



Grab ^{YOUR} future
BY THE
HORNS
and Stay on Track

High School Checklist



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9th and 10th grade Checklist

- Organize your assignments and activities** using a student planner or a system that works for you.
- Get familiar with the college prep curriculum** if you plan to attend a four-year program. Outline your plan with your counselor and/or your parent(s).
- Find out about college prep courses.** See which Advanced Placement, Running Start, Tech Prep, dual enrollment or International Baccalaureate courses are offered at your school. If they aren't offered at your school, talk to your counselor about your options.
- Visit Your High School Counselor**, they are a phenomenal resource. Schedule time to talk with your counselor about your goals, career interests and types of education after high school.
- Start your MCIS portfolio** (mtcis.intocareers.org). The portfolio allows you to create a resume, explore careers, develop your educational plan, and more.
- ReachHigherMontana.org** has the information, tools, and resources to help students plan their futures and prepare for life after high school.
- Get involved in extra-curricular activities.**
- Focus on good attendance**, it will appear on your final transcript.
- Research potential careers** you might want to pursue, and the schools or work-based learning opportunities where you can gain experience. Visit ReachHigherMontana.org, Find Your Career Path page and start exploring with MCIS (mtcis.intocareers.org).
- Take ACT's PLAN** as practice for the ACT (sophomore year).
- Take PSAT 10** as practice for the PSAT (sophomore year). (PSAT scores count for National Merit Scholar consideration in your junior year.)
- Start volunteering**, get involved in your community. Keep track of your hours, it helps when applying for scholarships.
- Talk to your parents** about your plans after high school.
- Save for your education** after high school.

11th grade Checklist

- Check in with your High School Counselor**, make sure you are on track.
- Enroll in college prep courses** (Advanced Placement, Running Start, Tech Prep, dual enrollment or International Baccalaureate). If they aren't offered at your school, talk to your counselor about your options.
- Register for the PSAT in the fall.** (Scores count for National Merit Scholar consideration).
- Take the ACT** (act.org) **or SAT** (collegeboard.org) in the spring.
- Narrow down career choices**, and explore schools where you can gain the required skills. Visit ReachHigherMontana.org, Find Your Career Path page and start exploring careers with MCIS (mtcis.intocareers.org).
- Talk to your counselor or one of our advisors about **setting up a work-based learning experience**. This can be a job shadow, internship or apprenticeship.

11th grade Checklist *(continued)*

- Begin searching for scholarships** to help pay for school. Some deadlines come earlier than you might think, so don't delay. Check out ReachHigherMontana.org/scholarships, and our list of Montana scholarships.
- Follow us on social media**, we post scholarships every Thursday. MCIS has a comprehensive scholarship tool (mtcis.intocareers.org).
- Update your MCIS portfolio** (mtcis.intocareers.org).
- Attend a financial aid night or junior parent night at your school.** It's not too early to be learning about your options to pay for your education.
- Create your FSA ID**, you will need this to complete the FAFSA. (studentaid.gov). **Don't lose it**, you'll use it every year.
- Plan visits to the campuses** you are interested in attending.
- Save for your education after high school.**
- Continue to volunteer** and stay involved in your community. Continue to keep track of your hours for scholarship opportunities.

12th grade Checklist

- Begin writing your **college and scholarship essays** over the summer. Check out the videos at the bottom of our scholarship page for tips.
- Visit with your counselor** to make sure you are meeting all of the requirements for the college you want to attend.
- Continue to take college prep courses.**
- Take the ACT** (act.org) **or SAT** (collegeboard.org) in Sep. or Oct. Retake it if you want to try for a better score, it could open the door to more scholarships.
- Continue to research and apply for scholarships** to help you pay for school. Check out ReachHigherMontana.org/scholarships, and our list of Montana scholarships. Follow us on social media, we post scholarships every Thursday. MCIS has a comprehensive scholarship tool (mtcis.intocareers.org).
- Check with schools you are interested in attending** regarding application, scholarship and housing deadlines. Some colleges require early submission of applications for merit or need based scholarships.
- Create a planner** to log all important dates and deadlines or use our tracking sheet. (ReachHigherMontana.org, search tracking sheet). Keep everything together in one place.
- Ask employers, teachers, and school counselors for **letters of recommendation**. Be sure to give them plenty of time and provide them with some background. Use our form to make it easy. (ReachHigherMontana.org, search letter of recommendation).
- Register for selective service** at the post office or online. This applies to males, 18 years of age. (You can't receive federal financial aid if you don't register).
- Participate in **College Application Week**, apply to as many public Montana college as you want - no application fees (applymontana.mus.edu). Attend **financial aid nights, college fairs** and visit with **college representatives or one of our advisors** when they come to your school.

