

# College Preparation Checklist

## ***Pre-High School***

- > Start saving for college if you haven't already. Look into college savings plans that your state may offer.
- > Do your best in school. If you are having difficulty, don't give up—get help from a teacher, tutor or mentor.
- > Become involved in school- or community-based extracurricular activities that enable you to explore your interests, meet new people and learn new things.

## ***High School:***

### **Every Year**

- > Continue to save for college.
- > Take challenging classes in 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.
- > Stay involved in school- or community- based extracurricular activities that interest you or enable you to explore career interests. Consider working or volunteering. *Remember—it's quality (not quantity) that counts.*

### **9th Grade**

- > Take challenging core classes. (Core subjects are listed above, under “High School: Every Year.”)
- > Start planning for college and thinking about your career interests. At **[www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)** you can register with MyFSA and research your career and college options.

### **10th Grade**

- > Continue to take challenging core classes. (Core subjects are listed above, under “High School: Every Year.”)
- > Meet with your school counselor or mentor to discuss colleges and their requirements.

# College Preparation Checklist

## 11th Grade

### All Year

- > Continue to challenge yourself academically. 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.
- > Research colleges that interest you.
- > Investigate financial aid, including scholarships. Understand the different types and sources of aid.
- > For more information about scholarships and federal student aid opportunities, visit [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov).

### Fall

- > Take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).<sup>\*</sup> You must take the test in 11th grade to qualify for scholarships and programs associated with the National Merit Program.

### Spring

- > Register for and take exams for college admission.<sup>\*</sup> Many colleges accept the SAT I and/or SAT II: Subject Test, while others accept the ACT. Check with the colleges you are interested in to see what tests they require.

## Summer Before 12th Grade

- > Narrow down the list of colleges you are interested in attending. If you can, visit the schools that interest you.
- > Contact colleges to request information and applications for admission. Ask about financial aid, admission requirements and deadlines.
- > Decide whether you are going to apply under a particular college's early decision or early action program. Be sure to learn about the program deadlines and requirements.

<sup>\*</sup> REMEMBER: Register for all tests in advance and be sure to give yourself time to prepare appropriately! If you have difficulty paying a registration fee, see your school counselor about getting a fee waiver.

# College Preparation Checklist

## 12th Grade

### All Year

- > Keep taking classes that challenge you. 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.
- > Work hard all year; second-semester grades can affect scholarship eligibility.
- > Stay involved and seek leadership roles in your activities.

### Fall

- > Meet with your school counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate and fulfill college admission requirements.
- > If you haven't done so already, register for and take exams such as the SAT I, SAT II: Subject Test, or ACT for college admission.\* Check with the colleges you are interested in to see what tests they require.
- > Apply to the colleges you have chosen. Prepare your applications carefully. Follow the instructions, and **PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO DEADLINES!**
- > Well before your application deadlines, ask your counselor and teachers to submit required documents (e.g., transcript, letters of recommendation) to the colleges to which you're applying.
- > To prepare to apply for federal student aid, be sure to get a PIN at [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov) so that you can complete your application and access your information online. One of your parents must also get a PIN.

### Winter

- > Encourage your parent(s) to complete income tax forms early. If your parent(s) have not completed the tax forms, you can provide estimated information on your federal student aid application, but remember to make any necessary changes later.
- > As soon after January 1 as possible, complete and submit your *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA), along with any other financial aid applications your school(s) of choice may require. You can complete the FAFSA online at **[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)** or on paper, but completing the application online is faster and easier. You should submit your FAFSA by the earliest financial aid deadline of the schools to which you are applying, usually by early February.
- > If you have questions about the federal student aid programs or need assistance with the application process, call **1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)** or the TTY for the hearing-impaired, 1-800-730-8913.
- > After you submit the FAFSA, you should receive your *Student Aid Report* (SAR) within one to four weeks. Quickly make any necessary corrections and submit them to the FAFSA processor.
- > Complete scholarship applications.

### Spring

- > Visit colleges that have invited you to enroll.
- > Review your college acceptances and compare financial aid packages.
- > When you decide which school you want to attend, notify that school of your commitment and submit any required financial deposit. Many schools require this notification and deposit by May 1.

\* REMEMBER: Register for all tests in advance and be sure to give yourself time to prepare appropriately! If you have difficulty paying a registration fee, see your school counselor about getting a fee waiver.