



Starting Point!

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Welcome to your journey to college. Whether you have four years or six months to plan for college, the list of items to consider is the same. Where do you want to go? What will you study? How will you pay for it? Do your grades and test scores reflect your best self? With the TRACK IT! College Planning Curriculum, you will have a chance to answer those questions and to make purposeful choices and informed decisions.

As you move through the TRACK IT! units, remember to be honest with yourself. Take time to discover your academic, creative, social, athletic, and emotional strengths. Learn the attributes that you might need to improve upon to meet your goals. This is a wonderful opportunity to think about your future and what you would like it to be.

This first unit is your introduction to the college admissions process. You will learn all about the unique college admissions vocabulary. You will discover timelines for each year of high school that can help remind you of the most important things to do during that year. You will learn about the organizational tools you can use to help keep your data in order and ready to use when the time comes to complete your applications.

Finally, you will learn that there is a lot to learn! As you begin the process of understanding the college admission journey, you will encounter much information that is inaccurate and sometimes confusing. When you hear something that doesn't sound quite right, make certain you ask an adult or counselor that is familiar with the process to validate the information. For now, let's start by addressing some of the most common myths surrounding college admissions.

Discover your future – with 12 comprehensive units:

Introduction

Self Assessment

Academic Planning

College Applications

College Search

Essays

Financial Aid

Standardized Testing

Scholarships

Communications

Special Populations

Visual & Performing Arts

Five Common Myths in College Admissions

Myth #1: Some secret strategy can get me admitted to college.

Sounds wonderful, huh? Unfortunately, it's just not true. The very best things you can do to increase your odds of being admitted are to work hard in your classes, prepare for your standardized tests, and have a purposeful high school experience. Seek out extracurricular activities that demonstrate your interests and strengths, not just those that add lines to your resume. Cultivate relationships with teachers and administrators that can help highlight your assets in letters of recommendations instead of trying to find some 'famous' person that doesn't even know you to write those same letters.

Myth #2: Relying on magazine lists of "Best Colleges" is the best way to determine whether a college is right for me.

Everyone loves lists; the "Top Ten Colleges," the "Top Five Drama Programs," the "Top Eight Engineering Universities." You name it — there are lists for everything. It's too bad there isn't a published list that actually makes sense — the "Top Ten Colleges Best for You!" Those other lists are often based on data and information that doesn't even relate to students' concerns. The best way to determine if a college is right for you is to research it by visiting the campus in person (or online), talking to graduates and current students, and evaluating what you are looking for in the college experience.

Myth #3: The best time to visit a college is after you have been admitted.

Actually setting foot on a campus and spending time exploring the school is one of the best ways to see if it is a good match for you. Obviously, it's not always practical to visit every school on your list, but any opportunity to visit a campus should be taken. Visiting can validate your feelings about a school or rule it out, which can save time and money during the application process. Visiting campuses early also allows you to fine tune your Key College Criteria (which you'll learn more about in Unit 5!)

Myth #4: If you don't have a perfect GPA, you'll never get accepted to a 'good' college.

Of course there are well-known colleges, but there are also prestigious academic programs within less-known universities. Be sure to explore your potential major and the corresponding college programs. And remember that most colleges admit over half of their applicants. The average acceptance rate for all four-year colleges in the U.S. is 63.9 percent (NACAC 2013) and there are amazing success stories coming out of all types of colleges regardless of rankings.

Myth #5: Colleges are looking for well-rounded students.

You've probably heard this at least once — and once upon a time, it was true. Over time, most colleges came to realize that students who brought depth and knowledge in specific areas (instead of a little bit of knowledge in lots of areas) helped create a well-rounded student body. How exciting for a campus! Think of a beautiful tapestry: Imagine each colored thread representing a specific interest and strength of a single student. Stitch together a bunch of differently colored threads and you create the fabric of the campus community. Everyone has at least one emerging interest — learn to develop yours into a passion and add to the 'tapestry!'

