

High School Student & Parent To-Do List for Students in 10th 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:

- Estimate your financial aid.** Work with your parent(s) to estimate your potential financial aid using *FAFSA4caster* at 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.
- Advanced Placement courses.** Talk to your school counselor or teachers about Advanced Placement courses. Find out what courses are available and how to enroll in them.
- Study hard—do well in school.** Remember, your grades will count toward college and will show up on your permanent record.
- 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's 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/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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- College admission requirements.** Meet with your school counselor to discuss colleges and their admissions requirements.
- Take a practice national test.** Consider taking a practice Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) or PSAT™ 10, or the PreACT™.
- Research careers.** Use the career search at [StudentAid.gov/careersearch](https://www.studentaid.gov/careersearch) to research your career options. Research majors that might be a good match with your interests and goals. Consider what fits well with your results from the career search at [StudentAid.gov/careersearch](https://www.studentaid.gov/careersearch).
- Career information events.** Go to career information events at your high school.

To Explore:

- Check out *KnowHow2Go: The Four Steps to College*, at 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.
- Learn about managing your money in the “High School Youth” section of www.mymoney.gov/Pages/for-youth.aspx.
- Visit [StudentAid.gov/whycollege](https://www.studentaid.gov/whycollege) for a quick rundown on why deciding to attend college is a no-brainer.
- Find ways to get help preparing for college at [StudentAid.gov/prepare-for-college/help](https://www.studentaid.gov/prepare-for-college/help).
- Learn the differences between grants, loans, work-study, and scholarships at [StudentAid.gov/types](https://www.studentaid.gov/types).
- Think about starting to research different colleges. Use the College Scorecard tool at collegescorecard.ed.gov to explore schools based on size, location, programs, and more.

Parents

To Do:

- Talk about college plans.** Talk to your child about college plans as if he/she will definitely go to college.
- 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.
- College information events.** Find out whether your child’s school has college nights. Plan to attend those events with your child.

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- Develop independence.** Help your child develop independence by encouraging him/her to take responsibility for balancing homework with other activities or a part-time job.

To Explore:

- Explore [StudentAid.gov/parent](https://studentaid.gov/parent) for information on saving for:
 - College
 - Borrowing money for college
 - Applying for financial aid
 - Getting tax benefits to help make college affordable
- 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.
- Learn about the standardized tests your child will take during 10th, 11th, and 12th grades:
 - PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 (see www.collegeboard.org)
 - SAT and SAT Subject Tests (see www.collegeboard.org)
 - PreACT and the ACT (see www.act.org).
- Get a brief overview of financial aid from *Federal Student Aid at a Glance* at [StudentAid.gov/glance](https://studentaid.gov/glance).