

COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR

FRESHMAN YEAR:

Develop two lists for planning each year of high school – one for the courses you plan to take to prepare for college, the other for the school and outside activities in which you want to participate. If you would like more information about your school's offerings, talk to a counselor.

Read **Academic Preparation for College: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do**. See your counselor for a copy or write to the Office of Academic Affairs, Box CT, The College Board, 45 Columbus Avenue, New York, New York 10023-6992. This booklet will help you plan your high school course, schedule, and activities to prepare for college.

SOPHOMORE YEAR:

Find out what resources are available in your high school to help you plan for college. Talk to your counselor and visit your school library, the Career Center, or public library to familiarize yourself with catalogs, computerized college-search programs, and general guides such as **The College Handbook, Index of Majors, and College Cost Book**.

Update plans for high school courses and activities you began last year. If you want to take Achievement Tests for college admission, ask the counseling office for registration dates. It is a good idea to take each test just after you finish your last course in the subject.

If you are particularly strong in a subject, talk to a counselor or teacher about taking an Advanced Placement (AP) Program Examination or the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) test in that subject.

Do you plan to take the PSAT/NMSQT in October of your junior year? Take the PSAT in your sophomore year for practice. See your counselor. In the fall, you will receive a free copy of the **PSAT/NMSQT Student Bulletin**. Take the practice test inside. Fee waivers are available to juniors who cannot pay the test fees.

JUNIOR YEAR:

September – Review your high school course plans and your plans for high school activities.

If you have not done so yet, identify the sources of college and career information in your school – counselors, college catalogs, guidance publications, college guidebooks, and computerized college search programs. Ask your counselor if there is a “parents’ night” or “college night” for college-bound students.

To expand your information about colleges, look at student newspapers and yearbooks from colleges, and talk to classmates, parents, teachers, and recent graduates of your school who are in college.

If your school has a college counselor, make an appointment for you and your parents to discuss what you can do to improve your college preparation and college selection processes.

Check with your counselor about taking the PSAT/NMSQT in October. Ask for a free copy of the **PSAT/NMSQT Student Bulletin** and take the practice test inside. By doing well on the test, you may be eligible for scholarships and awards.

October – Develop lists of your interests, educational priorities, special talents and abilities, social and cultural preferences, and personal qualities.

Develop a list of what you think you would like to study and do in college. Rank the items in order of importance to you now.

Obtain dates and places of local college fairs from your counseling office. Try to attend at least one fair in order to talk to college representatives.

The PSAT/NMSQT will be administered in October. See your counselor for a date.

November – List the college features that suit your interests, needs, and abilities, and try to rank them in order of importance to you. These include size, type of college, location, fields of study offered, academic quality, necessary

facilities, desirable programs, special opportunities, cost and financial aid opportunities, and social and cultural environments.

If you have not yet done so, start saving money for your college education from part-time work, gifts, etc. Most colleges expect students to contribute at least \$700 towards their freshman-year expenses in addition to what their parents provided; some colleges expect even more.

December – If you took the PSAT/NMSQT test in October, you will receive your test report this month. Use this information to interpret and understand your score.

Plan to take Achievement Tests while course material is still fresh in your mind. Ask your counselor about registration dates, late deadlines, and special requests. Achievement Tests are given in 18 subjects and last one hour each. They are described in the booklet **Taking the Achievement Tests**, which is available in your school's counseling office.

January – If you have already identified a college you would like to visit this year (visits are not mandatory), write to the admission office and inform them of where you go to high school and what your academic interests are. Request an application form and a campus interview. Provide several possible dates for your visit.

Start educating yourself about college costs and financial aid. Ask your counselor for a free copy of **Meeting College Costs**, and consult the **College Cost Book**, published by the College Board, or a similar publication. Encourage your family to learn more, too.

February – Investigate private student aid and scholarship programs for which you might be eligible to compete. Use directories available in many school and public libraries.

If your counselor recommends that you take the SAT or ACT tests this year, ask him or her for a free copy of the appropriate brochure, **Taking the SAT** or **Taking the ACT Assessment**, and read it thoroughly. **Taking the SAT** contains a practice test; take the test and score it. Fee waivers are available for students who cannot afford the test fees.

March – If you are considering taking CLEP or AP Examinations this spring, ask your teacher or counselor for advice and registration information. See "May," below, for AP Examination dates.

April – Develop a preliminary list of colleges that interest you. Write for their catalogs and application forms, citing your academic and other interests. If appropriate, apply for an interview and prepare for it by reading the catalog and reviewing your goals and interests.

May – **Advanced Placement Examinations** are given in high schools nation-wide. **Check with your counselor.**

Identify teachers, administrators, counselors, and other adults (e.g., minister or employer) whom you could ask for letters of recommendation.

This academic year, the registration deadline for the **Achievement Tests** is posted in the counseling center. Be sure you check with your counselor. You may also take them the following year.

Read your local newspapers carefully this spring to find out which civic, cultural, and service organizations in your area award financial aid to graduating seniors. Start a file.

June – Most colleges and families expect students to help pay for college costs. If possible, use your summer to earn money for college in a job related to your career interests.

SENIOR YEAR:

September – If you have not clarified your educational goals, needs, and preferences and developed a preliminary list of colleges, do so now.

Reduce your preliminary college list to approximately five to ten colleges. Write to each college's director of admission to request its catalog, application forms, and financial aid information.

