

Freshman year checklist

Fall–Winter

College planning

- ☐ Learn the high school courses required by colleges
- ☐ Meet with your high school counselor for advice on your college plan
- ☐ Identify your interests, likes and dislikes—to help focus on your goals

College planning

- ☐ Join a club or try out for a sports team
- ☐ Volunteer for something you find important

Spring

Academics

- ☐ Refocus your study habits and finish the year strong (<https://tinyurl.com/hs-studyskills>)
- ☐ Keep up your grades—colleges look at your grade point average (GPA)
- ☐ Set your sophomore class schedule with your counselor to include honors or Advanced Placement (AP) classes
- ☐ Create your four-year academic plan with your counselor

Career exploration

- ☐ Start searching for summer programs (e.g., academic, work, volunteer, travel)
- ☐ Spend a day at work with a family member, friend, or community member and learn about their job
- ☐ Attend career fairs or career day at your school or in your community

College exploration

- ☐ Attend local college fairs in your area or at your school
- ☐ Talk to current college students about their path to college and college life
- ☐ Try virtual campus tours (<https://campustours.com>)

Summer

Summer opportunities

- ☐ Participate in an enrichment program that expands your knowledge
- ☐ Get a job—many important skills are developed in work environments
- ☐ Volunteer with an organization you find interesting
- ☐ Apply for a service learning program (locally or abroad) and travel
- ☐ Prepare for sophomore year by doing summer reading
- ☐ Visit college campuses

Money management

- ☐ Open a bank account and save money for college
- ☐ Take a financial education course online
- ☐ Talk to your parents or guardians about a college savings plan



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Sophomore year checklist

Fall–Winter

Time management

- ☐ Learn to make the most efficient use of your time
- ☐ Use SMART goals to keep you on task (www.studyright.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/SMART-Goals-Tracker.pdf)
- ☐ Include down time in your schedule
- ☐ College placement test preparation
- ☐ Take the PSAT (Pre-SAT) to help prepare you for the SAT (www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat)
- ☐ Take the PLAN (Pre-ACT) to help prepare you for the ACT (www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation/act-academy.html)

Spring

Academics

- ☐ Keep up your grades—colleges look at your grade point average (GPA)
- ☐ Review your four-year academic plan with your counselor
- ☐ Plan rigorous academic courses for your junior year
- ☐ Create your four-year academic plan with your counselor
 - ☐ Enroll in Honors, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, which may earn college credit
 - ☐ Take college courses while in high school and earn both high school and college credit (known as dual/concurrent enrollment)

Extracurricular activities

- ☐ Join a club or try out for a sports team
- ☐ Volunteer for something you find important
- ☐ Explore summer opportunities—be mindful of application deadlines

Career exploration

- ☐ Seek summer opportunities to work or volunteer in your field of interest
- ☐ Take an interest inventory—it expands your ideas for careers you may enjoy (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/explore-careers>)
- ☐ Have conversations with counselors, teachers, family and community members about their career paths and what they studied in college

College search

- ☐ Visit campuses—think about size, location and campus programs
- ☐ Attend local college fairs in your area (www.nacacfairs.org/attend/national-college-fairs)
- ☐ Try online college fairs and virtual campus tours (<https://campustours.com>)
- ☐ Use an online search engine to find colleges (<http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>)

Summer

Summer opportunities

- ☐ Create a summer reading list from teacher recommendations
- ☐ Confirm your summer plans (e.g., work, academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, service learning, travel, camps, internship, campus tours)

Money management

- ☐ Learn about types of scholarships and grants (www.finaid.org, www.studentaid.gov)
- ☐ Take a financial education course (www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart/young.html)
- ☐ Use the tools found on the College Affordability and Transparency Center website (<https://collegecost.ed.gov>) to compare and estimate your college costs.



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Junior year checklist

Fall–Winter

College planning

- ☐ Meet with your college counselor about your coursework and college plans
- ☐ Become or stay involved in extracurricular activities
- ☐ Check college websites for admission requirements
- ☐ Create a professional email address to use when registering for college entrance exams and completing college applications
- ☐ Attend college fairs and/or college information events

College search

- ☐ Tour local campuses and visit non-local colleges during winter and spring breaks; consider campus size, location and academic programs
- ☐ Try on line college fairs and virtual campus tours (www.collegeweeklive.com, <https://campustours.com>)
- ☐ Use college search sites to explore your college options (www.cappex.com)
- ☐ Prepare your college list, and sort by reach, match and safety schools

Career planning

- ☐ Attend a local career fair and/or a career technical education fair
- ☐ Take an online career inventory to help connect your interests and skills with a career (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/explore-careers>)
- ☐ Make a list of careers that may interest you and research the education level required for each profession
- ☐ Talk with professionals in careers you are curious about and ask about their work
- ☐ Enhance skills that would be useful in a career of interest through your extracurricular activities

Spring

College entrance exams

- ☐ Register and take your first college entrance exam during spring semester so you can take it again fall of senior year, if you want
 - ☐ SAT, with essay option SAT (www.collegeboard.com); free SAT test prep help (www.khanacademy.org)
 - ☐ ACT, with essay option ACT (www.actstudent.org); free ACT test prep help (<https://academy.act.org>)
 - ☐ Subject tests, recommended by some colleges for certain majors (<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat-subject-tests>)

Academics

- ☐ Prepare for Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) exams
- ☐ Plan your senior year schedule with your counselor
- ☐ Review your college preparation coursework and GPA with a college advisor
- ☐ Create a list of teachers, coaches and other mentors who will be able to write personalized letters of recommendation

