

# THE TATTOO

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## The horrible first day that wasn't

By **NICOLE TEIXEIRA**  
The Tattoo

The thought of finally entering high school (the place where boys had real facial hair and people drove cars to school) seemed like the biggest feat in my short life when I first entered ninth grade.

I spent the whole month of August on the phone with friends discussing where we were going to meet on the first day in September, what school supplies we were going to buy and how we were going to style our hair.

Since I was going to a school with a uniform, I was relieved that clothes weren't an added issue to my list of worries.

I woke up that fateful first day of school at 4 a.m. I was so excited and nervous that I could no longer stay in bed and besides, the extra three hours gave me time to perfect my practiced walk, and how I was going to say "hi" to new acquaintances.

Even these extra hours of preparation got me ready for the new world I was about to enter.

Looking back at the summer before

high school, I realize I spent more time worrying about the social aspect of high school than the academic aspect.

Of course, I asked numerous older friends if high school consisted of a lot of "hard work."

Their answer was always, "Nah, it's a breeze," but having actually entered the classroom on my first day, I realized it was more of a desert storm in comparison to the "puff of air" that had been previously described.

I was bombarded with sheets to sign, a list of required school supplies, yearly academic layouts and the same lecture in every class that consisted of priceless phrases such as, "Your life starts now," and "Get ready to smell the coffee and start working!"

I sat in that first classroom that day regretting my lack of summer academic preparation and wishing I could return to the safe walls of elementary school.

Apart from feeling the sting of academic pressure, my heart began to race the second I entered the hallways after my first class.

In a high school consisting of almost 2,000 students, it seemed to me

at the time that I was most definitely the smallest and un-coolest person in the school.

I bumped into people, held my schedule in my hand like a dork and searched frantically to find my classroom which always seemed to be hidden at the time.

After successfully making it through my first two classes alive, I made my way to the cafeteria.

This was indeed the center of my fears, the dreaded cafeteria, where hundreds of students I didn't know ate lunch.

I feared that I wouldn't find anyone I recognized and I worried that bringing a lunch from home instead of buying one at the caf was dorky.

After summoning the courage within me, I opened the two doors and was incredibly delighted to see that all the other ninth graders looked just as petrified as I did.

I took a look around and found a bunch of my friends sitting at table. I was expecting to finally have a good moment in my school day, but the second my body touched the seat I heard a bell.

To my astonishment, the bell signaled the end of lunch.

Apparently I had taken so much time going through the hallways, finding my locker again, and then finding the cafeteria, that my 40-minute lunch was over.

Hastily, I put my lunch back into my bag and made my way to the third class of the day.

The final bell struck at 2:20 p.m., and I wasn't relieved yet.

I hadn't gotten home safely thus far, and this meant that I hadn't yet lived to tell the tale of my first day in high school.

I still had to find my locker once more, pack my books and make it onto my school bus in time. I rushed to pack all my stuff and practically ran out of the building to find the right bus.

With the fear instilled in my mind that I would miss my bus and be forced to survive amongst all the older kids hanging out in the parking lot, I was the first person on the bus. Although I was truly relieved that the earlier fear had not become reality, I certainly didn't want to be the first

nerd on the bus.

I chose a seat that wasn't too far up or too far back in the bus. After the bus had loaded with about 20 other students, my breath had returned to its normal routine and was no longer staggered with panic.

This feeling was short-lived, however, when an 11<sup>th</sup> grade boy asked me if I was a freshman. My mind raced with panic and I answered with a meager, soft-spoken, "Yes."

This encapsulated my first high school conversation with an older high school boy.

I rushed off the bus at my stop and walked two blocks home. I entered the house looking disheveled and stressed beyond belief.

My older sister looked at me with a mocking smile and asked how my first day went. I recounted the horror story and collapsed onto the nearby couch.

Her response, however, was the most shocking memory from that day.

"You didn't fall down stairs? Accidentally drop all your books or get your shirt caught in your locker?" she asked. "Sounds to me like you had the ideal first day. Keep it up!"

## Brotherly words of wisdom

By **STACEY GARRETT**  
The Tattoo

Going into high school is a huge deal. The last eight years of education were pretty much all about preparing me for what's to come in the next four years of my life.

Not only am I going to have to deal with seven classes at a time, but I'm also going to have clubs and stuff to join.

All of my past teachers and my mom have stressed that organization is the key to success. It doesn't seem like it would be that hard just to keep my papers neat and tidy and to remember where I put my homework, but for some reason, it's not.

