

College Readiness Calendar

ELEVENTH & TWELFTH GRADES

It's never too early to start preparing for college. Early planning and preparation will help you and your student feel more informed and in control of the bright future ahead!

ELEVENTH GRADE

FALL

September, October, November

- Sign up to take the PSAT in October.
- Meet your student's teachers, reintroduce yourself to the counselor and discuss your student's preparation for college.
- Take a tour of a local college or university while classes are in session to get a feel for the campus.
- Have your student make a list of "target" colleges he or she is considering. Take into account location, size, campus resources and student demographics.
- Ensure that your student is familiar with the entrance requirements for target schools.
- Attend a College Fair or College Night.

WINTER

December, January, February

- Encourage your student to talk to friends who are home for college winter break about their college experience. Consider talking with their parents to get a parent perspective.
- Your student's PSAT score report will arrive in December; this will help identify challenge areas for the SAT Reasoning Exam.
- Ask the school counselor about fee waivers for the SAT exams. Eligible students can receive up to two waivers.
- Have your student carefully plan the spring SAT Reasoning and SAT Subject Exam schedule. Subject Exams should be taken as soon as possible after completing the appropriate coursework. Testing schedules and practice exams are available at www.collegeboard.com. Register 6–8 weeks before each exam to ensure preferred testing date and location.

SPRING

March, April, May

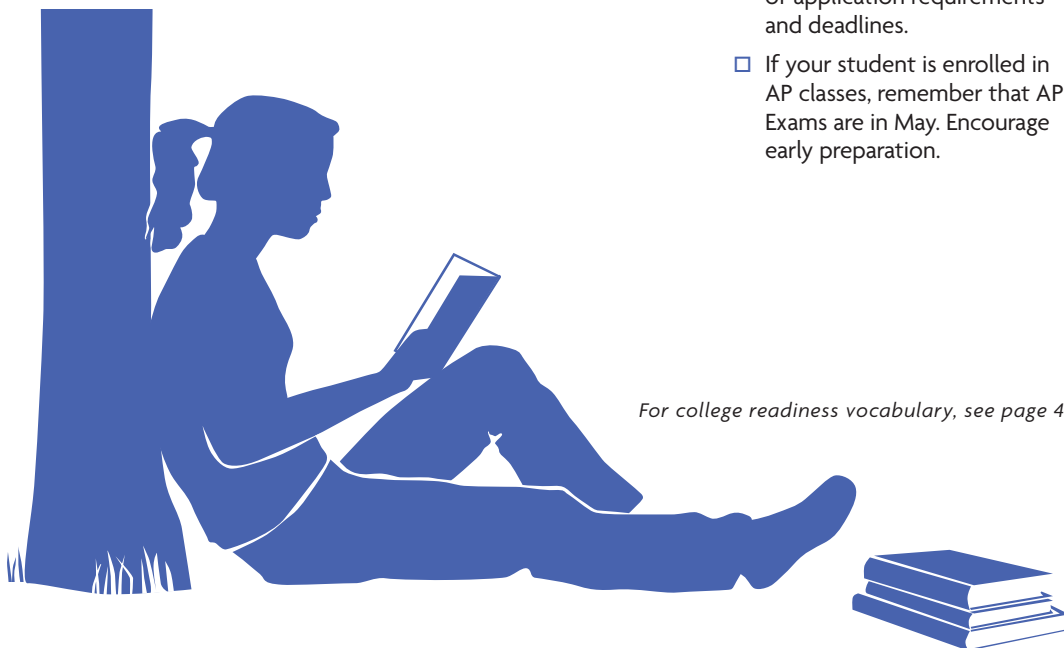
- Continue college visits with your student while classes are in session.
- Encourage your student to take at least one full-length practice exam before the SAT Reasoning Exam.
- All students should review their senior year class schedule with their counselor, including selection of possible AP or community college courses.
- Begin actively searching for scholarships and financial aid.
- Use tools such as the online FAFSA Forecaster (www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov/) to help calculate how much financial aid your student will receive and to estimate your Expected Family Contribution (EFC).
- Explore summer jobs, academic enrichment and volunteer opportunities. Be aware of application requirements and deadlines.
- If your student is enrolled in AP classes, remember that AP Exams are in May. Encourage early preparation.

SUMMER

June, July, August

- Finalize summer plans.
- If taking a summer vacation, include a college tour!
- Create a summer reading list. Teachers, counselors and the local library will have recommendations.
- Students should complete a draft of the personal statement. Look into workshops offered by college preparation programs at local colleges, as they can provide the information and structure your student may need to get started.
- Assist your student in narrowing the list of schools to which he or she plans to apply. The list should include "safe," "realistic" and "reach" schools. Ensure that your student makes a checklist of admissions requirements (transcripts, application fees, test scores, recommendation letters, essays, financial aid applications, etc.).
- Together, mark a calendar with important application and financial dates and deadlines for senior year.
- If your student plans to take the ACT, SAT Reasoning or SAT Subject Exams in the fall, he or she should register now to ensure a top-choice date and test location. Remember that the December test date is the last time to take the exam to meet college application deadlines.

