

9th Grade: College Planning Timeline

At this stage in the game, you're laying the foundation for your high school career. This is a time to establish your academic and extracurricular credentials. You should also begin to explore options for your career or further education.

Fall: Think about extracurricular activities and your list of classes

Meet your guidance counselor.

Your counselor is ready and willing to help you make sense of your college and career options. As soon as you can, set up a meeting to talk about your plans for high school and the future.

Get involved.

Extracurricular activities (both school- and non-school-sponsored) are an important part of high school. Make the effort to get involved with groups, clubs, or teams that interest you. These activities are fun and make you a well-rounded student.

Pick the right mix of classes.

Make sure you're enrolled in the appropriate college-prep or tech-prep classes and that you're taking key core requirements, such as English, math, science, history, and a foreign language.

Winter: Consider a college savings plan

Make the grade.

Get off to a good start with your grades because they will impact your GPA and class rank. Although college seems like a long way off right now, grades really do count toward college admission and scholarships.

Explore your interests and possible careers.

Discuss your skills and interests with your guidance counselor and take advantage of the College & Career Center opportunities at your school. Discover Naviance and go to the Careers and Clusters.

Consider a college savings plan.

Talk to your parents about planning for college expenses. If your family already has a savings plan, continue to add to it. If not, now is a great time to start saving for college. Your parents can use our financial planning calculator to help them assess their current savings situation and plan for the future.

Spring/Summer: Learn about college and make summer count

Build your credentials.

Keep track of academic and extracurricular awards, community service achievements, and anything else you participate in, so it'll be easier to remember later. It'll come in handy when you want to highlight your accomplishments—such as when you're filling out college applications or creating a resume.

Start learning about college.

Look at the college information available in your counselor's office and public libraries. Use the Internet to check out college Web sites. Use our college search and view college profiles. You may even want to start a list of colleges that might interest you.

Begin to get a feel for college life.

Visiting relatives or friends who live on or near a college campus is a great way to get a sense of what college is like. Check out the dorms, go to the library and student center, and walk around the campus. Don't worry yet about where you want to go—just get a feel for college in general.

Make summer count.

There are plenty of ways to have fun and build your credentials during the summer, such as volunteering, getting a job, or signing up for an enrichment program.

Source: *Peterson's College Planning Timelines*