

# Freshman Year

Freshman year is an important year in a student's college-preparation journey. Learn how a student can have a well-rounded experience in high school and how a parent can support his or her child.

## Students To Do:

- ❑ Take challenging classes in core academic subjects. Most colleges require four years of English, at least three years of social studies (history, civics, geography, economics, etc.), three years of mathematics, and three years of science. Many colleges require two years of a foreign language. Round out your course load with classes in computer science and the arts.
- ❑ Establish a strong Grade Point Average (GPA)
- ❑ Take the PreACT
- ❑ Work with one of your parents to estimate your financial aid using [FAFSA4caster](#) and be sure to save for college.
- ❑ Get involved in school activities: Sports, Clubs, Band, Choir, the Fall Play and Spring Musical
- ❑ Participate in school or community-based activities you are interested in or ones where you will have opportunities to explore career interests. Consider working, volunteering, and/or participating in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, and camps with specialty focuses such as music, arts, or science. Remember quality, not quantity, counts.
- ❑ Ask your guidance counselor or teachers what [Advanced Placement](#) or Honors courses are available, whether you are eligible, and how to enroll in them.
- ❑ Use the U.S. Department of Labor's [career search tool](#) to research career options.
- ❑ Explore Naviance Student Program Goal Setting and Supermatch Inventory (Completed with the College Counselor as a class assignment).
- ❑ Create an account on Raiseme.com (completed with the College Counselor as a class assignment).
- ❑ Start a list of your awards, honors, paid and volunteer work, and extracurricular activities; update it throughout high school.

## To Explore:

- Check out *KnowHow2Go: The Four Steps to College*, which suggests some actions you can take as you start thinking about education beyond high school.
- Learn about managing your money.
- Explore reasons to consider college and ways you can get help preparing.

## Parents To Do:

- Talk to your child about college plans as if he or she will definitely go to college.
- Keep an eye on your child's study habits and grades—stay involved.
- Encourage your child to take Advanced Placement or other challenging classes.
- Add to your child's college savings account regularly; make sure you are fully aware of the provisions of the account.

## To Explore:

- Explore resources that help parents plan and pay for college.
- Read "Parent Power" to access ideas for remaining involved in your child's progress.

# Sophomore Year

A sophomore student can do many things to stay on the right track toward college. Parents can do a lot to help. Take a look at these tips for thinking about the future, managing time, taking standardized tests, and more.

## Students To Do:

- Meet with your school counselor or mentor to discuss colleges and their entrance requirements.
- Take Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).
- Plan to use your summer wisely by working, volunteering, or enrolling in a summer course (away or at a local college).
- Go to career information events for a more detailed look at career options.
- Research majors that might be a good fit with your interests and goals based on your results from the U.S. Department of Labor's career search.
- Complete the Career Cluster Finder and Career Interest Inventory on Naviance Student (completed with the College Counselor as a class assignment)

## To Explore:

- Learn the differences between grants, loans, work-study, and scholarships.

## Parents To Do:

- Find out whether your child's school has college nights or financial aid nights. Plan to attend those events with your child.
- Help your child develop independence by encouraging him or her to take responsibility for balancing homework with any other activities or a part-time job.

## To Explore:

- Learn about the standardized tests your child will be taking during 10th through 12th grades.
- Get a brief overview of financial aid from *Federal Student Aid at a Glance*.

# Junior Year

For both students and parents, it's crucial to stay on top of college preparation during junior year and the following summer. Here's what you should be doing—including looking into careers, searching for scholarships, and keeping the savings account on track.

## Students To Do:

### All Year:

- Explore careers and their earning potential with the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* search tool. Or, for a fun interactive tool, [try this career search](#).
- [Learn about choosing a college](#) and find a link to our free college search tool.
- Attend college fairs and college-preparation presentations hosted by college representatives.
- Visit colleges you are interested in applying to.

### Fall:

- Take the [PSAT/NMSQT](#). You must take this in 11th grade to qualify for scholarships and programs associated with the National Merit Scholarship Program.
- Use the Naviance College Search Supermatch Feature (completed with the College Counselor as a class assignment).

### Spring:

- Register for and take admission exams. Many colleges require the SAT, the SAT Subject Tests, and the ACT. Check with the colleges you are interested in to see what tests they require.
- Register for the ACT Preparation Class offered at Montini Catholic.
- [Use a free scholarship search](#) to find scholarships for which you might want to apply. Some deadlines fall as early as the summer between 11th and 12th grades, so be prepared to submit applications soon.

- ❑ ACT and Naviance College Overview Presentation (completed with the College Counselor as a class assignment).
- ❑ College Counselor/Student/Parent 30 minute meeting (to be scheduled during the months of March-May).

