

AP Courses - Accept the Challenge

Kay Peterson, Ph.D.

Need a bigger challenge from your high school classes? Ready to delve more deeply into your favorite subject? Want to save money and advance more quickly once you enter college? It's time to check into AP classes.

AP stands for "Advanced Placement," a series of 35 college-level courses available to high school students looking for a head start. AP courses cover more material at a faster pace and in greater detail than regular high school courses. They also allow students to begin earning credit toward a college degree.

The Benefits of AP

AP means more work, but it's work that pays off. Consider what AP allows you to do:

- Explore more challenging coursework. AP work offers you the opportunity to work independently and with students who are as excited by the subject as you are.
- Improve your college applications. Admissions officers recognize the work and commitment required by AP courses. Having AP classes as part of your course schedule improves your application profile.
- Prepare for college-level work. AP coursework provides a solid foundation for your work in college.
- Get ahead in college. Earning college credit in high school allows you to advance more rapidly through your major and general education requirements.
- Save money on tuition. For every course you don't have to take in college, you save money. Those dollars add up if you are able to graduate early. Keep in mind: Some schools may charge a fee to ensure that your AP credits transfer.

AP Courses

AP courses provide a challenge for motivated students who are interested in working more intensively in their field of choice. You can choose from 35 different courses in science, math, the humanities and the social sciences. Offerings vary from school to school; ask your counselor or AP coordinator about the classes available at your school.

If appropriate AP courses are not offered at your school, you may want to consider preparing for the AP tests through online or distance-learning courses offered by colleges or study services.

However, before committing to these alternatives, talk to your guidance counselor. Make sure your school approves the coursework and that the credit you earn will be applied toward graduation. You may also need your high school's assistance in coordinating your exam.

Taking the Test

Once you've completed your coursework, you must take the AP exam in order to receive college credit. AP tests are administered every May. Most students take them at the end of senior year but it's best to take the exam as soon as possible after the completion of AP coursework. If you take an AP course earlier than senior year, plan to take the test the same year you finish the course.

Schedules and locations for testing vary. Check with your teacher or your high school's AP coordinator for more details.

Scoring and College Credit

AP tests are scored on a scale of 1-5. Students with a grade of 3 or higher are recommended to receive advanced placement in college and/or credit for a college course. However, some colleges might require a 4 or 5 for students to receive credit. Keep in mind that passing the AP exam doesn't guarantee you'll receive college credit. Only your prospective college can confer credit for AP coursework; policies vary from school to school.

If receiving credit is important to you, contact your prospective college early to learn about their AP policies. Since AP courses are generally taken senior year, this may mean checking AP policies far in advance, even before you apply for college admission. Consult the school's catalog to learn more.

There's a lot to be gained from advanced study. By researching this option, you can save time and money, and develop your skills for a successful college career.

