

Honors classes: the double-edged sword

Business



Congratulations, you've made it through eight seemingly-unimportant years of elementary school and middle school. The days of recess and class Christmas parties are over and now you're ready to move on to the big leagues: high school. Now you can look forward to making new friends, joining fun clubs and activities, and making sports teams. Unfortunately, these next four years are the most important for college resumes, and so begins the four-year, cut-throat race against your peers to the top of your high school class. Excited? I think not. The question for students entering high school then becomes: "Colleges want the creme of the crop, but how can I get there? How am I ever going to stand out from my peers?" The answer, my friends, is honors classes.

For those of you who don't know what these classes are, they're essentially classes for "accelerated" students wishing to challenge themselves and have a weighted GPA on their transcripts. Now, you're probably thinking, "Hey! I got straight A's in grade school and middle school. These so-called honors classes should be a cinch!" Think again. As a student who has been in your shoes, I want to tell you that high school is very different from previous years of education, and these classes will rip you to shreds if you're not cut out for them. And yes, it takes a special kind of student to be in honors classes. Like I stated before, the days of grade school and middle school are over.

Unfortunately, for the students beginning their first honors classes, this also means the end of completion grades and easy A's. This is why honors students must have raw intelligence if they are to succeed in the classes. As a student who has been through a fair share of honors classes, I know from <https://assignbuster.com/honors-classes-the-double-edged-sword/>

experience how the grading process works with these courses. Exam performance constitutes the majority, if not all, of the overall grade you receive in the class. Homework grades and extra credit are almost unheard of, so if you're not capable of understanding the vast amounts of material covered in each honors class, save yourself the trouble and take the regular courses instead. I can imagine that some people might disagree with my previous claim.

“Isn't hard work just as important as smarts? How can you say that it only takes intelligence to succeed in honors classes?” I'm certainly not trying to discredit the notion that hard work yields benefits. I'm simply trying to say that in the battle against honors classes, you can't have hard work as your only ally. Believe me when I say that honors classes will have any student working hard right off the bat. The curriculum is fast-paced and the work piles up. For the students about to enroll in classes out there, let me ask you this: How are you possibly going to keep up with all of the material if you can't understand it from the beginning? Hard work isn't a necessary characteristic of an honors student because it's forced.

Intelligence and the ability to keep up with the fast-paced curriculum are the things that define a successful honors student. Sorry, but if these two weapons aren't in your arsenal, you're going to lose the honors class war. Even though intelligence and quick learning are key characteristics, they make up only the foundation of an honors student; there are still key characteristics to be considered. Honors students not only need to possess the raw intellect to keep up with the curriculum; they have to be able to

adapt to the demands of the course. Essentially, honors students are able to work under pressure, which is something that I, myself, have yet to perfect.

Do keep in mind, though, that working hard and working under pressure are far from the same. Working hard in an academic sense would constitute completing all of your work, studying for exams, participating in class, and all of the other motions that we've been going through since kindergarten.

Honors students do, of course, possess these characteristics, but so do the rest of the students in high school, so it doesn't differentiate them from the rest of the crowd. On the other hand, working under pressure in this sense can be defined as "putting up with all the crud advanced classes throw your way," and honors students are able to do just that. Some of you may be wondering: "What is all of this struggling that he's talking about?" As any kid in one or more advanced classes can tell you, the material is difficult to understand and the giant mass of work continues to grow.

Honors students are the kids who spend fortunes on Starbucks so they can stay up until 2 a. m. doing homework. They wake up early in the morning to get help before school and stay after school to do the same thing. They sacrifice their weekends to study and finish essays.

If you're thinking that honors students don't have that much of a life outside of the school-based environment, you're absolutely right. As you can imagine, though, working under stressful conditions for 9 months out of the year can lead to some malfunctions. After all, anyone who's seen *The Shining* knows that "all work and no play makes Johnny a dull boy," and as an honors student myself, I could tell you countless horror stories of sleep

deprivation-induced forgetfulness. I think it's also safe to say that I speak for the rest of the honors-student population when I say this. Yes, honors students do forget about assignments and procrastinate like the rest of the student body, but hey, anybody running on 4 hours of sleep a night would do the same too! Consequences from these lapses of memory can range anywhere from having to sacrifice your weekend to read and annotate 700 pages of *Wuthering Heights* or starting an essay at 12 a. m.

the night before it's due. Yet, despite seemingly-impossible odds, honors students are somehow able to “get ‘er done” and remain victorious at the end of the day. It's because they can work under these conditions and overcome unfavorable odds that qualifies them as good honors students. It's safe to say that honors classes can either be your best friend or your worst enemy. They can raise your GPA or drain the life right out of you.

When all is said and done, an honors student is a student who possesses raw intelligence and the ability to learn at a fast pace. Honors students can also put up with all of the bologna that their classes throw at them and somehow make it through each day, alive and victorious, ready to face the next challenge that lies ahead. As you go into high school and register for classes, consider the qualities that make a good honors student. Ask yourself if you fit the mold, for it takes a certain kind of student to deal with the double-edged sword.