#### Summer Before 12th Grade:

- ❑ Create a username and password called a FSA ID that you'll use to confirm your identity when accessing your government financial aid information and electronically signing your federal student aid documents. Learn about the FSA ID, and create yours. **Note: You must create your own FSA ID; if your parent creates it for you, this will cause confusion later and will slow down the financial aid application process.** (You can watch a video about creating your FSA ID below.)
- ❑ Narrow down the list of colleges you are considering attending. If you are able, visit these schools.
- ❑ Contact colleges to request information and applications for admission including financial aid, admission requirements, and deadlines.
- ❑ Decide whether you are going to apply for admission under a particular college's early decision, early action, or regular decision program. Be sure to learn about the program deadlines and requirements.
- ❑ Use the FAFSA4caster financial aid estimator, and compare the results to the actual costs of colleges to which you will apply. To supplement any aid FAFSA4caster estimates you might receive, be sure to apply for scholarships. Your goal is to minimize the amount of loans you borrow so you have less to pay back later.
- ❑ Sign up on college scholarship search engines like Fastweb.com and the U.S. Department of Labor's FREE scholarship search tool

#### To Explore:

- ❑ Find out what government financial aid you can apply for, and how, in Federal Student Aid at a Glance.
- ❑ Learn how to avoid scholarship scams and identity theft as you look for financial aid and then attend college.

# Senior Year

Senior year is the time to apply for admission to college and to apply for federal student aid by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA<sup>®</sup>) form. Here's what students and parents should be doing throughout the year to stay on track at this busy time—including learning how to manage federal student aid.

## Students To Do:

### All Year

- Work hard all the way to graduation—second-semester grades can affect scholarship eligibility.
- Stay involved in school activities and seek leadership roles if possible.

### Fall

- Know the schools you will be applying to by September 1st.
- You can request your official transcripts to be sent to your colleges or universities after Labor Day.
- As soon as possible after its October 1st release, complete and submit your FAFSA<sup>®</sup> form at [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov), along with any other financial aid applications your chosen school(s) may require. Submit your FAFSA form by the earliest financial aid deadline of the schools to which you are applying, usually early February.
- Please review what schools require that you complete the CSS Profile for their Financial Aid Requirement. Go to <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/> to see if you need to complete the CSS Profile.
- Link your Common App to Naviance (to be discussed with the College Counselor during homeroom)
- Use Naviance to request your transcripts and teacher/counselor letters of recommendations (to be discussed with the College Counselor during homeroom)

- ❑ After you submit the FAFSA form, you should receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) within three days to three weeks. This document lists your answers to the questions on your FAFSA form and gives you some basic information about your aid eligibility. Quickly make any necessary corrections and submit them to the FAFSA processor.
- ❑ If you haven't done so already, register for and take the standardized tests required for college admission. Check with the colleges you are interested in to see what tests they require.
- ❑ Apply to the colleges you have chosen. Prepare your application carefully. Follow the instructions, and **PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO DEADLINES!**
- ❑ Well before your college application deadlines, ask your counselor and teachers to submit the required documents (e.g., transcripts, letters of recommendation) to the colleges to which you're applying.
- ❑ Complete any scholarship applications.

## Spring

- ❑ Visit colleges that have invited you to enroll.
- ❑ Review your college acceptances and compare their financial aid offers.
- ❑ Contact a school's financial aid office if you have questions about the aid being offered you. In fact, getting to know your financial aid staff early is a good idea no matter what—they can tell you about deadlines, other aid for which you might wish to apply, and important paperwork you might need to submit.
- ❑ When you decide which school you want to attend, notify the school of your commitment and submit any required financial deposits. Please also notify colleges you will not be attending. Many schools require this notification and deposit by May 1st.
- ❑ Mrs. Lamar, our Registrar, will send you an email in the spring and you must respond to confirm what college you will be attending so she can send that institution your final transcript.

## To Explore:

- ❑ Understand the FAFSA process better by watching the videos in the “FAFSA: Apply for Aid” playlist at [YouTube.com/FederalStudentAid](https://www.youtube.com/FederalStudentAid).
- ❑ Follow or like the office of Federal Student Aid at [Twitter.com/FAFSA](https://twitter.com/FAFSA) and [Facebook.com/FederalStudentAid](https://www.facebook.com/FederalStudentAid) to get regular financial aid tips.
- ❑ Make informed decisions about student loans with these resources:
  - ❑ [Federal Versus Private Loans](#)
  - ❑ [\*Federal Student Loans: Basics for Students\*](#)

# Scholarships

## How do I find scholarships?

You can learn about scholarships in several ways, including contacting the financial aid office at the school you plan to attend and checking in a public library or online. But be careful. Make sure scholarship information and offers you receive are legitimate; you

don't have to pay to find scholarships or other financial aid. Read information on how to avoid scams.

Try these free sources of information about scholarships:

- the financial aid office at a college or career school
- sign up at the Scholarship Search tool [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
- a high school counselor
- the U.S. Department of Labor's [FREE scholarship search tool](#)
- federal agencies
- your state grant agency
- your library's reference section
- foundations, religious or community organizations, local businesses, or civic groups
- organizations (including professional associations) related to your field of interest
- ethnicity-based organizations
- your employer or your parents' employers