For college readiness vocabulary, see page 4.



TWELFTH GRADE

FALL

September, October, November

- Together, review admission requirements and deadlines for all schools to which your student will apply. Meet with the counselor to review details.
- If your student plans to take the ACT, SAT Reasoning or SAT Subject Exams this fall, he or she should register now.
- If needed, apply for college application fee waivers directly through the colleges. All students who receive an SAT fee waiver are eligible for four application fee waivers from the College Board.
- Attend a College Fair or College Open House.
- Help your student identify 3 or 4 trusted individuals to review application materials. Provide reviewers with materials early so they have ample time to strengthen the application.
- Ensure that your student asks for any required recommendation letters at least three weeks before the due date(s). Give each recommender required forms, resume and a stamped, addressed envelope.
- Ensure that the school guidance office sends transcripts to colleges.
- Apply to CSUs and UCs between November 1 and November 30.
- Your student should send his or her SAT scores to the colleges where he or she has applied.

TIP:

Your student should plan on completing college applications two weeks before the application deadline to allow time for revisions and changes without feeling rushed.

WINTER

December, January, February

- Encourage your student to talk to college friends on winter break about how prepare for the first semester of college.
- Many scholarship applications are due in December.
- File your taxes as early as possible.
- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available starting January 1 and can be completed on or after this date. You and your student will need a separate Personal Identification Number (PIN) to complete the FAFSA online. Be aware that most priority financial aid deadlines are in February.
- Attend a Financial Aid Night at your student's high school and/or in your community, such as a Cash for College event (www.californiacashforcollege.org).
- Approximately four weeks after completing the FAFSA, your family will receive the Student Aid Report (SAR), a summary of the information provided on the FAFSA. Make any necessary changes and return.

TIP:

If your student receives a D or lower in an A–G course, talk to his or her counselor immediately to discuss options.

SPRING

March, April, May

- If your student plans to attend community college in the fall, apply now.
- Look for a summer job, internship or volunteer opportunity early.
- Your student should prepare early for AP Exams held the first two weeks of May. A qualifying grade can earn college credit at many colleges. Send scores to the college he or she will attend in the fall.
- Most admissions decisions and financial aid award letters will arrive in April.
- Compare aid award letters. Talk to financial aid officers if you have any questions. If you have not received enough aid, ask if other options are available.
- If your student has been wait-listed, he or she should contact the admissions director and express continued interest in the school.
- Your student should notify all colleges of his or her acceptance or rejection of admissions or financial aid offers by May, and send a deposit to the chosen college.
- Find out about test dates for placement exams your student's college may require.
- Encourage your student to maintain good grades and attendance.
- Together, explore summer preparatory programs at the college your student will attend. These programs offer opportunities to take courses for credit and provide skills and information for a successful start to college.
- If your student is not admitted to any of the colleges to which he or she applied, see the counselor right away to discuss options.

SUMMER

June, July, August

- Your student's final transcript should be sent to the college he or she will attend in the fall.
- Finalize summer plans.
- Help your student prepare for the following school year.
- Celebrate your family's hard work and accomplishments!



GET AN EARLY START ON CAREER EXPLORATION!

Career exploration will expose your student to the educational and professional requirements for various careers. Career preparation and work-based learning experiences can help your student develop goals and make informed choices about careers.

1) Career Interest and Personality Assessments:

Talk with the school counselor about assessments, which can raise your student's self-awareness and create a foundation for informed career and educational planning. Some assessments may also be found at www.cacareerzone.com.

2) Informal Interview with a Professional: Look to the professionals in your community. Does your student dream of being in the medical field? Next time he or she visits the doctor, encourage your student to ask questions about the profession. Perhaps your student is drawn to journalism. Encourage him or her to contact and interview a reporter for a local newspaper or media outlet.

3) Career Panels: Many college fairs, college nights and school events include career panels. When possible, you and your student should attend, even if the career interest of your student is not represented on the panel. Listening to professionals reflect upon their educational and career paths can be motivating and inspiring.

4) Internships: Through an internship your student can learn first-hand about a particular career pathway. Information on internships can be found at the counselor's office, summer job fairs or through community-based organizations. Look into paid and unpaid internship opportunities for high school students at local colleges.

5) Career Shadow Days: Many high schools organize their own career shadow days. On this day, your student can choose to "shadow" a professional of his or her choice and learn more about that career. If your student's school does not have a career shadow day or your student is unable to participate, summer vacation or spring break can be a time for an informal shadow day.

