



The State University of **New York**

# COUNTDOWN TO **SUNY**

9th • 10th • 11th • 12th Grade Timelines





# 9<sup>th</sup> GRADE TIMELINE

## DID YOU KNOW?

College graduates earn substantially more than high school graduates. Here is a breakdown of the median earnings by college degree:

Level of education completed	Mean (average) earnings in 2014
Less than a high school diploma	\$30,108
High school graduate, no college	\$43,056
Some college, no degree	\$48,984
Associate degree	\$52,364
Bachelor's degree	\$74,308
Master's degree	\$88,036
Doctoral degree (e.g., Ph.D.)	\$105,456
Professional degree (e.g., M.D., J.D.)	\$124,904

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, unpublished tables, 2015, via [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov)

## THE COURSES YOU TAKE IN HIGH SCHOOL ARE IMPORTANT.

Whether you plan to attend a 4-year college or community college, take at least five academic classes every semester in high school to develop skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and reasoning.

Colleges are looking for a solid foundation of learning that you can build upon. Keep in mind that even though they may not be required for high school graduation, most colleges prefer the following:

- 4 years of English
- 4 years of math (including Integrated algebra, geometry, and algebra 2/trigonometry)
- 3 years of social studies
- 3 years of laboratory science
- 2-3 years of the same foreign language
- courses in fine arts and computer science

Many states have diploma options available to students, such as the New York State Regents Diploma, and options frequently require additional high school coursework. Your counselor can help you make the right class choices.

## TAKE ACADEMICS SERIOUSLY AND KEEP YOUR GRADES UP.

Your high school grades are important and the difficulty of your courses may be a factor in a college's decision to offer you admission. College admission officers will pay close attention to your grade point average (GPA), class rank, Advanced Placement (AP), and other honors-level courses, as well as your scores on standardized tests and state exams - such as the Regents in New York State. So, challenge yourself by taking tougher courses and maintaining good grades. Not only will this help prepare you for standardized tests (such as the PSAT, SAT and ACT), but it will also determine your eligibility for some colleges.

## GET TO KNOW YOUR TEACHERS, COUNSELOR AND PRINCIPAL.

Show them that you are both serious about learning and a hard worker. When you begin applying to college in a couple of years, you will have people who know you well. Those who know you well will write the strongest recommendation letters.

## GET INVOLVED.

Find something you like and stick to it! Colleges pay close attention to your life outside of the classroom and value these types of experiences.

It is not the quantity but the quality and longevity of involvement in activities or organizations that matter. For example, if, as a 9th grader, you join the school newspaper and are a club reporter and then in 10th grade become a sports reporter, in 11th, a sports editor and in 12th, the editor-in-chief, it demonstrates growth in leadership. In community service, the same applies. It is not a sign of commitment if you simply participate in a charity walk once a year for four years. Rather, you should find something in which you have an avid interest. Whether it is an animal shelter, a nursing home, or a soup kitchen, the idea is that you stay and put in significant time.

## MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SUMMER.

Keep busy by doing something meaningful such as finding a summer job, identifying a volunteer experience in a career field that interests you, learning or perfecting a skill or hobby, going to summer school to get ahead or catch up, attending a summer program or camp, or catching up on your reading.

Get a head start by creating your activities resume now. An activities resume is a great way to highlight your strengths and to inform colleges about your out-of-class accomplishments and special talents.

Additional ideas include the following:

- Find a community service project and commit significant hours.
- Attend a summer camp and hone your testing skills, athletic skills, or a hobby such as music.
- Find a summer college program where you can master subject areas of interest or leadership training.
- Go to summer school to advance or to repeat a subject that was failed.
- Utilize the 10th grade reading lists for English, social studies, etc. to complete assignments and free up time during the beginning of the school year.

Here are a couple of helpful resources to get you started:

- College Board's 5 ways to stay on track in summer at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/outside-the-classroom/5-ways-to-stay-on-track-in-summer>
- Summer programs at [www.teenlife.com](http://www.teenlife.com)

## START SAVING FOR COLLEGE.

It's not too early to begin saving for college. Learn about 529 plans through the College Savings Plan Network at [www.collegesavings.org](http://www.collegesavings.org) and Upromise at [www.upromise.com](http://www.upromise.com) to earn points when you shop.

