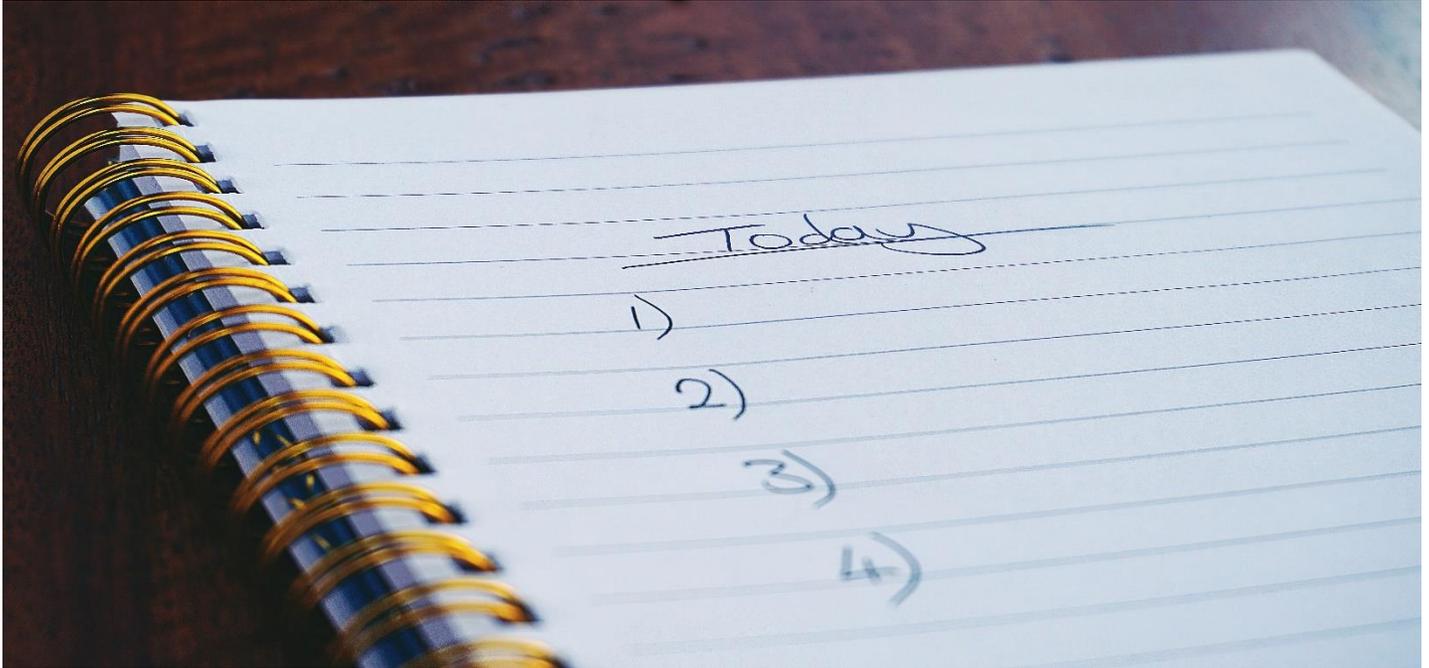


## I. ACADEMIC PLANNING - COLLEGE PREPARATION

# COLLEGE PREPARATION



### GRADE 8

- ✓ Each student will carefully complete a four-year high school academic plan in their Career Pathways Course.
- ✓ Each student will have an opportunity to explore their individual interests as they prepare for higher education and the world of work.
- ✓ Parents and students will be invited to a general information session in the spring.
- ✓ It is strongly recommended that each student carefully read the course selection guide and carefully choose courses for high school.
- ✓ Look over specific college catalogs and publications that give college profiles.

