

# COLLEGE BOUND

## A Guide for Juniors





Dear Junior,

Your junior year is a very important and very busy year! This is the year you need to seriously consider your college options, take college tests, go on college visits, and narrow your list of college choices. You also need to work extra hard over the coming months to improve your academic record and GPA.

There is a lot for you to do this year, but don't worry—this booklet will go over what you need to do each step of the way.

# COLLEGE BOUND

## A Guide for Juniors

### Table of Contents

Build an Impressive Record.....	4
Your Fall/Winter To-Do List.....	6
Take Admission Tests.....	8
Things to Consider.....	10
Go on College Visits.....	12
Your Spring To-Do List.....	14
Get Ready for Your Senior Year...	15

**WOODBURN PRESS**

Copyrighted Material  
All Rights Reserved

# Build an Impressive RECORD



Look for ways to improve your high school record this year. *The more impressive your record is, the more college options and opportunities you will have.*

## Know what colleges look for

Colleges use some, if not all, of the information listed below when determining whether or not to accept an applicant.

- grade point average (GPA)
- strength of courses
- ACT/SAT scores
- class rank
- recommendations
- special talents/awards
- activities
- essays
- interviews
- demonstrated interest

## How to build an impressive high school record

Your high school record is your opportunity to show college admissions officers who you are, what you have learned, and what makes you unique. *Here's how to build an impressive high school record.*

### 1. Take college prep courses

Four-year colleges generally recommend that students take the following college preparatory courses in high school.

- 4 years of English
- 3–4 years of math (including Algebra I, Geometry, & Algebra II)
- 3–4 years of science
- 2–3 years of the same world language
- 3 years of social studies
- 1 year of fine or performing arts

## 2. Get good grades

When you apply to a college, they will request a copy of your transcript (your high school record). This transcript will list your GPA, along with all of your high school courses, grades, and credits.

*Colleges typically consider the grades earned in college prep courses to be the most important criteria for college admissions.*



## 3. Prepare for college tests

Many four-year colleges require that applicants submit ACT or SAT scores. Colleges use these test scores to assess a student's readiness for college level work. The more competitive the school or program, the more important these scores can be.

*Read more about these tests on pages 8–9.*

## 4. Be involved in activities

Colleges look for students who are active and involved in their school and community. They also look for students who have leadership abilities, unique experiences, and an interest in community service. *Choose activities that are meaningful to you. Colleges are looking for quality, not quantity.*

## 5. Have a clean digital footprint

Many college admissions officers check the social media of their applicants. To the casual observer, your online posts lack context and largely speak for themselves, so choose what you post carefully.

Use social media to support others and to highlight your positive activities and accomplishments. Avoid posting anything racy, rude, or controversial. *Don't give anyone a reason to disqualify you for a college or scholarship opportunity.*

# Your Fall/Winter TO-DO LIST



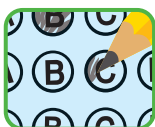
## Set up a calendar for the year

Use this calendar to record test dates, college fairs, college visitation days, and college-related events at your high school.



## Create a college file

Use this file to keep college brochures, notes on college visits, copies of test scores, and anything else you may need or want.



## Make a testing plan

Learn about the PSAT/NMSQT, ACT, and SAT. Decide if and when you will take these tests, and put the registration deadline(s) on your calendar.



## Explore your options

Think about what you're looking for in a college and learn about the schools you're considering. Talk to your parents and your counselor about your college options.



## Work hard to get the best grades possible

When you fill out college applications in the fall of your senior year, a copy of your transcript will be submitted along with your application. Because your junior year grades will be the most recent grades shown on your transcript, it's important that you do as well as possible your junior year. *Colleges like to see improvement, so if your grades aren't as good as they should be, now is the time to bring them up.*



## Develop your interests

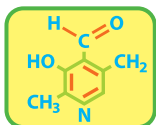
Participate in activities in and out of school, take on leadership roles when possible, and do some volunteer work. Community service, such as volunteering for a local food bank or animal shelter, is very worthwhile and impressive on any application.

*Colleges are looking for students who have something that makes them stand out. If you have an interest, talent, or passion, take time this year to develop it.*



## If you're an athlete...

If you hope to play a sport in college, talk to your counselor to make sure that you're taking all of the courses you need. If you're thinking of playing a sport at a DI or DII college, register online with the NCAA Eligibility Center. [eligibilitycenter.org](http://eligibilitycenter.org)



## Think about a major

As a college student, you must choose a major. This is the subject you will study in-depth. Think about your abilities, talents, and interests in terms of a possible major. For help choosing a major, visit [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org).



