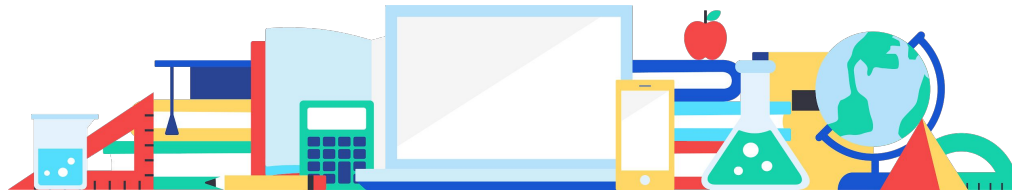




College Prep

Updated July 2024



In this training



We'll review

Topics covered in this training

- Your role
- Helping 9th & 10th grade students prepare for college
- Helping 11th grade students prepare for college
- Helping 12th grade students prepare (and apply) for college

Your role



Your Role

Awareness and Action

- **Awareness:** Help students understand what steps they should be taking in order to prepare for college
- **Action:** Help students research and take crucial steps towards becoming college ready
- **Personalize** these steps for each student based on their interests and unique context
 - ◆ If Mark is interested in engineering help him research engineering summer programs that are free for low-income students
 - ◆ If Bailey lives in a rural area and doesn't want to leave home for an internship help her research virtual internships
 - ◆ If Asha's school doesn't offer coding classes but she wants to go into computer science help her research free coding programs

Checklists

Don't worry-you don't have to memorize this guide

- [College Planning: 9-11th Grade Guide](#)
- [College Planning: 12th Grade Timeline Checklist](#)

Ninth & Tenth Grade



Tips for 9th and 10th grade students

Academics

- Admissions counselors review students' performance starting in 9th grade, Grades matter
- Students should challenge themselves academically (e.g. Honors, APs, IB, etc.), as curriculum difficulty is a key factor for an applicant
- Explore potential majors and careers through electives, magnet programs, and on the job training opportunities
- Students should meet with their school counselor about their aspirations and outline a plan of action

Tips for 9th and 10th grade students

Extracurriculars

- Students should join 2-5 extra academic activities, join clubs, and get involved in their community through volunteering. They should pick something they are likely to stick with throughout high school
- Demonstrate leadership and excellence in those activities
- Explore career or major options through activities

Summer activities for 9th and 10th grade students

Encourage 9th and 10th grade students to partake in summer enrichment activities

- Part-time job
- Volunteering at local clinic, hospital, or other non-profit
- Intern at a program or company of interest
- Attend a college's summer program open to high school students (scholarships are often available)
- Take a college-level or online class

Tips for 9th and 10th grade students

Explore Majors and Careers

- Explore career or major options through volunteer activities,
- extracurricular activities and elective courses
- Use career inventory or major [search engines](#) to explore careers of interest
 - ◆ Big Future: bigfuture.collegeboard.org
 - ◆ ACT Aspire: discoveractaspire.org
 - ◆ Mapping Your Future: Mappingyourfuture.org
 - ◆ Occupational Outlook Handbook: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>
 - ◆ [BigFuture Career Quiz](#)
 - ◆ [BigFuture Career Search](#)
 - ◆ [BigFuture College Quiz](#)
 - ◆ [BigFuture College Search](#)

Tips for 11th grade students

Continue

- Students should continue with challenging courses and maintain good grades
- Students should continue to get involved inside and outside of school. Taking leadership positions is important
- Students should be proactive and stay in contact with their school counselor. They'll need to provide the student recommendations for many colleges

Tips for 11th grade students

Researching College Options

- Students should continue researching colleges through their visits, attending college fairs, etc
 - ◆ Be mindful of the costs associated with visiting colleges and that college representatives may not visit our students' schools encourage them to use online resources including <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search>

Students take the PSAT in 11th grade

Testing

- The PSAT taken in 11th grade is used for National Merit Scholarship consideration
- The PSAT is only available in October
- The PSAT currently costs \$17 per student, however, be sure to note that some schools might cover the cost, or a student should ask about a fee waiver
- After getting their PSAT score, students should review their score reports to understand their strengths and weaknesses, as it is important students work on any weaknesses they find
 - ◆ Linking score reports to the Khan Academy can help with future test prep

Students take the SAT and ACT at the end of 11th grade

Important reminders

- Both the SAT and the ACT are accepted by almost every college and university, however, many schools have continued to operate under a test-optional policy since COVID
- Students should decide for themselves whether to take the SAT or ACT (or both) based on skills, knowledge, and college requirements
- Students should take the SAT/ACT toward the end of 11th grade at the latest, so the student has enough time to study and take practice exams over the summer
- While both tests cost money, both the [College Board](#) and [ACT](#) offer fee waivers based on students' free and reduced lunch status

SAT Summary

The SAT test

- **Overview:** The SAT is a multiple-choice, pencil-and-paper test created and administered by the [College Board](#). The purpose of the SAT is to measure a high school student's readiness for college and provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants.
- **Schedule:** The SAT is offered almost every month but if your student is a senior they need to take the [SAT](#) at least 2 months before the college application deadline to allow for scoring and the time it takes to send scores to schools
- **Content:** The SAT has two sub-sections: Reading & Writing, Math
- **Scores:** In 2019, the average SAT score was 1050 (out of 1600). Any score above that would be above average and perfectly acceptable for many colleges. A score of 1350 would put students in the top 10% of test takers and help make their application competitive at more selective schools.
- **Practice:** Khan Academy offers free College Board aligned materials and the College Board offers free [practice exams](#). Students should take at least 3 full, timed practice tests and use UPchieve to review wrong answers.

