

THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS - High School Courses

Plan of Action

WHAT COURSES ARE BEST FOR ME?

Your course schedule may seem like a random selection of classes to you, but college admissions officers are looking for a solid foundation of learning that you can build on in college. Concentrate your course work in five areas:

1.) English (Language Arts)

Take English every year. Traditional courses, such as American and English literature, help you improve your writing skills, reading comprehension, and vocabulary.

2.) Math

You need algebra and geometry to succeed on college entrance exams, in college math classes, and in most careers. Take them early on and you'll be able to enroll in advanced math in high school—and you'll show colleges you're ready for higher-level work.

3.) Science

Science teaches you to think analytically and apply theories to reality. Laboratory classes let you test what you've learned through hands-on work. Six semesters are recommended.

4.) Social Studies

Understand local and world events that are happening now by studying the culture and history that has shaped them. Social sciences round out your core curriculum.

5.) Foreign Languages

Solid foreign language study shows colleges you're willing to stretch beyond the basics. Many colleges require at least two years of foreign language study, and some prefer more.

In addition:

The Arts

Research indicates that students who participate in the arts often do better in school and on standardized tests. The arts help you recognize patterns, discern differences and similarities, and exercise your mind in unique ways, oftentimes outside of a traditional classroom setting.

Computer Applications

More and more college courses and jobs require at least a basic knowledge of computers. Computer skills can also help you do research and school work better and faster.

Advanced Placement Program® (AP®)

Try out college-level work, master valuable skills, and, with satisfactory scores, maybe even receive college credit. More than 3,800 higher education institutions award credit, advanced placement or both based on satisfactory AP Exam scores. Learn more about the AP Program from your high school counselor or at <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com>

HIGH SCHOOL CLASS PLANNING WORKSHEET

Print and Complete

Print a worksheet for each year of school, listing the courses that you're currently taking or plan to take for each subject (where appropriate). Talk to your counselor about your plan and make sure you're on track to achieve your goals.

Name: _____

Grade: _____

| SUBJECT | FALL SEMESTER | SPRING SEMESTER |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Language Arts | | |
| Math | | |
| Social Studies | | |
| Science | | |
| Foreign Language | | |
| Arts | | |
| Other | | |

EVERY YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENTS:

- Work with one of your parents to update your information in FAFSA4caster at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov, and continue to save for college.
- Take challenging classes in core academic subjects. Most colleges require 4 years of English, at least 3 years of social studies (history, civics, geography, economics, etc.), 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and many require 2 years of a foreign language. Round out your course load with classes in computer science and the arts.
- Stay involved in school- or community-based activities that interest you or let you explore career interests. Consider working or volunteering. Remember—it's quality (not quantity) that counts.
- Talk to your school counselor and other mentors 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.
- Check out KnowHow2Go: The Four Steps to College, which suggests some actions you can take as you start thinking about education beyond high school. The online version of the brochure is at www.knowhow2go.org.
- Get answers to common questions about college: Read the "college q&a question of the week" at www.college.gov.
- Learn about managing your money in the "Financial Literacy" section of www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/preparing.

PARENTS:

- Continue to talk to your child about college plans as if he or she will definitely go to college.
- Keep an eye on your child's study habits and grades— stay involved.
- Encourage your child to take Advanced Placement or other challenging classes.
- Add to your child's college savings account regularly.
- Explore www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/parent for information on academic preparation, homeschooling, financial literacy, saving, and borrowing for college.
- Request a free copy of your credit report and correct any errors. If you do this every year you will be better prepared for Senior year when you apply for student loans.

9TH GRADE / HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMEN

FALL

- Plan for the year ahead.
- Meet with your counselor to discuss your college plans. Review your schedule with him or her to make sure you're enrolled in challenging classes that will help you prepare for college. Most colleges require 4 years of English, at least 3 years of social studies (history, civics, geography, economics, etc.), 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and many require 2 years of a foreign language.
- Start a calendar with important dates and deadlines.
- Get involved with extracurricular activities.
- Go to college fairs in your area.

