

COLLEGE MAJOR DECISION · FAMILY EDITION

The Parent College Prep Timeline

A calm, phased map from exploration to decision — with concrete parent actions each year, and a clear place for MajorMatch when the shortlist needs real data.

9th–10th explore · 11th narrow · 12th decide · freshman backup

9–10

Explore
breadth

11

Narrow
with evidence

12

Decide
& document

Frosh

Backup if
undeclared

PARENT ACTIONS

Concrete checklists for each
phase — not vague pep talks.

WHERE MM FITS

Assessment → Tree of
Knowledge → Pathfinder when
ready.

DECISION QUALITY

Cost of drifting beats the cost
of imperfect picking.

How to use this tool

This is a working timeline, not a pep talk. Pick the phase that matches your teen's grade. Do the parent actions on that page. Advance when the evidence is ready — not when a brochure says you “should.”

Honest frame: Families don't usually fail by caring too little. They fail by drifting — no shared shortlist, no cost conversation, no plan for a switch. Decision quality beats hype.

What this PDF is for

- A year-by-year parent checklist you can print and mark up
- Better dinner-table questions than “What do you want to be?”
- Knowing *when* to bring in assessment data vs. still exploring

What it is not

- Not a guarantee of admissions or earnings
- Not a four-minute personality label
- Not pressure to buy Pathfinder before you're ready

Where MajorMatch fits

1. **Take the free assessment** (~15-25 min adaptive). Teen sees a **top-3 sample** with ability + interest + persistence context.
2. **Read the Tree of Knowledge** together — free map of 73 majors with careers and pay context: majormatch.us/blog/major-galaxy/
3. **Unlock Pathfinder (\$29 one-time)** when you need full reasoning, paths to avoid, state colleges with tuition, and a PDF for a counselor — not before.

[Free assessment](#)[Open Tree of Knowledge](#)

9-10 Explore

11 Narrow

12 Decide

Frosh Backup

9-10
EXPLORE

Breadth without panic

Goal: build a wide, honest interest map. Do **not** lock a major. Collect evidence: classes they finish, work they seek out, work they avoid.

Parent actions this phase

- ☐ Inventory strengths: which classes hold attention vs. which they survive.
- ☐ One job-shadow or informational chat per semester (relative, neighbor, alumni).
- ☐ Visit the free Tree of Knowledge once — browse families of majors, not rankings.
- ☐ Protect sleep and reading time; exploration fails when everything is frantic.
- ☐ Keep a shared note: “liked / curious / never again.” Update quarterly.

Questions that help

- What problem would you happily work on for a month?
- Would you rather build, explain, persuade, care for, or organize?
- Which elective would you take twice?

MajorMatch now? Optional. A free assessment is fine for curiosity — treat top-3 as a *hypothesis*, not a contract. Revisit in 11th.

Next-step gate to Phase 2

Move on when you have: (1) a short list of 5–8 fields that aren’t random, (2) at least one real-world exposure, (3) agreement that “undecided” is still OK.

9-10 Explore

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11

NARROW

Evidence over vibes

Goal: cut the field to a **shortlist of 3**. Align coursework, extracurriculars, and campus visits with that shortlist — not with a Pinterest aesthetic.

Parent actions this phase

- ☐ Have teen take the free MajorMatch assessment (~15-25 min).
- ☐ Read the top-3 sample together the same week — no forced #1 if scores are close.
- ☐ Map each shortlisted major on the Tree; open related careers.
- ☐ Ask the counselor: which courses unlock these majors at target schools?
- ☐ Price-check: one state flagship + one backup path for each shortlist item.
- ☐ Schedule one “paths we should avoid” conversation using ability gaps, not fear.

Where Pathfinder helps

Unlock **\$29 Pathfinder** (one-time) when you need:

- Full “why this fits” write-ups
- Paths to avoid with specific gaps
- State colleges + tuition context
- A PDF for counselor meetings

Skip it if the free top-3 + Tree already settled the shortlist.

Talk script: “We’re not picking forever tonight. We’re picking what to research for the next 90 days.” Then ask: which of these three still stands if a friend laughs? Which needs the most persistence from *you*?

9-10 Explore

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12 Decide

Frosh Backup

12
DECIDE

Document the decision

Goal: choose a primary major direction (or intentional undeclared strategy), align applications, and write down the switch criteria *before* tuition compounds.

Parent actions this phase

- ☐ Confirm primary + alternate major on each application where it matters.
- ☐ Re-open Pathfinder PDF (if unlocked) before counselor / FAFSA season meetings.
- ☐ Tour departments, not just campuses — sit in on a class if possible.
- ☐ Agree on a switch rule: e.g. “revisit after first midterms if X and Y.”
- ☐ Build a one-page family summary: why this path, what we’d change, cost ceiling.

Decision-quality checks

- Is this interest + ability, or only prestige pressure?
- Do we understand early-career work on a Tuesday?
- If wrong, is the expensive part time, tuition, or both?
- Does the school make switching possible without a lost year?

Soft next step

If senior year started without a shortlist, take the free assessment this week, walk the Tree once, then decide whether Pathfinder is worth unlocking before deposits.

[Take free assessment →](#)[Tree of Knowledge](#)

9-10 Explore

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Frosh Backup

YR1
BACKUP

Undeclared / freshman course-correct

Goal: use the first year as structured discovery — not accidental delay. Extra semesters are where families quietly pay for no plan.

Parent actions

- ☐ If undeclared: set a declare-by date with the advisor (term, not vibe).
- ☐ Retake or refresh MajorMatch if interests shifted after real coursework.
- ☐ Compare Pathfinder “paths to avoid” against actual first-semester grades.
- ☐ Prefer majors with clear prerequisite ladders over vague “figuring it out.”
- ☐ Talk cost early: what one extra semester means for your family budget.

This week (any phase)

- ☐ Print this PDF; circle your phase.
- ☐ 20-min talk: teen explains top interests in their words.
- ☐ 15 min on the Tree of Knowledge together.
- ☐ Book the free assessment if you lack a data shortlist.

Keep these links handy

Assessment: majormatch.us/quiz/

Tree of Knowledge: majormatch.us/blog/major-galaxy/

Parents hub: majormatch.us/for-parents/

Pathfinder preview: majormatch.us/pricing/#pathfinder-preview · \$29 one-time

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