TABLE 1: Commission's Admission Standards For First-Time Freshmen

	SAT range	400 - 490	500 - 540	550 - 600	610 - 680	690 - 740	750 - 790	800 - 830	840 - 870	880 - 920	930 - 960	970 - 1000	1010 - 1040	1050 - 1070	1080 - 1110	1120 - 1150	1160 - 1190	1200 - 1230	1240 - 1270	1280 - 1300	1310 - 1340	1350 - 1390	1400 - 1430	1440 - 1480	1490 - 1540	1550 - 1590	1600
	ACT	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
Rank	GPA																										
0-1	0-1.3	45	47	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	68	70	72	74	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	93	95	97
2-3	1.4-1.5	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	72	74	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	97	99	101
4	1.6	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	71	74	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	99	101	103
5-6	1.7	52	54	56	58	60	62	64	66	68	70	72	75	77	79	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	100	102	104
7-8	1.8	54	56	58	60	62	64	66	68	70	72	74	77	79	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	102	104	106
9-10	1.9	56	58	60	62	64	66	68	70	72	74	76	79	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	104	106	108
11-12	2.0	58	60	62	64	66	68	70	72	74	76	78	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	103	106	108	110
13-15	2.1	60	62	64	66	68	70	72	74	76	78	80	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	103	105	108	110	112
16-18	2.2	61	63	65	67	69	71	73	75	77	79	81	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	109	111	113
19-22	2.3	63	65	67	69	71	73	75	77	79	81	83	86	88	90	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	108	111	113	115
23-26	2.4	65	67	69	71	73	75	77	79	81	83	85	88	90	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	108	110	113	115	117
27-30	2.5	67	69	71	73	75	77	79	81	83	85	87	90	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	108	110	112	115	117	119
31-34	2.6	69	71	73	75	77	79	81	83	85	87	89	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	108	110	112	114	117	119	121
35-38	2.7	70	72	74	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	93	95	97	99	101	103	105	107	109	111	113	115	118	120	122
39-43	2.8	72	74	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	95	97	99	101	103	105	107	109	111	113	115	117	120	122	124
44-48	2.9	74	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	97	99	101	103	105	107	109	111	113	115	117	119	122	124	126
49-53	3.0	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	99	101	103	105	107	109	111	113	115	117	119	121	124	126	128
54-58	3.1	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	98	101	103	105	107	109	111	113	115	117	119	121	123	126	128	130
59-62	3.2	79	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	102	104	106	108	110	112	114	116	118	120	122	124	127	129	131
63-67	3.3	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	104	106	108	110	112	114	116	118	120	122	124	126	129	131	133
68-72	3.4	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	103	106	108	110	112	114	116	118	120	122	124	126	128	131	133	135
73-76	3.5	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	103	105	108	110	112	114	116	118	120	122	124	126	128	130	133	135	137
77-81	3.6	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	101	103	105	107	110	112	114	116	118	120	122	124	126	128	130	132	135	137	139
82-85	3.7	88	90	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	108	111	113	115	117	119	121	123	125	127	129	131	133	136	138	140
86-89	3.8	90	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	108	110	113	115	117	119	121	123	125	127	129	131	133	135	138	140	142
90-92	3.9	92	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	108	110	112	115	117	119	121	123	125	127	129	131	133	135	137	140	142	144
93-100	4.0	94	96	98	100	102	104	106	108	110	112	114	117	119	121	123	125	127	129	131	133	135	137	139	142	144	146

TABLE 2: Index Score and Eligibility

Adams State College*	80
Colorado School of Mines	110
Colorado State University	101
Colorado State University-Pueblo	86
Fort Lewis College	92
Mesa State College*	85
Metropolitan State College**	76
University of Colorado at Boulder	103
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs	92
University of Colorado at Denver	93
University of Northern Colorado	94
Western State College of Colorado	80

* Applies to students admitted to four-year programs only.

** Applies to students 19 years old or younger.

CCHE Admissions Index

HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) oversees admissions standards for Colorado's public colleges and universities. The Commission has established Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR) for students who graduate from high school in spring 2008 and later and plan to attend a four-year public college or university in Colorado. Community Colleges will continue to offer open admissions; students enrolling in these institutions are not subject to HEAR requirements.

HEAR has recently been revised by CCHE. This Handbook contains the most recent information, but be sure to check with your high school counselor to make sure you are taking the right courses.

SUMMARY OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS (HEAR)

HEAR is a combination of courses, primarily in the areas of English, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences that students should plan to complete as preparation for entering one of Colorado's four-year public colleges or universities. Many states now have some form of pre-collegiate curriculum structure, either as a requirement to qualify for admission to four-year colleges/universities or as a high school graduation requirement.

Colorado's HEAR was being implemented in two phases: Phase I began with students who graduate in spring 2008; phase II applies to graduates in spring 2010 and later. The specifics for Phase II are as follows:

Academic Area	Number of Units
English	4
Mathematics (Algebra I and two higher levels plus one additional year beyond algebra II)	4
Natural Sciences (two units must be lab-based)	3
Social Sciences (at least one unit of U.S. or world history)	3
Foreign Language	1
Academic Electives	2
TOTAL	17

** An academic unit, often referred to as a Carnegie Unit, is equivalent to one full year of credit in a specific subject*

Detailed information on admissions standards as well as a guide to HEAR courses is available online at <http://highered.colorado.gov>.

