CollegeBoard Access

9th Grade
10th Grade

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**.

☐ **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.

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