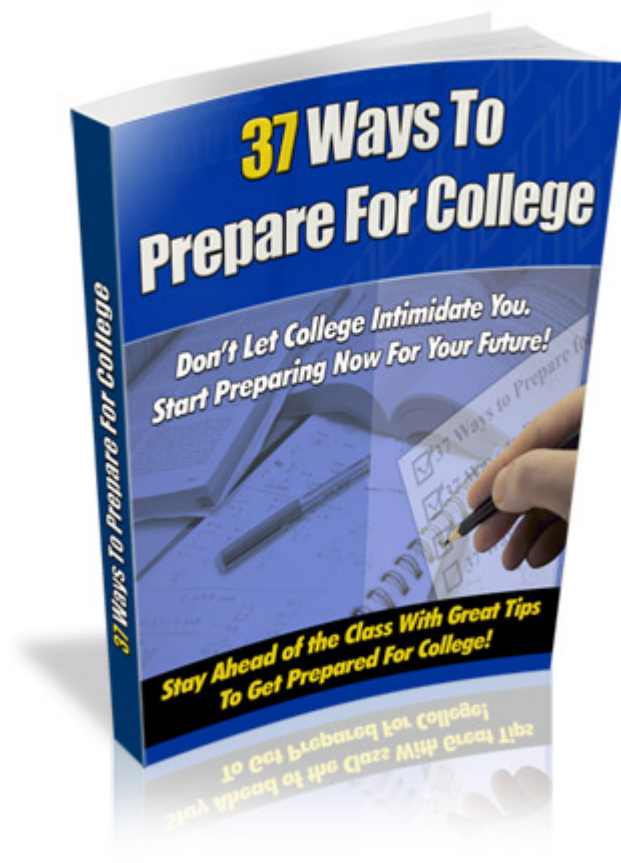


# 37 Ways to Prepare For College



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## Introduction

Getting ready for college can be difficult. The applications, the costs and the planning really take quite a bit of time, especially if you wait until the last minute to start. That's what we're here for!

This e-book will show you 37 Ways To Prepare For College, now! We'll guide you through the steps and measures you can take each year of high school to get you started on the right foot.

And, because we know how daunting the whole process can be, we're throwing in a free bonus packing list. Now, you can easily check off the items as you pack (or buy them!) so moving into the dorms is a breeze.

If you want to know what you can do right now to get ready for college, whether it's taking the right classes in high school or calling your roommate to plan what each of you will bring. We've got it all right here packaged in 30+ pages of solid information.

So, what are you waiting for? Jump right on in and learn what you can do to get ready for college right this instant.

## **Chapter 1 – As A Freshman You Can...**

As a freshman in high school, you may just be getting used to the idea of being in high school, but you should also start thinking about your college career. It may seem like a lot of pressure, but today's academic environment is very competitive, so it's a good idea to get ahead start.

The focus of your freshman year should be on laying the groundwork for what is to come. You will need to plan out your curriculum so it meets the standards of most colleges, stay in touch with your teachers, counselors and parents and try to become an involved student.

Now, without further adieu, let us begin the ways you can prepare for college during your freshman year.

### **Chapter 5 *Plan Your High School Curriculum***

You can't wait to decide the classes you'll take your senior year until your senior year. Since many colleges have stringent curriculum requirements for high school students, you need to plan ahead in order to stay in the game.

For instance, many colleges require three years of a foreign language. If you do not begin this track in either your freshman or sophomore year, you'll be unable to attend that college!

It's imperative that you find out the courses available to you and pick those you need as well as those that interest you. College administrators like to see a diverse, well-rounded student with many interests and your class schedule should reflect this.

It is also advisable to take the hardest course load you can handle. College administrators also like to see that you are up for the challenging course load you will be expected to complete during college. Taking honors classes shows that you are, indeed, up for this challenge. Plus, you have the advantage of being thoroughly prepared for college level courses after taking a rigorous high school curriculum.

You can expect to have to take courses like the following:

English: Consists of courses like Composition, Creative Writing, American Literature and English Literature. You will need four years of English courses.

History: Consists of courses like U.S. History, World History, and Geography. You will need two years of History courses\*.

Government and Economics: Consists of courses like U.S. Government, Civics and Economics. You will need one to two years of Government courses.

Math: Consists of courses like Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry and Calculus. You will need three to four years of Math courses.

Science: Consists of courses like Biology, Chemistry and Physics. You will need two to three years of Science courses.

Foreign Language: Consists of courses like Spanish, French and German. You will need two to three years of Language courses.

Electives: Consists of courses such as Art, Psychology and Music. You will need one to three years of Electives courses.

\*Note: Each college has its own admissions requirements. Be sure to talk to a counselor about individual college requirements to ensure you take the proper courses throughout your high school education.

## ***2. Discuss the next four years with your counselor***

Don't let your freshman year pass by without seeing a counselor. It may be a dreaded activity to you to schedule an appointment and sit down to discuss your future, but you'll be glad you did.

