

Activity 1—Interest inventory

This activity is intended for teens and/or young adults with high-functioning autism or Asperger syndrome

Figuring out what you want to do after high school is an important task, and you will have plenty of time to make these decisions. This activity is a good first step as to help you focus on what you like to do. This will help you set goals for the future.

1. My favorite class(es) in school is/are _____
because _____.
2. My least class(es) in school is/are _____
because _____.
3. Outside of school assignments, I read books about _____.
4. I watch TV shows or movies about _____.
5. In my spare time I enjoy _____.
6. I like _____ type(s) of music.
7. The Web sites that I like to access include:

_____.
8. If I had more time and money, in my free time I would _____.
9. I have always wanted to _____.
10. The person I admire the most is _____ because _____.

11. Activities that I have been involved in include (examples: clubs, community activities, sports)

12. Activities that I do not enjoy participating in include _____

13. I prefer the kind of environment where (examples: that is quiet, there are people that I know)

14. When working in groups, I prefer group members who are (examples: nice, helpful, hardworking)

15. After high school, I might like to _____

One Step Further (Optional): You can use magazines, newspapers, catalogs, or drawings to find pictures that represent your answers to the questions above. Paste these pictures onto a posterboard. You can use this visualization board to focus on what you like, get ideas for essays, and remind yourself of your future goals.



Activity 2—Preparation checklist

Use this activity to help prepare and track your planning for college while teens and/or young adults with high-functioning autism (HFA) or Asperger syndrome (AS) are in high school.

Below is a list of activities and tasks that you can start doing during high school to prepare for college. You do not have to do everything on this list, but these are some ideas that may help you make decisions and gain acceptance to college. Keep in mind that you do not need to do all of these activities on your own. You can enlist the help of your parents or your individualized education plan (IEP) team or other supportive people for help with any of these tasks.

Note: You may not be a freshman when you start to prepare for college (you may be a junior or a senior). That is okay. This checklist is just a guide to help you along the way. You can still follow the recommendations whatever year you are and successfully get into college.

Freshman Year

___ Join extracurricular activities.

- These can be athletics, academics, service-related clubs or organizations, or teams like indoor track, the National Honors Society, or debate. Colleges like to see that students' interests are balanced across a variety of areas.

___ Start thinking about your interests and career goals with your IEP team.

- This may help narrow what schools you will be applying to based on the programs and majors they have available. Start by asking yourself questions such as: "What do I like to do in my free time?" "What are my strengths in school?"

___ Create a transition plan with your IEP team.

- This plan will be part of your IEP and will include the steps you need to take toward graduating from high school. It may include classes to take, skills to accomplish, or other goals to help you prepare for leaving high school.

___ Join extracurricular activities.

- These can be athletics, academics, service-related clubs or organizations, or teams like indoor track, the National Honors Society, or debate. Colleges like to see that students' interests are balanced across a variety of areas.

___ Keep your grades up,

A GPA of 3.0 or above throughout your entire high school career can qualify you for federal, state, and/or school-provided financial aid and help with acceptance to competitive college programs.



Sophomore Year

___ **Begin searching online for schools you would like to learn more about.**

- Ask your IEP team, parents, and/or other adults (teachers, school counselor, or therapists) for their ideas about colleges you might want to consider.

___ **Buy an SAT or ACT preparatory book that includes practice tests.**

- These will help familiarize you with the format and types of questions given on the standardized test(s) you plan on taking.

___ **Consider a prep course, online resources, or a tutor for the SAT/ACT test.**

- Once you have familiarized yourself with the format of the SAT and/or ACT, you will want to determine if a tutor or a prep class will be more helpful than practicing on your own. Talk with parents, teachers, or others to get their input on what format would be best for you.

___ **Shadow a person or search for internships in the career or field of your choice.**

- You can learn more about a topic by following a person who is an expert or who works in the field. Or you can also participate in an internship to gain experience in a particular area.
- Career mentors and/or internships may be found online, through your school counselor, or at a career center.

___ **Continue to maintain good grades and keep up with extracurricular activities.**

Junior Year

___ **Register for SAT/ACT test dates that are convenient for you.**

- Begin the accommodation request process, if necessary.
- You may want to take the test two or three times and use the highest scores among them (if allowed by school).
- You will want to know which schools you are applying to by your test date so you can send your SAT/ACT scores directly to those schools through the testing agency. (However, if you take the tests early, you could also wait to send your scores until after you receive them. In this way, you could take the test again if needed.)

___ **Make use of any prep courses, tutors, and books for the SAT/ACT.**

- Take practice tests and time yourself as you would on the real test day.

___ **Research and visit some of the schools to which you are thinking of applying with the help of your parents and other adults.**

- Look at the different aspects of each school to determine which schools you will be applying to in your senior year.
- Visit colleges that you are interested in.