WINTER

- Learn about colleges of interest.
- Learn about college costs and how financial aid works. Use the Net Price Calculator on each college site.
- Use the College Savings Calculator at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/myfsa to determine how much you should be saving to meet college expenses and to find tips on maximizing your savings efforts.
- Find out about college first hand from college friends who are home for the holidays.
- Prepare for tests. Visit <http://sat.collegeboard.com/practice>.
- Talk to your counselor and teachers about taking SAT Subject Tests™ in your strong subjects this spring. Take Subject Tests such as World History, Biology E/M, and Chemistry while the material is still fresh in your mind.

SPRING

- Stay focused.
- Sign up for college preparatory courses.
- Look for a great summer opportunity — job, internship, or volunteer position.
- Check with your counselor and search online for summer school programs for high school students at colleges.

SUMMER **Make the Most of Your Break**

- Start a summer reading list. Ask your teachers to recommend books.
- Create a MyFSA account at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/myfsa and try the Career Finder.
- Plan to visit college campuses to get a feel for your options. Start with colleges near you.
- Finalize your summer plans.

PARENTS

- Review "Every Year in High School" of this checklist.
- Use the College Savings Calculator at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/myfsa to determine how much you should be saving to meet college expenses and to find tips on maximizing your savings efforts.
- Make sure you are fully aware of the provisions of any college savings accounts you have opened for your child.
- Request your free copy of your credit report and correct any errors. If you do this every year you will be better prepared for Senior year when you apply for student loans.

10TH GRADE / HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES

FALL

- Plan for the year ahead.
- Meet with your counselor to discuss your college plans. Review your schedule with him or her to make sure you're enrolled in challenging classes that will help you prepare for college. Most colleges require 4 years of English, at least 3 years of social studies (history, civics, geography, economics, etc.), 3 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, and many require 2 years of a foreign language.
- Start a calendar with important dates and deadlines.
- Get involved with extracurricular activities.
- Go to college fairs in your area.
- Consider taking the PSAT/NMSQT®
- Sign up for the PSAT/NMSQT, which is given in October. Ask your counselor which date is offered at your school.
- Get free online PSAT/NMSQT practice.
- If you're taking the PSAT/NMSQT check 'yes' for Student Search Service® to hear about colleges and scholarships.

WINTER

- Prepare for tests.
- Talk to your counselor and teachers about taking SAT Subject Tests™ in your strong subjects this spring. Take Subject Tests such as World History, Biology E/M, and Chemistry while the material is still fresh in your mind.
- Learn about colleges.
- Learn about college costs and how financial aid works.
- Talk to your parents about financing college.
- Make a list of colleges you would like to visit.
- Find out about college first hand from college friends who are home for the holidays.

SPRING

- Stay focused.
- Sign up for college preparatory courses.
- Explore summer opportunities.
- Look for a great summer opportunity — job, internship, or volunteer position.
- Check with your counselor and search online for summer school programs for high school students at colleges.

SUMMER Make the Most of Your Break

- Start a summer reading list. Ask your teachers to recommend books.
- Log on to your MyFSA account at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/myfsa. Complete the College Matching Wizard.
- Plan to visit college campuses to get a feel for your options. Start with colleges near you.
- Finalize your summer plans.

PARENTS

- Review "Every Year in High School" of this checklist.
- Find out whether your child's school has college nights or financial aid nights. Plan to attend those events with your child.
- Learn about the standardized tests your child will be taking during 10th through 12th grades: the PSAT/NMSQT, SAT Reasoning Test and SAT Subject Tests (see www.collegeboard.com), and/or the PLAN exam and the ACT (see www.act.org).
- Request your free copy of your credit report and correct any errors. If you do this every year you will be better prepared for Senior year when you apply for student loans.