*Links to non-SUNY websites and information are provided for your convenience and do not constitute an endorsement.*





# 10<sup>th</sup> GRADE TIMELINE

## GET READY FOR COLLEGE TESTS.

Begin your year by practicing and then taking the PSAT (pre-SAT). Be sure to consult your counselor about your readiness to do so. You can also prepare for the SAT or ACT college entrance exams – which you will take in the 11th and/or 12th grades – by participating in their Question of the Day programs. To get started, go to [sat.collegeboard.org/practice/sat-question-of-the-day](http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice/sat-question-of-the-day) and [www.act.org/qotd](http://www.act.org/qotd).

## GET TO KNOW YOURSELF.

Learn more about your personality, skills, abilities, likes and dislikes. An understanding of these will assist in determining what career will bring you the most satisfaction. There are many assessments available to aid you in learning more about yourself such as The Campbell™ Interest and Skills

Survey (CISS®), Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®), John Holland's SDS® Self-Directed Search® and the Strong Interest Inventory®. Check with your counselor to see which are available through your high school.

Talk to your family, friends, teachers and counselor and ask for their perceptions about what you do well. Then, ask yourself questions and make a list of your answers. Here are a few questions to get you started:

- What are five things I like to do?
- Which classes do I enjoy?
- Which classes do I least enjoy?
- How would my friends describe me?
- How would my family describe me?
- What are five of my strengths?
- What are five of my weaknesses?
- What three accomplishments am I most proud of?
- What careers or professions are attractive to me?

## EXPLORE CAREERS THAT INTEREST YOU.

Consider volunteering or job shadowing in a career that interests you. Ask people whose jobs look or sound interesting to explain what they really do and how they got to where they are now. Here are a few questions to get you started:

- Describe your typical day.
- What did you study in college?
- What courses best prepared you for your career?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What do you like least about your job?
- What advice do you have for someone interested in this career?

## RESEARCH JOB TRENDS.

Find out more about the careers that interest you. What level of education is required? What is the average salary? What are the expected job prospects? The U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics at [www.bls.gov/ooh](http://www.bls.gov/ooh) offers answers to these questions and provides information about occupational projections by state, as well as career exploration information.



## MAKE A LIST OF COLLEGES THAT INTEREST YOU.

- Do you wish to attend a large, medium or small-sized college or university?
- Close to home or far away?
- Public or private?
- Two-year or four-year?
- How important is cost?
- How important are clubs, activities and sports?
- Does your list include colleges and universities that offer your areas of academic interest?

Then, explore free college search programs, such as The College Board's Big Future at [www.bigfuture.org](http://www.bigfuture.org) or SUNY's campus search at [www.suny.edu/attend/find-a-suny-campus](http://www.suny.edu/attend/find-a-suny-campus).

## BEGIN VISITING COLLEGE CAMPUSES.

It's not too early to begin visiting college campuses. Check websites for information about campus tours and open house programs, as well as summer opportunities such as workshops and camps – these are often referred to as pre-college programs. Remember, a visit is not a commitment to attend a college but rather an opportunity to experience a campus first-hand.

## DON'T FORGET:

- The courses you take in high school are important.
- Take academics seriously and keep your grades up.
- Get to know your teachers, counselor and principal.
- Get involved.
- Make the most of your summer.

## EXPLORE WAYS TO PAY FOR COLLEGE.

A college education is an investment in your future. Do your research, learn about college costs, and develop a financial plan. Here are a few resources to get you started:

SUNY Financial Planning  
[www.suny.edu/smarttrack/literacy](http://www.suny.edu/smarttrack/literacy)

New York State Financial Planning  
[www.hesc.ny.gov](http://www.hesc.ny.gov)

Federal Financial Planning  
[studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov)

Scholarships  
[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

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# 11<sup>th</sup> GRADE TIMELINE

## SUMMER – PRIOR TO YOUR JUNIOR YEAR

- **Visit** as many colleges as possible. Check websites for information about tours and open house programs and combine with a family vacation or gathering. Even if a school is not on your list, but an opportunity for a visit presents itself, consider checking it out. Doing so will give you perspective for asking more informed questions and making better decisions later in the process.
- **Prepare** for the PSAT/NMSQT or SAT by visiting the College Board's SAT Preparation Center at [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/practice](http://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/practice), or take the practice ACT at [www.actstudent.org/testprep](http://www.actstudent.org/testprep).

