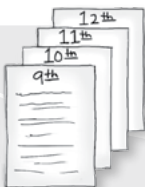


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# Part IV

## High School Year by Year

*Here you will find information on what you need to know and what you need to do at each grade level. If you have a question or concern, contact your counselor. A school counselor can be an invaluable resource; however, you must assume responsibility for making sure that all college requirements are met.*

### 8th Grade

### Getting Ready for High School



Sometimes when an eighth grade student takes an advanced course, such as Algebra I, credit is given and the grades are included in a student's GPA. As a general rule, however, the grades received in the eighth grade are not used in computing a student's GPA, nor do they appear on a student's high school transcript. The eighth grade, nevertheless, is an important year for the following reasons:

- ▶ The grades earned are often used to determine ninth grade course placement. For example, a student may need an A or a B in eighth grade math to be eligible to take Algebra I as a freshman.
- ▶ Students who develop good study skills in middle school are much better prepared for high school.
- ▶ Eighth grade students usually select their freshman courses in the spring. Since all freshman courses and grades become part of the high school record, freshman courses must be chosen carefully. Spring is also a good time to develop a four-year high school plan.
- ▶ Students involved in activities have greater academic success and enjoy school more. Also, colleges want students who are active and involved. With these things in mind, try to identify some high school activities that you might enjoy.

# 9th Grade

## What You Need to Do as a Freshman

*When you become a freshman, everything starts to “count.” All of your freshman courses, grades, and credits will be on your transcript, and your freshman grades will be used in determining your GPA. Freshman activities, honors, and awards can also be listed on college and scholarship applications.*

### Work hard to get good grades

Set realistic academic goals at the beginning of each grading period. Make sure that you receive all progress reports and report cards, and share these with your parents. *Remember, your freshman grades will be on your transcript, and these grades will be figured into your GPA.*

### Become involved in a variety of activities



Most college and scholarship applications ask students to list their high school activities. Many applications also ask for evidence of leadership. Get involved in meaningful activities and, whenever possible, take a leadership role. Depth of involvement (being on the debate or soccer team for four years) is also important because it shows focus and commitment.

Also participate in activities outside of school (church, scouting, athletics) and do some volunteer work. Community service (volunteering for Habitat for Humanity or the Red Cross) is very worthwhile, and it's impressive on any application.

Colleges today are looking for quality, not quantity. Find a subject, activity, or hobby that you have a real interest in and develop that interest.

*Tip: During your freshman year, start an “Activities Record.” Include all school and community activities, leadership positions, honors, awards, unique educational experiences, employment, and volunteer work. Update this record at least once a year. This information will be very helpful later, when you are required to list activities and honors on college and scholarship applications.*

## Select appropriate 10th grade courses

In the spring, review your four-year high school plan with you counselor and your parents, and select the most appropriate courses for your sophomore year.

## Plan meaningful summer activities

Many of the traditional summer activities can be very worthwhile. Read, develop a hobby, take a course, join a team, or volunteer at an animal shelter, hospital, or nursing home. Many colleges also have excellent summer programs for high school students.

## Be careful with your Internet use

Do not to post anything on a site like MySpace or Facebook that you wouldn't want a college admissions officer to see. *Admissions officers do check these sites.*



## Start a college savings account

If you haven't started saving for college yet, begin now. Also, encourage your parents to look into 529 plans. For information on these plans, go to [www.savingforcollege.com](http://www.savingforcollege.com).

# 10th Grade

## What You Need to Do as a Sophomore

*Start thinking of your aptitudes, interests, and abilities in terms of possible college majors. Also look for opportunities to further develop your talents and skills.*

**Work hard to get the best grades possible**

**Get involved in meaningful activities**

Help your child find meaningful activities to be involved in, both in and out of school.

## **Sign up for the PLAN if it's offered**

The PLAN measures the same academic skills as the ACT (English, Math, Reading, and Science). Students receive an “estimated ACT score range” and an evaluation of their skills and interests.

## **Consider taking the PSAT/NMSQT**

The PSAT/NMSQT is a national test that's administered by high schools in October. Although the PSAT/NMSQT is primarily for juniors, many sophomores take it for practice. *For additional information, see page 9.*

## **Consider dual-credit courses**

Many high schools now have programs that enable students to take courses for both high school and college credit. For information on dual-credit courses, talk to your counselor.



## **Explore and discuss college options**

Gather information, go to college fairs, and make informal visits to colleges.

## **Select appropriate 11th grade courses**

In the spring, review your four-year high school plan with your parents and your counselor. Select the most appropriate courses for your junior year.

## **Plan summer activities**

Choose meaningful activities for the summer months. If possible, look for activities that relate to a career you might be interested in pursuing.

## **Update your “Activities Record”**

At the end of the year, all sophomore activities, awards, etc. should be added to your “Activities Record.”

