



It was so great to see you!

Come Again!



A great time was had by all!

Nick, we are so proud of you and were very happy to hear that you had a positive first-day experience at your new school. We are still a little worried about you so we wanted to share a little advice from Eric Zorn, a reporter at the Chicago Tribune, which he included in an article he wrote when his twin sons were about to start high school.

1. Leave nothing for the morning.

Before you go to bed, gather your books and assignments, pack your lunch, charge your cellphone and lay out your clothes. Drama and anxiety are no way to start the school day and are likely to cause you to violate pointer No. 2 ...

2. Never be late.

Tardiness is a sign of disrespect to teachers and fellow students. When circumstances beyond your control make you late, always approach the teacher after class, apologize and offer a brief, honest explanation.

3. “To be interesting, be interested.”

That quote from Dale Carnegie’s 1936 best-seller “How to Win Friends and Influence People” crisply sums up the best way to get to know new classmates and acquire the reputation as a friendly person. Asking a question — not too nosy or personal, please — is a great way to start a conversation. And listening carefully to the answer allows you to follow up and keep the conversation going.

4. Remember names.

I don’t advise inserting them gratuitously into conversations, but “Hey, Mike” as you pass in the hall is much friendlier than just “Hey.”

5. Never gloss over unfamiliar words.

When some smarty-pants drops a word such as “gratuitously” on you, look it up, (www.dictionary.com is a terrific resource) even if you can kind of guess the meaning in context. Having a broad and ready vocabulary will not only help you on the standardized tests and college admissions exams, but it will also help you think and allow you to express yourself better.

6. Don't sweat the "relevance" question.

A lot of what you'll have to learn won't seem important or directly related to your goals. And, honestly, a lot of it won't be. Within a few years you'll forget most of the facts you'll stick into term papers and memorize as you cram for finals. What you won't forget, though, is how to attack an assignment — how to research, analyze, criticize and refine; how to tell good ideas from bad ones. Also, some of those facts will turn out to be extremely relevant, the building blocks that will form the foundation of your career.

7. Dive into extracurriculars.

School sports and clubs are an excellent way to meet new friends, deepen or discover your interests and, down the line, add gloss to your college applications.

8. Get organized.

If you manage your time well, school will not make you nuts. Create and keep to a study schedule, a to-do list and an assignment calendar. Staying caught up in your classwork is the most important and for some the hardest aspect of school, as it requires limiting the time you spend socializing and entertaining yourself by staring at screens.

9. Be kind.

You don't build yourself up by knocking others down. When you're older, you'll regret all the times you were careless with the feelings of others, and you'll remember fondly those who accepted and included you when they didn't have to. You can't be admired if you're either hated or feared.

10. Shrug off your insecurities.

Even the most popular kids have them, as I learned in frank conversations at reunions. No one thinks about or notices your particular imperfections nearly as much as you imagine.

11. Avoid drugs and alcohol.

Yes, this sounds like a pro forma wag of my adult finger. But substance abuse has derailed the lives of many smart, promising teens, all of whom thought they could handle a little dabbling. A clue: If you start "partying" on weekdays, you're not handling it.



And, most important:

12. Solicit advice. (“Solicit” means “ask for”)

Believe it or not, the teachers and parents and other relatives (and even the librarians at school and at the public library!) who, if you're lucky, will ride you hard these next four years, **really want you to succeed**. And despite their advanced age and cultural cluelessness, they can and want to help you through just about any academic or personal problem you'll encounter. Ask them questions. Trust their answers. They're on your side.



I Am Nick!

Nicholis Miguel Gardner

First Lieutenant

U.S. Marines (someday?)

If it turns out that you want to enlist in the military after graduating from high school, go for it! (But you *might* want to consider going to college first.)

Patty's Rules for a Good Life

- 1 Never compare yourself to other people.
- 2 Learn how to read for fun and entertainment.
- 3 Remember, only YOU can make you happy.
- 4 Never wish you were someone else.

You are a handsome young man! Add a few smarts, a bit more confidence, good posture, some swagger and a “don’t mess with me” attitude, and you could be a fashion model!



The Smithsonian Air & Space Museum was cool ... so much to see and do, so little time!



Next time you come visit, we'll see “The Blackbird” (SR-71) – although I guess we won’t watch it fly!





We are happy that you love Hank as much as we do!



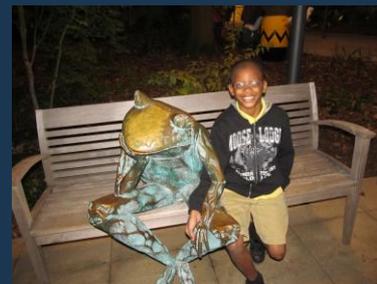
Our weird-looking apartment building.



Your cluttered little bedroom.



Your Grandpa (oops ... Big Brother) in New York City, March 2015.



Atlanta Botanical Garden, August 2010.



Next time, planes overhead?!



What a ride these old guys were on!



At airport, summer 2010.



Remember I told you about the photo that I took of our shadows in NYC?

Thanks!



Paul Loves His Corvette!

Right now it's in our kitchen next to my display of "street junk," but he may take it to the office.