



Planning Guide by Grade

For Students & Parents

GRADES 7 & 8

Student Task List

- Take care of yourself: Sleep well, eat right, think positive, ask for help. And check out www.thepathway2success.com/top-10-middle-school-keys-to-success for more tips.
- Get organized with a day planner or calendar to keep track of assignments, due dates, test dates, and other commitments. Submit homework on time, focus in class, and get involved.
- What do you do for fun, adventure, learning? Your experiences can give you clues to careers you might enjoy.
- Talk to adults in your life about their careers. Think about the ones that seem interesting to you and why.
- Talk to your school counselor, teachers, and others about:
 - 1) classes to take in 9th and 10th grade, based on your interest in certain careers/jobs and preparing for and attending college
 - 2) the importance of doing well academically for college or technical training programs.
 - 3) finding extracurricular activities (sports, performing arts, volunteer work, etc.) that may interest you

For more on
career & college
planning, visit
vsac.org/plan.

Parent/Adult Task List

- Monitor and encourage your student's academic progress by:
 - 1) taking an active role in helping your student choose classes and activities for 9th grade
 - 2) making sure that your student has a place to study and that homework gets done
 - 3) helping your student organize schoolwork and practice good study habits:
 - sitting close to the front of the room in class, joining class discussions, and asking questions
 - keeping up with homework and completing assignments *before* they're due
 - asking teachers for help, when needed (teachers want students to be successful in their classes!)
 - developing note-taking, proofreading, study skills, and test-taking skills
- If you can, visit a college campus. Middle school students often do better in school when they realize that college can be a goal. It doesn't have to be an "official" visit; go to a sports event or performance.
- Help your student to learn good financial management habits. To get started, visit www.jumpstart.org/what-we-share/financial-education-principles.
- Introduce your student to people who have careers/jobs that your student is interested in.
- Attend school events (back-to-school, parent conferences, etc.). Meet your student's teachers and school counselor.
- Support your student by providing proper nutrition and a good night's sleep.
- Become familiar with your child's school's website.

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GRADES 9 & 10

Start the school year off right by helping your student organize schoolwork and practice good study habits:

- 1) joining class discussions/ asking questions
- 2) keeping up with homework & completing assignments early
- 3) asking teachers for help
- 4) learning study skills, note-taking, proofreading, time-management, and test-taking skills

Student Task List

- Talk to a friend or relative about their career.
- Get involved! Sign up for an extracurricular activity or non-academic activity to meet new people, learn skills, and explore interests.
- Do you know how much money you'll need to have in order to support the lifestyle you want? Take the Reality Check at www.jumpstart.org/what-we-share/financial-education-principles.
- Consider community service or volunteering, which will be good for your community and scholarship applications.
- Take the PSAT or PreACT (if offered). Check with your school counselor for information.
- Take an Introduction to College & Careers course for **free** through Community College of VT. Visit <http://gotocollegevt.org/signup> for details.
- 10th graders, ask your school counselor about VSAC's College and Career Pathways events.
- Talk to your school counselor, teachers, and others about:
 - 1) the classes you need to take to make sure that you're on track for your college or career path, including college entrance or technical training program requirements.
 - 2) Advanced Placement/honors classes (courses, eligibility requirements, and enrollment procedures)
 - 3) what it takes to be a member of the National Honor Society or National Technical Honor Society
 - 4) opportunities to earn college credit while you're still in high school
 - 5) summer opportunities such as Medquest, Governor's Institutes of Vermont, and local opportunities; and how to pay for them

Parent/Adult Task List

- Monitor academic progress by making sure your student has a good place to study and that homework's done.
- Stay connected with teachers and school. Call or e-mail teachers with questions about your student's progress. Check with your school for instructions on accessing the parent online portal to review student grades.
- Help your student become involved in activities of interest in and outside of school.
- Ask the school counseling office about how your student should register for the PSAT or PreACT.
- Start to learn about financial aid. Consider attending a "Financial Aid & Managing College Costs" presentation at your school in the spring or view online at www.vvac.org/financial-aid-videos.
- Visit www.vvac.org/ccp to register for VSAC's springtime College & Career Pathways event, a free conference for sophomores, juniors, and parents.
- Begin to explore and discuss college and career options. Attend a college fair or career fair with your child and/or visit a college campus.
- Help your student find meaningful summer activities: programs on college campuses, summer camps, paid work, and volunteer opportunities.
- It's never too late to open a 529 college savings account. You can start with just \$25, and funds can be used to pay back student loans. Visit www.vvac.org/save.
- Visit www.vvac.org/plan/applying-to-college to learn about what's involved.

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GRADE 11

For a month-by-month college planning checklist, visit vsac.org/junioryear.

