

# How to be an honors student: an introduction

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I'm the kind of person who likes to think that most people don't stereotype. I would like to hope that people save their judgments until after they've met a person. However, I cannot help pondering the difficulty one might have in attempting to pigeonhole me: you could say I was a band kid or a Snowball junkie, an NHS do-gooder or an English nerd, you could even call me a jock. You would be right with all of these labels, but you would also be wrong, because I'm not just one of those things, I'm all of them.

Most of the time, it feels like I couldn't be more involved, but it is my constantly full lifestyle that might guide my evaluator realize the most appropriate title for me: honors student. Being an honors student is not easy. There are classes, there are sports, there is music, and there are clubs. There is always more to join. And while I enjoy most of what I do, the interests I pursue eat up my time like hungry girls at a soccer sleepover (i.e. a lot). The prospect of taking part in so many different things is exciting; however, most of the time I feel smothered by my schedule and workload, like I literally "have no life." (For precisely this reason, I feel like smacking every freshman who bemoans her lack of time for a social life.) Really, try being me. Wake up every day at 5: 50 a.

m. to take a test or go to a meeting or conference with a teacher at seven o'clock. Then go to classes where your teachers constantly rave about the upcoming AP tests as if "The British are coming!" and don't forget to finish the homework you didn't get done last night sometime before class (lunch, maybe?). After seven and a half hours of this, go to two grueling hours of soccer every day, and don't forget to go to the sophomore practice after the

junior varsity, because your class schedule was too rigorous to allow you to practice eighth period with your actual team. After practice, race home and try to eat a family dinner without being hostile, try to figure out your pre-calc homework because you dozed off in class today, and try to read (and annotate!) your English homework without falling asleep again .

If you finish—and that is a big “ if”—you might make it to bed by 11: 30, and then you may want to write for a while, because that is the only thing keeping you sane. Try doing this for one day. Just one day. Then try doing it every day. I’ll tell you, it is frantic, crazy, and just plain hard.

This is the life of every true honors student. We are involved, we are dedicated, and we are crunched for time. To survive this frantic schedule, however, I have developed several effective battle tactics that have proven very useful over the course of this year. With them, I have been able to retain my “ honors student” status, or whatever level of existence I have achieved based on my class schedule, class rank, and GPA. Since I find that earning straight A’s is necessary in order to maintain a stellar GPA, I put a considerable amount of time and effort into my studies. But pair hours and hours of studying with a constant flow of after-school activities, and there’s little time to do anything else, including sleep.

Lack of sleep is probably the most prevalent issue in an overachieving society, but everyone finds a way to cope. Many viable substitutes for sleep exist, as well as many preventative measures against falling asleep at inopportune moments. First, I find it impossible to stay awake during the day without my daily cup of coffee. I’m not picky, though: the coffee I drink is

nothing special, just whatever my parents are drinking, whether it's vanilla, hazelnut, creamed, sugared, or just plain black. As long as I have it, I'm okay.

No, I do not have a caffeine addiction. Yet. I just know that I can barely survive on six hours of sleep alone. The second and probably more difficult challenge to exhaustion comes in staying awake during the night, after staying awake all day. While most average people turn in around ten or eleven o' clock, an honors student is usually just warming up when the clock strikes bedtime. Our physical nature tells us to rest; our eyes twitch and slide shut, our heart rate slow-slow-slows down, but our mental nature—that of the overachieving species—says, “ Keep going!” To remedy this persistent “ sleepy-eye syndrome”, I recommend a full arsenal of caffeinated food items, as well as physical exercise.

Try having a Nutella sandwich next time you're writing a paper at 11 o'clock at night. If that doesn't work, you might eat a large chocolate bar or a bowl of Moose Tracks ice cream. If all else fails, guzzle a Coke, and you'll be chugging right along the homework track until every last thing is done. If you are working on a reading assignment, please don't sit in a comfy chair: you will fall asleep. I, on many occasions, have left a cozy armchair in the family office for the warm and inviting kitchen floor in order to keep myself uncomfortable enough to stay awake and keep reading.

For long stints of literature, I would recommend physical exercise in between chapters, such as a set of pushups or a couple flights of stairs. If all else fails, stand. Now, it may seem that after staying up so you late must have

accomplished something. However, most likely, you have not finished the assignment, and on the fanciful occasion that you have, remember: there is always something to be working ahead on. During the day, your challenge will be to find time between classes and passing periods, or over breakfast, if you have to, to finish what you didn't in your sleepy sleepless night. I find the few non-honors classes in my day are quite suitable as honors study halls; therefore, I usually find myself attending to these lonely half-finished assignments then.

Much to the distress of my normal-level physics class teacher, I can count on my hands the number of times I've paid full attention during his class period. Likewise, I can do a full chapter of assigned reading during choir and I have even finished Spanish homework during orchestra. Clearly, I have had a lot of practice. In the end though, I suppose there is a lot I can take away from my experiences as an honors student. After all, I have learned how to make the perfect Nutella sandwich, how to conceal a book practically anywhere, and how to appreciate homework as my lunch date.

But even above these lofty achievements, I have learned to get the job done. I have learned to keep working until I finish. I have learned to balance the extracurricular and the curricular, and to give all of those innumerable interests of mine the highest level effort and dedication that I possibly can.