



The Nontraditional Teen Path

Starter Checklist



A simple guide to help you think through flexible education, college-prep options, and next steps when the normal path doesn't quite fit.



- ✓ Clarify your teen's strengths, needs, and direction
- ✓ Explore flexible education paths that fit
- ✓ Understand testing, dual enrollment, and early college basics
- ✓ Map out the next step with clarity



Use this to think, sort, and plan



Before You Start '🌱

You're not alone.

You're asking the right questions.

More families are exploring flexible education paths for advanced, neurodivergent, burned-out, or out-of-the-box teens. This checklist will help you slow down, get clear, and take the next right step with more confidence.



This checklist is for you if:

- You're wondering if the current school path still fits your teen
- You're curious about homeschooling, dual enrollment, early college, CLEP, DSST, AP, or hybrid options
- You want more clarity before making a big decision
- You're ready to explore options that support your teen's potential



How to Use This Checklist



Go at your own pace.

There's no rush. Use what helps right now and save the rest for later.



Think, don't decide.

This is not about choosing today. It's about gathering clarity.



Include your teen.

Their voice and goals matter. This works best as a conversation.



Focus on one next step.

Small, steady action is more powerful than a perfect plan.



A gentle reminder

Your teen doesn't need the "perfect" path. They need a path that fits who they are right now and gives them room to grow. You're doing better than you think. ❤️



Important

This checklist is for reflection and planning. It is not legal, financial, educational, medical, mental health, college admissions, or scholarship advice. Always verify requirements with your state, school, college, testing organization, or program.



Is the Current Path Still Working?

Before you make any big decisions, it helps to get honest about what is working and what is not. Use this page to notice patterns, name what feels true, and create space for thoughtful next steps.



Check anything that feels true right now:

- ☐ My teen is bored or under-challenged.
- ☐ My teen is overwhelmed, burned out, or shutting down.
- ☐ The current schedule creates more stress than structure.
- ☐ My teen needs more flexibility than the current path allows.
- ☐ My teen is ready for more advanced work in at least one area.
- ☐ My teen struggles with the pace, environment, or expectations of school.
- ☐ We are doing a lot of support work outside the school system already.
- ☐ Dual enrollment, early college, CLEP, DSST, AP, or another college-prep option may be worth researching.
- ☐ The current path technically works, but it does not feel like the best fit.
- ☐ We need more information before making a major decision.



What feels like the biggest friction point right now?



You do not need to decide today.
Sometimes clarity starts by
simply naming what is working,
what is not, and what your teen
may need more of.



One thing I want to understand better:



Paths Worth Researching'

You do not have to choose a path today.

This page is simply a place to name the options that may be worth learning more about. Some families use one path. Some combine several. Some only need a small adjustment, while others need a bigger reset.

Start by checking anything that might be worth researching for your teen:

- ☐ Homeschooling
- ☐ Online school
- ☐ Hybrid school
- ☐ Dual enrollment
- ☐ Early college
- ☐ CLEP exams
- ☐ DSST exams
- ☐ AP exams
- ☐ SAT / ACT / PSAT planning
- ☐ Transcript planning
- ☐ Scholarship planning
- ☐ Career or technical education
- ☐ Portfolio-based learning
- ☐ Flexible graduation timeline
- ☐ A mix of several options



Which 2-3 options feel most worth researching first?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



You are not committing yet.

Research is not the same as deciding. The goal is to understand what exists, what fits your teen, and what questions you should ask before making a bigger move.



One option I want to learn more about this week:



Records + Information to Gather >>>

Before you choose a new path, gather the basics.

You do not need everything perfectly organized yet. The goal is to collect enough information to see where your teen is now, what options may be realistic, and what questions still need answers.

Start with what you already have.

