**Step  1**: Come up with a Game Plan (Spring of 11th grade)

**Step  2:** Research Colleges (Spring of 11th grade)

**Step  3:** Visit Colleges (Summer after 11th grade)

**Step  4:**Take the SAT or ACT (Spring of 11th grade and Fall of 12th grade)

Visit [CollegeBoard.org](https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/) or [ACT.org](http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act.html) to learn more about these exams.

**Step  5:** Apply to College (August-January of 12th grade)

Visit the [College Board’s Big Future](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/applying-101/tips-for-preparing-your-college-application) website for tips on preparing your college application.

**Step  6:** Submit your Financial Aid Forms (October - March of 12th grade)

The most important form is the[Free Application for Federal Student Aid](https://fafsa.gov/), commonly referred to as the FAFSA. The FAFSA opens every year, October 1st.

**Step  7**: Submit the Required Follow-Up Documents (January - March of 12th grade)

**Step  8:** Review Financial Aid Awards (April of 12th grade)

Visit [consumerfinance.gov](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college/compare-financial-aid-and-college-cost/) to access a comparison calculator to help compare financial aid packages.

**Step  9**: Pick a College (April of 12th grade)

**Step 10**: Say Thank You! (May of 12th grade)

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