



THE JUNIOR'S GUIDE TO PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

FOR STUDENTS

At School

- **Take challenging courses.** Talk to your teachers and counselor about taking advantage of AP or upper-level courses available at your school. While colleges are definitely concerned with good grades, they also want to see that you challenged yourself!
- **Continue your foreign language study.** Colleges like to see commitment to a foreign language throughout your high school career.
- **Focus on grades,** especially this year. These are the most recent grades colleges will see on your transcript, so make a good impression!

After School

- **Take leadership roles in extracurricular activities** like clubs, sports, arts, and volunteer work.
- **Make the summer count** towards your college application. Consider getting a summer job, volunteering, or attending an academic camp. Begin compiling the materials you'll need for your applications, and brainstorm some essay ideas.

College Prep

- **Begin drafting your College List** with your guidance counselor in the fall, and finalize the list by spring. Consider safety, match, and reach schools.
- **Take the PSAT in October** to qualify for a National Merit Scholarship.
- **Take the ACT and the SAT in the fall** and compare your scores and your experience. Decide which test to pursue and register for another sitting in the spring. If your scores aren't in your target range, take a class or hire a private tutor.
- **Get serious about your scholarship search.** Talk to your counselor, search the web, and attend scholarship info sessions to get as much information as possible on potential scholarships.
- **Go on college visits** during the spring semester to help narrow down your application list.
- **Attend college and career fairs** at your school or in your area to help narrow down your application list.
- **Use your summer** to write application essays, take standardized tests, and gather all the materials you'll need to apply in the fall.
- **Update your "Best Of" list** of awards, activities, honors, and work (both paid and volunteer) so you'll be prepared for college applications.

FOR PARENTS

- Meet with your student and his guidance counselor at the beginning of junior year to ensure you are on track with college preparation.
- Talk with your student about the different colleges she's considering. Help her clarify her desires for college, her main priorities, and the pros and cons of each school.
- Use FAFSA4caster to determine how much federal aid you can expect in paying for college. Continue adding to your student's college savings account and attend any financial aid info sessions at your student's school or in your area.
- Visit colleges with your student. Two heads are better than one when it comes to making big decisions!