

# Sophomores and Juniors: Preparing for College

Taken mostly from

**"Countdown to College: 21 To-Do Lists for High School"**

By Valerie Pierce

Parents should make any financial decisions regarding paying for college prior to January 1st of the student's sophomore year, as that is the beginning of the base calendar year used for the FAFSA application.

By 10th grade, students should narrow down their activities to two or three that you'll continue to do through high school and possibly into college. Colleges would prefer to see you do a few things well and that show dedication, rather than many things with mediocrity, which can show little focus and the tendency to get spread too thin.

A study sponsored by the National Bureau of Economic Research showed that if you take two average, middle-class students who are equal academically, the one who attends a slightly less selective institution will probably have higher grades in college, a higher class rank, and stand out more to faculty. This doesn't mean you don't apply to your dream school; it just means that those who think they need to attend an ivy-league college to succeed may want to rethink their motivation.

Best college website according to the author:

[www.allaboutcollege.com](http://www.allaboutcollege.com)

Scholarships/Financial Aid Websites:

[finaid.org](http://finaid.org)

[fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com)

[collegboard.org](http://collegboard.org)

[scholarships.com](http://scholarships.com)

[review.com](http://review.com)

[xap.com](http://xap.com)

[allaboutcollege.com](http://allaboutcollege.com)

[collegeview.com](http://collegeview.com)

[scholarshipexperts.com](http://scholarshipexperts.com)

[collegeanswer.com](http://collegeanswer.com)

[ed.gov/index.jsp](http://ed.gov/index.jsp)

[collegeispossible.com](http://collegeispossible.com)

[petersons.com](http://petersons.com)

[studentedge.com](http://studentedge.com)

[collegegold.com](http://collegegold.com)

[Student Guide, Funding Your Education, and Looking for Student Aid](#)

(Please – never pay anyone to search for scholarships for you)

On-line personality tests to help find colleges:

[collegegrazing.com](http://collegegrazing.com)

[collegetrends.org](http://collegetrends.org) [princetonreview.com/colleges-majors.aspx](http://princetonreview.com/colleges-majors.aspx)

[rankingsandreviews.com](http://rankingsandreviews.com)

Help finding majors:

[mymajors.com](http://mymajors.com)

[myplan.com](http://myplan.com)

Talk with people in the profession you're thinking of pursuing and find out what they majored in/where they interned/ what skills they needed, etc. to get that job.

If you don't know anyone:

- call professional organizations such as the Society of Mechanical Engineers, and ask if they could refer you to someone.
- look through magazines related to that career (Psychology Today) for stories that profile people.
- call the Human Resources Department of a related business and ask if they could refer you to someone in that company.

If you want to play a sport in college, your junior year is the time to start asking questions. Talk to your coach first, then contact the coaches of colleges in which you're interested. There are very strict guidelines concerning recruiting. You can check out the website below to find out what those are:

[eligibilitycenter.org](http://eligibilitycenter.org)

And though not in this book, I recommend that all juniors sign up now to take the ACT test at least once this spring, as well as the SAT if there's time.

[ACT – act.org](http://act.org)

[SAT - collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org)