

College planning calendar for juniors

FALL

Start with you: Make lists of your abilities, social/cultural preferences and personal qualities. List things you may want to study and do in college.

Learn about colleges. Look at their Web sites (www.collegeboard.com has links). Talk to friends, family, teachers and recent grads of your school now in college. List college features that interest you.

Resource check: Visit the counseling office and meet the counselors there. Is there a college night for students and families? When will college representatives visit your school? (Put the dates in your calendar.) Examine catalogs and guides.

At school, sign up early to take the PSAT/NMSQT®, which is given in October. If you plan to ask for testing accommodations (because of a disability), be sure your eligibility is approved by the College Board. Check with your school counselor.

Make a file to manage your college search, testing and application data.

If appropriate (for example, if you're interested in drama, music, art, sports, etc.), start to gather material for a portfolio.

With your family, start to learn about financial aid. Read the Department of Education's Funding Your Education (about federal aid programs). Use Getting Financial Aid published by the College Board and the financial aid calculator at www.collegeboard.com to estimate how much aid you might receive.

WINTER

Make a family appointment with your counselor to discuss ways to improve your college-preparation and selection processes.

Sign up to take the SAT® in the spring. Register online or through your school. Fee waivers are available for students with financial need. To prepare, download practice booklets from www.collegeboard.com. You can also take it again next fall.

Begin a search for financial aid sources. National sources include the College Board Scholarship Handbook and electronic sources. Don't overlook local and state aid sources (ask a counselor or check your public library).

Ask a counselor or teacher about taking the SAT Subject Tests™ in the spring. You should take them while course material is still fresh in your mind. You can download "Taking the SAT Subject Tests," which offers test-prep advice, from www.collegeboard.com.

If you're in Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) classes, register for AP Exams, given in May. You can earn college credit for courses not given in the AP Program by taking CLEP® tests at a college test center. See www.collegeboard.com to learn more.

SPRING

Visit some local colleges — large, small, public and private. Get a feel for what works for you. Attend college fairs, too.

Scan local newspapers to see which civic, cultural and service organizations in your area award financial aid to graduating seniors. Start a file.

Develop a list of 15 or 20 colleges that attract you. Request viewbooks and information about financial aid and academic programs that interest you. Visit some colleges over your spring break.

If you are considering military academies or ROTC scholarships, contact your counselor before leaving school for the summer. If you want a four-year ROTC scholarship, you should begin the application process the summer before your senior year.

SUMMER

If you are an athlete planning to continue playing a sport in college, register with the NCAA Eligibility Center (www.ncaaclearinghouse.net).

Find a full-time or part-time job, or participate in a camp or summer college program.

Visit colleges. Take campus tours and, at colleges you're serious about, make appointments to have interviews with admissions counselors.

Create a résumé—a record of your accomplishments, activities and work experiences since you started high school.

Download applications (or request paper copies) from colleges to which you'll apply. Check application dates — large universities may have early dates or rolling admissions.

Source: The College Board.

