

Preparing for College: What to do & When

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Confused about what you should be doing to prepare for college and when? Here's a brief description of things you can do:

7th and 8th Grade

- Start looking at possible careers and education requirements on FACTS.org. This will help guide course decisions in high school.
- Take algebra, foreign language and computer courses by the 8th grade to be better prepared for state university admission requirements and Advanced Placement (AP), dual enrollment, or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses in high school.
- Consider which high school graduation program you will select and start planning your 9th grade class schedule.

9th Grade

- Check your grades and evaluate your progress with the High School Academic Evaluations every term on FACTS.org.
- If you haven't already looked at possible careers and education requirements, explore the Career Planning portion of this site.
- Start looking at admission requirements for different postsecondary institutions (schools after high school such as community colleges, technical centers, colleges and universities, etc).
- Select your graduation program and try to plan coursework for all your high school years now. Qualifying for graduation, Bright Futures scholarships, the Talented 20 program, and higher ed admissions, all depend in part on course selections.
- Take schoolwork seriously because every year counts.
- Apply for a Social Security number if you don't already have one.
- Take computer classes early in high school because it will help with future courses.

10th Grade

- Check your grades and evaluate your progress with the High School Academic Evaluations every term on FACTS.org.
- Meet with your guidance counselor about placement into AP and dual enrollment courses to earn high school and college credit.
- Register to take the PSAT test in October, it's the SAT practice test and the National Merit Scholarship qualifying test.

- Register to take the PLAN test in fall, that's the ACT practice test. PLAN includes an interest inventory to help you with education and career planning.
- If you haven't already done so, use the career planning programs on FACTS.org and meet with your guidance counselor to help identify careers of interest to you.
- In addition, use the Degree Program Search, Institution Search, and other planning resources on FACTS.org to narrow down your choices. If you are planning on attending a community college, college, or university, now is a good time to visit college campuses and talk to other college students.

11th Grade

- Check your grades and evaluate your progress with the High School Academic Evaluations every term on FACTS.org.
- Meet with your guidance counselor about placement into AP and dual enrollment courses to earn high school and college credit.
- If haven't already done so, register to take the PSAT and/or PLAN practice tests in the fall.
- Be aware of deadlines and requirements for admissions at schools you are considering, such as test scores, high school transcripts, essays, letters of recommendation, essays, portfolio items, resumes, etc. You may want to start putting some of these things together.
- Attend career and college/university fairs held at your high school or in the area.
- Take the SAT and/or ACT tests in spring and summer.
- After completing specific advanced coursework, take the SAT-II subject tests or AP exams to earn college credit.
- If you're ready, start applying this year.
- Start looking for scholarship and financial aid opportunities. Go to the library, guidance counselor, career center, or the Internet to find scholarship and financial aid directories. Request applications and keep track of deadlines.
- Interested in an athletic scholarship? Talk to your coaches, contact the athletic departments of your favorite schools, or go to the NCAA web site for more information.
- Plan visits to campuses. Make appointments, especially if visiting during the summer.

12th Grade

- Check your grades and evaluate your progress with the High School Academic Evaluations every term on FACTS.org.
- Continue taking dual enrollment courses if you qualify.

- After completing specific advanced coursework, take the SAT-II subject tests or AP exams to earn college credit.
- Take the SAT or ACT in fall, or retake them if necessary.
- Prepare admissions application packages and begin applying in fall.
- After December 1, but before the end of your senior year, complete the Florida Financial Aid Student Application (FFASA) to apply for state grant, scholarship (including Bright Futures), and loan programs. This application is available online at FACTS.org.
- After January 1, but before the earliest college deadline, complete the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) application. This application is available online at FACTS.org. Be sure to send the application early to maximize your chances for receiving financial aid.
- Wait for college admission decisions and financial aid award letters. You need to determine the college best meeting your personal academic goals and financial needs. Many schools have an early-May decision deadline to accept or decline applicants.
- Upon notification of acceptance let the other colleges you applied to know of your decision. This frees up places and possible financial aid for other students.
- Work with guidance counselors to find colleges and universities with openings if your top choices are not available.
- Be aware, after acceptance there may still be things to do such as arranging for final transcripts to be sent, housing applications, and immunizations.