

COLLEGE BOUND CALENDAR

GRADE 9

- Meet with your **guidance counselor**, especially in fall and spring, to choose the right courses. Plan ahead so that there is time to take all of the math and other classes that college admissions officers want to see. Take as many Advanced Placement classes as possible. Parents, stay involved.
- Students, **work at those classes!**
- Continue with the **extracurricular activities**. They're fun, and they are important to admissions officers at colleges. When possible, take leadership positions.
- What are your interests? Find out what's involved in various occupations. Your guidance office may have a computer program for researching **career interests**.
- Talk to relatives and friends who are in college or went to college. Ask what they were looking for in a school, whether they found it, and what they would look for today.
- Seek **summer employment** or **volunteer work** in a field that may be related to future career interests.
- Review your college savings plan and the student's personal budget. Your first "base year" for college aid begins January 1 of junior year.

GRADE 10

Students

- Plan with your parents!
- Continue studying and participating in activities.
- Attend college fairs.
- Talk with your guidance counselor.** Choose the right courses for college admissions and graduation.
- Some students, particularly if they are in honors courses, **practice for standardized tests by taking the PSAT** (the preliminary SAT test) in sophomore year. The PSAT is given in October. Students can also take the SAT subject tests in June and take them again in junior year. Ask your guidance counselor.
- Read up-to-date books that describe colleges. Look for and order information from the most interesting schools. Make a list of colleges that interest you.
- Plan for summer. Look for a job related to your interests; schedule college visits. Review your budget. Summer is a good time to read and to review math skills in preparation for SAT/ACT tests.

Parents

- Plan with your students!
- Consider your income and asset situation.** Aid formulas look at income for base years. Your most important base year starts in January of junior year.

GRADE 11

Fall

- Parents and students continue planning together in this important year.
- The first base year for college financial aid starts January 1st of the student's junior year of high school.
- Work closely with your guidance counselor. Make sure that you register for the courses that you need for college. Sign up for advanced classes whenever possible. Take standardized tests at the right time.
- Grades for this year are important for college admission. Keep working!
- Continue with your important extracurricular activities.

Tests

- Register for the **PSAT** (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test). The PSAT practice test in October of junior year prepares students for the SAT. It will give you an idea of where your strengths and weaknesses are and how your scores compare to those of students who are admitted to the colleges you are considering. An extremely high score may qualify you for the **National Merit Scholarship** competition.

- SAT I and SAT II** (Scholastic Aptitude Tests). Find out test dates and registration dates and make your plans! Look on the Web at <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/calenfees.html>. Students who intend to apply to colleges for Early Decision or Early Action must plan ahead. Students who apply under Early Decision agree to attend the school if accepted. Under Early Action (offered by fewer colleges), the student is still free to choose another school.

- Three SAT II Subject Tests** (formerly called "Achievement Tests") are required by many colleges. The SAT II Writing Test is usually one of the three. You may decide to take two subject tests in the spring of junior year and the other during senior year. If the colleges on your list require SAT II tests, choose your subjects early. For example, if you are considering taking the SAT II chemistry test, ask the chemistry teacher if the class will provide enough background to do well in the subject test. If you decide to go ahead with chemistry, take the subject test right after you finish the class. Tests should be taken as soon as possible after completing a related course. You may choose to take science, history, foreign language and/or math tests in junior year, then read during the summer and wait until senior year to take the Writing and the Literature tests. You may take up to three subject exams on one day. Not all tests are offered on every test date. You may take more than three on several test dates and report the best ones.

- The ACT Test** (American College Testing) is an alternative to the SAT. Most students who take it are from the South and the Midwest. If this test is made available to you, check to **be sure whether your colleges accept it**. Most colleges do.

- Seek out and **build relationships** with the teachers who will write your college recommendations.

- Find out the dates of local college events. **Attend college fairs.** Meet with college representatives who visit your school.

- Continue collecting information on colleges. Decide which features are most important to you—location, academic quality, size, fields of study, cost, type, etc. Refine the list of colleges that interest you. You may start with a list of ten or 15 colleges and eventually apply to three or six schools.

Attend financial aid information nights at school. Review financial aid forms. Begin collecting financial data. Your family's income for the year starting January 1 will be viewed by financial aid formulas. It's your first base year.

- Plan college visits.** Do some research ahead of time. Make a list of questions that aren't answered in the literature. Find out when tours are scheduled. If possible, make an appointment for an interview. If you can visit while college is in session, you will get a better feel for the atmosphere on campus. You may be able to sit in on a class or two.

Winter

- Ask relatives, friends, and acquaintances about where they went to college and whether they have suggestions for you. Continue doing your own college research. Make a list of your thoughts, questions, and impressions.
- If your PSAT scores were low compared to SAT scores at colleges that interest you, **study to improve in areas of weakness**.
- Register in February for the March SAT I test.
- If interested in a federal military academy, begin planning your application process. Take SAT I and SAT II tests this year.
- Stay in touch with your guidance counselor.**

- Plan college visits. Find out schedules for tours and information sessions.

Spring - Summer

- Register in March for the May SAT I and SAT II tests or in April for the June SAT I and SAT II tests, unless you have already taken the SAT and are satisfied with your score.
- Familiarize yourself with **private scholarships** available to you. Obtain application forms.
- If you are in Advanced Placement courses, take the tests in May. **High grades on AP tests can earn you college credit and/or advanced standing.**
- Talk with seniors about the colleges they chose to apply to and why they made their choices.
- Meet again with your counselor.** Plan senior year courses with college and graduation requirements in mind.
- Think about how you will present yourself in college admissions applications and interviews.
- If you are considering an Early Decision or Early Action admissions application, gather the necessary forms now.
- Apply for nomination to a military academy, if interested.

