

High school Checklist for the College Bound

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TOPICS

1. *Take challenging courses*
2. *Take tests*
3. *Keep grades up*
4. *Build strong relationships*
5. *Gain leadership skills*
6. *Volunteer*
7. *Create/Update Portfolio*
8. *Apply for scholarships*
9. *Attend college fairs/tours*
10. *Grade level specific activities*
11. *BONUS – Learn to do things on your own*

#1 Take Challenging Courses (AP, IB, DC)

▶ Why?

- prepares you for the rigor and pace of college courses
- possibly earn you college credit
- Colleges look at grades 1st & course rigor 2nd
(prefer a B in an advanced course over an A in a regular courses)

▶ Take the appropriate level and quantity for YOU

▶ Don't "take it easy" your senior year

- advanced classes 9th-11th then regular classes in 12th ☹
- finished grad requirements early, took electives/half day in 12th ☹

#2 Take Tests

- **PSAT** Preliminary SAT taken in 8th-10th
 - PSAT/NMSQT is a qualifying test for national scholarships (≈7500 winners) taken in 11th
- **ASVAB** Aptitude test that can be taken during 10th-12th
 - Designed to measure the strength and potential for success in military training
- **SAT/ACT** College Entrance Exams
 - Take by end of junior year & retake beginning of senior year (if needed)
 - Take full length practice tests for both. The one you did better on, should be the one you take
- **TSI Assessment 2.0 (Accuplacer)**
 - Texas College Placement Exam that **determines college readiness** (developmental education)
College Readiness Scores: **Math 950 or Level 6 & ELAR 945 or Level 5+ & Essay 5**
 - Used for dual credit, community colleges, and depending on your SAT/ACT score, Texas 4-year public colleges
 - **Exemption**

SAT	Math 530	EBRW 480	
ACT	Math 22	E+R 40	no composite score required

#3 Keep Grades Up

- ▶ Most 4-year colleges look at
 - 1st - Grades, GPA, &/or Class rank (9th-11th)
 - 2nd – Rigor (AP, Dual Credit...)
 - 3rd - SAT/ACT scores (unless test blind)
- ▶ Seniors are not off the hook - Colleges will require your final transcript after graduation
 - Seniors need to finish strong (it matters to your college)
 - Show them that you didn't let up & you finish what you start
 - Colleges can revoke admissions due to last semester grades or if you don't graduate

#4 Build Strong Relationships (With teachers, counselors, coaches, club advisors, community leaders...)

- ▶ Make sure you are on track to graduate
- ▶ Help with college & financial aid process
- ▶ Good source for letters of recommendation (College & Scholarship Applications)
- ▶ Networking

#5 Gain Leadership Skills (Through clubs, organizations, internships, employment)

- ▶ **Quality** over Quantity (how long you've participated, level of participation, focus on your initiative & impact)
- ▶ Choose activities because they delight, intrigue, and challenge you and NOT because you think they'll look impressive on your application

#6 Volunteer (Colleges and scholarship committees want students who have contributed to their community)

- ▶ Keep documented hours
- ▶ **Quality** over Quantity (how the activity affected **you**, and the impact it made on **others**)
- ▶ Focus on your initiative and impact

#7 Create/Update Portfolio (Useful when applying for college admissions and scholarships)

- ▶ Community Service documentation
- ▶ Résumé (honors & awards, club involvement, employment) with dates
- ▶ Essays (college & scholarships)
- ▶ Recommendation Letters (get some before summer)
- ▶ Transcript w/ GPA, Class Rank & Test Scores
- ▶ Other Info
 - Financial Reports (FAFSA Submission Summary)
 - Samples of your work (certifications, photos, videos, articles, artwork...)
 - Copy of birth certificate/passport (proof of citizenship)
 - Professional photography (headshot)
- ▶ Tracking Spreadsheets (college & scholarship)

#8 Apply for Scholarships

- ▶ Automatic/Assured Scholarships (from the college)
 - Only some colleges offer (*i.e. Angelo State, Baylor, SFA, Texas Southern, Texas State, Texas Tech...*)
 - Based on GPA & SAT/ACT scores
 - Usually renewable
- ▶ Competitive Scholarships (from colleges & outside sources)
 - Characteristic – tall, left-handed, Hispanic, first gen
 - Talent – athletic, music, dance, theatre
 - Academic – grades (class rank/GPA), test scores
 - Leadership – clubs, organizations, jobs
 - Community Service - volunteering

Well-rounded

#9 Attend College Fairs/Tours

- Fairs during 9th, 10th, & 11th
- Tours during 10th, 11th, & 12th

GRADE SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

9th Grade – Take Self Assessments

- Texas Career Check <https://texascareercheck.com/ExploreCareer/InterestProfiler>
- My TX Future <https://www.mytexasfuture.org/interests-skills-quizzes/interests-quiz/>
- O*net Interest Profiler <https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>
- Career Outlook <http://www.careeroutlook.us/>
- What Career is Right for Me <https://www.whatcareerisrightforme.com/career-aptitude-test.php>