Nothing impresses a guidance counselor more than a student that is prepared. By visiting them during your freshman year, you show initiative and a real drive to obtain a quality education.

If you have questions, be sure to write them down before you go into see the counselor. This also shows that you are thinking about your future and not just when you are asked about it. This sort of drive shows counselors that you care and will really pay off come time you need a recommendation letter.

Also, make an effort to let your counselor know who you are. While they attempt to get to know all of their students, counselors see many students each day and it can be hard to keep track of them all. Make yourself stand out by sharing your interests, your summer plans and goals. When it comes time to ask for a recommendation letter, your counselor will have a wealth of information to work from. A generic letter is far less impressive than one with personal touches.

It is also a good idea to bring along a notepad to your appointment. You'll probably want to take a lot of notes. Keeping track of what your counselor says allows you to make better use of the time you spend together. You can better

prepare yourself and come up with more detailed questions if you keep a record of the information you've already obtained.

### ***3. Join clubs and extracurricular activities***

Completing your high school education with a 4.0 GPA is impressive, but not as impressive as doing so while in a club or as a member of a sports team. Colleges look at what you do with your time outside of the classroom as well. Being a diligent student is one thing, but do you manage your time well?

To put yourself above other college applicants, you can join a club during your freshman year. Many high schools offer a wide range of activities and clubs to join, everything from foreign language club to golf.

It may be difficult to balance your new high school curriculum and activities, but it can be done. It just takes a bit of discipline.

To stay on track try making a to-do list for everyday or buy a planner. Write down all of the things you absolutely must get done for each day in priority order. Many people also find it beneficial to keep track of the amount of time it will take to complete each item on the list. You can stay ahead in school and be involved on campus. It will just take some adjusting at first.

Why do colleges like to admit students that are active on campus? Because colleges want to have a well rounded student body that is active and involved. Also, showing such dedication and discipline while in high school makes it likely that you will be able to handle the rigorous demands of college courses alongside a job, activities and adult responsibilities.

### ***4. Discuss college financing with your parents***

Now is the right time to begin the discussion about funding for college with your parents. While you can't do much about securing financial aid during your freshman year, you can come up with a plan for how your family will go about paying for college.

Your parents may have been saving for your college education since you were little. Or, they may not have been so fortunate. Either way, you'll need to sit down as a family and discuss the reality of the situation. How much are your parents willing to spend on your college education? How much do they expect you to contribute? About how much do you expect to get in financial aid?

Answering these questions early on save a lot of grief during your senior year. You don't want to fill out the FAFSA and realize in the April before you start

college that you cannot afford to go due to lack of funding. There is always a way to get through school. You just need to start planning early to account for any difficulties along the way and to make sure both you and parents are on the same financial page.

### ***5. Take virtual college campus tours***

While you won't be applying to colleges for a while, you can still get a leg up on the competition by taking virtual campus tours for colleges of interest. Knowing what campuses look like, what their buildings look like and where things are located can put your mind at ease. Plus, it shows you how beautiful some colleges really are.

The best part about it is you don't have to leave the comfort of your home. Just visit the websites of colleges you're interested in and click on the virtual tour link (or something similar). You'll learn a lot and won't have to spend a dime. Plus, it can be kind of fun to browse around these different campuses.

Above all else, you'll be further preparing yourself for the college experience. Just the act of searching through college websites and locating the virtual tour section is a good exercise. You'll need to become increasingly efficient when using college websites, or any website for that matter, as your high school career moves forward.

### ***6. Volunteer over the summer***

Just lazing the day away during the summer might sound nice, you should continue to work toward making your college application look appealing. You can do this by volunteering for a community organization.

Many students' excuses range from they can't find volunteer opportunities to they don't know how to volunteer. Rest assured, the organizations you'll be working with will be glad to have your assistance. Many high schools even post volunteer opportunities on campus. Check news bulletins and boards in the office for such opportunities.

You can also find volunteer opportunities by visiting:

<http://www.serve.net.org>  
<http://volunteermatch.org>

These sites allow you to search for volunteer opportunities of interest to you



You'd be surprised. There are plenty of organizations and companies out there that would absolutely love to have your help. All you need to do is ask. The added bonus is that doing volunteer work on your own time shows dedication, commitment and empathy for the cause of others. Plus, you'll start up a good networking base that could lead to potential employment later on.

College administrators love to admit students that care about their community, can balance their schedules and work well with others. Add these excellent qualities to your resume by putting in some time with a volunteer organization.

## ***7. Learn to type***

If you don't already know how, get a handle on typing. Being able to type fast and accurately helps to keep you up to speed with your classmates and better prepares you for college.

You can take a typing class at your high school as an elective to really hone your skills. The old "hunt and peck" method may have worked for your parents, but it certainly won't work for you. With term papers, essays and applications to fill out, you'll need to have a good typing speed to keep up with the workload.

