

IB seniors at North Mecklenburg High School were asked to make some notes about advice and good things to know, or that they wish they had known. Here's a representative selection of what they had to say. (These are all actual quotations, with editing only for grammar and clarity and sometimes civility.)

Key to acronyms and abbreviations:

IB = International Baccalaureate program; **AP** = Advanced Placement program. Both are available at North Meck. IB at North Meck refers to the Diploma Program, that is 11th and 12th grades only.

diploma = the full IB program, leads to the graded diploma; **certificate** = incomplete participation, does not result in the IB diploma

IBMYP = IB Middle Years Program, for middle school, 9th and 10th grades.

EE = Extended Essay, the major research paper due fall of senior year (usually completed over the summer), written under the guidance of a mentor from any department. "The extended essay is an independent, self-directed piece of research, culminating in a 4,000-word paper. As a required component, it provides: practical preparation for the kinds of undergraduate research required at tertiary level; an opportunity for students to engage in an in-depth study of a topic of interest within a chosen subject. Emphasis is placed on the research process: formulating an appropriate research question; engaging in a personal exploration of the topic; communicating ideas; developing an argument. Participation in this process develops the capacity to: analyse; synthesize; and evaluate knowledge. Students are supported throughout the process with advice and guidance from a supervisor (usually a teacher at the school)." (ibo.org)

TOK = Theory of Knowledge course. "The theory of knowledge (TOK) requirement is central to the educational philosophy of the Diploma Programme. It offers students and their teachers the opportunity to: reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing and on areas of knowledge; consider the role and nature of knowledge in their own culture, in the cultures of others and in the wider world. In addition, it prompts students to: be aware of themselves as thinkers, encouraging them to become more acquainted with the complexity of knowledge; recognize the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected but uncertain world. As a thoughtful and purposeful inquiry into different ways of knowing, and into different kinds of knowledge, TOK is composed almost entirely of questions. The most central of these is 'How do we know?'" (ibo.org)

IA = Internal Assessment: "In nearly all subjects at least some of the assessment is carried out internally by teachers, who mark individual pieces of work produced as part of a course of study. Examples include oral exercises in language subjects, projects, student portfolios, class presentations, practical laboratory work, mathematical investigations and artistic performances." (ibo.org)

EA = External Assessment: Primarily EA consists of end-of-course examinations, IB Exams. These are administered off campus in May each year. Also: "Some assessment tasks are conducted and overseen by teachers without the restrictions of examination conditions, but are then marked externally by examiners. Examples include world literature assignments for language A1 [English at North Meck], written tasks for language A2 [Spanish, French, German, or Latin at North Meck], essays for theory of knowledge and extended essays. Because of the greater degree of objectivity and reliability provided by the standard examination environment, externally marked examinations form the greatest share of the assessment for each subject." (ibo.org)

CAS = Community, Action, Service: volunteer hours required as part of the IB curriculum and targeted toward IB mission and values.

HL and **SL** = Higher Level and Standard Level courses (with corresponding HL or SL exams). Normally: three of the six subjects are studied at higher level (courses representing 240 teaching hours); the remaining three subjects are studied at standard level (courses representing 150

teaching hours). The curriculum is 6 subjects (normally 3 HL, 3 SL; but no more than 4 HL) plus TOK plus the Extended Essay plus CAS.

Personal Project = tenth-grade project required by the IBMYP. The personal project is a significant piece of work involving planning, research, and a high-degree of personal reflection; students work with an advisor.

World Lit = World Literature papers. There are two, one written at the end of junior year, and a second during the middle of senior year, both in the IB English class and under the direction of the IB English teacher for that class. Both papers are sent off together late in the winter for external assessment. WL papers make up 20% of the A1 language grade. Topics and texts are highly proscribed.

Senior Exit = a local CMS, non-IB requirement of all seniors that consists of “a research-based essay, a product, and an oral presentation” (cms.k12.nc.us). Senior Exit essays for IB students at North are completed spring of junior year; product and presentation are done senior year.

