Junior Checklist

To Do: All Year

- ☐ Explore careers and your earning potential with the ***Occupational Outlook Handbook*** search tool, or for a fun interactive tool **try this career search**.
- ☐ **Learn about choosing a college** and find a link to a free college search tool.
- ☐ Attend college fairs and college-preparation presentations hosted by college representatives.

REMEMBER: Register for all tests in advance and be sure to give yourself time to prepare appropriately! If you need help paying a registration fee, see your school counselor about getting the fee waived.

To Do: Fall Season

- ☐ Take the PSAT! Students generally take the test during the fall semester of the eleventh grade to qualify for National Merit scholarships and programs.
- ☐ Attend in-person or **online college fairs**.
- ☐ Explore careers and their earning potentials in the **Occupational Outlook Handbook**.

To Do: Spring Season

- ☐ Register for college admission exams—SAT, the SAT Subject Tests, and the ACT—and take practice tests. College admissions professionals recommend students have at least one standardized score before the end of their junior year.
- ☐ Research how to pay for college and what federal student aid may be available to you.
- ☐ Find out what government financial aid you can apply for, and how, in ***Do You Need Money for College or Career School? Apply for Federal Student Aid***.
- ☐ Identify scholarship opportunities to pursue; note deadlines on your calendar.
    - **Use a free scholarship search** to find scholarships for which you might want to apply. Some deadlines fall as early as the summer between 11th and 12th grades, so prepare now to submit applications soon.
- ☐ Contact colleges to request information and applications.

To Do: Summer before 12th Grade

- ☐ Create a StudentAid.gov account. You'll need a StudentAid.gov account to access your federal student aid information and electronically sign your federal student aid documents. Learn about the StudentAid.gov account, and create yours. **Note: You must create your own StudentAid.gov account; if your parent creates it for you, that will cause confusion later and will slow down the financial aid application process.**
- ☐ Narrow down the list of colleges you are considering attending. If you can, visit the schools that interest you.
- ☐ Contact colleges or browse their websites to get information and applications for admission. Research financial aid, admission requirements, and deadlines.
- ☐ Decide whether you are going to apply for admission under a particular college's early decision, early action, or regular decision program.
- ☐ **Use the *Federal Student Aid Estimator*** to get an estimate of what federal student aid you may be eligible to receive.
- ☐ To supplement any federal student aid you may receive, be sure to **apply for scholarships**. Your goal is to minimize the amount of loan funds you borrow so you have less to pay back later.
- ☐ Register for the Common App and look it over so you know what is required in essays and statements (Begin drafting 1-2 application essays).
- ☐ Finish any community service requirements over the summer, if possible.

To Explore:

- ☐ Learn how to avoid scholarship scams and identify theft at **StudentAid.gov/scams**
- ☐ Visit any college campuses you couldn't fit in during the spring and schedule on-campus interviews.
- ☐ Schedule college visits in the fall.
- ☐ Finish up your Common App essays.
- ☐ Create a Youtube channel and/or update your portfolio.

Parent Checklist

To Do:

- ☐ Look at your financial situation, and be sure you're on the right track to pay for college. **Calculate loan payments here.**
- ☐ Get in-depth information on the **federal student aid programs**. Also, visit **Sallie Mae**.
- ☐ Talk to your child about the schools they're considering. Ask why those schools appeal to your child, and help them clarify goals and priorities.
- ☐ Attend college fairs with your child, but don't take over the conversation with the college representatives. Just listen, and let your child do the talking.
- ☐ **Create a StudentAid.gov account** if you don't have one yet. **Note: You must create your own StudentAid.gov account. If your child creates it for you, or if you create your child's, that will cause confusion later and will slow down the financial aid application process.** ***Need help?*** You and your child should watch the ***Why Do My Contributors and I Need Our Own StudentAid.gov Accounts for the 2024–25 FAFSA® Form? video***. If you don't have a Social Security number, you'll be able to get a StudentAid.gov account to access and fill out your portion of your child's 2025–26 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form online.

To Explore:

- ☐ Talk to your child about the schools they're considering. Ask why those schools appeal to your child, and help them clarify goals and priorities.
- ☐ Attend college fairs with your child, but don't take over the conversation with the college representatives. Just listen, and let your child do the talking.
- ☐ **Learn about student and parent loans**.

Adapted from studentaid.gov