## FALL

- **Take** the most challenging courses you can as it is the rigor of your curriculum, along with a solid grade point average, that will be evaluated by college admission committees. Taking challenging courses shows that you are ready for a competitive college environment. Be sure to meet with your counselor to review the courses you've taken and determine what you still need to take.
- **Maintain** your grades. Grades earned in your junior year will be evaluated by college admission officials when you apply for admission.

- **Obtain** schedules for the SAT, SAT Subject Tests and ACT and determine which of these exams you will take. Complete the registration forms and mark the dates on your calendar. See your counselor for information.
- **Inquire** about national competitions and scholarships, such as the Intel Science Talent Search, by visiting with your counselor.
- **Complete** SAT II subject exams as you finish subject areas. See your counselor for information.
- **Develop** your leadership skills and stay involved. Colleges look for consistency and depth in activities.
- **Attend** college fairs, financial aid nights and college planning workshops. Encourage your parent(s)/guardian(s) to accompany you.
- **Establish** an e-mail account specifically for your college search. Remember, a "funky" e-mail address is best left for communicating with friends and family.
- **Start** early! Learn about federal financial aid, your potential eligibility, and how the EFC (Expected Family Contribution) works. Visit Federal Student Aid at [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov) and SUNY Smart Track at [www.suny.edu/smartrack/literacy](http://www.suny.edu/smartrack/literacy) for more information.

- **Talk** to your counselor if you are interested in a military academy to find out about requirements and timelines.

## WINTER

- **Generate** a list of 10-20 colleges and contact them for information. Research costs and note upcoming campus visit programs.
- **Organize!** Make folders for your college information, along with deadlines and important dates. Check it often.
- **Send** e-mail messages to your colleges of interest to get on their mailing lists. To request information from SUNY go to [www.suny.edu/attend/request-information](http://www.suny.edu/attend/request-information).
- **Research** scholarships at [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) and see your counselor for additional information.
- **Create** a first draft of your resumé to maintain a record of college courses taken, college programs in which you've participated, awards you've won, projects you've completed, extracurricular achievements, and volunteer work.
- **Review** your senior year class schedule with your counselor to ensure that it fulfills graduation requirements.
- **Start** the certification process if you are interested in participating in college athletics. Consult with your athletic director or coach(es) to determine whether

you are a candidate for an athletic program. Be sure to check with your counselor to make sure you're taking a core curriculum that meets NCAA requirements. For more information go to [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org).

## SPRING

- **Research** Early Decision and Early Action programs and schedule your testing to meet early deadlines.
- **Attend** college fairs, financial aid nights and college-planning workshops. Many spring events are designed for high school juniors.
- **Utilize** your college list to arrange visits to campuses during spring break.
- **Focus** on financial aid and enlist the assistance of your parents/family members. For each college on your list, calculate the total cost of a year (two semesters) using the college's net price calculator. SUNY's calculator will be available at [www.suny.edu/howmuch](http://www.suny.edu/howmuch).
- **Contact** your U.S. Representative or U.S. Senator to express your interest in and desire to be nominated to attend a military academy.
- **Consult** your coach and counselor BEFORE submitting the NCAA eligibility paperwork (for potential athletes).

- **Consider** whom you'll ask to write letters of recommendation (current teachers and counselors). Then, provide a summary of what you wish for them to include and politely ask if they can assist. Remember to send each a thank you note.
- **Inquire** about personal interviews or group information sessions at your favorite colleges.
- **Search** for summer pre-college programs, workshops and classes at SUNY campuses or apply for internships and summer jobs in your field of interest.
- **Pace** yourself. Don't spend so much time trying to improve standardized test scores that your grades and involvement in activities suffer. Find and maintain a balance.