IT'S NOT WHERE YOU GO TO COLLEGE THAT COUNTS, IT'S WHAT YOU DO WHEN YOU GET THERE!

THE MAJORITY OF COLLEGES ACCEPT OVER HALF OF THOSE WHO APPLY!

PERSONAL DATA RECORD

WORK SHEET

Throughout the college admissions process, you will be asked to fill out numerous forms: standardized test registration forms, scholarship forms, letter of recommendation request forms, college applications and more! **By recording the information here, you will save time by not having to dig around for information at the last minute. Click on the boxes to the right to fill in your information.** Keep this form in a safe place for you to use throughout the college application process.

LEGAL NAME	
BIRTHDATE	
SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (OPTIONAL)	
HOME ADDRESS	
HOME PHONE & CELL PHONE	
EMAIL ADDRESS	
BIRTHPLACE CITY/COUNTRY CITIZENSHIP?	
ALTERNATE HOME INFO (IF APPLICABLE)	
HIGH SCHOOL & WEBSITE	
HIGH SCHOOL ADDRESS	
OTHER HIGH SCHOOLS/ COLLEGES	
GRADUATION YEAR	
COLLEGE PREP GPAS: WEIGHTED, UNWEIGHTED, 9-12 AND 10-12	
HIGH SCHOOL RANK	
CEEB / ACT CODE	
HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR	
COUNSELOR PHONE	
COUNSELOR EMAIL ADDRESS	
USER ID/PASSWORDS FOR COLLEGE RELATED WEBSITES	

Extracurricular Activities, Awards, and Recognition

LIST ALL OF YOUR ACTIVITIES AND AWARDS ON THIS PAGE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE. MAKE ADDITIONAL COPIES IF NECESSARY.

ACTIVITY: EXTRACURRICULAR, VOLUNTEER, WORK, ATHLETICS, MUSIC, ART	GRADES: 9, 10, 11, 12 WHEN: SCHOOL YEAR? BREAKS? SUMMER?	APPROX. HRS/WEEK; WEEKS/ YEAR	AWARDS, RECOGNITION, LEADERSHIP ROLE, & POSITION

THIS WILL COME IN HANDY WHEN YOU FILL OUT YOUR COLLEGE AND SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS!

ACADEMIC HONORS:	TITLE:	GRADE:	LEVEL OF RECOGNITION: SCHOOL/STATE/ NAT'L/INTL

FUTURE PLANS:	
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HIGHEST DEGREE INTENDED:	
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CAREER INTEREST:	
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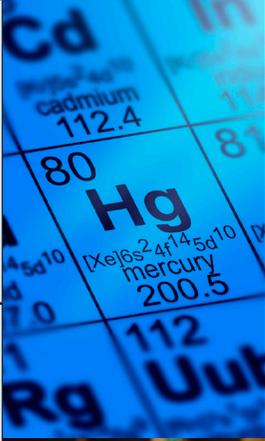
What do you think of when you hear the words, “College Planning?” Do you feel overwhelmed by all of the tasks you need to complete? One of the most important pieces of college planning is organization. Use this TRACK IT! checklist to help keep you on course in high school and with your college planning. Each year lists the most important tasks you need to accomplish. Start each school year by reading through the tasks and then set some goals for each activity. Coordinate the tasks with your personal calendar to make certain you don’t miss any deadlines. With a little organization, you’ll be ready to apply for college on time and without stress. Good luck!