ACT Summary

The ACT test

- **Overview:** The [ACT](#) is an entrance exam used by most colleges and universities to make admissions decisions
- **Schedule:** The ACT is offered almost every month but if your student is a senior they need to take the ACT at least 2 months before the college application deadline to allow for scoring and the time it takes to send scores to schools
- **Content:** The ACT has four sub-sections: English, Math, Reading, Science
- **Scores:** The average ACT score was 20 (out of 36). Any score above that would be above average and perfectly acceptable for many colleges. A score of 28 would put students in the top 12% of test takers and help make their application competitive at more selective schools.
- **Practice:** [Kaplan offers free ACT aligned course](#) for students who are eligible for the ACT fee waiver. Students should take at least 3 full, timed practice tests and use UPchieve to review wrong answers.

Questions students should ask regarding the SAT and ACT

Scores

- Do the colleges they are considering require scores from all test dates or just the highest composite score?
- Even if the colleges they are considering are “test-optional,” should they still take the SAT/ACT for additional application and scholarship consideration?
- How should I study? (Hint: Use UPchieve!)
 - ◆ Free resources:
 - [Official SAT free test prep](#)
 - [ACT free test prep](#)

What students should do before leaving 11th grade for the summer

Recommendations

- Students should secure at least one 11th grade teacher to serve as “recommender” for their college application
- Colleges prefer teachers be from 10th or 11th grade and be from a core subject (math, science, english, history, and sometimes foreign language will count)
- Identify any [“fly in” programs](#) (where colleges pay for students to come visit) they would like to apply to and ask for recommendations in advance

What students should do the summer between 11th and 12th grade

Encourage students to visit different college campuses and start planning ahead

- Students should continue or start compiling a list of colleges, as well as touring campuses if possible, to get a feel of what different college campuses are like
- Some colleges have funds that make visits possible for low-income students called “fly-ins.” Fly-ins usually take place in the fall, but applications are due in the summer
- The summer after 11th grade is the most important one. Students should plan ahead for a summer doing volunteering, working, preparing applications, and making memories with friends and family

Twelfth Grade



Tips for 12th grade students

Important note

- It is important that students acknowledge diving into a 4-year college is not for everyone and there are other options. However, most of our UPchieve students should think about pursuing 4-year colleges
- Students should select college based on academic, financial and socio-emotional fit factors
- For more information on how to advise students to build their college list take our training

Tips for 12th grade students

Academically

- Colleges often require students to send in grades from their first semester of senior year as part of their application. Remind the student that all acceptances are conditional, and colleges will require a final high school transcript
- Your student should continue to challenge themselves; however, they should be reasonable with their schedules. For example, just because they *can* take every advanced course available doesn't mean they *should*

Tips for 12th grade students

School Counselor

- 12th grade students should meet with their school counselor at the beginning of the year to:
 - ◆ Ensure they are on track to graduate high school
 - ◆ Discuss post-graduation plans
 - ◆ Discuss fee waivers for SAT/ACT and college applications, as well as waivers for College Board's CSS profile which is needed by some colleges for financial aid
 - ◆ Learn the procedure to get a counselor's recommendation for college applications

Tips for 12th grade students

Letters of recommendation

- If they have not already, students should ask for letters of recommendation as soon as the school year begins. They should check from whom the particular colleges want letters
- Students may request letters without knowing to which specific schools they are applying, as they can follow-up later
- Students should give recommenders enough time and information about themselves for their letters, preferably 3-4 weeks

Tips for 12th grade students

Finalize College List

- Students should carefully research the schools they are interested in.
- Students should avoid picking colleges solely on rankings
- Encourage students to pick schools based on academic, financial, and socio-emotional fit
 - ◆ A college might be perfect academically, but the campus environment might not be the right fit for the student
- The more knowledge of a college the better, as it allows the student to craft a better essay. Ask your student to answer, “Why *this* college?”

Tips for 12th grade students

Get organized and meet deadlines

- Students should keep a college tracker, complete with names of colleges, application requirements, and deadlines
- Students should double check which application each college accepts (Common, Coalition, or the college's own application)
- Students should remind recommenders to submit their letters before the deadline
- Deadlines for Early Decision (binding) and Early Action (non-binding) are usually at the end of October or beginning of November
- The deadline to decide about which college to attend is typically May 1

A note about deadlines

ED/EA/Rolling/Regular Decision

- Students should keep a college tracker, complete with names of colleges, application requirements, and deadlines
- There are a variety of deadline types that we go into more detail about in the college application section
 - ◆ Early Decision: Binding to that college if accepted
 - ◆ Early Action: Student applies early and hears back early, but is not bound to attend if accepted
 - ◆ Regular Decision: Normally in Nov-January
 - ◆ Rolling Admissions: No strict deadline but often there is a priority/scholarship deadline

Tips for 12th grade students

Scholarships & Financial Aid Applications

- Students should complete FAFSA
- Students may need to complete CSS profile
- Students may need to complete state-specific financial aid forms
- Students may need to complete specific school forms
- Apply for scholarships