

# GEAR UP

## *for your future!*

### ***A Guide for Junior and Senior Students and Their Families***

**W**elcome to your junior year! For some, this will be a year to get serious. For those who have been serious, it will be important to stay focused. Among the milestones you can expect in 11th grade are taking the SAT or the ACT—for the first, but not necessarily the last time—and possibly making a list of potential colleges or other postsecondary opportunities. You may get your first part-time job. And for many of you (probably to your parent's dismay) you may get a driver's license.

Indeed, there are exciting opportunities ahead. Academically, 11th grade may be the most rigorous yet. Many of you may be enrolled in Advanced Placement and/or Dual Enrollment courses. Others may be tempted to improve your chances of a perfect GPA by taking easier courses. Doing so, however, could be a mistake since your junior-year classes and grades may be used by colleges to make early-admission decisions. Instead, you should stay on the path you started in grades nine and ten, taking courses consistent with your postsecondary plans and getting the best grades that you can.

Eleventh grade can be stressful. However, your parents, teachers, and counselors can help you manage your time and develop effective study skills.

*GEAR UP for Your Future* can help you and your family find information about graduation requirements, research careers, and investigate college and financial aid opportunities. Take time to review this guide and keep it handy throughout the next two years. Best wishes for success and happiness during your final two years of high school.



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# Staying on Course

A checklist can provide useful information to keep you on track. Consider using the timeline below to ensure that you remember important steps to prepare for postsecondary experiences.

## Junior Year

- Continue** taking courses toward your graduation plan. Include Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses.
- Investigate** interests and possible careers. Talk to adults in a variety of professions to determine what they like and dislike about their jobs and what kind of education is needed for each.
- Take** the PSAT, SAT or ACT.
- Continue** adding to your personal resume file, including:
  - Copies of report cards
  - Copies of certificates
  - A list of awards and honors you have received
  - A list of school and community organizations and clubs you have joined, including dates of participation and any offices you held
  - A list of jobs you have held (volunteer and/or paid)
  - Extracurricular and GEAR UP activities in which you have participatedUpdate this file each semester.
- Visit** the counseling and/or college center at your high school.
- Attend** meetings to get college admissions and financial aid information.
- Begin** to explore the financial cost of college.
- Continue**/start saving for college.
- Explore** colleges by attending college fairs and visiting college campuses.
- Request** information from colleges that interest you.

## Senior Year

- Make** a final list of potential colleges.
- Discuss** your options with your parent(s) and guidance counselor.
- Continue** to work hard – second semester grades can affect college admissions and scholarship criteria.
- Finalize** your personal resume file.
- Complete** college applications before the deadlines.
- Prepare** your college essay.
- Ask** your personal references for a letter of recommendation.
- Retake** SAT or ACT if necessary.
- Apply** for scholarships, including GEAR UP. Pay attention to deadlines.
- Complete** your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) – Be aware of financial aid priority deadlines.
- Make** your final decision as to the college that you will attend.
- Graduate!**

# Do More Than the Minimum!

These are the classes that must be taken in high school to meet graduation requirements for the Standard Diploma or the Advanced Studies Diploma. These classes will prepare you for college and provide a valuable knowledge base for other postsecondary experiences.

Discipline Area	Standard Diploma		Advanced Studies Diploma	
		Verified Credits	Standard Credits	Verified Credits
English	4	2	4	2
Mathematics	3	1	4	2
Laboratory Science	3	1	4	2
History and Social Sciences	3	1	4	2
Foreign Languages			3	
Health and Physical Education	2		2	
Fine Arts or Career & Technical Education	2		1	
Economics and Personal Finance	1		1	
Electives	4		3	
Student Selected Test		1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>9</b>

Additional guidelines for these requirements are available from the Virginia Department of Education website ([www.doe.virginia.gov](http://www.doe.virginia.gov)) under Graduation Requirements. Your school counselor or career coach can tell you which courses are offered by your school and any additional requirements needed to obtain your diploma.

**Take challenging classes! Listed below are a few courses and programs for your consideration:**

## Advanced Placement (AP) Classes

Students take advanced placement (AP) courses for a variety of reasons. Some enroll because they want to take rigorous coursework. Others take AP courses because they have an interest in a particular subject and want to explore it in depth. Still others know that AP courses will help them to be competitive in college. All of those are excellent reasons to participate in AP courses and to complete your AP courses by taking the AP exams.

## Dual Enrollment Program

Dual Enrollment is a program that allows eligible high school students attending public or private high schools to simultaneously enroll in a college course. Credits earned may be used toward high school graduation and toward an associate or baccalaureate degree. They also may be applied toward a technical certificate.

## International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB)

The IB Diploma Program is an academically challenging program of study that prepares students for success in college. The program is normally taught over two years and has gained recognition from some of the world's leading universities.

## Career and Technical Education

Career and technical education programs in Virginia public schools are designed to prepare students for productive futures while meeting the commonwealth's need for well-trained and industry-certified technical workers.

