

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.

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___ 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.