When you receive this information, analyze the application instructions to see what information is required and to learn about all due dates. You may have to submit test scores, Achievement Test scores, an essay, application form, recommendations, and a financial aid application form.

Create a complete checklist of test names and registration deadlines, fees, test dates, college application deadlines financial aid applications and deadlines, and other materials that you will need.

Some colleges charge a \$ 10 to \$ 50 fee when you submit a completed application. If you cannot pay the fee, write to the college's admissions director, who may excuse you from paying.

If you took an admission test last year, and wonder whether or not you would benefit from taking it again, consult your counselor.

If you take an admission test this year, plan to take it at least six to eight weeks before you must submit scores to the colleges. Your counseling office has registration dates and materials.

If you want to take the Achievement tests this year, ask your Counseling office for registration dates.

October – Chances are, you will have to submit a least one essay as part of your application. Start to develop an outline of an essay this month.

If you decide to visit colleges, ask your high school counselor for the names of former students in your area who are enrolled at the colleges or recently graduated from the. Talk to these people before your visits to get the most from them.

Decide who to ask for recommendations, and ask them now, if you have not already done so. When you ask, provide an addressed and stamped return envelope together with the appropriate college forms and an outline of your academic record and extracurricular activities.

Obtain a free copy of **Meeting College Costs** from your counselor and read it carefully. It explains the financial aid process. Check your library for books and pamphlets about financial aid, and look for special state, federal, and local programs from which you may be able to get aid.

November – Find out from the colleges to which you are seeking admission exactly what forms you need to complete in order to start the process. You usually can get copies of the College Scholarship Services Financial Aid Form (FAFSA) and other forms from your high school counselor. Some colleges have their own financial aid applications that you also must complete.

Complete the first draft of your essay this month and start to revise it.

November 1 – 15: Most colleges using "early decision" admissions require test scores and applications between these dates. There are two types of policies. One type requires the student to withdraw applications from all other colleges as soon as he or she is accepted by the first-choice college. The other type allows the student to apply only to the first-choice college, unless the student is rejected by that college. Students must apply by November 15 and are notified by December 15.

Fill out applications for early decision, early action, or rolling admissions candidacy.

A counselor usually sends a copy of your high school grades to colleges. Return the proper forms to your counselor at least two weeks before colleges require them.

December: Begin completing your FAFSA and other student aid applications. To avoid costly delays in processing your application, make sure to fill out their FAFSA and other forms completely, accurately, and legibly. You do not need to wait until you have received W-2 statements from employers to begin working on the FAFSA, but you should not actually mail the form before January 1. If colleges have their own financial aid application forms, fill them and return them when you apply for admission.

Check deadlines for state government-sponsored student aid programs with your guidance counselor and obtain the forms you need to apply. In many states, you can use the FAFSA to apply for state aid.

Complete your essays. Type them and be sure they are clean, neat, attractive, grammatically correct, interesting and easy to read. Keep copies.

Give your counselor, principal, or designated office five (5) days to complete the "Secondary School Report" section of your college application forms.

December 15: This is the usual deadline date for application to some selective colleges. Others have deadlines in February or later. Be sure to apply on time to colleges you have selected.

January: Make sure you sign and date your financial aid applications and send them in as soon as possible **after** January 1. You can use the FAFSA to apply for all forms of federal aid, including Pell Grants, as well as for state government-sponsored assistance in many states. Ask your counselor for details.

February: Men who are 18 years old or over must prove draft registration in order to receive federal financial aid. Inquire at your local post office about providing this information.

March: In your strongest courses, consider taking the AP Examinations or CLEP tests. Talk to your teachers and ask the counseling office for CLEP and AP Examination registration dates.

If you are applying to more than one college, carefully rank your preferences by location, academic program, and the other characteristics that are important to you. Does their final ranking match your “gut” feeling?

April: Most selective colleges start to announce their decisions this month. If you are accepted at more than one college, decide which one is best for you. Talk it over with your parents, counselor, family, and friends, and think it through by yourself. Weigh any offers against the factors that are important to you.

If an accepting college requests a non-refundable deposit before you have heard from other colleges that interest you, ask your counselor for advice.

Carefully review financial aid award notices from colleges. Call or write to the financial aid office if you have questions. Don't just look at **how much** aid you are offered; look also at **how much of your need** the award will cover. If you don't get any (or enough) financial aid, ask the college if other financing plans are available to help families meet the costs.

May: As soon as possible after May 1, notify colleges to which you are accepted of your decision to attend, in keeping with the Candidates Reply Date Agreement (some colleges do not subscribe to the Agreement and may have earlier deadlines).

If you are “wait-listed” by a college and intend to enroll if accepted, call, visit, or write to the admission director to state your intention and ask how to strengthen your application. Recent evidence of notable academic or other achievements could help.

As soon as you have decided which college to attend, notify your college counselor and all colleges that have accepted you. Be fair to the colleges and to the students on colleges' “waiting” lists.

If you are not admitted to any of the colleges you selected, see your counselor immediately about what to do next.

May – Advanced Placement Examinations are given in high schools nationwide. Check with your counselor for dates.

June – Make sure that you **accept** the financial aid award from the college you decide to attend and **decline** all others so that the funds can be made available to other students. Find out from the college you choose what else you need to do, if anything, to establish and maintain your eligibility for financial aid.