

# NHS Post-Secondary College Timeline & Checklist



## How to get the college selection process started?

Six commonly asked questions that are important for students to be able to think about:

- 1. Why do you want to go to college?**
  - a. Reason: Encourages thoughtful reflection to individualize the college search process by understanding personal motivations and goals.
- 2. What excites you about going to college? What are you looking for in this next chapter of your life?**
  - a. Reason: Helps students connect with their aspirations and envision their future, ensuring a more meaningful decision-making process.
- 3. What do you want to study or take for a major?**
  - a. Reason: Reinforces that the primary purpose of college is education. Exploring academic interests helps guide students toward relevant majors, which can influence the schools they consider and their chances of admission.
- 4. Do you care about location?**
  - a. Reason: Encourages students to reflect on proximity to home, logistics of travel, and preferences for urban, suburban, or rural settings. Visits and demonstrated interest also play a role in building a balanced college list.
- 5. Have you discussed the cost and your family's budget?**
  - a. Reason: Highlights the importance of financial planning, considering merit scholarships, financial aid, and overall affordability when selecting colleges.
- 6. What else do you want your ideal college to have?**
  - a. Reason: Encourages students to visualize their ideal college experience, factoring in extracurriculars, class sizes, internship/study abroad opportunities, and other personal preferences.

## College Timeline and Checklist

### Fall - Junior Year: Setting the Foundation

- 1. Explore Options:**
  - Using SchoolLinks start research colleges, trade schools, military options, or direct workforce entry.
  - Take Campus Tours whenever and as much as possible
  - Talk to your school counselor about post-secondary goals.
  - Take or retake career assessments to identify interests and skills.

- Set a time each week as a family to sit down and talk about college stuff
- 2. **Start Building a List:**
  - Create a list of possible colleges that interest you and research them.
  - Create a Google Folder for all your College Search
  - Add a spreadsheet to keep track of your colleges, what you like and don't like about them, any campus visit notes, GPA, test optional, majors, location, application type, deadlines, expected difficulty, interest level, supplements, and cost of attendance.
  - Create a google doc for your essay and one for your supplemental essays
  - Share these docs or folder with your parents
  - Research admission requirements (Average GPA and or SAT/ACT), costs, and application deadlines, application type (EA, ED, Regular, Rolling)
- 3. **Academics:**
  - Focus on maintaining or improving your GPA.
  - Take challenging courses that align with your goals (AP, DE, Honors).
- 4. **Standardized Testing:**
  - Take the PSAT at school in Oct to qualify for scholarships and prep for the SAT.

### Winter - Junior Year

- 1. **Begin Test Prep:**
  - Start studying for the SAT/ACT using free resources like Khan Academy.
  - Consider taking a prep course or using practice tests.
- 2. **Register for the SAT/ACT**
  - Sign into your College Board account or ACT account to register
- 3. **Financial Planning:**
  - Discuss with your family how to pay for college or trade school.
  - Work with our partners at College Affordable
  - Research scholarships, grants, and financial aid.
- 4. **Extracurriculars:**
  - Stay involved in clubs, sports, or part-time jobs.
  - Seek leadership roles or meaningful community service.
- 5. **Visit Schools/Programs:**
  - Plan visits to colleges, trade schools during February break or weekends.
  - Attend open houses or virtual tours

## Spring - Junior Year

1. **Take the SAT/ACT:**
  - Register for the spring and take your first SAT/ACT
2. **Visit Schools/Programs:**
  - Plan visits to colleges, trade schools, or other programs during Feb/April break or on weekends.
  - Attend open houses or virtual tours
  - April - Attend NHS College & Career Fair
3. **Work on Your Personal Statement for assignment in English class:**
  - Create the 1st draft of your college essay or personal statement.
4. **Update your Resume in SchooLinks:**
  - Include extracurriculars, volunteer work, awards, and skills.
5. **Teacher Recommendations:** This is the first ask in-person before we leave for the summer.
  - Identify teachers who know you well and can write strong recommendation letters.
  - Verbally ask them at the end of May or early June.

## Summer - Junior Year

1. **Finalize Your List:**
  - Narrow your list to 8–12 colleges/universities you would be interested in attending and spending the next 4 to 6 years.
2. **Work more on Your Personal Statement:**
  - 2nd draft of your college essay and personal statements if required.
3. **Gain Experience:**
  - Volunteer, intern, or work to strengthen your resume.
  - Attend summer programs or camps related to your career interests.

## Fall - Senior Year: Executing the Plan

1. **Finalize Applications:**
  - Complete early decision (only one as ED is a binding agreement) or early action applications by Oct/Nov/Dec deadlines.
  - Finalize essays and have them reviewed by a counselor or teacher.
2. **Take/Retake Tests:**
  - Take or retake the SAT/ACT if needed.
3. **Request Letters of Recommendation:** Officially in SchooLinks
  - Provide teachers with your resume and a clear deadline.
4. **Financial Aid:**
  - Complete the FAFSA as soon as it opens (October 1).
  - Complete the CSS Profile if you are applying to any colleges that require it.
  - Research and apply for scholarships.

5. **Attend Info Sessions or College Visits at NHS:**
  - Attend any last-minute college fairs, college visits or info sessions.

### **Winter - Senior Year**

1. **Submit Regular Decision Applications:**
  - Ensure all applications are submitted by January deadlines.
2. **Follow Up:**
  - Check that schools have received all materials, including transcripts and test scores.
3. **Scholarships:**
  - Continue applying for scholarships - Workshops at NHS when given.
4. **Interviews:**
  - Prepare for interviews with admissions counselors or program representatives.

### **Spring - Senior Year**

1. **Review Offers:**
  - Compare acceptance letters and financial aid award packages.
  - Visit schools again during Accepted Students Days if needed before making a decision.
2. **Decide:**
  - Make your final decision by May 1.
3. **Celebrate:**
  - Notify schools you won't attend.
  - Share your success with family and friends.

### **Summer Before College**

1. **Finalize Plans:**
  - Register for orientation and housing.
  - Complete any placement tests or medical forms.
2. **Work and Save:**
  - Work a summer job to save for expenses.
3. **Get Ready:**
  - Buy necessary supplies and plan for the transition to your new school/program.