## Make college visits

Visiting different colleges is the best way to find out what kind of college will be the best fit for you. Talk to your parents to determine which colleges you will visit and make a plan.



## Have a conversation about college costs

Talk to your parents about how your education will be paid for. Will you need to get financial aid? Will you apply for scholarships?



*For more on how to plan and prepare for college your junior year, watch this short video.*

# Take Admission TESTS



## PSAT/NMSQT

The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is a practice test for the SAT. It includes assessments in Reading, Writing and Language, and Math. It's given in October, primarily to juniors.

College-bound juniors should consider taking this test. It's good practice for the SAT, and students find out how their skills compare to the skills of other college-bound students. Exceptionally high scores can also lead to scholarship opportunities.

## ACT & SAT

While many colleges require that applicants submit ACT or SAT scores, a number of colleges now have a test-optional policy. This means that they allow some or all applicants to choose whether to submit test scores with their application.

Colleges view test scores differently. Some colleges look for very high test scores; other colleges use ACT and SAT scores more for course placement than admission. If you're interested in a competitive college or program, or if you're trying to get a scholarship, having high test scores can be very helpful.

*For advice on which tests you should take, talk to your counselor.*

Two-year colleges generally do not require ACT or SAT scores; however, to ensure that students enroll in courses appropriate for their ability levels, many two-year colleges require that all incoming students take a placement test.



## ACT/SAT FAQs

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions about these important tests.



### Q. Do I need to take one of these tests?

A. Unless you're certain that you will not need to submit test scores to the colleges you're considering, you should take the ACT or SAT.

### Q. When should I take these tests?

A. You should take the ACT and/or SAT in the spring of your junior year. If you want to improve your scores, you will then have time to retake one or more of these tests in the fall of your senior year.

### Q. What do the ACT and SAT cover?

A. The ACT has four multiple-choice tests: English, Math, Reading, and Science. There is also an optional Writing Test. The SAT includes assessments in Reading, Writing and Language, and Math.

### Q. Which test should I take?

A. Colleges accept both ACT and SAT scores. Many college admissions counselors recommend that you take a practice test for both, and then spend your time preparing for the test you're likely to do better on.

### Q. How do I sign up for the ACT or SAT?

A. You can register for the ACT at [act.org](http://act.org). To register for the SAT, go to [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org). Register 6-8 weeks before the test date.

### Q. How do I prepare for these tests?

A. Free test-prep resources and practice tests are available online at [act.org](http://act.org) and [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org). Test-prep materials can also be found in counseling offices, bookstores, and libraries. Be sure to take at least one practice test and go over the questions you answered incorrectly.

# Things to CONSIDER



Choosing a college is not about finding the highest ranking school—it's about finding a college that's a good match for you. Knowing what you're looking for in a college will help you find a college that's a good fit.

*Put a check beside any of the following that are important to you.*

## Type of college

Will a two-year or four-year college best help you meet your career goals?

### Two-year colleges (community and technical colleges)

- ▶ An increasingly popular choice, two-year colleges offer affordable one- and two-year career programs.
- ▶ Two-year colleges accept all high school graduates.
- ▶ Students can start at a two-year college and then transfer to a four-year college.

*For more on two-year colleges, watch this video.*



VIDEO

### Four-year colleges

- ▶ A four-year college education can open doors and prepare students for a wide variety of careers.
- ▶ Four-year colleges vary greatly in size, cost, and admission requirements.
- ▶ Public four-year colleges are generally larger and offer a wide variety of majors and programs; private colleges are usually smaller and have a more personal atmosphere.

*For more on four-year colleges, watch this video.*



VIDEO

**Location**

Where do you want to go to college? Close to home? In your home state? Near a big city? Close to nature?

**Size**

Do you want to go to a large school with lots of majors, programs, and activities, or to a small school with fewer students and smaller classes?

**Academic programs**

Do you have a specific subject that you want to study? While most colleges offer popular majors, such as business, not every college will offer the major you may be interested in.

**Admission requirements**

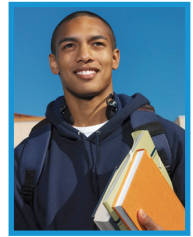
Some colleges accept all high school graduates; others are very selective. Look for colleges that accept students with academic records similar to yours.

**Cost**

When calculating college costs, include tuition and fees, room and board, books, and an allowance for personal expenses. Remember, financial aid often makes it possible for students to attend schools that would otherwise be too expensive.

