



The Complete Student Checklist for 2025: Freshman Edition

Rising Freshman Summer [8th-9th Grade]:

As you transition to high school, use the summer break to prepare for the new and exciting challenges that ninth grade can bring.

One way to be proactive is to explore the kinds of clubs, sports, and activities available to you while you have free time. Once the semester begins, most students have more responsibilities to juggle—and significantly less time or energy to explore than before.

Another way to prepare ahead of time is to familiarize yourself with your new campus so you know what to expect, and start thinking about your academic and extracurricular goals for the next four years.

Freshman Year [9th Grade]:

FALL

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Meet with your in-school guidance counselor to introduce yourself and establish a rough plan for your high school journey.

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Sign up for college preparatory classes (including rigorous coursework in Honors, AP, and IB if applicable).

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Join several clubs to explore potential extracurricular interests.

SPRING

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Hone in on your academic interests, paying attention to your strengths and weaknesses.

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Begin to commit to extracurricular activities that strike your interest (remember quality over quantity).

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Start a list of awards, honors, work, etc. to keep adding to as you complete your time in high school.

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Apply for relevant summer internships to keep you busy and to help build your resume to stand out in the coming months.

College Apps Advice for Freshmen

Consider an independent project.

Start thinking about what big questions might stoke your interest. How can you go above and beyond to demonstrate your dedication to these unique interests outside of the classroom?

Consider independent college counseling.

On average, our college counselors spend 25x the amount of personal one-on-one time with their students at Empowerly than in-school counselors. Consider reaching out to an independent college counselor and seeing how they could support your child’s dreams with a personal touch.