TIP:
If your student plans on participating in Division I or Division II college sports and wants to be recruited, he or she should register with the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse in the summer of his or her junior year.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: ELEVENTH & TWELFTH GRADES

Q: What is the difference between the ACT and the SAT? Which one should my student take?

A: The ACT is an achievement test, measuring what your student has learned in school. The SAT Reasoning Exam is more like an aptitude test, testing reasoning and verbal abilities.

The ACT has up to 5 components: English, Mathematics, Reading, Science, and an optional Writing Test.

The SAT has 3 components: Verbal, Mathematics, and a required Writing Test.

Your student should take the exam with which he or she feels more comfortable. Counselors can provide more information about the exams and about fee waivers.

Q: Does my family need to file its income taxes before completing the FAFSA?

A: No. File the FAFSA early. Once you receive the SAR (Student Aid Report), necessary corrections can be made.

Q: I've heard the terms "eligibility" and "competitive eligibility." What is the difference?

A: Eligibility means that a student has met all the basic entrance requirements (coursework, GPA, entrance exams). To be competitively eligible means that the student goes beyond the basic requirements with:

- Strong grades in challenging coursework
- Participation in available academic enrichment opportunities
- Engagement and leadership in extra-curricular activities
- Strong scores on college entrance exams

To gain admission to more selective colleges, students should focus on being competitively eligible.

A–G Coursework: A series of coursework required for admission to the University of California (UC) and to the California State University (CSU). Each high school has an approved list of “Doorways” A–G coursework, which can be reached through www.eaop.org/resources or at the high school guidance office.

Academic Enrichment: These opportunities reinforce and improve basic academic skills, prepare students for more challenging coursework, and provide academic experiences that go beyond those available through the normal school curriculum.

ACT Exam: A 3½ hour national college admissions exam that tests your student’s knowledge in English, Math, Reading and Science. The ACT Plus Writing Exam includes a 30-minute Writing Test. Most colleges require that students take the ACT Exam or the SAT Reasoning Exam as a college entrance requirement.

Advance Placement (AP) Courses: College-level courses in a variety of subject areas that students can take while in high school. Students can boost their high school GPA by doing well in AP courses because they will earn more grade points in AP classes. When completed, students have the option of taking the corresponding AP Exam and earning college credit.

College Entrance Requirements: These include completion of specific academic coursework, entrance exams such as the ACT and SAT, and a scholarship requirement (combination of GPA and standardized test scores). Required coursework and testing may vary at different colleges.

Extra-Curricular Activities: Activities that happen outside of the school day, including jobs (whether paid or unpaid), school-based activities (such as student government, service clubs, year-book, etc.) or activities affiliated with a community organization or a faith-based community.

Grade Point Average (GPA): GPA can range from 0.0 to 4.0 (5.0 for AP or Honors courses), and is calculated by dividing the total number of grade points earned by total number of credit hours attempted. Grade points are assigned as follows: A (4), B (3), C (2), D (1), F (0). Most year-long high school courses are 3 credit hours. Colleges will look at a student’s GPA in college prep courses as part of the application process.

High School Graduation Requirements: Courses and sometimes community service hours required for high school graduation. Note that requirements for high school graduation are not always the same as A–G course requirements. Therefore, a student may meet high school graduation requirements without becoming college-eligible.

Personal Statement: A student essay, written in response to one or more prompts, that is an important part of many college applications. Colleges use such essays to learn more about the student. Students should give themselves ample time to write, revise and proofread their personal statements.

Preliminary SAT (PSAT): This test measures some skills your student has developed over the course of his or her education. Students usually take the test in the eleventh grade, but benefit from taking the test in the tenth grade or sooner because they will receive personalized feedback on the academic skills needed for college. By taking the test early, students have more time to develop these skills and to begin the college-planning process. The PSAT is a good way to prepare for the SAT.

SAT Reasoning Exam: The SAT is a 3¾ hour test that measures critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, and writing skills. Most colleges require that students take this or the ACT as a college entrance requirement.

SAT Subject Exams: Many colleges require Subject Exams. UC requires two. Your student should take the exam as soon as possible after completing the corresponding course.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): The portion of your family’s financial resources that should be available to pay for college, based on a federal formula using the information on your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

Parent Spotlight: Lamar W.

Lamar is the parent of a son who just graduated high school and will be attending UC Merced in the fall. His outgoing son is a natural leader and was involved in a number of activities throughout high school—he was the president of his school’s French club, leader of a hip-hop dance troupe, served as an attorney on the Oakland Youth Court and still made time to take a college-level course on a college campus.

Lamar believes that college provides students with the opportunity to interact with other students who share similar goals.

Lamar’s advice to parents: “Don’t tell your children what to do, tell them what you want them to do and what you think is best. Tell them that what makes them happy is what is important. They will be more motivated and will have their own personal reasons to accomplish things. Guide them to find their own reasons. You can’t rush them. I talked to my son a lot, showed him examples of what is out there, and now he has his own goals.”