



College Planning: 11th Grade

Stay on Track

This is a key year in the college planning process because you'll be taking standardized tests, narrowing down your college list, and learning more about financial aid. In addition, you'll need to stay involved in your high school courses and activities. College readiness is a process and takes time and investment.

Checklist

Below is a timeline to help provide the best options for your student.

SUMMER

- **Get the facts on what colleges cost.** Learn the difference between private vs. public colleges, small liberal arts schools vs. large state colleges, etc. You may be surprised by how affordable your college options are.
- **Explore financial aid options.** These include grants and scholarships, loans and work-study programs that can help pay for college costs.

Sources of Financial Aid:

- The federal government (the largest source)
- State governments
- Colleges and universities
- Banks and lending companies
- Private organizations

There are four main types of financial aid:

- Grants
Grants are called gift aid because they do not have to be paid back. Grants come from federal and state governments and from colleges. Most grants are need based, which means they are usually given based on your or your family's financial circumstances.
- Scholarships
Scholarships are also gift aid. Scholarships come from governments, colleges and private organizations. They may be awarded for academic or athletic ability, interest in a certain subject, or volunteer work, for example. Some scholarships are given based on membership in an ethnic or religious group. Companies may also give scholarships to children of employees.
- Loans
Borrowing money from a bank, government or lending company is called taking out a loan. A loan must be paid back with an extra charge called interest. The federal government offers low-interest loans to students with financial need. Other lenders charge more interest.
- Work-Study Programs
The Federal Work-Study Program offers paid part-time jobs to help students pay for part of their college cost.

FALL

- **Make a college list.** Make a list of colleges that meet your most important criteria; size, location, cost, academic majors, special programs. Weigh each category on their importance to you and develop a preliminary ranking.
- **Continue gathering information.** Go to college fairs, attend college nights and speak with college representatives. Use an online college finder and search top college lists. Add or remove colleges from your list according to information gathered.
- **Take the PSAT.** Taking the test qualifies you for the National Merit Scholarship program that helps earn money for college. In addition, it's a good way to practice for the SAT.
- **Make sure you're meeting any special requirements:** If you want to play Division I or II sports in college, start the registration process now. Meet with a counselor and make sure you are meeting the core curriculum requirements.
- **Start with you.** Explore careers and their earning potential based on your abilities, interests and personal qualities. Investigate student resource sites such as www.bls.gov/oco to find careers that relate to your interests and learn fun facts about the economy and jobs.

WINTER

- **Organize a testing plan.** Figure out when you'll be taking important tests like the SAT and ACT and mark registration deadlines on your calendar.
- **Prepare for standardized tests.** Find out if the colleges you are interested in require the SAT or ACT. Most juniors take them in the winter or spring of their junior year and again in the fall of senior year. Use free online test practice that's available through College Board and offers SAT practice tests, KHAN Academy practice, sample questions and practice apps.
- **Stay involved with extracurricular activities.** Colleges look for consistency and depth in non-academic activities and clubs. Taking on leadership roles and making a commitment to the same groups are more impressive than adding new activities each year.
- **Organize your college information.** Set up a filing system with individual folders for each college's correspondence materials. That will make it easier to locate the specific information you might need in making college selections.
- **Begin narrowing down your college information.** Be sure you have all the information you need about the colleges you are interested in including entrance requirements, tuition, room and board costs, course offerings, student activities, etc.

SPRING

- **Prepare a challenging senior year.** Meet with your counselor to determine what classes you'll take next year to stay on track for graduation.
- **Start a scholarship search.** There are a lot of scholarships available. You need to spend time researching them. Look at online scholarship search tools such www.studentaid.ed.gov/scholarship to find scholarships for which you might want to apply. Some deadlines fall in the summer prior to senior year or early fall so prepare now to submit applications.
- **Contact your recommendation writers.** Teachers and counselors are often asked to write recommendation letters. Consider whom you want to ask now and let them know so they will have time to prepare.
- **Apply for a summer job or internship.** Summer employment and internships in the fields you are interested in will boost your application or resume.
- **Set appointments at your top college choices.** You often need to plan ahead when visiting colleges. Call the admissions office to schedule an interview, tour and any meetings with professors or coaches if you're interested.
- **If considering ROTC:** Contact your counselor before leaving school for the summer if you are considering military academies or ROTC scholarships. Many need the application process started the summer before senior year.
- **Take the SAT:** Tests are typically offered in March, May and June.