IB students say . . .

- IB overall
 - Take classes that you want, but be sure to have the drive and motivation to finish them well.
 - It is possible to do IB, play a sport, and have a social life—you just need to plan wisely.
 - Be genuinely interested in learning. If you’re in the program for any other reason (e.g. your parents want you in, or you don’t want to go to Hopewell) you should leave.
 - Remember: You *can* be IB diploma and still have a social life.
 - Make good friends. A lot of IB stuff requires group work and they will help you all turn your stuff in on time.
 - Don’t believe people who say that IB is a lot harder than AP. AP is hard but mostly boring.
 - Communicate with your teachers.
 - It is not necessary to know *everything*, but to know *something* and to be able to present it well.
 - If you’re going to do certificate, do AP!!
 - Stay diploma. Certificate is a cop out.
 - If you feel like you are overloaded and can’t possibly get it all done, think of all the people before you who managed it. Shut up and move on.
 - Take your Internal Assessments seriously. They matter.
 - If you find you consistently do not have time for friends or a social life, you may need to make some time, or seriously consider dropping IB, cause there are more important things in life, for real.
 - 9th and 10th graders: If you are not committed to the work load or the challenge of IBMYP, get out *before* junior year.
 - If you think the teachers are giving you too much work all at once it’s probably because you procrastinated and blame no one but yourself.
 - If you want to make *As* you just have to work harder. Think about it.
 - At the beginning of junior year go over the IB point requirements (24) for Diploma. Learn about:
 - how you get them (SL vs. HL, exams, TOK, etc.);
 - when things happen;
 - internal vs. external assessments;
 - internal assessments for each class

- for instance, knowledge that World Lit papers are an EA;
 - the knowledge that Math Portfolio things are IAs
- IAs count toward overall score along with exams (EAs).
- Senior Exit vs. Extended Essay
 - get specific SE and EE guidelines for your subject area from your mentor;
 - select a mentor you like who is approachable, understanding of the process, and has time for you;
 - Be careful turning SEs into EEs. The SE is *not* an EE. This can be done in some subjects like English, but is very difficult.
- Pick a personal project topic that you will enjoy and benefit from long after graduation from IB. I picked cooking and cuisine as my topic and I fell in love with something I used to have no ability for. It has proven to be so helpful.
- IB does a pretty good job of preparing its students for the IB exams but often I get the feeling that the teachers sort of wait to the last possible moment to review us. This is not true for all teachers, but it is for a few. I cannot stress enough how important it is to talk about Senior Exit and Extended Essay all through the high school years. I was not aware that I would have to write an Extended Essay until the middle of my junior year and I believe that students should be constantly reminded about it. If teachers approached Extended Essay and Senior Exit like they did the sophomore Personal Projects, things would run a lot smoother. Perhaps a time-management workshop could be held for underclassmen who can't seem to complete their homework and projects on time. Many of my friends suffered from severe anxiety due to the amount of homework they were assigned. I think students who know how to manage their time well suffer from less stress. Overall, the IB program has been fairly efficient and I wouldn't change much about the curriculum except perhaps to include the World Lit stuff (reading all the books) all in one year, or to talk about and discuss the World Lit 2 paper constantly at the beginning of senior year so that it doesn't come as a surprise later on.
- Suggestions: The first suggestion I have for whomever may read this is Pay attention!! Dates and deadlines come at you real fast and you cannot afford to loose time. (You won't be getting much sleep as it is.). I myself am an expert procrastinator but I will admit I would have had a much easier time if I had broken stuff down instead of attempting to write an entire research paper the day before it was due. This may sound rather cliché, but it is the truth: IB was not designed for slackers and compromises will just have to be made. My second and final point is summed up in one word: "honor." IB has its fair share of cheaters, but that won't cut it. You will be seeing more personalized assignments and the teachers like Ms. Womack and Mr. Strong can see plagiarism and cheating a mile away. So just don't be stupid and you'll be ok.
- Advice to incoming freshmen:
 - DON'T take IB is it isn't what *you* want to do. It's a demanding program and if you don't want to do it, you won't do well.
 - Get a calendar. You'll have a lot of things due on different days and if you don't keep track you might forget something.
 - Ask for help if you need it. Don't just let a situation get worse—just ask somebody for help.
 - Don't get too wrapped up in schoolwork. Remember to relax and have fun some, too.
- Advice for rising seniors:
 - Get CAS done as soon as possible. There is *no* time at the end of the year for it.
 - TOK – Mr. Strong is awesome in that class.

