

# Timelines and Checklists for College

## **10<sup>th</sup> Grade Year**

Your college applications are still a couple years off, but you need to keep your long-term goals in mind. Work on keeping your grades up, taking challenging courses, and gaining depth in your extracurricular activities.

**1. Take challenging courses.** An “A” in an AP course is more impressive than an “A” in gym or shop.

**2. Grades, grades, grades!** Work on self-discipline and time management.

**3. Extracurricular activities.** These extracurricular activities will demonstrate depth and leadership. Think about what it is that you’ll bring to a college community. Volunteer work throughout your high school career needs to do more than fill time, it needs to show purpose, demonstrate skill building and build on itself. Showing that you are growing in your activities is just as important as showing you are growing academically.

**4. Foreign Language.** A minimum of 1 year of a foreign language is required by Colorado Commission on Higher Education. Many colleges require 2 years of the same language. Colleges are more impressed with depth in a single language than introductory classes in a number of languages. Be sure to check college admissions language requirements.

**5. Take a trial run of the PSAT.** This is optional, but if your school has it consider taking the PSAT in October. If you’re planning on taking the ACT instead of the SAT, check to see if your school offers the PLAN.

**6. Take SAT II and AP exams as appropriate.** It’s worth studying for these exams. Many colleges require a couple of SAT II scores, and a 4 or 5 on an AP exam can earn you course credit, giving you more options in college. If your high school offers the opportunity to earn college credit for AP classes (such as the CU Gold Program), consider taking advantage of this opportunity. Discuss the possibility with your counselor.

**7. Familiarize yourself with the **\*\*Common Application**.** You don’t want senior year to come and then discover that you have gaping holes in your high school record.

**8. Visit Colleges and browse the Web.** Your sophomore year is a good time to do some low-pressure exploration of the college options out there. A lot of schools have informative virtual tours on their websites.

**9. Keep Reading.** The more you read, the stronger your verbal, writing and critical thinking abilities will be. Reading beyond your homework will help you do well in school on the ACT and SAT, and in college.

**10. Have a summer plan.** Do something that leads to personal growth and valuable experiences. Some options are: volunteer work, a summer music program at a local college, a bike tour, living with a host family abroad..... whatever your passions and interests, try to plan your summer to tap into them. Recognize it is never too early to earn money to help pay college expenses (even beyond tuition and housing).

**11. High School Resume:** Begin to collect information on your activities and accomplishments and build a resume. This document can be added to as you continue your high school career and will become invaluable as you apply to institutions of higher education and for scholarships.

\*\*In 2012, The Common Application is used for undergraduate admissions by 488 colleges and universities. Only schools that evaluate applications holistically are allowed to use the common application; that is, the admissions staff must take into consideration things like letters of recommendation and the application essay. If a college bases admission solely on GPA and test scores, they cannot be members of the Common Application. Nearly all top colleges and top universities use the Common Application.

The Common Application covers several areas: personal data, educational data, standardized test information, family information, academic honors, extracurricular activities, work experience, a short answer essay, a personal essay, and criminal history. Financial aid information needs to be handled on the FAFSA.

In most cases, the Common Application is submitted electronically, and the Common Application website does a great job organizing your documents and keeping track of the different application components.

Many schools will ask for a supplemental essay to complement the personal essay options provided on the Common Application. These supplements are often submitted through the Common Application website.

Sources:

<http://collegeapps.about.com>

[www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/right-school/timeline](http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/right-school/timeline)

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*\*NYTimes.com – blog You can sign up for monthly mailings of to-do lists based on where you are in the process. They are delivered by email and are helpful.*