

## PRE-HIGH SCHOOL CHECKLIST

- What majors/careers sound exciting?** Start thinking about which kinds of classes you will need to take in high school in order to be prepared for the major/career path of your choice in college.
- Read daily.** Becoming a critical and engaged reader will prepare you like nothing else for the PSAT/SAT and the many academic challenges ahead.
- Develop strong study habits.** Make sure to incorporate study into your schedule as a daily activity.
- Ask questions! About college, careers — anything related to the process that you might not understand.** Ask your teachers, your parents, your guidance counselor, and any other working adults you might know about their careers and what prepared them for college. The more you talk to other people, the more you will learn and the more you will clarify your own thoughts, dreams, and visions for yourself.
- Become involved in school and/or community-based extracurricular activities.** Play sports, learn a musical instrument, volunteer locally. Don't stretch your time too thin, but make sure you stretch yourself by learning new things and having new experiences!

## 9TH GRADE CHECKLIST

- Become aware of the college resources and college counselors** available at your school.
- Continue to talk to adults in a variety of professions** to determine what they like and dislike about their jobs and what kind of education is needed for each kind of job.
- Take classes in the core academic subjects.** Most colleges require 4 years of English, at least 3 years of social studies (history, civics, geography, economics, etc.), 3 years of mathematics, and 3 years of science, and many require 2 years of a foreign language. Round out your course load with classes in computer science and the arts.
- Become involved in school- or community-based extracurricular activities** that enable you to explore career interests.
- Continue to clarify your vision for yourself concerning college.** What careers/subjects excites you? What kind of school would you see yourself going to?

## 10TH GRADE CHECKLIST

- Continue to maintain a rigorous and balanced academic course load.**
- Continue to be involved in school- or community-based extracurricular activities** that enable you to explore career interests.
- Meet with your career counselor or guidance counselor** to discuss colleges and their requirements.
- Consider taking a practice Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) or the PLAN exam.**
- In the spring, begin preliminary college visits** and talk to students while there.
- Continue to learn about different types of colleges** — which of them might be the best fit for you and your overall vision?

## 11TH GRADE CHECKLIST

- Decide which colleges most interest you. Contact them to request information and an application for admission.** Ask about special admissions requirements, financial aid and deadlines.
- Talk to college representatives** at college fairs.
- Visit more colleges** and talk to students.
- Consider people to ask for letters of recommendations,** such as teachers, counselors and employers.
- Investigate the availability of financial aid** from federal, state, local and private sources. Talk to your guidance counselor for more information.
- Investigate the availability of scholarships** provided by organizations such as corporations, labor unions, professional associations and religious groups.
- Register for and take the PSAT/NMSQT (if you haven't already), SAT I, the ACT, SAT II Subject Tests** or any other exams required for admission to the colleges you might want to attend.

## 12TH GRADE CHECKLIST

- Meet with your counselor early in the year** to discuss your college plans.
- Complete all necessary financial aid forms**, especially the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Apply online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).
- Contact colleges to request information and applications for admission.** Ask about financial aid, admissions requirements and deadlines.
- Register for and take the SAT I, ACT, SAT II Subject Tests** or any other exams required for admission to the colleges to which you are applying.
- Prepare your application carefully.** Follow the instructions and pay close attention to deadlines.
- Be sure to ask your counselor and teachers at least two weeks before your application deadlines to submit the necessary documents** to colleges (your transcript, letters of recommendation, etc.)

## PRE-HIGH SCHOOL CHECKLIST

- Start saving for your child's college education.** Learn about the tax advantages of state college savings plans and prepaid tuition plans at [www.collegesavings.org](http://www.collegesavings.org). Use FAFSA4caster at [www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov) to find out how much federal student aid your child might receive.
- Encourage good study habits**, such as having all the materials you need and planning ahead with daily tasks for larger projects.
- Talk to your child about their interests** and explore how to best fit those interests with a college major/career.
- Foster a lifelong love of reading by reading** to your child when they are younger and having regular reading time each day when they can read on their own.
- Check in on your child's academic progress periodically.** Review report cards, assignments, and special projects.
- Be supportive.** Words of encouragement and snacks on study breaks go a long way to helping build your child's sense of confidence to get to the next level.

## 9TH GRADE CHECKLIST

- Continue saving for college** and add to your child's savings account regularly.
- Monitor your child's study habits** and stay involved with their academic/extracurricular lives.
- Help your child "keep their eye on the prize"** by continuing to talk to them about college plans as if they will definitely go to college.
- Encourage your child to take Advanced Placement and other challenging classes.**
- Keep track of their time and help your child manage their time** so that they don't get overcommitted and exhausted. This is a marathon, not a sprint! Occasionally there will be sprinting involved, but in general for every mile of progress there should be a mile of rest.

## 10TH GRADE CHECKLIST

- Continue saving for college** and add to your child's savings account regularly.
- Begin investigating financial aid options available**, starting with the US Education Department's website: <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/resources#needmoney>
- Find out whether your child's school has college nights.** Attend them!
- Investigate the availability of scholarships** provided by organizations such as corporations, labor unions, professional associations and religious groups.
- Schedule preliminary visits** to nearby campuses.
- Help your child make summer plans.** Summer is a great time to explore interests and learn new skills, and colleges look for students who pursue meaningful summer activities.



## 11TH GRADE CHECKLIST

- Schedule college visits with your child.** Go together and ask questions of the tour guides, admissions offices, and financial aid staff together. Think of possible questions before arriving on campus.
- Make a college wish list together.** Talk with your child about qualities he or she may want in a college in terms of location, size, majors offered and so on.
- Help your child prepare for the standardized tests** they will take this year — the PSAT/NMSQT, SAT and SAT Subject Tests. and/or the PLAN exam and the ACT. [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) and [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) for more information.
- Make sure your child meets with the school counselor** this year to begin preparing for the application process.
- Attend college fairs and financial aid events.** These events allow you to meet with college representatives and get answers to questions. Your child can ask the school counselor how to find events in your area.

## 12TH GRADE CHECKLIST

- Make sure your child knows when their applications are due!** These deadlines are non-negotiable and late applications may prevent them from going to the college of their choice!
- Help your child decide about applying early.** If your senior is set on going to a certain college, they should think about whether applying early is a good option. Early applications are usually due in November. Read about the pros and cons of applying early.
- Encourage and assist your child if necessary to set up college interviews.** An interview is a great way for your child to learn more about a college and for a college to learn more about your child.
- Work together to apply for financial aid.** Have your child contact the financial aid offices at the colleges he or she is interested in to find out what forms students must submit to apply for aid. Make sure he or she applies for aid by or before any stated deadlines. Funds are limited, so the earlier you apply, the better.
- Help your child process college responses.** Once your child starts hearing back from colleges about admission and financial aid, he or she will need your support to decide what to do.