



A Short Checklist for Freshman Year

Establish Good Habits Now

It is extremely important to start establishing good study habits during your freshman year. High school is different from middle school and is **very** different from college. It is essential to begin learning how to manage your time, keep up with deadlines, take good notes, and establish your best study practices. **ALL** teachers offer tutoring hours before or after school and are happy to answer questions. Take advantage of these opportunities if you feel, at any time, that you do not completely understand the materials. If you show your teachers that you are genuinely invested in learning the materials, they will be more patient in making sure that you fully understand the concepts. By establishing these good relationships with teachers, you are also providing yourself with a selection of teachers to ask for recommendation letters your senior year.

Challenge yourself

Colleges want to see that you took advantage of the challenging courses offered at our school. This does not mean that you have to take a full AP load! It simply means that they want to see you going beyond the minimum. Start with the classes that you are good at or that interest you the most. You can add more as you progress through high school. You'll also want to challenge yourself by participating in extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.) by taking on leadership roles within those organizations.

Keep up those grades and test scores

Many colleges pay much more attention to your performance in high school than they do about your SAT or ACT scores. (A lot of colleges are becoming test-optional!) This means that your GPA, course selection, and overall transcript carry a significant weight in the college application process. You'll want to protect your GPA as much as possible while still challenging yourself academically.

Explore your options while building your résumé

Join sports teams, clubs, and organizations! Figure which ones you enjoy the most and stick with them. Colleges like to see that you're involved in different activities in **and/or** out of school. Focus on making an impact, rather than a long list of activities or service projects. Come junior or senior year, you may even be holding a leadership position in these organizations. **Set up an account on www.mycoalition.org** to start keeping track of what you are doing! You can even save a copy of your resume in your locker and add to it every year. Come senior year, you'll be ready to apply to college because you can import your profile right into your college applications!

Start (a little) College/Career Research

This is where www.mycoalition.org comes in handy! These schools offer the best financial aid in the country and have high graduation rates! It's a great place to start your research. (We'll teach you more about need-met financial aid later on!) Don't get too hung-up on major / minor offerings unless you are interested in something very specialized like Aeronautical Engineering or Actuarial Mathematics. Don't just look into certain schools just because your friends are interested. Have your own thoughts! It's okay to be your own person, especially when it comes to **YOUR** education. The school that your friend wants to go to may not be a good fit for you. If you think that a 4-year college or university is not in your plans, then find out what trades you are interested in or what skills you can make a career out of. You don't have to go to college for this, but receiving training or a certification ensures that you will be more marketable. You don't need to make this choice this year though! Keep your options open!

□ **Plan a productive summer**

Do not waste the summer playing video games! Find other ways to fill your time that allow you to make a positive impact on our community (and look good on a résumé). Talk to your ASP College Advisor about summer opportunities and encourage your parents to attend ASP Parent Meetings to learn more about why this is important!

□ **Study for the SAT, ACT, and PSAT**

While the SAT and ACT say little about how well you will perform in college, they are used a lot for scholarships at our in-state institutions and may provide you more college opportunities. The good news? You can study for the SAT and ACT! Students who spend time studying for these tests generally perform better on test day and end up with higher scores when they take the test more than once.

Taking the PSAT as a freshman (and sophomore) is a good idea, as it lets you practice this test before junior year when it also serves as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQST). Doing well on the test your junior year might give you a few opportunities for additional scholarship money, but you want to focus on being ready for the SAT and the ACT.

To get personalized practice for your SAT, you can link your PSAT score with Khan Academy! See your college advisor for assistance. The ACT also offers free test prep through their website, www.actstudent.org.

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