Remember: practice makes perfect. Don't worry if you're not flying through page after page right away. After a few months of diligent practicing you'll be a pro, and ready to tackle anything with a word processor.

## **Chapter 2 – As A Sophomore You Can...**

Your first year of high school is behind you and now it's time to hit the old books once again. But as you further your studies, you can continue to keep up to date with the college scene. In fact, unlike your freshman year, you can really dig in your heels this year and start making some decisions in regards to your college choice, standardized testing and financial aid. Just look at all of the things you can do.

### ***8. Come up with a list of potential colleges***

After taking those virtual tours last year, you should probably already have a good idea of the types of colleges you'd like to apply to. There are many factors that go into deciding on a campus that is right for you. You can narrow your list down by answering the following questions:

- Would to prefer to attend a small school or a large school?
- Do you want to live at home or live in the dorms?
- Do you want to go to a school that is close to home or far away?
- What major are you most interested in?
- How much can you spend on a college education?
- Do you prefer small, intimate classes or large lecture hall classes?
- How selective of a school would you like to go to?

After answering these questions, you should be able to narrow down your list some. For instance, if you want to go to a small school and live at home, campuses with extravagant dorm facilities and are massive in size will be off the list. Likewise, if you think you may want to be an English major, yet a potential school specializes in Mathematics, they may not be the right choice for you.

The point of this exercise is to get focused. It is best to have a good idea of the type of college you want to go to at least early on, so you know the specific classes you'll need to take in high school and to what academic standard you should be aiming.

### ***9. Take on a leadership role in a club***

You spent your freshman year joining clubs of interest and taking part in extracurricular activities. During your sophomore year, make it your objective to take on a position of leadership in one of the organizations you're involved with. Whether you're a committee member or president, your efforts to lead your classmates will be noticed on college applications.

College administrators like to see students that take initiative. If you were a leader of a club during high school, it shows initiative on your part to take control and be in charge. These skills come in handy during college when you'll be expected to make presentations or speeches. These leadership skills can be even more beneficial once you join the workforce.

If you run for a leadership position and don't make it right away, not to worry. You can always document your attempts on your college application. Your valiant efforts will not go unnoticed by the college recruiters.

And don't be afraid to think outside of the box when it comes to leadership roles. If you organize a beach clean up with your classmates or start a petition for a noteworthy cause, don't be afraid to include that on your application as well. Your leadership skills can and should branch outside of the school campus.

### ***10. Talk with your teachers and counselors regularly.***

Yes, this was included in your freshman year to-do list, but it is so very important, I just had to include it again. Talk to your counselor regularly. In order for them to help you make the best decisions regarding college, you have to make yourself available to them.

Don't be afraid to visit often. You won't get on their nerves. Just come prepared with any questions you may have and they'll appreciate your organization.

You should also make it a point to speak with your teachers on a regular basis. Your instructors see your mental prowess first hand. They are the best to evaluate your academic performance and to write letters of recommendation for you. Letting your instructor in on your goals allows them to better help you when the time comes to make big college decisions.

After all, teachers are there not just to teach, but to help their students as well. If you have any concerns regarding your classroom performance and how that will affect your college admissions, try to set up a meeting time with one of your teachers. More often than not, they are glad to help you make sense of the college prep process.

### ***11. Research the standardized tests required for college admissions***

College entrance exams can be a real pain. Let's face it. They don't exactly test your intelligence or your breadth of knowledge from high school. Rather, you need to study specifically for the test to ensure you know the kind of information that's on it.

It may seem pointless, but standardized tests are the, well, standard of most colleges regarding entrance exams.

This year, you should research the specific requirements of each of the schools on your list. The tests you will most often run across include:

- PSAT/NMSQT
- SAT Reasoning Test
- ACT
- SAT Subject Test

What do you each of these tests require? What sorts of questions will you be asked? Do your research on the specifics of these tests and pick up a handbook with a few sample questions inside.

Even though standardized tests only really matter in terms of applying to college, they matter big time in this one area. Do your best to prepare early for the exams by knowing which ones you'll need to take and what subjects you'll need a refresher course on before test day.

## ***12. Attend preparatory classes for the SAT or the ACT***

Speaking of preparing yourself, signing up for a class that prepares you for these college entrance exams is probably a good idea. The material on these tests should be familiar to you, but their presentation and formatting may be entirely new to you. Taking a class makes it so come test day, there are no surprises.

If you will be taking the SAT, you'll need to also take the PSAT, which is just a practice test to prepare you for the one that counts. You can also take PSAT classes. Do what feels best for you but keep in mind that less work doesn't mean it's the right path.

Do your best to prepare for the standardized tests you need to take now and you'll thank yourself later. Pay particular attention to your math class. Formulas and equations you learn now will most likely appear on these tests.

## ***13. Sign up for [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)***

While your primary focus should still be on your high school education, you can start planning ahead now. Sign up for <http://www.fastweb.com>. You'll have to answer several questions about yourself, but once you do, you'll receive scholarship updates, job opportunities and even internship opportunities. You can even opt to receive e-mail notification of these updates.