Every year since fifth grade I've gone into school with some big plan about how I'm going to stay on the right track. And every time it's ended up falling apart by the end of the year.

My plan this year is to follow in my older brother's footsteps.

I mean, he managed to survive high school with good grades and he even made it into a top of the line college.

So, what was his secret to success?

As far as I can tell, it's color-coding.

At the beginning of the year, he would get one one-inch binder for each subject, each a different color, get five matching dividers for each binder, and then get book covers of different colors for his books.

Heck, he even used color-coordinating pencils in the different subjects.

That way, when he went to class he could take anything purple to Spanish, blue to English, and yellow to social studies.

Hopefully this system will work for me and I'll be able to stay organized this year.

Another part of going back to school that is kind of scary is clothes shopping.

I recently went through all of my clothes and threw out all of the things that I outgrew over the year, leaving me with less than half of my wardrobe remaining.

My mom, being a typical mother, will only let me buy clothes that are on sale with a limit of no more than four pieces at a time.

Hopefully I'll be able to get enough clothes purchased by the time school starts to not have to wear the same shirts over and over.

I've heard all kinds of horror stories about going to high school, and believe me, my friends' older siblings aren't helping much.

They talk about how much we're going to be picked on, how often we're going to get lost, and how much homework we're going to have.

None of them have anything good to say about high school, which really doesn't help the experience very much.

When I asked my brother his top tips for becoming a freshman, this is what he said:

1. Organize your binders the way your teachers tell you at the beginning of the year and stick to it.

2. Get a map of the school and figure out where your classes are *before* the first day of school.

3. Do your homework - 30 percent of your grade is *a lot*.

4. On the first day of school *never* sit in the back. Sit as close to front and center as you can get. It gives the teacher a good impression.

5. Save all your work. If you do it on the computer, make a folder that you can put everything into.

6. Join clubs. It's a great way to meet people who have similar interests.

7. Know your place. You're a freshman and nobody older than you will care about you.

Hopefully his tips will help me get through high school... well, the first week at least.

Until then, all I can do is hope for the best.



Oscar Ramirez / The Tattoo

Sofia Ramirez, 17, takes a break with *El Diario de Hoy*, the number one selling newspaper in El Salvador.

## Get fit for school

By **EDREES KAKAR**  
The Tattoo

High school is the most critical and dangerous part of student life. It's a time when you should embrace sports, study hard and forget about dating.

It is really difficult to keep your life under control during these years because in the teenage years of high school, students are filled with emotions, passions, inspirations and enthusiasm.

We have to be careful in terms of handling all of our actions within society.

High school years are the time when we start to make our own future. They are the years when we must get our minds focused on our studies.

To be successful during your high school years, you must have a very friendly relationship with your teachers and classmates.

You should encourage your friends to study together in a group, which could turn out to be a great benefit for you.

I also recommend collecting information from different geographical places when you're on vacation and then have study tours with your group.

Participating in sports in high school is an intelligent idea because sports always teach us. It also helps by calming our minds and keeping us healthy, fresh and fit for school.

If you're taking part in sports, chances are you won't fall ill and have to be out sick from school, either.

The important thing that we should avoid during high school is dating because it's not the time in life for it. It's only wasting your time.

There's no need to leave your lessons and go searching for dates because one day after high school you will find the right person for you.

## Get a teacher on your side

By **OSCAR RAMIREZ**  
The Tattoo

How important is it to have a good teacher-student relationship?

Well, very.

I find it amusing how some people, generally young and death-defying freshmen, dare to challenge the power of a high school authority.

It is not only naive but overall very stupid to rebel against the school system.

You are only jeopardizing your school credits, college recommendations, and (rarely, but possible) a good life tutor.

Besides that, there's all the time in your golden teen years that you will lose due to make-up tests, summer school and after school detentions.

First of all, as a freshman you need to understand that you are no longer in safe territory.

The minute you step into a high school building, you become an easy target for derision.

You should refrain from making impulsive decisions such as seeking the spotlight by doing something dumb but accepted by teen society as cool - like acting nonchalant at a teacher's request or disrupting the class while something is being said.

Even though you might gain some sort of "recognition" from your peers, that feeling will fade, but the impression left on a teacher hardly ever does.

Having that said, doesn't it sound wise to ally with people that have been in high school for a long time and that, if you're lucky, are automatically on the newbie's side?

Because the truth is, teach-

ers are actually there for you.

Contrary to common belief, they are not hired to make your life hell, but rather to help you make your learning experience more bearable.

I believe also that respect is the key to success, and you will find out that nothing says "I respect you" to a teacher as much as paying attention during their class.

