

It's Never Too Early To Plan for College

Education Pays! COLLEGE PREP TIMELINE

College is more than just an opportunity to learn, it can mean the difference between a low-paying job and a high-paying career! Many studies of the earnings and education indicate that, on average, each year of education at any stage, from grade school through graduate school, adds over 10 percent to an individual's lifetime earnings. Thus a four-year college degree can be expected to increase an individual's earnings by almost two-thirds.

“But I'm only in middle school! I don't need to worry about college yet!”

NOT TRUE! It's never too early to start thinking about college! Things that you do as early as the 6th or 7th grade can affect your ability to go to college later. There are lots of things you can do right now to help.

Look at these websites for more ideas

www.collegeboard.com	www.act.org	www.ed.gov and check financial aid	www.fafsa.ed.gov (for Free Application for Federal Financial Aid)
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Sixth Grade

- Concentrate on getting good grades & develop good study habits
- Identify areas that are interesting to you; volunteer and go to work with family and friends

Seventh and Eighth Grades

- Concentrate on getting good grades
- Continue to develop good study habits
- Explore potential career fields and the education you need to work in these careers
- Get involved with activities outside of school including volunteer or paid work

Ninth Grade

- Continue to focus on grades (these will stay on your transcript) Improve good study habits
- Make sure that you are taking the classes you need for college
- Take part in extra-curricular activities (these may become part of your transcript) Continue to identify areas that are interesting to you and explore potential career fields Make sure you have a social security number (this number is used by many colleges and universities on the application).

Tenth & Eleventh Grades

- Continue to focus on strong study habits, obtaining good grades, participating in extra-curricular activities, and taking a schedule of classes that will prepare you academically for college. In addition, continue to identify areas that are interesting to you, and explore potential career fields through volunteer and paid work.

September

- Talk to your high school guidance counselor about your class schedule and standardized tests
- Inquire about the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)

October - November

- You may wish to take the PSAT/NMSQT
- College fairs are held in October in many larger communities – attend them!

December

- Discuss results of PSAT/NMSQT with your guidance counselor and your parents.
- Examine changes you might make in your class schedule to help you improve in areas of weakness uncovered by the tests.
- You may wish to register for spring SAT I and ACT

January - February

- Consider looking for college and university summer programs for high school students. Continue to focus on your classes and activities; put together a resume of your classes, clubs, sports activities, artistic and language abilities, and outside activities to use in your applications.
- Start thinking about which colleges you might like to attend and financial aid programs/packages
- Discuss your choices with your high school guidance counselor and your parents
- Prepare for the SAT I and ACT

March – April

- You may wish to take the SAT I
- Obtain information from different colleges, evaluate the schools, and begin to make a long list of schools from which you will later choose. Be sure to inquire about any financial aid or scholarships that are available.
- Register for June SAT II subject tests for those classes you have taken this year.

May – June

- Take the Advanced Placement Exams if you are eligible (these help you get college credit!)
- Register for summer school classes to improve grades, prepare for next year's classes, to get ahead, or develop areas of interest.
- Attend a college fair in your area to gather additional information about different schools.
- Consider making plans for visiting colleges on your list
- Consider what you might do with your time if you choose not to go to summer school. Perhaps you will take a vacation, work, or volunteer. Colleges will be interested in how you spent this time.
- You may wish to take SAT II Subject Tests
- Think about which teachers you might want to ask to write letters of recommendation for you.

During the Summer before your senior year

- This would be a good time for you to begin writing/calling the schools you are interested in and asking for applications.
- You might consider taking an SAT/ACT tutorial program during this time to help you do better.

Twelfth Grade

- Do not lose focus on grades. Continue your good study habits. Make sure that you are taking the classes that are needed for college. Don't slack off and take an easy course load. Colleges will be looking at your senior schedule and they will be looking for challenging classes. Continue to take part in extra-curricular activities

September

- Talk to your high school guidance counselor to discuss your list of colleges and make sure that your expectations are realistic given your academic and personal record
- Sign up for the October ACT or the November SAT I
- You should have received the college applications that you have requested. If you have not, or if you have added new schools to your list, contact the school to obtain an application. Many schools have deadlines in November and December making it important that you start work on these applications as soon as possible. Make sure to ask about scholarships and other financial aid and housing—know your application deadlines!
- Continue to visit colleges

October

- Take the ACT
- Attend a college fair to gather information
- Start working on your college application
- Start asking teachers to write you recommendations.
- Start sending in your college applications (check the due date for each school)
- Sign up for December/January SAT II Subject Tests and the December ACT if not yet taken

November

- Take the SAT I
- Have test scores sent to the schools where you are applying
- Based on information and financial aid at your chosen schools, discuss options with your guidance counselor and parents.

December

- Take the SAT I, SAT II, and ACT if not yet taken or if you want to try to improve your scores
- Expect Early Decisions this month

January

- You may wish to take the SAT II
- If you are applying for federal financial aid, prepare your application and send it in as soon as possible after January 1 (it requires family tax information from the previous year). Most schools require the FAFSA.

February - April

- Keep track of all your applications and make sure schools have received all of the information that they have requested.
- Consider your options of schools and financial aid packages.
- Decide which school you wish to attend and send in your acceptance letter and tuition deposit

May

- Prior to May 1st you must decide on which college you will attend. Notify other schools of your decision
- If you are applying for federal financial aid, your application must be submitted by
- May first - there are NO EXCEPTIONS to this deadline.
- You may wish to take the Advanced Placement Exams if you are eligible
- Find a place to live if you are not living at home or in the dorm!

Top ten reasons to volunteer

10. Gain job experience. Some of the work you do could lead to a job doing similar work. Volunteer experience also looks great on a resume.

9. Improve your health and self-esteem. Volunteering to help others has been shown to reduce stress, give you hope, and boost your immune system.

8. Meet real community needs. Helping people learn to read, obtain furniture for their home, or acquire basic food, clothing, or shelter makes a huge difference! Whether the project is planting a tree or tutoring children, the community will look and feel better.

7. Gain entrance to college. Colleges and universities today are looking for applicants who have more than high grades. They are looking for well-rounded people who have volunteered to make a difference in their community.

6. Meet new people and establish friends, connections, and references. When you work alongside others, you really know them and become friends with them. Also, adults at organizations can connect you to great opportunities and provide you with a reference for a job or college.

5. Gain new skills and develop talents. Whether you enjoy working with computers, children, or seniors, any interest you have can be developed through volunteering.

4. Spread positive energy and hope just like random acts of kindness, when you volunteer your energy and efforts affect the whole community.

3. Make the world a better place. If you see problems in your community you feel need addressing, do something about them. By volunteering, you do make a difference and make the world a better place.

2. Personal growth. By meeting new people and taking on new tasks you will learn and understand both people and life better.

1. It's fun! Volunteering will bring smiles and laughter into your life