

College Prep 101

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Getting Started

- Although the college application process begins in earnest during your senior year, there are things you can be doing along the way to ensure you're ready to put your best foot forward.

9th & 10th Grade

○ MEET WITH YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Determine what classes you should take to put yourself in a good position for college.

○ TAKE A CAREER APTITUDE TEST TO EXPLORE CAREER INTERESTS

Free career aptitude test

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○ GET INVOLVED

Extracurricular activities are an important and fun part of high school. Look for sports, groups and clubs that match your interests, then join!

○ FOCUS ON GETTING GOOD GRADES

It's not too early to work hard and develop good study habits. Your freshman and sophomore grades count toward college admission and scholarships.

○ SOPHMORES: TAKE A PRACTICE PSAT

While sophomore PSAT scores aren't used for college admission, taking the test early can be a good trial run.

○ LEARN ABOUT COLLEGES

It's never too early to start researching schools. Get familiar with different college options, including ROTC, by searching online.

9th & 10th Grade

○ TRACK YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Keep track of academic and athletic awards, extracurricular accomplishments and community service.

○ PUT THOUGHT INTO YOUR SUMMER WORK

While financial pressure often dictates your summer employment, start thinking about how your summer work may look on a college application.

○ KEEP LEARNING ALL SUMMER

Summer community college or adult-education classes are a great way to explore interests.

○ CHAT WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS HOME FOR THE SUMMER

Get current students' take on college, especially if they attend a school you're considering.

○ START THINKING ABOUT FINANCIAL AID

Have a discussion with your parents or guardian about what they think they can afford.

11th Grade

○ MEET WITH YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Determine what classes you should take to put yourself in a good position for college. Go over graduation requirements

○ TAKE THE PSAT IN OCTOBER

Not only is it a good way to practice for the SAT, it also qualifies you for the National Merit Scholarship Program.

○ START REVIEWING COLLEGES

Look online. Go to college fairs. Speak to college representatives that visit your school. Start to actively learn more about the schools you are interested in.

○ ORGANIZE YOUR SPRING TESTING SCHEDULE

Find out registration deadlines and the exact dates and times of important tests like the ACT, SAT and SAT Subject Tests.

○ TAKE PART IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Colleges like well-rounded students who participate in more than just school, especially if they display consistent involvement or take a leadership role

○ START VISITING LOCAL COLLEGES

Plan trips around colleges you are interested in, and visit friends in college and tour nearby campuses.

11th Grade

○ TAKE AN SAT OR ACT PRACTICE TEST

Use an SAT or ACT prep book to experience what it's like to take a test from beginning to end.

○ EXPLORE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Scholarships are a great way to save money, but they can be hard to find. Talk to your school counselor and search online.

○ SET UP YOUR SENIOR CLASS SCHEDULE

Challenge yourself. Meet with your counselor and review possible honors and AP classes.

○ START WORKING ON COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Request applications from the colleges to which you want to apply.

○ REACH OUT TO RECOMMENDATION WRITERS

You are going to need recommendation letters when you apply to schools in the fall, contact those writers (teachers, coaches, mentors) you want to ask now.

○ PUT THOUGHT INTO YOUR SUMMER WORK

While financial pressure often dictates your summer employment, start thinking about how your summer work may look on a college application.

○ TAKE SUMMER CLASSES

Whether you're taking summer classes through a local community organization or at an accredited college, you can enhance your transcript and your chances of getting into a competitive college.

12th Grade

○ CONTINUE MAKING CAMPUS VISITS

If you have not yet visited the top colleges you're considering, make arrangements. Fall is an especially good time to visit a college since classes are in session.

○ MEET WITH YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Make sure the class schedule you have set up for your senior year continues to put you in a good position for college.

○ MARK YOUR CALENDAR TO KEEP TRACK OF DEADLINES

Your senior year is going to be a busy one. Stay organized by marking your calendar in advance with important dates like financial-aid seminars, early- and regular-decision application deadlines, test dates and scholarship deadlines.

○ MAKE A FINAL LIST OF YOUR TOP COLLEGE CHOICES

Decide on five to 10 prospective college choices.

