



Academic Planning

FACT
SHEET

BE SURE TO
CHECK THE
ACCURACY
OF YOUR
TRANSCRIPT.

ALWAYS KEEP
YOUR MOST
RECENT
TRANSCRIPT
IN YOUR FILES.
YOU MAY NEED
TO REFER TO IT
OFTEN.

REFERENCE
AN OFFICIAL
COPY WHEN
FILLING OUT
YOUR COLLEGE
APPLICATIONS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

TRANSCRIPTS

Your high school transcript is a complete record of the classes you have taken, along with the grades you received in those courses. You will be required to send colleges an official high school transcript at some point in most every college application.

Where do I find my transcript?

Most high school counseling offices or school business offices will include a registrar who can provide you with either an official or unofficial transcript. If you are just requesting a copy for your review and records, then an *unofficial* copy is fine. However, if you are asked to send a transcript to college admissions offices or for scholarship applications, you will need to ask your registrar or your high school counselor to send an *official* copy to the requesting college.

When do I send my transcript?

College applications will state if they want a copy of your transcript at the time of application. Schools that use the Common or Coalition Applications (see the TRACK IT! College Applications unit) will allow school counselors to upload your transcript when they electronically send your secondary school report. *Do not assume that your counselor will send your transcript – if in doubt, make a request. It is always the student's responsibility to ensure all documents are sent.*

Some colleges ask you to self-report your grades and courses from your transcript on the application and then send your official transcript at the end of senior year to validate your data. Your academic accomplishments are typically the most important criteria in college admissions. Be accurate when completing applications – include all classes, grades, and an accurate GPA when requested.

Some high schools charge a small fee to print and send official transcripts. *Request your transcript at least two weeks prior to the due date.*

After every grading period, it is important to check your transcript for accuracy. It may be nearly impossible to petition for a grade change two years later! Make sure that summer classes you have taken through your school district are also included on your final transcript. Request a transcript from online organizations and colleges that you have attended during high school as well.

**KEEP UP THE
MOMENTUM TO
FINISH OFF YOUR
SENIOR YEAR!**

**MANY COLLEGES
CONSIDER THE
RIGOR OF YOUR
HIGH SCHOOL
ACADEMIC
CHOICES ONE
OF THE TOP
CRITERIA IN
THE SELECTION
PROCESS.**

ACADEMIC PLANNING

Curriculum Guide

The first task that every freshman should do prior to the first day of high school is to locate the school's curriculum guide. This document will list all of the classes that are offered by the school, class descriptions, graduation requirements, prerequisites, and any other pertinent information. The curriculum guide can usually be found on the school website. If you don't see it there, request it from the counseling office. Curriculum guides are based on school years. Make sure you are using the right year to select courses.

Once you have your curriculum guide, map out a four-year academic plan for yourself. Consider not only the requirements, but reflect upon your goals. If you love art, perhaps take a few electives in the art department during high school. If you excel at science, consider registering for an extra science class at a local community college or an approved online course. If you take control of your academic planning, you will likely be more engaged in a purposeful high school experience.

Revisit your Four-Year Academic Plan (see the worksheet in this unit) each year to revise it as needed. For example, if your Honors English class was a breeze for you in sophomore year, consider taking an AP English class your junior year.

Advanced Courses

It is wise to consider the advanced courses that your high school offers. Admissions officers like to see that students are challenging themselves when appropriate. Many schools offer Honors classes, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, or International Baccalaureate (IB) Programs that provide an opportunity to take college-level classes. You will typically receive an extra point on your GPA for mastering advanced level courses. In addition, many colleges will give college course credit if you score well on the final, official test.

Highly-Selective Colleges

If you plan to compete for admissions to a highly-selective college (less than 25% acceptance rate), be sure to research not only the minimum requirements, but the average academic profile of the previous year's incoming freshman class.

Community College Courses

Many community colleges offer programs for high school students to take courses. Co-enrollment during high school can be a great opportunity to broaden your course selection and experience a college level class. If the course is three units or more, it will typically be transferrable to most four-year universities and will give your GPA a boost.

Grade Point Average

Many colleges consider a student's high school GPA as one of the top criteria in admission decisions. It is important to understand this statistic and learn how to validate it throughout your high school years to ensure accuracy. A GPA is an

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CHECK EACH
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average of all the grades you have received in the courses you have completed during high school. GPAs are based on how your school awards grades. Some schools use a 4.0 point system where each “A” is worth four points and each “B” is worth three points, and so on. Other schools may use a 100 scale, with 100 being an “A+.” Each college you apply to may desire a different GPA calculation. Here are the most common ways to calculate your GPA:

Overall 9-12, un-weighted GPA: this GPA includes all coursework taken during all years in high school. It includes P.E., health and other non-college prep electives. Give each grade received in a course a point value (A = 4, B = 3, etc.) and add up all grades. Divide this number by the total number of grades you have earned.

Overall 9-12, weighted GPA: this GPA is similar to the calculation listed above, except that for each AP or IB course (also, some honors courses will be given extra weight – check with your high school to see if this is the case) you can add an additional point to each grade, therefore giving it weight. For example, a “B” received in an AP or IB English course is worth 4.0 points instead of the usual 3.0 points. Likewise, an “A” received in an AP or IB class is worth 5.0 points instead of the usual 4.0 points. Assign point values to each of your grades, add them all up and then divide by the total number of grades. Weighted points are only used for As, Bs, and Cs.

There are other variations colleges might use in their admission decision. Some colleges will only include college preparatory or academic courses in the GPA calculation. Others may choose to only use grades from 10th - 12th grades.

Always check the GPA calculation policy before you begin the application process. It is wise to understand and calculate your GPA after each grading period to be sure your high school hasn't inadvertently made a mistake in the calculation; it is easier to correct a mistake right after the grading period, rather than waiting a year or two.

STEP OUTSIDE THE BOX:

There are many ways to learn! Gain new skills or discover new interests with these creative learning experiences:

- Online courses and MOOCs -Massive Open Online Courses (some are free): Coursera, UConn, Udemy, Udacity, MIT Open Courseware and EdX are a few options.
- Ted Talks - Keep a list of Ted Talks you've listened to - it might come in handy on a college application.
- For those interested in coding, the internet is full of fantastic, free coding courses.
- Follow blogs, websites, and e-lists on topics of interest.

There is no requirement to complete these options - simply participating demonstrates a love of learning!

Notes:

