

# About.com

## College Admissions

### 9th Grade

College seems a long way off in 9th grade, but you need to start thinking about it seriously now. The reason is simple -- your 9th grade academic and extracurricular record will be part of your college application. Low grades in 9th grade can seriously jeopardize your chances of getting into the country's most selective colleges

The primary advice for 9th grade can be boiled down to this: take demanding courses, keep your grades up, and be active outside of the classroom. The list below outlines these points in more detail.

#### **1. Meet With Your High School Guidance Counselor**

An informal meeting with your high school counselor can have many benefits in 9th grade. Use the meeting to find out what types of college admissions services your school provides, what high school courses will best help you reach your goals, and what successes your school has had in getting students admitted to selective colleges and universities.

#### **2. Take Challenging Courses**

Your academic record is the most important part of your college application. Colleges want to see more than good grades; they also want to see that you have pushed yourself and taken the most challenging courses offered at your school. Set yourself up so that you can take full advantage of whatever AP and upper-level courses your school offers.

#### **3. Focus on Grades**

Grades matter in your freshman year. No part of your college application carries more weight than the courses you take and the grades you earn. College may seem like it's a long way off, but bad freshman grades can hurt your chances of getting into a selective college.

#### **4. Continue With a Foreign Language**

In our increasingly globalized world, colleges and universities want their applicants to have command of a foreign language. If you can keep taking a language all the way through senior year, you'll be improving your chances of admission, and you'll be giving yourself a big head-start for meeting the language requirements in college.

#### **5. Get Help if You Need It**

If you find you're struggling in a subject, don't ignore the issue. You don't want your difficulties with math or a language in 9th grade to create difficulties for you later in high school. Seek out extra help and tutoring to get your skills up to snuff.

#### **6. Extracurricular Activities**

By 9th grade you should be focusing on a couple extracurricular activities that you're passionate about. Colleges are looking for students with varied interests and evidence of leadership potential; your involvement in activities outside of the classroom often reveal this information to the college admissions folks.

### **7. Visit Colleges**

9th grade is still a bit early to shop around for colleges in a serious way, but it is a good time to start seeing what types of schools strike your fancy. If you happen to find yourself near a campus, take an hour to go on the campus tour. This early exploration will make it easier to come up with a short list of colleges in your junior and senior years.

### **8. SAT II Subject Tests**

You usually don't have to worry about SAT II subject tests in 9th grade, but if you end up taking a biology or history class that covers SAT II material, consider taking the exam while the material is fresh in your mind. With the [College Board's new score reporting policy](#), you can easily withhold a low score from colleges.

### **9. Read a Lot**

This advice is important for 7th through 12th grades. The more you read, the stronger your verbal, writing and critical thinking abilities will be. Reading beyond your homework will help you do well in school, on the ACT and SAT, and in college. Whether you're reading *Sports Illustrated* or *War and Peace*, you'll be improving your vocabulary, training your ear to recognize strong language, and introducing yourself to new ideas.

### **10. Don't Blow Off Your Summer**

While it may be tempting to spend your whole summer sitting by the pool, try to do something more productive. Summer is a great opportunity to have meaningful experiences that will be rewarding for you and impressive on your college application. Travel, community service, volunteerism, sports or music camp, and employment are all good options.