It is hard - I know. But believe me that as cliché as it may sound, chatting to your friend can wait for lunch break. And anyway, 45 to 50 minutes of academic concentration is not as tedious as having to live with a "disrupter" label for the rest of the year.

I say, choose wisely.

What should worry people is that this trend of being a disruption probably starts when you are a freshman and brand new to high school. And after getting used to it, you carry it along until you graduate.

Later, you'll realize the damage you've done to yourself when you need your teachers most.

It will boil down to reluctance from teachers when you need a recommendation for activities within the school or later in life, when you're ready to enter college.

I am not telling you to become one of those "teacher's pets" because that would probably bring you more hassle from your peers.

But a good relationship with a teacher can never hurt.

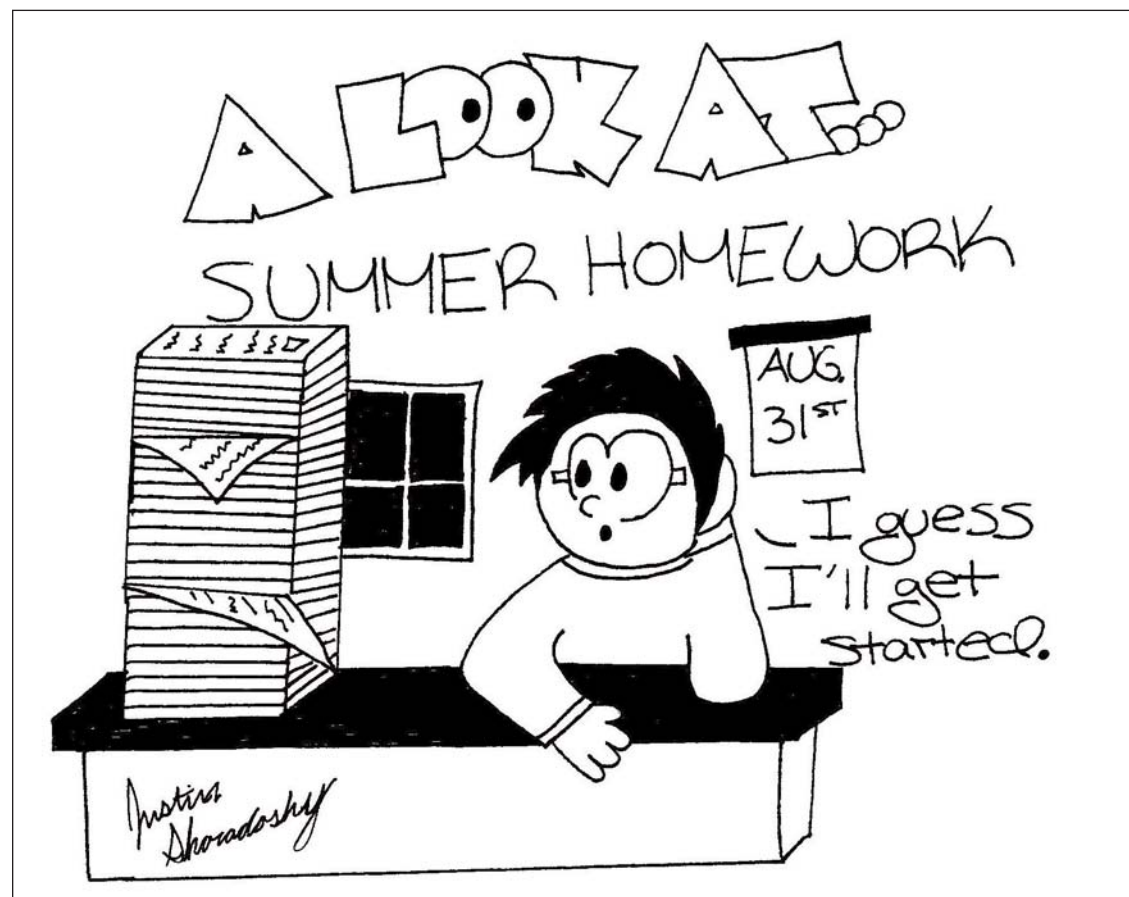
In fact, it can do a world of good for you and make your high school life easier.

You soon will discover that if you have teachers by your side, you'll step out of the "living hell" triumphant.

It's here...  
the 2005

## Insider's Guide to High School

Get solid advice from teens who've survived freshman year. Watch for more pages in the coming weeks and check out our website archives for five years of insider advice that stands the test of time.



Justin Skaradosky / The Tattoo

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