FastWeb is great because it allows students to get a heads up on scholarships they are eligible for. That's why you answer all of those questions at first. The results you receive are completely customized to your background, ethnicity, interests, extracurricular activities and GPA.

You can expect to frequent the site often. It also offers excellent financial aid information and resources and articles to help you get abreast of what this whole college thing is all about.

Why sign up during your sophomore year? This allows you plenty of time to become familiar with FastWeb and all it offers. So, once it's time for you to actually apply to scholarships you'll know the requirements like the back of your hand.

Being prepared is the major theme here, in case you haven't noticed. Make use of FastWeb and all of its resources and you'll definitely have a leg up on your classmates.

#### ***14. Go to college fairs***

Many high schools have college fairs, so you can also go to yours and check out local college information. But, many other college fairs are held across the country.

You can easily find a college fair near you by visiting the National Association for College Admission Counseling website at:

<http://www.nacacnet.org/MemberPortal/Events/CollegeFairs/>.

These college fairs give you an excellent opportunity to learn about many colleges all at once. It can be very expensive to visit all of the colleges on your list, so going to a college fair saves you lots of money on travel expenses.

You can even pick up brochures, applications and financial aid information for your prospective colleges. Be sure to have any questions you may have ready to ask the college representatives. Also be sure to bring a pen and pad of paper to take notes. You'll be speaking to lots of people and you won't be able to remember everything!

## Chapter 3 – As A Junior You Can...

Junior year is a hectic time. You're officially an upperclassman now, and a whole slew of new responsibilities are instilled upon you. You probably have your driver's license by now and may be working and going to school simultaneously. While you will certainly be busy, you need to keep in mind your college goals and what you can be doing now to make them a reality.

### **15. Take AP classes.**

You may feel as though your life is tough enough, but taking AP (Advanced Placement) classes offer students numerous benefits. Not only does it look good to do well in an AP class, but at the end of the year, you'll be given the opportunity to take an AP test. If you pass this test, you'll receive college credit in that course! Just think of it! You'll have college credit before even setting foot on campus!

Plus, being consistent from freshman year to senior year with high difficulty level courses shows you are dedicated and committed to your education.

When you're a freshman in college, you'll be thankful for the rigorous high school curriculum you took. College is entirely different from high school, so you can look at AP courses as a transition.

### **16. Take the PSAT**

Review your PSAT materials and register for a time and date to take the test. You can find more information on the PSAT and registration at:

<https://secure.www.fastweb.com/fastweb/resources/articles/index/103549?id=ED3HRO9UH4RK.46677377cef712d52a68bad1be3b40f2>

The PSAT doesn't count toward your college admission, but it does prepare you for the SAT. It is basically a shorter version of the SAT, but provides you with a real test environment in which to practice the questions and types of questions that will be on the real test.

The PSAT also acts as an application for the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. So, if you are interested in this scholarship, you should definitely take the PSAT.

It is true that it is not required to take the PSAT, but if you want to your best on the SAT, the test that really counts, you should try out your test taking skills on this practice test.

## ***17. Begin your search for scholarship and financial aid money***

Since you're already signed up for FastWeb, you should be in the know about the types of scholarships you can apply for. But you can also contact your counselor about scholarships that may be right up your alley.

You should also discuss your financing options with your parents. College is a major expense and you need to start saving now (if you haven't already).

Becoming familiar with the other types of aid available can be helpful as well, so you know application deadlines and what information you need to pinpoint ahead of time. Check to see if you are eligible for a grant or scholarship. Also check to see if a loan is a realistic option for you.

Another financial aid option is work-study, where you will pay for your college tuition by working on campus. There are even tax credit programs for getting through college. Do your research and find the financing options that will work best for you and your parents.

Why make this decision now? Because before you know it, financial aid applications will be due. Stay ahead of the game by learning about all of your options now.

## ***18. Take the SAT***

Besides taking the SAT, you should also expect to prepare quite a lot for the test beforehand. Your high school should offer preparatory materials to help you get acquainted with the exam and the kinds of questions you'll be asked. You can even download some of these materials with practice questions for free at:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/>

You can also sign up for a preparatory course to help you get ready for the SAT. Your school may offer some or you can visit the following websites to find out about SAT prep courses in your area.

Kaplan: <http://www.kaplan.com/>

The Princeton Review: <http://www.princetonreview.com/>

Sylvan Learning Center: <http://www.educate.com/>

Be sure to also look into online course you can take to prepare for the SAT.

It's a good idea to take your SAT in the spring of your junior year. The first testing opportunity is usually held in March. Visit this site to find out when test dates are being offered in your area:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/calenfees/calenfees2.html>

## ***19. Visit colleges on your list***

You can gain insightful information from virtual college tours, but before actually applying you should have a good idea of what campus life is like for each of your selections.

