



# SOAR College Timeline

## HIGH SCHOOL TO DO LIST - ALL FOUR YEARS

- Take a challenging Core Course of Study:** *If you undertake this rigorous Core Course of Study and challenge yourself to do your best work during your high school career you may enjoy a wider range of postsecondary options after graduation.*
  - 4 years of English
  - 4 years of math (some majors have a minimum requirement of pre-calculus or calculus)
  - 4 years of a lab science
  - 3 to 4 years of social studies
  - 2 years of a foreign language (some colleges require 3 consecutive years)
- Participate and get involved in school, community or work:** *Do things that foster your sense of community, responsibility, time management, and leadership to demonstrate these key aspects of your character.*
- Schedule regular meetings with your school counselor and attend college night events at your high school:** Go to [Soartocollege.com/events](http://Soartocollege.com/events) to find a current list of College Planning events in your area.

### TIPS

*No two college timelines are the same. Consider these items when creating yours.*

## FRESHMAN & SOPHOMORE YEARS

- Begin exploring career and major options:** *Try job shadows, volunteer opportunities, informational interviews and career assessments.*
- Talk with your school counselor:** *Stay connected to your school staff and share your postsecondary goals to ensure you are on the correct academic path and meeting all college prep requirements.*
- Keep a journal:** *Write down all your activities you want to include in your college resume. You'll create your college resume during your senior year.*
- Considering playing an NCAA eligible sport in college?** *Begin researching NCAA guidelines and high school academic requirements to ensure your eligibility by visiting [eligibilitycenter.org](http://eligibilitycenter.org).*
- Begin preparing and studying for the PSAT or Pre ACT:** *The summer between 10th and 11th grade is a perfect time to start using FREE tools to prep for the practice versions of the SAT and ACT. Go to [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org) or [act.org](http://act.org).*

## JUNIOR YEAR

### Fall

- Attend a college fair:** *To see a list of both local and regional college fairs go to [nacacfairs.org](http://nacacfairs.org).*
- Take the PSAT or PreACT:** *These are practice versions of the college entrance exams.*
- Continue studying for the Spring SAT or ACT:** *If you do even 30 minutes of prep twice a week you will be ready to face the test this spring!*

### Winter

- Register for senior year courses:** *Remember colleges will see your senior year classes; this is not the time to take a lot of "study halls". Continue to challenge yourself to the best of your ability.*
- Consider special academic programs to get college credit while still in high school:** *Advanced Placement (AP), Honors in the High School, etc.*

### Spring

- Attend College Fairs:** *Registration opens in February. For details go to [gotocollegefairs.com](http://gotocollegefairs.com)*
- Take the SAT or ACT:** *Also, check with the colleges you are considering to determine if they require SAT Subject Tests. Spring of junior year is a great time to take them, if necessary.*
- Begin researching and developing a list of colleges you are interested in:** *You can utilize college search engines, visit campus websites, or take campus tours.*
- Interested in Architecture, Art, Dance, Theater or Music?:** *Inquire with each school to determine if a portfolio or audition is required. Both can be extensive, so the more time you have, the better.*

## Summer

- Visit college campuses:** Look for opportunities to get on different types of campuses, rural and urban, tiny, small and large. Get a feel for what you like and remain open to a variety of options.
- Consider doing a FAFSA4caster to estimate financial aid:** Go to [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov) to use the FAFSA4caster tool to get an idea of the federal financial aid your family may be eligible to receive.  
**Begin a family conversation about a college budget and each family member's realistic ability to contribute financially:** Getting on the same page about what your family can afford can help you choose your list of schools and ensure you have viable financial options to choose from in spring of senior year.
- Start working on your college essay:** Utilize the summer to get your thoughts organized and start your essay so you won't have to "cram" in the fall.  
**Attend a College Bootcamp:** Many high schools offer a "bootcamp" in the summer to get students started on the college application process. If your school does not offer one, consider attending one presented by SOAR for College Planning. (For more information contact the **SOAR at 770-827-3850**)

## SENIOR YEAR

### Admissions Process

- Narrow down your list of colleges:** Try using the 3-3-2 approach.
- Get Organized!:** Create a list that includes important information for your colleges of choice. Include deadlines, financial aid requirements and forms needed.
- Retake the SAT or ACT:** You are responsible for sending your scores to ALL schools that require them. Go to [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org) or [act.org](https://act.org) to find out how to send your scores.
- Begin creating a College Resume:** Use your journal to highlight your education, community service, and work experience.
- Work on college applications:** Colleges use many different online applications. Check with each of your colleges to determine which they use.
- Get Letters of Recommendation:** Request one to three letters of recommendation from your school counselors and teachers (if required)
- Submit completed college applications:** Deadlines can vary.
- College decision letters arrive:** Every college has their own "turn around" time from when you apply to when their decision is sent, but a realistic time frame is four to eight (4 to 8) weeks from when you apply.

### Financial Aid/Award Letter Process

- FAFSA Online Application becomes available October 1st:** If a FAFSA is required by your college of choice you simply need to file by the college's specified deadline. To make an appointment for free assistance filing your FAFSA, contact **SOAR..**
- Think About the CSS Profile®:** Check [profileonline.collegeboard.org](https://profileonline.collegeboard.org) to see if your college(s) require(s) the CSS Profile® found at. This financial aid form is also available October 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Apply for Scholarships:** There are scholarships from national, regional and local sources. But in order to receive any scholarship(s) you need to apply! So don't limit your options; apply, apply, apply!
- Once you have been accepted, the college will send you a Financial Aid Award Letter:** For help interpreting your award letter, attend a **Paying for College** program at your high school or meet with a SOAR by calling at 770-827-3850.
- Compare Award Letters and calculate your estimated loan debt:** Go to the "student loan calculator" at [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org) to help estimating your future loan payment after you graduate.
- Make one last visit to your school of choice before sending your deposit:** Many colleges offer "admitted student days", where accepted students can visit the campus, meet faculty and sample campus life one more time. If you can't visit, revisit the website and call admissions with any last minute questions.
- MAY 1st – National Candidate Reply Day:** This is the deadline that 4-year colleges expect accepted students to make their admission deposit by in order to hold their spot in the upcoming freshman class. Planning to live on campus? A housing deposit may also be due at this time.