

# College Planning Cohorts™

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## Important Actions: 9th Grade

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Consider 9th grade as the first leg of a 400-meter race...what type of start will you need to run your best race? The college planning that you begin during 9th grade should be revisited at the end, and at the beginning, of each school year.

Ponder the question, "What do I want to do after high school?" It is okay if you do not know exactly what you wish to do, however, it is important to determine the type of options you wish to have, and 'hook' you wish to develop to determine your future college and scholarship opportunities.

- Know your 'Student Profile':** Know the type of student you are today and the type of college or scholarship applicant you hope to be in the future.
- Develop an Academic Résumé** projecting the type of awards, extracurricular activity involvement, community service, internships, leadership roles, grades, and ACT or SAT scores you wish to experience over the course of your four years of high school.
- Develop a Preliminary College List** of the type of college opportunities you wish to have as a high school senior.
- Develop a 4-year academic course schedule** of classes where you believe you can earn a final (unweighted) grade of 'B' or higher and which are consistent with the type of college applicant you envision yourself as a high school senior (e.g., average, competitive, highly competitive, or most highly competitive).
- PSAT, SAT, ACT, and ASVAB:** Familiarize yourself with each of these assessments as they can have a huge impact on college admission, scholarship, career, or military enlistment opportunities. Determine which assessment you wish to focus your test prep strategies over the course of the next 3 years so that you may achieve your target score prior to the end of your junior year.
- Develop a 4-year extracurricular activity schedule** of clubs and activities that relate to your gifts, talents, and passions.
- Military Service Academies:** If you are considering applying to one of the 5 military service academies (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines, or Navy), visit their websites and familiarize yourself with the application requirements and timelines. If your school has a ROTC program, meet with the ROTC Commander to discuss your aspirations.
- Scholarship Planning:** You may have gifts and talents that have already revealed themselves, while others may reveal themselves throughout high school. Developing a 4-year scholarship focus will assist in identifying and qualifying for scholarships throughout high school and ensure that you are a strong scholarship candidate as a high school senior.
- Summer Planning:** Develop a rough draft of the activities you wish to engage in during each summer of high school.
- Develop a 4-year calendar** reflecting your academic, extracurricular activity, and summer plans.
- Develop a College Planning Notebook** to serve as your working manual throughout high school to file your calendar, plans, research, résumé, report cards, test scores, letters of recommendation, awards, etc.
- Plan College Visits:** Explore opportunities to take advantage of visiting college campuses during holidays, spring break, summers, and when your travels places you in close proximity to college campuses. Complete a 'College Research Sheet' and write a brief narrative summarizing each visit and file in your *College Planning Notebook*.
- Develop your email signature** and sign-up with a college planning website.
- Meet with your counselor** at the end of the school year to assess your 9th-grade performance and plan your 10th-grade course schedule.

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Important Actions: 10th Grade

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10th grade begins the 2nd leg of your 400-meter race. Your 9th grade performance has determined if you are ahead, running with the pack, or have ground to make up.

- Engage in a self-assessment** of the goals achieved and gifts and talents discovered during 9th grade.
- Review and update:**
  - Résumé
  - *College Planning Notebook*
  - Preliminary College List
  - 4-year calendar. Note your AP/IB exam dates, and SAT Subject-test dates.
- Academic Planning:** Review your 9th grade academic performance and identify needed tutors, study groups, or other academic support.
- PSAT, SAT, ACT or ASVAB Progress:** Review your progress and preparation for the assessment you have chosen to take and the important concepts learned through your 9th-grade coursework.
- PSAT, SAT, or ACT testing schedule:** Does your school offer free PSAT testing? If so, engage in independent or school-sponsored test prep, and thoughtfully complete the PSAT questionnaire as hundreds of colleges will receive your information and test scores.
- Extracurricular Activities:** Review your activity schedule and adjust your involvement accordingly based on your gifts, talents, interests, and ability to balance your activities with your academic coursework.
- Military Service Academies:** If you are considering applying to a military service academy, note the application requirements and timelines on your calendar.
- Scholarship Planning:** Continue applying for current scholarships and preparing to be a strong applicant for future scholarships.
- Summer Planning:** Assess your summer experiences between the 9th and 10th grades and plan your summer between 10th and 11th grades. Explore pre-college programs, internships, research opportunities, and specialized training in your gifts and talents (e.g., athletics, creative arts, academics, mission trips, leadership).
- Research Diversity Weekend Opportunities:** Many colleges offer all-expenses paid 'Diversity Weekends' opportunities. However, such opportunities are highly competitive.
- Update your 4-year calendar** with your academic, extracurricular activity, and summer plans.
- Plan College Visits:** Continue to take advantage of opportunities to visit college campuses and attend college fairs.
- Your 'Hook':** Did an academic area, extracurricular activity, community service, or employment opportunity reveal itself during 9th grade as a potential college admission or scholarship 'hook?' For example, did you distinguish yourself in a particular sport, as a top academic student, as a top dancer, artist, or theatre performer?

Did you discover something so uniquely special about yourself, that by your senior year of high school it will potentially distinguish you in the pool of college or scholarship applicants?

If a 'hook' has revealed itself, ensure that you developing a portfolio of your work through film, news articles, testimonials, awards, and letters of recognition/recommendation.
- Meet with your counselor** at the end of the school year to assess your 10th-grade performance and plan your 11th-grade course schedule.