Student Task List

- Begin your college or technical program search. Start identifying schools and programs you may want to visit.
- Attend college fairs and career fairs.
- Prepare for standardized tests (SAT, ACT, TOEFL, Accuplacer). Check with your VSAC or school counselor for information and take them in the spring.
- Register for VSAC's College & Career Pathways, a free conference for sophomores, juniors, and parents. Visit www.vvac.org/ccp or call 800-642-3177 for dates, locations, and registration.
- Learn about financial aid and 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 www.vvac.org/schedule or check with your VSAC or school counselor.
- Take a dual enrollment course this year and explore the option of early college for senior year. Visit <http://vtdualenrollment.org> and <https://education.vermont.gov/student-learning/flexible-pathways/early-college> for details.
- Visit www.vvac.org/plan/applying-to-college and learn about the college application process.
- Talk to your school counselor about work-based apprenticeships and learning opportunities.
- Consider community service or volunteering, which will be good for your community and scholarship applications.
- Work with your school counselor to develop a résumé.
- Have your parents work with you on net price calculators at <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>.

Parent/Adult Task List

- Have conversations about your student's personality, likes and dislikes, non-academic concerns, and joys.
- Attend open houses and teacher conferences.
- Continue discussing and exploring college and career options with your student.
- Have the college cost conversation with your child early. Use net price calculators at <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov> to estimate what college might actually cost.
- Get to know the resources offered by the high school counseling office.
- Help your student register in the fall for the PSAT or Pre-ACT and in the spring for the SAT, ACT, TOEFL, or Accuplacer.
- Begin visiting colleges with your student or talk to the school counseling office about a job shadow.
- Ask the school for instructions on accessing the parent online portal to review student grades.
- Learn about financial aid and scholarship options. During the spring, VSAC holds "Financial Aid & Managing College Costs" presentations at high schools throughout the state. For dates of presentations in your area, visit www.vvac.org/schedule. If you're unable to attend, view our online version at www.vvac.org/resources.
- Attend VSAC's College & Career Pathways, a free conference for sophomores, juniors, and parents. Visit www.vvac.org/ccp for details and registration or call 800-642-3177.
- Talk with your student about the application process for college or technical programs. To learn about what's involved, visit www.vvac.org/plan/applying-to-college.

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GRADE 12

In the fall, start to apply online for a Vermont grant and VSAC-assisted scholarships. Go to www.vvac.org to create a MyVSAC account and log in frequently to respond to requests from VSAC for more information.

For a month-by-month college planning checklist, visit www.vvac.org/senioryear.

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Student Task List

- Take a full load of courses and keep up performance so colleges and employers know that you're serious about your education.
- Attend local college fairs and career fairs, and visit college campuses and technical programs.
- Talk to your school counselor about a work-based learning opportunity or doing a job shadow.
- Take a dual enrollment course before you graduate. Visit vtdualenrollment.org for details.
- Register for standardized tests (SAT, ACT, TOEFL, Accuplacer), if required, and take in the summer or fall.
- Pay attention to testing registration dates and all application deadlines.
- Create folders for each college you're applying to. Look at their websites for virtual tours and information sessions. Find a system that works for you to remember usernames and passwords. You'll need to create several of them throughout the college and financial aid application process.
- Check with <https://www.commonapp.org> to see whether the schools you're applying to accept the online Common Application. To apply online, see the sidebar.
- Gather materials to apply for financial aid. To find out what you'll need for the application, visit <https://studentaid.gov/articles/filling-out-fafsa>.
- Consider community service or volunteering, which will be good for your community and scholarship applications.
- Search for local, regional, and national scholarships. Ask your school counseling office how to apply for local scholarships. **Watch deadlines carefully.** In November, VSAC's scholarship booklet is available in the school counseling office and online at www.vvac.org/scholarships.

Parent/Adult Task List

- Encourage your student to keep up their academic performance. Senior year is as important as any other. Colleges often request mid-year and end-year grade reports before finalizing an offer of admission.
- Help your student obtain college application materials and complete them. Watch deadlines.
- Review VSAC's paying for college guide at www.vvac.org/resources and apply for financial aid, starting with the FAFSA.
- Have the college cost conversation with your student early in the year. Use net price calculators at <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov> to look at actual college costs.
- Familiarize yourself with financial aid and scholarship application procedures and paperwork. Watch deadlines.
- Encourage your student to search for scholarships and to ask the school counseling office for applications to local scholarships that may be available. Watch deadlines.
- Keep copies of everything, including college applications, financial aid applications, and tax returns.
- Remind your tech center student to talk to their school counselor about the credential they can receive from their program and how to get it.
- Once you begin receiving financial aid offers, visit www.vvac.org/collegedecision to learn how to crunch the numbers and use our online comparison tool.
- For VSAC videos on financial aid, the admission process, and more, visit <https://bit.ly/2YZp1Ql>.