11TH GRADE / HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS

FALL

- At school, sign up early to take the PSAT/NMSQT® in October. Get PSAT/NMSQT tips and a free practice test.
- Start your college search.
- Start with you: Make lists of your abilities, preferences, and personal qualities. List things you may want to study and do in college.
- Jumpstart your college planning by reading about majors and careers.
- Start learning about Financial Aid. (p.22)
- Talk to your counselor about your college plans and attend college night and financial aid night at your school.
- Use financial aid calculators to estimate your aid eligibility and college costs.

WINTER

- Plan your spring testing schedule.
- You can take either the SAT Reasoning Test™ or up to three SAT Subject Tests™ on one test day.
- Plan your testing schedule carefully if you want to take both types of SAT®.
- See the SAT schedule of test dates and register online for the SAT at www.collegeboard.com. (p.12)

SPRING

- Get ready for the SAT.
- Start visiting local colleges: large, small, public, and private. Get a feel for what works for you.
- Develop a list of 15-20 colleges that interest you.
- Prepare for AP® Exams.
- Do well on AP Exams and receive credit or placement at most colleges. Get AP Exam preparation.
- Plan ahead for the Summer & Senior Year.
- Review your senior year class schedule with your counselor. Challenge yourself with honors and AP classes and stick with sequences you've begun, in the languages, for example. Read about how to select your courses.
- Plan summer activities early. Enrich yourself by volunteering, getting an interesting job or internship, or signing up for special summer learning programs.

SUMMER

- Keep your momentum up this summer.
- Log on to your MyFSA account at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/myfsa and look at the information for any colleges you saved if you completed the College Matching Wizard (see 10th Grade).
- Visit colleges. Take campus tours and, at colleges you're serious about, schedule interviews with admissions counselors. Be sure to bring your campus visit checklist.
- Request applications from colleges to which you'll apply.
- Check important dates; some universities have early dates or rolling admissions.

PARENTS

- Review "Every Year in High School" of this checklist.
- Visit www.college.gov and click on "how to pay" to see how other young people paid for college.
- Learn how to avoid scholarship scams and identity theft from Save Your Money, Save Your Identity at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/lssa.
- Familiarize yourself with ways to pay for college at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/guide.
- 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 with your child, but don't take over the conversation with the college representative. Just listen, and let your child do the talking.
- Take your child to visit college campuses, preferably when classes are in session.
- Get in-depth information on federal student aid programs from Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/guide.
- Learn about student and parent loans in Your Federal Student Loans: Learn the Basics and Manage Your Debt at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/repayingpub.
- Request your free copy of your credit report and correct any errors. If you do this every year you will be better prepared for Senior year when you apply for student loans.

SUMMER BEFORE 12TH GRADE / SENIOR YEAR

- ❑ Narrow down the list of colleges you are considering attending. If you can, visit the schools that interest you.
- ❑ Contact colleges to request information and applications for admission. Ask about financial aid, admission requirements, and deadlines. Use the Net Price Calculator listed on every college website to track costs.
- ❑ Decide whether you are going to apply under a particular college's early decision or early action program. Be sure to learn about the program deadlines and requirements.
- ❑ Update your information in FAFSA4caster one last time at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov, and compare the results to the actual costs at colleges to which you will apply. To supplement any aid FAFSA4caster estimates you might receive, be sure to apply for scholarships. Your goal is to minimize the amount of loan funds you borrow.
- ❑ Find out what government financial aid you can apply for, and how, in the following parts of Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/guide to ensure you understand the federal aid programs and upcoming application process.
 - ❑ Part A, "What You Should Know Before You Apply"
 - ❑ Part B, "How Do I Apply?," especially the first two sections, "Getting Your Federal Student Aid PIN" and "Completing the FAFSA"

PARENTS

- ❑ Be careful when searching for scholarships: Read "Don't Get Scammed on Your Way to College!" <http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/attachments/siteresources/69.pdf>.
- ❑ Review your financial situation and make sure your child is looking into or already has applied for scholarships.
- ❑ Ask your employer whether scholarships are available for employees' children.
- ❑ Find out whether your child has added any schools to his or her college wish list since the last time you visited colleges, and visit additional campuses if possible.

