

College Planning by Grade

Ninth Grade

- Meet with Logic/Rhetoric Principal and file a diploma plan. Make certain the diploma plan selected best utilizes your student's abilities and expectations for the future.
- Work to your full academic potential. The grades you earn in ninth grade will be included in your final high school GPA and class rank. This is important for college admissions and scholarships.
- Explore your interests and possible careers. Take advantage of area career day opportunities.
- Participate in extracurricular activities. Church activities, mission trips, community volunteer service, summer jobs, scouting, etc. are all important. Be involved and keep track of your involvement, especially areas indicating leadership or personal initiative.
- Talk to your parents about planning for college expenses. Continue or begin a savings plan for college.
- Look at college information. Use the internet to check out college web sites. Begin making a preliminary list of colleges that might interest you.
- Tour a nearby college if possible. As you travel or when you visit relatives or friends who live on or near a college campus, stop by for a visit. Check out the campus, dorms, library, and student center. Pick up a school catalog. Begin getting a feel for college life.
- Investigate summer enrichment programs.
- READ, READ, READ. Read as many books as possible from comprehensive reading lists. Learn about current affairs. Work continuously on your writing skills. Extensive reading and writing should be ongoing throughout high school (and earlier).
- Begin to maintain and save in an organized manner the important information that you will later need to meet your college admission requirements and complete scholarship applications.
- Begin to maintain a college portfolio consisting of a 6-pocket, portable organizer that can be found at most office supply stores. Place pockets or dividers for the following categories:
 - Transcripts, etc. - diploma plan, grades, PSAT scores, ACT & SAT scores, etc.
 - Extra-Curricular Activities - student council, athletics, clubs, church activities, music, mission trips, community service, scouting, etc.
 - Service Projects and Jobs - volunteer opportunities and paid opportunities
 - Awards/Honors - academic, athletic, service, leadership, job recognition, etc.
 - Pictures - of activities related to any of the above topics: mission trips, academic banquets, competitions, etc.
 - College Related Information - SAT/ACT test dates, essay recommendation tips, yearly task list for college preparation, etc.

Tenth Grade

- In October take the PSAT/NMSQT for practice. Take advantage of credible SAT/PSAT preparation classes. Participate in the Student Search Service to start receiving mail from colleges.
- Become familiar with general college entrance requirements. Make note of required or recommended SAT/ACT scores, class ranking, level or course work, overall grade point average, etc.
- Continue to explore your interests and possible career choices. Continue taking advantage of area career day opportunities and career interest testing.
- Remember the importance of being a well-rounded individual. Work toward leadership positions in the activities that you like best. Become involved in community service, church service, missions, or other volunteer activities.
- READ, READ, READ. Read as many books as possible from comprehensive reading lists. Learn about current affairs.
- Work continuously on your writing skills. Extensive reading and writing should be ongoing throughout high school (and earlier). Work diligently to keep your grades up so you can have the highest GPA and class rank possible.
- Continue to assess your strengths, weaknesses, goals, and favorite subjects. Explore careers relative to your interest and abilities.
- Begin thinking about and discussing with your parents the type of college you would prefer (two-year or four-year, small or large, rural or urban, etc.)
- If you are planning to attend a military academy, now is the time to start planning and getting information. • Write to schools and obtain their academic requirements for admission.
- Visit a few more college campuses. Read all the mail you receive from colleges. You may see something you like.
- Attend college fairs. This is a great way to receive materials as well as speak to college representatives about their school.
- Continue saving for college, considering summer jobs, and investigating summer enrichment programs.
- Continue maintaining your College Portfolio (see ninth grade list). Maintaining this material now will save hours and hours of searching for the right information later and when time is more limited and precious.

Eleventh Grade

This year, you will begin the college selection process. Attend college fairs, financial aid seminars, general information sessions, etc., to learn as much as you can about the college application process. Make sure you are meeting NCAA requirements if you want to play Division I or II sports in college.

