

College Planning: 11th Grade

Junior year 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 stay on track for college.

FALL

- ☐ **Start with you:** Make lists of your abilities, social/cultural preferences, and personal qualities. List things you may want to study and do in college.
- ☐ **Learn about colleges.** Look at their websites and find colleges at bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search. Talk to friends, family members, teachers, and recent grads of your school now in college. List the college features that interest you.
- ☐ **Resource check:** Visit the counseling office and meet the counselors there. Is there a college night for students and families? When will college representatives visit your school? (Put the dates in your calendar.) Examine catalogs and guides.
- ☐ **At school, speak to your counselor about taking the PSAT/NMSQT[®],** which is given in October. If you plan to ask for testing accommodations (because of a disability), be sure the College Board has approved your eligibility.
- ☐ **Make a file to manage your college search, testing, and application data.** If appropriate (for example, if you're interested in drama, music, art, sports, etc.), start to gather material for a portfolio.
- ☐ **Estimate your financial aid need.** Financial aid can help you afford college. Use the College Board's *Getting Financial Aid* and the financial aid calculator at bigfuture.org to estimate how much aid you might receive.

WINTER

- ☐ **Sign up to take the SAT[®] in the spring.** You can register online or through your school. SAT fee waivers are available to eligible students. To prepare for the SAT, you can access free, personalized SAT practice tools at satpractice.org, including thousands of interactive questions, video lessons, practice tests, and more.
- ☐ **Begin a search for financial aid sources.** National sources include the College Board's Scholarship Search and electronic sources. Don't overlook local and state aid sources. (Ask a counselor for help or check your public library.)
- ☐ **With your family, make an appointment with your counselor** to discuss ways to improve your college-preparation and selection processes.
- ☐ **Ask a counselor or teacher about taking the SAT Subject Tests[™] in the spring.** You should take them while course material is still fresh in your mind. You can download *The SAT Subject Tests Student Guide*, which offers test-prep advice, from SATSubjectTests.org.
- ☐ **Explore AP[®].** The Advanced Placement[®] Program helps hundreds of thousands of high school students achieve their college dreams each year. Get the facts at apstudent.collegeboard.org/exploreap. If you're in AP classes, register for the AP Exams given in May.
- ☐ **Opt in to the College Board Opportunity Scholarships** at cb.org/opportunity. You can earn scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 by completing individual college planning steps. Complete all six steps and you'll be eligible for the \$40,000 scholarship.



SPRING

- ☐ **Contact your counselor** before leaving school for the summer if you are considering military academies or ROTC scholarships. If you want a four-year ROTC scholarship, you should begin the application process the summer before your senior year.
- ☐ **Develop a list of 15 or 20 colleges that are of interest to you.** You can find many colleges at which you'll be happy and get a great education. The college search is about exploring who you are and what you want and then finding colleges that will meet your goals.
- ☐ **Stay open to all the possibilities—don't limit your search.** To find the best college for you, you should apply to colleges of varying selectivity. Selective colleges admit a portion of students who apply. Some colleges are highly selective while others are less selective. Make sure to apply to public, private, in-state, and out-of-state schools so that you have plenty of options from which to choose.
- ☐ **Take the SAT.** The test is typically offered in March, May, and June. Make sure you start preparing for the test several months in advance using the tools available at satpractice.org. And remember, if you're not happy with your scores when you get them, you might want to test again in the fall. Many students take the test a second time as seniors, and they usually do better.
- ☐ **Start to gather documents for financial aid:** Be sure to keep a copy of your tax returns handy. You'll use these to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which opens on Oct. 1.

SUMMER

- ☐ **Register with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Center** if you are an athlete planning to continue playing a sport in college (ncaaclearinghouse.net).
- ☐ **Get your FSA ID:** Before you can fill out your FAFSA, you need to get a username and password (also known as an FSA ID).
- ☐ **Find a full-time or part-time job,** or participate in a summer camp or summer college program.
- ☐ **Visit colleges.** When planning your campus visits, make sure to allow time to explore each college. While you're there, talk to as many people as possible. These can include college admission staff, professors, and students. Take campus tours and, at colleges you're serious about, make appointments to have interviews with admission counselors.
- ☐ **Create a résumé—a record of your academic accomplishments, extracurricular activities, and work experiences since you started high school.**
- ☐ **Download applications.** Go to the website of each college's admission office and either complete the application online or request a paper application from colleges to which you'll apply. Check application dates—large universities may have early dates or rolling admission.
- ☐ **Visit some local colleges—large, small, public, and private.** A visit to a college campus can help you decide if that college is right for you. Make a plan ahead of time to get the most from your visit. Check out the campus checklist at bigfuture.org. Attend college fairs, too.
- ☐ **Scan local newspapers** to see which civic, cultural, and service organizations in your area award financial aid to graduating seniors. Start a file.

Visit **bigfuture.org** for more information.



Family Action Plan: 11th Grade

Junior year 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 provide 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 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**.

WINTER (CONTINUED)

- ☐ **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 your child talk with teachers now about taking these tests in May. Read more about the **AP Program**.
- ☐ **Encourage your child to opt in to the College Board Opportunity Scholarships.** Your child can earn scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 by completing individual college planning steps. When they complete all six steps, they'll be eligible for a \$40,000 scholarship.

SPRING

- ☐ **Search together for colleges that meet your child's needs.** Once you have an idea of the qualities your junior is looking for in a college, help your child enter these criteria into **College Search**. There your child can 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 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 perfect time to explore interests and learn new skills—and colleges look for students who pursue meaningful summer activities. Help your high school student 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.

Visit [cb.org/opportunity](https://collegeboard.org/opportunity) to learn more.

Visit **bigfuture.org** for more information.



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