

## HIGH SCHOOL CHECKLIST: FRESHMAN YEAR

Congratulations! You are ready to embark on the last leg of your journey to higher education. To make sure you are fully prepared for the next step, use this checklist as a guide.

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- Create 4-year high school plan.** This plan should include all courses suggested to be college-ready (4 English courses, 4 mathematics courses, 3 science courses, 3 social studies courses, 2 foreign language courses of the same language and 1 fine art course).

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  - Enroll in challenging courses.** Treat your transcript as a “résumé” for higher education, as it will be reviewed by admissions and financial aid officers. Consider special curriculum options, including Advance Placement (AP), Dual Credit and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. It’s a balance, though, because ultimately a good GPA will be important for scholarships.

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  - Get to know your high school counselor.** This person will be a crucial advocate as you start your journey to higher education.

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  - Engage in extracurricular activities.** Be sure to track volunteer hours, awards, leadership roles and special involvements in an Activity Resumé for future college and scholarship applications.

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  - Discover how you learn best.** Experiment with different ways to study, summarize and remember your course material.

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  - Look for meaningful job shadowing opportunities.** This will help further explore career interests.

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  - Make sure you’re on track with saving for higher education.** Use available resources, such as creating your Family Education Philosophy to help reach your goals.

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## HIGH SCHOOL CHECKLIST: SOPHOMORE YEAR

Use this checklist as a guide to make sure you are fully prepared for the next step of your journey to higher education. The road can be overwhelming, but you don't have to go it alone.

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- Enroll in challenging courses.** Explore programs that will give you an academic edge, such as Advance Placement (AP), Dual Credit and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. It's a balance, though, because ultimately a good GPA will be important for scholarships.

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  - Take PSAT and/or ACT PLAN in October.** This will get you ready for the SAT and ACT, which many colleges require for admission. Talk to your counselor about how to best prepare for these tests.

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  - Explore academic and career interests.** Doing so will help identify your abilities and aptitudes.

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  - Consider attending a summer camp.** Further develop your skills, talents and academic interests through these additional experiences. For ideas, check area college or school district websites.

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  - Create a permanent email address.** Use this email to communicate with college admissions.

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  - Update your Activity Resumé.** Many scholarships have requirements that center around the number of hours devoted to certain activities, so be sure to keep a detailed log of your time.
    - If you are planning on competing as a NCAA Division I or II student-athlete, register online at the NCAA Eligibility Center.

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  - Continue saving for higher education.** Begin familiarizing yourself with the basics of financial aid.

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  - Understand the cost of college.** What you pay for college will likely be lower than the listed price. To get a better idea of what you'll pay to attend a college, use our College Cost & Compare Calculator. Know that if you plan to attend college immediately after high school, then the spring of your sophomore year will be the start of what the financial aid application, the FAFSA, calls your "base year." What happens financially this year will affect your aid application for your freshman year in college. Curious about what kind of financial aid you may receive? Complete the FAFSA4caster for a free estimate.
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## HIGH SCHOOL CHECKLIST: JUNIOR YEAR

Use this checklist as a guide to make sure you are fully prepared for the next step of your journey to higher education. The road can be overwhelming, but you don't have to go it alone.

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- Meet with your high school counselor.** Review your progress and make sure you are on the path to graduation and to meet higher education admission requirements.

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  - Enroll in challenging courses.** Push yourself academically by taking Advance Placement (AP), Dual Credit and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. Keep an eye on your GPA so it stays in line with your higher education aspirations.

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  - Take PSAT in October.** This will get you ready for the SAT and ACT, which many colleges require for admission. Talk to your counselor about how to best prepare for this test. PSAT score from your Junior year may qualify you for the National Merit Scholarship.

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  - Start researching options to continue your education after high school.** Schedule campus tours and attend college fairs to begin to narrow down your higher education choices.

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  - Take ACT or SAT between March and June.** You are allowed to take these tests on multiple occasions to potentially increase your score, though we don't recommend more than 4 times. Explore various resources to help in preparation, both free and paid.

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  - Register with NCAA Eligibility Center.** If you are planning on playing NCAA Division I or Division II athletics, you can create an account online as a prospective student-athlete.

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  - Prepare for higher education admission process.** This includes essay writing, gathering required documents and deadlines.

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  - Research scholarships.** Keep your eyes and ears open for all scholarship opportunities.

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## HIGH SCHOOL CHECKLIST: JUNIOR YEAR

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**Create an Activity Resumé.** Gather your test scores, awards, important courses and Activity Log to develop a resumé that can be used for applications to schools and scholarships.

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**Request a Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID.** Go to [fsaid.ed.gov](https://fsaid.ed.gov) to request a FSA ID for both student and parent.

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**Complete FAFSA4caster.** Curious about what kind of financial aid you may receive? Complete the FAFSA4caster for a free estimate.

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**Continue saving for higher education.**

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## HIGH SCHOOL CHECKLIST: SENIOR YEAR

Congratulations! You are ready to embark on the last leg of your journey to higher education. To make sure you are fully prepared for the next step, use this checklist as a guide.

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- Enroll in challenging courses.** Finish strong by taking Advance Placement (AP), Dual Credit and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. Keep an eye on your GPA so that it stays in line with your higher education aspirations.

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  - Request recommendations.** Ask at least two teachers and your counselor as soon as possible to make sure they have enough time to complete your recommendations.

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  - Meet with your high school counselor at the beginning of the school year.** Use this time to discuss plans for higher education and review ACT/SAT scores.

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  - Retake ACT or SAT in October, if necessary.** A higher score might increase the amount of scholarships received and improve admission acceptance.

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  - Schedule campus tours and attend college fairs.** We recommend completing all campus tours prior to November to allow for ample time to make your final decision.

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  - Finalize your Activity Resumé.**

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  - Fill out Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after October 1.** Financial aid is generally awarded on a “first come, first serve” basis. Some private colleges and scholarship programs will also require the completion of secondary financial aid applications, such as the CSS/Financial Aid Profile, in addition to the FAFSA. *Tip: The FAFSA is free at [fafsa.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov).*
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## HIGH SCHOOL CHECKLIST: SENIOR YEAR

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- Pay attention to deadlines.** Complete college admissions, financial aid, and scholarship applications on time and in full.

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- Compare all higher education offers and financial aid award packages.** Our Financial Aid Comparison Tool can help you look at your awards and determine the most cost-effective path to achieving your goals.

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- Make your college or training program decision by May 1.**

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## The Next Steps to Higher Education

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- Attend orientation programs.**

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- Enroll in courses for the fall.** Aim for 15 credit hours each semester to graduate on time.

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- Submit housing/resident deposit.** And don't forget to connect with your roommate.

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- Return any financial assistance documents that require signatures.** Take special note of all deadlines.

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- Notify other colleges of your decision.**

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- Start planning for payments.** Be sure to know when your first bill is due. This is also a good time to determine whether or not you'll need to have a payment plan.

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