The CCHE does not review individual high school courses to determine whether or not they meet Colorado's HEAR standards. Local school districts in Colorado oversee their high school curricula and colleges and universities establish their own entrance requirements.

Check individual college publications and Web sites to determine which classes meet their entrance requirements.

COLORADO COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSION INDEX

To use the information on page 13, first use Table 1 to calculate your index score. Then see Table 2 to find out the index number of the Colorado public college or university of your choice. Keep in mind that the index is only one of many factors used by institutions to determine whether a student is eligible for admission. You should not make assumptions about your admissibility to an institution based on your index alone.

Calculating an Index Score

- 1 Find your high school GPA and/or class rank along the left side of the index table. Round to the nearest available unit. If both high school GPA and high school class rank are available, use the one that gives you the higher index.
- 2 Find your SAT and/or ACT score along the top of the index table. If more than one score is available, use the one that gives you the higher index. (Note, the SAT score is calculated using your Critical Reading and Math scores only.)
- 3 Follow the row containing your GPA and/or class rank and the column containing your best test score to determine your CCHE admissions index.

10 Rules for All Students Applying to College

JJ Nelson

1.) Talk To Your Counselor. Between the books in the counselor's office, and the knowledge in your counselor's head, he or she will be a virtual treasure trove of information. Take advantage of the opportunities you have to work with a counselor to make plans for your future. Many counselors know more than any one book or website, and they are generally always willing to share their knowledge.

2.) Stay In Touch With Your Counselor. Selecting a college is not a one-step operation. In order to really help you make a decision, the counselor is going to need to get to know you. The only way for the counselor to do that is for you to take initiative and go meet with him or her. Also, most counselors are not just there for information. They really are truly counselors, and they are also there to help you with your decision, help you solve your crises, or to just calm you down when you're really stressed out.

3.) Do Research. The way to begin the college process is to get online or crack some books and start discovering what's out there. Use the resources in your counselor's office. There are great websites such as www.myroad.com that, if you have taken the PSAT/NMSQT, are free opportunities to begin your college search. (On MyRoad, you start by taking a personality test. The site then generates a list of suggested majors and career possibilities, complete with a ranking system for how well they think this career will work for you. Then you can browse through their college index and find the right colleges with the right majors for you.) Visit www.makingitcount.com and take the My College Style and All About Me tests. Like MyRoad, these resources are free with registration, but these tools are not limited to students who have taken the PSAT. Don't forget to research ways to pay for college by visiting sites like www.fastweb.com, a free scholarship search engine.

4.) Get Started Early. It's never too early to start researching colleges, even if you don't have a clue where to start. Just get out there and research something. *Start now!*

5.) Don't Procrastinate. This is one of the greatest decisions you'll ever make, and you could end up missing a great opportunity. You shrug this off like it could never happen, but it does happen all the time. Case in point: Last summer I toured a highly selective college near the nation's capital and instantly fell in love. As the year progressed, and I applied to other colleges, it became apparent that it was very unlikely that I would ever go there, but I did keep the January 10th deadline in the back of my mind. However, at around 11:00 p.m. on Jan. 9th, when I hadn't even looked at the application, I realized that I might have just let a great possibility slip through my fingers. I'll be alright, since I might attend a military academy anyway, but there will always be that "what if?" factor at the back of my mind.

6.) Listen To Your Parents. I know you never do this (trust me, I'm like everybody else - I don't want to either), but they're there to help you. Having help makes it easier to handle all of this pressure and responsibility—and means you don't have to handle it on your own. Also, remember that even though this is your future, your parents, in most cases, are the ones paying and the ones who got you where you are. They're part of the decision too.

7.) Don't Let Your Parents Do Your Work For You. They're there to help you, but not to pick up your slack. The most they should ever do for you is research. Let them look up some information for you and go over it with you. It's then your job to apply that information, fill out the forms, and write the essays yourself.

