

To Do's:

The really great thing about being a freshman is all of your choices are in front of you;

Freshman Year - Beginning to End:

the choices you have and the decisions you make can get you to where you hope to be.

- Meet with John in Guidance Counseling to go over your 4-year course schedule. Be sure to keep him updated throughout high school as you make decisions about the colleges and majors you're thinking about.
- Frequently check in with counselors, advisors, and teachers to stay on top of any special programs or extracurricular activities available.
- Make a list of your academic and personal goals. Revisit and revise your list as you become more aware of your specific plans.
- Get to know the people who can help you most: advisors, teachers, counselors, and/or administrators. At some point you may need recommendations for summer programs, scholarships, and college applications (even future job applications!) Watered-down, generalized recommendations from individuals who hardly know you and aren't able to provide personal insight don't help.
- Check out the web sites of your 'dream' colleges, 'ideal' majors, and "perfect" jobs. What's it going to take to get admitted, to get hired? Are you taking the right courses in high school? How many years of math, language arts, science, and foreign language will you need?
- Register at the college web service sites: www.review.com, www.students.gov, www.collegeispossible.org, www.collegegold.com, www.collegefunds.net, www.brokescholar.com, www.knowhow2go.org. Along with access to information on the site, you will be put on mailing lists for other important college material.
- Read newspapers, bulletin boards, even junk mail! Keep your eyes open for cool activities or opportunities such as summer programs, camps, academic or sports contests, jobs, or volunteering.
- Create a file – even a milk crate and some files – it doesn't have to be pretty or expensive. Keep all your important papers, grades, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, names/phone numbers of people you come into contact with who you will want to remember, notes to yourself...whatever in one place where you can always find them.
- Start a Portfolio so you can keep track of your activities, volunteer work, jobs, and contact people. Write down the experiences you have, the good and the bad, what you liked and didn't like. This will gradually start to reveal some real important insight to help you discover your interests, passions, desires, etc.
- Find some fun and interesting ways you can volunteer. It's best if you can find a couple you can commit to throughout high school.
- Start learning about, and doing, scholarship searches. It is definitely not too early. Although there are tons of them, a good place to start is: www.fastweb.com
- Begin the conversation with your parents: how much money, if any, do they think they will have available towards your college education. Don't be discouraged if it isn't a lot...this isn't a problem if you plan ahead.

A few pearls of wisdom that will make the road less bumpy along the way:

- 📍 Colleges, volunteer opportunities, scholarships committees, employers WILL look at your Facebook and My Space pages.
- 📍 Every adult may have some influence regarding your success some day. A complete stranger who sees you do something kind for someone may end up being the person you interview with for the job you really want...who knows? Of course the opposite can be true too!

To Do's:

Sophomore Year - Beginning to End:

You may not have a clue yet, exactly what you will be doing after high school, hardly anybody in 10th grade is absolutely sure. In the mean time take challenging courses, get good grades, do everything you can to be the best candidate you can be.

The doors will stay open and you'll end up with a lot more options...then you can figure it out.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sign up for the PSAT. This is the practice round...the real one happens for juniors and seniors. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Take the Plan Assessment and go over the results. You'll find some very revealing information you may not have even known about yourself: what you're good at, different careers you may have the skills and personality to do, college majors that would be a good fit for you, and so on. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Focus on your GPA. Take the most challenging courses, there is no such thing as too much math, science, foreign language, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Narrow down your extracurricular activities to two or three that you'll do throughout high school, can get good at, and may pursue in college. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Start a list of colleges that interest you. Be sure to go to the college fairs and visit colleges on their Preview Days. Any exposure to the admissions people will help you develop the exploration and application 'language'. Go on to college web sites and take their virtual tours...give the colleges a "test drive". |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Take the personality / interest inventory through AKCIS, ASVAB, College Board for some very valuable help determining colleges and majors. They're fun to do, they're free, and they provide a wealth of information. If you still want more insight, or need help figuring out what to do with the feedback, come and see me in the office. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Plan your summer ahead of time. Find programs and camps to attend, think about what volunteer opportunities you may want to do, don't wait until summer is here. All the great positions will be filled. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Continue the scholarship search. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Review for the PSAT, SAT, and ACT. You get to take them more than once if you want / need to. Save your money, there is a boat load of free help material on their web sites. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Consistently be updating your records of activities, volunteer work, programs, classes, and traveling. File information you receive and gather about scholarships, colleges, tests, and programs. Remember the milk crate...you should be getting close to needing another soon. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Review and revise your goals. You're older, more aware, you've explored personality and interest inventories, start taking a real close look at who you are. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Think careers. Research, investigate, and interview people about their jobs. Consider getting into a mentorship. |