*In light of all that happens at the end of your junior and senior years in high school, taking on rigorous, college-level courses can be a tough decision. But the benefits are significant. Ask your counselor for more information about how you can prepare for postsecondary education.*

# What's Best for Me?

Should I take the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test ) or the ACT (American College Test)? Many colleges will accept either ACT or SAT scores as part of your college admissions portfolio.

## Here's a comparison of the two tests:

ACT	SAT
Includes a science reasoning section	Does not include a science section
Includes trigonometry questions	Does not include trigonometry questions
Uses vocabulary words in context	Vocabulary words are not used in context
Is a 100% multiple choice test with a separate writing option	Includes short answer questions and a writing section
Does not subtract points for wrong answers	Subtracts partial points for some wrong answers
Is approximately 25% mathematics	Is about 50% mathematics
Contains questions that go from easy to hard	Easy and hard questions are mixed up
Allows you to choose which test date scores are reported to selected colleges.	You cannot choose which scores to report. The colleges you select receive scores for all of your test dates.

### Sample ACT Test Question:

A car averages 27 miles per gallon. If gas costs \$4.04 per gallon, which of the following is closest to how much the gas would cost for this car to travel 2,727 typical miles?

- (A) \$44.44
- (B) \$109.08
- (C) \$118.80
- (D) \$408.04
- (E) \$444.40



### Sample SAT Test Question:

Hoping to \_\_\_\_\_ the dispute, negotiators proposed a compromise that they felt would be \_\_\_\_\_ to both labor and management.

- (A) enforce. . .useful
- (B) end. . .diverse
- (C) overcome. . .unattractive
- (D) extend. . .satisfactory
- (E) resolve. . .acceptable



For more information about the ACT visit [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). For additional information about the SAT visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

# Show Me The Money

## **GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship and Achievement Grant**

Students who participate in the GEAR UP program may be eligible for a scholarship or grant to help pay for college. Scholarship and grant recipients will be selected based on a variety of factors including financial need, participation in GEAR UP activities, and academic performance.

The **GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship** is a competitive college financial aid program available to eligible GEAR UP students who demonstrate high financial need.

The **GEAR UP Virginia Achievement Grant** is a competitive college financial aid program available to eligible GEAR UP students who do not qualify to receive the GEAR UP Virginia Scholarship.

*For more information, please see the GEAR UP VA Scholarship and Grant Information book for the 2006-2012 cohort at [www.gearupva.com](http://www.gearupva.com).*

## **Ways to Pay for College**

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College can be expensive, but you should not let this expense stop you from continuing your education. There are many options available for students to help pay for college. You should contact your preferred institutions' financial aid offices to find out more about ways to pay for college.

### **Saving**

Saving money will help you pay for college. Many students rely on a combination of savings, income, and financial aid to pay for college. It's never too late to start saving for college!

### **Need- & Merit-based Grants and Scholarships**

Grants and scholarships are forms of gift aid – money that does not have to be repaid. Students can receive grants and scholarships because of financial need, academic achievement, athletics, or because of their background, college program of interest, or parent's employer. Start searching early for grants and scholarships and visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) for advice on avoiding scams.

### **Student Loans**

Loans have to be repaid with interest after you graduate or if you take a break from school. Student loans usually have low interest rates.



### **Work-study**

Many colleges offer part-time jobs to students who demonstrate financial need. Work-study can be used to help pay for educational expenses. There are a variety of jobs available through work-study on and off campus. Students may be able to find jobs that are related to their course of study and be paid at least minimum wage.

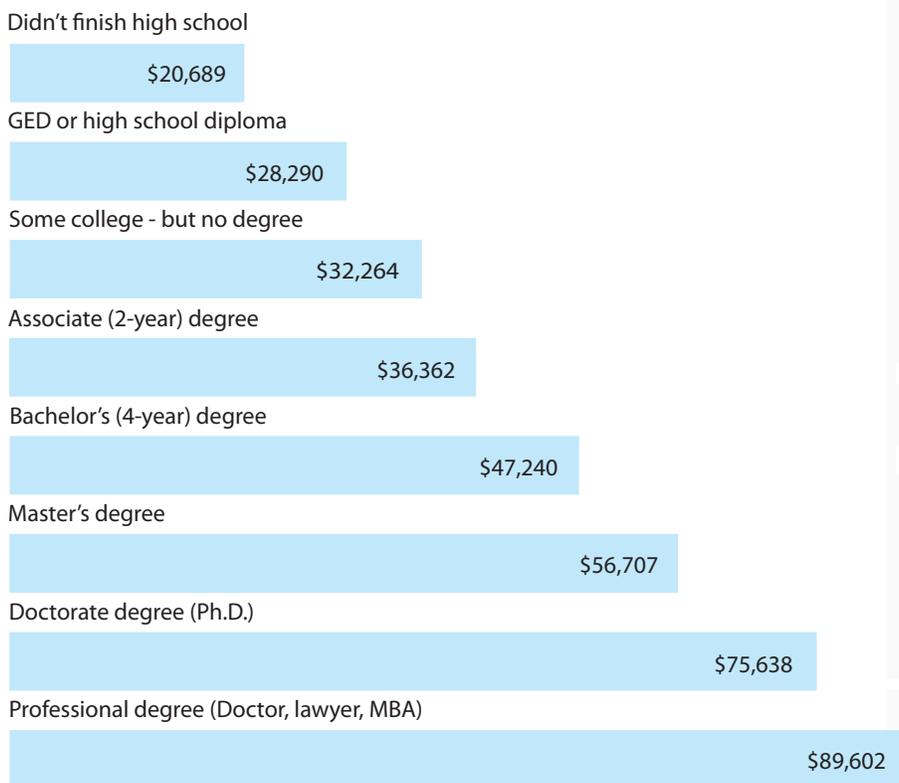
**Most colleges require that you complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be considered for any type of financial aid. For more information, visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).**

