College Prep Checklist for High School Students

To best prepare your student for college, certain steps and procedures must be accomplished prior to college enrollment. This is a chronological checklist designed to help assist you and your student in being well-organized and as ready as possible for college. In all cases, check the resources section for additional information.

9th Grade **August through October**
Focus on academics! Maintain at least a 3.0 GPA.

- Visit high school counselor for appropriate freshman schedule.
- List the top 6 desired colleges along with the top 4 desired majors.
- Join various school- and community-based activities, clubs, and/or sports.
- A social security number (SSN) is required. Contact local social security office or College Information: SSN.
- Create an interest and learning style inventory profile; update yearly. See Career: Kuder Navigator.
- Consider taking a concurrent credit or digital learning course. See College Information: SouthArk.

**November through January**
- Attend local college and career fairs in addition to any financial aid seminars.
- Draft a resume including any special awards, honors, and certificates. See College Information: Resume Builder.
- Review websites that help to prepare students and families for college expenses. See Financial Aid FAQ.
- View virtual campus tours, student photos, and degree information on different college websites.

**February through June**
- Stay up-to-date with all required shots and immunizations; retain a copy of shot records.
- Finalize sophomore class schedule by end of May, making sure all classes align with graduation requirements.
- Begin to collect personal milestones for an education portfolio.
- Request college recommendation letters from teachers, coaches, and other mentors for college applications.
- State test(s) must be passed at the end of grade level to advance to the next grade and/or to graduate.

**Summer after Freshman Year**
- Having a summer job will help with saving for college.
- Explore summer volunteer opportunities in the career area of interest.
- Enroll in a summer school class if a required class was not passed during the year.
- Take a college campus tour, if vacationing to a new city or town.
- Register no later than August to take the PSAT in October. See Testing: PSAT.

10th Grade **August through October**
Focus on academics! Maintain at least a 3.0 GPA.

- Contact college coaches for possible scouting, if desired.
- List the top 5 desired colleges along with the top 4 desired majors.
- Create/update an interest and learning style inventory profile, update yearly. See Career: Kuder Navigator.
- A social security number (SSN) is required. Contact local social security office or College Information: SSN.
- Join various school- and community-based activities, taking on leadership positions within those groups.
- Create a 4-year calendar, covering the last 3 years of high school and 1st year of college, noting college admission, financial aid application, scholarship, and testing registration deadlines as well as testing dates.
- Schedule to take the PLAN exam only one time during the sophomore year. See counselor or Testing: PLAN.

**November through January**
- Add all volunteer and extra-curricular activities to the resume.
- Visit different college websites to view estimated cost, application process, and enrollment information.
- Attend local college/career fairs and financial aid seminars. See College Information: College Fair.
- Prepare for college expenses by visiting financial aid websites. See Financial Aid FAQ.

**February through June**
- Stay up-to-date with all required shots and immunizations; retain a copy of shot records.
- Finalize junior class schedule by the end of May, making sure all classes align with graduation requirements.
- Consider taking a concurrent credit or digital learning course. See College Information: SouthArk.
- Review scholarship and grant websites, noting application deadlines. See Financial Aid: Scholarships.
- Compare specifics between community colleges and 4-year universities; specifically programs available, cost, athletics, and which scholarships apply.
- SAT Subject Test(s) and AP Testing are recommended immediately following class completion, usually in May/June. See Testing: AP Testing and SAT Subject Tests.
- State test(s) must be passed at the end of grade level to advance to the next grade and/or to graduate.
- Continue collecting personal milestones for an education portfolio.
- Request college recommendation letters from teachers, coaches, and other mentors for college applications.

**Summer after Sophomore Year**
- Explore summer volunteer and job opportunities in the career area of interest and to save money for college.
- Enroll in a summer school class if a required class was not passed during the year.
- Review college exam study guides and websites with online tutorials. See Testing: Test Prep.
- Register no later than July to take the SAT in September. See Testing: SAT.
- Register no later than August to take the PSAT in October. See Testing: PSAT.
- Complete the NCAA Clearinghouse application if wanting to play on Division I/II team. See College Info: NCAA.
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### 11th Grade

**August through October**
- Focus on academics! Maintain at least a 3.0 GPA.
- List only 3 colleges of choice with only 2 possible majors.
- Contact the high school counselor if interested in ROTC program.
- Create/update an interest and learning style inventory profile, update yearly. See Career: Kuder Navigator.
- A social security number (SSN) is required. Contact local social security office or College Information: SSN.
- Take on leadership positions in various school- and community-based activities, clubs, and/or sports.
- Complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after noting deadline dates, but at least one month prior to testing date. See Financial Aid: Scholarships.
- Complete college applications by the end of the junior year. Call ahead for appointments. Request an application, talk with current students, and take a campus tour. Create a 2-year calendar, covering the last 2 years of high school and 1st year of college, noting college admission deadlines, financial aid application, scholarship, and testing registration deadlines as well as testing dates. Register no later than October to take the ACT in December. See Testing: ACT.

