

Junior Year Planning Checklist

For Students & Parents

For many families, planning for life after high school can seem overwhelming.

For more than 50 years, we've been helping students go to college. We're here to help you too.

This step-by-step checklist will help you know what to do and when to do it.

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September

- Review your courses and grades with a school counselor** to be sure you're on track for graduation and college admissions requirements. Are you taking challenging math and science, plus a foreign language?
 - Talk about work-based learning and job shadow opportunities.
 - Consider taking a dual enrollment course in the spring or enrolling in early college senior year.
- Register for the October PSAT if your school offers it.** Top scorers of this SAT prep test may qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Program. Find free practice quizzes and videos at kaptest.com/study/psat.
- Research and attend college fairs.** Visit the NACAC (National Association of College Admission Counseling) website at nacacfairs.org to find out how you can attend college fairs, online or in person. For college fairs in New England, visit the NEACAC (New England Association of College Admission Counseling) site at neacac.org.

October

- Take the PSAT this month or whenever your school is offering it,** even if you already took it last year (only junior-year scores are used for the National Merit Scholarship competition). Visit kaptest.com/study/psat for free practice quizzes and videos.
- Explore your interests & careers.**
 - myfuturevt.org — explore careers in Vermont, learn about statewide education and training programs, and find resources and support for your career search
 - mynextmove.org — find tasks, skills, salaries, and more for 900+ careers, browse different industries that employ different types of workers, and use the O*NET Interest Profiler for career ideas based on your interests
 - bls.gov/ooh — find info on hundreds of different careers and occupations
- Begin to research colleges & identify schools** or training programs you may want to consider.

November

- Check in.** How is the year going so far? If you need help with study strategies, test-taking skills, or organization, talk to your teachers now so you won't fall behind.

**TIP**

There are lots of ways students can continue their education or training after high school. To learn about options, go to vsac.org/explore:

- Identify your interests, strengths, and preferences.
- Explore careers and connect them to further education.

And for education and training programs in Vermont, spend time at myfuturevt.org.

December

- Review PSAT scores, make a testing plan for the SAT and the ACT**, and start customizing your tutorials for the SAT. Many juniors take these tests in the spring of junior year and again in the fall of senior year. Find test dates and registration links at collegeboard.org and act.org.
- Link your PSAT scores** to Khan Academy so you can start customizing your tutorials. (College Board reports that the more time you spend using Khan Academy, the higher your SAT scores are likely to be.) It's free, and you can get an app for your phone.
- Meet with your school counselor** to develop a plan for college prep and your college search.

January

- Watch school announcements** for college planning events and visit vsac.org/events for online workshops about planning and paying for college or training.
- Plan your senior-year courses**. Consider ways to start earning college credits during senior year by taking a dual enrollment class or enrolling in early college, if offered. If possible, match your senior-year classes with your career pathway or college major.

February

- Register for standardized tests** (SAT, ACT) at collegeboard.org and act.org if they're being held. Beforehand, check with the colleges on your list to find out whether they are test-optional. If you register, confirm your test center at least two days before the scheduled test.
- Register for VSAC's College & Career Pathways**, a free program for juniors, sophomores, and parents/guardians that helps you plan for education or training after high school. Participate in workshops on finding the right career & college fit, managing education & training costs, finding scholarships, navigating the admissions process, and much more. Find registration and event details at vsac.org/ccp.
- Learn about financial aid & scholarships**. Participate in a VSAC Financial Aid & Managing College Costs presentation. Visit vsac.org/schedule for dates and details.
- Consider applying for the Governor's Institutes of Vermont (GIV)**. Visit giv.org to find out what may be available this summer (past institutes have included Health & Medicine, Environmental Science, Arts, Youth Action, and more). GIV offers sliding-scale tuition so that every young Vermonter, from any background, can join these fun learning residencies on college campuses.
- Start a list of colleges** you may want to apply to, and research each school's test requirements for admission. Find out if the schools on your list are test-optional (see sidebar on the next page).

