

12th Grade Checklist

Fall

College Planning

- Attend college information events in your community (www.collegenights.org)
- Check college websites for applications, deadlines, financial aid and housing information
- Ask your counselor to evaluate your transcript for high school graduation and college eligibility
- Register to take or retake college entrance exams
 - Several colleges are test optional—check www.fairtest.org/test-optional-list for the most comprehensive list
 - SAT (www.collegeboard.org)
 - ACT, with optional writing section (www.act.org)
- Keep your test scores, resume and transcript organized to help in completing college applications
- Ask teachers or counselors for letters of recommendation
- Finalize portfolios, audition materials or writing samples if required as part of the application
- Get feedback from a college advisor, teacher or parent/guardian and complete revisions of all applications and essays
- Begin to submit college applications

Financial Aid

- Review the financial aid application process and timeline required by the colleges on your list
- File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/afsa>)
 - Information from the 2024 tax year will be used by the class of 2026 when applying for financial aid for the 2026-2027 academic year
- Attend financial aid workshops in your community for help completing the FAFSA
- Be aware that private colleges may require additional financial information from the CSS Profile (<https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org>)
- Check your state financial aid websites for more information about in-state financial aid opportunities for undocumented, DREAMer and DACA students (www.ecmc.org/students/resource-guides.html)
- Search and apply for scholarships (www.fastweb.com, <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>)
- Review your FAFSA Submission Summary once the FAFSA has been processed and make any needed corrections
- Males: Plan to register for Selective Service when you turn the age of 18; federal law requires nearly all male U.S. citizens and male immigrants, ages 18-25, to register with Selective Service; some states require registration before distributing state-based financial aid (www.sss.gov)

Winter

College Application Follow-Up

- Check your email frequently for additional information colleges might request within their timeline
- Send your mid-year transcript to colleges that request them
- Continue scholarship searches over winter break and continue to submit applications

Spring

Academics

- Keep up your grades—college admissions are conditional and can be rescinded if you do not continue academic excellence
- Check with the colleges where you have applied before considering dropping a 12th grade year class; colleges expect you to complete all of the high school courses you listed as "in progress" on your admissions application
- Take your Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) exams

College Decision

- Check your email or college admissions portal for admission decision notification
- Visit campuses that most interest you
- Carefully review your financial aid offer for each college where you have been accepted and compare offers; contact financial aid offices to answer questions or update them on any changes to your family's financial situation
- Finalize your financial aid; accept your financial aid offer or work with the college's financial aid office to adjust it
- If you'll be attending a four-year college, notify and place a deposit at the college of your choice by National College Decision Day (May 1)

College Admissions Follow-Up

- Sign into your college portal and review your task list and deadlines
- Check your email for correspondence and deadline reminders
- Request your final transcript be sent to your college choice from your high school registrar before the deadline
- Request AP and IB scores be submitted to your college choice
- Ask about college placement tests—some colleges require them for certain subjects, such as English and math; make sure to register in time and study beforehand
- Sign up for summer and/or fall orientation; some are mandatory and some have a cost
- Figure out housing—if living on campus, complete any roommate survey forms, sign the housing contract and submit a housing deposit to make sure you have a reserved room



The **12th Grade Checklist** is part of the 2025-2026 *Opportunities Preparing for College Guide and Workbook*. This free college planning publication provides students and families with important information and tools to guide their pursuit of postsecondary education. These books are available in English and Spanish. Full PDFs of each *Opportunities* booklet can be downloaded at www.ecmc.org/opportunities.

Summer—Final Steps!

Orientation

- Attend orientation; at orientation, you will register for your classes; you may also take English, math or world language assessments

Paperwork and Payments

- Check your college email account and log into your college's student portal every few days for important notices for new students
- Download your college's health forms and see your doctor; colleges may require evidence of immunizations
- Most four-year colleges require students to have health insurance, so you may see it on your fall bill; if you don't want it, you must opt out
- Research tuition payment options—tuition payments are due at the beginning of the term
- Search your student portal for “FERPA waiver” and submit a completed form to your college if you want your parents/guardians to access your student account (bill, grades, etc.)
- Ask your high school to send your final transcript to your college

College Finances

- Work and save money for college
- Make a budget with your parents/guardians (www.ecmc.org/studentseducators/student-resources/financial-awareness-basics-fab)
- View your class syllabus for required textbooks; consider buying used books, which cost less than new; you may also be able to save money by shopping for books online, downloading PDFs, buying e-books or renting books
- Some college instructors/institutions have shifted to open educational resources (OERs). OERs are learning, teaching and research materials that are in the public domain, making them available at no cost and accessible for a wider audience. Here are a few resources to explore: the University of Minnesota Open Textbook Library (<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks>), OER Commons (<https://oercommons.org/>) and OpenStax (<https://openstax.org/>)

Living on Campus

- Check out a sample packing list and start packing (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/plan-for-college/after-youve-applied/off-to-college-checklist>)
- Consider creating a roommate agreement (www.collegexpress.com/articles-and-advice/student-life/articles/living-campus/how-make-your-own-college-roommate-agreement)
- Set expectations on how and when you will communicate with your family while away at college
- Make any necessary travel arrangements; buy travel tickets (plane, train, bus) and make hotel reservations early (if necessary)

Living at Home

- Develop boundaries with your family and let them know that your first obligation is your studies, so you're not available while at school
- Identify a study space at home

Support

- Search your college website for academic advising or counseling services to learn more about these free resources available to you; www.activeminds.org is another free resource used to help yourself or your friends with topics related to mental health
- Check your student portal or college website so you don't miss out on any virtual or local welcome events for students before classes start
- Send thank-you notes to everyone who helped in your college process, such as counselors and teachers who wrote letters of recommendation and scholarship providers who provided you funding for college

