

The Next Steps to a College Education: A High School Timeline

What do you need to do to be prepared?



Freshman and Sophomore Years

- Talk to your guidance counselor to get signed up for the PSAT and PLAN tests.
- Pursue as challenging of an academic schedule as you can, focusing on college preparatory courses.
- Make vacations productive. If you and your family travel, make time for casual visits and tours of colleges near your vacation destination.
- Check out the [Indiana College Costs Estimator \(ICCE\)](#) to learn about the college selection, admissions and financial aid processes and fill out an *Estimator*.
- Take a skills assessment to see if you can narrow down your career interests.
- Keep a list of extra-curricular activities and how much time you spend with them.

Junior Year

August-January

- Study hard and get good grades. Ideally, the Core 40 Diploma is the minimum goal for Indiana students. However, try to stay on the Core 40 with Academic Honors or Technical Honors track if you can!
- Be sure to talk to your guidance counselor so you can get signed up for the PLAN and PSAT tests.
- Create a folder where you start saving and organizing all of your college information.
- Start searching for scholarship opportunities on the ICCE [Free Scholarship Searches](#) and [Local Scholarships](#) pages so that when you are a senior you will know what scholarships to apply for.
- Talk to your guidance counselor about what you think you want to do after high school.
- Complete an *Estimator* on the [Indiana College Costs Estimator](#) to generate an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and see what merit or need-based aid Indiana colleges might give you.

February-April

- When registering for your senior classes, choose those that will challenge you (English, math, science, etc).
- Take the [SAT or ACT](#) more than once.
- Investigate [Indiana college profiles](#) and start narrowing down what colleges you might want to visit now or over the summer.



May-June

- Take AP tests for any AP courses that you are taking.
- Register with the NCAA Clearinghouse if you plan to play sports at a Division I or II college.
- Last chance to take the [SAT or ACT](#) this spring.

July

- Start college visits and don't forget to take along our [College Visit 101](#) tour tips document.
- Pick up a summer job to learn new skills and possibly gain leadership experience.
- Start going through the [Indiana College Costs Estimator](#) website to learn about college selection, admissions and financial aid information. Don't forget to check out our [ICCE Publications](#) section.

Note: Many of these steps do not HAVE to be followed in the exact order that we have placed them (excluding some that have specific dates). However, we have tried to give you a good idea as to how you might map out your planning during high school.

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What do you need to do your Senior Year?

Senior Year

August-November

- Narrow down your college options and make a list of their application deadlines.
- As you start narrowing down what schools you want to apply to, start drafting any required college admissions or scholarship essays. Be sure to make multiple drafts and have others check them!
- Continue college visits with our [College Visit 101](#) tour tips document.
- Register for the fall [SAT or ACT](#) (if needed).
- Identify people who you would like to write a letter of recommendation. Please be sure to respect their time by giving them ample time to write the letter.
- Begin completing college admissions and scholarship applications.
- Don't stop looking for [scholarship opportunities](#).

December-January

- Take SATII: Subject Tests as needed.
- Attend your school's financial aid meetings.
- Last chance to file many regular decision admissions applications.



February

- Parents need to start filing their taxes as early as possible this month in preparation for filling out the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#).
- Attend FAFSA days to get help filling out the FAFSA. You can see a list of FAFSA days near you by checking out the [ICCE Calendar of Events](#).
- Also, on February 12 (2pm) you can attend a College Goal Sunday event to help you fill out the FAFSA. [Click here to find an event near you](#).

March-April

- Make sure the FAFSA is completed by any college's priority FAFSA filing Deadline. For Indiana residents, you need to be sure the FAFSA is filed no later than **MARCH 10**. [Click here to fill it out](#).
- Are you a Twenty-first Century Scholar? Submit your Senior Affirmation by March 10th, too.
- Review financial aid packages from colleges.
- Make overnight visits to final college choices.

May

- Decide on a college by May 1 or sooner (depending on the colleges' deadlines). For all of the other colleges where you have been accepted, be sure you notify them that you will not be attending.
- Submit enrollment deposit to your school of choice.
- May 15 is the last day for Indiana students eligible for a state grant to make any required changes to the [FAFSA](#).
- Take AP tests for any AP courses you are taking.

June-August

- Attend on-campus orientation/registration sessions
- Make final preparations for your departure. Two really good ways to prepare are to map out a schedule for your first semester and to create a budget.

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