TRACK IT! - ALL THE WAY TO COLLEGE			
DONE	START OFF RIGHT... FRESHMAN YEAR		NOTES
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>COURSE PLAN – Look ahead! Do you want to go to a four-year college, a community college or a tech school? Make sure the courses you are taking will meet the requirements for your goal. It is better to end up with extra credits than to try and get required classes right before applications are due.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>ORGANIZE - Start the habit now. Create a binder to keep track of all important papers in high school. Keep track of dates and deadlines (tests, assignments, applications). Keep your awards, achievements, test scores, best writing samples, photos and art to create a portfolio of your best work.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>STUDY SKILLS – Create good study habits. Remember that your grades are one of the most important indicators of how successful you will be in college. Start your high school years strong – and then stay strong! Work on test-taking skills and strategies. Seek extra help or tutoring for subjects that you are struggling with.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>EXTRACURRICULAR – Now is the time to get involved with your school and your community. Starting high school can sometimes be intimidating; getting involved can help you feel like you belong. In addition, clubs and sports give you an opportunity to explore your interests and skills and to meet new people (adults and peers).</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>READ (AND THEN READ SOME MORE!) - College courses are demanding and require large amounts of time spent reading. Read now to expand your vocabulary, to challenge yourself, to learn something new, and to enjoy a break from your computer or phone!</p>		

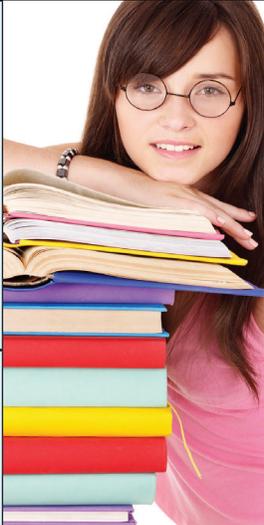
Notes:



TRACK IT! - ALL THE WAY TO COLLEGE

DONE	YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY... SOPHOMORE YEAR		NOTES
<input data-bbox="155 359 228 432" type="checkbox"/>	<p>COURSE PLAN - Review your class plan and make sure you will meet high school and college requirements. Grades continue to be extremely important, along with taking challenging classes. Colleges like to see growth in a student's academic skills. Take the most challenging classes you can handle – and then aim for the best grades possible.</p>		
<input data-bbox="155 653 228 726" type="checkbox"/>	<p>ORGANIZE – Continue to keep examples of your best writing. If you are an artist, create a portfolio. If you are an athlete, start collecting videos of your highlights. Test dates and deadlines will become even more important this year. Stay on top of your calendar.</p>		
<input data-bbox="155 989 228 1062" type="checkbox"/>	<p>STUDY SKILLS - Now that you have a year of experience, take a moment to re-examine your study skills. Are you using your time well? Are you focusing your attention on your weak areas? Speak with your teachers to see if they have any additional tips. Consider getting tutors for classes you are finding overly challenging. Remember: the pay off for hard work is more options when you are heading to college!</p>		
<input data-bbox="155 1346 228 1419" type="checkbox"/>	<p>EXTRACURRICULAR – Now that you are more comfortable with high school, really take the time to get involved with campus organizations and opportunities. Try new activities and challenge yourself to take on leadership roles. Think of this as a time to explore your interests so that you can head to college with an idea of what you are interested in doing or studying.</p>		
<input data-bbox="155 1724 228 1797" type="checkbox"/>	<p>TESTS (PSAT, AP, SUBJECT TESTS) – Sign up to take preliminary ACT/SATs. These tests will allow you to see the format of the ACT/SAT and will give you an indicator of how you might do on the actual tests. Plan to take any Subject Tests that match the courses you take this year. It is best to take these tests as soon as you finish the course – not after summer when the content might not be as fresh in your mind. If you are taking any AP classes, study hard for the AP test at the end of the course. A good score can earn you college credit at many schools!</p>		