- Do your Extended Essay in the summer so you don't have to worry about that and schoolwork at the same time.
 - Do the Extended Essay *well* — a good score on it could make up for a not-so-good score on an exam later on.
 - *Listen* to the teachers' suggestions. Believe it or not, they really do have good advice for the exams.
 - Advice for IB students . . .
 - Pick an Extended Essay topic that is related to a class you are actually in!
 - Do all CAS before senior year. [perhaps not allowed?]
 - Always max out your summer hours.
 - When Ms. Womack says get a notebook with those dividers, do it. (When she says it, not months later.)
 - Do not act like you are 4 when at exams unless you want them to run over hours at a time.
 - Check your email regularly.
 - When peer editing is ever optional in TOK, do it.
 - Do not write TOK essays the night before, it doesn't work. Trust me.
 - Be open to criticisms that may help you. So many IB kids have ignorant tendencies when it comes to getting help. Don't waste time thinking you are always right.
- CAS matters
 - CAS hours: *DO THEM*, in fact, do a few extra just in case some go missing.
 - Join Habitat for Humanity.
 - Do your CAS hours early.
 - Get Community Service done as quickly as possible. Do the max junior year. Try and finish in possible by Christmas break of senior year.
 - If something counts as both service and action, be smart and count it as service. Use sports and clubs for the 30 action hours. This can cut down on the total service hours.
 - Get you CAS done *early* and have more hours than you need.
 - Habitat gets major CAS hours.
 - Do CAS hours not because you have to but because you're actually making a difference.
 - Be sure you understand how **CRITICAL** it is to get the majority of your CAS hours done in your junior year. This made my senior year much more enjoyable.
 - CAS hours are not as stressful as you might think.
 - Juniors and Seniors: Write down all your activities at the beginning of the year. Many of them can count as Action or Creativity hours.
 - Get most of your CAS hours done junior year. You won't have the time senior year.
 - Keep track of your service hours.
- study matters
 - Form study groups where you get work done.
 - Buy (and use) a flash drive. Mine has saved my life more than once!
 - Do your stuff ahead of time. I procrastinated more than a few times and ended up pulling all-nighters for D papers.
 - Don't cheat. You will get caught.
 - Save your notebooks from classes.
 - Study groups and peer editing are your friends. Use them. Take advantage of each other's skills.
 - Don't procrastinate (even though you still will).