8.) Open Up Your Mind. Talk to reps of colleges you've never heard of. Don't be fooled by big names and Ivy Leagues. There are so many more great opportunities out there. **IN ORDER TO FIND THE PERFECT PLACE FOR YOU, YOU WILL HAVE TO OPEN UP YOUR MIND.**

9.) Visit, And Visit Early. How can you make such a huge decision without ever having seen the college? You could fall in love with Hendrix College in Arkansas, even after thinking “no way” when someone told you what state it was in. Or, you could get up to Boston and realize that Harvard is way too uptight for your taste. You have to experience colleges first hand. If you can't visit, getting good information is critical to making the right decision for you.

10.) Don't Let The Pressure Get To You. Yes, this is a big decision, but it's not the end of the world if you make a mistake. People transfer and switch majors much more often than you think. There's still plenty of time for all of you to find the right place for you. Just keep your options open and always have a back up plan. With a little effort on your part, things will work themselves out for the best.

Top Ten Tips for Admissions

Michael Pugh

Take a strong course schedule. Your class record is a big part of your college application. Don't take courses that simply pad your GPA. Challenge yourself. Take AP, IB or honors courses. If your school doesn't offer them, see if your local community college or university does.

Do volunteer work. Make a difference and volunteer for activities that reflect your personality and matter to you. Volunteering benefits your community and looks great on an application.

Ace the entrance exams. Familiarize yourself with the test by taking sample versions beforehand. Get plenty of sleep the night before and eat a well-balanced breakfast. Read the directions and test questions carefully. Pace yourself so you have time to review your work.

Find the school that's right for you. Develop your ideal college profile. Then find matches with the help of your guidance counselor and FastWeb's college search. Learn more about your schools of choice via their Web sites, campus visits and college fairs.

Fill out the application accurately and well. Approach each application as if it were the *only* one that you're filling out. Read the directions carefully and follow them precisely. Tell the truth. Complete a draft copy first, then revise and proofread. Avoid the common errors of college apps.

Craft excellent application essays. Start by brainstorming for an original topic and take some time to hone your unique point of view. When writing, be clear, concise and well organized. And don't forget to check grammar and spelling.

Submit applications as early as possible. Many colleges require applications to be in by early January. Online applications are a great way to get your forms in quickly.

Get great letters of recommendation. Choose adults who know you well such as teachers, employers, coaches, clergy and community leaders. Provide them with all the necessary materials and information well in advance. Find out if the due date is a postmark date or a receive date. For receive dates, send letters at least 10 days in advance.

Follow up on your applications. If a college hasn't sent you something that they should have, don't be afraid to check on your application. With thousands of applications being processed, mistakes do occasionally happen.

Dazzle them at your college interview. Stay calm. Prepare by practicing with friends and formulate a few questions to ask. Dress for the occasion. Follow up with a thank-you note.

See also:

- [Top Ten Tips for Financial Aid](#)
- [Top Ten Tips for Winning Scholarship Applications](#)
- [Top Ten Tips for Career Planning](#)
- [Top Ten Tips for Getting a Good Job](#)

Unlocking the Mystery of College Admission

Stephen J. Pemberton, Senior Assistant Director of Admission at Boston College

How colleges make decisions and what they look for when they read applications remains a great mystery to many families. Whether it's the fear of being a number or the competitiveness of the institution, many students and families feel as if they've lost control of their fate once their applications are dropped in the mail.

Nobody can guarantee your admission. I can't tell you your child will be admitted to a certain school. Truthfully, only the admissions office at the university can tell you that. What here are some insights into the different aspects of the process that will ease some of the anxiety your son or daughter may face.

Before doing that, a good exercise for your son or daughter is to go through an assessment of their strengths. On a blank sheet of paper write these two words: *My Strengths*. Under that write the following: "*In the Classroom*" and "*Outside the Classroom*."