- September:
 - Make sure you are on track to complete your selected diploma plan. Save samples of your best work for your academic portfolio (all year). Maintain your co-curricular record (all year).
- October:

Junior year PSAT/NMSQT scores may qualify a student for the National Merit Scholarship Competition and the National Achievement and the National Hispanic Scholars Programs. So, even though these scores will not be used for college admission, it is still a good idea to take the PSAT. The more times you take standardized tests, the more familiar you will become with the format and the types of questions asked. If you wish to receive free information from colleges, indicate on the PSAT test answer form that you want to participate in the Student Search.
- November:
 - Junior year grades are extremely important in the college admission process, because they are a measure of how well you do in advanced, upper-level courses. Grades also are used to determine scholarships and grants for which you may be eligible. So put in the extra effort and keep those grades up.
 - If you will require financial aid, start researching your options for grants, scholarships and work-study programs. Start by visiting NACAC's Web resources for the CollegeBound to do research on your own using the Internet.
- December:
 - During December you should receive the results of your PSAT. Read your score report. Determine how you might improve on future standardized tests. The PSAT is excellent preparation for the SAT, which you should take in the spring. o If you plan to take the ACT (American College Test), register now for the February ACT. Many colleges accept the ACT or the SAT. Some colleges require the ACT or both SAT and some SAT subject tests. When you begin to explore different colleges and universities, double-check to see if they prefer or require the ACT, the SAT and/or the SAT subject tests.

- January:
 - Begin to make a preliminary list of colleges you would like to investigate further. Surf the Internet and use the college resources in the guidance office or library.
 - Ask your parents for your Social Security number (required on many college applications). If you were never issued a Social Security number, contact the closest Social Security office as soon as possible to obtain a number.

- February:
 - Develop your preliminary list of colleges.
 - Register for the March SAT if you have completed math courses covered on the SAT. If not, plan to take the SAT in May or June.
 - When selecting your senior courses, be sure to continue to challenge yourself academically.

- March:
 - Write, telephone, or use the Internet to request admission literature and financial aid information from the colleges on your list. There is no charge and no obligation to obtain general information about admission and financial aid.

- April:
 - Register for the May/June SAT and/or the May/June SAT Subject Tests. Not all SAT Subject Tests are given on every test date. Check the calendar carefully to determine when the Subject Tests you want are offered. Register for the June ACT if you want that test.
 - Continue to evaluate your list of colleges and universities. Eliminate colleges from the original list that no longer interest you and add others as appropriate.
 - Look into summer jobs or apply for special summer academic or enrichment programs. Colleges love to see students using their knowledge and developing their skills and interests.

- May:
 - Get a jump start on summer activities-consider enrolling in an academic course at a local college, pursuing a summer school program, applying for an internship, working, or volunteering. If you work, save part of your earnings for college.
 - Begin visiting colleges. Phone to set up appointments. Interviews are always a good idea. Many colleges will tell you they are optional, but an interview will show interest, enthusiasm and initiative on your part and provide an excellent opportunity to have your questions answered. Do a practice interview with your counselor, teacher, employer, or a senior who has had a college interview. Set up interviews as early as possible interview times become booked quickly.
 - Take the SAT or the SAT Subject Tests.

- June:
 - After school ends, get on the road to visit colleges. Seeing a college firsthand, taking a tour and talking to students can be the greatest help in deciding whether or not a school is right for you. Although it is ideal to visit colleges during the academic year, going in the summer will be valuable. Admission offices employ their students to give tours and answer questions from prospective students and their parents.
 - Take the SAT, the SAT Subject Tests and/or the ACT.

- July:
 - Visit colleges, take tours, have interviews and ask questions. Make college visiting a family event. Involve your parents and siblings in every step of your application process. Choosing the right college is a tough decision; the opinions of those who know you best provide insight into which college is best for you.

- August:
 - Continue to refine your list of potential colleges and universities.
 - Begin preparing for the actual application process: draft application essays; collect writing samples; and assemble portfolios or audition tapes. If you are an athlete and plan on playing in college, contact the coaches at the school to which you are applying and ask about intercollegiate and intramural sports programs and athletic scholarships.
 - Complete the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse form if you hope to play Division I or II sports. (This form cannot be mailed until you finish your sixth semester of high school.)

Twelfth Grade

- July, August, September:
 - Review your career plans and determine which type of school is right for you. Begin to narrow your choices of schools.
 - Write to colleges requesting application forms, catalogs, and financial aid information. Much of this can also be found or requested on the college's web site.
 - Visit some college campuses. Be sure to meet with an admission representative and a financial aid officer.
 - Contact the office for registration materials and test dates for the ACT and SAT or visit their websites for online registration at College Board and ACT.
 - Make a list of test names, dates and fees, registration deadlines, college application deadlines, and financial aid applications and deadlines. Remember that it takes at least six weeks to get admissions test scores.
 - Begin asking teachers, counselors and employers for letter of recommendation. FOR THIS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED, GIVE AT LEAST TWO WEEKS NOTICE. Provide an addressed and stamped envelope with the appropriate college forms and an outline of your academic record and extracurricular activities for each recommendation.
 - Maintain or improve academic grades during the year. Colleges look unfavorably upon failing grades and an extremely "light load;" one's senior year should be academically challenging.
 - Throughout the year keep a log of volunteer activities that can be used for scholarship opportunities and add to your profile folder.

