

Parent Action Plan: 9th Grade

The beginning of high school is an exciting time. Your child may be adjusting to a new school, making new friends and becoming more independent. But your child still needs your help and involvement. Here are some things you can do together to succeed this year.

Summer Before High School

- Visit a college campus together. It's a great way to get your child excited about college. Learn more about how you and your child can [prepare for a campus visit](#).
- Get the facts about what college costs. You may be surprised at how affordable higher education can be. Start by reading [Understanding College Costs](#).
- Show your child how to explore career ideas. He or she can make a list of interests, talents and favorite activities and start matching them with occupations. Learn more about how your child can [complete a career worksheet](#).
- Come up with fun reading ideas. Look for magazines or newspapers your child may like and talk about the books you loved reading when you were your child's age. If your family makes reading enjoyable, it can become a daily habit.

Fall

- Make sure your child meets with the school counselor. Your child should schedule a meeting to talk about college and career options and to choose the most-appropriate classes. Learn more about [the high school counselor's role](#).
- Help your child set goals for the school year. Working toward specific goals helps your child stay motivated and focused.
- Make a plan to check in regularly about schoolwork. If you keep up with your child's tests, papers and homework assignments, you can celebrate successes and head off problems as a team. Get [homework tips for your child](#).
- Talk about extracurricular activities. Getting involved in clubs and other groups is a great way for your child to identify interests and feel more engaged in school. Read more about [the benefits of extracurriculars](#).

Winter

- Start thinking about financial aid. It's not too early to look into types of aid that could help you cover college costs. Start by reading [7 Things You Need to Know About Financial Aid](#).
- Discuss next year's classes. Make sure your child is challenging him- or herself — and taking the courses college admission officers expect to see. Learn more about the [high school classes that colleges look for](#).

Spring

- Help your child start a college list. Visit [College Search Step-by-Step](#) together to get tips on starting a college search and figuring out what matters most to your child when choosing a college.
- See how much you need to save for college. Use the [College Savings Calculator](#) to get an idea of where you are compared with your savings goal.
- Help your child make summer plans. Summer is a great time to explore interests and learn new skills — and colleges look for students who pursue meaningful summer activities. Find out ways your child can [stay motivated this summer](#).

Parent Action Plan: 10th Grade

As your child settles into the high school experience, it's a great time for him or her to take on new challenges. It's also not too early to explore colleges, college majors and career goals. Use the list below to help make 10th grade count.

Summer

- Visit a college campus together. It's a great way to get your 10th-grader excited about college. Learn more about how you and your child can [prepare for a campus visit](#).
- Get the facts about what college costs. You may be surprised by how affordable higher education can be. Start by reading [Understanding College Costs](#).
- Help your sophomore explore career ideas. He or she can make a list of interests, talents and favorite activities and start matching them with occupations. Learn how to use exercises like these to [make a career worksheet](#).
- Come up with fun reading ideas. Look for magazines or newspapers your child may like and talk about the books you loved reading when you were in high school. If your family makes reading enjoyable, it can become a daily habit.

Fall

- Make sure your child meets with the school counselor. Your sophomore should schedule a meeting to talk about college and career options and to make sure he or she is taking the most-appropriate classes. Learn more about [the high school counselor's role](#).
- Encourage your child to set goals for the school year. Working toward specific goals helps your high schooler stay motivated and focused.
- Make a plan to check in regularly about schoolwork. If you keep up with your child's tests, papers and homework assignments, you can celebrate successes and head off problems as a team. Get [homework tips](#) for your sophomore.
- Talk about extracurricular activities. Getting involved in clubs and other groups is a great way for your child to identify interests and feel more engaged in school. Read more about [the benefits of extracurriculars](#).
- Help your 10th-grader get ready to take the PSAT/NMSQT, if their school offers it to sophomores. Taking the test this fall can help your child prepare for the SAT and get on track for college. Sophomores can also use their score reports to figure out which academic areas they need to work on. Learn more about the [PSAT/NMSQT](#).

Winter

- If your child was not offered the PSAT/NMSQT as a 10th-grader, they may be offered the PSAT 10 in February or March. They are the same test, just offered at different times of the year.
- Review PSAT 10 or PSAT/NMSQT results together. Log in to the [student score reporting portal](#) with your child to learn what she or he is doing well and which skills your child should work on to get ready for college and career. It will also connect your child to [free, personalized SAT study tools](#); AP courses; and college and career planning resources.
- Start thinking about ways to pay for college. Most families get help paying for college costs. Read [7 Things You Need to Know About Financial Aid](#) to learn more.
- Encourage your sophomore to consider taking SAT Subject Tests. Many colleges require or recommend taking these tests to get a sense of your child's skills in a certain academic area. In general, it's best to take a Subject Test right after taking the relevant course. Learn more about [SAT Subject Tests](#).
- Discuss next year's classes. Make sure your child will be challenging him- or herself and taking the courses college admission officers expect to see. Learn more about the [high school classes that colleges look for](#).