12th grade Checklist *(continued)*

- Send current high school transcripts to colleges** with your initial admissions application in the fall, and send your complete official transcripts after final grades and graduation status are recorded.
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** at studentaid.gov. The revised and simplified **Better FAFSA** will be available in Dec. 2023. Get your FAFSA done as soon as possible. Priority deadlines have changed this year, be sure to check with your school to confirm the date.
- Check your FAFSA Submissions Summary (FSS)**, the FSS provides an estimated Student Aid Index (SAI) and estimated Pell Grant and student loan eligibility using information from your FAFSA. Make sure your college(s) of choice are listed on your FAFSA. If corrections or updates are needed, complete them as soon as possible.
- Expect to hear whether you have been **accepted to colleges** between January and April, depending on when you applied. Check your email often, including your SPAM folder.
- Respond promptly to admissions acceptance letters**, requests for additional information, and financial aid award offers. Check email often.
- Compare financial aid packages** to determine which school offers the best funding. Once you decide, accept your aid offer. Notify the colleges you will not be attending so they can cancel your awards.
- Have your high school send **final transcripts to your college**, request transcripts for **dual enrollment courses** and share them with your college for credit.
- Finalize summer job plans** and **save for your education**.
- Most colleges require freshmen to live on campus**. Pay your non-refundable housing deposit early for the best chances of getting your desired housing.
- Be sure to accept your scholarships** and fill out and return any required paperwork. Send thank you notes to the funders of your scholarships.
- Participate in summer orientation programs for incoming freshmen**. Attend the earliest session possible; many schools will help you register for fall courses and find a work-study job if you have a work-study award.
- Save for your education and create a budget for college**. Live like a student now, so you don't have to when you graduate!
- Finish strong**. It's likely you have acute senioritis. Don't check out yet. When applying for scholarships, part of the submission process is including your GPA. The higher the GPA, the more scholarship opportunities you are likely to have!

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Parent Checklist

- Talk with financial professionals about college saving strategies.**
If you start saving early, college savings accounts are beneficial. For more information, visit achievemontana.com.
- Attend college fairs and financial aid nights** at your student's school. Participate in College Application Week.
- In your student's junior year of high school**, go to studentaid.gov/aid-estimator to help you understand your options for paying for college. By providing some information, it can help you estimate your eligibility for federal student aid. Talk about this with your student.
- Plan visits to the college campuses** your student is interested in attending. Help them find the best fit for them.
- Encourage your student to push themselves academically.**

Your Student's Senior Year




- Create your FSA ID**, you will need this to complete the FAFSA, (studentaid.gov/fsa-id), one parent and your student will both need one. **Don't lose it**, you'll use it every year.
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** at studentaid.gov. The revised and simplified **Better FAFSA** will be available in Dec. 2023. Get your FAFSA done as soon as possible. Priority deadlines have changed this year, be sure to check with your school to confirm the date.
- Encourage your child to research and apply for scholarships** to help pay for school. Some deadlines come earlier than you might think, so don't delay. Check out ReachHigherMontana.org/scholarships and follow us on social media. We post scholarships every Thursday.
- Borrow only what is needed to pay for college.**



PRO TIP: To save money, many students start at a two-year school to complete their general requirements or prerequisites and then transfer to a four-year school.



We can help!

- ReachHigherMontana.org** has the information, tools, and resources to help students plan their futures and **prepare for life after high school**. Our website includes **videos** and **guides**, a directory of **Montana scholarships**, and much more.
- Follow us**    for events, news, scholarships, and advice.

10 TIPS to get ahead of the game

- 1 Take the **classes** that colleges require
- 2 Think about your **interests** and **skills** and start **exploring careers**
- 3 Meet with a **school counselor**, RHM or college advisor, or mentor
- 4 **Get information** about colleges in which you are interested
- 5 **Start saving money** for your education
- 6 **Visit college campuses** and ask questions
- 7 **Apply for admission** before the deadline
- 8 **Complete the FAFSA** at studentaid.gov
- 9 **Research scholarships**, loans, work-study, other funding, and apply
- 10 Learn to **manage your expenses**

Pre-College Checklist for Seniors

YES

NO

Is your **FAFSA** done?

Did you get a **notification** or **Student Aid Report**?

Did you **get accepted to the college** you applied to?

Did you get a letter?

Do you have to respond back?

Did you get an **award offer** from your school (usually electronic)?

If so, did you **accept the awards** that you need for the fall?

Do you **understand what you accepted**?

i.e. subsidized vs unsubsidized loans? If not, talk to Financial Aid

If you did not get an award offer – **call the school**.

If you had to take loans, did you sign your **Master Promissory Note (MPN)**?

Do you complete **entrance counseling** for your loans?

Did you sign up for an **orientation** session at your school?

Did you **sign up for housing** in the dorms? If not, you need to do this!

Are you living **off campus**?



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