Most colleges offer campus tours for new and potential students. You need to check each individual school for information on their tour program. However, they do share many things in common. For instance, you will definitely want to attend campus tours on a weekday on a normal school day. Holidays, weekends and big campus events like graduation tend to throw a wrench in the works insofar as your ability to gauge what the campus is really like.

Spring break is a great time to get many campus tours out of the way because it will still be during the spring semester but you won't have to miss any school.

While the majority of your tour consists of walking around campus with a guide, you can do many other things as well to ensure you gain a well-rounded perspective of the campus.

For instance, you can stay overnight in one of the dorms to gain a sense of what it would be like to live there, what the students are like and the accommodations. You can eat in the cafeteria and you may even be able to schedule an interview.

You can also sit in on a class or two. What are the instructors like? What is the classroom dynamic? Does it feel like an environment you'd like to be a part of?

Have a list of questions prepared for each campus you visit. Keep a pen and pad of paper handy as you tour each campus, as well. You'll be quite busy and it's really easy to forget the details.

This is an excellent opportunity to interact with current students of your prospective schools. Are they a part of any on-campus organizations you'd be interested in joining? Ask about it! Do they enjoy their classes? Loathe their professors? Need a break? Regardless, ask current students questions to gain a



real life perspective on each campus in addition to what the scheduled tour can give you.

## ***20. Get brochures and applications from your choice colleges***

Now that you've been on the campuses of some of your selected colleges, you can collect more information. You can either request brochures and applications while on campus or by mail.

Once you receive these documents, read them thoroughly. You don't want to come across any surprise deadlines later on when you're actually applying.

Plus, having these applications on hand from the get go allows you to prepare and collect any information you may need early, so it's not a mad rush come time to fill them out. Some documents you may need include your parents' tax forms, your own tax forms, transcripts and a listing of your high school achievements.

During the summer between junior and senior year, you can get ahead start on your college application essays. Write rough drafts and show them to people whose opinions you trust. What do they think? Do you need a more focused topic? Do you have grammatical issues all over the place? Get genuine feedback on these initial drafts so you can crank out essays sure to make college administrators take notice later on.

Starting early really is the key here. Admissions essays are the gateway to the school of your dreams. You need to make sure you do your absolute best. Not too much pressure, eh?

## ***21. Apply for scholarships***

During early spring, make it a point to start applying for scholarships. You've had plenty of time now to sort through them, collect any necessary information and take note of individual deadlines. Now is the time to start applying.

You may luck out and find a scholarship or two that only requires you fill out a form for consideration. But many others require you to write an essay. "Not another essay!" you cry. Not to worry. Just think of the incentive of winning these scholarships? You'll get free money to go toward your college tuition, books or other expenses that you never have to pay back!

## **Chapter 4 – As A Senior You Can...**

It's crunch time! You have one more year of high school before delving into the world of adulthood! But try to take things one-step at a time. After all, you started planning way back in freshman year for college, right? This year shouldn't be like any other, except for the fact that all of that resourceful planning will be applied. You've worked hard for this moment. Keep plunging forward and the college of your dreams will be at your fingertips.

### ***22. Request recommendation letters from teachers and counselors***

You've been visiting your counselor for nearly four years now. They should know you and have a pretty good understanding of your goals. Who better to ask for a recommendation letter? Many colleges require recommendation letters from persons in professional standing to comment on you as a student and a person.

While your counselor is an obvious choice, you can also ask your teachers, advisors, sports coaches and employers. If you volunteered for an organization every summer, you can ask the head to write you a letter of recommendation as well. Be creative in your choices! A letter from your counselor and one from your community volunteer program leader looks a bit more impressive than two letters from teachers. Show you are a diverse and well-rounded individual based on your letters.

Another thing to keep in mind is to be courteous to those you ask for letters from. Give them at least three weeks to write the letter and get it back to you. Nothing looks more unprofessional than a last minute letter request.

Also, a week or so after receiving the letters of recommendation, write the individual a brief thank you note. After all, your counselor or instructor took time out of their life for you. You can do them the same courtesy.

### ***23. Set up a tentative college cost budget.***

Everything involved with college is expensive. There is just no way of getting around that fact. But you can help yourself by coming up with a budget.

First and foremost, college application costs can really add up. Decide how much you are willing to spend on this cost and figure out how many colleges you can apply to. Take the colleges from the top of your list and prepare to apply.

Next, figure out how much your parents are willing to spend on your college education and how much you will be expected to pay as well. Take this amount and compare it to the tuition costs of your top schools. Will it cover the costs? Or, will you require financial aid? How much funding will you receive from financial aid resources?

Figure out tentative numbers now. You don't want to be accepted to your dream college only to find out you can't go because you can't afford it.

## ***24. Write your applications essays***

You've written rough drafts over the summer, had those you trust read them over, and now it's time for the real deal. Get out your pen and paper and rewrite your applications essays. Make the changes that your favorite editors have suggested and make sure each essay is focused. If one application has a very specific prompt, be sure your essay addresses it. You can think of this sort of a prompt as a question and your essay as the answer.

