

# PREPARING FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

## FRESHMAN YEAR CHECKLIST

**Transitioning from middle school to high school** can be an exciting yet daunting time. As a high-achieving, low-income student, you may feel like you must pave your own path. Whether or not you are thinking ahead to college, freshman year is the perfect opportunity to build a foundation for a successful high school career.

### STARTING STRONG

Meet with your counselor early in the year to discuss your high school goals and college interests. Ask as many questions as you can! Gain a good understanding of how your middle school career transitions to high school.	
Set a good tone for your high school career by building good habits, like keeping a weekly planner, having dedicated homework time, or being active in the classroom.	
Start building good relationships with your teachers, counselors, and even school administrators.	

### COURSEWORK

Talk to your counselor about advanced courses and tracks offered at your school. Exploring options early is important! Your school may have policies or you may experience scheduling conflicts (e.g., certain AP courses only being offered in the Fall or Spring semester, or at the same time as specific athletics/music programs).	
Map out a rough four-year <a href="#">coursework plan</a> . It's okay if things change, but having a basic plan will give you something to refer to and build upon.	
We recommend that you take at least one course per core subject area every year. Core subjects include Math, Science, History/Social Studies, English, and Foreign Language.	

### EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Continue extracurricular activities from middle school that you want to develop. Explore activities that you're excited about trying in high school. Colleges like to see longevity and depth in your involvement.	
Be on the lookout for community service projects or part-time jobs.	

#### DID YOU KNOW?

QuestBridge's 40 college partners are dedicated to meeting [100% of students' demonstrated financial need](#).

### COLLEGE-BOUND

Start saving for college. A little goes a long way, and collecting loose change or summer job income over four years could be a good idea.	
Begin your <a href="#">college research</a> . Explore the <a href="#">40 QuestBridge college partners</a> on our website to get started.	
Prepare for the PSAT and/or PreACT tests. The National Merit Scholarship is a prestigious national award for which you can only qualify if you score well on the PSAT. This will help you prepare for the <a href="#">SAT and ACT</a> .	
Take <a href="#">summer</a> school/community college/online courses to enhance your academic record.	



**THE STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER**

Visit our [website](#) for more information dedicated to equipping high-achieving, low-income students, including:

- Coursework planning FAQs
- Maximizing your summers
- [Checklists](#) for each grade

# PREPARING FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

## SOPHOMORE YEAR CHECKLIST

**Sophomore year is your opportunity to feel more comfortable and focused.** Take what you learned from your first year in high school and put it toward this year! Your sophomore year can help set the tone for your junior and senior years, when you will be very focused on college admissions.

### COURSEWORK

Schedule a meeting with your counselor in the beginning of the school year. Evaluate your freshman year and plan the years ahead of you. Discuss your progress and potential future plans.	
Take rigorous classes, including <a href="#">AP/IB/Honors level courses</a> . Be aware of pre-requisites you may need to take this year to qualify for junior and senior year classes.	
If you are interested in a science major or career, take the most rigorous courses (including honors, AP, or IB) available in those areas.	

### STANDARDIZED TESTING

Take the PSAT or PreACT. Check “yes” to the box that allows other organizations to contact you, so you can hear from scholarship programs, summer programs, and colleges.	
In the spring, consider taking <a href="#">SAT Subject Tests</a> in one or more subjects you took throughout the year. This is a good option if you are highly comfortable with the material from the year.	
Prepare for the SAT/ACT. Visit our <a href="#">Standardized Testing page</a> for more information and tips.	

### EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Continue to participate in meaningful extracurricular activities. If the activity you’re interested in doesn’t exist at your school, start a new club. Enlist the support of family, friends, classmates, and teachers if you need.	
Think about running for leadership positions this year or next.	

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Attending a top college can be [more affordable for low-income students](#) than your public state school or local community college.

### SUMMER AND COLLEGE RESEARCH

Take ownership of <a href="#">your summer</a> . Register for summer school, community college, or online courses. Always challenge yourself academically.	
Participate in summer enrichment programs offered by organizations and colleges. Look for programs that offer financial assistance.	
Look for working professionals you can shadow. Job-shadowing is a great way to explore and experience specific careers and industries.	
Get to know <a href="#">college campuses!</a> Visit local campuses, attend fly-in programs, or use free online virtual tours.	
Research <a href="#">QuestBridge college partners</a> and get ready for the <a href="#">College Prep Scholars Program</a> for juniors.	



**THE STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER**

Visit our [website](#) for more information dedicated to equipping high-achieving, low-income students, including:

- Differences in SAT/ACT
- Maximizing your summers
- [Checklists](#) for each grade

# PREPARING FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS JUNIOR YEAR CHECKLIST

**Junior year is an important time in preparing for college admissions.** Your classes become more challenging, standardized tests feel more significant, and more people around you may start thinking or talking about college. You can do it! Keep yourself organized and on track by using our checklist.

## AT SCHOOL

Schedule a meeting with your counselor in the beginning of the school year. Evaluate your past two years and plan for what is ahead. Discuss your progress and potential future plans.	
Take the most rigorous classes available that you can manage. Remember, these will be the most recent grades available to colleges. Visit our <a href="#">Coursework FAQs</a> if you have questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>What should I do if I am struggling to balance my other responsibilities with school?</i></li> <li>- <i>What if it's not possible to take advanced/honors/AP classes because of scheduling conflicts or school policies?</i></li> </ul>	
Continue to participate in meaningful extracurricular activities. Apply or run for leadership roles. Colleges like to see that your involvement and responsibility have been steady or even increasing over the years.	
Develop strong relationships with your core subject teachers. You will need <a href="#">recommendation letters</a> for both your College Prep Scholars Program and National College Match applications.	

