



12TH GRADE COLLEGE PREP CHECKLIST

Congratulations! You are officially a senior in high school, which means graduation is getting closer and closer! With that, comes the extra importance of staying on top of your to-do list and completing the necessary tasks to help make your Dakota Dreams come true.

AUGUST:

- Start your year off strategically — Visit with your school counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate and fulfill college admission requirements.

SEPTEMBER:

- Ask for personal references from teachers, school representatives or employers early in the year (or at least two weeks before college and/or scholarship application deadlines).
- Follow your school's procedure for requesting letters of recommendation for scholarships.
- Take the ACT, if you haven't already, or take it again to boost your score.
 - If you need to sharpen your skills, take the free **ACT test prep** in SDMyLife.
- Watch **Paying for College SD** video series and invite your parents to do the same.
- If you haven't already, schedule campus visits to explore colleges and universities firsthand.

OCTOBER:

- Apply to South Dakota's technical colleges and public universities for free between October 1-November 30 through the **Free College Application Period!**
 - Write your college essay(s) if required for admission or application for institutional scholarships.
 - Ask your school to send your high school transcript to the colleges to which you've applied.
 - Share ACT, Accuplacer, and other test scores with the colleges to which you've applied.
- Attend a college fair early in the school year.
- Start the financial aid application process — See your school counselor for help finding financial aid and scholarships.
- Prepare to complete the **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). The FAFSA is a major factor in determining what financial aid and scholarships you may qualify for!
 - **Create your FSA ID** at **StudentAid.gov** now while you wait for the FAFSA application to open late December. Your FSA ID is your username and password for your StudentAid.gov account. You and anyone contributing to your FAFSA (like a parent) will need an FSA ID.
 - Find out if your high school holds an informational event on FAFSA.
 - Attend a financial aid event if offered at your school.
 - Request help from your school counselor or non-profit Mapping Your Future by visiting **SouthDakota.MappingYourFuture.org**.
- Consider taking a **College Readiness Course** in the spring semester to get ready for college math and/or English courses.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER:

- Apply to colleges you wish to attend, if you haven't already.
- Apply for the college-specific scholarships by their stated priority deadline for the best opportunity to receive money!
- Research and apply for other scholarships by browsing the **Statewide Scholarship Bulletin Board**.
 - Search scholarships specific to:
 - College(s) where you have applied
 - Your community
 - Your activities
 - Your planned major
 - Visit with your high school counselor to explore scholarship options.
 - Call the **admissions offices, financial aid offices**, and the academic program departments at the college(s) you are interested in attending to make sure you are aware of all your opportunities.
- Use a spreadsheet to **keep track of important scholarship deadlines**.
- Visit with admissions representatives who come to your high school.
- Consider taking **dual credit courses** in the spring semester. (Remember to keep working hard! Dual credit courses show up on your college transcript and affect your GPA.)

JANUARY:

- Complete the **2024-25 FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) as soon as possible!
- Keep working hard all year — Second semester grades can affect scholarship eligibility.

FEBRUARY/MARCH:

- This is peak season for scholarships! Continue researching and applying for **scholarships** by browsing the **Statewide Scholarship Bulletin Board**, and **keep track of important scholarship deadlines**.

APRIL:

- With your college applications and FAFSA submitted, now compare **financial aid offers** from different colleges.
- Decision time! Talk it out with friends, family, teachers and your school counselor, and decide which college you want to attend.
- Keep track of and observe deadlines for sending in all required fees and paperwork.
- Figure out your housing situation — do you plan on living at home or on campus? What are the residence halls like? Will you have a roommate?
- Register to attend a new student orientation at your college held in the summer.

MAY:

- Request that your high school sends final transcripts to the college you will attend.
- Consider getting a summer job to help pay for some of your college expenses, and prepare a **budget** to manage your money while in college.
- Make plans to attend your college or university's early registration or new student orientation programs, if you haven't already.
- Graduate and celebrate!

JUNE/JULY:

- Make a list of what you will need to take with you to set up your rooming situation.
- Attend a new student orientation at your college, if you haven't already.