

COLLEGE PLANNING TIPS & TIMELINES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



The college preparation and admissions process can feel intimidating and may leave many students and their families with a LOT of questions. These tips and timelines are provided to help take the guesswork out of the process and break down key milestones across each high school grade level to make the process easier to manage and help students achieve college admission success!

GRADE 9

COLLEGE PREP TIPS FOR FRESHMEN

High school can be a big change for students. Being proactive to help ease the transition and set students up for success from the start can have significant benefits. Now is the time to explore interests and take on new experiences that can help shape future goals.

- ✓ Choose the courses and academic opportunities that fit current goals and interests.
- ✓ Select an organization style and tools and stick to a study schedule.
- ✓ Build a relationship with guidance counselors.
- ✓ Participate in extracurricular opportunities and school activities that align with interests.
- ✓ Start the conversation at home about post-high-school goals, including discussions on paying for college.
- ✓ Consider career exploration opportunities, like shadowing, volunteering, and interning, which can provide first-hand experience and insight on future career interests.
- ✓ Begin keeping a “resume”/overview of your high school experiences and achievements as they occur and update it throughout your high school career.

GRADE 10

COLLEGE PLANNING DURING SOPHOMORE YEAR

This year is an opportunity to refine and define your future goals and dial in your academic and extracurricular pursuits to support those priorities.

- ✓ Take available AP and other college preparatory courses that are a fit with future goals identified so far.
- ✓ Continue to focus on academics and maintaining good study habits.
- ✓ Stay active in extracurricular and school activities.
- ✓ Continue conversations with guidance counselors about college and future goals.
- ✓ Consider taking the PSAT test.
- ✓ Start researching colleges and making a list of what is personally important in a college experience.
- ✓ Write down potential future paths and personal goals and refine career exploration activities (shadowing, volunteering, interning) to match up with those choices.



Have Questions? **Reach Out.**



COLLEGE PLANNING FOR JUNIORS

The college prep and investigation pace dramatically quickens this year, as milestones become much more defined and time-sensitive. Staying ahead of deadlines and being prepared for what comes next can dramatically reduce the stress associated with the process.

GRADE 11

- ✓ This year's grades really count, and so does attendance. Get help from teachers and ask for extra support when needed.
- ✓ Continue to consider, research, and evaluate careers, college majors, and potential post-secondary options.
- ✓ Visit college campuses and take college tours. Make a point to visit schools of interest and speak with students who attend those schools (seek out those with similar majors to your career interests).
- ✓ Attend local college fairs.
- ✓ Try to narrow college choices to five or less institutions and request application materials from those schools online.
- ✓ Research scholarship options and compile a list of opportunities.
- ✓ Consider a dual enrollment opportunity for senior year. Earn college credit that counts towards high school AND college at a discounted rate!
- ✓ Know what tests are required by the post-secondary institutions under consideration (SAT I, SAT II, or ACT).
- ✓ All juniors will take the PSAT at their school in October. Parents and students should discuss results with their school's guidance counselor. Online practice at collegeboard.org is also encouraged.
- ✓ Take the SAT I in the spring of junior year. This test can be taken more than once to improve scores. Visit the College Board website at collegeboard.org for more information. Juniors are encouraged to take at least one college admission test during the spring of junior year. Register early, at least 6 to 8 weeks ahead, for the SAT or ACT. Those who wait run the risk of their preferred test center filling up.

Take particular note of the deadlines for scholarships and early admissions to schools (typically very early in the fall of senior year).



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COLLEGE ADMISSIONS STEPS FOR SENIORS

The final stages of the college application and admissions process can seem intense, but preparation in previous years and an understanding of the timing for key steps can make a big difference.

GRADE 12

September through December

- ✓ Continue to gather information on colleges of choice and make final visits.
- ✓ Narrow the list of college application choices in preferred order of acceptance. Experts recommend having 4 to 8 choices: at least 1 to 2 “sure bets,” 2 to 4 “target choices,” and 1 to 2 “reaches.” This number may vary for each individual. Remember that some applications will require a fee.
- ✓ Keep grades as high as possible and remember that attendance really does count.

Explore college and standardized test resources online:

scoir.com

educationplanner.org

collegeboard.org

act.org

- ✓ Register to take or retake the SATs and/or ACTs.
- ✓ Determine whether SAT Subject Tests are required by intended college(s) – and plan to take them no later than January of senior year.
- ✓ Check with school counselors for information regarding college visits to school as well as local college fair opportunities.



October through December

- ✓ If any targeted schools have rolling admissions, the EARLIER the application is submitted, the better. Some majors and programs require an early application, such as nursing, physical therapy, and physician assistant since there are limited spots for incoming freshmen.

The early application deadline at most colleges and universities is October 1. Students who submit their applications by this date usually receive acceptance details by December 31. Students who do not apply for early decision, but plan to attend college, should apply no later than May 1. Acceptance details are usually received by June 30. Please note, these dates vary by college and university.

- ✓ Begin collecting and thinking about financial aid information.
- ✓ Arrange to send first quarter grades to schools that request them.
- ✓ Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at studentaid.gov after October 1 to qualify for college financial aid.

Check out tips for the second half of your senior year! →



COLLEGE ADMISSIONS STEPS FOR SENIORS CONT.

January and February



Before the end of January:

Take any necessary SAT Subject Tests

- ✓ Submit mid-year reports to the schools that request them.
- ✓ Continue researching and applying for national and local scholarships.
 - Utilize College Board's Scholarship Search Engine through BigFuture at bigfuture.collegeboard.org.
 - Utilize the US Department of Labor's Scholarship Search Tool at careeronestop.org

February through May



It's decision time!

Notify schools about decisions.

- ✓ Submit a deposit to the college/institution you will attend.
- ✓ Write letters to the schools not selected.
- ✓ Continue to build study skills and keep grades as high as possible.
- ✓ Save copies of senior projects, research papers and other completed assignments that may be helpful in college as resources or to use in a portfolio when applying for student activities, internships, etc.



Get In Touch With Your Questions.

For additional resources or questions about the college application and admissions process, get in touch with York Catholic.

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