- October, November
 - Chances are, you will have to submit at least one essay as part of your application. Start to develop an outline of an essay. It is a crucial part of your application and deserves special attention.
 - Continue to research financial aid options.
 - Most colleges using "early decision" admissions require test scores and applications by November 15.
 - Attend college fairs. There are a few in the area. See the Academic Advisor for more information.
 - Attend financial aid seminars.
 - Take ACT, SAT, and/or SAT Subject Tests, if necessary. When test scores are received, check to see that you have the scores needed for entrance to your colleges of choice.

- Send in housing applications in early fall, especially if dorm room space is highly competitive. This is a must for most of the larger and competitive public and private universities.
- December:
 - All applications and a copy of your high school transcript should be sent to the colleges by Christmas, unless the college says otherwise. Be sure to return the proper forms to your counselor at least two weeks before colleges require them.
 - If applying to a Texas public university you may fill out the Texas common application. FA's school code for this application is **2441947**.
 - Begin completing your Financial Aid Form and other student aid applications. To avoid costly delays in processing your applications, make sure to fill out the FAFSA and other forms completely, accurately, and legible. You may also submit the FAFSA online at FAFSA. **DO NOT SUBMIT BEFORE JANUARY 1.**
 - If SAT test scores are needed before May, register now. • Check deadlines for state government –sponsored student aid programs.
 - Complete your essays. Type them and be sure they are clean, neat, attractive, grammatically correct, interesting, and easy to read. Keep copies.
 - Give your academic advisor sufficient time (at least one week) to complete the “Secondary School Report” section of your college application forms.
 - Take December ACT, SAT, or SAT Subject Tests.
 - December 15: This is the usual deadline to apply to some selective colleges. Others have deadlines in February or later. Be sure to apply on time to colleges you have selected.
 - **DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE DEADLINE. EVERYBODY DOES THAT.**
- January:
 - Submit your completed FAFSA to the processor 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 student assistance. Keep copies of all forms you send.
 - PARENTS: Get your income tax returns prepared early – schools may require them to prove eligibility for financial aid.
 - Request a transcript to be sent to the college of your choice.
 - Pursue vigorously second semester progress; until colleges receive full transcript, admission is on a conditional basis. Your last semester is still important.
 - Listen closely from now through the end of the year to announcements, especially those pertaining to seniors. The rest of the year will be filled with important dates.

- February:
 - Men who are 18 years old or over must prove selective service (draft) registration in order to receive federal financial aid. Inquire at your local post office about providing this information.
 - If interested in credit-by-exam, check on your college's policy regarding credit. This is a great way to "place out" of college classes by simply taking a test. This saves you time and big money once you are in college.
 - February 15 is the usual deadline for submitting financial aid applications.

- March:
 - Contact each college to make certain that your application is complete.
 - Look for your Student Aid Report. If you have not received your Student Aid Report after four weeks have passed since you sent in your FAFSA, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at (319) 337-5665.
 - Register for AP tests if applicable.
 - Look into local scholarships. The deadlines for most of them are in April.

- 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. Pray about it, asking for God's wisdom and for His will for your college career. Talk it over with your parents, advisor, family, and friends. Weigh any offers against the factors that are important to you.
 - Reply promptly to colleges asking you to notify them of your decision. Meet deadlines or you may well lose the acceptance you have gained.
 - 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 what 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.
 - Contact UNT about CLEP testing schedule, if interested in placing out of basic college classes.

- 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. Be fair to the colleges and to other students who are on the "wait" lists.
 - If you are "wait-listed" by a college and intend to enroll if accepted, call, visit, or write to the admissions director to state your intention and ask how to strengthen your application. Recent evidence of notable academic or other achievements could help.
 - AP exams are given in high schools nationwide.

- If you need and are eligible for Federal Stafford, Unsubsidized Stafford, or Parent Loan (PLUS), call EDUCAID at 1-800-EDUCAID for a loan application.
 - Request final transcript to be sent to the college you will be attending.
 - Finalize summer school or summer job plans.
- 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.
 - During the summer, read widely and review mathematics. Obtain a summer job that is related to your career interest