The Top 10 Mistakes High School Students Can’t Afford to Make—(and How to Avoid Them)*

Here at PHC Prep, we’re all about helping your student succeed. In high school—as in any part of life—we can end up making mistakes that affect us for quite some time. But if we can learn from others, and learn to avoid the most common mistakes, then we’re able to move forward faster, learn quicker, and become more successful in all that we do.

Here is a list of the Top 10 Mistakes common to all persons in high school—and how to avoid them.

► MISTAKE #1: Believing that courses are all about learning information in that particular semester.

The Truth: Taking a course is more than just learning information. It’s all about learning how to deal with the subject with a positive attitude, in positive interaction with others, growing our personal study skills, learning to articulate our ideas, and learning about relationships. And most of all, taking a course is part of a lifestyle of lifelong learning. Approach each course for what it is: A great learning experience for ALL of life.

► MISTAKE #2: Overloading the extracurricular schedule.

The Truth: We learn better—and enjoy learning more—when we have “margin” in our lives. When we put too much in our schedule, we end up short changing ourselves. Be super careful to not put too many extras in the schedule, so you can feel good about all that you’re doing.

► MISTAKE #3: Underestimating the negative power and influence of anger, pride, and entitlement.

The Truth: Negativity can ruin us, and positive Christ-like traits are really what life’s all about. If we’re dealing with anger, it affects all of who we are. If we’re dealing with pride, it affects all of who we are. And if we’re dealing with entitlement, it affects all of who we are. Anger comes in many forms: frustration,

* The content of this download comes from a live presentation from Erin Brown Conroy, 2006.
irritation, being bothered…they’re all forms of anger. Pride comes in many forms, too: Thinking that our way is best, trying to push our own agenda. Finally, entitlement is the feeling that other people owe us something, or that we deserve something. Check your attitude when responding to another student and, in particular, to your instructor. Put away all anger, pride, and entitlement—inside the classroom and out. Before you write that email, write on a discussion board, or make a phone call, check yourself. And if you find yourself struggling with one of these negative stressors, talk to your parents about it. Self control and the ability to check our thoughts and behavior is crucial to your high school success.

► MISTAKE #4: Having an attitude of correcting the teacher

The Truth: Realize that your instructors have many years of learning and knowledge behind their words and actions—and that knowledge is what drives them. Students can get tangled (like the picture of the roots, here) in a belief that they can—and should—talk to their teachers and “show them how it is.” Sometimes we have this attitude deep down inside, and we don’t really know it (because it tends to hide itself in our subconscious). Again, the best thing to do is to check your inner feelings and thoughts before any communication with an instructor. If you’ve seen Star Wars, you know all about “Padawan Learners” (a Jedi in training). And you know about Anakin’s inner struggle with attitude toward his mentor, Obi-Wan. Be a Padawan who is respectful, and learn from your teacher, who is your mentor. Find the good. Ask questions respectfully. And look for opportunities to gain from your instructor’s wisdom and experience.

► MISTAKE #5: Believing that summer is “time off”

The Truth: Summer is a great time to learn and read great books that grow you personally. Learning takes place all the time—not just in the classroom. The quicker that you learn to take advantage of your “free time” and see it as time to freely grow yourself, the better—because it will totally affect your future, how you feel about yourself and who you become. Those who succeed in life have great personal skills and are lifelong learners. If you’re struggling with the idea of cracking a book in the summer, find a topic that you’ve always wanted to learn about, and learn about it now. Find a book on personal growth that trips your trigger. Make learning fun—and make it a perspective and attitude that carries you all the time.

► MISTAKE #6: During school, reading the assignment and then answering the questions

The Truth: When you have a reading assignment with questions, the best thing that you can do is read the questions first. When
you read the questions first, your mind is predisposed to finding the
answers. Look at the questions; find keywords; and even write the
keywords down. THEN read. You’ll find your mind remembering the
answers much quicker.

► **MISTAKE #7:** Underestimating the power of reading everything that’s assigned

**The Truth:** Read everything; leave nothing out. So many students skim or skip
readings. Don’t do it. Find the best time to read, when your mind is fresh (that may
not be just before bed, when you’ll nod into your book). Read with depth. And most
importantly—write in your books. Underline, star, and highlight what’s important.
Marking in your book makes a deeper memory of the reading—and puts you ahead.

► **MISTAKE #8:** Underestimating the Power of Templates

**The Truth:** Templates make life easy. A template is a document
that has your assignment already formatted. Find out the exact format
that your instructor wants you to use, and make one template of that
format. Then, in all following assignments, save time and energy by
using your template. Simply fill in the new assignment’s name, date,
and so on. Templates can be used in all of life, and template making
(and using) is part of high school, college, and your future job. Start
now!

► **MISTAKE #9:** Not asking for help (until it’s too late)

**The Truth:** Smart people ask for help. Often. Your instructor is an email and a
phone call away. The sooner that you ask your questions, the better! Don’t wait!

► **MISTAKE #10:** Not taking responsibility for your own learning

**The Truth:** You are in charge of your learning. Not the teacher.
Not your parents. It’s all about you. That’s good news—because
when you take initiative, confidently being responsible and joyfully
doing the work, life truly does become easier. So go ahead and be the
fabulous learner that you are!