

College Prep & Scholarship Checklist

Every Year

- Apply for scholarships EVERY YEAR:**
As a high school student, you can apply for scholarships starting freshman year. So start then and continue applying every year. It will increase your chances of getting one, and it's as simple as typing on the search bar, "scholarships for Freshmen/Sophomores/Juniors/Seniors."
- Ask for a recommendation letter EVERY YEAR:**
Every school year, ask for a letter of recommendation from a teacher, counselor, coach, employer, etc. That way, you will have one from freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years. It'll make it easier for you to paint a picture of your success, progress, development, and growth from freshman to senior year.

9th grade – Freshman Year

- **Start a notebook with all your activities:**
It's hard to remember everything you did throughout high school. Start writing down all your activities, leadership roles, and achievements for handy access when you apply for scholarships.

- **Begin community service hours:**
Engage in community service early on. It does more than make you look good on scholarship applications. It shows how you made a difference during your time in high school. Plus, volunteering can be rewarding and help you gain confidence about your ability to complete your educational and career goals in the long run.

- **Get involved in extracurriculars:**
Extracurricular activities will help you stand out come application time because you will be exposed to the values and qualities scholarship reviewers look for.

- **Start preparing for SAT and/or ACT state exams:**
These tests can lead to a scholarship. They're not for everyone, and you might not need them. But they can strengthen your case for a scholarship, regardless. Start looking into them, and if they're for you, start preparing.

10th grade – Sophomore Year

- Meet regularly with school counselors:**
Counselors are very important during this process. They can help identify the best scholarships and future career paths according to your educational and career goals. Aim to have a good relationship with them and reach out for help every step of the way.

- Increase class rigor:**
If you have the opportunity to take advanced classes, take them, you'll be better prepared for what's coming. Plus, it'll help you stand out over others who may have a better GPA but aren't taking AP classes. Not to mention dual enrollment can also serve as credit. It's a double win! Oh, and it can save you money in the future! Triple win!

- Plan what you'd like to do after high school:**
What's best for YOU? A 4-year college or university? A 2-year community college? A trade program? There are many options out there. Try to find what suits you best.

- Take on leadership roles:**
Whether it's a job, community service, tutoring, mentoring or joining the student government, take advantage of these opportunities during your high school years. You'll learn a lot about leadership and yourself, and that is another quality scholarship reviewers notice.

11th grade – Junior Year

Decide if standardized tests are for you:

At this point, you will probably have a better sense of what you'd like to do. Decide whether tests like the PSAT, SAT, ACT, AP, and others are necessary for YOUR path. Today, many programs have a test-optional admission process.

Create a resume:

Some scholarships request resumes, as they let scholarship reviewers know about your qualifications. A good resume can also let you differentiate yourself from a sea of applicants. Time to start working on it.

Organize your college options:

Create a spreadsheet with deadlines for every college you want to apply to. Some colleges open applications during the summer and have extra benefits for applying early. Don't miss a deadline because you didn't realize it was coming up!

Try interning or job shadowing:

Interning and job shadowing will help you when looking for a scholarship or admission into a specialized program, such as medical school. They are a great opportunity to network with professionals, sharpen your skills, and even let you know if it's something you'd like to pursue.

12th grade – Senior Year

- Submit your FAFSA® on October 1st:**
And so, the final year begins. Time to submit your FAFSA® application and see if you qualify for a grant. Do it early.

- Share your plans with your supporters:**
Whatever support system you have, hold on to it, as it is key to your emotional and psychological development. It will help boost your self-esteem and confidence during your journey.

- Submit applications before deadlines:**
Deadlines are one of the most important requirements of scholarships and college applications. If you don't meet the deadline, you won't qualify. Simple as that.

- Avoid senioritis:**
Keep the momentum going during your final year in high school and avoid any decline in motivation or performance. It's the final stretch!

Good Luck!