

PLAN YOUR PATH TO COLLEGE

USE THIS HANDY REFERENCE CALENDAR TO KEEP TRACK AS YOU PREPARE TO GET INTO THE COLLEGE OF YOUR CHOICE

Freshman Year

Fall Term

- Plan ahead. Schedule time to meet with your guidance counselor and plan a strategy of courses that will meet college entrance requirements.

Sophomore Year

September

- Speak with your guidance counselor about taking the PSAT/NMSQT and the PLAN in preparation for the SAT and ACT.

October

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT and/or PLAN. Sophomore-year PSAT/NMSQT scores will not count toward the National Merit Scholarship Competition, but it is good practice.

December

- Receive results of PSAT/NMSQT and/or PLAN. Consult with your guidance counselor to investigate ways to improve scores on standardized tests.

Junior Year

September

- Map out a testing schedule for the coming year, including the PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, SAT Subject Tests, and/or ACT. Pick the test dates that will work with your schedule, taking into account family events, extracurricular activities, and holidays.
- Register for the October PSAT/NMSQT.
- Meet with your guidance counselor to review your course plan for the school year and plan your senior schedule.
- Check your course transcript. Are you on track to complete all the credits required by schools you are interested in applying to?
- Begin to establish criteria for the college search: Are you interested in a small rural college or a large urban campus? Visit some local colleges to learn what you do and don't like.

October

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT. Scores are important, as they are used to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Competition and the National Achievement program; plus, it's good practice for the SAT.
- Start doing a search for financial aid. Options include grants, loans, and scholarships.

December

- Receive results of the PSAT/NMSQT. Consult your guidance counselor to consider whether an SAT prep course would be a good investment.

February

- Contact the colleges you are interested in to find out if they prefer the ACT or the SAT.

Spring Break

- Visit schools that interest you.

April

- Consider registering for the May and June SAT and ACT test dates; it's not too early to start testing.
- Re-evaluate your list of potential schools and eliminate those that no longer interest you.
- Begin searching for financial aid.

May

- If you're enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) classes, it's time to take the appropriate AP tests.
- Continue to visit colleges. Call ahead and ask for appointments with the departments of financial aid and admissions, academic advisors, professors, and students.

Senior Year

September

- Continue to research financial aid options.
- Make sure you have all applications required for financial aid and admission.
- Check admission and financial aid deadlines for the schools you plan to apply to.
- Register for the fall ACT and/or SAT test dates as needed.
- Obtain letters of recommendation and plan college visits.

October

- Meet with your guidance counselor to review your final list of colleges.
- File early decision applications if you have made a decision.
- Attend college fairs to further investigate the colleges where you would like to apply.
- Have official test scores sent by the testing agency to the colleges on your short list.

November

- Start writing and editing your application essays.
- Complete your college applications (make copies before mailing).

December

- Mail all applications.
- Schedule college admission interviews, if required.

January

- File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon after January 1 as possible. You can file online at www.fafsa.ed.gov or request a paper form by calling (800) 4-FED-AID (433-3243). Talk to your counselor about special forms your state might require.

- Request that your school send your grade reports/transcripts to the colleges you applied to.
- Complete your income tax forms as soon as possible. Contact the colleges to see if they require any other forms.
- Contact the colleges and confirm that all application materials (transcripts, recommendations, and financial aid forms) have been received.

February

- You will receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) within four weeks of completing the FAFSA online (longer for the paper application). Review the SAR, make any necessary corrections, and return it to the FAFSA processor. If you have not received your SAR and more than four weeks has passed, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center.
- Complete scholarship applications.

April

- Review acceptances and compare financial aid packages.

May

- By May 1, you should make a decision about which college you will attend and send in your acceptance of the school's offer along with any other necessary paperwork.
- Notify other prospective colleges that you have selected another school.
- If your first-choice college placed you on a waiting list, let them know that you are still interested in attending the school.

June

- Ask your counselor to forward your final transcript to the college you selected
- Contact your college to determine when fees are due for tuition and room and board.

Article provided by Sally Wood

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