**TIP**

Both the SAT and the ACT are often taken in the spring of junior year and again the fall of senior year to improve scores.

Check with colleges on your list to ask whether they're waiving their test requirements.

In addition, there are schools that don't require either test. At [fairtest.org/university/optional](https://www.fairtest.org/university/optional), you'll find a list of schools that are:

- test-optional
- test-flexible

March

- Prep for the SAT and ACT.** Make sure you're registered, then use free online practice tools at [academy.act.org](https://www.academy.act.org) (ACT) or [khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat](https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat) (SAT). Once registered, be sure to confirm your test site is open the night before and morning of your scheduled test.
- Continue to research & identify colleges or training programs** that interest you. Focus on majors, admission requirements, and average annual cost. Download VSAC's comparison chart at [vsac.org/compareprograms](https://www.vsac.org/compareprograms) to start building a wish list of schools and create a file folder for each school you want to apply to.
 - collegescorecard.ed.gov — browse schools for details on test scores and acceptance, fields of study, average annual cost, graduation rates, and median earnings after graduation
 - bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search — learn about college majors, explore majors based on your interests, and connect college majors with careers
- Visit colleges or attend open houses & visit days** if schools are holding them. If you can't visit, you can find virtual campus tours on websites like youvisit.com/collegesearch. Also, check out virtual tours offered on college websites. If you have questions, contact the Admissions Office to ask whether there are student representatives you can talk with.

April

- Learn about the college application process.** Visit [vsac.org/plan/applying-to-college](https://www.vsac.org/plan/applying-to-college) to find out what you can do over the summer to make your senior year more manageable.
- Explore training programs, apprenticeships & other options** in Vermont.
 - [vsac.org/skilledtrades](https://www.vsac.org/skilledtrades) — learn about skilled trades and apprenticeships
 - [vtadultcte.org/classes](https://www.vtadultcte.org/classes) — find out about career and technical education
 - [ccv.edu/explore-ccv-programs/credentials-training](https://www.ccv.edu/explore-ccv-programs/credentials-training) — explore statewide and online certification and training programs
 - [cewd.vtc.edu](https://www.cewd.vtc.edu) — discover courses that can lead to certificates, degree programs, and more
 - [labor.vermont.gov/apprenticeship](https://www.labor.vermont.gov/apprenticeship) — find companies and organizations that sponsor apprenticeships; look for the link to registered apprenticeship sponsors

May

- Stay focused to the finish.** End the year with your best effort. Your grades are one of the most visible indications of your academic ability. Keep up your studies all the way through final exams.

**TIP****Looking at colleges**

There's more to a college campus than the academics. Look at the dining halls, ask if you can attend or watch an online class, read the school newspaper, and talk with current students. Check out the athletic facilities and library.

Ask yourself: Can I see myself living here? Go with your instinct. Better to find out now that a college isn't for you rather than when you're moving into the dorm.

June

- Find a summer job, volunteer, and/or take a dual enrollment course.**
- Talk to others** about their experiences in college, especially if you know someone who goes to a school you're interested in.

July

- Plan college visits.** Compare different options: urban and private, 2- and 4-year, and public and private. And review websites of schools on your list.
- Narrow your list of schools** based on campus visits, information from schools, and standardized test scores, if required. Use the comparison chart you downloaded in March to update your wish list. And try these online apps:
 - *Fiske Interactive College Guide* is a robust college search tool with info on more than 300 schools and ways to help you make your selection.
 - *College Score Matcher* finds colleges whose students have SAT scores similar to yours.
 - *College Search Guide* helps you search by geographic area and provides info about schools, admissions requirements, and more.
- Create an appropriate email address** to share with college admissions and other school contacts. Many high schools close your school email after graduation, so it will be important to have a free, non-school email address that you will check for all sorts of post high school and financial aid communications. Also, make sure your social media is free of inappropriate language, photos, or stories.