



**WEST HIGH
SCHOOL**

COLLEGE CHECKLIST

Your Year-by-year Guide to Being Prepared for College

YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR:

- Take challenging classes and work hard to make good grades. Your GPA (grade point average) is cumulative and starts now! Know your graduation requirements.
- Honors, AP (Advanced Placement), IB (International Baccalaureate) and Dual Enrollment courses will prepare you for college level work, and will prove to colleges that you are willing to work hard. Ask your school counselor to explain the requirements and benefits of these courses.
- Begin exploring the many different types of postsecondary schools including 2 year and 4 year, public and private, technical and professional schools, women's and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- Create a file of important documents in preparation for creating your resume.
- Explore your interests through clubs, volunteering and sports. Take an interest survey and explore careers on Tennessee Career Information Delivery System (tcids.com).
- Ask your teacher about what you need to do all year to be ready for EOC (End of Course) Exams that count 25% of your grade.
- Develop study, organizational, and time management skills. If you need help ask your school counselor, teachers, and parent/guardian.
- Take advantage of before and after school study sessions and ask your teachers about online study resources.
- Consider taking the PSAT in October as practice. Ask your counselor if you qualify for a fee waiver.
- Enroll on CollegeforTN.org to track your academic progress, and do research on colleges, financial aid, careers and more!
- College is expensive, but more than half of college students get some type of financial aid such as grants and scholarships.
- Attend the Smoky Mountain Regional College Fair in October.
- Attend Knox County Schools Annual Career Day Feb. 23 to visit displays and talk to employers and college representatives.
- Meet with your school counselor in the spring to talk about next year's schedule. Make sure that you sign up for courses that you need to prepare for AP and IB courses.
- Summer:** Use the summer to attend academic enrichment camps and workshops, and read, read, read!

YOUR SOPHOMORE YEAR:

- Talk to your school counselor and parents about Honors, AP and IB courses. There are many ways that taking rigorous courses now will pay off in the long run!
- Research the IB program on the WHS website. If interested, contact your school counselor as soon as possible to review readiness for the IB program. You will need a recommendation from your teacher to take IB or AP classes next year.
- Make sure you are taking all classes needed for graduation, and to gain admission to the type of schools you are interested in attending.
- Begin your resume. You will use it for college applications and scholarship competitions.
- Continue exploring interests outside the classroom; keep track of activities, leadership, honors and awards.
- Meet with your school counselor to familiarize yourself with college planning resources.
- Create a list of colleges and universities in which you are interested and note their admissions requirements. Use college search engines such as collegeboard.org; act.org; petersons.com.
- If you intend to play a sport in college, review NCAA academic requirements at eligibilitycenter.org.
- Take the ACT PLAN in October as preparation for the ACT.
- Ask your school counselor about taking the PSAT and/or SAT subject tests; discuss the results with your parents and counselor.
- Attend the Smoky Mountain Regional College Fair in October.
- Attend Knox County Schools Annual Career Day Feb. 23 to visit displays and talk to employers and college representatives.
- Meet with your school counselor in the spring to discuss next year's schedule.
- Summer:** Attend academic enrichment camps, volunteer, or work. Visit college campuses. Explore 2 and 4 year colleges, scholarships, and major fields on the web.

YOUR JUNIOR YEAR:

- Talk to your school counselor about taking Honors, AP and IB classes next year. You must start IB classes (and a lot of AP classes) in junior year because they are 2 year courses.
- Stay on track for graduation.
- Know your graduation requirements and how many credits/what classes you already have.
- Familiarize yourself with college applications and compile all needed information.
- Narrow your focus in clubs and activities in order to increase your accomplishment and assume leadership roles.
- Begin thinking about topics for college essays. Review admissions applications and visit commonapp.org for potential topics.
- Talk to recent graduates that are home on breaks; they are a great resource.
- Create an account on a free scholarship search engine such as fastweb.com.
- Take the PSAT and review results with your parents and counselor.
- Begin ACT/SAT test preparation. Ask your counselor about free resources.
- Research colleges and consult your parents and counselor about narrowing your list to a manageable number.
- If you intend to play a sport in college, review NCAA academic requirements at eligibilitycenter.org.
- Attend the Smoky Mountain Regional College Fair in October.
- Attend Knox County Schools Annual Career Day Feb. 23 to visit displays and talk to employers and college representatives.
- Make a list of adults who might write recommendations for you.
- Summer:** Work, volunteer, intern or take special courses to help define your interests and add depth to your college essays. Visit colleges. Work on your college essays and applications to reduce stress this fall.

