

9th Grade

How to Guide and Advise Your Freshman

When a student becomes a freshman, everything starts to "count." Freshman courses, grades, and credits all become part of a student's transcript, and freshman grades are used in determining a student's GPA. Freshman activities, honors, and awards can also be listed on college and scholarship applications.

1. Monitor academic progress.

Sit down with your son or daughter at the beginning of each grading period and help him/her set realistic academic goals for that term. Throughout the year, make sure that you see all progress reports and report cards. *Do not assume that someone will contact you if there's a problem.* Provide encouragement and support, and make sure that your son or daughter understands that freshman grades are very important.

2. Encourage your son or daughter to become involved in a wide variety of activities.

Most college and scholarship applications ask students to list their high school activities. Many applications also ask for evidence of leadership. Students should therefore be involved in a variety of activities and, whenever possible, they should take a leadership role (e.g., become an officer of a club or a squad leader in the band). Depth of involvement (e.g., being on the debate team or the soccer team for four years) is also important because it shows focus and commitment.

Encourage your son or daughter to participate in activities outside of school (e.g., church, scouting). Encourage him/her to also do some volunteer work (e.g., work for Habitat for Humanity). Community service is very worthwhile, and it's impressive on any application.

Tip: *During your son or daughter's freshman year, start keeping a record of his/her activities and awards in their individualized "Educational Development Plan." Include information on all school and community activities, leadership positions, honors, employment, and volunteer work. Be sure to update this file at least once a year. (This information will be very helpful later when your son or daughter is required to list activities and honors on college and scholarship applications.)*

3. Select appropriate 10th grade courses.

In the spring, review your son or daughter's four-year high school plan, and make sure that he/she selects the most appropriate courses for his/her sophomore year.

4. Help your son or daughter plan meaningful summer activities.

A number of colleges have excellent summer programs for high school students. Of course, many of the more traditional summer activities can also be very worthwhile. Your son or daughter could, for example, join an athletic team, take a course, perfect a skill, develop a hobby, read, and/or do volunteer work at a homeless shelter, hospital, nursing home, blood bank, etc.

5. If you haven't yet done so, start a college savings account.