

WHERE DO I START PLANNING MY LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL?

9TH GRADE CHECKLIST

- Create a four-year high school plan. Think about what you'd like to accomplish in the next four years.
- Make sure you know which high school courses are required by colleges, and that you're taking the right classes as early as the ninth grade. You can ask your counselor about what those "right" classes are.
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- Get to know the levels of courses offered by your school. Start thinking about your life after school, including the types of jobs that might interest you. Of course, these will change — often — but it's good to start thinking about the possibilities.
- Identify your interests — likes and dislikes — not just in classes but also in every area. This will help you focus on your goals.
- Talk to other people, such as your school counselor, teachers, recent college graduates who are working, professionals in the community, etc., about careers you might find interesting. Meet with your high school counselor. Your counselor knows how to help you get the most out of high school. Be sure to take some time during the school year to discuss post-high-school plans with him or her.
- Participate in extracurricular activities. Academics aren't everything. Explore your interest in a sport, school club, music or drama group, or community volunteer activity.
- Remember that colleges would rather see real involvement in one activity instead of a loose connection to several.
- If you're interested in playing sports in college, research the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) eligibility requirements. The NCAA requires completion of certain core courses; you can find the specifics at ncaaclearinghouse.net.
- Save for college. It's not too late to put money aside for college. Every little bit helps! Learning about financial aid early on can also help you down the road.
- Explore summer opportunities. Look for a job, internship, or volunteer position that will help you learn about a field of interest.

- Get familiar with the PSAT-related assessments and SAT® . Most four-year colleges consider applicants' scores on college admission test. Download the free Daily Practice for the New SAT app to get a feel for the kinds of questions you might face on test day.

Resource: <https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/CollegePlanning/media/pdf/BigFuture-College-Planning-9th-10th-Graders.pdf>

Students

To Do:

- Take challenging classes in core academic subjects. Most colleges require four years of English, at least three years of social studies (history, civics, geography, economics, etc.), three years of mathematics, and three years of science, and many require two years of a foreign language. Round out your course load with classes in computer science and the arts.
- Work with one of your parents to estimate your financial aid using [FAFSA4caster](#) and be sure to save for college.
- Get involved in school- or community-based activities that interest you or let you explore career interests. Consider working, volunteering, and/or participating in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, and camps with specialty focuses such as music, arts, or science. Remember—it's quality (not quantity) that counts.
- Ask your guidance counselor or teachers what [Advanced Placement](#) courses are available, whether you are eligible, and how to enroll in them.
- Use the U.S. Department of Labor's [career search tool](#) to research your career options.
- Start a list of your awards, honors, paid and volunteer work, and extracurricular activities. Update it throughout high school.

To Explore:

- Check out [KnowHow2Go: The Four Steps to College](#), which suggests some actions you can take as you start thinking about education beyond high school.
- Learn about [managing your money](#).
- Explore [reasons to consider college](#) and [ways you can get help](#) preparing.

Parents

To Do:

- 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; and make sure you are fully aware of the provisions of the account.

To Explore:

- Address your concerns about [whether your child can or should go to college](#).
- Get tips from [Help Your Child Improve in Test-Taking](#).
- Read "[Parent Power](#)" to access ideas for remaining involved in your child's progress.

Resource: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/prepare-for-college/checklists/9th-grade>