

College & Scholarship Checklist for High School Juniors & Seniors

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So you're planning to go to college once you finish high school, right?
But are you really ready?

Planning for college is a two-year process. And unless a rich uncle is going to write that \$30,000 check for you, it is going to involve acquiring and submitting financial aid forms, scholarship applications, and grant applications. But don't despair. By following the suggestions below, and by carefully monitoring the process, you should be buying college textbooks before you know it. Keep in mind, however, that this is a process; it isn't like taking one test and getting an A. It requires diligence, double-checking, and follow-up.

When you are a high school JUNIOR:

- Take the [SAT](#) and/or [ACT](#)...this is a must. Juniors should plan to take one or both of these tests by December or January. Most students need to repeat these tests at least once, if not more. Taking it early allows more opportunities to retest if necessary.
- Keep your grades up! Remember that colleges look at your entire high school academic record when making admissions decisions: what you do in 9th through 11th grade is just as important as what you do as a high school senior.
- Consider college options. Decide what is important to you: Location? Curriculum? Size? Diversity? Athletics? Social life?
- Keep an eye on your local papers and community bulletin boards for college nights and open houses; talking to representatives at college fairs is a great way to find out about the colleges you are considering.
- Begin making visits to college campuses. The earlier you start visiting schools, the easier it will be to make a final decision next year. Be sure to meet with staff in the admissions office. Make appointments with people in specific programs/majors that you may be interested in. Arrange a tour of the campus that includes dining facilities and dorms.
- Research your scholarship and grant options. Utilize the most accurate customized scholarship search service available on the Internet, such as [ScholarshipExperts.com](#), [fastweb.com](#), [cappex.com](#). There are many free websites to search for scholarships. There is no need to pay for this service.
- Make an effort to be involved in your community or in extra-curricular activities at school.
- Join a club, do a service project, sign up for a committee at your church. Admissions officers and scholarship providers will want to see evidence of your leadership and commitment to service when they review your applications next year.

In the FALL of your SENIOR year:

- Select the colleges that interest you most, as soon as you enter your high school homeroom. Don't delay. Check out web sites for information you can obtain online. All college applications can be completed online.

- Check the LHS website, www.lburg.k12.in.us, every month for the updated "Senior Newsletter" from the Guidance Office. This newsletter will contain information about college fairs, campus visit events, scholarships, financial aid, and more. It is the responsibility of the student and parent to obtain and complete scholarship applications.
- Sign up to re-take the SAT or ACT. Buy a study guide or sign up for a test prep course to take before the actual test date. Believe it or not, you CAN improve your test scores by taking them a second time, and better scores could affect your ability to get scholarships!
- If possible, visit any colleges you can. Find out when there are prospective student activities or if you can sign up to "shadow" an existing college freshman.
- Pay attention to early admission deadlines. By October or November, submit applications for early decision programs.
- Attend a financial aid presentation. These are offered at schools, libraries, and college campuses.
- Narrow your list of intended colleges, and make sure you have all the financial aid forms required by each school. Required documents may not be the same at each school, so pay close attention to what each requires.

In the SPRING of your SENIOR year:

- Complete and submit the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) immediately (it can be submitted anytime after January 1st, so long as you are a high school senior or college student). Call 1-800-4-fed-aid; the online address is <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. The FAFSA form can also be obtained from high schools, colleges, and local libraries. Do not put this off for months and months as some state funding programs require submission of this federal form as early as mid-March. Make a copy for yourself. Parents should compile income tax information and complete taxes early. Remember, all U.S. students should complete this form, regardless of income, as it is required not only for federal funding, but also for some state and institutional funding as well.
- Verify that you have submitted all required financial aid forms in a timely manner to the financial aid offices of the colleges you've applied to.
- Be sure to send in your scholarship applications on time; several scholarships have spring deadlines. Check regularly on the **LHS Website for the Guidance Newsletter and the college websites** to find even more awards during the winter and spring months.
- Verify that you have received your Student Aid Report (SAR). You will receive it online after you have submitted your FAFSA.
- Compare financial aid packages when you receive admissions notifications. Look for the best rather than the most.
- Finalize your college choice and notify the college of your plans to enroll.
- Sign and return financial aid forms to the university you plan to attend.
- Send your final transcript and student loan application.
- Notify the schools whose enrollment offers you decline.

Now celebrate! You are about to enter one of the most amazing times of your life, and one that will change you forever. Make the most of your college experience, and remember to study. It is important to maintain your GPA so that you can maintain your scholarships throughout your college career.