10th Grade – Explore Careers

- What careers are a good fit for YOU?
 - Job responsibilities (do they match your 4Ps & A?)
[Passion > Personality > Preferences > Principles > Aptitude](#) (innate abilities & acquired skills)
 - **Job outlook** (is it growing?)
 - Pay (can it support you?)
 - Education requirement (return on investment)
- Determine career before a major
 - Knowing what you want to study can guide and inform your college list and college visits
 - Can save you time and money while in college
- Ways to explore careers
 - **Internet Research** <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm>
 - Informational Interviews
 - Job Shadow
 - Take a related class
 - Join a related club/organization
 - **Volunteer/Job/Intern** www.TXInternshipChallenge.com

11th Grade – Research Colleges

- Create a college list and research things that are important to YOU: majors, size, location, type, mission, financial aid, student organizations...
- When researching use
 - College's website for their mission statement, majors, & **Common Data Set**
 - College comparison websites & books
<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> www.CollegeData.com
<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/> <https://www.appily.com/colleges>
 - Tour campuses (get a feel for that school and ask questions)
- Find the best "FIT" for YOU
 - **Financial Fit** – one that you and your family can afford without having to go into huge debt
 - Have the "money talk" with your parents; COA vary widely
 - **Academic Fit** – one where you meet their admissions requirements or are competitive for holistic evaluation
 - Use the college's **Common Data Set** (class rank, SAT/ACT scores)
 - **Personal Fit** – one where your values, interests, wants, and social needs are aligned with the institution
 - you feel as if you belong
- Narrow down your list and record deadlines, logins/passwords, documentation needed, details of any correspondence
 - **Safety/Likely** – Student's academic credentials fall **well above** the school's average range (>75th percentile)
 - **Match/Target** – Student's academic credentials fall **within** the school's average range (between 25th and 75th percentiles)
 - **Reach/Dream** – Student's academic credentials fall **in the lower end or below** school's average range (<25th percentile)

12th Grade –

Complete College Admissions

College Application Platforms

- ▶ ApplyTexas.org opens July 1 (all Texas 2-yr & 4-yr colleges)
- ▶ Common App opens Aug 1(1000+ colleges – 36 in TX)
- ▶ Coalition for College opens Aug 1 (161 colleges - 6 in TX)
- ▶ College's website

Info Requested on Application

- ▶ High School Coursework
- ▶ Awards & Honors
- ▶ Extra-curricular
- ▶ Jobs/internships
- ▶ Community Service

Submit Documents (Optional = DO IT!)

- ▶ Transcript
- ▶ Essay(s)
- ▶ Letters of recommendation
- ▶ Resumé

Special Programs - If applying for a special program

(Engineering, Nursing...):

- ▶ check for additional requirements
 - additional application
 - extra essay
 - higher GPA
- ▶ Check school's passing rates on licensing exams
 - Business (CPA)
 - Education (teacher, principals)
 - Healthcare (LVN, ADN, BSN, PT, PTA, OT, OTA, VT...)
 - Psychology & Social Services

Apply to 4 or 5 good fit colleges **plus** your local community college

Complete Financial Aid Application(s)

FAFSA or TASFA

- ▶ 1st step in applying for financial aid (grants, work study, federal student loans, or scholarships)
- ▶ Mandatory for Texas seniors
- ▶ Determines your Student Aid Index (SAI)
- ▶ Opens ~~Oct 1st~~ **Dec 1st this year** (year prior to attending)
- ▶ Requires a new application every year
- ▶ 1st come/1st serve
- ▶ Some scholarships require it

What application (FAFSA or TASFA) do I fill out QUIZ

<https://www.highered.texas.gov/our-work/empowering-our-students/tasfa/tasfa-decision/>

CSS Profile (if your college requires it)

- ▶ Less than 10% of U.S. colleges (mostly private) require this form in addition to FAFSA
- ▶ Baylor, Rice, SMU, St Edwards, TCU, Trinity Univ
- ▶ Asks for more information than the FAFSA does
 - Primary home equity
 - Retirement accounts
 - If biological parents are divorced, it requires financial info from both biological parents and

FAFSA is accepted at ALL U.S. colleges, universities, trade & technical schools. Student must be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen to complete the FAFSA.

TASFA is only accepted at Texas colleges, universities, trade & technical schools. The TASFA is for undocumented students who are Texas Resident.

BONUS FOR ALL

Learn to do things on your own

- ▶ **Personal skills**
 - Cooking, cleaning & laundry basics
 - Asking for help
 - Scheduling appointments
 - Dealing with an emergency
 - Saying "no" respectfully
 - Behaving responsibly (drugs, alcohol, sex)
 - Maintaining a healthy lifestyle (eating, exercising, sleeping)
- ▶ **Financial skills**
 - Budgeting
 - Banking (checking, savings, credit cards)
 - Tipping
- ▶ **Professional skills**
 - Managing time
 - Getting along with others (roommate/professor)
 - Networking
 - Creating a resume & cover letter
 - Writing a thank you note

Miscellaneous

- ▶ Compare Financial Aid Offers and accept your chosen college
- ▶ Pay your housing deposit
- ▶ Attend freshman orientation
- ▶ Send Final Transcript