○ CONSIDER APPLYING EARLY

Submitting Early Decision or Early Action to a college allows you to find out if you have been accepted to a school earlier than regular admission notifications.

○ TAKE THE ACT/SAT

Register and take the ACT, SAT or SAT Subject Tests, depending on what's required by the schools to which you wish to apply.

12th Grade

○ COMPLETE YOUR COLLEGE ESSAYS

The college essay is an important part of the application process. Have a teacher or parent proofread your essay for mistakes and provide feedback.

○ GATHER YOUR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

If you haven't requested them already, now's the time to start approaching teachers and counselors for recommendation letters or to follow up with those from whom you've made requests.

○ FINISH AND SUBMIT ALL OF YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Mail in or submit your application online.

○ LOOK INTO FINANCIAL AID

You should talk with your parents or guardian about what they can afford and start learning more about financial-aid opportunities for which you qualify.

○ FOLLOW UP ON SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Finish and submit any scholarship submissions you're working on.

○ CONTACT COLLEGES TO MAKE SURE THEY RECEIVED YOUR APPLICATION

Make sure that each college received the necessary materials: test scores, transcripts, application form and recommendations.

12th Grade

○ IF APPLICABLE: FILE YOUR FINANCIAL AID DOCUMENTS

If you would like to receive any federal financial aid, fill out your FAFSA and submit it as soon as possible after October 1.

○ EVALUATE EARLY DECISION OR EARLY ACTION RESPONSES

If you have been accepted Early Decision, you will need to withdraw your applications from all other schools.

○ REVIEW YOUR STUDENT AID REPORT

If you submitted a FAFSA, about one month after you filed (three to five days if you filed online), you will receive your Student Aid Report or SAR.

○ CHECK FOR ADMISSION DECISIONS IN THE MAIL AND ONLINE

Admission letters should start arriving between March and April, followed by financial-aid award letters.

○ PROVIDE DOCUMENTS FOR FINANCIAL-AID VERIFICATION

The federal government selects 30 percent of all FAFSA financial-aid applications for verification, which means a college will require you to submit additional documents.

○ COMPARE THE DIFFERENT FINANCIAL-AID PACKAGES

Financial aid may be a large part of your final decision, so go over each school's package thoroughly with your parents or guardian.

12th Grade

○ MAKE A CAMPUS VISIT TO YOUR FINAL COLLEGE BEFORE ACCEPTING

If you haven't already made a visit, you'll want to fully prepare yourself to make an educated final decision by first experiencing what it's like on campus.

○ INFORM THE SCHOOLS YOU WON'T BE ATTENDING

Once you've decided on the school you want to attend, make sure to inform the other schools that accepted you that you won't be attending. This frees up a spot for another student.

○ MAKE YOUR FINAL DECISION

Choose the college that's right for you by May 1. Mail in the corresponding enrollment form, deposit check and signed financial-aid package.

○ FINISH ENROLLMENT PAPERS

Upon accepting a school's offer, you'll receive a package with information on classes, orientation, housing and more.

○ TAKE AP EXAMS

Although AP exams may come after you've decided on a school, a good score can earn you college credit for any AP classes you took during high school.

○ SEND YOUR FINAL HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT

Many colleges require a final high school transcript. If this is the case for you, contact your high school counselor to make sure your transcript gets sent.

12th Grade

○ TAKE SUMMER CLASSES

Summer classes can help prepare you for your upcoming college-level courses, or provide a jump-start on required classes

○ PREPARE FOR YOUR FIRST YEAR AT COLLEGE

Sign up for orientation. Figure out where you'll be living. Purchase items you'll need for your first year.

○ SAY THANK YOU

Thank anyone who was especially helpful during the college application process. Showing your appreciation in person or with a formal letter will ensure your supporters' testimony for years to come.

○ ENJOY YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Make sure you stop and appreciate those around you. You want to make the most of the time you have before heading off to school.

Kahoot Challenge!

References

○ <https://myfuture.com/college/planning/college-planning-timeline?gclid=CPmgggJfigOoCFZwliAkdF9oD4g&gclidsrc=ds>