

## 1 CHOOSE YOUR CAREER PATH



You may not know exactly what you want to be but you probably have an idea of what you're interested in. The goal is to have a career path in mind, ideally by your sophomore year. To figure out what you want to be, start by dreaming big, following your passions and most importantly, believing in yourself. You can always change your mind, but it's important to start somewhere.

### I AM HERE NOW

1. I need help figuring out where to start exploring my career options.
2. I have a good idea of what I want to be but need help planning a career path.
3. Done! I want to be a(n) \_\_\_\_\_  
FILL IN YOUR CAREER HERE

Tip: Narrow down your interests and search for college majors that support them. Think about people that have inspired you about your favorite subject in school to help you explore career options.

## 2 BUILD YOUR SUPPORT TEAM



Surround yourself with people who can help you get into college, as well as those who can help you along your career path.

### I AM HERE NOW

1. I need help knowing people that can support me getting to college.
2. I have a good idea of who can be part of my team, but need help talking to them about supporting me.
3. Done! I have my support team and I am ready for what's next.

Tip: Talk to your teacher, mentor, adviser, school counselor, coach, employer, and youth or church leader about what you want to be and ask them how they can support you getting there.

## 3 MAKE YOUR COLLEGE LIST



There are different types of colleges. Identify your options by looking at degrees offered, whether it's located in a city or rural area, potential costs, distance from home, etc. Create a list of your top ten college choices, including headlines and required admission items for each school. You should have this list done and ready to use ideally by the end of your junior year.

### I AM HERE NOW

1. I need help understanding college options and how to start my search.
2. I have a good idea of colleges I want to apply to but I need help creating a final list.
3. Done! I have my list of ten possible colleges.

Tip: Talk to your teacher or school counselor about available resources for your college search. Contact college admission officials, research the universities' websites, and if possible, visit college campus.

## 4 CREATE YOUR FINANCIAL STRATEGY



You have to pay for college but before you stress out about applying for financial aid and scholarships, work with your family to create a budget and a savings plan to find out how much they will be able to help you. Your goal is to have a well-developed paying for college strategy ideally by your sophomore year.

### I AM HERE NOW

1. I need help understanding the costs of a college education.
2. I have a good idea of college costs but I need help preparing my paying for college strategy.
3. Done! I have a paying for college strategy.

Tip: Think about including extended family members in your strategy and consider part-time jobs that can help you put some money aside for college.

## 5 TAKE THE RIGHT CLASSES



Learn about the specific classes you need to take in high school to get into the colleges you are applying to. Talk to your support team about high school courses that will build strong language, math and reasoning skills. Your goal is to have a list of high school courses to take ideally by the beginning of your freshman year.

### I AM HERE NOW

1. I need help deciding what courses I should take.
2. I have an idea of courses I want to take but need help making sure I'm on track to attend the college of my choice.
3. Done! I have a list of courses I need to take in high school.

Tip: Taking honors-level, AP, Dual Credit, and IB courses can save you money and better prepare you for your college experience.

## 6 GET THE GPA YOU NEED



Your Grade Point Average (GPA) matters. Find out the GPA you need to get into your dream college and start tracking your grades. Knowing you need a high GPA keeps you focused. Use available online resources and hit those books!

### I AM HERE NOW

1. I don't know how to calculate my GPA.
2. Almost there. I need help with my study skills to get my GPA higher.
3. Right on track! I'll make sure to keep my GPA up.

Tip: Take some risk and balance your chances of getting a good grade in honors-level, AP, Dual Credit, and IB courses as those courses can help you raise your GPA faster.

## 7 GET INVOLVED



Colleges value a well-rounded person so be sure to get involved in extracurricular and community activities. Join clubs, play sports, and volunteer. Contribute to the organizations you join and have fun doing it! Your goal is to start a portfolio at the beginning of your freshman year and keep updating it every year. It's never too late to get started!

### I AM HERE NOW

1. I need help identifying what kind of activities and organizations I can get involved with.
2. I know how I want to get involved but I need helping getting connected.
3. Done! I'm involved in different activities and keep a record of the ways I contribute.

Tip: Colleges prefer to see the impact that you made in your extracurricular activities rather than the amount of activities you were involved with so keep track of the contributions you make.

## 8 TAKE THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS



ACT and SAT are tests required by most colleges for admission. Your goal is to take the test(s) and have your scores sent to the colleges on your final list. Apply early during your junior and senior years to take these tests.

### I AM HERE NOW

1. I need help deciding which test I need to take and resources to prepare for it.
2. I have registered but I need resources to help prepare for the test.
3. Done! I have taken the test(s) I need and requested the results to be sent to the colleges of my choice.

Tip: Get some practice! Take the ACT Explore test in 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Then take the PLAN or PSAT tests in 10<sup>th</sup> grade to prepare for the ACT and SAT exams.

## 9 APPLY TO COLLEGE



Double check your list of colleges from Step 3 and make a final decision on which ones you will be applying to. Be aware of deadlines, make sure you meet all the requirements, and write your best essays ever! Your goal is to apply to at least the top five colleges on your final list.

### I AM HERE NOW

1. I need help with my applications and writing my essays.
2. I have completed the college applications but need help writing my essays.
3. Done! I have applied to the five colleges of my choice.

Tip: Get some practice! Take the ACT Explore test in 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Then take the PLAN or PSAT tests in 10<sup>th</sup> grade to prepare for the ACT and SAT exams.

## 10 GET MONEY FOR COLLEGE



There's a lot of financial aid out there! The trick is to get your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form sent in as early as possible! Your goal is to submit your FAFSA and then complete ten scholarship applications for every \$1,000 you need to pay for college each year. Keep a copy of your applications and go for it!

### I AM HERE NOW

1. I need help understanding how financial aid works and if I'm eligible.
2. I know what I need to do to apply for financial aid (with the FAFSA), but I don't know how to apply for scholarships.
3. Done! I have submitted my FAFSA and applied for private scholarships.

Tip: Submit your FAFSA form after January 1<sup>st</sup> of your senior year.