- Pick External Assessment topics that have a lot of research available. I recommend going to a college library with a broad topic and *then* picking a specific topic after determining the quality of research available for that topic.
- Leave room for an IB art class. It allowed me to relax between other IB classes, even though I was still working hard in art.
- A *B* in IB maybe better than an *A* in regular classes, but *Ds* and *Fs* are still *Ds* and *Fs*.
- Do school work when you get home from school not at night when you'll want to go to bed.
- Do not procrastinate . . . do your work early!! This will help reduce stress, especially during your senior year where your mind is not only on school work, but most importantly on college applications and scholarships.
- Take some classes you enjoy.
- Make sure your senior exit and extended essay do not have the same topic.
- Do not try to convince yourself that you are a math person if you know it will be a struggle.
- Read the books. Sparknotes really are arbitrary in their usefulness to you.
- Don't stress out. Set aside time to have fun and you'll be fine.
- Use all the textbooks in your science classes.
- Learn how to do research papers in 9th grade.
- Do biology rather than environmental science. And take HL because you have two years to complete the curriculum.
- Don't make GPA your top priority. The point of learning in school isn't to compete with or beat out others, but to grow academically and socially as a person.
- Do study for your Spanish exam. Try to work at a place that is bilingual so you can talk in Spanish.
- Don't worry about IB exams too much; your teachers will have you prepared in all your classes.
- TOK will be easier if you learn to speak up.
- Senioritis does not exist until after exams.
- Due dates a vital. Do not fall behind.
- Take Math Methods 2 or Math Studies 2 IB exam junior year. It will reduce exam stress senior year. AP Statistics is a good option for senior year.
- Stay organized.
- The IB biology exam seems magically to come from the floppy green IB book.
- Take TOK and 20th-Century History senior year. They will ultimately prepare you best for college.
- Work on your Extended Essay over the summer! you never know when something crazy will happen and your whole thing needs to be rewritten.
- Do not blow off Extended Essay.
- Pay attention in TOK: develop yourself into an independent, critical thinker and questioner. Develop a love and passion for learning and knowledge.
- It is okay to ask for help. I know that as IB students we may think we are too good for others' help, but you will regret it if you do not ask for help.
- Get started on the Extended Essay in the summer.
- Be clear about deadlines (hard and soft) for internal assessments and extended essays.
- Start working on your Extended Essay immediately, cuz really, trying to cram it all together at the end sucks.
- Get a good advisor for your EE paper, one who will rip it apart and tell you exactly how awful it is because then you will know how to fix that. Advisors who don't care make you do less work but you will have a crap paper.

- Don't kill yourself over every little grade.
- Do not throw away anything you do in history.
- Use textbooks. (At least open them.) Study for tests before the period just before the test.
- For any science and math the best way to learn how to do things is to practice problems. You may have good notes, but you can't solve without them you are useless.
- Take Womack's class. Don't be intimidated by the big workload. It is manageable and you learn to deal with it sooner or later. better now, than in college! The amount of writing that you do in this class is a lot, but is to your sole advantage. Remember that! Also, Womack prepares you very well for the exam, so long as you are willing to put effort into it.
- All-nighters suck. Do your work as soon as you come home so you can get some sleep.
- Set due dates for yourself that are a week early (and stick to them!).
- Really DO your Extended Essay, as in set goals for yourself for partial completion dates and keep up with your advisor.
- Don't slack off after first semester senior year; most IAs and a bunch of work is due after Christmas break.
- TOK essays suck when written the night before. Revise; get smart kids to read them.
- Don't cram the night before; study way ahead and review.
- Don't work for a grade; that is, don't make grades your primary priority. Take classes that you're interested in, not those that are weighted high. Then, good grades will be a by-product of your love for learning and for the material in your classes.
- Read. Do not use Sparknotes.
- Take a few non-IB classes each year so you don't stress yourself out so much. You might not get a perfect 6.0 GPA but it's worth it.
- DO NOT, I repeat, DO NOT PROCRASTINATE, especially with TOK papers and Womack assignments. It will be the death of you.
- life and such
 - Feeling overwhelmed? Take a break; life is not about work, work, work. It's okay to relax a bit—but not too much.
 - If you don't wait until the last minute to do everything senior year, it really isn't that stressful.
 - Identify your passions and dreams and run at them as fast as you can!
 - Be the best that you can be.
 - Do not procrastinate with work!
 - Do have a life outside of school!
 - Don't do bad stuff, especially if you don't know what you're doing.
 - Don't undervalue sleep. It's important to get to be early so that you don't feel like poop in the morning.
 - Overstressing is a given; take some playtime.
 - Good enough is good enough.
 - Watch the movie *Thank you for Smoking*; it's a Bible for IB.
 - Plan a good senior prank.
 - Be goal oriented with your work.
 - Learn *great* time management.
 - Don't freak out if you make a B.
 - DO NOT PROCRASTINATE.
 - IB is about love and justice.

