**8th - 9th Grade Planning**

**#1: Take the Right Classes**

1. Talk to your counselor about taking a college prep curriculum.
2. Colleges will evaluate you based on the classes you’ve taken, especially top colleges. They want to see that you have taken challenging courses like honors or AP classes if you can.
3. An example of a freshman schedule for a student who wants to be competitive for admission to the top colleges: Honors or Pre-AP Biology; Pre AP or Algebra 1; Honors or Pre-AP English I, World Geography or AP Human Geography, Spanish I, PE class, Elective

**#2: Get Good Grades**

1. Some courses from 8th grade may have earned you credit going into high school
2. Grades start to matter in your freshman year. Your grades in your freshman year will influence your high school [GPA](https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-do-you-calculate-gpa) and [class rank](https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-is-class-rank-why-is-it-important).
3. If you get good grades in your freshman year, you’ll be more likely to get good grades in your sophomore and junior years.
4. If you don’t do as well as you’d like in your freshman year, it doesn’t mean that your college dreams are doomed. Undoubtedly, your sophomore and junior year grades are more important to colleges.

**#3: Get Involved in Extracurricular Activities**

1. Your grades, test scores, and [extracurricular activities](https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-are-extracurricular-activities-and-why-do-you-need-them) probably have the biggest influence on the quality of your college applications, especially top colleges.
2. If you play a sport, you can focus your energies on reaching the highest level in your sport and becoming a [recruited athlete](https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-does-college-recruiting-work-athletic-complete-process). If you excel in math, you can use your time outside of school to practice for and compete in math competitions.
3. You should be participating in extracurricular activities during your freshman year of high school. **Colleges prefer to see a sustained commitment to your activities**.

**#4: Start Preparing for the SAT/ACT**

1. **Take the** [**PSAT**](https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-is-the-psat-10-complete-guide) **or** [**PreACT**](https://blog.prepscholar.com/what-is-the-preact-test) **during your Freshman year if offered at your high school.**

**#5: Keep a Folder for Accomplishments**

1. Keep a list of awards, honors and extracurricular activities for scholarship and college applications.

**#6: Start Preliminary College Research**

1. **You can start thinking about what you’re looking for in a college**. What do you want to study? What geographic region do you want to be in? You can also visit local college campuses to see what they're like and get a small taste of college life. Check admission and application requirements and timelines.
2. **You can get a better idea of what you need to do to get admitted**. If you know the grades you'll need to get into different schools, you stay on track. Furthermore, you can also go on colleges' websites and look at their admission requirements so you know which classes you should be taking.

**#7: Involve Your Parents**

1. If you get your parents involved with your college planning, they can be more supportive and helpful.
2. Inform them [why you want to go to college](https://blog.prepscholar.com/why-should-i-go-to-college). Finances shouldn't be a barrier to you attending college. Between [grants](https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-to-get-a-pell-grant), [scholarships](https://blog.prepscholar.com/79-colleges-with-full-ride-scholarships), and possibly [loans](https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-to-get-a-student-loan-step-by-step-guide), **a college education can be accessible to you regardless of your financial situation**.

**#8: Monitor high school credits and tests**

1. Make sure you meet all local and state requirements for credits and STAAR EOC ( Algebra 1, English 1, and Biology). If you did not meet the requirement retake the tests in the summer.
2. Make sure you earned your credits for the school year.