

TIMELINE FOR COLLEGE PLANNING: CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

In 7th & 8th Grade:

- Begin thinking about the high school classes that will prepare you for college.
- Ask your parents or teachers to help you develop good study habits.
- Practice setting and reaching goals.
- Volunteer in your community.
- Take interest and skills assessments to help you think about possible career options. You can use Missouri Connections at www.missouriconnections.org.
- Talk to your school counselor and parents about careers that interest you.
- Create a tentative high school class plan.
- Enroll in a summer enrichment program.
- Explore options for foreign language study in middle and high school.

In 9th Grade:

- Take interest and skills assessments to help you explore career options. You can use Missouri Connections at www.missouriconnections.org.
- Talk to your school counselor about career options and the education required for those careers.
- Check if your school requires 10th graders to take the PLAN test to prepare for the ACT.
- Participate in extracurricular activities.
- Review your high school class plan. Take the most difficult classes you can handle.
- Explore internships and apprenticeships.
- Enroll in a summer enrichment program.
- Consider taking courses such as English literature, world history, biology, and algebra or geometry.
- If you have not already done so, start studying a foreign language.



In 10th Grade:

- Take the PLAN test to prepare for the ACT, or simply take the ACT as a “practice” round.
- Take the PSAT to prepare for the SAT, and to determine whether you are eligible for the National Merit Scholarship.
- Talk with your parents about saving and paying for college.
- Consider AP or IB courses, or other courses that may allow you to earn college credit.
- If you are an athlete, review the SCAA requirements for college athletes.
- The recommended core curriculum for 10th graders preparing for college includes English composition, trigonometry and pre-calculus, chemistry, American history, and continued study of a foreign language.
- Participate in community-based volunteer or extracurricular activities whenever possible.
- Begin looking through college catalogs and consider which schools might be a good fit for you and your interests.
- Consider the financial aid available from each school you are interested in, as well as the scholarships that might be available to you based on your activities and interests.
- Over the summer, visit a few colleges and try to talk to students about what they like or don't like about the school.
- Over the summer, get a job or internship to save money for college and gain work experience.

In 11th Grade:

- Find out if your high school participates in the A+ Program. The A+ Program is a scholarship program with some requirements, but anyone can be eligible.
- If you can dual-enroll at a local college or take classes that are eligible for dual-credit, do so.
- Take the ACT Review or PSAT in the fall to prepare for the SAT, and to identify areas where you need improvement. The PSAT also qualifies you for the National Merit Scholarship.



- Consider possible career options and investigate the type of education that is needed.
- Request materials from schools that interest you and visit their websites.
- Arrange campus visits to those schools that interest you. Try to visit on a weekday so you can attend a class.
- Participate in extracurricular activities.
- Request admissions and financial aid forms.
- Register for and take the ACT and/or SAT in the spring. The ACT qualifies you for the Bright Flight scholarship.
- Make sure you are meeting your high school graduation requirements.
- The core curriculum includes advanced English composition, calculus, physics, European history, and continued study of a foreign language.
- Get a job to earn and save money for college, or explore your skills through an internship or apprenticeship.
- Research private scholarship options.
- Join the MDHE's Journey to College discussions on Facebook.
- Create a resume of your jobs, volunteering activities, extracurricular activities, and positions held as well as outstanding courses taken.
- Start considering which teachers, counselors, or employers you could be asking for letters of recommendation.
- Consider opening a bank account to accumulate savings and begin to build good credit.
- Over the summer, start practicing your admissions essays.

In 12th Grade:

- Stay focused on your schoolwork and take the most difficult classes you can handle. .
- Take career interest assessments and determine the education needed for careers that interest you.
- Participate in extracurricular activities.
- Volunteer in the community.



September - November

- Arrange campus visits to those schools that interest you. It's okay to go more than once. Try to arrange appointments with faculty in those areas that interest you, as well as a student or two.
- Take or retake the ACT and/or SAT in the fall.
- Meet with your school counselor to review your high school class plan.
- Select the schools to which you will apply. Make a list of deadlines for each school.
- Practice your admission essays.
- Update your resume with your academic, athletic and work activities as well as other achievements. Ask for recommendations (if required) from teachers, counselors and others who can comment on your abilities and talents.
- Attend a financial aid event.
- Apply for every scholarship that you may be eligible for.
- Set up a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) profile and PIN at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov.
- Research AP exams if there are subjects for which you did not take the AP course but feel comfortable with (or if the course was not offered at your school).

December - February

- Apply to four or more colleges that interest you. Some may have earlier or later deadlines. (Make copies of each application.)
- Attend a financial aid event if you haven't already done so.
- Apply for scholarships offered by the colleges to which you have applied.
- Apply for financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after January 1. You and your parents will need the previous year's income tax information to complete it.
- Review your Student Aid Report (SAR) for accuracy.

March - May

- Have your final high school transcript sent to the colleges to which you've applied.
- Start looking for a summer job early to ensure that you find the best one for you.



- Make sure your parents are involved. Ask them to help you compare financial aid packages.
- Choose a college and notify in writing those you don't plan to attend.
- Send in any required forms or deposits.
- Note all summer orientation dates for the school you have chosen and plan your trip(s) accordingly.
- Prepare a college budget—you may be living on your own for the first time. Consider things such as laundry, dining halls/ grocery budget, and gas money if you will have your own car.
- Make copies of and turn in all financial aid, health, tax and other forms that your school requests.

Summer

- Get a job to earn money for college.
- Review orientation materials from the college you selected.
- If living on campus, check with the college for a list of what's provided by the school and what the school expects the student to provide.
- Contact your roommate.

With information from [Preparing for College](#), published by the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

