



College planning guide

A detailed checklist for middle and high school students

Middle school years

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Review my academic strengths and weaknesses.		
Start thinking about my future and career possibilities.		
Explore different occupations that match my interests.		
Talk with friends and family about careers and possible college choices.		
Visit a college campus for fun. Tour the grounds, attend an event, talk to some students—I could be one of them someday!		
Sign up for pre-algebra.		

Tips

- Use your time outside of school wisely.
- Get help when you need it.
- Do your best in class.
- Study hard, turn in all of your assignments, and try to earn good grades.
- Get to know your teachers.
- Read, read, read!
- At the end of each school year, look back at how much you changed, learned and grew to get to where you are now. Congratulate yourself on your accomplishments.

Middle school years

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Talk to my school counselor about:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Going to a college or university		
<input type="checkbox"/> College-track courses to start taking in middle school		
<input type="checkbox"/> The importance colleges and universities place on grades, and when my school grades start to matter in the admissions process		
<input type="checkbox"/> College preparatory, Advanced Placement (AP), and other honors-level courses I should be taking in grades 9 through 12		
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic enrichment programs available through my school or local colleges		
<input type="checkbox"/> Pursuing extracurricular activities that interest me		
<input type="checkbox"/> Taking the right courses		

Freshman year

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Attend my high school orientation sessions.		
Know the requirements for high school graduation.		
Learn about college entrance exams.		
Begin research on careers that interest me. Speak with my parents and school counselors about possible careers.		
Discuss classes with my parents and guidance counselor.		
Talk to my parents and guidance counselor about colleges that interest me.		
Get involved with athletics or school clubs, community, and church activities.		

Tips

- *Learn strong study skills.*
- *Take your grades seriously.*
- *Read two or three extra books each month.*
- *Learn library and Internet research skills.*

Sophomore year

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Research materials that will help with PSAT exam preparation.		
Take the PSAT (home-schooled students should contact the local school board to register for the PSAT).		
Continue to research colleges by reading their catalogs or visiting their websites.		
Talk to my parents about visiting college campuses.		
Talk to my guidance counselor about colleges that interest me.		
Attend career and college nights that are held in my area.		

Tips

- Listen for announcements from your school counselor or teachers about opportunities to earn scholarships.
- Take challenging classes.
- Think about selecting a mentor.
- Learn library and Internet research skills.

Junior year

September–November

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Attend college fairs and career nights.		

December–February

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Review my list of interests and goals to use in my college search.		
Research scholarship opportunities through libraries, guidance counselors, local civic organizations, and the Internet.		
Ask my guidance counselor for information about AP and College Level Examination Program exams (home-schooled students should contact the local school board for more information).		
Start my college search based on my most important criteria. Arrange to visit schools I am interested in, and ask for information and applications.		

Junior year

April–June

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Register for the June SAT/ACT by April.		
Take the AP exams in May.		
Identify and speak to teachers, employers, and activity leaders who can write letters of recommendation to colleges.		

Summer

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Find a summer job to earn money for college. Keep a copy of my tax records.		
Plan visits with my family to colleges that interest me.		

Senior year

September

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Register for the October SAT/ACT exam.		
Review all material in my college folder. Throw out unnecessary information so I can better focus on my top choices.		
Prepare a list of all deadlines and necessary materials for my top schools, and keep these in my folder.		

October

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Make my final college choices.		
Take the SAT/ACT exam.		
Visit the financial aid websites of the colleges of my choice to find out the deadlines for forms I need to complete.		
Apply for scholarships.		
Visit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) website (www.fafsa.ed.gov) so my family can review the federal financial aid process.		
Complete any early admissions applications that my colleges offer. (Many colleges require these to be completed by November 15.)		

Senior year

December–February

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Finish my essays and applications.		
Make sure all of my letters of recommendation are prepared.		
Gather my tax records and make sure my parents have their tax records. We need these to complete the FAFSA.		
Complete the FAFSA and return it for processing as soon after January 1, as possible.		

March–June

TO-DO LIST	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Review my Student Aid Report (SAR) online. (The date I received this depends on the date I returned the FAFSA.) This report tells me about my eligibility to receive a Pell Grant, and it also includes a calculation of my Estimated Family Contribution.		
Review and make any necessary corrections to my SAR. If corrections were made, return my corrected SAR to the federal processor.		
Review the financial aid award package(s) that I have received from the school(s) I am interested in attending. Consider how much debt my family needs to incur and how much we can afford to repay.		
Decide on a college. Follow their directions for orientation.		
Make other preparations for attending college, such as room and board, etc.		

Academic checklist

Fill in the chart with the names of courses you complete each year of high school.

		My classes					# of years required for college admissions
		Freshman year	Sophomore year	Junior year	Senior year	Total # of years	
Academic area	English						4
	Math						3
	Social studies						3
	Science						3
	Foreign language						2-3
	Electives						Varies

Notes