# Education Pays

## Why college?

1. As a college graduate, you'll earn an average of \$368 more a week than a high school graduate – that's \$20,000 more a year!
2. It pays to stay in school. Over a lifetime, a high school dropout working full-time will earn \$300,000 less than a high school graduate and more than \$1 million less than a college graduate!
3. You'll have better odds for a better job: A college degree increases your chances of employment by nearly 50%.
4. You'll be getting ahead of the game – it's estimated that by 2014, 90% of the fastest-growing careers will require some level of education beyond high school.
5. Your college degree will continue to grow in value. By the time you're in your 30s, there'll be an estimated 19 million more jobs for educated workers than there are qualified people to fill them.
6. It will benefit you in lots of other ways, such as health insurance and generous retirement plans. Jobs for college graduates typically offer more and better benefits than lower-skill jobs requiring just a high school diploma.
7. You'll be more likely to live the way you've always dreamed. Families with higher levels of education tend to enjoy a better standard of living.
8. Pay it forward – if you go to college, statistics show that your children and even their children are more likely to go.

### Median Earnings for Workers Age 25 and Up



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement



# Explore Your Options

## Explore Your Career Options

### What are some things you like to do?

- Reading
- Building & Fixing Things
- Managing Money
- Music & Arts
- Helping People
- Writing
- Social Studies
- Science
- Nature
- Sports
- Computers
- Math

### What skills do you have?

Evaluate school, volunteer, work, or leisure experiences.

Make lists of your school activities and volunteer work you have done.

After you have explored your interests and skills, determine the relationship between your skills and interests and possible careers. Visit the Virginia Wizard website at [www.vawizard.org](http://www.vawizard.org) to help you get started.

### Matching Careers to Degrees

One benefit of going to college is that you have more careers to choose from when you finish.

Below are some sample careers and types of degrees they usually require:



<b>Two Years of College</b> (Associate Degree or Apprenticeship)	<b>Four Years of College</b> (Bachelor's Degree)	<b>More Than Four Years of College</b> (Graduate Degree)
Auto Mechanic Cardiovascular Technologist Computer Technician Dental Hygienist Engineering Technician Hotel/Restaurant Manager Paralegal Pharmacy Technician Physical Therapist Assistant Preschool Teacher Registered Nurse Surveyor	Accountant Air Traffic Controller Clinical Laboratory Technologist Construction Manager Engineer Federal Agent Graphic Designer Journalist Landscape Architect Physician's Assistant Social Worker Teacher	Advanced-Practice Nurse Archaeologist College Professor Dentist Doctor Economist Lawyer Librarian Physical Therapist Psychologist Scientist Veterinarian

# Learn More

Is your future on the web? You can use the web to plan your future, choose a college, and pay for it too. Check out these sites for more information and resources.

## Planning and Testing

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### College Board

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

### I am the One

[www.i-am-the-one.com](http://www.i-am-the-one.com)

### KnowHow2Go

[www.knowhow2go.org](http://www.knowhow2go.org)

### Virginia Wizard

[www.vawizard.org](http://www.vawizard.org)

### SAT

[www.collegeboard.com/testing](http://www.collegeboard.com/testing)

### ACT

[www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)

## Government Agencies

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### State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

[www.schev.edu](http://www.schev.edu)

### Virginia Department of Education

[www.doe.virginia.gov](http://www.doe.virginia.gov)

### U.S. Department of Education

[www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

### American Council on Education

[www.collegeispossible.org](http://www.collegeispossible.org)

## Financial Aid

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### FAFSA

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

### FastWeb

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

### Federal Student Aid

[www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov](http://www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov)

### FinAid

[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

*\* Spanish version available online. Versión en español disponible en línea.*

## References used in this publication include:

[www.college.gov](http://www.college.gov)

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

[www.i-am-the-one.com](http://www.i-am-the-one.com)

[www.knowhow2go.org](http://www.knowhow2go.org)

[www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov](http://www.federalstudentaid.ed.gov)

[www.nasfaa.org](http://www.nasfaa.org)

[www.suntrustededucation.com](http://www.suntrustededucation.com)

[www.ecmcfoundation.org](http://www.ecmcfoundation.org)



State Council of  
Higher Education for Virginia

Special thanks to Oklahoma GEAR UP,  
Texas GEAR UP and GEAR UP Washington.