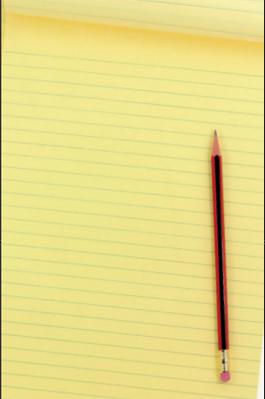
TRACK IT! - ALL THE WAY TO COLLEGE

DONE	YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY... SOPHOMORE YEAR		NOTES
<input data-bbox="131 390 204 464" type="checkbox"/>	<p>READ (AND THEN READ SOME MORE!) - Did we mention this Freshman year? Yep! Reading continues to be an important part of your preparation for college. In addition, you should work hard to increase your vocabulary. The SAT and ACT require a strong vocabulary, and the more challenging your classes get, the more challenging the vocabulary will be.</p>		
<input data-bbox="131 741 204 814" type="checkbox"/>	<p>COLLEGE SEARCH – Sure you have two years until you apply, but high school will be busy. Take advantage of free time now by researching colleges online or visiting them when you are on vacations or trips. Start imagining what type of school you would like to attend: large or small, rural or urban setting, certain majors available, conservative or liberal, etc.</p>		
<input data-bbox="131 1092 204 1165" type="checkbox"/>	<p>FIND A MENTOR - Adults, aside from your parents, can provide additional perspectives on your journey to college. Teachers, coaches, and advisors are some people you may look to for advice. These role models can give you advice and wisdom — and, one day, they may even write a letter of recommendation for your college application!</p>		
<input data-bbox="131 1442 204 1516" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Add your own!</p>		
<input data-bbox="131 1793 204 1866" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Add your own!</p>		

TRACK IT! - ALL THE WAY TO COLLEGE

DONE	NEARLY THERE... JUNIOR YEAR		NOTES
<input data-bbox="159 359 232 432" type="checkbox"/>	<p>COURSE PLAN - Continue studying hard and aiming for top grades. This year is extremely important on your application. In the spring, consider signing up for interesting summer enrichment courses at a local community college. Take challenging courses. Colleges like to see a progression in your coursework and in your grades.</p>		
<input data-bbox="159 705 232 779" type="checkbox"/>	<p>ORGANIZE - Begin gathering important data for your applications: social security number, test scores, transcripts, your school's CEEB number, and personal data record. Continue collecting examples of your best work and create a résumé of your activities and achievements. Include leadership roles and awards. Create a calendar to record dates for PSAT, Preliminary ACT tests, SAT Subject Tests, SAT and ACT tests, AP tests, College Nights, and College Fairs.</p>		
<input data-bbox="159 1020 232 1094" type="checkbox"/>	<p>EXTRACURRICULAR - As you learn more about your interests and skills, make a plan for your next two years of high school so that your extracurricular activities will relate to the things you enjoy. Look for volunteer, job shadowing or intern opportunities over the summer that will give depth to your interest area. Seek opportunities for positions of responsibility and leadership in your clubs, sports or other activities.</p>		
<input data-bbox="159 1335 232 1409" type="checkbox"/>	<p>TESTS - This is the big year! Get your mind in testing mode. Take the PSAT and/or ACT Aspire in October. Begin test prep. Plan to take our first SAT or ACT January - June. Plan to take it again after more prep to raise your scores! Take SAT subject tests in your best academic subjects in May and June. These tests are recommended by many schools and required by others. Continue studying hard in your AP or IB classes for the AP tests or IB exams.</p>		
<input data-bbox="159 1745 232 1818" type="checkbox"/>	<p>COLLEGE SEARCH - Begin researching colleges. Keep in mind the 'Key Criteria' you decided were important. Attend college fairs and college rep events at your school. Go online and visit colleges in person when you can. Visit local colleges to help you understand which characteristics are most important to you. Go online to request information from schools and to make appointments for tours during spring break and summer. Call academic departments you are interested in for more information. Create college lists for applications. Get excited! This is the fun part!</p>		

TRACK IT! - ALL THE WAY TO COLLEGE

DONE	NEARLY THERE... JUNIOR YEAR		NOTES
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>MENTOR - Continue forming relationships with teachers, coaches and professionals for advice and guidance. Arrange to meet a professional in your career of interest to learn more about his or her day-to-day job. By the end of junior year, have in mind which teachers you will ask to write a letter of recommendation for you.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>SCHOLARSHIPS/FINANCIAL AID - Sit down with your parents and review how the Financial Aid process works. Visit: WWW.FAFSA.ED.GOV</p> <p>Begin researching scholarship opportunities. Bookmark scholarships you find that aren't due until senior year. Keep a list of all potential scholarships. Apply often!</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>ESSAYS - This spring, begin brainstorming the 'key message' you hope admissions officers will get out of your essays. Review essay questions listed on the Common Application and on other college websites. Work hard over the summer to complete an essay or two that tells a strong story about you. Having these essays completed before senior year begins is a huge relief and makes it easier for you to enjoy your last year of high school!</p>	 	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Add your own!</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Add your own!</p>		