More words to ponder:

- Ⓢ If you don't take the time to do something right the first time where will you find the time to get it right the second, third, maybe forth time?
- Ⓢ The key to success in school isn't 'getting organized'...It's staying organized.

To Do's:

Junior Year - Beginning to End:

The summer before

- Make arrangements to visit the colleges on your short list. They often have 'Campus Visit Weekends' with planned tours run by students and admissions folks who would love to show you around their campus. There can't be enough said about the value of having admissions folks at a school meet you personally to be able to put a face with a name.
- Spend lots of time researching the colleges on your list of potential schools. Go to the web sites, bookmark interesting ones, and request information packets from their admissions offices
- Don't push the 'milk crate' under the bed. Any number of things you may do during the summer could add to your overall life experience and be worth including in your future applications. File everything away...you never know what may be helpful some day.

Throughout the year

- Pay attention to, concentrate on, and don't forget about the importance of your GPA. Take the most challenging classes possible and get the absolute best grades you can.
- Intensify your scholarship search. Keep track of specific deadlines and requirements, they do and there won't be any excuses for late applications.
- Attend career days, college fairs, and financial aid workshops. Unless you, or your parents, are independently wealthy or you have a close relative with a building named after him at the college you want to attend, these resources are essential.

Fall

- Meet with your guidance counselor early in the year and frequently after that. Be sure the classes you're taking are on the right track for the colleges and majors you're setting your sights on.
- Register for and take the PSAT. *This is the year it counts towards the National Merit Scholarship.*
- Talk to your coach if you want to play for a college team or apply for an athletic scholarship; see your counselor for an NCAA clearinghouse form if you want to play sports in college.
- Schedule dates to take the SAT and / or ACT tests. It's important to check with the colleges to see if they want you to take one or the other (never both and frequently neither will be required)
- Research financial aid programs now, before, the financial 'base' (senior) year begins
- Contact the US military academies NOW if you want to apply. Each academy has its own summer program that would be very helpful for you to take part in: <http://www.defencelink.mil/faq/pis/20.html>
- Look in to summer workshops and college courses for high school students. There are a number of them available and the college web sites will have descriptions and information listed.

There is no 'magic morning' when you wake up and KNOW what you want to do for the rest of your life.

You have to get involved...pay attention to what interests you...What you want is a 'rational feeling' based on the research, sound advise, and wisdom.

This is how you can get 'what you really want' and know the best way to get there.

Winter

- Review your PSAT results with your guidance counselor. The results will show you the areas you need to put more energy in to.
- Register for the SAT, ACT, and SAT II (subject) tests if the colleges you're considering require them. If you're applying for Early Decision, and you want to take them a second time, be sure to take the ACT and ACT again in June
- Decide what camps, programs, volunteer work, and classes you want to attend or take this summer.

Spring

- If the colleges or scholarships you're applying for require them, compile writing samples, collect information about yourself, and work on audition tapes
- Consider taking a summer class. You can start earning college credit by taking 'dual credit courses' or classes through APU or UAA.
- Enroll in AP classes and take AP exams for the AP classes you've completed.
- Look for a summer job. Try to get one related to a major you plan on pursuing. Colleges are impressed with students who have put thought into their efforts.

Summer

- Request applications for scholarships.
- Start to work on essays for college applications and scholarships.
- Zero in on those teachers, coaches, employers, individuals who know you well and will write 'glowing' letters of reference.
- Work on your resume.
- Start your application process if you're applying for Early Decision or Early Action.

