Ninth grade is an important year in a student's college-preparation journey.

Learn how a student can have a well-rounded experience in high school and how a parent can support his or her child.



Students

To Do:

- [ ] Take challenging classes in core academic subjects. Most colleges require four years of English, at least three years of social studies (history, civics, geography, economics, etc.), three years of mathematics, and three years of science, and many require two years of a foreign language. Round out your course load with classes in computer science and the arts.
- [ ] Work with one of your parents to estimate your financial aid using FAFSA4caster and be sure to save for college.
- [ ] Get involved in school- or community-based activities that interest you or let you explore career interests. Consider working, volunteering, and/or participating in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops, and camps with specialty focuses such as music, arts, or science. Remember—it's quality (not quantity) that counts.
- [ ] Ask your guidance counselor or teachers what Advanced Placement courses are available, whether you are eligible, and how to enroll in them.
- [ ] Use the U.S. Department of Labor's career search tool to research your career options.
- [ ] Start a list of your awards, honors, paid and volunteer work, and extracurricular activities. Update it throughout high school.

To Explore:

- [ ] Check out KnowHow2Go: The Four Steps to College, which suggests some actions you can take as you start thinking about education beyond high school.

- [ ] Learn about managing your money.
- [ ] Explore reasons to consider college and ways you can get help preparing.

Parents

To Do:

- [ ] Talk to your child about college plans as if he or she will definitely go to college.
- [ ] Keep an eye on your child's study habits and grades—stay involved.
- [ ] Encourage your child to take Advanced Placement or other challenging classes.
- [ ] Add to your child's college savings account regularly; and make sure you are fully aware of the provisions of the account.

To Explore:

- [ ] Address your concerns about whether your child can or should go to college.
- [ ] Read "Parent Power" to access ideas for remaining involved in your child's progress.

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