TRACK IT! - ALL THE WAY TO COLLEGE

DONE	HOMESTRETCH... SENIOR YEAR		NOTES
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>COURSE PLAN - Tempting as it may be, this is no time to slack off in your classes. Keep your grades up and remember that colleges notice increasing challenge and improving grades. These are both signs of your commitment to college readiness.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>ORGANIZE - Before you start your applications, review your collection of achievements, activities, and other useful information. Record any additional testing signup dates, test dates, application start and due dates for college admissions and scholarships. Gather necessary information to give your letter of recommendation writers to remind them of your strengths and achievements. Include copies of written work or other examples to jog their memory. Make copies of all applications you submit for your records.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>EXTRACURRICULAR - Continue staying involved on campus and exploring opportunities that will help you understand your interests and goals. Remember to include some fun activities so you don't get burned out before you start college. Enjoy your senior year! You deserve it.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>TESTS - Hang in there! You are almost finished with most of the testing you need to do. Evaluate your SAT and ACT scores from the spring/summer and decide if you need more prep and another shot at the test. Continue to work hard in any AP courses you are taking so you can score high on the AP test. Remember, at many colleges high scores can translate into saved money on lower level college classes.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>COLLEGE SEARCH - Finalize your college list (8-12 colleges) and consider if you will apply Early Decision or Early Action to any. Attend any college fairs or college rep meetings at your school to continue your knowledge of the schools you are interested in. Contact schools for more information about their campus, departments or activities. Continue to visit colleges if you are able. Schedule any interviews with colleges you are applying to that require them.</p>		

TRACK IT! - ALL THE WAY TO COLLEGE

DONE	HOMESTRETCH... SENIOR YEAR		NOTES
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>ESSAYS - Finalize your essays. Hopefully you worked hard over the summer and they are almost complete. Have someone you trust read them over to see if they convey your 'key message.'</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>APPLICATIONS - At last! Carefully check your calendar for all start and due dates for applications. Double check dates if you are applying Early Action or Early Decision. Make certain you have requested letters of recommendation (with instructions for submitting them, due dates and information about you) with ample time for them to be completed. Request your high school to send your official transcript to schools that require it.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>SCHOLARSHIPS/FINANCIAL AID - Continue researching scholarships and sending in applications. Remember to 'recycle' your essays from your college applications when you can. FAFSA filing is from January 1 - early March depending on your state. You should aim for as close to January 1 as possible. If you are applying to private colleges that require the CSS Profile, register for that in October. In February, double check that all colleges you applied to have all the necessary financial aid information for you. Review the SAR (Student Aid Report) when it arrives and make certain all information is current and correct.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>FOLLOW UP - Send thank you notes to all interviewers, letters of recommendation writers and anyone who has given you extra help. After submitting your applications, continue to check with the colleges to make sure there are no outstanding application requirements. If you are wait-listed, send an 'appeal' letter expressing your strong interest in the school with any extra supporting documents and letters from teachers or coaches.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>WAIT - Now comes the hard part. You can expect admission responses from the beginning of March to the end of April or earlier if you applied EA or ED. Review your reasons for applying to each college before you choose your final destination. If you are on a wait list, send a follow-up with new, compelling information to express your interest in the school. Finally, be sure to let each school know your final decision by May 1. Check your email frequently for required deposits and next steps.</p>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>HAVE FUN!! - Enjoy your senior year. Of course you don't want to slack off in your classes, but you should take the time to enjoy this last year with your high school friends.</p>		