

## High School Student & Parent To-Do List for Students in 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

### Summary

Need information about going to school? Here is a checklist and areas to explore for both students and parents to help prepare academically and financially for an education after high school. Find out what you should be doing each year in high school and which publications or websites will be useful for you.

### Students

#### To Do:

#### ...all year

- Estimate your financial aid.** Work with your parent(s) to estimate your potential financial aid using *FAFSA4caster* at [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov), and continue to save for college.
- Take classes in core subjects.** Take challenging classes in core academic subjects. Most colleges require:
  - 4 years of English
  - 3 years of social studies (history, civics, geography, economics, etc.)
  - 3 years of math
  - 3 years of science
  - Many colleges require 2 years of a foreign language
  - Round out your course load with classes in computer science and the arts.
- Study hard.** Your grades this year will go a long way toward helping you or hurting you get into the college of your choice. You can make up ground if you've been slacking, or continue the good work if you've been excelling.
- School/Community-based activities.** Stay involved in school- or community-based activities that interest you or let you explore career interests. Consider working or volunteering. Remember that it is quality—not quantity—that counts.
- Use your summer wisely.** Plan to use your summer wisely: Work, volunteer, or take a summer course.
- Keep a list of your activities.** Make a list of your awards, honors, extracurricular activities, and paid and volunteer work. Consider participating in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, and camps with specialty focuses such as music, arts, or science.
- Research education after high school.** Talk to your school counselor about education after high school. Your counselor can answer questions about what classes to take in high school, how to sign up for standardized tests, and where to get money for college.

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- Choosing a college.** Learn about choosing a college at [StudentAid.gov/prepare-for-college/choosing-schools](https://studentaid.gov/prepare-for-college/choosing-schools).
- Explore careers.** Explore careers and their earning potential with the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* tool at [www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco).
- College fairs.** Go to college fairs and college-preparation presentations hosted by college representatives.

## ...fall

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT.** You must take the PSAT/NMSQT in 11<sup>th</sup> grade to qualify for scholarships and programs associated with the National Merit Scholarship Program.

## ...spring

- Take exams for college admission.** Register for and take exams for college admission. The tests that many colleges require are the SAT, the SAT Subject Tests, and the ACT. Check with the colleges you are interested in to see what tests they require.
- Visit college campuses.** Visit college campuses you're interested in, preferably when classes are in session.
- Find scholarships.** Use the free scholarship search tool at [StudentAid.gov/scholarships](https://studentaid.gov/scholarships) to find scholarships for which you might want to apply. Some deadlines fall as early as the summer between 11th and 12th grades, so prepare now to submit applications soon.

## To Explore:

- Visit [www.YouTube.com/FederalStudentAid](https://www.YouTube.com/FederalStudentAid) and go to the "Types of Aid" playlist to see how the government can help you pay for college.
- Learn how to avoid scholarship scams and identity theft at [StudentAid.gov/scams](https://StudentAid.gov/scams).
- Check out KnowHow2Go: The Four Steps to College, at [www.knowhow2go.org](http://www.knowhow2go.org) for more advice on actions you can take as you start thinking about education beyond high school.
- Get answers to common questions about college by watching videos on the "Prepare for College" playlist at [www.YouTube.com/FederalStudentAid](https://www.YouTube.com/FederalStudentAid).
- Think about starting to research different colleges. Use the College Scorecard tool at [collegescorecard.ed.gov](http://collegescorecard.ed.gov) to explore schools based on size, location, programs, and more.

## Parents

## To Do:

[www.southhills.edu](http://www.southhills.edu)  
1-888-282-7427

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- Stay involved.** Keep an eye on your child's study habits and grades.
- Advanced Placement courses.** Encourage your child to take Advanced Placement courses or other challenging classes.
- College savings account.** Add to your child's college savings account regularly.
- Review your financial situation.** Take another look at your finances, and be sure you're on the right track to pay for college.
- Discuss college choices.** Talk to your child about the schools he or she is considering. Ask why those schools appeal to your child, and help him or her clarify goals and priorities.
- Attend college fairs.** Attend college fairs with your child, but don't take over the conversation with the college representatives. Just listen; let your child do the talking.
- Visit college campuses.** Take your child to visit college campuses, preferably when classes are in session.
- Attend financial aid events.** Attend any financial aid information events at your child's school.

## To Explore:

- Get in-depth information on federal student aid programs at [StudentAid.gov/types](https://studentaid.gov/types).
- Learn about student and parent loans in the *Federal Student Loans: Basics for Students* and *Federal Student Loans: Direct PLUS Loan Basics for Parents* booklets at [StudentAid.gov/resources#loans](https://studentaid.gov/resources#loans).
- Learn about the tax benefits of cashing in savings bonds to pay for your child's education; search for "Publication 970" at [www.irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov).
- Get a brief overview of financial aid from *Federal Student Aid at a Glance* at [StudentAid.gov/glance](https://studentaid.gov/glance).