

The big day is here. No more classes. No more teachers. No more homework. You and your buds put on your caps and gowns, hear all the speeches, then walk up to get your diploma. It's graduation day!

Afterwards, you go to parties and hang out with all your classmates one last time.

Later that night as things wind down, you and your closest buds: Mia, Jason, Brandi, Shannon, Luis, and Michael get together.

Mia does not stop talking about studying fashion design. Jason talks about being nervous going to Navy boot camp. Brandi and Shannon debate about whose private college is better. Luis chimes in that his state university is best. Michael still plans on attending a local technical school.

And you? What are you going to do?

Graduation Day



SENIOR YEAR

MEANS

PARTY YEAR

Senior year is the time to slack off, right?

WRONG!

Blowing off your senior year is a big mistake. Although you will see a lot of seniors slack off their last year in high school, what you do not see is how they're doing a few years later. Some research got the 411 on some of these senior slackers and the news wasn't so sweet. Remember high school is not meant to be the end of your education.

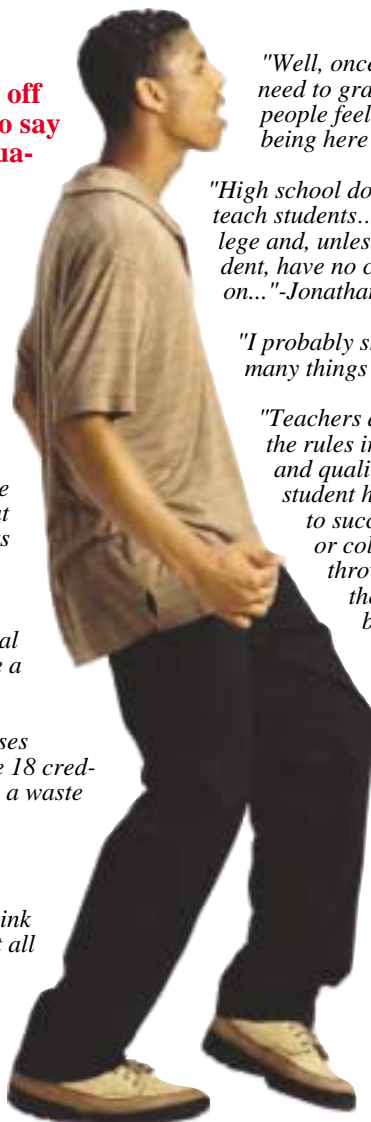
Check out what some recent grads who blew off their senior year had to say a few years after graduation.

"I didn't even consider it [what to do with my life] until right at the end of school... When it came down to it and I started looking at jobs, I'm like, I'm in a dead-end hole here."-Donald

"It should be your most important year. It should be your most focused year. But instead I think a lot of it gets looked at as, oh, my last year. I have my credits, or whatever... Then when you are in what they call—the real world, things hit people like a ton of bricks."-Jim

"I only had to take two classes because we only had to take 18 credits... So my senior year was a waste of time."-Elvia

"You stay at McDonald's, Wendy's, or the part-time, meaningless jobs. I don't think high school prepares you at all to enter the work force."-Camille



"Well, once you get what you need to graduate, then a lot of people feel what's the point in being here?"-Christina

"High school does not adequately teach students... Then you go to college and, unless you are an A student, have no clue what is going on..."-Jonathan

"I probably should have done so many things different."-Kyle

"Teachers and parents often bend the rules in terms of deadlines and quality of work so that a student has every opportunity to succeed. In the workplace or college, students are thrown into a world where they alone are responsible for how they work and if they succeed."-Lauren

Get Over Your Senioritis

1. Take challenging courses your senior year. That means math, science, English, computer and so on. Even if you're not on the "Recommended" plan. Use your electives on meaningful classes.

2. Don't drop out. Dropping out is like deciding that you'll never go anywhere in life. And too many kids, especially minorities, do just that. DEFY expectations and stay in school.

3. Don't have a job if you don't have to. Part-time jobs steal time and energy from your study time. If you don't spend a lot of money in the mall while you're in school, you'll help ensure that you don't have to work in the mall the rest of your life.

4. Get to know a teacher or counselor. Don't just be another face in the crowd. Take the initiative to reach out. You'll be surprised at how more connected to school you feel and how much more enjoyable you find it.

5. Look for ways to like learning. If you think school can be boring, imagine waiting tables for the next sixty years. If your textbook is boring, find a book or movie or website on the topic that makes it more fun. Do whatever it takes—it's up to you.

A recent report by the National Commission on the High School Senior Year made a crystal clear point: for most kids, the minimum high school degree doesn't prepare them for college or for work.

The fact is: the more you learn, the more you earn. Even if you don't want to be rich, you still need to earn enough

to support yourself. People with only a high school diploma or less often can't do even that.

Today, there aren't many jobs for unskilled people. The low skilled jobs that exist are usually low paying, boring and don't lead to anything better.

Taking advantage of your senior year will help your chances of getting

accepted to college and succeeding when you get there. Students who go to college often find themselves equally unprepared. Almost a third of college freshmen need to take basic (i.e., pre-college level) courses in math, reading and writing before they can take credits toward their college degree.