If you were given a very wide prompt, make sure your essay focuses on specifics. Cite specific examples and allow others to see your unique personality.

A big college application essay no-no is to recycle essays. A generic essay is very obvious to college admissions officers. After all, they read thousands of essays and they know all of the tricks.

## ***25. Send off your applications***

The time has come to release those applications from your sight. You'll be glad to see them go after laboring over essays, and question after question. You've probably been having dreams about them they've become such a huge part of your life! But you need worry no more. Once those applications leave your hands, you can't do anything else about them.

Make sure they have enough postage and that you send them in before the specified deadlines. Also, proofread your applications one last time before letting them leave your hands.

Even though the big part of applying for college is behind you, there are still plenty of things you can do to prepare for college as you finish out your senior year of high school.

## ***26. Schedule interviews with prospective colleges***

Not all colleges require interviews for admission. But, many still do. It may seem like a big annoyance, but interviews help administrators view the face behind the application and see what it is about you that makes you so suited for their institution.

It is understandable to be nervous, but you really don't have to be. The admissions officer is not out "to get you." Rather, they just want to know what makes you different than the other thousands of students that apply to their school. Some qualities just cannot be adequately reflected on paper. Perhaps you are a very enthusiastic person and have done tons of research about your prospective school. The interview is the time and the place to show this quality.

Another way to impress during the interview is to prepare. While you can't possibly know what the admissions officer will ask you, you can prepare for some of the generalized questions they are likely to ask. For instance, they will probably ask you why you want to go to college, what you want to major in and why and why you have chosen to apply to their school.

Also, reread your application essays to have them in your mind. Many admissions officers reference students' applications as a conversation starter during the interview.

Another great way to really shine is to have a list of questions prepared. What do you really want to know about the school? Just be sure not to ask anything that is readily available in the materials they sent you!

More than anything, relax! The interview is often not the deciding factor in acceptance. It's just icing on the cake, really. So take a deep breath and prepare to answer honestly and openly.

## ***27. Fill out the FAFSA***

Beginning January 1, you can fill out the FAFSA. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid makes it possible to be eligible for financial aid. Even if you don't think you will be eligible, it is still a good idea to fill out the FAFSA.

You will need your parents and your own tax forms and financial information in order to complete the FAFSA. Also set aside a few hours to complete this form. It is quite lengthy and you will be required to answer many questions about your family's finances.

It is a good idea to fill out the FAFSA with one of your parents. You'll come across many questions that may need explaining.

The deadline for filling out the FAFSA is March 2. Within a few weeks you'll receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) with your estimated financial aid described in it. If you have any questions at that time, you can contact them for further explanation

## ***28. Select your school***

During the spring, you'll start receiving responses back from the schools to which you applied. Smile and take pride in all of those acceptance letters! Four years of hard work and dedication have really paid off!

But come May, you'll have to let the school you want to go to know you will be attending their school in the fall. You'll also have to let those schools to which you don't want to go to know that you'll be attending somewhere else.

Upon deciding to go to a certain college, you will most likely be sent a welcome package containing many forms, brochures and information on the campus. If you need information on housing, loans or other concerns, contact the admissions office to request the appropriate materials.

## ***29. Keep housing and financial aid deadlines in order***

Being accepted at your dream college is great, but finding you will be unable to live on campus can put a damper on your plans if you live in an entirely different state.

Besides requesting appropriate forms, it is necessary to also keep track of all deadlines related to your college experience. When do you need to have your housing request in by? When do you need to make your housing payment? What about financial aid forms, loan forms and other must-have materials?

In order to stay on top of it all, buy some of those cheap manila folders and label each one "Housing," "FAFSA," etc. Keep everything related to each topic inside these folders. Even better yet, you can attach a note, or write on the folder itself the deadlines for submitting all materials. This way, you'll keep on top of deadlines and have an enjoyable college experience rather than one that is preceded by chaos!

## **Chapter 5 – The Summer Before College...**

You just graduated from high school and you're on top of the world. It may feel like the end of an era, and it really is. The sad truth is that you may not see many of the familiar faces from high school again. But before you become nostalgic for simpler times gone by, stay committed to your college goals. You'll be on campus in a few short months starting an entirely new phase of your life. Enjoy this last summer before college, but keep your goals in sight.

### ***30. Get a job***

If you haven't worked before, now is the time to suck it up and get a job. Let's face it: college is expensive! By getting a job over the summer—and saving the money you earn, of course—you'll be able to buy those school supplies and books once the fall semester begins.

Even if your parents are paying for all of your college expenses or you're getting a federal grant, you will still need money to pay for food and other items, especially if you're living on campus. What if you run out of printer ink the night before a paper is due? You'll have to run down to the campus store and buy some. You obviously can't do this without some money in the bank.

Another added bonus of having a job over the summer is it will take your mind off of the impending start of college. Many people find themselves stressed out at the change college brings to their lives. Having a job keeps you productive and focused rather than sitting at home worrying.

