



Plan. Act. Learn. Go.

Applying to College Starts Now



Are you ready for college?

Yes, college! Most jobs, not just the best jobs, will require some education after high school.

This guide helps you plan for and apply to college. Learn what to do, when to do it and where you can find help.

**It's your future. You can make it happen.
Starting now. Here's how.**



KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

Getting ready for college is a process — one that starts as soon as you enter high school. It has many steps and many deadlines. The good news: There are resources to help you stay organized. Talk to your college advisor, and use the resources below to get information and to identify test dates and other important deadlines. **Make your plans, register** for tests and events, and then **mark your calendar** so you'll be in the right place at the right time.

Test dates and registration deadlines

Resources for test dates and registration deadlines:

- **Regents** exams are offered in January and June.
<http://usny.nysed.gov/parents/regexams.html>
- **SAT** exams are offered each month from October through January as well as in March, May and June.
www.collegeboard.com/testing
- **ACT** exams are offered in September, October, December, February, April and June.
www.actstudent.org/regist/currentdates.html
- **PSAT** exams are offered once a year in October.
www.collegeboard.com/testing
- **AP** and **CLEP** exams:
www.collegeboard.com/testing
- **TOEFL**: www.ets.org

Low-cost test preparation, tutoring, youth employment and more

- SAT, PSAT, AP, CLEP practice questions:
www.collegeboard.com/testing
- SEEK/College Discovery. To apply, complete the Special Programs section of the CUNY application
- Searchable profiles of college access programs to prepare, plan and pay for college:
www.collegeaccess.org/accessprogramdirectory
- Employment, volunteer and internship opportunities:
www.newvisions.org/collegebound/weblinks.asp

MAKE SENSE OF THE ALPHABET SOUP

Information about applying to college — and applying for financial aid — can seem like it's written in a foreign language. See page 8 for a glossary that explains the acronyms, initials and terms.

Financial aid

- Financial aid section of the full *Citi College Planning Guide*: www.newvisions.org/collegeguide2007.asp
- Financial aid and college workshops for parents/guardians: Advocates for Children, www.insideschools.org
- Scholarship information: *Scholarships for New York City Students*, www.newvisions.org/collegebound/scholarships0708.pdf
- FAFSA information: www.fafsa.ed.gov
- FAFSA worksheet: www.fafsa.ed.gov/fafsaws78c.pdf
- HESC: www.hesc.com

Athletics

- *NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete*: www.ncaastudent.org
- Registration for the NCAA Clearinghouse:
www.naaclearinghouse.net

College fair schedules

Most college fairs are in the fall, many in October. Get schedules and details here:

- www.bigapplecollegefairs.com
- www.hesc.com
- New Visions' Citi College Fair: www.newvisions.org
- NACAC: www.nacacnet.org/MemberPortal/Events/CollegeFairs

Comparing Colleges

- College comparison worksheet: www.newvisions.org/collegebound/ComparingColleges_form.pdf

College Now

- www.collegenow.cuny.edu

FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS: EIGHT WAYS YOU CAN HELP

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Once students reach high school, they may try to talk you out of being involved. You might hear: “Don’t bother, I’m fine.” Or: “I don’t need your help.” Don’t believe it. Your teenager needs you now more than ever.

1. Find out which classes and Regents exams your child needs in order to prepare for college. Make sure your teenager knows that earning good grades and taking Regents exams are essential, not optional.

2. Meet regularly with your student’s teachers and college advisors. Make sure you know each teacher’s expectations, and discuss your teenager’s academic progress and extracurricular activities. Keep an eye out for parent-teacher nights once a semester.

3. Provide encouragement and support so your teen can maintain good grades. Make sure your teen is doing homework every night. Support him or her by providing a quiet workspace and routines that allow enough time for schoolwork. Attendance is important, too, so set limits on bedtime and help your student get out the door on time each morning.

4. Help your student organize his or her admissions applications, financial aid documents and other paperwork. Review the timelines in this guide together, and help your student keep ahead of deadlines.