### GRADE 9

- ✓ Goals and objectives that were chosen in the eighth grade will be re-evaluated during ninth grade course planning period.
- ✓ Careful consideration should be given to reviewing the four-year graduation plan with your high school counselor and parents.
- ✓ Students should continue exploring their interests in Xello and through online resources.
- ✓ Each high school has a Go Center available to further research colleges.
- ✓ Students should also review college catalogs and publications which give college profiles.
- ✓ Attend the MISD College and Career Night in the fall.
- ✓ Begin keeping in your portfolio: report cards, test scores, honors, school activities, community activities, and work experience.
- ✓ Students may also want to keep samples of their major school projects, papers, etc. Know NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) requirements if you want to play sports in college.
- ✓ Take courses that are challenging and work to your full potential.
- ✓ Be a self-advocate, attend tutorials and do not let yourself fall behind in classes.
- ✓ **Remember, to qualify for access to dual credit courses students must have an overall grade point average of at least an 80.**

## I. ACADEMIC PLANNING - COLLEGE PREPARATION

### GRADE 10

- ✓ Review the four-year graduation plan.
- ✓ Take courses that are challenging and continue working to full potential.
- ✓ Take the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) as practice for the PSAT/NMSQT that juniors take for scholarship consideration.
- ✓ Analyze the PSAT results and establish personal goals in January.
- ✓ Begin searching for scholarships apply.
- ✓ Continue to review college publications.
- ✓ Begin to visit colleges in the summer, especially if you are interested in a highly selective college.
- ✓ Study to make grades representative of abilities.
- ✓ Continue adding to your portfolio.

### GRADE 11

- ✓ Review graduation plans and narrow college choices.
- ✓ Confer with parent(s) and the counselor to decide on courses for the senior year and to discuss post-graduation plans.
- ✓ Contact the colleges and speak with an admissions officer about the specific courses they require
- ✓ Go online and view the entrance course requirements.
- ✓ Take challenging courses.
- ✓ Attend the MISD College and Career Night in the fall and talk to the college personnel.
- ✓ Take the PSAT offered only once per year in October.
- ✓ Apply for any scholarships that your parents' employers may provide and any scholarships that are available to junior competition.
- ✓ Take the SAT and/or ACT in the late spring.
- ✓ Visit colleges in the summer.
- ✓ Send for college information and applications.
- ✓ Make grades representative of your ability.
- ✓ Continue adding to your portfolio.

### GRADE 12

- ✓ Finalize college choices and send letters/ applications.
- ✓ Check with the campus counseling center, Internet resources, and the college website to apply for any qualifying scholarships.
- ✓ Confer with your counselor in early fall.
- ✓ Obtain a FAFSA ID and Complete the FAFSA starting October 1.
- ✓ Attend the MISD College and Career Night
- ✓ Take the SAT and/or ACT and necessary achievement tests.
- ✓ Send regular decision applications in the fall semester & secure housing-especially to colleges that are highly competitive for dorm space.

### Financial Aid

The Free Application for Federal Student Assistance (FAFSA) is not available until October. The information for the application is based on income tax returns. Through this application, eligibility is determined for grants, loans, work-study programs, and some scholarships. You may apply on-line at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

### Scholarships

The best resource for scholarship information is directly from the financial aid office at the college(s) you wish to attend. The counseling center on your high school campus will also have information about certain scholarships. Most scholarship opportunities are now posted online, allowing student's the opportunity to do local and national scholarship searches on their own.

### Texas Grant

The purpose of the Texas Grant is to provide grant money to enable well-prepared, eligible students to attend public and private colleges and universities in Texas. The awards may be used at a Texas college or university, both public and private. Awards to students attending Texas private colleges and universities are based on public university amounts. To apply, first complete the FAFSA form. You will then work with the financial aid office at the college or university you plan to attend to determine if you are eligible.

### Common Application

Texas offers a common application for all public universities. This application may be obtained from the counseling center on your high school campus or online at [www.applytexas.org](http://www.applytexas.org).

## I. ACADEMIC PLANNING - COLLEGE PREPARATION

NOTE: College Board provides students with recommendations for each grade level as they prepare for a post-secondary education. The College Board checklists in our Academic Planning guide are great planning tools. Students may also visit the College Board website directly. Along with College Board, several vetted sources provide students and families with a wealth of information necessary to keep them on track during the college planning process. Some of those sources with links are listed below. Families are encouraged to visit those sites for self-guided understanding or visit with their academic counselor. A link to MISD Counselor information is also provided. These links represent a sampling of the many places we recommend for students/families. Again, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to visit with your counselor.