If cost is a factor, consider the following:

- ▶ Public colleges receive government funding and are generally less expensive than private colleges.
- ▶ Going to a public college in your home state usually costs much less than going to a public college in a different state.
- ▶ To cut college costs, consider starting at a two-year college or living at home and commuting.



## Do a College Search

To do an online search for the colleges that have what you're looking for, visit [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org).

# Go on College VISITS



Going on a college visit is the best way to find out if a college will be a good fit for you.

## Plan your visit

### Learn about the college

Visit the college's website to learn about their campus, programs, majors, and facilities.

### Decide when to visit

Spring of your junior year is a great time to visit colleges. Be sure to visit when classes are in session so that you can talk to students and get a feel for what the campus is like when it's in full swing.

### Check out all visitation options

Many colleges have open houses and visitation days for high school students and their parents.

### Schedule your visit

Contact the admissions office directly or schedule your visit online. If there's a specific major or program you're interested in, be sure to let the admissions office know.

*If you can't visit a college in person, you may be able to take a virtual tour on the college's website or at [campustours.com](http://campustours.com).*

## College visit tips

### Take a campus tour

A group tour is a great way to learn about a college. During the tour, your guide (usually a student) will provide you with facts and information. As you walk around the campus, try to visualize yourself as a student there.

## Attend an information session

Most colleges have information sessions for prospective students and parents. These sessions can be very helpful.

## Talk to an admissions counselor

Admissions counselors are available to discuss admissions requirements and to answer questions. If you would like to discuss your academic record or your chances of being admitted, take an unofficial transcript with you.

## Check out the area

Explore the city or town the college is located in. Remember, you won't just go to school there—you will also be living in that community.

## Take pictures and make notes

Take pictures to help you remember the campus and make a note of anything you want to remember. After your visit, write down your impressions and list the college's positive and negative aspects.

## Questions to ask

### General information

- ▶ What percentage of first-year students return?
- ▶ What makes this college unique?
- ▶ How safe is the college?
- ▶ Which admissions criteria do you consider most important?



### Academics

- ▶ What are your strongest majors?
- ▶ How large are most of the classes?
- ▶ Is it difficult for students to get into the classes they need?
- ▶ Are there specific requirements for my major?

### Student life

- ▶ Where do students live?
- ▶ How do students get around campus?
- ▶ What activities are available for students?

# Your Spring TO-DO LIST



Check these tasks off as you complete them.

**Determine what test(s) you will take**

If you plan to go to a four-year college, consider taking the ACT and/or SAT in the spring or summer. The ACT is offered in February, April, June, and July. The SAT is offered in March, May, and June. Register 6–8 weeks before the test date.

**Choose the best courses for your senior year**

Make sure your senior courses fulfill your high school's graduation requirements, the requirements for the college(s) you are considering, and if necessary, the requirements for athletic eligibility.

*Resist the urge to “take it easy” your senior year. You want to keep your skills sharp, and colleges like to see that students are continuing to challenge themselves.*

**Talk to your counselor**

Meet with your counselor to go over your academic record and discuss your college plans. If you have questions about college tests, the application process, financial aid, or anything else, your counselor can help you.

**Make college visits**

Making college visits will help you narrow your list of college choices and determine which college(s) you want to apply to.

**Choose meaningful activities for the summer**

Try to get a job or do volunteer work in a field related to your intended major.

# Get Ready for Your SENIOR YEAR



**Your senior year will be very busy! You will have applications to complete, colleges to revisit, forms to fill out, and decisions to make. And that's on top of your classes and everything else.**

You can make your senior year much less stressful by doing the following this spring/summer:

## **1. Have your college list narrowed down**

You don't need to know where you want to go to college by the beginning of your senior year, but you should know where you want to apply.

## **2. Plan to take the ACT or SAT, if necessary**

If any of the schools you are considering require ACT or SAT test scores and you haven't taken either test—or if you want to improve your test scores—plan to take the ACT or SAT early in your senior year.

## **3. Create a one-page resume or “activities record”**

Include all of your activities, awards, honors, unique experiences, community service, jobs, and anything else that helps you stand out. This record will be helpful when you're completing applications, and anyone writing a recommendation will appreciate having this information.

## **4. Get a head start on your applications**

If you know you will need to write an essay or personal statement, work on it over the summer. If you're going to want a letter of recommendation from a teacher or counselor, make your request before school is out. They will appreciate having the extra time to put their thoughts together.

# COLLEGE BOUND

A Guide for  
Juniors



This booklet is filled with expert advice on how to make your college dreams a reality.

**WOODBURN PRESS**

[woodburnpress.com](http://woodburnpress.com)

Item 114