take these practice tests in 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

These tests do not actually affect your SAT or ACT grades in any way, so don't worry if you did poorly!

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## WHY DO I HEAR ABOUT THE PSAT MORE THAN THE PACT?

In 11<sup>th</sup> grade, if you do well on the PSAT, you could become a National Merit Semifinalist.

Your PSAT score makes you a semifinalist, and other factors will be considered when choosing the finalists. Once you are a National Merit Finalist, you can 1) write it on your resume, 2) show colleges that you're academically strong, and 3) be considered for many scholarships.

Becoming a National Merit Finalist opens the door for many scholarship opportunities, and this is the reason why so many people take the PSAT in 11<sup>th</sup> grade (even if they don't plan on taking the SAT)!

## WHAT ARE THE SAT AND THE ACT?

### THE SAT

The SAT is a test used as a standard for academic prowess by colleges. Your SAT score does not affect your transcript, but it is used in the college admissions process.

### WHAT ARE THE SECTIONS ON THE SAT?

On the new SAT, there are four sections: reading, writing, no-calculator math portion, and a calculator math portion. While the rest are self-explanatory, the writing section tests your grammar skills.

There is also an optional essay section, which some colleges require you to take.

### HOW IS IT SCORED?

You are given a score out of 800 for reading/writing, and a score out of 800 for math. You add those two scores to get your composite score on the SAT.

You do not get four separate scores for the reading section, the writing section, the non-calculator math, and calculator math. Based on how many questions you got wrong on the reading/writing combined, your reading/writing score is calculated. Based on how many questions you got wrong on the math section (as a whole), your math score is calculated.

For the optional essay section, two graders score your essay. Each one grades you on a scale of 1-4 in reading, analysis, and writing. This means that each essay sub-score will be out of 8 points, and the composite essay score will be out of 24 points.

Based on how well other students did on your test, your score may be curved upwards or downwards (pray that it's upwards)! So even if you had a harder test than one you took a few months ago, your score should still be reflective of your skill level.

### HOW DO I INTERPRET MY SCORE?

There isn't a hard-and-fast rule to a "good" SAT score, as it depends on your goals.

However, people applying to ivy league colleges generally have an SAT score of over 1500. If your score is 1530 or above, there's no point in retaking the SAT for a higher score. At that point, luck plays a decent role.

If you're wondering what SAT score you need for your specific college goals, go to [connection.naviance.com/roslyn](https://connection.naviance.com/roslyn), find the college you'd like to apply to, and look at the middle 50% of SAT scores of people accepted. If you're in the 50%, you're good. If you're higher than that, great for you!

For the essay, if you got an 18 or above, you're good. If you got slightly lower (like a 16 or 17), don't bother retaking the SAT if you'd only be retaking it to bring up your essay score.

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## HOW DO I SIGN UP?

You sign up for the SAT through the College Board website.

Go to [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org). If you don't already have an account, go ahead and create one. Navigate yourself to their SAT information page, and you should find a button that says, "Register Now." If you can't find it, try this link: [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat](https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat).

Note: The SAT may not be offered at our high school on the day you'd like to take it. It's totally okay to take it at a different high school (as nerve-racking as this was for me). You'll realize that no one really knows each other, and everyone's just as nervous as you are.

## THE ACT

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### WHAT ARE THE SECTIONS ON THE ACT?

The ACT has four sections as well: English, math, reading, and science. The English section tests your knowledge of grammatical rules, science tests your ability to read and comprehend scientific texts, and the rest is self-explanatory. I would compare the science section to a part two on a science regents test.

Like the SAT, there is also an optional essay writing section.

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### HOW IS IT SCORED?

The ACT composite score is scored on a scale of 1 to 36. Why 36? I have no idea.

Each ACT section (English, math, reading, and science) is scored out of 36. They then average the section scores together to come up with the composite score. Simple, right?

If you take the optional essay section, your essay is graded by two people. Each one gives you a score 1-6 on ideas and analysis, development and support, organization, and language use. This means that you'll get a score of 2-12 for each essay sub-score. These are averaged together to get a composite essay score of 2-12.

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### HOW DO I INTERPRET MY SCORE?

The rules for interpreting your ACT score and your SAT score are the same.

Look up the college you'd like to attend, and then look up the middle 50% of ACT scores for accepted students. You would like your score to be in that range or higher.

If you're just wondering what's considered to be an excellent score, I would personally say it would be a 34 or above on the ACT.

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### HOW DO I SIGN UP?

Like the SAT, you sign up online for the ACT. Go to [act.org](https://act.org) and sign up for an account if you don't already have one.

Once you sign in, you should see a button that says, "Register Now for the ACT."

## HOW TO CHOOSE

The first thing to consider is **what topics you excel at**: If you excel at math and science and English is your weak point, the ACT may be a better choice for you. On the other hand, if you excel at English but aren't great at math and science, the SAT may be a better choice (the SAT doesn't even have a science section).

Another thing to consider is the **time given per question**: you have much more time per question on the SAT. If you're someone that will definitely get a question right with enough time, go with the SAT. However, if you'll do the same on a question whether you have a long time or a short time, go with the ACT. (More time isn't necessarily better!)

If you still can't choose, go ahead and take the practice test for both in order to decide which you prefer.

## WHEN TO START PREPARING

Different people will give you different timelines for when you should start preparing.

In my honest opinion, **you should start studying the summer after sophomore year of high school (before you start your junior year)**. You'll have plenty of time to study during the summer and nothing else to worry about.

It becomes much more difficult to study during your junior year. Don't get me wrong, though, you should continue studying throughout junior year if you feel like your studying during the summer wasn't enough, or if you're someone that forgets information easily (like me).