Spring - Summer

- ❑ Check into **summer deadlines** to apply early for a four-year ROTC scholarship.
- ❑ Make spring trips to colleges and plan summer trips. If interviews are available, it may be necessary to schedule them far in advance.
- ❑ Look for educational summer employment, internships, or other opportunities. **College admission committees will be interested in how you spent your summer.** It's a chance to learn and have fun.
- ❑ Review your SAT test scores. Summer is a great time to upgrade math and subject skills for future tests. Read, read, read!

GRADE 12

Fall

- ❑ Students and parents: Strategize! Work together to make the best choices. Plan for meeting deadlines.
- ❑ **Meet with your guidance counselor** to plan courses and to schedule tests. Discuss college choices. Parents should be involved.
- ❑ **Plan for any remaining college visits.** Make appointments for any recommended college interviews. If possible, schedule an overnight visit to stay with a student in a dorm and attend a few classes.
- ❑ **Decide which colleges are most interesting to you.** Make a side-by-side list of features to compare them; then decide which features are most important. Narrow the list. Include at least one school you feel confident will admit you and at least one school that would be affordable even if financial aid were low.

Paperwork, etc.

- ❑ **Prepare/update a college file** for admissions materials and another for financial aid materials.
- ❑ If you need additional information or application forms for college admission and financial aid, call or send for them right away. In many cases, this can be done on the Internet.
- ❑ Make a list of **due-dates** for admissions and financial aid application materials.
- ❑ Look over admissions application forms early. If essays are required, allow time to think about them and do them well.
- ❑ Find out how many **recommendations** (and what type) you need. Ask teachers (also guidance counselors and employers, etc.) whether they are willing to write them for you. Provide them with forms, envelopes, and a brief description of your academic record and extracurricular activities. Tell them that you appreciate their efforts.

Early Application For Admission

- ❑ If you are applying for Early Action or Early Decision, complete your application materials now. Most college deadlines for these programs are in November or December.

Exams

- ❑ Register for and take the fall SAT I and/or SAT II tests, whether taking them for the first time or repeating because you think you can improve your score.

Prepare For Aid Forms

- ❑ Obtain the FAFSA (federal aid form) or prepare to file the FAFSA online. If you are also required to submit the PROFILE aid form, prepare to file online. Get copies of any other necessary aid forms. Start early to compile financial information, so that you can be among the first to file aid forms. The FAFSA can be filed after the first of January.

ROTC

- ❑ If ROTC is available at your colleges and if you are interested, check into fall deadlines for four-year ROTC scholarships.

Selective Service

- ❑ Males between the ages of 18 and 25 must register with the Selective Service. The FAFSA federal aid form asks whether you have registered and provides a box to request automatic registration.

Ongoing

- ❑ Keep up with grades, extracurricular activities, and volunteer work.
- ❑ Attend college fairs and financial aid information programs. Meet with college representatives who visit your school. Ask questions.
- ❑ Let your counselor know that you appreciate the work she or he is doing for you (advice, providing information, sending recommendations and transcripts, etc.).

Admission Applications

- ❑ Make your final choice of colleges. Apply for admission! Keep records of your application materials.

Winter - Aid Applications

- ❑ **Family income tax** returns should be prepared as early as possible. Many colleges ask for copies of tax returns. An estimate may suffice until the tax filing date.
- ❑ **Complete your FAFSA** (federal financial aid form) as soon as possible after January 1. Make a copy for your records.

- ❑ **Complete your PROFILE** (private college aid form) and/or other required financial aid application forms in time to meet the deadlines. Keep copies of everything.

- ❑ **Review the SAR** (Student Aid Report), which should be sent to you within a month after your FAFSA is filed. If any corrections are needed, make them and send the document back to the processor.

Winter - Exams

- ❑ Register for and take SAT I and/or SAT II if indicated
- ❑ Register for Advanced Placement Exams if you have taken, or are taking, AP courses

Transcripts

- ❑ Have mid-year transcripts sent to colleges.

Scholarships

- ❑ Look into private scholarships and other funds that may be available to you. Obtain application forms. List the deadlines. Complete and submit applications when due.

Summer Plans

- ❑ Apply for summer employment, internships, or programs.

Financial Planning

- ❑ Parents of Dependent Students: get ready for your first college bill. Pay down any credit card bills and give yourself as much cash flow freedom as possible. The first bill may be due in July and cover the first semester. Some schools offer monthly payment arrangements.

Spring-Summer

- ❑ Send copies of tax returns to financial aid offices, if required.
- ❑ Apply for private scholarships with spring deadlines.
- ❑ Keep your grades up. Colleges ask for your final transcript.
- ❑ Take AP tests.
- ❑ **Receive and open your letters from colleges.** Compare financial aid awards. Decide which college to attend. The reply date is usually May first. Notify the school you choose and send your admission deposit. Let other schools know that you will not attend, so that they may give your place and aid funds to another student. Aid awards must be accepted in order to hold them. If your aid award is such that you expect significant difficulty in meeting costs, communicate with the aid office.
- ❑ Ask your guidance counselor to send your final transcript to your new school.
- ❑ Thank your counselor and those who gave recommendations. Tell them about your plans.
- ❑ Graduate. Congratulations!
- ❑ Look into terms of loans for student and parents. Apply for loans. Expect the first college bill.

Freshman Year In College

To continue receiving financial aid, you must file application forms for every year of postsecondary education. Your copies of first-year application forms will help you with renewal forms the next year.