## SUMMER - Following your junior year

- **Take** the SAT II subject tests if your potential colleges require them and you have finished the curriculum which would help you score well. (If you and your family are experiencing financial hardship, ask your counselor about a fee waiver.)
- **Narrow** your list of colleges to 4-8. Make sure these are a right match for you. Just because a relative attended an Ivy League school, doesn't mean it is a good fit for you.
- **Visit** the three schools at the top of your list. (Be sure to include SUNY.) Schedule your visit in

conjunction with a family vacation or when colleges are hosting events.

- **Decide** on whether you'll apply as an Early Decision or Early Action candidate and begin preparing your application for admission. These deadlines are typically in early to mid-November of your senior year.
- **Compose** rough drafts of essays and ask your family, friends, and teachers to review your essays for grammar, punctuation, readability, and content.
- **Contact** coaches, if applicable, and include your high school sports schedule and game tapes. Be sure to tell them why you are interested in their program and school.
- **Create** an arts portfolio, if applicable, to showcase your performing, visual or creative arts work. Your portfolio may include essays, photographs, illustrations, slides or other forms of artwork. A portfolio should represent your best creative work from class projects or assignments and be consistent with portfolio instructions given by an individual campus program.
- **Preview** application questions now and begin to draft your answers. Worksheets for the SUNY application can be found at [www.suny.edu/attend/learn-more/forms-and-publications](http://www.suny.edu/attend/learn-more/forms-and-publications).

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# 12<sup>th</sup> GRADE TIMELINE

## SUMMER - Prior to your senior year

- **Take** the SAT II subject tests if your potential colleges require them and you have finished the curriculum which would help you score well.
- **Narrow** your list of colleges to 4-8. Make sure these are a right match for you. Just because a relative attended an Ivy League school, doesn't mean it is a good fit for you.
- **Visit** the three schools at the top of your list. (Be sure to include SUNY.) Schedule your visit in conjunction with a family vacation or when colleges are hosting events.
- **Decide** whether you'll apply as an Early Decision or Early Action candidate and begin preparing your application for admission. These deadlines are typically in early to mid-November of your senior year.
- **Compose** rough drafts of essays and ask your family, friends, and teachers to review your essays for grammar, punctuation, readability, and content.
- **Contact** coaches, if applicable, and include your high school sports schedule and game tapes. Be sure to tell them why you are interested in their program and school.

- **Preview** application questions now and begin to draft your answers. Worksheets for the SUNY application can be found at [www.suny.edu/attend/learn-more/forms-and-publications](http://www.suny.edu/attend/learn-more/forms-and-publications).
- **Create** an arts portfolio, if applicable, to showcase your performing, visual or creative arts work. Your portfolio may include essays, photographs, illustrations, slides or other forms of artwork. A portfolio should represent your best creative work from class projects or assignments and be consistent with portfolio instructions given by an individual campus program.

## FALL

- **Have** a strong senior year. Take at least four academic courses and earn good grades. Colleges may ask to review your mid-year grades.
- **Review** your high school transcript to be sure it is accurate.
- **Plan** ahead! This is a busy time for your school counseling office. Provide your counselor with a list of schools to which you intend to apply and give him/her a list of dates for letters, forms, etc.
- **Discuss** essay topics with your teachers and/or counselor. If you haven't done so already, write a first draft of your college essay.

- **Create** a résumé which includes your high school graduation date, grade point average, class rank, standardized test scores, special courses taken, academic honors and awards, activities (including athletics, leadership, community service, and work), interests and major goals. Keep your résumé brief – one to two pages maximum.
- **Apply** to SUNY at [www.suny.edu/applySUNY](http://www.suny.edu/applySUNY). The application is available August 1.
- **Apply** for federal financial aid. Obtain your FSA ID, then complete the FAFSA at [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov). Use your tax information from the previous year. The application is available October 1.
- **Keep** your counselor updated about where you've applied for admission and let him/her know how you've applied (SUNY Application, Common Application, etc.).
- **Organize!** Create a folder for each college to which you are applying and make special note of deadlines. Also create separate folders for tests you've taken or plan to take, financial aid forms and fee waivers.
- **Identify** teachers and counselors from whom you will ask for letters of recommendation. Give serious consideration to teachers that can speak to the rigor of your curriculum and your potential for success.