Spring

- Make a college wish list together. Talk with your 10th-grader about qualities he or she may want in a college in terms of location, size, majors offered and so on. Check out [How to Find a College That Fits You](#) to learn more about deciding on college must-haves.

- See how much you need to save for college. Use the [College Savings Calculator](#) to get an idea of where you are in terms of your savings goal.
- Help your child make summer plans. Summer is a great time to explore interests and learn new skills — and colleges look for students who pursue meaningful summer activities. Find out five ways your high schooler can [stay motivated this summer](#).

Parent Action Plan: 11th Grade

Junior year usually marks a turning point. This is because for most students and families, it's when college planning activities kick into high gear. Here are some things you can do this year to support your child and give him or her the best options.

Summer

- **Get the facts about what college costs.** You may be surprised by how affordable higher education can be. Start by reading [Understanding College Costs](#).
- **Explore financial aid options.** These include grants and scholarships, loans, and work-study programs that can help pay for college costs. Find out more about how [financial aid can make college affordable](#).
- **Fall**
- **Make sure your child meets with the school counselor.** This meeting is especially important this year as your 11th-grader starts to engage in the college application process. Learn more about the [counselor's role in applying to college](#).
- **Help your child stay organized.** Work with your 11th-grader to make weekly or monthly to-do lists to keep on top of the tasks required to get ready for applying to colleges. For more time-management tips, see [8 Ways to Take Control of Your Time](#).
- **Help your junior get ready for the PSAT/NMSQT in October.** This is a preliminary test that helps students practice for the SAT and assess their academic skills. Juniors who score well on the test are also eligible for scholarship opportunities. Find out more about the [PSAT/NMSQT](#).
- **Encourage your child to set goals for the school year.** Working toward specific goals helps your high school student stay motivated and focused.

Winter

- **Review PSAT/NMSQT results together** by logging in to the [student score reporting portal](#). Your child's score report shows what they should work on to get ready for college; lists Advanced Placement courses that might be a good match for them; and connects them to [free, personalized SAT practice on Khan Academy](#) based on their results.
- **Help your child prepare for the SAT.** Many juniors take the SAT in the spring so they can get a head start on planning for college. See [which other tests](#) your high school junior may need to take.
- **Discuss taking challenging courses next year.** Taking honors courses or college-level courses like Advanced Placement as a senior can help your child prepare for college work — and these are also the courses that college admission officers like to see. Learn more about [advanced classes](#).
- **Encourage your junior to consider taking SAT Subject Tests.** Many colleges require or recommend taking these tests to get a sense of your child's skills in a certain academic area. In general, it's best to take a Subject Test right after taking the relevant course. Learn more about [SAT Subject Tests](#).
- **Encourage your child to take AP Exams.** If your 11th-grader takes AP or other advanced classes, have him or her talk with teachers now about taking these tests in May. Read more about the [AP Program](#).

Spring

- **Search together for colleges that meet your child's needs.** Once you have an idea of the qualities your child is looking for in a college, help him or her enter these criteria into [College Search](#) to create a list of colleges to consider applying to.
- **Help your child research scholarships.** This form of financial aid provides money for college that doesn't need to be repaid. Learn more through College Board's [Scholarship Search](#).
- **Attend college fairs and financial aid events.** These events allow you to meet with college representatives and get answers to questions. Your child can ask the school counselor how to find events in your area. Check out the [College Fair Checklist](#) for more information.

- **Help your child make summer plans.** Summer is a great time to explore interests and learn new skills — and colleges look for students who pursue meaningful summer activities. Help your high schooler look into [summer learning programs](#) or find a job or internship.
- **Visit colleges together.** Make plans to check out the campuses of colleges your child is interested in. Use the [Campus Visit Checklist](#) to learn how to get the most out of these experiences.

Parent Action Plan: 12th Grade

Senior year is a whirlwind of activities. This is a big year for your child as he or she balances schoolwork, extracurricular activities and the college application process. Use the suggestions below to help you and your child successfully navigate this important time.