5. Visit college campuses and fairs with your teenager. (See *Know Your Resources* on page 2 for details.) Ask your student’s college advisor about opportunities to visit college campuses for free. Help your teenager create a list of college choices.

6. Help your student understand his or her financial aid options. Attend parent financial aid and college workshops at your teenager’s school or neighborhood organization. (See *Know Your Resources* on page 2 for details.) Have copies of your federal and state tax forms ready by the end of January of your student’s senior year. These tax forms are essential for the financial aid applications your teenager will need to complete in February. Help your student with the financial aid applications. The earlier they are filed, the more money your student is likely to receive.

7. Talk to your teen’s college advisor about opportunities to offset application costs and fee waivers that can help reduce the cost of applying to college.

8. Use *Scholarships for New York City Students* to find scholarships for which your teenager is qualified. (See *Know Your Resources* on page 2 for details.)

**YOU CAN
COUNT THE
BENEFITS OF
COLLEGE**

Fact:

Students who enroll in college earn an average of **\$12,900** more a year than high school dropouts.

Fact:

Students who graduate from a four-year college earn an average of **\$33,200** more a year than high school dropouts. Over a lifetime, that’s an extra **\$1.4 million** in earnings!

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006

IF YOU ARE IN 9TH GRADE ▶

This is the year to get
on track for college.

3 things to do in 9th grade

1. **Do well in school.** Attend all your classes and get good grades.
2. **Start planning.** Get to know your college advisor. Map out a four-year plan for the classes you'll need for college. In 9th grade, you should earn at least 11 credits. You also should take at least one Regents exam by the end of 9th grade if your school offers them.
3. **Try something new.** Find a great after-school activity, such as chess, drama, band, karate, dance, volunteering, volleyball or a college access program. Plan an engaging summer by researching and applying for summer programs and internships.

TIMELINE FOR 10TH GRADE

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

- ❑ Meet with your advisor and parents/guardians to:
 - Register for the PSAT.
 - Review your 9th grade transcript and your progress through your four-year plan.
- ❑ Go to the Big Apple College Fair
 - Explore different types of colleges (private, public, professional and arts).
- ❑ Stay involved in extra-curricular activities. Try applying for a leadership position.
- ❑ Take the PSAT/NMSQT. Be sure to know the correct date and test location. Ask your advisor for practice tests and other tips.

NOVEMBER

- ❑ Continue to study hard and get good grades.

JANUARY

- ❑ Meet with your advisor to learn which Regents exams you should take in June.

MARCH & APRIL

- ❑ Research and apply for summer programs and internships. Pay close attention to program deadlines.
- ❑ Visit a college campus and attend an information session.
- ❑ Apply for working papers. (Remember, you must be 15 to work in NYC.)
- ❑ Meet with your advisor to:
 - Discuss your academic progress.
 - Review your four-year course plan and choose the classes you need to take next year.

MAY & JUNE

- ❑ Prepare for and take the Regents exams. By the end of 10th grade, you should take three Regents exams: math, science and history.
- ❑ Ask your advisor and teachers if they know of any summer opportunities.
- Discuss your summer plans.
- Ask about Advanced Placement classes.
- Ask about and register for a College Now course at a local college.
- Start preparing for the October ACT.

3 things to do in 10th grade

1. **Explore.** Visits to college campuses are a fun way to learn about college life.
2. **Study hard.** Get good grades so you'll graduate on time and be eligible for college scholarships.
3. **Become a leader.** Good leaders speak well, listen, inspire and help others. Colleges look for students who can motivate their peers.

EVERY SUMMER

Colleges want to know how you spend your time each summer.

- Find a summer program, internship or job that you will enjoy.
- Read at least three books for fun.

TIMELINE FOR 11TH GRADE

SEPTEMBER

- Continue your involvement with extracurricular and leadership activities.
- Register for College Now or Advanced Placement classes.
- Make sure that you take courses that challenge you, such as pre-calculus/Math B and chemistry.
- Register for the October ACT.

