



## Prepare Yourself for Education Beyond High School

**If you're thinking about education beyond high school, here are things you can do to prepare yourself:**

- Take challenging courses in high school. Work hard to learn as much as you can and get good grades. Begin thinking about future career possibilities.
- Participate in a variety of extracurricular and volunteer activities. In addition to benefiting you, your high school, and community, these can improve your chances of being admitted to post-secondary schools and earning scholarships.
- Talk with your parents or guardians. They may be able to help you in a number of ways such as evaluating schools, studying for placement tests, and visiting schools with you.
- Meet with counselors at your high school. They can advise you about school admissions applications. They can also give you details about registering for placement tests, write recommendations for you, and provide encouragement.
- Prepare for any tests that may be required. Note the registration deadlines carefully. Generally, you should register at least six weeks ahead of the test so you have time to study and avoid late registration fees.
- By your junior year in high school, start to consider what you're looking for in a post-secondary school. Remember, everyone's situation and goals in life are a little different. A four-year college degree isn't right for everyone. Ask yourself questions such as:
  - » What subjects, skills, and possible careers most interest me? What schools offer strong programs in those areas?
  - » What type of school would be best-suited to my interests and goals: a trade school, technical training, junior college, community college, or university?
  - » Where do I want to live while going to school? At home or on campus? In a city or in a small town?
  - » What size school do I want to attend? What class and campus size suit me best?
  - » What extracurricular activities interest me? Campus newspaper? Sports teams? Music? Find out what different schools have to offer.
- Based on your answers to these questions, review the brochures of schools that interest you. Narrow your list to three to six prospective schools.
- Visit the schools that interest you. If possible, visit during the school year when classes are in session.
- Contact admissions counselors at the schools. Like high school counselors, they can provide you with information about admissions, scholarships, and school-specific details, such as the tests they require to apply.
- Stay organized in your school search process. Create a file folder of information on each prospective school and keep track of all important dates on a single calendar.

## **Prepare yourself for education beyond high school (continued)**

### **Suggested Timeline**

#### **Your Junior Year**

- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible.
- Attend post-secondary school information nights and career fairs.
- Take applicable entrance exams (your guidance counselors should have test schedules and registration materials).
- Explore different schools online and schedule school visits.
- Start a scholarship search online.

#### **Your Senior Year**

##### **September**

- Meet with your guidance counselor to evaluate your choice of schools, based on your placement test scores, your grade point average, and extracurricular activities.
- Contact schools for admission and financial aid applications.
- Continue your scholarship search.

##### **October**

- Decide at which schools you'd like to apply. Apply to several schools, including at least one "safety" school, where you know you'll probably be accepted, several where you'll probably be accepted, and one or two "reach" schools.
- Secure recommendations from teachers, employers, or other adults. Give them at least a month to complete your recommendation.
- If your schools require application essays, begin thinking about topics now and start drafting outlines.

##### **November**

- Find out your schools' application deadlines, and be sure your information is submitted on time.
- Schedule campus visits and admission interviews.

##### **December**

- Decide where you want to live next year and submit your housing application.
- Keep an eye on scholarship deadlines.

##### **January**

- Attend financial aid nights to learn more about education financing.

## **Prepare yourself for education beyond high school (continued)**

### **Your Senior Year (continued)**

#### ***February***

- Provide your high school guidance counselor with the necessary mid-year grade forms, if your schools require them.
- Register for advanced placement tests, if applicable.
- Continue to complete scholarship applications.

#### ***March***

- About four weeks after submitting the FAFSA, you will receive your Student AID Report (SAR) containing your financial information and Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Schools use this to determine our financial aid package, so be sure it's accurate.
- You should begin receiving your admissions decisions from schools around this time.

#### ***April***

- Compare financial aid awards from different schools. Keep this in mind as you consider which school to select.
- If your financial aid package is not enough to cover your costs, consider the Federal PLUS Loan (Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students), which allows parents to borrow up to the full cost of attendance minus other aid received. Also, consider private student loans.
- It's time to make your final choice. Notify your schools of your decision to accept or decline their offer of admission. Many schools have acceptance deadlines in April or early May.

#### ***May***

- Relax. The hard part is behind you—enjoy the last few weeks of high school!
- Make sure your final transcripts are sent to the school you will attend.

#### ***Summer***

- Save money from your summer job and buy the things you will need for school gradually over the summer.
- Be aware of freshman orientation dates. If you miss your orientation, you may not be able to register for classes until you attend.
- Good luck in your future education!