<b>MISD GUIDANCE &amp; COUNSELING DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>COLLEGE BOARD &amp; BIG FUTURE (PAGES INCLUDED IN GUIDE)</b>	<b>FAFSA</b>
<b>TEXAS ONCOURSE</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>GENTEX</b>
<b>INSPIRED (GO CENTER)</b>	<b>NCAA</b>	<b>ROAD TRIP NATION</b>



# College Planning: 9th/10th Grade

There are some steps you can take as a ninth- and a 10th-grader to make sure you're on the right track for college. This list will help you navigate the college planning process.

## 9TH GRADE

- Create a four-year high school plan.** Think about what you'd like to accomplish in the next four years.
  - Make sure you know which high school courses are required by colleges, and that you're taking the right classes as early as the ninth grade. You can ask your counselor about what those "right" classes are.
  - Get to know the levels of courses offered by your school.
- Start thinking about your life after school,** including the types of jobs that might interest you. Of course, these will change — often — but it's good to start thinking about the possibilities.
  - Identify your interests — likes and dislikes — not just in classes but also in every area. This will help you focus on your goals.
  - Talk to other people, such as your school counselor, teachers, recent college graduates who are working, professionals in the community, etc., about careers you might find interesting.
- Meet with your high school counselor.** Your counselor knows how to help you get the most out of high school. Be sure to take some time during the school year to discuss post-high-school plans with him or her.
- Participate in extracurricular activities.** Academics aren't everything. Explore your interest in a sport, school club, music or drama group, or community volunteer activity.
  - Remember that colleges would rather see real involvement in one activity instead of a loose connection to several.
  - If you're interested in playing sports in college, research the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) eligibility requirements. The NCAA requires completion of certain core courses; you can find the specifics at [ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://ncaaclearinghouse.net).
- Save for college.** It's not too late to put money aside for college. Every little bit helps! Learning about financial aid early on can also help you down the road.
- Explore summer opportunities.** Look for a job, internship, or volunteer position that will help you learn about a field of interest.
- Get familiar with the PSAT-related assessments and SAT®.** Most four-year colleges consider applicants' scores on college admission test. Download the free Daily Practice for the New SAT app to get a feel for the kinds of questions you might face on test day.
- Take the PSAT™ 8/9.** If your school offers it, sign up to take the first of the College Board assessments to set a baseline. This test will help you build up your skills to take the SAT in 11th or 12th grade.

## 10TH GRADE

- Meet with your high school counselor — again.**  
Be sure to meet with your school counselor to ensure that your course schedule is challenging enough to prepare you for college.
  - Check into any prerequisites for advanced-level junior- and senior-year courses.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT® or PSAT™ 10.** Depending on your school, you might have the opportunity to take the PSAT/NMSQT in October or the PSAT 10 in February or March. It provides valuable feedback on your college readiness and a free, personalized plan to help you start getting ready for the SAT — and for college.
- Ask if the PSAT/NMSQT is offered to 10th-graders.** Although this test is usually given in the 11th grade, it is also often offered in the 10th grade. That's because it provides valuable feedback through the Student Score Report. You can then work on any of your academic weaknesses while there is still plenty of time to make improvements.
- Are you interested in attending a U.S. military academy?** If so, you should request a precandidate questionnaire.
- Along with your family, do some research about how to obtain financial aid.** Many students use financial aid to cover college costs. Find out what financial aid is, where it comes from, and how you can apply for it. Read the U.S. Department of Education's *Funding Your Education* (about federal aid programs).
- Attend college and career fairs.** The fairs often take place in the fall at your school or in your area.
- Participate in school activities or volunteer efforts.** Extracurricular activities can help you develop time-management skills and enrich your high school experience.
- Talk to your counselor** about your plans for life after high school. He or she can help you plan your schedule, search for colleges, and navigate the financial aid process. The more your counselor knows about you, the more he or she can help you along the way.
- Tour college campuses.** If possible, take advantage of vacation or other family travel time to visit colleges and see what they're like. Even if you have no interest in attending the college you are visiting, it will help you learn what to look for in a college.



