

50 Things I Wish I had been taught in high school

As I prepare to leave high school and head into college (aka the ~real world~), I realize I'm lacking knowledge in a lot of important areas. I can recite the quadratic formula from memory, name you 52 prepositions in the English language and write a 10-page research paper, no problem. (Note: some of those are more valuable skills than others.) But I find I'm alarmingly undereducated when it comes to real life skills, and I know I'm not alone in that.

I go to a wonderful high school and they really do try to raise us to be intelligent, well-rounded, capable citizens of world. Still, the current curriculum which plagues many high schools just doesn't prioritize the teaching of these life skills — or leave much room for it.

Some argue that it's not a school's job to deal with these issues, and while that's a valid point, we high schoolers spend 40 hours a week at these institutions — we ought to be learning about these things somewhere. School seems like the most logical place, but the bottom line is that I really wish I'd been taught the following things sometime in my adolescence.

1. How to show your parents you love them, even as a moody teenager.
2. How to balance school work, extracurriculars, social life, family time, time to yourself and sleep without burning yourself out.
3. How to communicate to your parents that they're doing something wrong.
4. How to reach out to a friend you're worried about.
5. What lessons we need to learn for ourselves — and when it's okay to ask for help.
6. The value of self-love and self-care.
7. How to avoid unnecessary drama.
8. What kind of person makes a good friend.
9. What taxes are.
10. How to pay taxes (including when and how to file a tax return).
11. How to respectfully challenge authority.
12. How to search for good jobs.
13. How to take out a loan — and one that won't leave you in massive debt.
14. When to engage in small talk and when to demand more interesting conversation.
15. The importance and benefit of unplugging from media sometimes.
16. How to navigate the healthcare system.
17. How to cope with problems related to mental health because they are just as valid and worthy of attention as physical health problems.
18. Why to vote.
19. How to vote.
20. How to network professionally.
21. Time management skills. (There's not nearly enough time devoted to this — you're just thrown in without much help and are expected to figure it out for yourself. It's really tough.)

22. How and when to authentically and sufficiently express gratitude.
23. Which meals to cook when you're on a student or recent graduate budget (all we ever hear about is Ramen... not exactly the greatest plan health-wise).
24. Self-defense skills.
25. Handy skills -0 how to repair things for yourself.
26. How to present yourself in a job interview.
27. How to avoid giving unnecessary apologies.
28. How to figure out when you really do owe someone an apology.
29. How to give a good apology.
30. The difference between equity and equality.
31. How to get a passport.
32. How to evaluate a contract to see if you're receiving fair treatment.
33. How to determine whether or not a charity organization is credible and worthy of donations.
34. How to ask for a raise.
35. How to check yourself to verify that you actually deserve a raise.
36. Where to go when you don't feel safe at home.
37. How to write a résumé.
38. How to balance a checkbook.
39. How to budget. (See jumpstart.org to verify that most of us are pretty tremendously delusional about how much things cost and how we allocate money.)
40. What our rights are when interacting with the police.
41. How to change a tire.
42. There is a difference between gas and diesel and if you put the wrong one in, it may ruin your car (not a fun lesson to learn from experience).
43. How to deal with grief.
44. How to navigate social media outlets (as in, what not to post, how to manage cyber-bullying and how to anticipate potential negative impact on your self-esteem).
45. How to deal with the guilt of privilege, which we all have in one way or another.
46. How to be aware of our respective privilege and advantages.
47. How to confront someone who's just doing the wrong thing (they tell us we should, but we hear a lot less about how to actually go about the process).
48. How to be less dependent on technology.
49. How to intervene when a family member needs help.
50. How to adequately cope with stress in a healthy way. (This one really gets to me, particularly given the amount of stress school provokes in young people.)