**November through January**
- Use all collected documents and personal milestones to create an education portfolio.
- Visit college websites to view estimated cost, application process, and enrollment information.
- Attend local financial aid seminars in addition to college and career fairs. See College Information: College Fair.
- Keep resume updated with all extra-curricular activities, recognitions, and employment, if any.
- Review websites which assist with applying for college scholarships, grants, and financial aid. Make note of all application deadlines on calendar. See Financial Aid: Scholarships.
- Review college exam study guides and websites with online tutorials. See Testing: Test Prep.
- ASVAB is a military entrance test taken either during the junior or senior year of high school. See Testing: ASVAB.
- Register one month prior to testing date for the following tests. See Testing: ACT, SAT, and SAT Subject Test(s).
  - ACT – February, April, or June
  - SAT – March or May
  - SAT Subject Test(s) – May/June

**February through June**
- Stay up-to-date with all required shots and immunizations; retain a copy of shot records.
- Finalize senior class schedule by the end of May verifying all classes align with graduation requirements.
- Consider taking a concurrent credit or digital learning course. See College Information: SouthArk.
- Request college recommendation letters from teachers, coaches, and other mentors for college applications. State test(s) must be passed at the end of grade level to advance to the next grade and/or to graduate. Register one month prior to the June or August testing date to take the ACT test. See Testing: ACT.
- SAT Subject Test(s) and AP Testing are recommended immediately following class completion usually in May/June. See Testing: AP Testing and SAT Subject Test(s).

**Summer after Junior Year**
- Explore summer internships, volunteer opportunities, and/or job shadowing in desired career.
- Enroll in a summer school class if a required class was not passed during the year.
- Prepare for the college application process by reviewing college essay prompts, assembling education portfolios, and gathering recommendation letters. See College Info: Essay Writing Tips.

### 12th Grade

**August through October**
- Focus on academics! Maintain at least a 3.0 GPA.
- Complete all leadership duties in extra-curricular activities.
- List top 2 choice colleges and top 2 majors. Continue to discuss these colleges and majors with counselor.
- Register with Selective Service if male and at least 18 years old. See College Information: Selective Service.
- Confirm all graduation requirements are met including one digital learning course. See College Info: SouthArk.
- Register no later than August to take the ACT and/or SAT in October. See Testing: ACT and SAT.
- Create a 2-year calendar, covering the senior year of high school and 1st year of college, noting important dates.
- Make sure resume information is up-to-date. See College Information: Resume Builder.
- Request college recommendation letters from teachers, coaches, and other mentors for college applications.

**November through January**
- Complete education portfolio of collected documents and personal milestones.
- Most college scholarship deadlines are in November and December. See Financial Aid: Scholarships.
- Attend local college and career fairs in addition to financial aid nights. See College Information: College Fair.
- Send a hand-written thank-you note to every person who wrote a recommendation letter.
- Note testing dates, begin completing college applications. Verify all required documentation has been received including test scores, recommendation letters, and essays. Keep dated copies of all items sent.
- Complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after January. See Financial Aid: FAFSA.