- Become involved in one club that you are passionate about instead of being in multiple clubs in name only.
- Pick an EE topic that you like, same for your history IA.
- Play a sport. Work out. Do something physical. Better yet, find a group of people to do it with. Not only does this release endorphins and attract girls, it gets you out of the house and stops your brain from frying.
- Find a passion—for a sports team or building model cars or ping pong or whatever else floats your boat. Heck your passion could be boating. This also helps attract girls.
- Don't join every single club, join 2 or 3 max and do something noticeable and worthwhile in a few rather than being in the yearbook picture of 17.
- For 9th graders: Don't try to be cool. Be your own cool. Lots of kids want to act cool to fit in at North, but just be yourself (as cliché as that sounds). Ask advice from older kids that you look up to. Also, don't be afraid to ask questions; always ask questions.
- For 10th graders: Start looking at colleges a little, but not too much. Don't be too stressed about it. Do yoga or play a game of Diplomacy to get rid of any stress. Stress management will be key in the years to come. Also by this time try to involve yourself in clubs but only if you are *really* interested.
- For 11th graders: Start on your big projects (Extended Essay, World Lit. essays, etc.) early. Also by this time, at least by the end of the year, really start looking into plans for after you graduate.
- For 12th graders:
 - Sign up for TOK.
 - Sign up for 20th-Century History.
 - You have to take English.
 - You will be most stressed your first semester of senior year. But please *hold on*. It will be tough but you will learn a lot, experience much, and once you make it through you will be stronger. By May you will work less than you have in years (after the IB exams).
 - Support each other. Help you peers and don't be afraid to ask them for help.
- Movies to watch: *On the Waterfront*, *The Godfather*, *Rebel without a Cause*, *The Graduate*, *Malcolm X*.
- Music to listen to: Bruce Springsteen, Led Zeppelin, Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Rage Against the Machine, Matchbox 20, Pink Floyd, Carlos Santana.
- To read: *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, *Catcher in the Rye*, *Siddhartha*. Rick Reilly's column in *SI* is the best one page of writing you can find on a weekly basis.
- Pick up boxing. Even if you are not hitting a person, hit a bag. This really only works for guys, but it sure does make you tougher and can give you some good life experience. Don't be a wimp. IB doesn't need any more stigma.
- Don't worry. If life isn't good, it means you are building character. Just ask your dad.
- Life is not fair—but it all depends on what you make of it, truly is does. If something does not go your way, then so be it; there is obviously something much better out there for you.
- Relax!
- Do college stuff in the summer (like writing application essays).
- Relieve stress through sports, exercise, or other activities.
- (Try to) sleep (at night preferably).

