

College Prep Checklist

FRESHMEN

Explore Your Interests

- Make a list of potential careers that intrigue you; think about your favorite subjects in school.
- Visit the College Match tool at CollegeRaptor.com/college-search to start exploring colleges best suited for you. See which schools offer the programs and majors you're considering.

Create a Plan

- Find out what classes will make you a strong college applicant.
- Push yourself academically; your high school GPA includes all four years.
- Ask about AP/1B/dual-credit classes, which illustrate your intellect and curiosity to colleges and can potentially earn you college credit while you're still in high school.

Get Involved

- Join a club, sport, or activity that you enjoy.
- Consider getting a part time job for experience and earning money for college.
- Volunteer for something you find important.

REMINDER

Being deeply involved in a few activities is usually looked at more favorably than being just slightly involved in many different activities. The best way to get deeply involved is to start early and find your passions!



College Prep Checklist

SOPHOMORE

Continue Exploring Interests and Potential Colleges

- Research majors and careers aligned with your passions and interests.
- Talk with people in your areas of interest to learn more about the field.
- Work with your advisor to fine-tune your schedule so you're taking the right classes.
- Revisit CollegeRaptor.com/college-search and update your search. See what's new!
- Think about visiting campuses. It's not too early.

Begin Prep for Entrance Exams

- Find out which exam your potential colleges require; talk to your counselor about prepping for the SAT or ACT.
- Consider taking a practice exam like the PSAT or ACT Aspire.

Prepare to Pay for College

- Strategize about how to pay for college.
- Talk to your family about their ability to contribute and how much.
- Start to learn about financial aid and student loans.
- Save up gift money and paychecks.
- Go to school-sponsored college-funding presentations to learn more.

Be a Proactive Participant

- Stay involved in community and school activities.
- Study more than you think you need to; work hard for your GPA.
- Make a record of your achievements, honors, awards, activities, volunteer work, leadership experiences, and other special recognitions you've earned.



College Prep Checklist

JUNIOR

Gear Up Your College Search Efforts

- Revisit CollegeRaptor.com/college-search to update your options.
- Start to narrow down and prioritize your list.
- Make sure your college list includes safety, match, and reach schools.
- Attend college fairs in your area.
- Visit the campuses you're interested in.
- Meet college admission representatives at your high school or in your area.
- Talk to current students about college life and their majors.

Take the SAT and/or ACT

- Check with your counselor on the standardized test(s) that are right for you.
- Register to take the exam(s).
- Study, study, study, and attend review courses or use online resources.

Ace the Academics

- Consider if AP/1B classes are right for you; if they are, take them.
- Check the requirements for graduation and admission at the colleges you're interested in.
- Continue to strive for a great GPA.
- Build good study habits.

Fine-Tune Your Finances

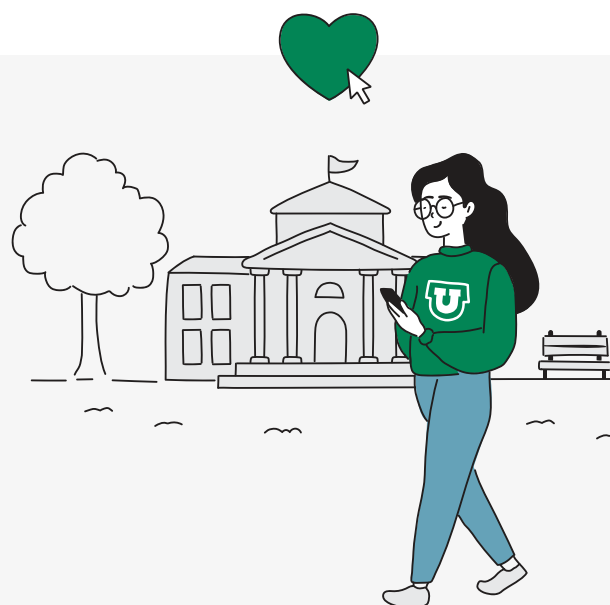
- Continue to explore financial aid.
- Search CollegeRaptor.com/scholarship/search for scholarships you could be eligible for.
- Continue saving money.

Stay Active

- Extracurriculars, jobs, and community service are important elements of your college applications. Continue participating in those activities!

REMINDER

Don't be afraid to look at colleges that may be a reach for you! Build a balanced list of potential colleges and remember to choose at least two "safe" schools where you're confident you'll be accepted.



College Prep Checklist

SENIOR

Write Your College Essay

- Think about what you want your essay to say about you. Brainstorm topics.
- What have you done that conveys who you are? Start with a 3–4 sentence personal statement.
- Get feedback from a trusted teacher or family member and fine tune your final essay.

Take or Retake Standardized Tests

- If you haven't already, take SAT/ACT tests.
- Consider taking them multiple times to improve your score.

Complete Admission Applications

- Gather letters of recommendation, essays, transcripts, and everything you'll need for college applications. Most open in August.
- Revisit your list of colleges on CollegeRaptor.com/college-search.
- Know the application requirements/deadlines; mark them on your calendar.
- Submit applications for your preferred colleges.

Complete Financial Aid and College Applications

- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which opens October 1.
- Complete the CSS Profile, if required by colleges to which you're applying.
- Apply for grants and scholarships.

Review Graduation Requirements

- Make sure you've taken all the required classes for your preferred colleges and in order to graduate.

Decision Deadline

- Once you've received acceptance letters, compare offer letters to see which school is giving you the best deal.
- Choose the school that's best for you.
- If you've been deferred or waitlisted, provide colleges with any new info to help them make a decision.
- Send in your deposit, final transcript, and any other requirements for your school of choice.
- Celebrate! You made it!

REMINDER

Complete the FAFSA even if you don't think your family will qualify for financial aid. Institutional grants from colleges often depend on your FAFSA and many families are surprised to find they can qualify for more aid than expected.

