

College Prep Timeline

Use the timeline below as your guide to preparing for college.

In 7th & 8th Grade:

- Discuss careers that interest you with your school counselor and parents.
- Talk to your parents or teachers to help you develop good study habits.
- Learn about the high school classes that will prepare you for college.
 - **Algebra 1**
 - **Geometry**
 - **Physical Science**
 - **Spanish 1**
- Take the most difficult classes you can handle.
- Practice setting and reaching goals.
- Take interest and skills assessments to help you think about possible career options.
- Create a tentative high school class plan.
- Enroll in a summer enrichment program, if available.
- Make the best grades you can.

In 9th & 10th Grade:

- **Take the PSAT in the fall to prepare for the SAT, and to identify areas where you need improvement.**
- Take interest and skills assessments to help you explore careers options.
- Get to know your counselor.
- Discuss saving and paying for college with your parents.
- Talk with friends, teachers, counselors and your parents about college.
- **Participate in extracurricular activities.**
- Review your high school class plan. Take the most difficult classes you can handle. Stay focused on your schoolwork.
- Sign up for classes that will earn college credit through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Dual Enrollment options.
- Explore internships and apprenticeships.
- Enroll in a summer enrichment program.
- **Begin participating in community service activities.**
- **Make the best grades you can.**
- **Practice your testing skills. Read, work on your vocabulary, and practice your writing skills.** Learn about other options to help you prepare for the SAT and ACT.

In 11th Grade:

- Talk with your school counselor about career options and the education required for those careers.
- **Attend college nights and financial aid events.**
 - **4 every fall**
- **Take the PSAT in the fall to prepare for the SAT, and to identify areas where you need improvement.**
- **Consider possible career options and investigate the type of education that is needed.**
- Request materials from schools that interest you and visit their websites.
- Arrange campus visits to those schools that interest you.
- Participate in extracurricular activities.
- Learn about admissions and financial aid forms.
- Sign up for classes that will earn college credit during your senior year through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Dual Enrollment options.
- **Register for and take the ACT and/or SAT in the fall.**
- **Register for and take the ACT and/or SAT in the spring. Remember the free SAT for all Juniors.**
- Review your high school class plan. Take the most difficult classes you can handle. Stay focused on your schoolwork. Make sure you are meeting your high school graduation requirements.
- Enroll in a summer enrichment program.
- Get a job to earn and save money for college, or explore your skills through an internship or apprenticeship.
- Research private scholarship options.
- Make the best grades you can.
- **Start making a list of your college options.** Keep a list of schools you're interested in and why, and a list of potential college majors to explore. Start looking into these options and schools so you can begin to narrow your choices.
- Make sure you're meeting any special requirements.

If you want to play Division I or II sports in college, start the certification process and check with your counselor to make sure you're taking a core curriculum that meets NCAA requirements.
- **Start a scholarship search.**

There are lots of scholarships out there; you just need to spend a little bit of time and effort to find them. Check with your guidance office for scholarships from local organizations and use online scholarship search tools to find a wider range of options. The sooner you start looking for scholarships, the easier it will be to select some to apply to during your senior year.
- Contact your recommendation writers.

Teachers and guidance counselors are often asked to write recommendations for lots of students. Consider whom you want to ask now and let them know so they'll have time to prepare before getting tons of requests in the fall. Ask teachers who know you well and who will have positive things to say. Letters of recommendation from a coach, activity leader, or adult who knows you well outside of school are also valuable.

- Talk to seniors at your school that you know. Who do you know and where is he/she going?
- SUMMER:
 - Start planning college visits. If your family travels over spring break or during the summer, and if you pass near a college campus, stop and take the tour.
 - Start working on your admissions essays.

In 12th Grade:

- Stay focused on your schoolwork and take the most difficult classes you can handle.
- Take career interest assessments and determine the education needed for careers that interest you.
- Participate in extracurricular activities.
- Volunteer in the community.
- Make the best grades you can.

September - November

- During holiday breaks from school, arrange campus visits to those schools that interest you. It's okay to go more than once. Remember, college visits are not excused absences.
- Take or retake the ACT and/or SAT in the fall.
- Meet with your school counselor to review your high school class plan.
- **Select the schools to which you will apply. Make a list of deadlines for each school.**
- Create a resume of your academic, athletic and work activities as well as other achievements. Prepare a portfolio if you're interested in the arts.
- **Ask for recommendations (if required) from teachers, coaches, counselors and others who can comment on your abilities and talents.**
- Attend a financial aid event.
- **Apply to four or more colleges that interest you.** Some may have earlier or later deadlines. (Make copies of each application.)

December - February

- Attend a financial aid event if you haven't already done so.
- **Apply for scholarships offered by the colleges to which you have applied.**
- **Apply for financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after January 1.** You and your parents will need the previous year's income tax information to complete the it.
- Review you Student Aid Report (SAR) for accuracy.
- **Bright Futures Community Service hours due!**

March - May

- Have your final high school transcript sent to the colleges to which you've applied.
- **Send in any required forms or deposits.**
- **Watch your mail for notification from colleges.**

If you applied under the regular application process, you should receive an admissions decision by March or April. Notifications of financial aid awards should arrive by the end of April.
- Check out your options if you're put on a waitlist.

Being put on a waitlist is not a rejection. Keep watching your mail; you should receive a decision by May. In the meantime, keep your options open in case you don't get in. Check out schools that have late or rolling application deadlines.
- **Compare financial aid packages.**

Make sure to consider each financial aid award carefully. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact the financial aid office of the college to get more information. Financial aid is a key factor in deciding where you will attend.
- Choose a college and notify in writing those you don't plan to attend.

Summer

- Bright Futures award information finalized and mailed to recipients
- Final transcripts sent
- Get a job to earn money for college.
- **Review orientation materials from the college you selected. Attend orientation events!**
- If living on campus, check with the college for a list of what's provided by the school and what the school expects the student to provide.
- Contact your roommate.