OCTOBER

- Meet with your advisor to discuss your 10th grade PSAT scores, and start to consider your career path.
- Attend fall college fairs.
- Take the October ACT if you are registered.

NOVEMBER

- Use your PSAT scores to help identify the test skills you need to develop before taking the SAT.

DECEMBER

- Study hard for high school exams and College Now classes.
- Prepare for January Regents exams.

- Find and register for an SAT prep course being held in January or February.

JANUARY

- Start learning about financial aid.
- Talk with your advisor about scholarships.
- Attend a Department of Education financial aid workshop with your parents/guardians.
- Meet with your advisor and parents/guardians to:
 - Review your academic progress.
 - Find out which Regents exams you have to take in June.
 - Register for the March SAT.
 - Register for College Now classes.

FEBRUARY

- Prepare a list of colleges you'd like to attend. Visit those schools online, call admissions offices or go to college fairs to request free materials.
- Learn about special admissions requirements for performing and visual arts colleges.
- Take an SAT prep course.

MARCH

- Take the March SAT if you are registered.
- English Language Learners: find out if the colleges on your list require the TOEFL. Register to take the test.
- Research and apply for a summer program, internship or job.
- Visit some of the colleges that interest you.
- If you are planning to take AP or CLEP tests this spring, talk with your college advisor or teachers about preparing.
- Register for the May SAT. Even if you took the March SAT, many people retake the test to raise their scores.

APRIL

- Attend spring college fairs.
- Narrow your college application list to 6-8 colleges.
- Register with the NCAA Clearinghouse if you are interested in playing sports in college.

MAY

- Take the May SAT if you are registered.
- Begin to prepare for your June Regents exams.

JUNE

- Take Regents exams.

- Meet with your advisor and parents/guardians to:
 - Discuss your current courses and the number of credits you have.
 - Decide on the classes you will take next year.
 - Review your college list.

SUMMER

- Enjoy your summer program, internship, youth employment or volunteer work. Tell teachers and/or supervisors that you will ask for letters of recommendation in the fall.
- Request catalogues, admission applications and financial aid information from colleges you haven't already contacted.
- Identify at least two scholarships that match your interests or talents.
- Write an outline for an autobiographical essay.
- Visit college campuses.
- Create a résumé that includes all of your jobs and extracurricular activities.
- Find out if a placement test, audition or portfolio is required for admission to a specialized program. Start preparing these items if you need them.
- Research summer deadlines for fall ACT, SAT, TOEFL and CLEP tests.
- Begin preparing for the SAT II subject tests you plan to take in the fall.

3 things to do in 11th grade

- 1. Research regularly.** Use the library and the Internet to research and select colleges that interest you. Use the college comparison worksheet, www.newvisions.org/collegebound/ComparingColleges_form.pdf, to track what you learn. Attend college fairs and open houses.
- 2. Get on the ball with financial aid.** Learn about financial aid and talk to your parents/guardians about it. Go to a financial aid workshop (ask your college advisor about workshops in your area). Identify at least two scholarships that match your talents and interests (leadership, community service, sports, religious affiliations, etc.).
- 3. Continue to study hard — and get help staying on track.** Review your credits, grades and Regents scores with your college advisor to make sure you are on track for high school graduation. The more you talk with your advisor, the more help you'll get. (See *Know Your Resources* on page 2 for details.)