## STANDARDIZED TESTING

See if the colleges you are interested in have <a href="#">requirements or recommendations</a> .	
Take the SAT or ACT as early as you are prepared to take it. If you want to apply early to college in the fall of your senior year, leave time to retake the test.	
Register early for fee waivers. Some colleges determine eligibility for application fee waivers based on if you were granted waivers for your standardized tests.	
Take <a href="#">SAT Subject Tests</a> in the summer in your strongest academic subjects. Some colleges require or recommend that you submit two SAT Subject Test scores.	

### DID YOU KNOW?

Your College Prep Scholars Program application carries over to your [National College Match](#) application. You can edit your application, but it will help to have a head start!

The [majority of College Prep Scholars are selected](#) as National College Match Finalists.

## COLLEGE PREP SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Apply to the QuestBridge <a href="#">College Prep Scholars Program</a> in February. If you are selected, take full advantage of the awards and/or resources offered.	
Draft college application essays. Applying to the College Prep Scholars Program will help you get a head start on <a href="#">essay writing</a> .	

### THE STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER

Visit our [website](#) for information dedicated to equipping high-achieving, low-income students, including [checklists](#) for each grade, essay writing tips, and a sample standardized testing calendar.

## COLLEGE RESEARCH

Discover different college campuses! Visit local colleges in person or go online to use free virtual tours. Find out what's a good fit for you.	
Sign up online for college mailing lists to receive information and alert admissions offices of your interest. Attend online information sessions and <a href="#">webinars</a> .	
Think about your academic and career interests and <a href="#">research</a> to determine which colleges offer programs in these areas.	

# PREPARING FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS THE SUMMER BEFORE YOUR SENIOR YEAR

**How are you spending the summer before your senior year?** In addition to [activities](#) like working, volunteering, or taking classes, summer is the perfect opportunity to research colleges and prepare for the admissions process. Set a goal number of hours per week dedicated to set yourself up for success. Use the checklist below to help organize your efforts.

## GENERAL PREPARATION

Determine your favorite places to study and concentrate, like your home, local library, or a cafe.	
Seek a community that can support you, such as family members, teachers, friends and peers, older students who have applied to college, mentors from jobs or extracurriculars, or online communities.	
Self-reflect and create a list of three academic and/or career areas you are interested in. Participate in Q&A!	
Have an open mind toward <a href="#">colleges</a> you are unfamiliar with, and consider opportunities that seem beyond reach. Top colleges can be <a href="#">more affordable</a> for low-income students than public or community colleges.	

## COLLEGE RESEARCH

Sign up online for college mailing lists to receive information and alert admissions offices of your interest.	
Get to know college campuses! Visit local campuses, attend fly-in programs, or use free online virtual tours.	
Attend online information sessions and webinars hosted by colleges you are interested in.	
Review standardized testing <a href="#">requirements or recommendations</a> and determine if you need to take the SAT, ACT, and/or SAT Subject Tests. If SAT Subject Tests are required, we suggest taking them in June.	

## STANDARDIZED TESTING

Register early for test dates and fee waivers, and note the different locations and times.	
Map out your test preparation and testing dates on a calendar to pace yourself and be best prepared. Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____    Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____ Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____    Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____	
Prepare for exams using study books and online resources, such as lessons and practice tests/questions.	

## COLLEGE APPLICATION

Begin brainstorming your outline for <a href="#">application essays</a> . Some prompts are available on college websites!	
Think about which teachers to ask for recommendation letters. Visit our website for <a href="#">helpful criteria</a> .	
Get ready for the National College Match application to open in late summer and research colleges to rank.	

# PREPARING FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS SENIOR YEAR CHECKLIST

Now that you are nearing the end of your high school career, you may feel like you want to take it easy. However, it's important to work harder than ever and finish strong. As a high-achieving, low-income student, there may be more opportunities out there for you than you realize. Use our checklist as a kick-off point or guide throughout the year.

## AT SCHOOL

Continue to take the most <a href="#">rigorous coursework you can</a> , making sure you are taking a class in each core subject. Colleges want to know that you are dedicated to learning as much as you can!	
Have conversations with your teachers and counselor about college applications. Continue to develop strong relationships with them so you can ask for <a href="#">recommendations</a> and other application materials.	
Seek involvement or leadership positions in your extracurricular activities. This demonstrates to colleges that you dive deep into your passions, and that you will find ways to be involved in your college community.	

## COLLEGE APPLICATION

Use our <a href="#">worksheet</a> to help you brainstorm and explore college essay topics. Ask for feedback from others.	
Read through our <a href="#">Detailed FAQs</a> about mechanics, structure, and content of a successful college essay.	
Map out your preparation and testing dates on a calendar to do as well as you can on <a href="#">standardized tests</a> . Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____ Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____ Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____ Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____	

## COLLEGE RESEARCH AND FINANCIAL AID

Have an open mind toward <a href="#">colleges</a> you are unfamiliar with, and consider opportunities that seem beyond reach. Top colleges can be <a href="#">more affordable</a> for low-income students than public or community colleges.	
Visit the <a href="#">Paying for College</a> section of our Student Resource Center to learn about the basics of financial aid.	
Use <a href="#">net price calculators</a> to estimate what your financial aid package might look like at different colleges.	

## NATIONAL COLLEGE MATCH

View all dates and deadlines for the National College Match. Learn more about the process and timeline and see if this could be your <a href="#">path to a top college!</a>	
View our <a href="#">QuestTips videos</a> to walk through different parts of the National College Match application.	
Visit our <a href="#">How to Apply page</a> for a list of application components, resources, and requirements.	

### DID YOU KNOW?

Match Scholarship Recipients are granted early admission to one of QuestBridge's 40 college partners with a [full four-year scholarship](#).

Our college partners are dedicated to meeting [100% of students' demonstrated financial need](#).