

COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR

From researching and visiting colleges to submitting application materials, the college admissions process can be both exciting and overwhelming. Use this checklist to help you and your family keep up with important deadlines and tasks. The key to success is to always plan ahead.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

FALL

- ☐ Begin researching potential majors and careers. Consider your academic strengths, extracurricular involvements you enjoy, and your long-term goals.
 - ➔ Use resources such as the 'Explore Career Possibilities' page on College Board or self-assessments in the George Mason Career Readiness Guide.
- ☐ Explore leadership or growth opportunities in your extracurricular involvements. Consider additional responsibilities or other ways you may contribute meaningfully to your activities.
- ☐ If you plan to play intercollegiate sports at an NCAA college, create a Certification Account with the NCAA Eligibility Center to make official visits to Division I and II schools, or to sign a National Letter of Intent.

WINTER BREAK

- ☐ Begin researching schools that interest you by using online search tools such as College Board, Princeton Review, and Niche.
 - ➔ Filter your searches by geographic location, distance from home, size, type or any other factor to narrow your results.
- ☐ Learn more about schools that interest you by visiting college websites, attending virtual information sessions, or taking virtual campus tours.

FEBRUARY

- ☐ Begin planning your junior schedule with your school counselor. Choose classes that reflect your academic interests and strengths.
 - ➔ Consider taking AP/IB/DE courses to challenge yourself and prepare for college-level coursework.
- ☐ Start considering your summer plans: Are you applying to pre-college summer programs? Getting a part-time job? Completing your volunteer hours? Taking a summer class?

SPRING BREAK

- ☐ Attend visit opportunities, such as guided campus tours and open houses, at schools that interest you.
 - ➔ Consider starting with schools local to you, or near areas your family will be traveling to over break.

SUMMER

- ☐ Continue learning more about schools that interest you through campus visits and by exploring schools' websites.
 - ➔ Look for financial aid and scholarship requirements, academic program information, and admission criteria. Record deadlines and action items for the fall.
- ☐ Record ways in which you contribute meaningfully to your summer involvements, such as adapting to new responsibilities, making suggestions, or accepting a leadership position.
- ☐ Study for the October PSAT.
 - ➔ Use free online resources such as Khan Academy to find practice problems and sample exams.

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JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ Register for the October PSAT through your school counselor.
- ☐ Begin researching majors and careers, and join activities or extracurriculars that interest you.
 - ➔ Use resources such as the 'Explore Career Possibilities' page on College Board or self-assessments in the George Mason Career Readiness Guide.
- ☐ Attend college fairs in your area, as well as college planning workshops and visits from college representatives hosted by your school.

OCTOBER

- ☐ Take the PSAT.
- ☐ Begin researching schools that interest you by visiting college websites, attending information sessions, and requesting admissions materials.

DECEMBER

- ☐ Review your PSAT results with your school counselor.
- ☐ Take a full length, timed practice SAT or ACT test.
 - ➔ Use free online resources such as Khan Academy to find practice problems and sample exams.
- ☐ Research standardized testing requirements for the schools that interest you.
 - ➔ Based on school requirements and your comfort with standardized tests, determine whether you would like to register for spring/summer SAT or ACT exams.

FEBRUARY

- ☐ Begin planning your senior schedule with your school counselor. Choose classes that reflect your academic interests and strengths.
 - ➔ Consider taking AP/IB/DE courses to challenge yourself and prepare for college-level coursework.

SPRING BREAK

- ☐ Attend guided campus tours or open houses at the schools that interest you!

MAY

- ☐ Ask teachers, counselors, employers, or community leaders for letters of recommendation, and notify them that they will receive 'recommender' instructions in the fall as you begin your applications.

SUMMER BREAK

- ☐ Continue to learn about the schools that interest you through campus visits and by exploring schools' websites.
 - ➔ Look for financial aid and scholarship requirements, academic program information, and admission criteria. Record deadlines and action items for the fall.
- ☐ Begin drafting your personal statement or 'the college essay.' Get feedback from friends and family, and continue to revise throughout the summer.

SENIOR YEAR

AUGUST

- ☐ Make a Common Application account and begin filling out your university applications!
 - ➔ The Common Application and most exclusive university applications open on or around August 1.
- ☐ Make a master 'College Application' calendar, noting important dates for college application requirements.

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ Attend college fairs in your area, as well as financial aid workshops and visits from college representatives hosted by your school.
- ☐ Submit your personal statement draft to a trusted editor, such as your English teacher or school's writing center.

OCTOBER

- ☐ Finalize application materials to meet any Early Action or Early Decision deadlines.
 - ➔ Prepare your materials for additional applications, such as Honors College programs or merit-based scholarship consideration.
- ☐ Complete and file your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online at www.fafsa.ed.gov.
 - ➔ If you do not qualify for the FAFSA, complete the Virginia Alternative State Aid (VASA) Application.
 - ➔ Note that a FAFSA or VASA is required to be reviewed for need-based aid eligibility.
- ☐ Submit your applications prior to Early Action or Early Decision deadlines.
 - ➔ Ensure that your high school counselor and recommenders have sent their respective documents, such as your high school transcript and letters of recommendation, to your requested schools.

NOVEMBER

- ☐ Research external scholarship opportunities, such as those on schools' financial aid websites.
 - ➔ Ask your high school counselor about local scholarship opportunities for graduating seniors.
- ☐ Complete any additional scholarship and financial aid forms by the appropriate deadlines.

DECEMBER - JANUARY

- ☐ Finalize materials and submit your applications prior to Regular Decision deadlines.
 - ➔ Ensure that your high school counselor and recommenders have sent their respective documents, such as your high school transcript and letters of recommendation, to your requested schools.

FEBRUARY

- ☐ Supply your mid-year transcripts, letters of continued interest, or any other supporting documents as requested by schools' admission offices.

APRIL

- ☐ Compared all received financial aid award packages.
 - ➔ Don't be afraid to reach out to your admissions representative to discuss your award.
- ☐ Visit your top choice schools to which you have been accepted to attend admitted student events, shadow a class, or take a campus tour.
- ☐ Make a final decision and submit your enrollment deposit by May 1st, National Decision Day.
 - ➔ Be sure to accept your offered financial aid package.
 - ➔ Notify the schools you will not be attending.

MAY

- ☐ Have official AP/IB scores sent to your college.
- ☐ Request that your final high school transcript be sent to your college.