



GET SET FOR

High School



A Guide for Students

ACT[®]

Your high school years

may be the most exciting and important ones you will spend in school.

For the first time, you'll have lots of choices to make about what you study. It's important to know that the choices you make for 9th grade—as well as 10th, 11th, and 12th—will affect the choices you'll have for the rest of your life.

No matter what you dream of doing with your life, preparing yourself for more education beyond high school is your wisest plan right now. Post-high school education can provide valuable experiences that contribute to a better quality of life for you. Whether or not you go on to a college, university, career or technical school, the information and skills you learn in your high school classes will always be useful in the world of work.

Remember: Everyone, in every kind of job, needs to be able to write and speak clearly, listen carefully, understand what is written and spoken, and use math effectively.

Average yearly income by educational attainment

High School Dropout	\$19,915
High School Graduate	\$29,448
Some College	\$31,421
Associate's Degree	\$37,990
Bachelor's Degree	\$54,689
Master's Degree	\$67,898
Doctoral Degree	\$92,863
Professional Degree	\$119,009

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 data

Keep your options open

Right now you may not know what you want to do with your future, or exactly how to get ready for it.

That's okay. You have plenty of time to figure out what interests you, what you're good at, and how those things add up to a career. The most important thing to do right now is make sure you keep your options open.

When you have questions

Your school counselor, teachers, or principal will have the answers (or know someone who does) to many questions about high school and education after high school. Your family and friends often have good information, too. Do not hesitate to ask as many questions as necessary to obtain all the information you need.

Learn how to learn

Now is the time to concentrate on improving your skills as a student. If you practice the following tips, you may find you enjoy your classes more:

- ◆ **Sit close to the front** of the classroom when possible.
- ◆ **Join in** class discussions.
- ◆ **Ask questions.** If you don't understand something, chances are others in the class don't understand either.
- ◆ **Keep up** with class assignments. Finish them before they're due.
- ◆ **Ask for help** in any class in which you find yourself falling behind. Remember, your teachers want to help you succeed!
- ◆ Look for ways to **sharpen your basic skills** in each class. You can practice your writing skills in history, your algebra skills in science, and your math and science skills in vocational education classes.
- ◆ **Learn keyboarding** skills so you can type your own schoolwork and use a computer.
- ◆ Learn to take **good class notes**. You'll take lots of notes throughout the rest of your life.
- ◆ Learn to **proofread, correct, and rewrite** your written work.
- ◆ **Develop test-taking skills.** Your counselor and teachers can show you how to get started.

High school courses ACT recommends for all students*

Courses	ACT Recommends
English	Four years
Mathematics	Three years (including Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II)
Science	Three years (including Biology, Chemistry, and Physics)
Social Studies	Three years
Other	Foreign language, visual and performing arts, computer science, etc.

***Specific high school course requirements vary from college to college, and some majors may have additional requirements.**

ACT's recommendations provide a general framework to follow for all colleges, but check with the schools you're interested in to see what they require or recommend.

Know the basics of class scheduling

First, you need to be thoroughly familiar with all the **required courses and graduation requirements** of your high school.

- ◆ You should take an **English or literature class** each year of high school. These classes will strengthen your reading, writing, and speaking skills.
- ◆ A series of **mathematics courses** is very important as you prepare for the careers of the future. Four years of high school math, **including algebra and geometry**, are necessary to many occupations. Math will be even more important in the future.
- ◆ Make sure you take enough **social studies courses** to get a good understanding of American history and our government. Many colleges and universities require three years of study.
- ◆ **Science is important.** Schedule three or more years, including at least one laboratory course.
- ◆ Schedule at least one year of **visual and performing arts** from the areas of visual arts, music, dance, and theater.
- ◆ **Elective courses** allow you to explore your special interests. These courses are considered very important. Seriously consider taking a foreign language. Some colleges expect two years of foreign language study, and your understanding of the world can be improved by knowing another language.
- ◆ You might consider combining your last two years of high school with two years of community college education, by exploring the **Tech Prep Education (2+2)** offerings. This can lead to an associate's degree or two-year certificate in the mechanical, industrial, or practical arts: agriculture, health, family and consumer sciences, or business. Remember, though, that these programs build upon knowledge gained in math, science, and communications courses.
- ◆ Some specific **applied academic courses** that use hands-on approaches to learning have been approved as meeting the core curriculum requirements. For more information, see your counselor.
- ◆ You will need to be **computer literate**.

High school course planning chart

This chart can be used to plan your classes for the next four years. First plan your 9th-grade classes and then pencil in the classes you expect to take in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. These choices may change later, depending upon your interests and career plans.

Check with your counselor to make sure your schedule meets your high school's graduation requirements. Be sure to plan for any additional requirements for admission to a four-year public college or university or a tech prep educational program at a community college.