12TH GRADE / HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

FALL

- Pull your applications together.
- Narrow your list of colleges to between 5 and 10 and review it with your counselor and parents.
- Get an application and financial aid info from each.
- Request a free copy of your and your parents' credit reports and correct any errors before applying for a student loan. It takes an average of 6 months to have something removed from your credit report, so plan ahead.
- Visit as many colleges as possible.
- Make a master calendar and note:
 - Test dates, fees, and deadlines
 - College application due dates
 - Required financial aid applications and their deadlines
 - Recommendations, transcripts, and other necessary materials
 - Your high school's deadlines for application requests, such as your transcript
 - November 1: For early admissions, colleges may require test scores and applications in early November. Utilize your account at collegeboard.com to send your SAT[®] scores to colleges of your choice.
- Complete the "Common Application" online at www.commonapp.org. Questions? See your guidance counselor for assistance.
- If your school does not accept the Common Application, you will need to complete the school's individual application.
- Ask for recommendations. Personal Recommendations maybe sent directly to the school via email or regular mail. When sending regular mail make sure to give each person your resume, a stamped, addressed envelope, and any required forms. Allow plenty of time for them to prepare the letter.
- School recommendations will be electronically attached to your common application and sent directly to your selected school(s).
- Write application essays and ask teachers, parents, and friends to read first drafts.
- Applying Early Action or Early Decision?
 - Ask if your college offers an early estimate of financial aid eligibility.
- Attend Financial Aid events in your area.
- Talk to your counselor about CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE[®] and learn about it with completing the PROFILE.
- Use Scholarship Search at www.collegeboard.com, review scholarship books, and ask your counselor about local and state funding sources.

WINTER

Application Details

- Most regular applications are due between January 1 and February 15. Keep copies of everything you send to colleges.
- Have your high school send your transcript to colleges.
- Contact colleges to make sure they've received all application materials.
- Financial Aid: Apply Early. Apply Right.
- You and your family should save this year's pay stubs to estimate income on aid forms that you'll file early next year.
- Submit your FAFSA as soon after January 1 as possible. Men 18 or older must register for the selective service to receive federal financial aid.
- Many priority financial aid deadlines fall in February. To get the most attractive award package, apply by the priority date. Keep copies of everything you send.

SPRING

When the Letters Start Rolling In

- You should get acceptance letters and financial aid offers by mid-April.
- Use Compare Your Aid Awards to compare awards from different colleges. Questions? Talk to financial aid officers. Not enough aid? Ask if other financing plans are available.
- If you haven't already, visit your final college before accepting.

May 1: Making Your Final Choice

- You must tell every college of your acceptance or rejection of offers of admission or financial aid by May 1. Send a deposit to the college you choose.
- Wait-listed? If you will enroll if accepted, tell the admissions director your intent and ask how to strengthen your application. Need financial aid? Ask if funds will be available if you're accepted.

SUMMER: THE NEXT STEPS

- Ask your high school to send a final transcript to your college.
- Start preparing for the year ahead.

SAT TEST DATES & DEADLINES

| 2011-2012 TENTATIVE TEST DATES | TEST | U.S. REGISTRATION DEADLINES | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| | | Regular | Late (a fee applies) |
| October 1, 2011 | SAT & Subject Tests | September 9, 2011 | September 21, 2011 |
| November 5, 2011 | SAT & Subject Tests | October 7, 2011 | October 21, 2011 |
| December 3, 2011 | SAT & Subject Tests | November 8, 2011 | November 20, 2011 |
| January 28, 2012 | SAT & Subject Tests | December 30, 2011 | January 13, 2012 |
| March 10, 2012 | SAT only | February 10, 2012 | February 24, 2012 |
| May 5, 2012 | SAT & Subject Tests | April 6, 2012 | April 20, 2012 |
| June 2, 2012 | SAT & Subject Tests | May 8, 2012 | May 22, 2012 |

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with practice
questions!**

<http://sat.collegeboard.com/practice/sat-practice-questions>

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"The Official
SAT Question
of the Day"**

<http://sat.collegeboard.com/practice/sat-question-of-the-day>