



junior

Financial Aid Checklist



Fall

- Explore ways to pay for college, starting with www.calgrants.org, www.csac.ca.gov, www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov and www.going2college.org.
- Ask teachers, counselors and coaches for leads on private scholarships and search the Web, starting with www.fastweb.com.
- Use FAFSA4caster to get an estimate of your eligibility for federal student aid—and shorten the time it will take you to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in your senior year when you apply for financial aid. Visit www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov.
- Check out colleges or technical and career programs at www.californiacolleges.edu and www.nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator. Start a college folder with the information you collect.
- Register for the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test at your high school. You'll get a chance to practice for the SAT and enter into a competition for a merit scholarship.
- Open up a free e-mail account, if you don't have one already, and make sure your e-mail address is appropriate for corresponding with colleges, lenders and employers.
- Ask your counselor if any college representatives will be visiting your school or whether a college fair is planned for your community.
- Review your class schedule with your counselor to make sure you're on track with your goals.
- Begin thinking about counselors, teachers, friends or family members to ask to write letters of recommendation for your college admissions and scholarship applications.

- Get involved in activities at your school or in the community. A number of colleges look at grades as well as outside interests when determining which students to admit. Keep a record in an "activities" folder for future reference.
- Make sure you pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). You must pass the exam to qualify for a Cal Grant.

Winter

- Register and begin studying for your college entrance exams—the SAT Reasoning or Subject tests (www.collegeboard.com), the ACT (www.actstudent.org) or other exam. You'll find practice questions at these Web sites.
- Consider taking any Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or SAT Subject exams in the spring while the information is fresh.
- Attend your high school's financial aid night. It's not too early to learn about your options.
- Continue to explore colleges or technical and career programs. Put together a list of 10 colleges that interest you.

Spring

- Take the SAT, ACT or other college entrance exam.

- Keep up your grades. Your junior-year grades in particular are important for college admission.
- Talk to your parents about visiting your top college choices. If possible, arrange for an interview or an overnight stay. Also, find out if a local organization sponsors a college tour during spring break.
- If you plan to participate in college sports, you may need to register at the beginning of your junior year with the clearinghouse of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, depending on your sport, division or college.
- Look into summer programs, workshops, internships or jobs.
- Continue to explore colleges and financial aid opportunities.
- Look into programs that let you earn money for college for volunteer service, including AmeriCorps (www.americorps.gov), California Volunteers (www.californiavolunteers.org) and the California Conservation Corps (www.ccc.ca.gov).
- Explore veterans (www.gibill.va.gov) and military service (www.myfuture.com) education benefits.

Important Numbers and Web Sites

California Student Aid Commission
www.calgrants.org
www.csac.ca.gov
888.CA.GRANT (888.224.7268)

California Cash for College Workshops
www.calgrants.org

Federal Student Aid
FAFSA4caster
PDF version of the FAFSA
www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov
800.4FED.AID (800.433.3243)

The FAFSA
www.fafsa.ed.gov