English—Language Arts (4 years)	9th	10th	11th	12th
Writing, reading, listening, and speaking				

Mathematics (3 years)	9th	10th	11th	12th
First-year algebra, geometry, second-year algebra, trigonometry, precalculus, calculus				

Science (3 years)	9th	10th	11th	12th
Biology, chemistry, physics				

Social Studies (3 years)	9th	10th	11th	12th
History, sociology, psychology				

Foreign Language—Second Language	9th	10th	11th	12th

Visual Arts, Music, Theatre, Drama, Dance, Computer Science	9th	10th	11th	12th

Physical Education (state requirements vary)	9th	10th	11th	12th

What you do outside of school counts, too

Develop habits now that will help you succeed in high school, in education after high school, and in the world of work:

- ♦ Find a **quiet place to study** where you won't be interrupted. Is it just too noisy at home? Ask your family or a teacher to help you find a place to study.
- ♦ Plan a daily **homework schedule** and stick to it. Do more than is required.
- ♦ Ask your **family or friends** to read your written work. And ask them for help if you're having trouble at school.
- ♦ **Use your local library.** If you don't have a library card now, ask the librarian for one. They're free.
- ♦ **Read newspapers and magazines.** Talk with your family and friends about what you read.
- ♦ Look up words you don't know in the **dictionary.** Then use your new words in writing and talking.
- ♦ Talk with your family about **career plans** and what you want to do in the future.

Take time to explore

This is the perfect time to check out lots of career options. The Web is a great resource for information about specific schools or training programs, and here are some other ways to learn more if you are considering:

1. Attending a **four-year college, university, vocational/technical school, or two-year college**
 - ♦ Make a list of the schools that interest you.
 - ♦ Gather information from each school and study it.

- ◆ Register to take the ACT® test before December of your senior year; spring of your junior year is recommended. All U.S. colleges and universities accept ACT scores.
- ◆ Visit the campus of each school you are seriously considering.
- ◆ Apply early for admission and housing.
- ◆ Apply early for financial assistance. Pay attention to deadlines listed in the financial aid information you receive from your counselor and the school(s) you are interested in attending.
- ◆ Find out about local, state, federal, and private student financial assistance programs.
- ◆ Make your decision. Take time to review all information carefully and weigh your options.

2. Serving in the **Armed Forces**

- ◆ Visit with friends, neighbors, and relatives who have served in various branches of the Armed Forces.
- ◆ Study the military literature available in your counseling office.
- ◆ Evaluate any physical limitations that might prevent you from serving in the Armed Forces.
- ◆ Compare military training opportunities with possible civilian occupations.
- ◆ Arrange with your counselor to visit with various military recruiters during your junior and senior years of high school.
- ◆ Compare benefits, tours of duty, training, and promotion opportunities of military programs.

3. Looking for **direct employment** after high school

- ◆ Explore your special abilities and interests with your school counselor.
- ◆ Collect and study materials about writing resumes and letters of application.
- ◆ Consider whether you want to move away from your home region after high school.
- ◆ Visit with individuals working in various occupations that may be of interest to you.
- ◆ Become familiar with major employers in the areas where you are interested in working.
- ◆ Be knowledgeable about the vocational/technical program offerings available in your high school.

Financing available

There is a lot of financial help if you want to take the big step toward more education after high school.

Many students hesitate to consider additional education because of tuition costs. If you think you can't afford more education after high school, you need to know that many students receive financial help from:

- ♦ the state
- ♦ the school they attend after high school
- ♦ the federal government
- ♦ private financial assistance programs

Different types of financial assistance

- ♦ **Scholarships**—usually based on good high school grades, good test scores (like the ACT), or exceptional ability (like athletic talent).
- ♦ **Grants**—usually based on financial need.
- ♦ **Loans**—will need to be repaid eventually.
- ♦ **Work programs**—allow students to earn money for educational costs and living expenses.

Your school counselor and the **financial aid office** at the schools you're considering can give you information about how to apply for financial assistance.

You can also use free searches on the Internet for scholarships (try www.fastweb.com) or the local library to search for private funds.

Military programs can provide financial assistance and additional training. **Apprenticeships** and **on-the-job training** are other ways to continue your education.

Your state may offer a variety of financial assistance programs targeted for specific groups of students. Ask your counselor for the Web addresses and phone numbers of aid sources in your state and elsewhere.

Take this booklet home

And share this
information with your family.

Share your ideas, too, about high school
and the years ahead. You may want to refer to
some of the information later. It's a good idea to
check as you proceed to be sure you're getting the
most out of high school.

Just by reading through this booklet and understanding
the importance of planning classes carefully, you're
getting set for high school. The planning you're doing
right now is going to help you make each year count.

For more information about planning for success
in high school and preparing for life after
high school, visit ACT's website at
www.actstudent.org.