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## Important Actions: 11th Grade

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11th grade begins the 3rd leg of your 400-meter race. Your 9th and 10th grade performances have determined how well you have positioned yourself as you enter the second half of your race.

- Engage in a self-assessment** of the goals achieved and gifts and talents discovered during 10th grade.
- Review and update:**
  - Résumé
  - *College Planning Notebook*
  - Preliminary College List
  - 4-year calendar. Note your AP/IB exam dates, and SAT Subject-test dates.
- Academic Planning:** Review your 10th grade academic performance and identify needed tutors, study groups, or other academic support.
- PSAT, SAT, ACT or ASVAB Progress:** Review your progress and preparation for the assessment you have chosen to take and the important concepts learned through your 9th and 10th grade coursework.
- PSAT, SAT, or ACT testing schedule:** This is a big year. The 11th-grade PSAT scores qualify for national merit and national achievement scholarship consideration. You should try to achieve your target ACT or SAT scores by June of your junior year.
- Extracurricular Activities:** Review your activity schedule and adjust your involvement accordingly based on your gifts, talents, interests, and ability to balance your activities with your academic coursework. Identify the activities where you have, or will have the opportunity to assume leadership roles.
- Military Service Academies:** If you are considering applying to a military service academy make careful note of important deadlines and requirements.
- Scholarship Planning:** Continue applying for current scholarships and carefully identify the scholarship deadlines for your senior year.

- Summer Planning:** Assess your summer experiences between 9th and 10th grades, and 10th and 11th grades, and plan your summer between 11th and 12th grades. Explore pre-college programs, internships, research opportunities, and specialized training in your gifts and talents (e.g., athletics, creative arts, academics, mission trips, leadership).

If you have not achieved your target ACT or SAT scores, consider test prep during the summer in preparation for the September exam.

- Attend a College Planning Boot Camp:** Utilize the opportunity to finalize your college research, calculate college costs, develop your college and scholarship application schedule, and begin your college, Diversity Weekend, and scholarship essays.
- Submit Diversity Weekend Applications:** Diversity Weekend applications begin opening during the second semester of your junior year and continue into the fall of your senior year.
- Update your 4-year calendar** reflecting your academic, extracurricular activity, and summer plans.
- Plan College Visits:** Continue to take advantage of opportunities to visit college campuses and attend college fairs.
- Your 'Hook':** Having completed two years of high school, have you developed a clearly identifiable 'hook?' Is your college and scholarship pathway most likely to be academic, athletic, creative arts, or through your state scholarship program? Are you developing a strong portfolio or body of work?
- Identify the people** from whom you will request letters of recommendation.
- Meet with your counselor** at the end of the school year to assess your 11th-grade performance and plan your senior-year course schedule.

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## Important Actions: 12th Grade

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12th grade is the final leg of your 400-meter race. Your 9th, 10th, and 11th grade performances have determined how well you have positioned yourself to approach the finish line and your competitiveness as a college and scholarship applicant.

- Engage in a self-assessment** of the goals you achieved and gifts and talents you discovered during 11th grade.
- Review and update:**
  - Résumé
  - *College Planning Notebook*
  - Your Final College List
  - 4-year calendar. Note your AP/IB exam dates, SAT Subject-test dates, college visits, Diversity Weekends, and auditions.
- Academic Planning:** Review your 11th grade academic performance and identify needed tutors, study groups, or other academic support. Colleges will expect rigorous classes and a strong performance.
- SAT or ACT Progress:** If you have not reached your target scores, you should prepare to take the June or July exam. (Focus on either the ACT or the SAT)
- AP or IB exam testing:** Senior-year AP and IB exam scores can result in thousands of dollars in cost savings from receiving course waivers.
- Extracurricular Activities:** Review your activity schedule and adjust your involvement accordingly based on your gifts, talents, interests, and ability to balance your activities with your academic coursework. Identify the activities where you have, or will have the opportunity to assume leadership roles.
- Military Service Academies:** If you are considering applying to a military service academy, there are critical application and recommendation deadlines.
- Athletic Eligibility Registration:** If you are positioning yourself for an athletic scholarship, finalize your eligibility registration with the appropriate governing body.
- Finalize Your College List:** Carefully review your Diversity Weekend experiences, college visits, college fair information, research, and financial circumstances to arrive at your final college list.
- Choose Your Admission Cycles:** Decide which colleges you plan to apply Early Decision or Early Action and the schools to which you will submit Regular Decision applications.
- Scholarship Research:** Fine-tune your scholarship research based on your college major, career aspirations, and sociocultural background. Apply, apply, apply!
- Scholarship Planning:** Finalize your scholarship deadlines for institutional, private, Honors College, and military scholarship programs.
- Application to Special Programs:** Identify the deadlines for special programs such as the Meyerhoff Scholars, Questbridge, and Posse Foundation programs.
- Develop a Personal Statement:** Write a 650-word personal statement or response to one of the *Common Application* prompts.
- October 1, Submit Your FAFSA:** The FAFSA filing period opens on October 1.
- Plan Final College Visits:** Continue to take advantage of opportunities to visit college campuses and attend college fairs.
- Finalize Auditions and Portfolios:** Finalize art and creative arts portfolios, and dance, music, and theatre auditions.
- Request teacher/counselor evaluations** and letters of recommendation.
- Establish your Common Application** account.
- Organize your College Planning Notebook** (transcripts, résumés, recommendations, etc.)