



College Planning Checklist:

Beginning the College Search, One Step at a Time By Katie McKoon

Beginning the college search can seem overwhelming. How do you know where to start, who to talk to, or what you want in a school?

Know yourself

Sit down at your computer or with a piece of paper and just brainstorm about the “University of You.” If you could create your perfect school, what would it be like? What is important to you? Research, research, research This is an important step because there are about 4,000 college options in the United States alone! Before your senior year, you want to limit this down to about five: one safety, one reach, and three that you’ll probably get into. There are lots of ways to narrow the list. Start by spending some time on the Web. You can use a lot of free online search engines (www.collegeboard.com and www.petersons.com are just a few).

Attend one or two college fairs

If there is a National College Fair in your area, go to it, as there will be a large number of schools represented (www.nacacnet.org). Talk to as many representatives as possible..

Visit your top schools

The college visit is very important; it’s the best way to determine your fit and feel at a school. Take advantage of visiting a college campus.

The academic side

Keep your grades up and keep taking challenging classes. Register for the ACT and/or SAT. Try taking both during the spring of your junior year. Then, take the one that you did best on again early fall of your senior year.

The last word

Senior year can be pretty chaotic, with filling out applications as well as all of your normal activities. The summer before your senior year is a great time to visit your top five schools.



College Preparation Steps

8th Grade

- Start discovering your passions and strengths
- Do your best in school.
- Become involved in extracurricular activities
- Explore careers through research and experiences

9th Grade

- Talk to your counselor about the classes that will prepare you for college and your career.
- Attend a well respect summer college program in your field of interest
- Start planning for college by thinking about your career interests.
- Get tutoring assistance for weaker academic areas
- Take the PSAT
- Take challenging classes in core academic subjects
- Get involved in extracurricular activities

10th Grade

- Meet with your counselor to review your classes and career goals.
- Register for AP, honors, and other challenging core courses.
- Take the PSAT in October
- Attend a well respect summer college program in your field of interest
- Work on your passions and strengths
- Take a college tour

11th Grade

- Continue to challenge yourself academically.
- Research colleges that interest you.
- Investigate financial aid and scholarships.
- Compare your academic record against college entrance requirements.
- Meet with your counselor about college admissions
- Continue to take AP, honors, and other challenging core courses.
- Attend college fairs and financial aid workshops.
- Take the SAT or ACT
- Become a leader in your extracurricular activities.
- Take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).
- You must take the test in 11th grade to qualify for scholarships and programs associated with the National Merit Program.
- Take a college tour
- Take classes at a local community college to obtain early college credit



- Find information and requirements on scholarships and grants.
 - Attend a well respect summer college program in your field of interest
- 12th Grade PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO DEADLINES!**
- Keep taking classes that challenge you.
 - Narrow down the list of colleges you are interested in attending.
 - Visit the schools that interest you.
 - Take classes at a local community college to obtain early college credit
 - Work hard all year; second semester grades can affect scholarship eligibility.
 - Become a leader in your extracurricular activities.
 - Apply to the colleges you have chosen. Prepare your applications carefully.
 - Write college admissions and scholarship essays.
 - Complete and submit college applications and transcripts.
 - Ask your high school guidance counselor to send your transcript electronically to the colleges to which you have applied.
 - Target teacher for letters of recommendation.
 - Contact financial aid offices at schools to which you have applied for school specific scholarships and additional financial aid forms.