# College Application Checklist

Having a list of important tasks to complete for each college application will make the application process go smoothly and help you meet deadlines. Opting in to the College Board Opportunity Scholarships at [cb.org/opportunity](https://collegeboard.org/opportunity) can also give you chances at earning scholarships for completing some of these steps.

## PLAN

To fill in all the blanks on the application form itself, you may have to dig up documents or get answers from your parents or guardians. Most students use online applications, but paper applications are usually available too. There are also services that let you complete one application online and submit it to several colleges like the Coalition Application, Common Application, and Universal College Application.

	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
Get information/application forms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make a note about regular application deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make a note about early application deadline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:  
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## GRADES

The record of the classes you've taken and your grades are important parts of your application. Your high school should send your transcript, along with a school profile, directly to the colleges you're applying to. Ask your school counselor or principal how to arrange for this. And be sure to check the transcript for errors before it's sent.

	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
Request high school transcript sent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Request midyear grade reports sent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:  
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## TEST SCORES

Most colleges require or recommend that you send scores from tests such as the SAT®. Colleges accept scores only from the testing organizations themselves. Visit [bigfuture.org](http://bigfuture.org) for more information and to learn more about the role of testing in college admission.

	<i>College 1</i>	<i>College 2</i>	<i>College 3</i>	<i>College 4</i>
<b>Send SAT scores</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Send SAT Subject Test scores</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Send AP® scores</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

Many colleges require letters of recommendation from teachers or other adults who know you well. Ask your references well in advance of the deadlines to write you a recommendation. You may want to give them a short written summary of your achievements to help them write about you.

	<i>College 1</i>	<i>College 2</i>	<i>College 3</i>	<i>College 4</i>
<b>Request recommendation letters</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Send thank-you notes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:

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## ESSAYS

Your essays are a chance for you to give admission officers a better idea of your character and strengths. Remember to proofread your essays carefully before you send them in.

	<i>College 1</i>	<i>College 2</i>	<i>College 3</i>	<i>College 4</i>
<b>Draft initial essay(s)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Proofread essay(s) for spelling and grammar</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Have two people read essay(s)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Revise your essay(s)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Proofread your revision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## APPLICATIONS

Applying to college is a big job, but you can make it easier by breaking it down into a series of small steps.

	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
<b>Complete college applications*</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Use exact same name on all of your forms</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Carefully review entire application</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Have a family member or teacher review application</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:

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\*Visit [cb.org/opportunity](https://www.collegeboard.org/opportunity) to check if you're eligible for the \$1,000 Apply to Colleges scholarship.

## INTERVIEWS

It's a good idea to ask for an interview, even if it's not required. It shows you're serious and gives you a chance to connect with someone in the admission office. Even if a college is far away, you may be able to interview with a local alumnus. Read [What to Do Before and After Your College Interview](#) to prepare.

	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
<b>Interview at college</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Look into an alumnus interview</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Send thank-you note(s) to interviewer(s)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:

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## SEND AND TRACK YOUR APPLICATION

Once you've completed your application, follow these tips to make sure all the parts get to where they're going.

	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
<b>Make copies of all application materials</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Apply online</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Include application fee</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sign application</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Confirm receipt of application materials</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Send supplemental material, if needed</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mail your institutional aid form, if needed</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mail state aid form, if needed</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:

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## FINANCIAL AID

College is usually more affordable than many families think, thanks to financial aid. Below are key steps to navigating the financial aid process:

	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
<b>Make a note of priority financial aid deadline</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Make a note of regular financial aid deadline</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Submit FAFSA (Opens October 1)*</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Submit CSS Profile™, if needed (Opens October 1)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Submit college aid form, if needed</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:

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\*Visit [cb.org/opportunity](https://bigfuture.org/opportunity) to check if you're eligible for the \$1,000 Complete the FAFSA scholarship.

