

Get Ready for College

MINNESOTA
OFFICE OF
HIGHER
EDUCATION

College Prep Timeline

Use the timeline below as your guide to preparing for college.

In 7th & 8th Grade:

- Begin thinking about the [high school classes that will prepare you for college](#). Take the most difficult classes you can handle.
- Ask your parents or teachers to help you develop good study habits.
- Practice setting goals.
- Volunteer in your community.
- Take interest and skills assessments to help you begin thinking about possible career options.
- Talk with your guidance counselor and parents about careers that interest you.
- Create a tentative high school class plan.
- Enroll in a summer enrichment program.

In 9th & 10th Grade:

- Take interest and skills assessments to help you explore careers that interest you and match your skills and abilities.
- Talk with your guidance counselor about career options and the education required for those careers.
- Talk with your parents about saving and [paying for college](#).
- Talk with friends, teachers, counselors and your parents about college.
- Check if your school has 10th graders take [the PLAN](#) to prepare for the ACT.
- Participate in extracurricular activities.
- Review your high school class plan. Take the most difficult classes you can handle. Stay focused on your schoolwork.
- Explore internships and apprenticeships.
- Enroll in a summer enrichment program.

In 11th Grade:

- Attend college and financial aid fairs.
- Mentor others and have a mentor for yourself.
- [Take the PSAT](#) in the fall to prepare for the SAT, and to identify areas where you need improvement.
- Narrow down possible career options and investigate the type of education that is needed.
- Request materials from schools that interest you, and visit their Web sites.
- [Arrange campus visits](#) to those schools that interest you. Meet with an admissions officer, a financial aid representative, faculty members and college students.
- Participate in extracurricular activities.
- Request admissions and financial aid forms.
- Consider earning college credit while in high school through [Advanced Placement](#), [International Baccalaureate](#), [Postsecondary Enrollment Options](#) or [College in the Schools](#).
- [Take the ACT and/or SAT](#) in the spring.
- Review your high school class plan. Take the most difficult classes you can handle. Stay focused on your schoolwork. Make sure you are meeting your high school graduation requirements.
- Enroll in a summer enrichment program.
- Get a job to earn and save money for college, or explore your skills through an internship or apprenticeship.
- Research private scholarship options.

In 12th Grade:

- Meet with your guidance counselor to review your high school class plan. Take the most difficult classes you can handle. Stay focused on your schoolwork.
- Consider earning college credit while in high school through [Advanced Placement](#), [International Baccalaureate](#), [Postsecondary Enrollment Options](#) or [College in the Schools](#).
- [Arrange campus visits](#) to those schools that interest you (if you haven't already done so).
- [Take or retake the ACT and/or SAT](#) in the fall.
- Select the schools to which you will apply. Make a list of important admissions and financial aid deadlines for each school.
- Attend a financial aid fair. Review a copy of [Focus on Financial Aid](#).
- Participate in extracurricular activities.
- Create a resume of your academic, athletic and work activities as well as other achievements. Prepare a portfolio if you're interested in the arts.
- Search and apply for private scholarships.
- Ask for recommendations (if required) from teachers, counselors and others who can comment on your abilities and talents.
- [Apply to four to six colleges](#) that interest you. Do not wait until just before the deadline.
- Complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) as soon as possible after January 1. You and your parents must complete your taxes before submitting the FAFSA.

- Review you Student Aid Report (SAR) for accuracy. If you make corrections, return the form as quickly as possible.
- Have your high school transcript sent to those colleges to which you've applied.
- Choose a college and send in any required forms or deposits (housing, meal plan, etc.). Notify in writing those schools you don't plan to attend.
- Get a job to earn money for college.