



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 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

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 jumpstart.org/education
- ☐ 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 student's school's website.

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GRADES 9 & 10

Student Task List

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

- ☐ 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 jumpstart.org/education/.
- ☐ 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 gotocollegevt.org/signup for details.
- ☐ 10th graders, ask your school counselor about VSAC's College & 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 email 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 vsac.org/financial-aid-videos.
- ☐ Visit vsac.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 student 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 vsac.org/save.
- ☐ Visit vsac.org/plan/applying-to-college to learn about what's involved.

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GRADE 11

Student Task List

- ☐ Begin your college or technical program search. Start identifying schools and programs you may want to learn more about and visit.
- ☐ Attend college fairs and career fairs.
- ☐ Prepare for standardized tests (SAT, ACT, TOEFL, Accuplacer). Check with your VSAC counselor 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 vsac.org/ccp or call 877-961-4369 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 vsac.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. For details, visit education.vermont.gov/student-learning/flexible-pathways.
- ☐ Visit vsac.org/plan/applying-to-college to 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 can also help with scholarship applications.
- ☐ Work with your school counselor to develop a resumé.
- ☐ Have your parents work with you on net price calculators at 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 student early. Use net price calculators at 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 vsac.org/schedule. If you're unable to attend, view our online version at vsac.org/resources.
- ☐ Attend VSAC's College & Career Pathways, a free conference for sophomores, juniors, and parents. Visit vsac.org/ccp for details and registration or call 877-961-4369.
- ☐ Talk with your student about the application process for college or technical programs. To learn about what's involved, visit vsac.org/plan/applying-to-college.

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

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GRADE 12

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. For details, visit education.vermont.gov/student-learning/flexible-pathways/dual-enrollment.
- ☐ 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 commonapp.org to see whether the schools you're applying to accept the online Common Application.
- ☐ Gather materials to apply for financial aid, starting with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). To find out what you'll need for the application, visit studentaid.gov/help/info-needed.
- ☐ 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 vsac.org/scholarships.

Parent/Adult Task List

- ☐ Encourage your student to keep up their academic performance. Senior year is as important as any other. Colleges usually 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 vsac.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 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 for 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 vsac.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 vsac.org/financial-aid-videos.

In the fall, start to apply online for a Vermont grant and VSAC-assisted scholarships. Go to vsac.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 vsac.org/senioryear.

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