- IB can be difficult at times. Sometimes monotonous, but it's worthwhile. When I chose to do IB I knew a lot about the program. I think this is one area that should be more stressed: Knowledge about assignments and expectations early on is really helpful. I'm not saying that you should get a detailed syllabus of a class three years in advance, but basic requirements in your classes, such as orals, research papers, what stuff needs to be known for tests, really gets you ahead. Some of my friends didn't know much about what was expected, and due to this were, I guess, shocked by the workload. Prior knowledge helped me to be ready for what was ahead and to manage my time well. That's the second thing: time management. It's key to this program. Although you'll learn and adapt as you go along, procrastinators beware. Time management and organization are two aspects that can be learned and aren't too bad to have acquired. Start now. 11th and 12th grade have chunks of the year that are a lot of work. With organization and time management skills you won't get stressed out. The last thing is to make sure you choose what your education experience will be. If your parents are forcing you to do IB, ask them why. Explore AP. Just as many kids get into great schools for college without being in IB. Make sure you pick classes that you like, too. There are some that you have to take, yes, but there is also flexibility, so choose wisely. Don't forget to have fun, too. School isn't everything. Pick something you enjoy, a passion, and continue doing it throughout the program. It will relieve stress and be an outlet when IB gets too hard.
- Do what you want, not what others want you to do. It is your life.
- Try something new. It's a big world out there, but you will never know it unless you step out of your comfort zone and explore it.
- Don't try to be someone you're not.
- Be true to yourself.
- $IB \neq \text{Life}$. $\text{Life} = \text{☺}$. $\text{Life} + \text{IB} = \text{☺} \text{🌀} \text{♥}$. $\text{Life} - \text{☺} = \text{☹}$. $\text{☹} = \text{IB}$ (*only*)
- Work hard, but your health, both mental and physical, should be your first priority.
- Join photo club (or some other club I guess).
- Most of your teachers have reasons for everything they do, so be patient; you'll appreciate it later. On the other hand, always be skeptical about everything you are taught. If you think something is sketchy then research it on your own to learn the truth.
- Take control of your education. If your classes can't provide something for you, take the initiative and seek it for yourself.
- Don't ever get stuck into thinking in generalizations about anything; always try to see each new event, person, or idea as what it is, a unique new experience.
- Always keep that thirst for learning. . . . but remember life is a little more important than schoolwork.
- college matters
 - Think of things as destined to be. If things don't work out, there must be something better—you just don't know it yet.
 - Start college apps summer before senior year. Be organized. Use your teachers as resources for checking things. Be smart about your recommendations: have teachers write for you who can be personal rather than generic. Be prompt and early about recommendations to keep you from entering the last-minute storm of recs.
 - Get to know Ms. Eglody. She writes one of your most important recommendations.
 - The harder you work senior year the easier college will be.
 - Investigate colleges over the summer while you are free.
 - Apply to colleges as early as possible and get as much scholarship money as you can.

- If you're an athletic girl and like Clemson, go check out Clemson Rowing. They just might give you a scholarship, if you want to be a rower.
- Keep your college list to fewer than ten.
- For underclassmen: Don't worry about stacking your college application with classes that people say you should take; take a variety of electives that you are interested in.
- Don't listen to all the college advice people have to say. Play your sport, work your job, do your own thing. Be different in your own way. You'll get into colleges.
- Check out college application essays ASAP just so you know if you are going to have to write several that are specific to a single school.
- Formulate your personal statement early. A lot of schools want these.
- Start applying for scholarships when you start applying to college. They get harder to get and a lot fewer are available after February and March.
- Juniors, start college applications in the summer.
- Seniors: apply to college BEFORE Christmas. you won't have the time or energy once February rolls around.
- If you have no college list, try collegeboard.com's College Match Maker.
- College essays – write rough drafts the summer before senior year; hope that the prompts from your colleges are already available. If not, start thinking about your unique experiences and what makes you the person you are today. Start thinking about what about yourself can be expressed through your telling of specific experiences throughout your own life.
- people
 - Do nice things for Ms. Royal.
 - Do not be afraid of your teachers. They're people too. They're understanding and flexible. Talk to them.
 - Cool people: Marlon Brando, James Dean, Dustin Hoffman, Robert DeNiro, Natalie Portman, Johnny Depp, FDR, LBJ, JFK.
 - If you take Spanish give Ms. Haselhorst Snickers; she will love you forever.
 - Do not be afraid of Ms. Royal. She's a nice lady and her office is always full of chocolate. Do not, however, make Ms. Royal mad.
 - John Lennon: "Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans."
 - Befriend Ms. Royal and Ms. Brown.
 - Mr. Kowalski hasn't eaten anyone that we know of.
 - Even though Ms. Royal told me not to write something like this: Take Ms. Womack's class. It will kick your butt, but it's the best class you'll ever take when it comes to being prepared for the IB exam and for college. Plus, Ms. Womack is amazing.
 - Have fun! Maintain a healthy social life. A lot of times you learn a lot more from other people than you do from a book.
 - Some teachers are simply crazy. The sooner you accept this and move on, the better you will do and the more you will learn.
 - Ignore Ms. Royal's jokes. Actually, become her friend because she will knit you a scarf.
 - Get on Ms. Royal's good side. Haha!