

What makes an honors student?

Business



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Have you ever been sitting in class when the teacher asks a question that baffles every student there? Well, all but one of the students, really. That one student promptly raises his or her hand and answers the question in a way that the teacher finds remarkably clever but no one else understands. That student is an honors student.

An honors student is possibly one of the hardest student groups to define. When coming up with a definition it is important that we not look too closely at the student's grades. That is a far too simplistic and not necessarily revealing look at a student. The easiest way to define an honors student is to look at all the things he or she is not. An honors student is not someone who settles for mediocrity, fails to seek help when needed, or is content to remain uninvolved. To begin with, I think it is safe to say that we all know someone who is...well... mediocre.

Now, do not misunderstand me I do not mean that the person is average. If someone who has average ability achieves an average amount of success, then that is perfectly acceptable. But most people know that student who could be an honors student if he or she wanted to, but instead settles for mediocrity. That kid who sounds brilliant in conversation, got a 33 on the ACT, and has a 2.9 GPA and not a single activity outside of getting out of bed and going to school.

This person has settled to be mediocre. It does not matter if this person has a higher IQ than Einstein or can recite a plethora of trivial knowledge. He or she will never be an honors student as long as he or she refuses to live up to his or her potential. This is part of what makes an honors student so hard to

define. A person who is simply in an honors class is not necessarily an honors student. By the same token a person in remedial courses might very well be an honors student.

The student in the honors class very well might put in no effort and not care about learning the material. However the person in the remedial course might very well struggle and strive on a daily basis to rise above the remedial level. The key to being an honors student is that the student does not settle. When a non-honors student turns in an assignment he or she is often satisfied by the knowledge that, with little to no effort, he or she has pretty much guaranteed themselves a “ C” on the assignment. However the honors student has turned it in, often times sleep deprived, with the confidence that enough effort has been put in to garner an “ A”.

It does not matter what class the assignment is for, the honors student has gone above and beyond the superficial amount of effort that non-honors students put into their assignments. Another area where honors students differentiate themselves from non-honors students is in seeking help. When a non-honors student is baffled by a concept he or she does not seek help. However an honors student will do everything possible to learn the topic. Whether it is tutoring, independent investigation, or whatever other method the honors student can come up with, there is no doubt that the honors student will try to find out what the concept means. When a non-honors student realizes two weeks before a test that he or she really does not understand electro statics in physics, he or she simply puts it off and assumes the knowledge will become clear on the test day.

However an honors student in the same scenario begins seeking help in the two weeks before the test. Now this is a point, where you might think that I am a snob. You probably are thinking to yourself, “ But, Matt, all your saying is that if someone gets good grades then he or she is an honors student.” But that is wrong! The grade is completely irrelevant. As a matter of fact, the non-honors student might very well achieve the same grade on the test. However the student who sought help is an honors student because he or she had to work to achieve that grade.

Everyone hopes that cumulatively through all the assignments the honors student will do better than the non-honors student. However, that is not necessary for the difference between the students to still be very much real and important. A third way to easily figure out if someone is or is not an honors student is to look at their involvement. A non-honors student is someone who has no extra-curricular activities and still manages to be a “ C” student. However an honors student will usually juggle two-four extra-curricular activities. Now these students might still end up being a “ C” student, but they have attained at least the same grade, if not higher, while doing far more than the non-honors students.

A non-honors student when asked to list a hobby will often say “ playing video games” or “ hanging out with my friends.” However an honors student when asked the same question replies, “ When I’m not at track practice, in a play, at work, or doing homework, I like to play video games and hangout with my friends.” An honors student enjoys taking advantage of the opportunities to be found in high school. However, a non-honors student is more often than not stunned to learn that there are opportunities to be

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found in high school. Or once in a while you might find a non-honors student who is involved in a few activities.

However that student often puts so little effort into what he or she is involved with that if you ask the other people in that activity they will tell you that they would prefer if the non-honors student just not be involved. The term “ honors student” encompasses such a broad swath of people that it is almost impossible to decide on a clear definition of what an honors student is. However once the typical person thinks about it for five minutes, he or she can usually come up with a long list of things that make someone not an honors student. So, perhaps it is not actually that important that we know what an honors student is. Perhaps we can derive more from simply knowing all the things that an honors student is not.