

# THE ULTIMATE

# GUIDE TO LIFE

## BEFORE COLLEGE

Let the countdown to college begin! Use this comprehensive checklist from eighth grade to high school graduation.



### 8TH GRADE

In a nutshell: Map out your high school education plan!

- ☐ **BEGIN YOUR STUDENT SUCCESS PLAN.** Work with your school's advisor to create a personalized education plan that will help prepare you for high school, college, career and community engagement. This can help you plan for the future by enrolling in classes that are suited to your specific career goals.
- ☐ **TAKE HARDER CLASSES.** Find classes that roll over for high school credit like foreign languages.
- ☐ **JOIN CLUBS AND STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS. SIGN UP FOR EXTRACURRICULARS AND SPORTS.** This is a good way to discover your strengths and passions, as well as start earning experience for the resume you'll need during your junior and senior years of high school.
- ☐ **GET A JUMP ON SCHOLARSHIPS.** Seems too far off, right? Wrong. There are scholarships out there for proactive middle schoolers and high schoolers to start building their college fund.



### 9TH GRADE & 10TH GRADE

In a nutshell: It's all about grades; your only job right now is to be a great student!

- ☐ **MEET WITH YOUR COUNSELOR ONCE PER SEMESTER.** Share your goals for high school and after graduation. Create your academic plan.
- ☐ **GET GOOD GRADES.** Believe it or not, your freshman year academic performance can set up your GPA for the rest of your high school career.
- ☐ **SIGN UP FOR EXTRACURRICULARS.** Sign up for student clubs, organizations and sports!
- ☐ **VOLUNTEER.** Give back through local nonprofits and charities. You'll want to be well-rounded as a student when applying for scholarships and as a citizen of the world.
- ☐ **MAKE NOTE OF ANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OR ACHIEVEMENTS** in your academics or extracurriculars (in and out of school). Always be looking ahead to your college resume. Colleges and universities want to know that you're well-rounded.
- ☐ **START TAKING PRACTICE ACT TESTS.** And take the PSAT (if it's offered!).
- ☐ **THINK ABOUT COLLEGES AND MAJORS.** Attend the college fair at your high school.

### 11TH GRADE

In a nutshell: Take the ACT or SAT, and tour colleges.

- ☐ **MEET WITH YOUR GUIDANCE COUNSELOR.** Check on your graduation requirements. Work together on your senior schedule.
- ☐ **ENROLL IN AP AND/OR DUAL-CREDIT COURSES THAT TRANSFER TO COLLEGE.** This cuts down on the cost of your future tuition.
- ☐ **TAKE THE PSAT DURING THE FALL SEMESTER** in hopes of qualifying to be a National Merit Scholar or Finalist. This distinction comes with a lot of scholarship money.
- ☐ **PREPARE FOR YOUR ACT AND/OR SAT.** Take practice tests or start taking the tests early to start building your score. Find out what scores you need to make to get into your first-choice college.
- ☐ **TAKE THE ACT AND/OR SAT.**
- ☐ **ATTEND YOUR HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE FAIR.**
- ☐ **TOUR COLLEGES.** Use every college visit day your high school grants you.
- ☐ **DRAFT YOUR RESUME.** Prepare for next year's college applications.

### 12TH GRADE

#### FIRST SEMESTER

In a nutshell: Apply to college!

- ☐ **MEET WITH YOUR GUIDANCE COUNSELOR.** Check in on your graduation requirements. Do any still need to be met?
- ☐ **ONE LAST CHANCE TO TAKE (OR RETAKE ) THE ACT OR SAT.** Check the score needed at your school of choice, study hard and go get it!
- ☐ **PREPARE YOUR APPLICATION(S).** Organize all the necessary documents. It's time for letters of recommendation, ordering transcripts from your counselors and polishing your resume. Make sure your test scores get sent to your prospective schools.
- ☐ **APPLY, APPLY, APPLY!** Apply to your dream schools and at least *one* safety school.
- ☐ **FILL OUT FAFSA.** States, schools and the federal government have different FAFSA deadlines. Submit your FAFSA form early.
- ☐ **RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS** and start applying for as many as possible.

#### SECOND SEMESTER

In a nutshell: Choose a college and get scholarships!

- ☐ **NOTIFY THE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY OF YOUR DECISION.** Don't feel pressured to declare a major right now. You have time, but it's important to start thinking about it.
- ☐ **APPLY FOR HOUSING, IF NEEDED, AS SOON AS YOU'RE ACCEPTED.** The earlier you apply, the better options you may have.
- ☐ **GO AFTER SCHOLARSHIPS.** If you haven't already applied for scholarships, now is the time to hit panic mode and submit applications.
- ☐ **DON'T LET "SENIORITIS" TAKE AWAY YOUR MOTIVATION.** End on a high note, stay involved and stay on top of your grades.
- ☐ **REQUEST YOUR FINAL HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT.**
- ☐ **SIGN UP FOR NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION** at your college.
- ☐ **MAKE LASTING MEMORIES** with your classmates.
- ☐ **WRITE A THANK YOU LETTER TO YOUR FAVORITE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER(S).**

