



# College Planning Timeline

## Junior High

- Take challenging classes (math, science, English, foreign language) in that will prepare you for high school.
- Participate in clubs and activities such as foreign language club, chess club, athletics, etc. that allow you to explore your interests and expand your horizons.
- Use outside learning activities like Khan Academy and k12 to get specific academic disciplines, explore new opportunities such as astronomy and coding.
- **Avoid playing video games all summer.**
- Attend youth programs and enrichment programs at a local community college, park district, or library, and participate in academic and athletic summer camps.
- Develop and practice excellent study and time management skills to prepare for rigorous high school classes. In order for parents to best help their children develop these habits, it is recommended that they read books such as "The Everything Guide to Study Skills" and "SOAR Study Skills".
- Talk with parents, guardians, and/or an academic advisor to create a clear plan for your education and career-related goals (Do not wait until your junior or senior year of high school). Consider all possibilities before making a decision.
- Start saving for college (if you haven't already)! Please contact a member of the **National Institute of Certified College Planners (NICCP)** to view financial options best suited for your family.

## Summer Between 8th and 9th Grade

- Take up to 2 high school classes during the summer. You will need to consult with your high school district to determine the correct procedure.

## Freshman Year (9th Grade)

- Meet with your high school counselor as soon as school starts to discuss what classes you plan to take in high school to align with your goals.
- Take the most difficult classes you can handle and focus on earning the highest GPA possible. An A in a regular class is better than a C in a AP/Honors class.
- Participate in extracurricular and leadership activities to become a well-rounded student.
- Continually volunteer at one or two organizations that you have a passion for to show colleges that you can handle more than just homework and can give back to your community.
- Take interest and skill assessments to determine which careers would be the best fit.
- Begin studying for the ACT.
- Attend college fairs to become comfortable talking to admissions officers and find out about a variety of educational options.
- Begin researching colleges to find ones that fit your career plans.
- Decide what you want in a college and what you can live without. Consider the size of school, the learning environment, the requirements for majors that you are considering, etc.



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- Talk to adults in a variety of professions. Discuss the education requirements and consider “job shadowing” for a day.
- Create your resume that will serve as a foundation and update it as you engage in new activities throughout your four years of high school.
- It is very important to participate in 1-3 clubs and be a member all four years of high school. For example, you should play the same sport (interscholastic or club) for four years.
- In January, explore and obtain a summer job that will hire a 15- year-old student (McDonalds, local restaurants, grocery stores, etc.). It is important to have a job in which you are interacting with the public.

## Summer Between 9th and 10th Grade

- Meet with your high school counselor again to review your class schedule and make sure it aligns with your college and career plans.
- Continue to take challenging courses that you can manage and maintain the highest grades you can.
- Continue to participate in club and/or sports.
- During the school year, work a part-time job for 5-10 hours per week, if possible.

## Sophomore Year (10th Grade)

- Meet with your high school counselor again to review your class schedule and make sure it aligns with your college and career plans.
- Continue to take challenging courses that you can manage and maintain the highest grades you can.
- Continue to participate in club and/or sports.
- During the school year, work a part-time job for 5-10 hours per week, if possible.
- Sign up and take the practice PSAT at your local high school (if offered).
- Continue studying for the ACT and take the test in September to determine a baseline score. Take your second ACT in February, and your third in June.
- Start exploring college majors and specify your interests and goals.
- Research college costs and continue to save for college.
- Continue visiting colleges over long weekends or breaks from school.
- Play no more than 2 hours of video games per week.
- Take AP exams if you took AP classes this year to potentially earn college credit. **Not everyone should take AP classes.** If you have an independent educational consultant, please consult with them about the merit of taking or not taking AP classes.
- In January, apply for summer jobs that align with your career goals.

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## Summer Between 10th and 11th Grade

- Enroll in summer classes and enrichment programs at your local high school and/or community college to earn college credit and explore your interests.
- Talk to college students who are home for the summer to learn about their experiences at different colleges.

## Junior Year (11th Grade)

- Meet with your high school counselor again and review your college plans and class schedule to ensure you are on the right track.
- Continue taking challenging courses that you can handle and earning high grades. Make school your top priority!
- Continue to participate in clubs and activities, as well as work 5- 10 hours per week, if possible.
- Play no more than 2 hours of video games per week.
- Put together a testing schedule (include PSAT/NMSQT, ACT, SAT, and AP exams).
- Discuss with your high school counselor the availability of scholarships in your community or at your school. Become aware of the deadlines for each one.
- Start thinking about financial aid and continue to talk to your parents about how your family will pay for college. **Please consult a financial planner from the NICCP.**

## - Begin asking these questions regarding colleges:

- Does the school offer my major?
- What if I change majors? Are there enough majors to which I can change?
- Do I feel comfortable on campus? Have my parents and I read the campus safety reports?
- Can my family afford the cost of the college? Is Financial Aid and/or Merit Aid an option?
- What are the deadlines? **(You must be proactive!)**
- Does the college have an Honors program? What are all of the extracurriculars available?

## - Continue going to job fairs and interviewing professionals in the careers in which you have an interest.

## - Research colleges and go to college fairs to get as much information as possible.

## - Arrange campus visits and travel to colleges while school is in session. Sit in on a class, if possible, to get a feel for the campus.