In the Classroom can be anything they think is important. Maybe they've taken tough courses, or they're a good writer or the best math student. Perhaps they've taken the SATs or ACTs and are happy with how well they did - they might want to add that to the list as a strength. Like it or not, tests are a reality and colleges do use them as a measure of what your child has learned in the classroom.

Outside the Classroom is anything they've done that they feel is an investment of their time. It can be hobbies, interests, a part-time job or volunteer work. *Anything* they do outside the class or they think is important is wise to include.

Here is a certainty: *ALL* schools are going to look at your application on the basis of some combination of what we'll call *The Significant Six* ...

- Grades
- Standardized Tests
- Extracurricular Activities
- Recommendations
- Essays
- Interview

Now the next step. For each school your child is thinking of applying to, find out which of these criteria are most important. There are several ways to gather this information:

- Go to your guidance counselor. He/she has had a lot of experience with colleges and their admission offices.
- Call the school itself and ask them.
- Really *read* the information they send in the mail.
- Go to their Web site.

For some colleges, all of the above criteria are equally important. For others, two or three may carry more weight on an application. Either way, it is your and your child's responsibility to find out.

As a general guideline, large public schools usually look at grades and standardized tests.

Let's take an example. The University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) tells you that they accept 50 percent of the people who apply on the basis of these two factors. Not only do they tell you that but they also give you a profile of the grade point average and standardized test scores ... so before you even apply you know that what you've done *In the Classroom* is most important for at least half of the freshmen class at UCLA. By defining their own strengths, your son or daughter should get some sense of how competitive they might be for admission. Schools like this we call "formula schools" because your numbers form the basis of their decision.

Small schools may work differently:

- Clarke University in Massachusetts tells you that who you are is as important as your grades and standardized test scores.
- Bennington College in Vermont not only has interviews but will interview you twice if they think it is necessary.

So you know that *Outside the Classroom* is as important to Bennington College and Clarke University as *Inside the Classroom*.

Believe it or not most colleges will tell you what is important to them. These schools we call "fine-tooth" because they look at everything—and usually in great detail.

These are just examples but this is a good plan to have for each college. Your son or daughter will take an honest look at their strengths, talents and interests and they'll try to match those with the schools in which they have an interest. It does mean some work on their part, but when they drop their application in the mail they're going to feel a lot better about how it's going to be read.

This article was brought to you by [CollegeLink](#).

What Are Colleges Looking For?

Mike Pugh

A rigorous course schedule through high school is important. Good grades are key. High SAT/ACT test scores certainly don't hurt. But what else are colleges looking for in students?

Genuine interest in the school

Colleges want students who show genuine and well-researched interest in their school. "A student who has gone beyond name recognition and reputation and has decided that the university's programs and environment are right for them is the ideal," says Andrew Bryan, a certified educational consultant at The Academic Institute, Inc.

Making concrete connections between what you want out of your education and what the college or university has to offer shows that you've done your homework. "Direct references to courses, programs or other academic opportunities demonstrate a level of interest that will immediately set a student apart in a crowd," says Scott Anderson, former admissions officer at Cornell University.

Interest in coursework

You need to demonstrate the same authentic interest in your proposed course of study.

"While admission officers want to hear about what kids want to study, the students are much more interested in telling us what they want to be. Lawyers. Doctors. Veterinarians. Investment bankers." Anderson says. "These professional goals are fine, but the reality is that law, medicine, and the like are not topics you can study as an undergraduate,"

Colleges would rather hear about the work you'll do *before* you enter the work world - such as your interest in geometry, philosophy, Peruvian literature or genetics.

Extracurricular activities

While academics are key, colleges also want students who will enhance their campus community in some special way. They seek students who will be leaders, communicators and active members of their college community. "We look for interesting volunteer work, internships, athletic achievement and other good extracurricular activities when we evaluate a student," says Kate Wells, former admissions officer at State University of New York College at Potsdam.

But don't start joining organizations by the dozen for appearance's sake. "In-depth participation in one or two extracurricular activities is preferred over superficial membership in many," says Diane E. Epstein, a certified educational consultant.