TIMELINE FOR 12TH GRADE

SEPTEMBER

- Know your SAT, ACT, CLEP and TOEFL dates for the fall.
 - Register for any SAT II subject tests you plan to take in October.
 - Study hard and get good grades. Colleges like to see strong grades in the first semester of the senior year.
 - Meet regularly with your college advisor. This is an important year to:
 - Review your college application list.
 - Make sure your list includes “dream,” “probable” and “safety” schools.
 - Ask your advisor about Early Decision or Early Action.
 - Think of two or three teachers who could write great letters of recommendation for you. Don't forget about your advisor or employers from after-school and summer activities.
 - Register for College Now and Advanced Placement classes.
 - Write first drafts of your essays for college and scholarship applications.
 - English Language Learners: Register for the TOEFL.
- Give recommendation forms to your college advisor, teachers, employers or others. Include addressed, stamped envelopes to make it easier for them to mail the letters.
 - Meet Early Decision and Early Action deadlines. Make copies of your applications before you mail them.
 - Work on your essay drafts. Get feedback from teachers or your college advisor.
 - Polish your portfolio and audition presentation if you are applying to a visual or performing arts school.
 - Begin to apply for scholarships.
 - Attend college fairs and continue to visit college campuses.

NOVEMBER

- Take the November SAT if you are registered.
 - Begin filling out your college applications. Most regular admissions deadlines range from late December to early March.
 - Attend a financial aid workshop with your parents/guardians.
 - Remind teachers, college advisors and others to mail your recommendation forms.
 - Schedule college interviews or auditions, if necessary.
 - If you have a learning or physical disability, contact colleges and ask about support services that are available for students with special needs.
 - Revise your essays and ask for final feedback from teachers or your advisor.
- Take the October SAT or SAT II subject tests if you are registered.
 - Finalize your list of six to eight colleges.
 - Ask your advisor if you qualify for financial aid programs like HEOP/EOP, SEEK or College Discovery.

OCTOBER

DECEMBER

- Take the December SAT or ACT if you are registered.
 - Give applications with mid-January deadlines to your college advisor to complete questions on class rank and academic history.
 - Give your advisor a list of colleges and scholarship organizations that require an official transcript.
 - Finalize your essays.
 - Collect information about your family's household finances, which will be required for the FAFSA form.
 - Apply for a PIN for your TAP and FAFSA applications, which can be submitted after January 1.
 - If you applied Early Decision or Early Action, keep an eye out for decision letters.
 - Prepare for January Regents.
 - Send out all scholarship applications before the end of December.
- Which, if any, Regents exams do you need to take in June?
 - Register for College Now classes.
 - Make sure your applications are complete.
- Check with your teachers, advisors or employers to make sure your letters of recommendation and transcripts are mailed.

JANUARY

- January is a very popular month for application deadlines. Make copies of your applications before you send them in.
- Ask your parents/guardians to work on their tax return estimates so you can complete the FAFSA and get the financial aid you need. You can submit the FAFSA after January 1 online or through the mail.
- Attend financial aid workshops with your parents/guardians at high schools, college access programs or the Department of Education.
- Meet with your advisor:
 - Are you on track for graduation?

FEBRUARY

- Complete and mail the FAFSA or file online.
- Complete your TAP application using either the online or paper version.
- Complete CSS/PROFILE and other financial aid forms.

MARCH

- Mail applications to colleges that have open or rolling admissions, as these schools may run out of space.
- Quickly complete and return HEOP/EOP forms that you receive from colleges.
- Keep an eye on the mail for your SAR, which will have the information that you included on your FAFSA. Review your SAR carefully and send any changes by mail.

APRIL

- Check the mail for decision letters. Colleges are supposed to let you know their decisions this month.
- Financial aid letters are sent separately by each college that accepts you, and these usually arrive later.
- If you do not apply for TAP online but have completed your FAFSA application, HESC will mail you an express TAP application (called an ETA) to review, sign and return.