## **Add money to your college savings account**

# 11th Grade

## What You Need to Do as a Junior

*The junior year is when you should begin seriously examining your college options. Juniors should take college tests, make college visits, and start searching for scholarships.*



### Work hard to get the best grades possible

You'll probably fill out college applications in the fall of your senior year. This means that your junior grades will be the last grades on your transcript. *It is very important that you do as well as possible your junior year.*

In the fall, go over your academic record with your counselor, and find out what your GPA and class rank are.

### Continue to be involved in meaningful activities

### Register for the PSAT/NMSQT in September

All college bound juniors should take the PSAT in October. See your counselor for information and to register for this test.

### Explore your college options

Talk to your parents and counselor about your college options. Think about what you're looking for in a college, and learn as much as you can about the colleges you are considering.

### Register for the ACT and/or the SAT early in the spring

All college bound students should take the ACT and/or SAT at least once in the spring of their junior year.

### Make college visits

The junior year is a great time to make college visits. *For tips on what to do on a college visit, go to page 13.*

## Select senior year courses

Make sure that your senior courses fulfill all high school graduation requirements, the requirements for the college(s) you're considering, and, if necessary, the requirements for athletic eligibility. If you have any questions, contact your counselor.

All colleges recommend that seniors continue to follow a strong college prep program, and most applications ask students to list their senior courses. Even though you may want to "take it easy" your senior year, you need to continue taking academic courses.

*Tip: College freshmen are often required to take a math placement test before they register for classes. To keep your math skills sharp, take a math course your senior year.*

## Look for scholarships

Students who are hoping to get a scholarship should start looking for scholarship possibilities as a junior.

## Update your "Activities Record"

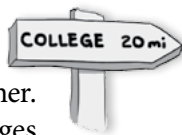
**In the spring, meet with your counselor to go over your record and discuss your college plans**

## Choose meaningful activities for the summer

Try to get a job or do some volunteer work in a field related to your intended major.

## Narrow your list of college choices

Continue to research and visit colleges over the summer. You should have your list narrowed down to 3 - 5 colleges by the fall of your senior year.



**Establish an appropriate, permanent e-mail address to use when communicating with colleges**

**Continue to put money in your college savings account**

# 12th Grade

## What You Need to Do as a Senior

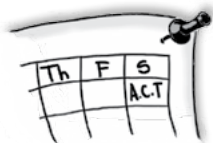
*The senior year is when everything comes together, and you see the rewards of your hard work and planning.*

### Continue to work hard to get good grades

You may have heard that your senior grades are not important. This is not true. Colleges often ask to see first semester senior grades, and at the end of the year, your high school will forward your final transcript, with your senior grades, to the college you plan to attend.

### Set up a calendar for the year

Use this calendar to record test dates, application deadlines, college visitation days, etc.



### Sign up for the first ACT or SAT, if necessary

Take a look at your previous test scores and determine whether or not you need to take the ACT and/or SAT in October. If you want to take the October ACT or SAT, you need to register early in September. You can register for the ACT at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) and for the SAT at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

Colleges view test scores differently. Some colleges are looking for very high test scores. Other colleges use ACT and SAT scores more for course placement than admissions. If you're interested in a competitive college or program, or if you're trying to get a scholarship, having high test scores can be very important. For advice on whether you should retake the ACT and/or SAT, talk to your high school counselor or call the college admissions office.

If you do not do well on the ACT and/or SAT, this doesn't mean that you won't be accepted into the college of your choice, or that you won't do well in college. Admissions officers look at a variety of criteria when evaluating applicants, and many students who don't do well on the ACT or SAT do very well in college.

## Complete college applications in the fall

You should know which colleges you want to apply to by the fall of your senior year. As a senior, you can then concentrate on doing well in your classes, retaking the ACT or SAT, if necessary, and completing your college applications.

Colleges have admissions information and applications on their websites, and high school guidance/counseling offices generally have applications for the colleges their students most often attend.

*Tip: Make sure that you apply to at least one “safety school.” This is a college to which you are certain to be accepted and one that you can definitely afford.*

All college applications require a high school transcript, and most have sections for the counselor to complete. High school counselors have many responsibilities and numerous applications to complete between October and February. Make sure you give your counselor plenty of time to prepare transcripts and complete application(s).

*Tip: Keep a copy of each completed application for your files, and note the date it was submitted.*

*Tip: Colleges usually contact students to let them know that they’ve received their application. If you do not hear from a college, contact the admissions office to make sure they have everything they need.*



## Complete financial aid and scholarship forms

If you are applying for financial aid, have your parents complete the FAFSA and submit it as soon after January 1 as possible. See page 25 for information on financial aid.

## Make the decision

At some point in the spring, you must decide which college to attend. **Do not choose a college before making a college visit.** Once the decision is made, complete the necessary forms, and, as a courtesy, notify the other colleges. If you are planning to live on campus, be sure to send in the required housing deposit before the deadline.