

Grade 9 Checklist – Preparing for College Admissions

Your first year of high school is a time where you are laying the foundation for your high school career and discovering the college options ahead of you. During 9th grade, you should be trying new extracurricular activities and beginning to think about which career paths are available to you. This is a time for exploration and for following your interests. Use this checklist to stay organized and to plan ahead for the future. And, remember, if you have questions or if you need assistance, Ivy Academic Prep is here to help! Just email us at contact@ivyacademicprep.com

All Year

- Explore! The 9th grade is the perfect year to try new extracurricular activities and to stop participating in activities that you no longer enjoy. Colleges want people who are passionate and who challenge themselves, so don't be afraid to try out a new club or sport. When you start your sophomore year, you'll need to deepen your engagement in extracurricular activities, but for now your goal should simply be to find out what excites you and try a lot of new things.
- Begin to think about your college and career plans. Talk to your parents, your guidance counselor, and your friends about life after college. Thinking about it now and planning ahead will give you the knowledge and confidence to make good choices when you apply to college during your senior year.
- Get organized. Minimize college application stress by creating an organizational system to keep track of paperwork and use calendars and spreadsheets to keep track of important dates.
- Become a good student. Your classes will become increasingly difficult over the next few years. Now is a good time to create good study habits and to start your high school studies with an excellent GPA. You will also be busy outside of regular school hours with extracurricular activities, sports, and you might even have a job so this is also a good time to teach yourself good time management practices. Consider working with a private tutor if you need additional help.
- Choose your classes carefully before the Fall semester begins. You should be taking the most rigorous courses available to you and also be taking the right prerequisites for the AP courses that you'll be taking later. Meet with your guidance counselor and have them help you choose the right classes for you.
- Read a book about college admissions. The more you learn about college admissions now, the fewer mistakes you'll make along the way. Be informed!

- Read, read, read! Developing strong reading skills and reading for fun will hone your intellect, turn you into a well-rounded person, and give you the critical thinking and reading skills that you'll need to succeed in college. It doesn't matter if you are reading graphic novels or *War and Peace*, you'll be building your vocabulary and improving your critical thinking skills. Read for fun and do it often.
- Talk with your parents about paying for college. College can be expensive and you can start planning now.
- Go over every item on this checklist at least once every 3 months to make sure that you are planning appropriately and that you aren't missing any important dates.

August-September

- Create a 4-year plan. Meet with your high school guidance counselor to make sure that you are taking the right courses, getting the right GPA, and that you have a plan for taking the SAT or the ACT exam. Your guidance counselor can also help you choose extracurricular and summer activities that will prepare you for college admissions. Also, inquire about AP courses, AP exams, and PSAT test dates. If you need additional help creating your plan, you can work with an independent college admissions consultant from Ivy Academic Prep.
- Attend college and career fairs. Most fairs take place in the fall at your high school or in a nearby meeting place. Your guidance counselor or school website should be able to provide you with dates and locations.
- Start making a list of colleges that interest you. Don't worry, most 9th graders haven't even thought about college yet. Just start making a list of schools that sound interesting to you.
- Plan ahead for the PSAT if your high school offers it. Be sure to mark important dates down on your calendar and create a plan for studying. The PSAT isn't as important as the SAT or the ACT, but you should still prepare for it.
- Keep your GPA up. Your GPA and class rank are the most important factor in college admissions, so set aside time for homework, develop your study skills, and make sure that you get good grades.

October-December

- Start thinking about life after high school. Take some time to start exploring jobs that are a good fit for you. Talk to other people, for example your parents and your high school guidance

counselor, about careers. You can also take personality tests, read books about how to choose a career, and take online quizzes.

- Become a good writer. Developing your writing skills now will not only improve your grades in high school, but will also help you write better college application essays and help you be more successful in college. Find an adult such as an English teacher or a professional tutor who can help you practice and improve your writing.
- Begin developing a résumé and update it at least once per semester. This list of extracurricular activities, awards, accomplishments, and work experience will be helpful when you fill out your college applications.

January-February

- Start researching scholarship opportunities. You can apply to some college scholarships as early as your 9th-grade year!
- Explore summer opportunities such as internships, camps, volunteer opportunities, summer jobs, and programs on college campuses. Not only is the summer a great time to have fun, but it is also the perfect time to learn about what you want to do after high school. In many ways, your summer experiences will teach you more about what careers that you want to have than your high school courses will. Be sure to give your summer plans serious thought.
- Meet with your counselor to discuss and create your sophomore class schedule. You should enroll in the most challenging courses. Also, make sure that you are on track to meet your academic requirements for college admissions such as foreign language requirements and AP requirements.
- Become involved. If you aren't involved in community service or other volunteer activities, you should begin now.

March-May

- Tour a college campus. Try to visit at least a local college or university if you live near one. If you are traveling or taking a family vacation, you can also visit a college campus during that time. Many schools also offer “virtual tours” on their websites. Even if you aren't interested in the college you are visiting, it is a valuable learning experience where you can discover more about college life and what kinds of things you should be looking for as you search for your “best fit” school.



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- Continue exploring careers. Use online tools such as the College Board’s “Big Future” website to learn about career paths, projected income levels, how different college major prepares you for careers, and more. If you are lost and you don’t know what you want to do, ask your guidance counselor for help.
- Create a summer reading list. Ask your teachers for help since they will know which books will help you with your classes next year. But your main goal should be to read for fun and to spend some time at the library every few weeks learning more about the topics and careers that interest you most.

Note: This checklist is just a resource to help you get started. You should always be checking in with your guidance counselor and scrutinizing the admissions requirements of the schools that you want to attend to make sure that you are on track. And, remember, if you have questions or if you need assistance, Ivy Academic Prep is here to help! Just email us at contact@ivyacademicprep.com