MAY & JUNE

- ❑ Once you have chosen the school you plan to attend, notify the college before the deadline — usually May 1.
- ❑ Review all of your financial aid forms and check off the financial aid you accept. Sign and return the form to the college financial aid office. If applicable, sign and return loan promissory notes.
- ❑ If you need more financial aid, contact the college's financial aid office.
- ❑ Mail your tuition deposit.
- ❑ If you plan to live on campus, you will receive information on dormitories. Complete and return the questionnaire on personal lifestyle, interests and habits.
- ❑ Mail your room and board deposit.
- ❑ Notify all other colleges that you do not plan to accept their offer of admission.
- ❑ If accepted through HEOP, review information on mandatory summer orientation and class schedule.
- ❑ Students accepted for regular admission should review the orientation and registration schedule.
- ❑ If your college is away from home, begin planning transportation and the luggage you will take.
- ❑ Finish high school!
 - If you are registered, take AP test(s). Scoring well can earn you credits in college.
 - Keep on top of your classes, so you do not jeopardize your high school graduation.

- Prepare for and take final exams.
- Breathe a big sigh of relief! Congratulations — you made it!

3 things to do in 12th grade

1. **Set goals, work hard, take yourself seriously.** Your senior year is one of the most rewarding times of your life! By the end, you'll have earned a high school diploma and will be college bound.
2. **Pay attention to details.** Deadlines are very important. Missing one can cause a lot of unneeded anxiety in your life. Follow through with all the small steps along the way, and you'll be ahead of the game.
3. **Manage your time.** Get involved in rewarding activities both in and out of school. Between school, homework, social activities and the mountains of paperwork involved in college applications, you will be busy. Plan carefully and be responsible, so your senior year can be both fun and rewarding.

APPLYING TO CUNY SCHOOLS

New York City students have a valuable resource: the City University of New York, or CUNY. CUNY has 11 senior colleges and six community colleges, each of which offers a wide range of academic and financial aid opportunities for students from New York City. Attending a CUNY school is a great option for students who want to work or stay in the city after they graduate from high school. Many CUNY programs have flexible schedules.

CUNY APPLICATION TIPS:

Admissions requirements are not the same for all CUNY schools. Some of the specialized programs require an essay and letters of recommendation. Learn the admissions requirements for each school to which you want to apply. Visit the CUNY Web site, www.cuny.edu, to find information about CUNY Honors Colleges or other specialized programs.

- You can apply to as many as six programs and colleges using one application. All completed applications are sent to the University Application Processing Center (UAPC) instead of to individual schools.
- If you attend a New York City public school, your school can give you a CUNY Personalized Application, which already has your high school transcript printed on the back of the form. Ask your advisor for details.
- All students who are interested in applying to a CUNY Honors College must complete a separate Honors College Application and submit it to UAPC. You can apply to only one of the seven Honors College programs, so ask your advisor to help you choose the right one.
- Visit www.cuny.edu for deadlines.

MAKE SENSE OF THE ALPHABET SOUP

Learning about colleges and submitting applications can mean wading through a sea of acronyms, initials and terms. Use this glossary to cut through the confusion.

ACT. ACT is a college entrance exam. It assesses your general educational development and your ability to complete college-level work. Students usually take the ACT in 11th grade; many take it again in 12th grade. Most colleges require either the ACT or the SAT as part of the application.

AP. Advanced Placement. AP classes are college-level classes that are offered in high school. After taking these classes, students can take AP exams. If you score high enough, you can earn college credit.

CLEP. College Level Examination Program. CLEP gives students the opportunity to demonstrate college-level achievement through a program of exams in undergraduate college courses. There are 2,900 colleges that grant credit and/or advanced standing for CLEP exams.

College Discovery/SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge). These programs offer support for high-potential, low-income students who are not academically well prepared for college. College Discovery is available to students at two-year CUNY colleges; SEEK is available to students at four-year CUNY colleges.

College Now. Through College Now, students from NYC public high schools can take college-level classes at their local CUNY campus for free.

CSS/PROFILE. The financial aid application service of the College Board. Some colleges require this form and use it to determine whether you are eligible for nonfederal financial student aid.

Early Action/Early Decision. Both Early Action and Early Decision plans allow you to apply to college early (deadlines usually are in November) and get an early decision from the college. Early Decision plans are binding: If you apply as an Early Decision

candidate, you agree to attend the college if it accepts you and offers an adequate financial aid package. Most Early Action plans are not binding: You typically do not have to commit to a college when you apply Early Action.