[Download/print this checklist](#)

Summer

- **Visit colleges together.** If you haven't already, make plans to check out the campuses of colleges in which your child is interested. Use the [Campus Visit Checklist](#) to learn how to get the most out of these experiences.
- **Ask how you can help your senior finalize a college list.** You can help him or her choose which colleges to apply to by weighing how well each college meets his or her needs, for example. Find out more about [how to finalize a college list](#).
- **Find out a college's actual cost.** Once your 12th-grader has a list of a few colleges he or she is interested in, use [the College Board's Net Price Calculator](#) together to find out the potential for financial aid and the true out-of-pocket cost— or net price—of each college.
- **Encourage your child to get started on applications.** He or she can get the easy stuff out of the way now by filling in as much required information on college applications as possible. Read about [how to get started on applications](#).
- **Help your child decide about applying early.** If your senior is set on going to a certain college, he or she should think about whether applying early is a good option. Now is the time to decide because early applications are usually due in November. Read about the pros and cons of [applying early](#).
- **Gather financial documents:** To apply for most financial aid, your child will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You'll need your most recent tax returns and an FSA ID to complete the FAFSA, which opens Oct. 1.

Fall

- **Encourage your child to meet with the school counselor.** This year, he or she will work with the counselor to complete and submit college applications. Learn more about [the counselor's role in applying to college](#).
- **Create a calendar with your child.** This should include application deadlines and other important dates. Your child can find specific colleges' deadlines in [College Search](#). If your child saves colleges to a list there, he or she can get a custom online calendar that shows those colleges' deadlines.
- **Help your child prepare for college admission tests.** Many seniors retake college admission tests, such as the SAT, in the fall. Learn more about helping your 12th-grader [prepare for admission tests](#).
- **Help your child find and apply for scholarships.** He or she can find out about scholarship opportunities from the school counselor. Your high school student will need to request and complete scholarship applications and submit them on time. Learn more about [scholarships](#).
- **Offer to look over your senior's college applications.** But remember that this is your child's work so remain in the role of adviser and proofreader and respect his or her voice.
- **Fill out the FAFSA to apply for aid beginning Oct. 1.** The government and many colleges use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to award aid. Now it's easier than ever to fill out this form because you can automatically transfer your tax information online from the IRS to the FAFSA. Read [How to Complete the FAFSA](#) to learn more.
- **Complete the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®, if required.** If your child needs to submit the PROFILE to a college or scholarship program, be sure to find out the priority deadline and submit it by that date. Read [How to Complete the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE](#).
- **Encourage your child to set up college interviews.** An interview is a great way for your child to learn more about a college and for a college to learn more about your child. Get an overview of the [interview process](#).

Winter

- **Work together to apply for financial aid.** Have your child contact the financial aid offices at the colleges in which he or she is interested to find out what forms students must submit to apply for aid. Make sure he or she applies for aid by or before any stated deadlines. Funds are limited, so the earlier you apply, the better.
- **Learn about college loan options together.** Borrowing money for college can be a smart choice — especially if your high school student gets a low-interest federal loan. Learn more about the [parent's role in borrowing money](#).
- **Encourage your senior to take SAT Subject Tests.** These tests can showcase your child's interests and achievements — and many colleges require or recommend that applicants take one or more Subject Tests. Read more about [SAT Subject Tests](#).
- **Encourage your child to take AP Exams.** If your 12th-grader takes AP or other advanced classes, have him or her talk with teachers now about taking these tests in May. Read more about the [AP Program](#).

Spring

- **Help your child process college responses.** Once your child starts hearing back from colleges about admission and financial aid, he or she will need your support to decide what to do. Read about [how to choose a college](#).
- **Review financial aid offers together.** Your 12th-grader will need your help to read through financial aid award letters and figure out which package works best. Be sure your child pays attention to and meets any deadlines for acceptance. Get more information on [financial aid awards](#).
- **Help your child complete the paperwork to accept a college's offer of admittance.** Once your child has decided which college to attend, he or she will need to review the offer, accept a college's offer, mail a tuition deposit and submit other required paperwork. Learn more about your high school senior's [next steps](#).

From Here to College in 14 Steps

College planning can be overwhelming and many families start too late. To help, we've simplified it to just the most essential steps to take during junior and senior years. Parents and guardians can use it to guide their students on their journey to college.

<https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/bigfuture/parent-toolkit-college-planning-overview.pdf>

STEP 1  Meet with your school counselor and check in regularly.	STEP 2  Sign up for a collegeboard.org account to track college-planning milestones.	STEP 3  Take the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall of junior year.	STEP 4  Search for scholarships big and small on bigfuture.org .	STEP 5  Get a free, personalized SAT practice plan and start preparing at satpractice.org .
STEP 6  Take the SAT for the first time during spring of junior year.	STEP 7  Search for colleges at bigfuture.org .	STEP 8  Get the real cost of schools you're considering by calculating their "net price."	STEP 9  Visit the campus of a college you're interested in.	STEP 10  Complete the FAFSA during October of senior year.
STEP 11  Apply to at least six schools in the fall of senior year.	STEP 12  Send SAT scores to schools.	STEP 13  Review acceptance letters and awards.	STEP 14  Make a college decision.	Want more college planning advice? Search for colleges, compare costs, find scholarships, and more at cb.org/parents .