You may even be able to buy yourself something fun before you bury your nose in books for four months and don't reappear until December. Regardless of what you do, having a job keeps you disciplined and in top shape for a fast paced environment. You'll be ready to attend classes like a pro.

### ***31. Make time for friends***

This may be the last summer you have at home. It also may be the last time you see some of your childhood friends. If you grew up in the same place you went to high school, you've probably known the same people since you were five years old! It will be sad to say goodbye, but you can make the most of this time by doing fun things with those you care about.

Be sure to collect the contact information of your closest friends. You'll want to keep in touch once you start college, and it will be too hectic at the beginning of

the semester to do such things. Exchange addresses and dorm information BEFORE you leave to move in.

You can also make an extra effort to spend time with those people that will be going to colleges far away from where you will be attending. Do things in your hometown and enjoy the home life as much as possible. In a few short months, you'll be missing it.

### ***32. Make time for yourself***

Between working and spending time with old friends, be sure to pencil in some quality time for yourself. Once college starts, you'll be really busy and may be a bit stressed out. Take this time to stay calm, cool and collected. Read a few books you've been dying to but haven't had a chance to. Have a horror movie marathon. Do what makes you most happy and soak up that free time.

If you have a bit of extra cash saved that doesn't have to go toward your college fund, why not take a trip? Everyone talks about pre-college travel, so why shouldn't you be apart of it? Take this time to go somewhere you've always wanted to go. Dying to go to France? Then go! Really want take a road trip with your closest friends? Do it! Now is the time to enjoy the "you" time you have left.

Don't forget to spend a little bit of time with your family as well. While you may not realize it now, you will miss them once you're all moved into the dorms. Talk to your family about your concerns about college. Listen to their concerns as well. Like it or not, they will always be your parents. Now is a good time to listen to their advice and allow them to help you prepare for this monumental life change.

### ***33. Make sure you have all the information you need from the college***

I've already mentioned this before, but if you don't have all of the information you need on housing, financial aid, tuition or any other concern, contact your college immediately.

It may be quite annoying to have to deal with such matters over your last summer at home, but you'll be glad you took the time out to do so. Failing to file all of your forms by their deadlines can lead to all sorts of hang-ups when it comes to registering for classes.

It would also be a real shame to be all set to go to class only to find out that your spot in the dorms has been taken due to your failure to make a down payment.

Check and re-check your deadlines to make sure everything is ready to go when you move onto campus.

### ***34. Attend a summer workshop***

Going to college is an entirely new experience. While you may be the kind of person that thinks they can do things on their own, you will need help when it comes to becoming familiar with your new school.

Most colleges offer a summer orientation program that shows new incoming freshman around the campus and provides valuable information on how college works. Some things you'll learn at such a workshop include:

- The location of important buildings and offices such as admissions, registration, financial aid, etc.
- The college's academic requirements.
- How to register for classes.
- Assistance in registering for classes.
- Tips on getting to know instructors.
- How to make the most of your college experience.
- Where to go to join clubs and become involved.

One of the most important factors of this orientation is the campus tour. Trying to find your classes without having been shown around campus first can be next to impossible. This isn't high school anymore. College campuses are huge and unless you know your way around, it's very easy to get lost.

### ***35. Register for classes***

You may have already registered at the summer workshop, or just been given instructions on how to do so at home. If you were merely given instructions, you will need to register for classes on your appointment day. Even though it may say you can register anytime after your appointment date and time, register as close to this time as possible. Incoming freshman and transfer students are on the lowest rung when it comes to registration priority.

Your appointment date and time will most likely be scheduled after most of the returning students have had a chance to register. Make sure the classes you register for all count toward your general education requirements. You're going to want to get these courses out of the way as fast as possible so you can begin focusing on your major courses.

It is also a good idea to have several "back up" classes on hand. There is no guarantee there will be room in the classes you register for. If the class is full or



you are put on the waitlist, you will need to have a back up class in mind. For many students, if your enrollment drops below 12 units or below full time, your financial aid will be lowered or dropped! Always be mindful of this.

It's tough to get all of the classes you want, but try to make your schedule as varied as possible. Four really difficult classes may not be the best way to start out your college experience. Try to mix up your schedule with a few difficult classes and a few fun-but-still-count-toward-my-degree classes.

### ***36. Call your roommate and get to know them***

You should be notified sometime during the summer of who your roommate is and their contact information. Take some initiative and call them. 99% of the time, they'll be glad you did.

Take this time to talk about yourself and ask questions about them. What are their hobbies? Where did they go to school? What are they thinking about majoring in? You get the idea.

Getting to know your roommate before you live with them can be helpful in eliminating some of the awkwardness associated with moving in day.

You don't have to become best friends over the phone, but try to be open to one another and listen. These first initial talks can really shape your relationship down the road once you are roommates.

Try to stay away from controversial topics like religion and politics. Use your best judgment when asking questions and talking in general. It's great to be open and honest, but don't divulge your entire life story. This can be off-putting and make your roommate feel uncomfortable if they don't wish to disclose as much as fast.

