11th Grade

CollegeBoard Access

College Planning: 11th Grade

Junior year marks a turning point. This is because for most students and families, it's when college planning activities kick into high gear. Here are some things you can do this year to stay on track for college.

FALL

- ☐ **Start with you:** Make lists of your abilities, social/cultural preferences, and personal qualities. List things you may want to study and do in college.
- ☐ **Learn about colleges.** Look at their websites and find colleges at **bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search**. Talk to friends, family members, teachers, and recent grads of your school now in college. List the college features that interest you.
- ☐ **Resource check:** Visit the counseling office and meet the counselors there. Is there a college night for students and families? When will college representatives visit your school? (Put the dates in your calendar.) Examine catalogs and guides.
- ☐ **At school, speak to your counselor about taking the PSAT/NMSQT®,** which is given in October. If you plan to ask for testing accommodations (because of a disability), be sure the College Board has approved your eligibility.
- ☐ **Make a file to manage your college search, testing, and application data.** If appropriate (for example, if you're interested in drama, music, art, sports, etc.), start to gather material for a portfolio.
- ☐ **Estimate your financial aid need.** Financial aid can help you afford college. Use the College Board's *Getting Financial Aid* and the financial aid calculator at **bigfuture.org** to estimate how much aid you might receive.

WINTER

- ☐ **Sign up to take the SAT® in the spring.** You can register online or through your school. SAT fee waivers are available to eligible students. To prepare for the SAT, you can access free, personalized SAT practice tools at **satpractice.org**, including thousands of interactive questions, video lessons, practice tests, and more.
- ☐ **Begin a search for financial aid sources.** National sources include the College Board's Scholarship Search and electronic sources. Don't overlook local and state aid sources. (Ask a counselor for help or check your public library.)
- ☐ **With your family, make an appointment with your counselor** to discuss ways to improve your college-preparation and selection processes.
- ☐ **Ask a counselor or teacher about taking the SAT Subject Tests™ in the spring.** You should take them while course material is still fresh in your mind. You can download *The SAT Subject Tests Student Guide*, which offers test-prep advice, from **SATSubjectTests.org**.
- ☐ **Explore AP®.** The Advanced Placement Program® helps hundreds of thousands of high school students achieve their college dreams each year. Get the facts at **apstudent.collegeboard.org/exploreap**. If you're in AP classes, register for the AP Exams given in May.

SPRING

- ☐ **Contact your counselor** before leaving school for the summer if you are considering military academies or ROTC scholarships. If you want a four-year ROTC scholarship, you should begin the application process the summer before your senior year.
- ☐ **Develop a list of 15 or 20 colleges that are of interest to you.** You can find many colleges at which you'll be happy and get a great education. The college search is about exploring who you are and what you want and then finding colleges that will meet your goals.
- ☐ **Stay open to all the possibilities — don't limit your search.** To find the best college for you, you should apply to colleges of varying selectivity. Selective colleges admit a portion of students who apply. Some colleges are highly selective while others are less selective. Make sure to apply to public, private, in-state, and out-of-state schools so that you have plenty of options from which to choose.
- ☐ **Take the SAT.** The test is typically offered in March, May, and June. Make sure you start preparing for the test several months in advance using the tools available at **satpractice.org**. And remember, if you're not happy with your scores when you get them, you might want to test again in the fall. Many students take the test a second time as seniors, and they usually do better.
- ☐ **Start to gather documents for financial aid:** Be sure to keep a copy of your tax returns handy. You'll use these to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which opens on Oct. 1.

SUMMER

- ☐ **Register with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Center** if you are an athlete planning to continue playing a sport in college (**ncaaclearinghouse.net**).
- ☐ **Get your FSA ID:** Before you can fill out your FAFSA, you need to get a username and password (also known as an FSA ID).
- ☐ **Find a full-time or part-time job,** or participate in a summer camp or summer college program.
- ☐ **Visit colleges.** When planning your campus visits, make sure to allow time to explore each college. While you're there, talk to as many people as possible. These can include college admission staff, professors, and students. Take campus tours and, at colleges you're serious about, make appointments to have interviews with admission counselors.
- ☐ **Create a résumé** — a record of your academic accomplishments, extracurricular activities, and work experiences since you started high school.
- ☐ **Download applications.** Go to the website of each college's admission office and either complete the application online or request a paper application from colleges to which you'll apply. Check application dates — large universities may have early dates or rolling admission.
- ☐ **Visit some local colleges** — large, small, public, and private. A visit to a college campus can help you decide if that college is right for you. Make a plan ahead of time to get the most from your visit. Check out the campus checklist at **bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/campus-visit-guide/campus-visit-checklist**. Attend college fairs, too.
- ☐ **Scan local newspapers** to see which civic, cultural, and service organizations in your area award financial aid to graduating seniors. Start a file.

Visit **bigfuture.org** for more information.

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