That extra "something"

With all the qualified applications coming in, colleges are frequently looking for the elusive extra "something" that can set a student apart from the crowd. This can be any number of things: job experience, involvement with a certain group or even the extra enthusiasm or thought that a student puts into their essay.

That extra "something" can also be an obstacle overcome: financial hardship, English as a second language, serious health problems. "Something special a kid has overcome will make them appealing," says Sue Bigg, a Chicago-based educational consultant.

Finding the right match

When admissions officers review your application, they'll be looking to make a good match. You need to show them that you've chosen them for the right reasons. At the same time, try to show colleges your "real" self.

If you offer a glimpse of the individual behind the grades and the test scores, you'll help the admissions officers make your perfect college match.

College Touring Tips for Parents

Jennifer LeClaire

You envision a college degree as part of your child's future. So choosing a college where they're comfortable, happy and can be successful is important. But you're also curious if that school's party reputation is deserved, and if your child really understands what it'll mean to be six states away in a town with no major airport.

As you accompany your teenager on college campus tours, how do you make the most of each visit? And how do you get the information you need without stepping on your teen's toes? Experts say successful college touring begins before you ever step foot on campus.

Let the student take charge

College admissions directors agree that one of the biggest mistakes parents make is helping their students too much. Some colleges are even banning parents from the campus tours in order to give the students more freedom during the visit.

"Let the students set up the visit and take the lead on question asking," says Christopher Tremblay, director of admissions at Gannon University in Erie, Pa. "It's important to let the students sit in the driver's seat."

Ask the right questions

That said, experts recommend working with your student to set clear goals before the visit and helping draft a list of targeted questions to ask during the tour. The college selection criteria a student is using may not mirror that of their parents. Before the tour is a good time to talk about some of those differences.

Tremblay recommends the following questions:

- How does the admissions process work?
- What forms of financial aid are available, and how do I apply?
- What academic support systems are offered to students?
- What activities/events take place on the weekends?
- What kind of academic advising is found on your campus?
- What are the benefits of attending your school?
- What is on-campus living like?

[Get a complete list of college selection questions.](#)

Of course, every family is unique with their own unique concerns. But parents should be mindful of questions that might send their child to the far side of the tour group. For example, experts say safety is a huge issue with

parents, but often one that students wish they wouldn't dwell on. To avoid a conflict that could potentially embarrass the student, they suggest visiting the college's Web site before or after the tour to get the information they need.

"Parents are good at spotting red flags based on life experience," Hirsh says. "Parents should form leading questions that they can ask their students after the college visit. This lets the students know how the parent feels about an issue without embarrassing them."

Keep the lines of communication open

"Get used to talking to your student about the different colleges you visit. Compare notes. Learn how to help your child define what he or she is looking for in a college," says Lou Hirsh, director of admissions at the University of Delaware in Newark, Del. "The kids ultimately need to decide where they are going to be most comfortable."

Some practical tips for the road

Beyond the must-dos, Margy Arthur, owner of College Campus Tours Inc. in Tahoma, Calif., offers up some practical tips for the road.

- Don't plan to visit more than two colleges a day.
- Make sure you've got a pen and paper handy to take detailed notes.
- Get a map of the college and parking information ahead of time.
- Try to visit schools on good weather days. Dashing from building to building on a rainy day can put a damper on your visit.
- Visiting schools around noon will give you a better feel for the atmosphere than visiting late in the day when the activity is winding down.
- Check out the bulletin boards around campus to find out what activities are going on, keeping in mind that summer is not as busy as the fall and spring terms.
- Don't judge the school based on its tour guide.
- Do some additional exploring on your own after the tour.
- Talk to current students about the kinds of activities available on the weekends.
- Eat a meal on campus. This gives you an opportunity to eavesdrop on what the kids are talking about so you can get an idea of what kind of students are attending the college.
- Get the name and title of all staff members that you meet during the tour.

"Some parents put more stock in the name of the school than the interest of the child," Arthur says. "It's important to find a place that meets your student's needs and abilities. Ask the questions that will help you find a good match for your child."

