

Essay

Please write and title a 500-700-word essay on the following theme:

What advice would you give an incoming 9th grader at your high school to help them maximize their high school experience?

The whole meaning of the term freshman is a fresh start. This should be utilized when any student enters the ninth grade; however, a fresh start does not mean that every step taken will be successful. Freshman year is a great time to try out new things. While every year matters, this year has lower stakes than the other grades. Even if something seems somewhat interesting, try it out and see. The way a freshman can maximize their high school experience is by stepping out of their comfort zone, knowing their own worth, and making smart decisions.

As humans, we live in a comfort zone, yet we learn the most about ourselves in uncomfortable situations. I was the girl who never dared voice her opinion or stray from what was considered acceptable and right. However, when I entered high school, I discovered the unique world of individual diversity. I found my "voice" about three weeks into freshman year when I was handed the FFA Creed by my agriculture instructor. I memorized and presented my first public speech to a class full of sleeping 14-year-olds. As boring as that may sound, I found a passion for speaking in front of people and have continued to compete with prepared public speaking. This "voice" I developed has followed me into other parts of my life. I find it easier to communicate my ideas and concerns with others due to the exposure public speaking has provided me with. This type of development can occur in any student as long as they are willing to step out of their box.

What judgmental people say about you should not determine your worth. This has been a challenge for me. I am six-foot tall, with red hair, and freckles. And yes, I have heard all the jokes, twice. Additionally, I was tagged with the nicknames of The Tractor Girl and Farmer Kaylee because it is my

hobby and passion to raise and show livestock. Also, I have a love for learning that even as a child made me seem odd to my peers dubbing me as a try-hard, teacher's pet, goodie-two-shoes, and the list continues. These aspects of my life have shaped my self-esteem. I am now confident that my height, red hair, and a deep desire to learn are things that look good on me. Any student who enters high school needs to develop a sense of confidence in their own abilities because not everyone will always be kind. There are different types of bullies in high school. Observe people and let their actions speak for them.

We make choices every day of our lives; whether the decision is big or small, these choices determine our future. Making good decisions are vital to living a successful and productive life. This is why it is crucial for teenagers, like myself, to find a firm set of values to base their decision making off of. I know the pressures of high school. There are parties, alcohol, drugs, etc. that high school students are commonly part of. So, if a student will start making smart choices the second they start high school, their chances of staying on the right track for academic and personal success will be greater. Sometimes it is easier to try to fit in with the crowd versus being true to oneself. Whether a student is a star athlete, an amazing singer, or a brilliant chemist—be authentic.

High school won't be easy, but when freshman step out of their box, have self-confidence, and become their authentic selves, they will start to maximize their high school experience at a young age. High school will fly by, and everything will be a fond memory. This is why every freshman should be conscious about making memories and having fun. If a student starts out freshman year as the person who cheers for their home team, asks someone to a dance, and has fun with their friends, they will forever be grateful that they took the steps necessary to maximize their high school experience.