



## **What Students Should Do During The Start of High School**

- Try a sport- team sports, or try something you have been interested in, if you aren't athletic could film games, manage equipment, be a student trainer
- Join a club or start a club, academic or professional or social. Participate in competitions and fairs (continue to do this throughout high school, too!)
- Get political- run for student government or work on someone's campaign. Find a cause that interests you and collect signatures for a petition. Join the debate team (it is the best cure for shyness)
- Work on the school newspaper, the yearbook, or the school website. Become a writer, photographer, or even a blogger
- Explore musical or artistic pursuits by joining the band or choir. Act in a school play or join community theater group. Or work behind the scenes painting scenery, sell tickets, be an usher. Write poetry and post in online.
- Travel- for shorter or longer trips, day trips. Experience different communities, people, ideas, and hopefully you will find something inspiring or to spark your interests along the way
- Volunteer- as a way to experience the value of giving back, exploring your interests, seeing if a potential major/career path is in actuality interesting
- Get a hobby- search for what interests you, or find online organizations and activities that are related
- Set a goal- train for an event, learn a new instrument, audition for a play, a band, a commercial. Get certified as a lifeguard.

## **General Ninth Grade Planning/To Do's**

- Meet with your counselor to go over your 4-year course schedule. Keep him or her updated throughout high school as you make decisions about what colleges and majors you're considering.
- Try to ensure you are in all or nearly all of the advanced-level classes that are available if you are seeking a top college



- ❑ Ask both counselors and teachers to keep you informed of any special programs or extracurricular activities that are available.
- ❑ Get organized, the schedule you develop for yourself will ensure you don't get behind. The study habits you have as a freshman will be a foundation for the remainder of high school
- ❑ Make a list of academic and personal goals. Revise them at least once a year.
- ❑ Get to know teachers so they get to know you. You may need recommendation letters for summer programs, scholarships, college applications.
- ❑ If you are extremely shy or find it hard to participate in class, work on this! Join the speech or debate team, research other ways to push yourself to learn to move beyond. Class participation is VERY important, and you need to start practicing it soon
- ❑ If you have a dream school, begin to look at their admissions requirements and most recent year's class profiles (you can online search for the school and Class of 202X statistics to see the means and medians), and generally how many years of each subject they expect.
- ❑ Register at a college web services site, you may also be put on mailing lists for other important college material.
- ❑ Keep your eyes open for cool activities or opportunities such as summer programs, camps, academic or sport contests, jobs, or volunteering
- ❑ Sort through the extracurricular options available at your high school, and aim to participate for four years in those that TRULY interest you. Colleges would rather see long-term commitment. It is OK to try and drop out, but they want to see 2-3 in-depth involvements that will be 3 or 4 year commitments.
- ❑ Avoid getting in friend groups that are "slackers" who would rather be on social media and going to the mall. A lot of kids in 9th grade are still very immature, you don't want their attitude to affect you
- ❑ Try to find a one-month or two-week college program at one of the top summer schools so you can pursue a subject you might not have had time to find out about in high school. Don't commit to the whole summer, because you should have some fun, too.
- ❑ Create a file or a box and keep all of your major important papers, grades, articles, scholarship opportunities together, both physically and digitally.

- ❑ Find fun and interesting ways to volunteer
- ❑ Start a log/journal/portfolio, keep track of your activities, volunteer work, jobs, and who the contact person is. Write down your impressions, especially what you do and don't like about each activity. Gradually, you may notice trends and see where your interests really lie.
- ❑ Over the Summer- read, read, read in your spare time, novels, newspapers, scientific journals, et cetera. By reading many different literary styles and genres, you will do the best kind of preparation for the SAT Critical reading section. The more you read, the more your vocabulary and reading comprehension will increase

### **General Tenth Grade Planning/To Do's**

- ❑ Keep reading novels, magazines, quality newspapers, or other challenging texts in your spare time
- ❑ Focus on your GPA. Take the most challenging classes you can handle.
- ❑ Review and revise your goals... and set new ones
- ❑ Take personality/inventory tests if you're not sure what you're interested in studying or what kind of colleges that might be a good fit for you
- ❑ Take the PSAT (Colleges never see PSAT scores, so you have an idea of what the SAT test is like)
- ❑ Take a real ACT test, and compare it to your PSAT score (optional, could be done in 11th grade, too)
- ❑ Start thinking about your long-term future and your potential careers. Work on doing informational interviews with people in fields that you might be interested in to learn what their careers are actually like. See if you can job shadow anyone your parents know.
- ❑ Plan your summer--- what will it include? A job, SAT prep, a college-prep program on a campus to study an area that isn't offered in your school?
- ❑ Are you enjoying your extracurriculars? Do you have any new interests you want to pursue? Now is the time to modify things and still have a solid 3-year commitment.