Prepare for summer

- ☐ Apply for summer jobs or internships
- ☐ Seek volunteer opportunities in your field of interest
- ☐ Register for community college courses and earn college credit while in high school, also referred to as concurrent/dual enrollment
- ☐ Review your SAT/ACT test scores
- ☐ Plan a test preparation schedule if you plan to retake the exams (www.khanacademy.org, <https://academy.act.org>)

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Summer

College application season begins

- ☐ Check websites of colleges on your list, review admissions application process and timeline
- ☐ Draft your application essays and/or personal statement; work with a college advisor for feedback
- ☐ Prepare a scholarship resume and/or a “brag sheet” that includes all your non-academic activities and honors
- ☐ Study for summer/fall college entrance exams (SAT or ACT) if you plan to retake them
- ☐ Communicate with college admission representatives for questions you may have

College finances

- ☐ Learn about the types of financial aid (<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/>)
- ☐ Use a FAFSA4caster to see how financial aid can help pay for your education (<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/estimate>)
- ☐ Search and apply for scholarships (www.fastweb.com, www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org, www.scholarships.com)
- ☐ Learn how money works; take a financial literacy course (www.fdic.gov/moneysmart)
- ☐ Use the College Scorecard to compare costs, degree programs and outcomes for the schools you are interested in (<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>)
- ☐ Open a bank account and save money

Senior year checklist

Fall

College applications

- ☐ Attend college information nights in your community
- ☐ Check college websites for applications, deadlines, financial aid and housing information
- ☐ Ask your counselor to evaluate your transcript for high school graduation and college eligibility
- ☐ Register to take or retake college entrance exams
 - ☐ SAT, with essay option SAT (www.collegeboard.com)
 - ☐ ACT, with essay option ACT (www.actstudent.org)
- ☐ Keep your test scores, resume and transcript organized to help in completing college applications
- ☐ Ask teachers and counselors for any required or optional letters of recommendation
- ☐ Finalize portfolios, audition materials or writing samples as required for each application
- ☐ Get feedback from a college advisor, teacher, or parent/guardian and complete revisions of all applications and essays

Financial aid

- ☐ Review the financial aid application process and timeline required by the colleges on your list
- ☐ Register for an FSA ID, which serves as your FAFSA e-signature; student's parents/guardians must also register for an FSA ID (fsaid.ed.gov)
- ☐ File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which opens on October¹ (www.fafsa.gov)
 - ☐ Information from the 2017 tax year will be used for entering class of 2019
- ☐ Attend financial aid workshops in your community for help completing the FAFSA
- ☐ Be aware that private schools may require additional financial information from the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE (www.collegeboard.com/profile)
- ☐ Check your state financial aid websites for more information about in-state financial aid opportunities for undocumented and DACA students
- ☐ Search and apply for scholarships (www.fastweb.com, www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org, www.scholarships.com)
- ☐ Review your Student Aid Report (SAR) once FAFSA has been processed and make any needed corrections

Winter

College application follow-up

- ☐ Check your email frequently for additional information colleges might request within their timeline
- ☐ Send your mid-year transcript to colleges that request them
- ☐ Continue scholarship searches over winter break and submit applications

Spring

Academics

- ☐ Keep up your grades—college admissions are conditional and can be rescinded if you do not continue academic excellence
- ☐ Check with the colleges where you have applied before considering dropping a senior year class; all classes on your college application are expected to be completed
- ☐ Take your Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) exams

Best college and financial fit

- ☐ Check your email for admissions decision notification
- ☐ Visit campuses that most interest you during admitted-student's day or before
- ☐ Carefully review your financial aid award letters for each campus where you have received admissions and compare each offer; ask a college advisor for help in clarifying your award letters
- ☐ Discuss your options with your parents/guardians (refer to worksheet on page 5)
- ☐ Call financial aid offices to answer questions or negotiate your award
- ☐ Notify and place a deposit at the college of your choice by Decision Day (May 1)—congratulations!

College admissions follow-up

- ☐ Sign into your college portal and review your task list and deadlines
- ☐ Check your email for correspondence and deadline reminders
- ☐ Finalize your financial aid; accept your financial aid award or work with the college's financial aid office to adjust it
- ☐ Request your final transcript be sent to your college choice from your high school registrar before the deadline
- ☐ Request AP and IB scores be submitted to your new college
- ☐ Ask about college placement tests—some colleges require them for English and math; make sure to register in time and study beforehand

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- ☐ Sign up for summer and/or fall orientation; some are mandatory and some have a cost
- ☐ Register for your classes during orientation
- ☐ Figure out housing—if living on campus, complete any roommate survey forms, sign the housing contract and submit a housing deposit to make sure you have a reserved room

Summer

More to do

- ☐ Work and save money during the summer and see if you can secure a campus job
- ☐ Make a budget (refer to worksheet on page 26) with your parents/guardians
- ☐ Download the college's health forms and see your doctor; colleges typically require evidence of immunizations and a clean bill of health
- ☐ Plan your payments; tuition payments are due at the beginning of the semester so research payment options beforehand
- ☐ Make travel arrangements if you are traveling far to college; buy travel (plane, train, bus) tickets and make hotel reservations early (if necessary)
- ☐ Send thank-you notes to everyone who helped in your college process, such as counselors, college advisors and teachers who wrote letters of recommendation
- ☐ Spend time with your family if you will be leaving home and set expectations for while you are in college and how and when you will communicate during the semester

