

COLLEGE BOUND

A Guide for Freshmen





Dear Freshman,

If you're thinking about going to college, congratulations! There's no better way to prepare yourself for a bright future than to continue your education.

You can start planning and preparing for college now by working hard in your classes, exploring your college options, and developing your skills and talents.

This booklet will tell you what you need to do this year to plan and prepare for college. It will also show you how going to college is a goal that you can achieve!

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Why Go to COLLEGE?



There are many good reasons to go to college. *Here is why going to college is a goal that's worth working toward.*

More career opportunities

A college education can prepare you for a variety of careers that are personally and financially rewarding. When you think of all the careers that are available to college graduates, the sky is the limit!

Greater income

College graduates earn more money than high school graduates. Having a better income means that you'll have more money for the things that are important to you, like hobbies, a nice car, entertainment, and travel.

Opportunities to develop and grow

Going to college gives you the opportunity to study a variety of subjects, try new things, make new friends, and become more independent. Most importantly, college gives you the opportunity to become the person you want to be.

Personal accomplishment

Receiving a college diploma is a testament to your hard work and your drive to succeed. It's an accomplishment that you can be proud of for the rest of your life!

A college education will open doors and provide you with more options and opportunities in life. Decide now to make going to college your goal!

9th Grade Matters A LOT!



Even though college may seem like it's a long way off, 9th grade is a very important year for college-bound students. Here's why.

Everything counts now

Now that you are a freshman, your courses earn credits that count toward graduation, your grades will be used to calculate your grade point average (GPA), and all of your courses, grades, and credits will be on your permanent high school record.

Having an impressive high school record is very important because colleges and employers will use it to help them decide what kind of student or employee you will be.

What you need to do this year

If you want to go to college, you will have a lot to do in the next few years. You will need to make college visits, take college tests, complete applications, and more. However, as a freshman, you should focus on the following:

- ▶ getting the highest grades possible in all of your classes.
- ▶ developing your interests, talents, and skills.
- ▶ getting involved in school and community activities.

While focusing on the above is what's most important, it's not too early to explore your college options and to think about what you might like to study in college.

**For more on how you can build an
impressive high school record,
watch this short video!**



VIDEO

Build an Impressive RECORD



When you apply to college, you will need to submit a copy of your high school record (transcript) along with your application for admission. The more impressive your high school record is, the more college choices and opportunities you will have.

Here's how you can build an impressive high school record.

1. Take college prep courses

In order to be prepared for college level work, four-year colleges typically recommend that students take the following college prep courses in high school:

4 years of English

3–4 years of math (including Algebra I, Geometry, and 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

As a general rule, high school students should take as many college prep math, science, English, social studies, and world language courses as they can handle.

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

2. Make a four-year plan

A four-year plan is a listing of the courses you plan to take each year in high school. *For information on how to make a four-year plan, watch this short video.*



VIDEO

3. Work to get the best grades possible this year

The most important aspect of your high school record will be the grades you earn in your classes—starting in the 9th grade.

Think about what you can do this year to improve your study skills. *Put a checkmark beside the things you should work on.*

- Being organized.** Being organized will save you time and make your days run more smoothly. Create to-do lists and use a planner to keep track of your assignments.
- Managing your time.** Use any extra time you have in class to start on your homework, and if you have a study hall, use it. You'll have a lot less to do in the evenings.
- Doing all of your homework.** Make homework a part of your daily routine. Get all of your homework done before you watch TV, jump on your devices, or contact your friends.
- Participating in class.** Raise your hand often and participate in discussions. You'll learn more and the time will go faster.
- Taking good notes.** Having good notes to study from will help you do better on tests. Listen in class, write down key points, and highlight or underline important information in your notes.
- Giving reading assignments extra time.** Read as slowly as you need to in order to understand what you're reading.
- Asking for help.** If you have questions or are struggling on an assignment, ask your teacher for help. Most teachers are happy to help you, but you need to ask.

4. Get involved in activities

There's no better way to meet new people with similar interests, learn new skills, and have fun! Find out what activities are available in your school and choose one or two to get involved in. Having meaningful school and community activities also looks good on college applications.

High School & College DIFFERENCES



While success in high school and college both require hard work, organization, and time management, there are a number of differences between the two. Here are some of them.

High School	College
You have classes one right after the other for 6–7 hours a day, Monday–Friday.	You may have gaps between classes. On some days, you may not have any classes.
Your days are scheduled and organized by others.	You organize your days and manage your own time.
Your classes usually have 30 students or fewer.	Your classes can be small or very large.
Your course selection is limited and your schedule is arranged for you.	You arrange your own schedule and have a variety of courses to choose from.
You have homework, but most of your learning is done in class.	For each hour in class, you're expected to spend 2–3 hours studying on your own.
Homework grades are usually a large part of your final grade.	Your final grades depend heavily on major papers, tests, and exams.

Two- and Four-Year COLLEGES



Some careers require four years of college, while others require only one or two years. In many cases, your career choice will determine which education option is most appropriate for you.

Two-year colleges

Two-year colleges provide career-oriented programs that enable students to begin their careers after two years of college or less. Going to a two-year college can be a good choice for students who want to prepare for a specific career. Students who want a bachelor's degree can save money by starting at a two-year college and transferring to a four-year college after a year or two.

Four-year colleges

A four-year college education can open doors and prepare students for a wide variety of rewarding careers. Four-year colleges vary greatly in their admission requirements, costs, and majors, but they all want students who are ready for college-level work. Therefore, students planning to go to a four-year college should take college prep courses in high school and work hard to get good grades.

Did you know?