## DECISION

You've received several college admission offers. Now comes the hard part: Which one do you choose? Find out how to make the best decision for you.

	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
<b>Receive admission letter</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Receive financial aid award letter</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Get more information about each college</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Ask questions about student resources and services</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Compare college features and things you want</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Compare financial aid awards side by side</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Make a decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Respond to college you're attending</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Respond to colleges whose offers you're declining</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Send deposit</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Send final high school transcript</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notes:

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Visit [bigfuture.org](https://bigfuture.org) for more information.



# College Planning: 12th Grade

Want to know if you're on track in the college application process? This checklist shows you what you should be doing, and when.

When you complete steps marked with \* you may be eligible for College Board Opportunity Scholarships. Learn more at: [cb.org/opportunity](https://cb.org/opportunity).

## FALL

- Strengthen Your College List\***: Meet with a counselor about your college choices and, if you've not yet done so, download college applications and financial aid forms. Make sure you have a balanced list of academic safety, fit, and reach schools. Plan to visit as many of these colleges as possible.
- Create a master list or calendar that includes:**
  - Tests you'll take and their fees, dates, and registration deadlines
  - College application due dates
  - Required financial aid application forms and their deadlines (aid applications may be due before college applications)
  - Other materials you'll need (recommendations, transcripts, etc.)
  - Your high school's application processing deadlines
- Ask a counselor** to help you request a fee waiver if you can't afford application or test fees.
- Improve Your Score\***: Many seniors retake the SAT in the fall. Additional coursework and practice with Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy® since your last test could help you boost your performance. Plus you already know what to expect on test day.
- Be sure** to have your SAT scores sent to the colleges to which you are applying.
- Complete the FAFSA\***: To apply for most financial aid, you'll need to complete the FAFSA. Oct. 1 is the first day you can file the FAFSA.
- Complete the CSS Profile**: CSS Profile™ is an online application used by certain colleges and scholarship programs to determine eligibility for their aid dollars.
- Prepare** early decision/early action or rolling admission applications as soon as possible. Nov. 1–15: Colleges may require test scores and applications between these dates for early decision admission.
- Ask a counselor or teacher** for recommendations if you need them. Give each teacher or counselor an outline of your academic record and your extracurricular activities. For each recommendation, provide a stamped, addressed envelope and any college forms required.
- Write first drafts** and ask teachers and others to read them if you're submitting essays. If you're applying for early decision, finish the essays for that application now.
- Apply to College\***: Submit your applications to the schools that you want to attend.
- Ask counselors** to send your transcripts to colleges. Give counselors the proper forms at least two weeks before the colleges require them.

## WINTER

- Keep photocopies** as you finish, and send your applications and essays.
- Give the correct form** to your counselor if the college wants to see second-semester grades.
- Have your high school send a transcript**—it is sent separately by mail to colleges if you apply online to colleges.

## SPRING

- Keep active in school.** If you are waitlisted, the college will want to know what you have accomplished between the time you applied and the time you learned of its decision.
- Visit your final college before accepting.** You should receive acceptance letters and financial aid offers by mid-April. Notify your counselor of your choice. If you have questions about housing offers, talk to your counselor or call the college.
- Inform every college** of your acceptance or rejection of the offer of admission and/or financial aid by May 1. Colleges cannot require your deposit or your commitment to attend before May 1. Talk to your counselor or adviser if you have questions.
- Send your deposit** to one college only.
- Take any AP® Exams.** Show what you've learned in your AP classes. A successful score could even earn you credit, advanced placement, or both in college.
- Waitlisted by a college?** If you intend to enroll if you are accepted, tell the admission director your intent and ask how to strengthen your application. Need financial aid? Ask whether funds will be available if you're accepted.
- Work with a counselor** to resolve any admission or financial aid problems.
- Ask your high school** to send a final transcript to your college.
- Review your financial aid awards:** Not all financial aid awards are the same, so it's important to choose the aid package that's best for you and your family. Be sure to note what you have to do to continue receiving financial aid from year to year, and how your aid might change in future years.