

Here is a timeline to help you stay on track when preparing for college.

Freshman Year

Meet with your advisor/guidance counselor.

See your high school advisor to plan your four years in high school and for college advice. Share your educational and career goals with them and they will work with you to achieve your goals.

Become involved in extracurricular activities.

Check out your school's club fairs and attend meetings to learn about the ones that interest you most. Then get involved!

Start learning about colleges.

Think about what colleges you may want to apply to and learn how you can fulfill the prerequisites for them.

Start thinking about financing college.

Look up scholarships you can apply for. There may be some that you can apply for now but most will be for juniors or seniors in high school. Learn the difference between scholarships and different types of loans.

Be productive during the summer.

Take a break during summer, but set some time aside for volunteering, working, summer programs, and summer classes.

Sophomore Year

Take a practice PSAT.

Some schools offer a practice PSAT. If not, check out a PSAT book from the library and complete a full test to see what subjects you should work on. Look online for sample tests.

Continue keeping your grades up and make sure your classes fulfill college requirements.

Work with your high school counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate. If you are struggling with some classes, seek help from your teachers, peers, and advisor as soon as possible.

Become familiar with the college admissions process.

Learn about college entrance requirements such as the SATs, language coursework, minimum GPA, etc. by looking at the schools' websites. Your counselor can provide you with more information if you need it.

Research potential career options.

Look into careers that interest you and look at what academic qualifications each requires. Find people who work in these careers and set up a time to interview them to learn about their educations and daily work.

Consider taking SAT Subject Tests.

Some schools do not require SAT Subject Tests. If you take it, take it while the material is still fresh in your mind.

Stay active on campus and in the community.

Continue your involvement in clubs and volunteer work and consider taking on a leadership role..

College Preparation Timeline



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Junior Year

Continue excelling in your classes.

Meet with your counselor to discuss what classes you still need to take. Be aware of your GPA and try to improve it if necessary. College admission officers like to see upward trends in GPAs.

Take the PSAT.

This will be great practice for the SAT. By taking the test, you may also qualify for the National Merit Scholarship.

Think about types of colleges.

Consider what type of college might be best for you: vocational college, 2-year community college, 4-year state college or university, private college. Remember that you can make your final choice after learning what colleges accept you and how much financial aid they will provide (also remember that some expensive private colleges give full scholarships).

Make a college list.

Make a list of possible colleges. Check the GPA, SAT and other minimum requirements. Think about location, majors you are interested in, environment, and academics. List several schools that you think you'll be accepted to for sure, several that are probable acceptances, and several that are your "dream" schools. Do a "virtual" tour online using the schools' websites.

Schedule your tests.

Plan and take standardized tests such as the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, ACT, and AP exams.

Visit colleges.

Visit potential colleges, take a tour and visit some classes. If you cannot afford to visit, ask your school if it has resources.

Start working on application essays.

Check the internet and schools' websites for sample questions. Draft responses to commonly asked questions.

Senior Year

Finalize your college list.

Most students select about 5-10 colleges to apply to. Make sure to include several schools where you'll be sure to get in.

Keep track of deadlines and complete your application.

Make sure you know when applications are due and complete them on time. Make a spreadsheet to keep track.

Ask for letters of recommendation.

If you choose colleges that require letters of recommendation, choose teachers/counselors/employers who know you well and will write you strong letters. Ask for the letters at least a month in advance. Be sure to send a thank you.

Continue searching for scholarships.

Ask your counselors and search the internet for scholarships. Remember to apply to small ones that are a good match.

Make your final decision.

Check financial aid packages from the schools you get into (scholarships, loans, work study). Try to avoid much debt. Choose the "best fit" college. Try to visit before your final decision. Send your statement of intent to register.