

9th Grade

Every Year in High School

10th Grade

- Start planning for college and thinking about your career interests. At www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/myfsa you can register with MyFSA and research your career and college options.
- Make a list of your awards, honors, paid or volunteer work, and extracurricular activities. Consider participating in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, and camps with specialty focuses such as music, arts, and science.
- Work with one of your parents to update your information in *FAFSA4caster* at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov, and 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 activities that interest you or let you explore career interests. Consider working or volunteering. Remember—it's quality (not quantity) that counts.
- Talk to your school counselor and other mentors about education after high school. Your counselor can answer questions about what classes to take in high school, how to sign up for standardized tests, and where to get money for college.

To Explore:

- Check out *KnowHow2Go: The Four Steps to College*, which suggests some actions you can take as you start thinking about education beyond high school. The online version of the brochure is at www.knowhow2go.org.
- Get answers to common questions about college: Read the "college q&a question of the week" at www.college.gov.
- Learn about managing your money in the "Financial Literacy" section of www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/preparing.
- Take another look at your financial situation, and be sure you're on the right track to pay for college.
- Talk to your child about the schools he or she is considering. Ask why those schools appeal to your child, and help him or her clarify goals and priorities.
- Attend college fairs with your child, but don't take over the conversation with the college representative. Just listen, and let your child do the talking.
- Take your child to visit college campuses, preferably when classes are in session.

- Meet with your school counselor or mentor to discuss colleges and their requirements.
- Consider taking a practice Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) or the PLAN exam.
- Plan to use your summer wisely: Work, volunteer, or take a summer course (away or at a local college).
- Go to career information events to get a more detailed look at career options.
- Log on to your MyFSA account at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/myfsa and try the Career Finder, or look at your career search results again if you used the Career Finder last year (see page 12). Then include the recommended majors from the search as you use the College Matching Wizard on the site to find schools that might be a good fit with your interests and goals.
- Review "Every Year in High School" on page 10 of this checklist.
- Meet with your school counselor or mentor to discuss colleges and their requirements.
- Consider taking a practice Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) or the PLAN exam.
- Plan to use your summer wisely: Work, volunteer, or take a summer course (away or at a local college).
- Go to career information events to get a more detailed look at career options.
- Log on to your MyFSA account at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/myfsa and try the Career Finder, or look at your career search results again if you used the Career Finder last year (see page 12). Then include the recommended majors from the search as you use the College Matching Wizard on the site to find schools that might be a good fit with your interests and goals.
- Find out whether your child's school has college nights or financial aid nights. Plan to attend those events with your child.
- Help your child develop independence by encouraging him or her to take responsibility for balancing homework with any other activities or a part-time job.
- Learn about the standardized tests your child will be taking during 10th through 12th grades: the PSAT/NMSQT, SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests (see www.collegeboard.com), and/or the PLAN exam and the ACT (see www.act.org).
- Get a brief overview of financial aid from "Financial Aid and Scholarships for College" in the "Parents School Box" section at www.ed.gov/parents.

11th Grade

All Year

- Review "Every Year in High School" on page 10 of this checklist.
- Explore careers and their earning potential in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* at www.bls.gov/oco.
- Log on to your MyFSA account (see page 12) at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/myfsa and look at the information for any colleges you saved if you completed the College Matching Wizard (see page 13) in the past. Try the college search again if you've changed your mind about what you want from a school.
- Go to college fairs and college-preparation presentations by college representatives.

Fall

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT.* You must take the test in 11th grade to qualify for scholarships and programs associated with the National Merit Scholarship Program.

Spring

- Register for and take exams for college admission.* The tests that many colleges require are the SAT Reasoning Test, the SAT Subject Tests, and the ACT. Check with the colleges you are interested in to see what tests they require.
- Use www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/scholarship to find scholarships for which you might want to apply. Some deadlines fall as early as the summer between 11th and 12th grades, so prepare now to submit applications soon.
- Take another look at your financial situation, and be sure you're on the right track to pay for college.
- Talk to your child about the schools he or she is considering. Ask why those schools appeal to your child, and help him or her clarify goals and priorities.
- Attend college fairs with your child, but don't take over the conversation with the college representative. Just listen, and let your child do the talking.
- Take your child to visit college campuses, preferably when classes are in session.

Summer

Before 12th Grade

Students

To Do:

- Narrow down the list of colleges you are considering 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.
- Update your information in *FAFSA4caster* one last time at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov, and compare the results to the actual costs at colleges to which you will apply. To supplement any aid *FAFSA4caster* estimates you might

12th Grade

- Work hard all year; second-semester grades can affect scholarship eligibility.
- Stay involved in after-school activities, and seek leadership roles if possible.

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 such exams as the SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests, 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 so that you can complete your application and access your information online. One of your parents also should get a PIN.

Winter

- Encourage your parent(s) to complete income tax forms early. If your parent(s) has (have) not completed their tax forms, you can provide estimated information on your federal student aid application, but remember to make any necessary changes later.
- As soon after Jan. 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 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. Refer to "FAFSA Filing Time" on page 22 of this checklist as you go through the application process.
- 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 three days to three weeks. Quickly make any necessary corrections and submit them to the FAFSA processor.
- Complete any last scholarship applications.

Spring

- Visit colleges that have invited you to enroll.
- Review your college acceptances and compare the colleges' financial aid packages.
- Contact a school's financial aid office if you have questions about the aid that school has offered you. In fact, getting to know your financial aid staff early is a good idea no matter what—they can tell you about deadlines, other aid for which you might wish to apply, and important paperwork you might need to submit.