Four-year colleges typically require that all students take courses in English, science, math, and history. These courses are in addition to the courses they take for their major (the subject they've chosen to study in depth.)

This is not the case for students attending most two-year colleges. Students in one- and two-year career programs take just the courses they need to prepare for a specific career.

Things to CONSIDER



You don't need to decide which colleges you want to apply to until your senior year, but now is a good time to start thinking about what's important to you in a college.

To find the colleges that will be a good match for you, consider the following:

Type of college – Do you want to go to a two- or four-year college?

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, a more personal atmosphere, and smaller classes?

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

Academic programs – Is there 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.

Special programs – Perhaps you want to go to a college with a girl's soccer team, orchestra, or study abroad program. Having a program, activity, or sport that's important to you will help you narrow your list of college choices.

Cost – The cost of a college is an important consideration for most students. Talk to your parents about how your education will be paid for. Will you need to get financial aid? Will you apply for scholarships?

Don't ever think that you can't go to college because you don't have enough money. There's a great deal of financial aid available, and there are many ways to cut college costs.

What Colleges LOOK FOR



Colleges consider some or all of the following when deciding which students to accept.

▶ **GPA**

A student's GPA is what most colleges look at first. Colleges know that students who get good grades in high school are much more likely to succeed in college.

▶ **Courses taken**

Four-year colleges look very carefully at the courses listed on a student's high school transcript. They are particularly interested in which college prep courses a student has taken—and in the grades they received in those courses.

▶ **ACT/SAT scores**

Some four-year colleges require that students submit ACT or SAT scores when they apply. Students usually take these tests in the spring of their junior year. *The best way to prepare for the ACT and SAT is to take college prep courses in high school.*

▶ **Other considerations**

When deciding whether to accept a student, colleges look at more than a student's academic record. They also consider a student's activities, awards, talents, and personal qualities.

To learn about a student's character and abilities, colleges may ask for letters of recommendation from that student's counselor and/or teachers.

Be smart with technology. Don't post anything on social media that you wouldn't want a college admissions officer to see. Admissions officers do check these sites.

Your Freshman TO-DO LIST



Doing the things on this to-do list will help ensure that you have lots of college options and opportunities when you graduate from high school.



Work hard to get the best grades possible

While colleges consider a number of things when deciding whether to accept an applicant, a student's high school academic record is the most important.



Make informal college visits

Visiting different colleges is the best way to determine what kind of college will be the best fit for you. Take a walk around a college campus, go to a sporting event, or have lunch in the student union. As you walk around the campus, try to imagine yourself as a student there.



Learn all you can

Think about what you're looking for in a college and learn as much as you can about the schools you want to consider. Check out college websites and go to bigfuture.collegeboard.org to learn about your college options.



Develop your interests and be involved

Participate in activities in and out of school, and do some volunteer work. Colleges are looking for students who have something that makes them stand out. If you have a specific interest, talent, or passion, take time this year to develop it.



Think about a major

If you go to a four-year college, you will need to choose a major—this is the subject you will study in depth. You will take about half of your courses in your major, so it's important to choose a subject area that you enjoy and will do well in.

Start thinking about your interests, talents, and abilities in terms of a possible major. If you have a favorite subject, learn as much as you can about the majors and careers related to that subject.



Do a college interview

You can learn a lot from the experiences of others. Think of someone you know who went to college and ask if you can talk to them about their college experience. Here are some questions to ask:

- ▶ What college did you go to?
- ▶ What was your major or program?
- ▶ What was the best part of your college experience?
- ▶ What was the most difficult part of college for you?
- ▶ Is there anything you wish you would have done differently in college?
- ▶ Do you have any advice for me?



Talk to your counselor

Let your counselor know that you want to go to college and make sure that you're taking the courses you need. Discuss your thoughts on college and ask questions. *Your counselor can help you make your college dreams a reality!*

For more on how you can plan and prepare for college your freshman year, watch this short video!



VIDEO

Set GOALS



It's important for people of all ages to set short-term and long-term goals.

Goals give you direction, focus, and purpose. Goals can also help you develop a plan of action. For example, if you want to go to college, there are certain things you need to do to achieve your goal. *If you're not in the habit of setting goals, now is the time to start!*

Set short-term and long-term goals

Short-term goals are ones you can achieve within days or weeks. Long-term goals may take weeks, months, or even years to achieve. Here are a few examples.

Michael's short-term goals

- Get a B on my next history test
- Practice my soccer drills three times this week
- Have all of my chores done by Friday

Michael's long-term goals

- Get all As and Bs this term
- Make the soccer team next year
- Go to college and become a lawyer

Write it down

Research shows that you are more likely to achieve goals that are written down. At the beginning of each quarter or semester, write down a short-term and long-term academic goal, and a short-term and long-term personal goal.

For information on how to set SMART goals, watch this short video!



VIDEO

Build a Support NETWORK



If you want to go to college, you will need some help from time to time. Think of the people in your life who will encourage and support you as you plan and prepare for college—these are the people that will make up your support network.

Your family

Tell your family that you want to go to college and ask them to help you achieve your goal.

Your school counselor

Your counselor will be a great source of support as you navigate the college process, from choosing the right classes now to helping you submit applications your senior year. Talk to your counselor about your college goals, ask questions, and discuss any concerns you may have.

Other adults in your life

Think of the adults you know who want you to succeed—teachers, coaches, relatives, and/or spiritual leaders. Seek their counsel and advice as you plan and prepare for college.

Make College Your Goal

Decide right now that college is a goal you're going to work toward. Keep your goal in mind as you go to class, do your homework, and study for tests. Remember, you're not working hard in school for your teachers or your family.

You are working hard for yourself and for your future!

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

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