- **Attend** upcoming college fairs - most will occur in September, October and November.
- **Follow-up** with your counselor and/or teachers to ensure that your letters of recommendation have been sent.
- **Contact** colleges regarding support services if you have a learning or physical disability.
- **Continue** to investigate scholarship opportunities. A good resource is FastWeb at [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com).
- **Plan** on auditioning for a music program or scholarship? Each SUNY campus has its own process for scheduling auditions. In some cases, the department will contact you directly to schedule an audition after receiving your application. Other programs ask that you schedule your audition as soon as possible whether you have submitted your application or not. Check with each campus about how and where to schedule an audition.
- **Plan** on playing a sport? Be sure to file the proper paperwork with the NCAA Clearinghouse. See your coach, athletic director or counselor, or go to [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org).

- **Practice** your college interview skills by participating in a mock interview. Ask your counselor for information or to organize an interview.

## WINTER

- **Stay** focused and keep studying.
- **Ask** your counselor to send mid-year grades to colleges to which you've applied, if required.
- **Register** for May AP exams.

## SPRING

- **Look** for decision letters.
- **Make** photocopies of all decision letters and scholarship letters/awards you've received and give them to your counselor. These copies will help your counselor know from whom you've heard and will enable him/her to compile yearly school profile statistics.
- **Maintain** good senior year grades. Failure to do so may result in your acceptance offer(s) being rescinded.
- **Review** financial aid and scholarship offers you've received. If you have questions, call offices directly.

- **Make** your college decision by May 1. Notify the colleges you won't be attending so other students who were placed on waiting lists can be admitted.
- **Send** your tuition deposit (if required).
- **Notify** your guidance counselor of your college decision and request that a final transcript to be sent to that college.
- **Notify** your counselor and those who've awarded you a scholarship (for scholarship recipients) about where you'll attend as most will send a scholarship check directly to the college you plan to attend.
- **Ask** your counselor to send your final transcript to the NCAA Clearinghouse (for athletes).

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# ▶ WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

## ACT

A college entrance examination generally taken during the junior and/or senior year that assesses a student's general educational development and his/her ability to complete college-level work. The ACT is comprised of four subject tests — English, mathematics, reading, and science and an optional writing test (essay).

## AP (Advanced Placement)

Courses and exams that enable high school students to earn college credit or advanced standing at most American colleges and universities. To learn more about AP courses and subject area exams go to [apstudent.collegeboard.org](http://apstudent.collegeboard.org).

## Associate Degree

The associate degree is awarded to students who complete a minimum of 60 college credits with a 2.0 GPA.

## Athletics

Colleges and universities belong to leagues that have their own rules, regulations, and eligibility requirements. SUNY participates in NCAA Divisions I and III and NJCAA Divisions I, II, and III, NAIA, and USCAA.

- **NCAA - National Collegiate Athletic Association at [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)**

Division I and II schools offer athletic scholarships and students are required to meet NCAA's academic requirements. Division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships and students are not required to meet NCAA academic requirements.

A future student athlete should meet with his/her counselor as early as possible to review the NCAA requirements to ensure he/she is taking the right high school courses.

- **NJCAA - National Junior College Athletic Association at [www.njcaa.org](http://www.njcaa.org)**

NJCAA Division I and II schools offer scholarships, while Division III schools do not. There are no academic eligibility requirements for student athletes entering junior or community colleges.

- **NAIA - National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics at [www.naia.org](http://www.naia.org)**

NAIA schools have an option of awarding full or partial scholarships. In order to play a sport or receive an athletic scholarship, a student must meet eligibility requirements.

- **USCAA - United States Collegiate Athletic Association at [www.theuscaa.com](http://www.theuscaa.com)**

USCAA schools have an option of awarding full or partial scholarships. In order to play a sport or receive an athletic scholarship, a student must meet USCAA eligibility requirements.