FAFSA. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This application is a critical element of applying for financial aid and can be submitted online or by mail. To complete the FAFSA, parents/guardians must have copies of their federal and state tax forms ready by the end of January of the student's senior year.

HEOP/EOP. Higher Education Opportunity Program (for private institutions) and Education Opportunity Program (for public institutions). Both offer financial aid and academic support to students who meet economic eligibility guidelines. To apply, check the HEOP/EOP box on your college applications or contact the colleges' HEOP/EOP offices.

HESC. New York State Higher Education Services Corporation. This state agency administers the Tuition Assistance Program and guarantees student loans.

NACAC. National Association for College Admission Counseling. This organization of college advisors hosts college fairs throughout the year.

NMSC. National Merit Scholarship Corporation. Each year, this organization recognizes the achievements of about 55,000 high school students. More than 10,000 of these students receive scholarships for college.

PSAT/NMSQT. Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. This standardized test provides practice for the SAT. It also gives you a chance to enter NMSC scholarship programs.

SAR. Student Aid Report. A report that confirms that your FAFSA has been processed. You will receive your SAR from FAFSA either electronically within three days or by mail within three weeks, depending on how you submitted your FAFSA. Review your SAR carefully and send any changes by mail.

SAT (SAT Reasoning Test). The SAT is a college entrance exam. It assesses your critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students usually take the SAT in 11th grade; many take it again in 12th grade. Most colleges require either the SAT or the ACT as part of the application.

SAT Subject Tests (formerly called SAT II). These standardized tests measure your knowledge and skills in particular subject areas, such as English, history, mathematics, science and language. Many colleges use the Subject Tests for admission, for course placement and to advise students about course selection. Students should take SAT Subject Tests only in subjects for which they are well prepared.

TAP. Tuition Assistance Program. TAP offers additional financial assistance to students attending colleges and universities in New York state. You can link to the TAP site once you complete your FAFSA online or contact HESC to apply by mail. An express TAP application is called ETA.

TOEFL. Test of English as a Foreign Language. TOEFL is required for non-native applicants at many English-speaking colleges and universities.

APPLYING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW

Test Tracker

Use a test tracker like this one to help you keep track of important test information and deadlines. You can create your own tracker or photocopy this page.

EXAM	SUBJECT	REGISTRATION DEADLINE	DATE OF TEST	NOTES
Regents	English			
Regents	Math			
Regents	Science			
Regents	Global History			
Regents	Geography			
PSAT/NMSQT	N/A			
SAT (first time)	N/A			
SAT (second time)	N/A			
SAT Subject Test #1				
SAT Subject Test #2				
ACT (first time)	N/A			
ACT (second time)	N/A			
AP Test #1				
AP Test #2				
CLEP Test #1				
CLEP Test #2				
TOEFL	N/A			
Other:				
Other:				

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Application Tracker

Use an application tracker like this one to help you keep track of important information and deadlines for each college you apply to. You can create your own tracker or photocopy this page.

	SAMPLE	COLLEGE 1	COLLEGE 2	COLLEGE 3	COLLEGE 4	COLLEGE 5
NAME	XYZ University					
Location	New York, NY					
Admissions officer	Ms. Smith					
Application deadline	March 1					
CUNY, SUNY common app?	Yes					
Application essay topic	Public Service					
Application essay drafted	Yes					
Application essay revised						
Rec. writer 1 and date submitted	Mr. Johnson, 2/6					
Rec. writer 2 and date submitted	Mr. Black, 6/3					
Rec. writer 3 and date submitted	Ms. Allen					
Entire application complete	Yes					
Entire application copied	Yes					
Entire application mailed						
Financial aid forms complete	Yes					
Financial aid forms copied						
Financial aid forms mailed						
Interviewer and interview date						
Expected response date	May 4					
Enrollment deadline	June 1					
Notes						

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