



# GETTING READY FOR COLLEGE:

A four-year checklist for  
high school teens

To help you and your student stay on track, we've compiled a year-by-year checklist of college preparation for high school students.

## COLLEGE PREPARATION CHECKLIST

### FRESHMEN

**Freshmen preparing for college should plan to:**

- Take challenging classes in core academic courses.
- Work with their school counselors to create a yearly schedule to meet graduation and college admissions requirements.
- Talk to an advisor or school counselor about taking Advanced Placement® and honors courses.
- Identify interests and potential career fields through online resources, like this interest profiler, and by attending career fairs and other events.
- Get involved with community-based and leadership-oriented activities that best reflect their interests.
- Browse the College Scorecard to see what types of schools interest them.
- As they find and review them, bookmark resources for college planning.
- Start a running list of accomplishments, awards, and recognitions to use when completing college applications and writing résumés.





## SOPHOMORES

**Sophomores preparing for college should plan to:**

- Consider taking a practice test to prepare for the PSAT.
- Attend college and career information events.
- Start learning about funding for college, including scholarships, grants, loans, work-study jobs, etc.
- Consider the types of careers that fit their interests and what college majors they require.
- Reach out to school counselors and/or mentors to discuss occupational interests and college requirements.

## JUNIORS

**In the fall semester, juniors should:**

- Take the PSAT if they have not already. Students should generally take the test no later than fall semester of the eleventh grade to qualify for National Merit scholarships and programs.
- Attend in-person or online college fairs.
- Explore careers and their earning potentials in the Occupational Outlook Handbook.

**In the spring semester, juniors should:**

- Register for college admission exams—SAT, the SAT Subject Tests, and the ACT— and take practice tests.
- College admissions professionals recommend students have at least one standardized score before the end of their junior year.
- Research how to pay for college and what federal student aid may be available to you.
- Identify scholarship opportunities to pursue; note deadlines on calendar.
- Contact colleges to request information and applications.



## SENIORS

### During the summer, rising seniors should:

- Plan college visits.
- Narrow down the colleges under consideration.
- Make decisions required by colleges' early-decision or early-action programs.
- Complete the Federal Student Aid Estimator.

### In the fall semester, seniors will need to:

- Register for and take (or retake) the SAT and/or ACT, if not already done.
- Complete and submit college applications prior to deadlines.
- Request transcripts and letters of recommendation at least 30 days before they are due.
- Work with parents to complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA® form).
- Before each year of college, you'll need to apply for federal grants, work-study, and loans with the FAFSA.
- Complete and submit college applications prior to deadlines.
- Complete and submit scholarship applications prior to deadlines.
- Meet with a counselor to verify that they'll meet graduation requirements on schedule.

### During the winter months, seniors should:

- Review and make any necessary changes/corrections to their Student Aid Report.
- Finish submitting scholarship applications.

### In the spring semester, seniors will need to:

- Visit colleges on their "short list."
- Consider college acceptances; compare financial aid packages offered. Call college financial aid representatives with questions.
- Decide on the college to attend (typically by May 1) and contact its offices. Make informed decisions about student loans.



## Ready to Learn Even More About Preparing for College?

Discover five ways virtual school can set you up for success long after graduation.

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