Remember:

- Ⓢ College admissions folks rely heavily on your junior year classes and GPA. They want to see you taking more challenging courses – not easier ones. They want to see grades rising – not falling.
- Ⓢ Every extra constructive, productive thing you can do this year will make your life a lot easier as a senior and the application process more fruitful beyond then.

To Do's:

Senior Year - Beginning to End:

There is no 'magic morning' when you wake up and KNOW what you want to do for the rest of your life.

You have to get involved...pay attention to what interests you...What you want is a 'rational feeling' based on the research, sound advise, and wisdom.

This is how you can get 'what you really want' and know the best way to get there.

The summer before

Stay focused on the goal. This is valuable time and needs to be used wisely. Volunteer, do something that challenges you, take a summer school course, participate in a summer program abroad...and as always, keep track of everything you do (to be filed in the milk crate).

Fall:

Create your Master Plan with all the important dates and deadlines. Include college applications, test registration dates and test dates, scholarship applications, housing, and financial deadlines.

Keep looking for scholarships. There will probably still be a lot of them to pursue & it's going to be in your best interest to keep applying for them.

This is your last chance to take the SAT and/or ACT to have the scores included on upcoming applications.

Request college applications, financial aid and housing applications.

Make sure your high school transcripts and records are correct and up-to-date.

Review your college plans and financial aid preparations with your counselor.

Attend college fairs and financial aid workshops.

Continue to visit colleges if possible. If you are even considering UAA or UAF, definitely go to their college visit days when they hold them.

Ask for letters of recommendation from your teachers. There is a lot of good information about the best way to do this, see John Stahl if you have any questions

Keep working on essays for college applications and scholarships. You need to have a solid foundation done and be very close to the final draft about now.

Update, update, update, your resume and portfolio.

Apply for 'Early Decision' or 'Early Action' if you are thinking that these are applicable to you.

Send in your college applications. They need to be in the mail ASAP.

Winter

- Gather your tax information for the financial aid applications. Remember, your parents, guardians, need to get theirs in order as well.
- Register with FAFSA to get your pin number. This is another thing your parents need to do. Go to the fafsa.ed.gov website for more information.
- Fill out financial aid forms for your scholarships.
- Have your mid-year grades sent to colleges you have applied to.

Spring

- Decide on a college and notify the admissions office by May 1st of your decision. Notify other colleges of your decision that you will not be attending their school.
- Determine your financial needs to create your college budget. Look closely to reconfirm the sources of the money you need to maintain this budget.
- Determine if you are going to need a student loan and research the ones available based on your level of need.
- See your doctor for a physical and any necessary vaccinations. Colleges, especially if abroad or if you're planning on playing sports, will probably require them.
- Complete your housing and meal applications.
- Take your Advanced Placement Exams.
- Have your final transcripts sent to your college
- Expect to get your Financial Aid Packet back from college. This will give you more information regarding how much you will need to contribute and if you need to continue to negotiate a dollar amount with the college.

Summer

- Notify the college of any additional scholarships you receive. These dollar amounts will come off the amount the college is 'discounting' your tuition.
- Apply for a summer job, If your financial aid packet includes work study, you may be responsible for finding the job at the college. The 'best' jobs go first so get in there early and secure one you would enjoy doing.
- Review the classes you know you will be taking at college, get the books ahead of time, start reading assignments you will have in those classes.
- Take a deep breath. You have made it and are now officially a college student. Order an IKEA catalog, pack for college...congratulations.

More things to think about:

- Ⓢ Deadlines, deadlines, deadlines...don't let a technicality trip you up. This is serious; colleges don't bend the rules because you're a day late with something.
- Ⓢ 'Early Admission': it's binding, you can't compare financial aid packets between the school that accepts you and others that you still like, you have to commit (and to just one school, they will compare lists).
- Ⓢ Don't get discouraged if your 'waitlisted' and don't give up...let the school know you want in. Send more recommendation letters, call them, see if you can get another interview.