## - Develop a list of colleges in which you are seriously interested.

## - Reach out to people who can write you a letter of recommendation (high school counselors, teachers, coaches, employers, clergy, community leaders, etc.).

## - Continue updating your resume as you participate in various activities. This will be used for the application process.

## Summer Before 12th Grade

## - Explore summer internships and jobs to build your resume and save money for college.

## - Take summer classes online or at a nearby community college to earn credit.

## - Talk to college admissions officers to learn specific details about each school and their application process.

## - Visit colleges that you are seriously considering.

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- Talk to college students who are home for the summer about their college experiences.

- Create a master calendar that includes:

- Test dates, fees, and deadlines
- Application due dates and fees
- Financial aid application deadlines
- Scholarship application deadlines
- Due dates of recommendations, transcripts, and other materials
- Your high school's deadline for requesting transcripts

Discuss this with your NICCP college planner.

- Begin the application process: register for the Common Application, Universal Application, Apply Texas, and special applications for other states in which you are considering attending college. Draft essays, assemble portfolios, and complete a resume that has a list of all clubs, activities, leadership positions, and employment.

- Follow your high school guidelines for the application process, including recommendations and transcript requests. Use programs like Naviance, Parchment, etc.

- Continue taking the ACT or SAT. If you have a perfect score, you may stop taking the tests. Otherwise, continue until you reach a perfect score or the best score on the last available test. (Never give up!)

- With your parents and/or guardians, create FSA ID's (both students and parents need separate ID's).

## Senior Year (12th Grade)

### Fall

- The goal is to submit all college applications on or before Labor Day.

- Once you are admitted to colleges, make a personal account with each institution at which you have been accepted to date. Additional scholarships or applications for Honors Colleges, financial aid, etc. will be available in your individual account.

- Apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Submit the application on October 1st or after. Your previous year's taxes will be used for this FAFSA filing. This is called "Prior Prior".

- Continue to work hard and earn the highest grades possible. Lower seventh- and eighth-semester grades can possibly negatively affect scholarship eligibility.

- Stay involved in extracurricular and leadership activities.

- Schedule interviews. Be proactive and find out which colleges have an interview process (most are optional).

### Winter

- Complete other financial aid, need-based, and merit-based applications for your colleges.

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## Spring

- Compare financial aid and award packages from your colleges and review the possibilities of appealing your financial aid award. Please contact NICCP your college financial planner for assistance.
- Consider work-study programs to help pay for tuition. Research what each school offers and become aware of the application process for each.
- Revisit or re-examine schools where you've been accepted and determine where you will go.
- Submit an Intent to Register to the college you will be attending on or before May 1st. Notify the colleges you are **not** attending with either a personal email and/or a handwritten note thanking them for the opportunity (very important!).
- Take AP exams if you took any AP classes.
- Review the options of taking CLEP exams (see your NICCP college planner for more information).
- Make any necessary housing deposits or other payments.
- Have final transcripts and ACT/SAT/AP/CLEP/IB scores sent.
- Take any necessary college placement tests.
- Register for a freshman orientation to complete your freshman year class schedule.

## August/September

- Your parents will leave you at college!

To search for scholarships, read college reviews, and find more information please visit the following websites:

<a href="http://chegg.com">chegg.com</a>	<a href="http://salliemae.com">salliemae.com</a>
<a href="http://scholarships.com">scholarships.com</a>	<a href="http://finaid.org">finaid.org</a>
<a href="http://niche.com">niche.com</a>	<a href="http://collegeboard.org">collegeboard.org</a>
<a href="http://fastweb.com">fastweb.com</a>	<a href="http://cappex.com">cappex.com</a>
<a href="http://campusreel.org">campusreel.org</a>	<a href="http://unigo.com">unigo.com</a>
<a href="http://nces.ed.gov">nces.ed.gov</a>	<a href="http://collegeresults.org">collegeresults.org</a>
<a href="http://collegedata.com">collegedata.com</a>	<a href="http://youiversitytv.com">youiversitytv.com</a>
<a href="http://collegefactual.com">collegefactual.com</a>	

To learn more about the NICCP, please visit [www.niccp.com](http://www.niccp.com). For more information about the SAT, AP courses, CLEP testing, and a CSS profile, please visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).

For more information about the ACT, please visit [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

For more information about IB courses, please visit [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org).

To create an FSA ID, visit <https://fsaid.ed.gov>.

To learn more information regarding FAFSA, visit [www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov). To fill out the Common Application, visit [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org).

To fill out the Universal College Application, visit [www.universalcollegeapp.com](http://www.universalcollegeapp.com).

To apply at a Texas institution, visit [www.applytexas.org](http://www.applytexas.org).

To apply at an institution within the University of Wisconsin system, visit [www.apply.wisconsin.edu](http://www.apply.wisconsin.edu).

For the US Department of Education College Scorecard, visit [www.collegescorecard.ed.gov](http://www.collegescorecard.ed.gov).

For the US News and World Report College Ratings, visit [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com).

To purchase the book *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*, visit [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com).