**February through June**
- Stay up-to-date with all required shots and immunizations; retain a copy of shot records.
- SAT Subject Test(s) and AP Testing are usually in May/June. See Testing: AP Testing and SAT Subject Test(s).
- State test(s) must be passed at the end of grade level to advance to the next grade and/or to graduate.
- Take advantage of any requested college interviews. Schedule them as early as possible.
- Acceptance letters should arrive no later than mid-April. Compare financial aid packages and visit with an advisor at each college prior to making any final decisions.
- Once a college has been decided, notify that college of your commitment. If wait-listed, accept another school’s admission offer while you remain on the waiting list.
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College Information
- SSN (Social Security Number): Follow these steps to get a new social security number. [www.ssa.gov/ssnnumber](http://www.ssa.gov/ssnnumber)
- SouthArk: All Arkansas public high school students are required to take at least one digital learning course for credit to graduate. This requirement allows high school students the opportunity to build a solid foundation for success in a digital world. Contact the high school counselor or local community college for additional information. [www.southark.edu](http://www.southark.edu)
- Resume Builder: The Kuder Journey and Navigator can assist with creating a resume. [arkansasworks.kuder.com](http://arkansasworks.kuder.com)
- NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Clearinghouse/Eligibility Center: Any student wanting to play on a Division I or II team must apply. Enter ‘9999’ as one of the college choices to have ACT or SAT test scores sent to the Eligibility Center. [web3.ncaa.org/ECW2/NCAA_EMS/NCAA.jsp](http://web3.ncaa.org/ECW2/NCAA_EMS/NCAA.jsp)
- Essay Writing Tips: The application essay shows the student’s writing skills, arrangement of thoughts on paper, and tells a little bit about him/herself. The topic should represent the student and his/her plans. Before submitting, always have the essay reviewed and proofread by different persons, making note of any suggestions for improvement. [www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/essay-questions](http://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/essay-questions)
- Selective Service: As a condition of enrollment for most public colleges, all males over 18 years of age who are not already in the armed forces, must register with the Selective Service System. You must have a social security number to register online. [www.sss.gov](http://www.sss.gov)
- College Fair: Create an account to attend a local college fair. Information is only given to colleges selected via a barcode system. [www.gotomyncf.com](http://www.gotomyncf.com)
- College Searches: Search for colleges by location, degrees offered, and different majors.
  - [nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator](http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator)
  - [www.collegewise.com](http://www.collegewise.com)
  - [knowhow2go.acenet.edu](http://knowhow2go.acenet.edu)
  - [studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/choosing-schools](http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/choosing-schools)
  - [www.educationconnection.com](http://www.educationconnection.com)
  - [www2.princetonreview.com/college-advice/find-your-best-fit](http://www2.princetonreview.com/college-advice/find-your-best-fit)
  - [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)
  - [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)
  - [www.princetonreview.com/Events](http://www.princetonreview.com/Events)
  - [www.testprepreview.com](http://www.testprepreview.com)
  - [www.act.com](http://www.act.com)
  - [www.act.org/planstudent](http://www.act.org/planstudent)

Testing
- Test Prep: Prepare to take the SAT, ACT, PSAT, AP Exams, and SAT Subject Tests by taking online tutorials.
  - [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)
  - [www.princetonreview.com/Events](http://www.princetonreview.com/Events)
  - [www.testprepreview.com](http://www.testprepreview.com)
- ACT (American College Test): This multiple-choice exam consists of 4 main sections being English, reading, math, and science with an optional 30-minute writing section. The ACT measures what has been learned in school and is one of the core college admissions exams. Scores range from 1 to 36 with an average score being 21. It is given 6 times per year and usually takes about 4 hours to complete.
  - [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)
  - [www.act.com](http://www.act.com)
- AP (Advanced Placement) Testing: Taking AP, honors, and dual enrollment classes shows academic vigor and the ability to tackle demanding material. Achieving 3 or higher out of 5 on an AP test may earn college credit which will save money and time. [PrincetonReview.com/APInfo](http://PrincetonReview.com/APInfo)
- ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery): This multiple-aptitude military entrance test measures developed abilities and helps predict future academic and occupational success in the military. The areas of word knowledge, paragraph comprehension, arithmetic reasoning, and mathematics knowledge are tested. It can be taken either during the junior or senior year of high school and is administered at military recruitment offices. [official-asvab.com](http://official-asvab.com)
- COMPASS: The COMPASS exam is an alternative to taking the ACT at some colleges. The components of writing, reading, and algebra are tested. This test is not timed yet normally takes 2 to 2 ½ hours to complete all sections and is usually administered at community colleges for a nominal fee. [www.act.org/products/higher-education-act-compass](http://www.act.org/products/higher-education-act-compass)
- PLAN: This multiple-choice test is usually taken during the sophomore year of high school and is a great way to prepare for the PLAN through your high school counselor. It measures academic progress in high school and is designed to improve students’ preparation for education, training, and work after high school while they still have time to adjust their high school courses. Students who plan to attend college should score higher on the ACT than students who do not. It covers the same subjects—English, mathematics, reading, and science—and provides an estimated ACT score.
  - [www.act.org/planstudent](http://www.act.org/planstudent)
  - [www.princetonreview.com/Events](http://www.princetonreview.com/Events)
- PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Achievement Test): This practice SAT test should be taken prior to completing the junior year in high school. It takes about half the time of the SAT and does not have an essay or Algebra II section. PSAT scores serve as a strong indicator of potential SAT scores. High PSAT scores, excellent grades, and a recommendation letter from the high school are needed to qualify as a finalist for the National Merit, National Achievement, and/or National Hispanic Scholarship. [www.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt](http://www.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt)
- SAT (Scholastic Achievement Test): This multiple-choice exam measures ability rather than knowledge. The SAT consists of math, critical reading, and writing. Scores range from 600 to 2400 with an average score being 1500. It is one of the core college admissions exams, takes approximately 4 hours to complete, and can be taken up to 9 times. [sat.collegeboard.org/home](http://sat.collegeboard.org/home)
- SAT Subject Test(s): These one-hour, multiple-choice exams focus on specific subject matter knowledge within five general categories: English, math, history, science, and languages. Each subject test is scored on a scale from 200 to 800. These scores demonstrate subject-matter strengths which are especially important if there was a low course grade. NOTE: The world history test focuses on non-European cultures and the chemistry test is quite different both in length and in terms of content.
Financial Aid