- ❑ Keep up with homework. If you're doing less well than expected, talk to the teacher about how you can improve. Stress it is not because you are so concerned about the grade, but that you are disappointed in your own performance
- ❑ By spring break, evaluate your stronger subjects and begin to study for one or two SAT Subject tests to take in June
- ❑ Update your records of activities, volunteer work, classes, travel. File information you receive on colleges, scholarships, tests both physically and digitally

### *Summer After 10th Grade*

- ❑ Find a job, colleges like to see a sense of responsibility and that students haven't had everything handed to them. If you have a particular talent or interest, try to line up commensurate with your academic skills, such as working in a computer store or for a local paper. If you are an athlete, work on your training here, too.
- ❑ Try to fit in 3-5 college visits over the summer, in June or July. Sit in on information sessions, take a tour, talk to students. Start earlier, so you won't be as panicked the following summer.

### **General Eleventh Grade Planning/To Do's**

- ❑ This should be your most challenging year academically, take many honors, AP, IB classes. Colleges look at your junior year as a significant one. Focus and try to get the best grades you can. Let your interests drive you, go beyond the basic requirements for a research paper. This is the year to impress your teachers and excel in all of your classes
- ❑ Take the PSATs in October-- your status as a National merit semi-finalist or National Merit finalist is determined by your PSAT score, not your SAT scores
- ❑ Take the September or December ACT to see how that scores compares to your junior PSAT, (if the ACT is higher, don't bother taking the SAT, take the ACT multiple times until you are happy with the score).
- ❑ Take the SAT as a first go around in November if you are unsure about the ACT or SAT
- ❑ Take one or two SAT Subject tests in the spring, prep for them starting a month before at least to fill in your knowledge gaps



- ❑ Study and take AP exams in May (for the classes you are enrolled in, and if you are a strong English student, perhaps AP English exam or other subject you study for)
- ❑ Find a really good academic program for the summer to participate in that will help further develop your interests, offers leadership skill or specialized skill development that your high school does not offer

### *Summer After 11th Grade To Do's*

- ❑ Visit colleges you are interested in (June and July are better than August, when everyone else goes)
- ❑ Every time you visit a college, fill out a visitation sheet in the admissions office so you will be on the mailing list. Also make sure you write down notes after each college visit so that
- ❑ At the end of the summer, narrow down your college list
- ❑ Do as much research as you can on the colleges you are interested in. Read about them, talk to college-age friends, search the web.
- ❑ Think about applying early decision
- ❑ Evaluate your testing record. If you think you can improve on the SAT or ACT, plan to take it again in the early fall
- ❑ Start working on your college essays so you won't be crunched near the deadline
- ❑ Decide which teachers you will ask for recommendation letters
- ❑ Research scholarship and financial aid information and requirements, students and parents should have ongoing discussion

### **General Twelfth Grade Planning/To Do's**

- ❑ Keep your grades up. Colleges look at your senior grades, even for the spring term. Don't slack off after all of your hard work!
- ❑ Plan to ask your teachers for recommendation letters



- Edit your common application personal statement (it usually requires 5-10 drafts to get to a solid statement)
- Keep track of all of the important deadlines and requirements for each college you are applying to
- Ensure you meet with your high school guidance counselor to make sure you are on the same page about the schools you are applying to
- If you apply Early Decision, the deadline is usually November 1 or November 15
- If you are not apply early decision, you have until the December test dates to take and improve upon your SAT Reasoning Test and to take SAT Subject tests
- Draft and edit college supplements (typically each college you apply to will have at least one supplemental essay, these add up!)
- Send your scores to the colleges you are applying to
- Follow up with your high school counselor to ensure that everything including your mid-year grades have been sent to colleges
- Prepare for on-campus or personal alumni interviews and write thank-you notes afterward
- Submit FAFSA/CSS profile information if relevant
- Select a school and notify admissions office and pay deposit by May 1

## **Testing Timeline**

### *Ninth Grade*

- Reviewing SAT Subject Tests (the most competitive schools require 2-3 Subject tests), best to take them at the end of the year you complete a subject (if you take Biology and do well in 9th grade, you could take Bio SAT II in June)
- You will want to take 3-5 Subject tests so when colleges select your two strongest, will be excellent. Note: Only the most selective colleges require SAT Subject tests, and more and more are becoming “test optional,” but if these scores are stronger than your SAT, they could help your case with the admissions committee if you are on the border



### *Tenth Grade*

- Take the PSAT (colleges never see PSAT scores, so you have an idea of what the test is like)
- Take a real ACT test, and compare it to your PSAT score
- Determine plan for testing schedule including goals, plan to enroll in test prep courses, independent studying, and stick to it (it's much easier to do better the more familiar you become with the test over time, much harder to cram)

### *Eleventh Grade*

- Take the PSATs-- your status as a National merit semi-finalist or National Merit finalist is determined by your PSAT score, not your SAT scores.
- Take the SAT for the first time
- Take the October or December ACT to see how it compares to your junior year PSAT (if the ACT is higher, don't bother taking the SAT, take the ACT multiple times until you are happy with the score).
- Take AP exams in May (you can register for AP exams even if you are not in the classes)
- Option to take SAT/ACT again before the end of the year in June

### *Twelfth Grade*

- Last chance to take the SAT or ACT in the fall or as late as December
- Take additional SAT Subject tests
- AP exams at the end of the year, strong performance can earn you college credit and save you a lot of money and time in college!