PLAN YOUR PATH TO COLLEGE

USE THIS HANDY REFERENCE CALENDAR

TO KEEP TRACK AS YOU PREPARE TO GET INTO THE COLLEGE OF YOUR CHOICE

Freshman Year

Fall Term

- Plan ahead. Schedule time to meet with your guidance counselor and plan a strategy of courses that will meet college entrance requirements.

Sophomore Year

September

- Speak with your guidance counselor about taking the PSAT/NMSQT and the PLAN in preparation for the SAT and ACT.

October

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT and/or PLAN. Sophomore-year PSAT/NMSQT scores will not count toward the National Merit Scholarship Competition, but it is good practice.

December

- Receive results of PSAT/NMSQT and/or PLAN. Consult with your guidance counselor to investigate ways to improve scores on standardized tests.

Junior Year

September

- Map out a testing schedule for the coming year, including the PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, SAT Subject Tests, and/or ACT. Pick the test dates that will work with your schedule, taking into account family events, extracurricular activities, and holidays.
- Register for the October PSAT/NMSQT.
- Meet with your guidance counselor to review your course plan for the school year and plan your senior schedule.
- Check your course transcript. Are you on track to complete all the credits required by schools you are interested in applying to?
- Begin to establish criteria for the college search: Are you interested in a small rural college or a large urban campus? Visit some local colleges to learn what you do and don't like.

October

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT. Scores are important, as they are used to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Competition and the National Achievement program; plus, it's good practice for the SAT.
- Start doing a search for financial aid. Options include grants, loans, and scholarships.

December

- Receive results of the PSAT/NMSQT. Consult your guidance counselor to consider whether an SAT prep course would be a good investment.

February

- Contact the colleges you are interested in to find out if they prefer the ACT or the SAT.

Spring Break

- Visit schools that interest you.

April

- Consider registering for the May and June SAT and ACT test dates; it's not too early to start testing.
- Re-evaluate your list of potential schools and eliminate those that no longer interest you.
- Begin searching for financial aid.

May

- If you're enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) classes, it's time to take the appropriate AP tests.
- Continue to visit colleges. Call ahead and ask for appointments with the departments of financial aid and admissions, academic advisors, professors, and students.

Senior Year

September

- Continue to research financial aid options.
- Make sure you have all applications required for financial aid and admission.
- Check admission and financial aid deadlines for the schools you plan to apply to.
- Register for the fall ACT and/or SAT test dates as needed.
- Obtain letters of recommendation and plan college visits.

October

- Meet with your guidance counselor to review your final list of colleges.
- File early decision applications if you have made a decision.
- Attend college fairs to further investigate the colleges where you would like to apply.
- Have official test scores sent by the testing agency to the colleges on your short list.

November

- Start writing and editing your application essays.
- Complete your college applications (make copies before mailing).

December

- Mail all applications.
- Schedule college admission interviews, if required.

January

- File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon after January 1 as possible. You can file online at www.fafsa.ed.gov or request a paper form by calling (800) 4-FED-AID (433-3243). Talk to your counselor about special forms your state might require.

- Request that your school send your grade reports/transcripts to the colleges you applied to.
- Complete your income tax forms as soon as possible. Contact the colleges to see if they require any other forms.
- Contact the colleges and confirm that all application materials (transcripts, recommendations, and financial aid forms) have been received.

February

- You will receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) within four weeks of completing the FAFSA online (longer for the paper application). Review the SAR, make any necessary corrections, and return it to the FAFSA processor. If you have not received your SAR and more than four weeks has passed, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center.
- Complete scholarship applications.

April

- Review acceptances and compare financial aid packages.

May

- By May 1, you should make a decision about which college you will attend and send in your acceptance of the school's offer along with any other necessary paperwork.
- Notify other prospective colleges that you have selected another school.
- If your first-choice college placed you on a waiting list, let them know that you are still interested in attending the school.

June

- Ask your counselor to forward your final transcript to the college you selected.
- Contact your college to determine when fees are due for tuition and room and board.

Article provided by Sally Wood

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