



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.** 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.
- Attend college fairs & career fairs.** The NEACAC (New England Association of College Admission Counseling) college fairs are this month. Go to neacac.org for the schedule and locations closest to you. Start developing a list of schools that interest you.

October

- Take the PSAT this month,** 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.
- Visit colleges.** You don't need to go far. Vermont has 15+ schools you can visit just to get a feel for different college campuses. Choose a few and visit during school breaks or on a Saturday, or attend an Open House event.

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 more about options, go to: vsac.org/explore:

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

December

- Review PSAT scores & make a testing plan for the SAT and the ACT.** Most juniors take these tests in 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 scores are likely to be.) It's free, and you can get an app for your phone.
- Meet with your school counselor** to talk about a plan for college prep and your college search.

January

- Attend a Junior Night** or other college-planning event at your school. Watch school announcements for info.
- 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.
- Register for VSAC's College & Career Pathways**, a free planning event for juniors, sophomores, and parents; held in multiple locations around Vermont. Visit vsac.org/ccp for dates, locations, and workshops.

February

- Register for the SAT & ACT.** Visit collegeboard.org to register for a SAT date. If you're also taking the ACT, register at act.org. Find practice materials at number2.com.
- Learn about financial aid & scholarships.** Attend a VSAC Financial Aid & Managing College Costs presentation at your school in the spring. For dates of presentations in your area, go to vsac.org/schedule or check with your school counselor.
- Apply for the Governor's Institutes of Vermont (GIV).** Visit giv.org to find out which institutes will be available this summer (past institutes have included Health & Medicine, Astronomy, Young Writers, Youth Activism, and many more). GIV offers sliding-scale tuition to make sure every young Vermonter, from any background, can participate in 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. Do they require the SAT essay or SAT II subject tests? Are they test optional (see sidebar on the next page)?

**TIP**

Both the SAT and the ACT are usually taken in the spring of junior year and again the fall of senior year if you want to improve your scores.

Some colleges accept the ACT instead of the SAT, so check to see what each school requires. Taking one test instead of two could save you time and money if you don't need to take both.

There are schools that don't require either test. Visit <https://blog.prepscholar.com> for a list of schools that are:

- test-optional
- test-flexible
- test-blind

March

- Prep for the SAT and ACT.** Make sure you're registered, then use free online practice tools at number2.com for the ACT or khanacademy.org for the SAT.
- Research colleges & start identifying schools** or training programs you may want to consider.
 - vsac.org/compareprograms—download VSAC's comparison chart to start building a wish list of schools
 - collegenavigator.gov—browse programs; search for colleges based on different factors; and check out costs, net price, and graduation rates
 - bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges—learn about college majors, explore majors based on your interests, and connect college majors with careers
- Visit colleges or attend open houses & visit days** to determine whether a college is the right fit.

April

- Learn about the college application process.** Visit vsac.org/plan/applying-to-college to find out what you can do over the summer to make your senior year more manageable.
- Explore your interests & careers.**
 - mynextmove.org—find tasks, skills, salaries, and more for 900+ careers, browse different industries that employ different types of workers, and use O*NET Interest Profiler for career ideas based on your interests
 - mycareerproject.org—learn about your personality, select some appropriate future careers, and create an educational and training pathway
 - bls.gov/ooh—find info on hundreds of different careers and occupations
- Explore training programs, apprenticeships & other options** in Vermont.
 - vsac.org/skilledtrades—learn about skilled trades and apprenticeships
 - vtadultcte.org/class—find out about career and technical education
 - ccv.edu/explore-ccv-programs/credentials-training—explore statewide and online certification and training programs
 - vtc.edu/academics/continuing-education-workforce-development—discover courses that can lead to certificates, degree programs, and more
 - labor.vermont.gov/workforce-development/apprenticeship/apprenticeship-sponsors-by-trade—find companies and organizations that sponsor apprenticeships

**TIP****On a college visit**

There's more to a college campus than the academics. Eat in the dining halls, attend a class, read bulletin boards, and talk with current students.

Check out the athletic facilities and library.

Visit during the winter break if you can, to see a school in the coldest months.

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

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.

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.
- Continue to research colleges** and identify schools or training programs you want to consider. Use our comparison chart at vsac.org/compareprograms to keep track of your notes about each school; and continue to browse collegenavigator.gov to find detailed info on programs, to search for colleges based on various factors, and to use net price calculators to compare costs.

You can also use 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 e-mail address** to share with college admissions and other school contacts. Also, make sure your social media is free of inappropriate language, photos, or stories.