If, for any reason, you do not think you'll be able to live with the person selected as your roommate, contact the housing department at your college immediately. They typically do their best to make new students feel as comfortable as possible. But be warned: the housing department must meet the needs of thousands of students. Don't be discouraged or insulted if they cannot meet your request.

### ***37. Decide who's bringing what***

After you've had a few nice chats on the phone with your new roommate, be sure to bring up the topic of the dorm room itself. Who will be bringing what?

It's best to distribute the items as evenly as possible so neither of you will feel taken advantage of. One person can bring the TV while the other can bring the stereo. One can bring a bedside lamp while another can bring a chair. You see how this works?

You'll both need a computer of your own. It's going to be cramped in your dorm room, but you'll manage so long as you keep an open line of communication. If you are an only child or have never had to share a room with a sibling, this will be an entirely new experience. Just take it day by day and try to enjoy yourself.

## **Bonus – Packing For The Dorms**

You didn't think that was all, did you? This e-book is jam packed with valuable information for students getting ready to go to college. What would such an e-book be without a packing list?

Many college students-to-be frantically pack their things a day before they have to move into the dorms. This is not the best way to go. You're bound to forget something or bring way too much with you. We'll start with the bare essentials, like toiletries and clothing. Then, we'll move onto things you may have to purchase to make your dorm feel like home.

### ***The Essentials***

These are the items that you just can't live without.

#### **Toiletries**

- ☐ Toothbrush
- ☐ Toothpaste
- ☐ Towels
- ☐ Washcloth
- ☐ Sponge
- ☐ Shampoo
- ☐ Conditioner
- ☐ Soap/Bodywash
- ☐ Facial Cleansers
- ☐ Contacts/Glasses
- ☐ Contact Cleaning Solution/Case
- ☐ Deodorant
- ☐ Perfume/Cologne
- ☐ Shaving Cream/Razor
- ☐ Robe
- ☐ Nail Clippers/Nail file
- ☐ Extra Toilet Paper
- ☐ Hair Dryer

#### **Clothing**

- ☐ Hangers
- ☐ 5-10 Shirts

- ❑ 2-5 Pairs of Pants
- ❑ 1 Dressy Outfit (Suit or Dress)
- ❑ 1 Pair of Running Shoes
- ❑ 1 Pair of Dress Shoes
- ❑ 1 Pair of Everyday Wear Shoes
- ❑ Two weeks worth of undergarments

## **Bedding**

- ❑ Extra Long Sheets
- ❑ Pillowcases
- ❑ Comforter and Blankets

## **Food**

- ❑ Non-perishable Snacks
- ❑ Paper Towels
- ❑ Napkins
- ❑ Plates, Bowls and Cups
- ❑ Frozen Dinners\*
- ❑ Fresh Fruits and Vegetables\*

\*Only if you have a mini-fridge.

## ***Things To Buy***

There's just some things you will have to break down for and buy. Here are the most important things you may have to shell out some cash for prior to moving into your dorm, if you don't have them already, that is.

## **Electronics**

- ❑ Laptop or Desktop Computer
- ❑ Printer
- ❑ Word Processing Software
- ❑ Ethernet Cables
- ❑ Small TV
- ❑ Powersurge Protector
- ❑ Alarm Clock
- ❑ Telephone

## **Appliances**

- ☐ Mini-Fridge
- ☐ Microwave
- ☐ Small Fan

## **School Supplies**

- ☐ Binder With Plastic Sleeve
- ☐ Subject Separators with Tabs
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Erasers
- ☐ Lined Paper
- ☐ Printer Paper
- ☐ Spiral Notebooks
- ☐ Highlighters
- ☐ A Table-top Tray for organizing papers
- ☐ Paperclips
- ☐ Stapler/Staples
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Backpack
- ☐ Calculator
- ☐ Dictionary
- ☐ Daily Planner

## **For Your Health**

- ☐ First Aid Kit
- ☐ Shower Caddy
- ☐ Shower Shoes
- ☐ Prescription Medications
- ☐ Over-the-Counter Medications (Pain Reliever, etc)
- ☐ Umbrella
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Flashlight

## **Storage**

- ☐ Underbed Boxes
- ☐ Laundry Bag

- ❑ Tupperware
- ❑ Mini-Hanging File

## **For Laundry**

- ❑ Laundry Detergent
- ❑ Change for Washer and Dryer
- ❑ Iron
- ❑ Ironing Board

## **Décor**

- ❑ Pictures and Picture Frames
- ❑ Rug
- ❑ Desk Lamp
- ❑ Posters
- ❑ Bean Bag
- ❑ Dry-Erase Board With Pens
- ❑ Wall Calendar

And there you have it! You've prepared for several years now for college. Make the most of it while you're there. Enjoy the learning environment and make new friends. They say there's nothing like your time in college. Make sure you get all you can out of the experience!