

9th Grade Countdown to College Calendar

Adopted by 2012 ICAN

August Tips

- Start off on the right foot with your grades. Your freshman grades really do matter. Colleges look at your overall grade point average (GPA) through all four years of high school. It's difficult to improve a GPA that starts off low.
- Find extracurricular activities that interest you and get involved. It's a great way to meet new people! There are also scholarship opportunities for being involved in high school and community activities.
- Keep track of your assignments, test dates, activities and important events by using a planner or electronic organizer. Use it to set up a study schedule.
- Get to know your teachers, counselors and administrators so you know what resources are available in your school.

September Tips

- Did you know some colleges recommend you complete four years of English; three to four years of math, science and social studies; two years of electives; and two to four years of foreign language in high school? Work with your school counselor to make sure you're on the right track.
- Set up an appointment with your school counselor to discuss your education goals. Before you meet with them, prepare a list of questions to ask.
- Talk to your parents and other adults in a variety of professions to determine what they like and dislike about their careers. Also find out what kind of education is required for each type of job.
- Get to know the four different types of postsecondary institutions. There are colleges and universities that offer four-year degrees and beyond, as well as community colleges and technical institutes that offer programs that can last 12 months to two years in length.

October Tips

- Talk with your parents about saving money for college. Take time to learn more about college savings plans.
- Know yourself. Think about what you like to do, what you're good at and what you value most. The first step in career planning is self-discovery.
- Start developing an activities portfolio or resume to keep track of your extracurricular activities. It'll become a great resource when you apply for scholarships during your junior year.
- Take a variety of classes from different subjects in high school. This approach will help you prepare for college-level courses.

November Tips

- Do you know the average cost of colleges in Nebraska or Iowa? How about out-of-state colleges? Explore college costs throughout the nation at www.educationquest.org or www.icansucceed.org.
- Talk with your parents about your school and career plans. Discuss how you plan to reach your goals, and ask for their advice.
- Get into the habit of reading in your free time. Reading will help you develop a strong vocabulary, which is important on college entrance exams like the ACT[®] and SAT.[®]

December Tips

- Consider volunteering in your community. It can be a rewarding experience, and it could help you earn a scholarship. Many scholarships are awarded based on community service.
- How are your computer skills? Work to become adept in common computer applications such as Word, Excel® and PowerPoint® and learn to use the Internet to do research.
- If you have a checking account, balance your checkbook and keep track of all your debits and deposits.
- Do you have a favorite college sports team? Is there a college you've always dreamed of attending? Start searching for colleges today.

January Tips

- Happy New Year! Now's the perfect time to learn about financial aid. It's made up of four types of assistance: grants, scholarships, loans and work-study. Grants and scholarships are free sources of money that don't have to be paid back. A loan is money given to you to help pay for expenses (i.e., semester/year of college) and it must be repaid. Work-study allows you to earn money by working part time at a campus-approved job.
- Even though you don't need to apply for financial aid until you're a senior, you can take steps now to learn about the process.
- What are your interests? Are you creative? Do you like to help people? You can tie your interests to a future career at www.teammates.org/postsecondary in the "Career Planning" section.

February Tips

- The fastest-growing occupations require some type of education beyond high school. Which jobs are in demand? What types of tasks do they involve? What are the average salaries? Find out about careers that may interest you.
- Looking for ways to raise your grades? Talk to your teachers to find out how you can become a better student. Find out if you can earn extra credit and whether teachers can work with you occasionally after class.
- If you're an athlete hoping to play sports in college, it's important to begin planning. Find out what the NCAA academic requirements are at www.naaclearinghouse.net and check with your school counselor for more information.

March Tips

- Meet with your school counselor to pick classes for your sophomore year. Choose wisely to stay on track to meet college admission requirements.
- Keep looking into jobs related to your interests.
- Make the most of your summer. Look for summer camps that focus on your interests (such as sports, band, drama or academic). Check with teachers, school counselors and coaches for recommendations.

April Tips

- Keep working hard on your grades – your final exams will be coming up soon. Remember, freshman grades are important for college admission.
- Do you have friends or family members who are high school seniors right now? Talk to them about their plans for next year. Ask how they selected a college and what type of work was involved.
- Looking for something to do with your family? Go to an athletic event, play or concert at a local college to get a feel for the campus environment.

May Tips

- Take advantage of the warmer weather to change up your routine and stay motivated through the end of the school year. Take your homework outside or spend some time outdoors after school.
- Get involved in your community by volunteering. Volunteering provides leadership and good citizenship skills, and you might find your future career.
- Make the most of your summer. Look for summer camps that focus on your interests (such as sports, band, drama or academics). Check with teachers, school counselors and coaches for recommendations.

June Tips

- Looking for ways to earn money and get a glimpse into the world of work? Babysitting, lawn mowing, car washing, tutoring, painting or dog-walking are all great ways to get started.
- Will you be attending summer camp on a college campus? If so, take time to look around and think about whether it's a school you'd attend. When you get home, research the college online.
- Talk to others who've been there. Family members, friends, teachers, school counselors and coaches may love to tell you about their college experiences.

July Tips

- During your summer break, take part in hobbies and activities that tie to your career interests. Don't forget to update your activities portfolio.
- Begin making a list of colleges to look into.
- Don't be afraid to change your career goals as you learn more about yourself and the world of work. Just remember to continue working toward your goals.
- Read more! Reading is one of the best ways to improve your grades, and you can do it practically anywhere. Ask your local librarian for ideas on books to read this summer or read reviews online.