___ **Consider taking some high-level classes such as Advanced Placement (AP) and/or honors classes.**

- Keep in mind that AP or honors courses may help prepare you for college.
- You may also receive college credit for some high level courses.

___ **Begin getting to know and talking to your teachers.**

- Many schools will require 1–3 letters of recommendation from your teachers to accompany the application. Talk to your teachers, get to know them, and ask if they would help with letters.

Senior Year

___ **Begin the college application process. By now you have narrowed your list of schools down by visiting them and researching them.**

- Make sure you put in requests for high school transcripts early.
- Give your teachers plenty of time to write any letters of recommendation.
- Give yourself plenty of time to work on those college essays as well.

___ **Take the SATs/ACTs before your last semester (if you haven't already).**

___ **Look out for scholarships.**

- Begin your search early in the year at your high school's career center or with your counselor(s) for scholarships or other financial aid opportunities.
- Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to qualify for any federal financial aid in the form of scholarships, work-study programs, or loans. You are able to submit the FAFSA January 1 of the year for which you are seeking aid.

___ **Don't give in to senioritis.**

- You should still be keeping your grades up and taking a challenging course load. Some colleges will ask for a second transcript even after you have been accepted.



Activity 3—Rethinking the talk

This activity is for parents of teens or young adults with high-functioning autism (HFA) or Asperger syndrome (AS). Use the examples to initiate conversations with your teen/young adult about sexual development and/or puberty issues.

Benefits of talking with your child with HFA/AS *often* about sexual development

- You can fit your discussions into daily life and events. This makes the conversation more natural and the information relayed more concrete and understandable for your child.
- You can cover specific topics during a short conversation, allowing your child to focus on the information rather than get distracted during a long, drawn-out preplanned “lecture.”
- Learning moments make conversations easier, more interesting, and more appropriate.
- Because there is so much important information to teach your child, you are able to explain a lot of information over a long period of time.
- You will create an open and comfortable environment for discussions about sexual development. This will promote your child’s ability and willingness to come to you with questions later on.
- You can answer your child’s questions on an ongoing basis.
- You will increase your comfort level—and your child’s—on potentially uncomfortable topics.
- Unscheduled discussions pertaining to current events are often more relevant, less awkward, and easier for everyone involved.
- You create a natural, ongoing dialogue with your child about sexual development issues.

Example learning moments and topics

- **TV shows**

While watching TV as a family, you can bring up relevant sexual development information as it pertains to a show. For example, if a TV character fights with a boyfriend or girlfriend, you could start a discussion about relationships.

- **Radio/music**

When listening to the radio in the car, you may hear lyrics about sex, love, or relationships. You can use this music to segue into a conversation about sexual development.

- **Magazines**

Magazines often have ads for birth control, feminine products, razors, aftershave, and other products associated with sexual development and maturity. You could look through a magazine together with your child, pointing out specific ads, and then have a discussion about what the ad is for and why or how those products are used.



- **Dinner conversations**

Dinner is a great time to check in with your child. Ask how his or her day was, what happened at school, and if there any questions or issues to discuss with you. You can find out what happened during the lunch hour, what topics were taught at school, or what books your child is reading and use this information to inform your discussions about sexual development

- **School dances**

Often, schools sponsor dances for their students. If your child is thinking of attending, you can have a talk about relationships, puberty, or other relevant topics ahead of time and afterwards.

- **Family or friend has a baby**

If someone you know has a baby, you can use this event to discuss reproduction with your child.

- **News segments**

Schedule a time to watch the news with your child. Often, news segments will feature issues relevant to your conversations with your child about sexual development that may provide a good learning moment.

- **Running errands**

When you go grocery shopping or run errands, bring your child with you. You can explain why you are buying certain items and relate the discussion to sexual development issues.

- **Scrapbooking**

If you like to keep a scrapbook or an album of family pictures, let your child look through the albums. The photos will showcase your child's development and can lead you into a discussion about puberty and how bodies and appearances change.

- **Books**

Stories or characters in books your child is reading may lend themselves to promoting sexuality discussions. Or you may want to read a specific book with your child. You could have a "book club" together, where you discuss the book and talk about issues relevant to sexuality.

- **A particular subject of interest**

If your child has a particular interest in a subject, such as history or animals, you could structure your conversations on sexual development issues around this subject. For instance, if the interest is animals, you could help your child find more information related to how certain animals reproduce and take care of their babies, then relate the information to human reproduction.

- **Movies**

Many movies aimed at teens include storylines about relationships, sex, and growing up. After seeing a movie with your child, have a discussion about the key issues from the movie and how they relate to your child and his or her sexual development.