THE COLLEGE PLAYBOOK

USC Rossier
Center for Enrollment Research, Policy and Practice
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Do you want to go to college when you graduate high school? Here's what you need to do to make yourself a competitive candidate.

BATTER UP: IMPORTANCE OF HIGH SCHOOL

I. Why does it matter?

A. Beginning in 9th grade, you have an opportunity to build your application.
   ● Colleges look at everything 9th-12th grade
   ● Key things to build:
     ○ GPA
     ○ School and community involvement
     ○ Connections with teachers

II. How to Prepare for College while in High School

A. Here are some ways you can prepare for college beginning in 9th grade.
   ● Stay on top of your school work.
   ● Learn to stay organized.
   ● Balance extracurriculars and school work.
   ● Build connections with teachers, coaches, and other staff and faculty.
   ● Take advantage of tutoring if you are struggling in any classes.
1ST BASE: POST HIGH SCHOOL PLANS

I. Career and Major Exploration

A. Do Your Research
   ● There are so many different majors and careers that you can pursue.
   ● Ask your teachers/ counselors questions.
   ● Try to talk to someone in that field.

B. Career Exploration Resources:
   ● Quizzes and information that can help you find potential careers based on your interests, skills, values, and preferences:
     ○ Big Future
     ○ California Career Zone
     ○ CareerOneStop
     ○ Choices 360 (Check out this video on how to take the Interest Profile and Career Key Assessments)
     ○ Goshen College
2ND BASE: HIGH SCHOOL COURSEWORK

I. Explore Your High School Coursework

A. **Choose your classes wisely.**
   - Emphasize subjects that align with your career interest.
   - What Advanced Placement/Honors classes does your school offer?

B. **Every grade matters so try your best to get the best grades you can.**
   - Retake A-G classes if you received a D or F.

C. **Dual enrollment**
   - Does your school have a partnership with a local community college?
   - You could take college-level classes at your local community college to get college credit for FREE.

D. **What is A-G eligibility?**
   - Meeting the class requirements universities want students to complete by the end of their senior year.
   - Must have a C or better in these classes. (retake if necessary)
   - Talk to a counselor to set you on an A-G path.
   - Research what colleges require when it comes to A-G.
3RD BASE: EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

I. Extracurricular Activities

A. Be involved at your high schools.
   - What clubs are available?
   - Whether it is arts, ASB, athletics, band, choir, theatre, academic clubs, family/work obligations, or anything else, make sure you are involved in something that you are interested in.

II. Volunteer Opportunities

A. Volunteer in your local community
   - You can contact your local library, city hall, parks and recreation office to see if they need volunteers.
   - Choose activities that you are interested in.

III. Why it Matters

A. Colleges want to see how you are spending your time besides academics.
   - Being involved could help boost your college application, if you feel your grades are not the best.
B. Update your Brag Sheet
- This will help you keep track of your involvement and will help teachers write letters of recommendation for you when you apply to college.
- Fastweb - Building Your Brag Sheet

HOME BASE: COLLEGE PREPARATION

I. Build Your College List

A. Do Your Research
- University of California (UC):
  - 4 year university
  - 9 different campuses
  - GPA: 3.0+
  - Research opportunities
  - Bachelor’s Degrees
- California State Universities (CSUs)
  - 4 year university
  - 23 different campuses
  - GPA: 2.0+
  - Bachelor’s Degrees
- Private Schools
  - 4 year university
  - There are many different private schools.
  - Requirements vary, do your research on each school.
● Out-of-State Schools
  ○ Requirements vary, do your research on each school.
● Community College
  ○ 2 year college
  ○ Transfer Programs
  ○ CA College Promise Programs
  ○ Certificate and Associate Degrees

B. **Sign up for campus tours.**
- Can sign up online for a group tour or self-tour around campus.
- Visit your career center or other college access program to find out more information.

C. **What makes each college different?**
- Location
- Programs
- Extracurricular Activities
- Class size
- Cost
- Campus culture
- [College Board - College Search](https://www.collegeboard.org)

*The goal is choose a school that meets your academic and personal needs!*
II. Know Your Requirements

A. SAT/ACT Exams
   - Most schools require students to take a test.
   - Should be taken between end of junior year and beginning of senior year.
   - SAT PREP: Kahn Academy

B. Application Requirements
   - Essays: Many colleges will require you to write and submit essays.
   - Letters of Recommendation: Some colleges will ask you to provide a teacher, coach, staff or faculty member who will write a letter about you and your strengths.
   - Every college application is different, so do your research on the schools you plan on applying to.

III. How to Pay for College

A. 9-11th Grade: Start applying for scholarships.
   - Fastweb
   - GoingMerry
   - College Board - Big Future
   - Peerlift
   - MALDEF (Dreamers/AB540)
   - CollegeNet
• Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF)
• JLV College Counseling

B. 12th Grade: Submit your financial aid application.
• How Financial Aid Works
• Three different applications:
  ○ Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
  ○ California Dream Act
  ○ College Scholarship Service (CSS Profile): Some private schools and out-of-state schools may require this application IN ADDITION to FAFSA or CA Dream Act.
• Which one do you apply for?
  ○ Who can apply for FAFSA?
  ○ Who can apply for the CA Dream Act?
• How much money you receive depends on your:
  ○ GPA
  ○ Family income
• Open October-March every year.

IV. Additional Resources

A. Take advantage of summer programs at colleges.
Examples of High School Opportunities:
  ○ **The Annenberg Youth Academy for Media and Civic Engagement**
  ○ **The Intern Project**

12th Grade: Summer Bridge Programs
  ○ Ex: **EOP Summer Bridge Program, CSULB**

Visit College and Career Center or talk to your counselor to learn about more opportunities
Thank You!
Still Have Questions?

USC Rossier Center of Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice

Visit [USC CERPP](#) for more resources!

**COLLEGE ACCESS FOR ALL HOTLINE**

Monday-Friday, 9 am - 5 pm

**(323) 870-8600**

Speak directly to a college adviser who can answer your college questions.

The phone lines are staffed daily during business hours by our USC College Advising Corps (USC CAC) advisers. Via the hotline, USC CAC advisers can help you with:

- Applying to college
- Navigating financial aid
- Comparing financial aid offers
- Understanding how to pay for college during COVID-19
- Finalizing college enrollment
- And more!