YOUR SENIOR YEAR:

AUGUST

- Meet with your school counselor to discuss your final college list and discuss application deadlines. Make sure you have included “safe,” “stretch,” and “dream” schools.
- Provide your counselor with a list of all schools to which you will apply, what forms they must complete, and the application deadline.
- Submit your most current resume to your counselor for use in writing your letter of recommendation. Parents/guardians may also send information to assist those writing letters of reference.
- If you are considering playing sports in college, make sure that you have registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center at eligibilitycenter.org.
- Create a file for each college to which you will apply. Include a list of what is necessary for a complete application.
- Take either the ACT or the SAT in the fall so that your scores can be considered with your application.

SEPTEMBER

- Check your school’s Scholarship Bulletin often. Copies can be picked up in the school counseling office or viewed online at your school’s website.
- Inform your school counselor at least one month in advance about any Secondary School Reports (a part of many applications which counselors must complete) and Mid-Year Reports; let them know if they can complete this online or whether a printed hard copy is necessary. If forms are required, print them and submit them to your counselor.
- Don’t forget to fill out a **transcript request** for each school to which you are applying and submit them to the registrar in the counseling office.
- Ask teachers who know you well and with whom you have a good relationship to write a **letter of recommendation** (if required by the college). Again, let them know if they may complete this online or provide them with the proper request form, your resume, and an envelope addressed to the college with postage included.
- Find out from the colleges to which you are applying whether a separate application is required for **Financial Aid/Scholarships**. Some schools automatically consider you when you apply; however, some schools require a separate application.
- If required by the colleges, file the CSS Financial Aid Profile online at collegeboard.com.

OCTOBER

- Attend the Smoky Mountain Regional College Fair to meet face to face with nationwide college representatives.
- Finalize and send any early decision or early action applications due this month. Have a parent, teacher, or school counselor review the application before it is submitted. **Always keep a hard copy of any application submitted electronically or through the mail.**
- Finalize your college essays.

NOVEMBER

- Every college will require a copy of your high school transcript. Follow your school’s procedure for sending transcripts.
- Make sure your ACT/SAT scores have been sent to colleges directly from the testing company.

DECEMBER

- Attend any **Financial Aid Workshops** held at your school. Request a pin number for you and one parent (fafsa.ed.gov); this will become your electronic signature on your FAFSA.
- Your goal should be to have all applications completed by the end of the first semester.

JANUARY

- Seniors and families can begin filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (**FAFSA**). This can be done online at fafsa.ed.gov. Complete it as soon as possible! In order to qualify for the **Hope Lottery Scholarship**, you must complete a FAFSA.
- Complete the CSS Profile (if required) at collegeboard.com.
- Remind your counselor if colleges to which you have applied require a mid-year report.

FEBRUARY

- Attend Knox County Schools Annual Career Day Feb. 23 to visit displays and talk to employers and college representatives.

APRIL

- You may have received notification of acceptance prior to April 15; however, this is the common final notification date for colleges.
- Make your final college choice after you receive your acceptances. Decline any offers of admission in writing so that colleges may admit other qualified candidates.
- If you are “wait listed” by a college you really want to attend, visit, call, and write the admissions office to make your interest clear. Ask how you can strengthen your application.

MAY

- May 1- this is the deadline for you to notify colleges of your final decision. Place only one deposit at a college. To submit more than one deposit at a college/university goes against accepted practice.
- Remember to accept financial aid offers and follow the instructions given.
- Make sure that you have submitted the senior survey including the final transcript request. The **senior survey** gives us information regarding scholarships you have received and which college you will be attending. We cannot announce your name at graduation as one who has received scholarships if you have not submitted the survey telling us what you have received...there is no other way for us to find out this information! We must send a final transcript to the school you are attending so it is critical that you complete the **final transcript request**.

HAPPY GRADUATION!

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (Beginning with Class of 2013)

If you have ANY questions, meet with your counselor - better safe than sorry!

- 4 years of English
- 4 years of Math
(Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra 2, one higher level math)
- 2-4 years of the same Foreign Language
- 3 years of Science
(Biology, Chemistry or Physics, one additional lab science)
- 3-4 years of History/Social Studies
(World History or Geography; 1/2 US Government; 1/2 Economics; US History)
- 1 year of fine arts
- 1.5 Physical Education and Health
(Lifetime Wellness and one additional 1/2 credit of PE)
- 1/2 Personal Finance
- 3 Electives in one of the elective focus areas (see counselor or website for details)