

College Prep Timeline

Lost in a sea of dates and to-do lists? Never fear. Our College Prep Timeline will help you stay afloat as you prepare for college during your junior and senior years of high school.

September

Senior year:

The hunt is on.

- Go to a financial aid workshop in your community.
- Start researching grants and scholarships.
- Apply for scholarships with fall deadlines.
- Sign up to re-take the SAT and ACT tests, if you want to try to improve your scores.

Junior year:

Get crackin'.

- Begin PSAT preparation.
- Research the total cost of education at your top school choices—and find out what types of financial aid packages they award.

October

Senior year:

Prepare, prepare.

- Create a checklist of financial aid tasks and deadlines.
View our [College Funding Checklist](#).
- Press on with scholarship research and applications.

Junior year:

Test time.

- Take the PSAT—you could qualify for the National Merit Scholarship program.

November

Senior year:

Go for it!

- Apply for grants and scholarships.
- Fill out the FAFSA pre-application worksheet so you're prepared to fill out the form on January 1st, when it's available.
- Apply for spring semester private student loans.

Junior year:

Scholarship booster.

- Look for community service projects that you can do over the holidays that can build your resume (and impress admissions officials).

December

Senior year:

Reality check.

- If you haven't done so already, use the FAFSA4caster to estimate your federal aid eligibility.

Junior year:

Results are in.

- Review PSAT scores with your guidance counselor.
- Do a holiday community service project.

January

Senior year:

Crunch time.

- January 1: The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is now available. Fill it out right away.
- Fill out a CSS Financial Aid Profile, if your school choices require it.

Junior year:

Know your needs.

- Talk with your family about how to pay for college. Use our [Family Discussion Guide](#). [1.1.2 Family Discussion Guide]
- Use the FAFSA4caster [www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov/] to estimate your federal aid eligibility.
- Start researching scholarships now.

February

Senior year:

Sign, seal, deliver.

- File the FAFSA—now! The federal deadline is June 30, but some states require this form as early as February 15.
- Contact prospective colleges' financial aid offices to make sure they've received all your materials.

Junior year:

School search.

- Evaluate the financial aid packages offered by your top school choices.

March

Senior year:

Deadline alert.

- Student Aid Report arrives—this summarizes your federal financial aid eligibility.
- Check your federal and state FAFSA deadlines.
- Apply for low-cost federal loans.
- Begin researching private student loans.

Junior year:

SAT sign up.

- Register for the SAT and ACT.

April

Senior year:

Commit!

- Return your school acceptance letter.
- Sign and return financial aid forms for the school you will be attending.

Junior year:

The real deal.

- Take the SAT and ACT.

May

Senior year:

Dot those i's.

- Send final transcript and student loan applications to your college.
- Contact your college's financial aid office to check your financial aid package status.

Junior year:

Envelope, please.

- Discuss SAT and ACT results with your guidance counselor, and decide if you want to retake either test in the fall.
- Look for community service projects you can do over the summer.

June

Senior year:

Secure all funds.

- Apply for a private student loan to fill any gaps that scholarships, grants, and federal loans don't cover.

Junior year:

College tours.

- Visit a few of your top college choices. Set up informational interviews with their financial aid offices.
- Do a community service project over your summer break to help build your resume, your experience, (and your good karma).

July

Senior year:

Pay up.

- Pay fall semester tuition.
- Apply for a private student loan to fill in any unexpected gaps—there's still time.

Junior year:

Summer studies.

- Study for the fall SAT or ACT tests if you're retaking them.

August

Senior year:

Whew! You made it.

- Pay tuition and other registration fees.
- Create a college budget.
- Attend orientation (with financial peace of mind).

Junior year:

Keep going!

- Continue studying for the fall SAT or ACT tests if you're retaking them.
- Apply for scholarships with fall deadlines now.