## Bachelor's Degree

(also called Baccalaureate Degree) – The bachelor's degree is awarded to students who complete a minimum of 120 college credits. Bachelor's degrees are found at four-year colleges and universities.

## Certificate Programs

Certificate programs provide specific job skills, require a minimum of 30 college credits and are generally offered at community colleges.

## Class Rank

Many high schools use class rank to show where a student stands academically in relation to other members in his/her graduating class. The student who has the highest GPA is number one in the class. The student with the second highest GPA is number two, etc.

## Community/Junior College

A community/junior college is also known as a two-year school. Courses offered include transfer curricula with credits transferable toward a bachelor's degree at a four-year college and occupational or technical curricula with courses of study designed to prepare students for employment in two years.

## Credit

College courses are measured in credit hours and typical college classes are 3 credit hours. A full-time student will generally take 15 college credits, or 4 to 5 classes, per semester.

## Early Action

An admission program under which students apply early to one or more colleges and receive a decision, prior to regular notification dates, without an obligation to attend. Admission is non-binding. Students typically have until May 1 to declare their intent to enroll and may apply under Early Action to as many schools as they wish.

## Early Decision

An admission program under which students apply early and receive a decision prior to regular notification dates. Admission is binding. If they are offered admission, they must commit to attending the college. As a result, students may not apply under Early Decision to more than one college.



## FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid at [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov) is required for students wishing to apply for financial aid - including federal, state, and campus-based aid. The FAFSA should be completed as soon after October 1 of the senior year in high school as possible.

## GPA (Grade Point Average)

Grade point average reflects the average of a student's semester (or end of term) grades, starting with the freshman year. Although GPA scales differ among schools, they are usually reported as letters or numbers.

Numeric grades can be converted to letter grades as illustrated below in the following table.

Numeric Grade Conversion

Numeric Grade	Letter Grade	Grade Point Average
90-100	A	4.0
80-89	B	3.0
70-79	C	2.0
60-69	D	1.0
Less than 60	F	0.0

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, *The 2009 High School Transcript Study*.

Some schools have "weighted grades" for honors and/or AP courses. If a high school has weighted grades, then a grade in a weighted course is worth more than it is in a non-weighted course. For example, an A in an honors course might be worth 5 points instead of the usual 4, a B worth 4 points instead of 3, etc.

A variety of methods are used to determine GPA. Regardless of the method used, the higher the grades, the higher the GPA, and the higher the GPA, the greater the college and scholarship opportunities.

## IB (International Baccalaureate)

IB programs promote the education of the whole person, emphasizing intellectual, personal, emotional, and social growth. Diploma students take six subjects, write a 4,000 word extended essay, complete a course in theory of knowledge, as well as complete a number of creativity, action, and service projects. IB diplomas are recognized by the world's leading universities and may result in awarding of college credit and/or scholarships.

## Major

The primary field of study in which an individual wishes to receive a degree.

## Minor

A second field of study requiring fewer credit hours than a major.

## PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)

A practice test for the SAT that is also used to determine National Merit finalists. The PSAT/NMSQT is given in October, primarily to juniors, and measures critical reading, math problem-solving and writing skills.

## Recommendation

Most colleges request two or three letters of recommendation when submitting an application for admission. These are generally written by people who know you inside and outside of the classroom (usually an academic teacher and a college advisor/school counselor).

## SAT Reasoning Test

A college entrance examination generally taken during the junior and/or senior year that measures the critical thinking skills needed for academic success in college. The SAT includes evidenced-based reading and writing and math sections.

## SAT Subject Tests

One-hour tests that measure a student's knowledge in specific subject areas that should be taken as the high school subjects are completed. These tests are required by some of the more competitive colleges.

## Transcript

A document that details a student's academic achievement in high school. Although the appearance of the transcript varies from school to school, all high school transcripts generally contain the following information: Courses, grades, and credits for each grade completed, beginning with grade nine; current cumulative GPA and class rank; and anticipated graduation date. An unofficial transcript is exactly the same as an official transcript except that there is no signature, stamp, or seal.

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