- **Financial Aid FAQ**: Find answers to many commonly asked questions about college financial aid.
  - [www2.princetonreview.com/college-advice#s3](http://www2.princetonreview.com/college-advice#s3)
  - [www.college.gov](http://www.college.gov)
  - [www2.ed.gov/finaid/landing.html](http://www2.ed.gov/finaid/landing.html)

- **Scholarships**: Search thousands of scholarships, fellowships, loans, and other financial aid opportunities.
  - [www.careerinfonet.org/scholarshipsearch](http://www.careerinfonet.org/scholarshipsearch)
  - [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

- **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**: The FAFSA must be completed to be considered for any type of federally funded financial aid. Parents should inquire as to their eligibility for the Hope Credit, Lifetime Learning Credit, and other tax benefits as a result of having a child enrolled in college.
  - [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

- **Scholarship Scams**: Learn how to spot potential scholarship scams, fraud, and avoid paying for free services.
  - [studentaid.ed.gov/types/scams](http://studentaid.ed.gov/types/scams)

- **Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship**: The ‘Lottery Scholarship’ is paid to Arkansas students who meet certain financial and academic criteria. [scholarships.adhe.edu](http://scholarships.adhe.edu)

- **Buick Achievers Scholarship**: Receive up to $100,000 over four years if your field of study is in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics). Annual deadline to apply is in early February.

- **Financial Literacy Challenge Scholarship**: Complete an online money quiz to possibly win a $36,000 college scholarship.
  - [www.53schools.com](http://www.53schools.com)

- **Military**:
  - Every branch of the military can assist with paying for college.
  - Army [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil)
  - Marines [www.marines.mil](http://www.marines.mil)
  - Navy [www.navy.mil](http://www.navy.mil)
  - Air Force [www.af.mil](http://www.af.mil)
  - National Guard [www.ng.mil](http://www.ng.mil)
  - Coast Guard [www.uscg.mil](http://www.uscg.mil)

Career

- **Kuder Navigator**: Discover and build a career around your unique interests, skills, and learning styles.
  - [kudernavigator.com](http://kudernavigator.com)

- **Arkansas Job Link**: Create a Job Seeker account to assist with job searching, resume building, and other employment opportunities in Arkansas.
  - [www.arjoblink.arkansas.gov](http://www.arjoblink.arkansas.gov)

- **Career Interests**: Explore different Arkansas careers by groupings of similar occupations or career clusters.
  - [discoverarkansas.net](http://discoverarkansas.net)

- **Career Search**: Search hundreds of career choices while reviewing current detailed descriptions of a potential career and its future expectations.
  - [www.princetonreview.com/career-search](http://www.princetonreview.com/career-search)

- **Occupational Outlook Handbook**: Guide full of career information for hundreds of different occupations.
  - [www.bls.gov/ooh](http://www.bls.gov/ooh)

- **O*Net Online**: Explore different career possibilities by looking at detailed descriptions, job analysis, and salary information for numerous career areas.
  - [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org)

- **My Next Move**: Match interests and skills to a career while being able to see the average yearly salary of a potential career.
  - [www.mynextmove.org](http://www.mynextmove.org)