

**CHECKLIST**

# Student checklist: Preparing for college

Are you getting ready to apply to the college or university of your dreams? Or do you simply need to start narrowing down your decision? Either way, take these steps to assure you are ready when it is time to apply and make the big decision!

**9th grade:**

- Establish good study habits.
- Focus on good grades. Your overall GPA is required on your college application.
- Meet with your high school counselor one to two times a year to talk about career interests, goals and preparatory curriculum.
- Get involved in sports, clubs or volunteer at organizations that interest you.
- Start a list to track your awards, honors, paid and volunteer work, and extracurricular activities.

**10th grade:**

- Take the PLAN test. It is a great way to prepare for the ACT test.
- Take challenging courses.
- Research which college entrance test (ACT or SAT) is best for your situation.
- Use the college resource center at your high school to research colleges and careers.
- Gain some work experience at a part-time job to save a portion of your college costs.
- Add to your list of awards, honors, paid and volunteer work, and extracurricular activities.

### 11th grade:

- Prepare for and take the ACT and/or SAT tests. There are workshops, books and online practice tests to help you prepare. Check with the colleges you are interested in to see what tests they require.
- Take the PSAT test to see if you qualify for National Merit Scholarship Corporation's competition.
- Job-shadow someone for a day to learn more about a career that interests you.
- Attend college fairs to learn more about colleges and meet their school representatives.
- Tour colleges — do an overnight to get the “feel” of the campus. Compare school attributes (big vs. small, rural vs. urban, distance from home, etc.).
- Use the U.S. Department of Labor's scholarship search to find scholarships. Some deadlines fall as early as the summer between 11th and 12th grades.
- Contact local civic organizations and employers about scholarship opportunities.

### 12th grade:

- Take college credits — they are free.
- Study for and take the ACT or SAT test. If you've already taken the test(s), consider retaking to see if you can improve your score.
- Revisit colleges and determine the best fit. See how your accomplishments align with their requirements.
- Request letters of recommendations — allow teachers and others plenty of time for completion.
- Write college essays, get feedback from others and be sure to proof it before submitting.
- Submit admission applications. Follow up with colleges you've applied to. Make sure they've received all required documents (transcript, letters of recommendation, official test scores, etc.).
- Create an FSA ID. Submit the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after Oct. 1.
- If you've taken Advanced Placement (AP) classes, take the exams to see if you qualify for college credits.

You've done your part. Now help your parents do their part in your college selection and preparation process with our [parent checklist](#).

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