## HOW TO PREPARE

First and foremost, **figure out if you have the type of personality required for studying by yourself**. Even though studying by yourself saves lots of money, some people simply do not have the diligence/self-discipline required to make themselves study on a consistent basis.

Then, **figure out if you just need practice, or if you truly don't know the material**. This is most obvious with the math section- do you know the math concepts needed to take the test? If you truly need to learn the material, focus on learning that before practicing questions. You can't do practice questions if you don't know the concepts in the first place!

Once you've figured out what approach you should use towards studying (independent, classes, practice tests, learning information), you can take a look at some resources for the specific test you plan on taking.

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## WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES TO STUDY FOR THE SAT?

**Khan Academy**: If you're fine with taking practice tests online, I 100% recommend Khan Academy. The questions are made by the same people that make the SAT, and it's completely free. It gives you a plan for studying every day, and they have mini tests for people that can't sit through an entire 50-60 minute section.

**Official Practice Tests**: The College Board has official practice tests for the SAT. I would suggest printing these out, setting up a timer for yourself, and taking the test. Make sure you're in a quiet environment when taking the

test. If you need a SAT-specific timer, I recommend using an app called "Study Timer: Test Prep Focus" by Magoosh.

Books: If you're looking for a review book, "The Official SAT Study Guide" by the College Board is a great choice. Some other choices include books by Princeton Review and Kaplan. I haven't personally tried these, but you can find most test prep books at your library if you're worried about the money.

## WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES TO STUDY FOR THE ACT?

*Note: I've only listed the resources which I think are most useful. There are plenty of paid online services as well, such as ACT Online Prep and Kaplan, but I haven't used them myself nor do I know anyone that used them.*

UWorld: This is a service like Khan Academy that gives online practice questions tailored to your weaknesses. Normally, this is a paid service, but there is a free 3-month trial (no credit card required)! This offer is only found through Reddit, as far as I know: [reddit.com/r/ACT/comments/7q6bn3/free\\_uworld\\_act\\_access/](https://www.reddit.com/r/ACT/comments/7q6bn3/free_uworld_act_access/). You can also extend the trial, so the service is pretty much free for as long as you want.

Official Practice Tests: Unlike the College Board, the ACT makes their free official practice tests difficult to find. You can find them on the Prep Scholar website: [blog.prepscholar.com/complete-official-act-practice-tests-free-links](https://blog.prepscholar.com/complete-official-act-practice-tests-free-links).

Books: If you still want some more practice tests, look into buying/borrowing "The Official ACT Prep Guide" or "The Official ACT Prep Pack" by ACT. Again, there are also books by Kaplan and the Princeton Review if you need some additional prep.

## WHEN TO TAKE THE TEST

The large majority of high school students choose to take the SAT/ACT during their junior year of high school.

If you're taking Pre-Calculus or something more difficult during your junior year, you can take the test in the first few months of school if you feel ready (October/December).

If you're taking Algebra 2 during your junior year, you might want to wait until May/June to take the SAT/ACT, as you won't know all of the mathematical concepts needed until then. Of course, you can study the math beforehand, but this is more difficult.

TL;DR: Take the test junior year. If you feel ready at the beginning of junior year, take it then. If not, take it in May/June. Take the test as many times as you need (but not more than 5-6 times).

## WHAT ARE SUBJECT TESTS?

Subject tests, also called the SAT 2, are tests you can sign up for that don't affect your average. They are solely for the purpose of college admissions.

As the name suggests, a subject test will test your knowledge in a specific subject (Biology, Chemistry, Math, Spanish, Literature, etc.).

## SCORING

The subject test is **scored out of 800**.

There is one unfortunate thing about the subject test, however: **you are penalized for wrong answers**. This means that you lose points if you get a question wrong. For other tests, you simply don't get the points, but this isn't the case with subject tests. For this reason, some people don't recommend guessing on questions you don't know; rather, you should skip them altogether.

Personally, I guess on every single question, and it's worked out for me. You just have to find what works for you. If you really can't decide, I would tell you to guess on a question if you can narrow it down to two or three choices. If not, skip it.

## INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE

Most people consider 650+ to be a good score on a subject test.

Personally, **I would say not to look at the score itself, but to look at the percentile you fit into**. When you get your score on the College Board website, you are told which percentile your score falls into. I would consider 90<sup>th</sup> percentile and above to be an exceptionally good percentile (if you're aiming for highly selective colleges).

If you're just aiming to be above average, you're doing well if you're in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or above.

*End note from the author:*

If you got to this page, thank you so much for reading my guide! It took a while, but I'm really happy with the way it turned out.

I hope it helped you in some way and that you learned something new.

When I first entered high school, I had no idea what I was doing. Heck, I still don't know what I'm doing half of the time in high school. I thought it was only because I was the eldest child with immigrant parents, but I soon realized that no one else knew what they were doing either.

We were just winging it through high school.

I don't want this to be the case for everyone, though. There are millions of guides on high school, all of which cover topics like be yourself, self-love, not caring what others think, and studying. Yet I couldn't find a single guide on the academic aspects of high school. Isn't that crazy?

Since I'm entering my senior year of high school, I thought that I could write a guide for all the incoming freshmen (and other people that have no clue what's happening in high school). I should know enough about high school by now to give others advice, right?

Honestly, there's still a lot I don't know about high school. For example, I'm starting college admissions, and it's a headache. You can expect a separate annoying guide on the college admissions process in a year.

High school is a lot of stress, anxiety, and studying, but it's also a lot of fun. I hope that if anything, this guide made you a little less scared of high school. Enjoy your time here!