- ☐ Current transcript or course list
- ☐ Completed high school credits
- ☐ Current grades or progress records
- ☐ Test scores, if any
- ☐ Current accommodations, 504 plan, IEP, if relevant
- ☐ College or career goals, even if tentative
- ☐ State homeschool requirements
- ☐ Dual enrollment requirements
- ☐ CLEP / DSST / AP credit policies for likely colleges
- ☐ Scholarship deadlines and eligibility rules
- ☐ Budget and funding options
- ☐ Parent work, time, and capacity limits
- ☐ Student energy, motivation, and support needs



What information do we already have?



What information do we still need?



You are building a clearer picture.

Records do not have to be perfect to be useful.

Start with what you can find, then make a short list of what still needs to be checked.



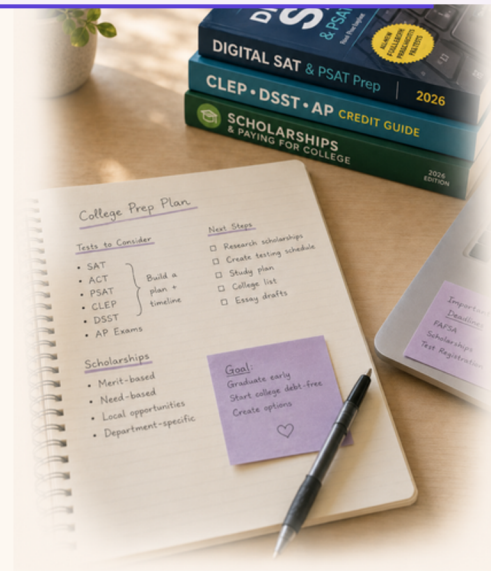
One record or requirement I will look for this week:



College Prep Questions for Advanced Teens

Advanced doesn't always mean "ready for everything."

Before you add college-level work, testing, scholarships, or acceleration into the plan, pause and look at the bigger picture. The goal is not to race. The goal is to build a path that fits your teen's strengths, support needs, energy, and future options.



Ask these before committing to a path:

- Does my teen need more challenge, more flexibility, more support, or all three?
- Are we trying to graduate early, earn college credit, reduce cost, improve fit, protect mental health, or create more options?
- Would dual enrollment help right now, or would it add too much pressure?
- Would CLEP, DSST, AP, SAT, ACT, or PSAT planning be useful for this student's goals?
- Do the colleges or programs we are considering accept the credits we are researching?
- Are scholarships tied to GPA, test scores, residency, enrollment status, deadlines, or specific programs?
- What transcript format will we use?
- What documentation should we keep so we are not scrambling later?
- What would make this path sustainable for the whole family?
- What does my teen actually want more of: challenge, independence, structure, rest, purpose, or direction?



What are we actually trying to create?



Which college-prep option feels most worth researching first?



Faster is not always better.

The strongest path is the one your teen can actually sustain, understand, and grow from.



One college-prep question I need to verify this week:



Your 7-Day Starter Plan

You do not have to solve the whole path this week.

Use the next seven days to gather clarity, organize the basics, and choose one realistic step. Small progress counts.



Day 1: Name what is not working.

Write down the biggest friction points and what you want more of: challenge, flexibility, support, rest, structure, purpose, or options.



Day 2: Gather what you already have.

Pull together credits, course lists, grades, test scores, accommodations, goals, any notes that help you see the current picture.



Day 3: Check the basic rules.

Look up your state's homeschool or alternative education requirements, plus any school, district, or program rules that may apply.



Day 4: Pick 1-2 options to research.

Choose the most realistic paths from your list: dual enrollment, CLEP, DSST, AP, online school, early college, hybrid school, or another option.



Day 5: Check college-credit policies.

Look at likely colleges or programs and see how they treat dual enrollment, CLEP, DSST, AP, transfer credits, or early college work.



Day 6: Talk to your teen.

Ask what feels exciting, stressful, unrealistic, supportive, or worth trying. Their voice matters.



Day 7: Choose one realistic next step.

Do not choose the whole future. Choose the next action that gives you more clarity.



This week I want to focus on:



You are not behind.

A thoughtful path is built one clear step at a time. The goal is not to rush. The goal is to make the next decision with better information.



One step I will take this week:



Your Next Practical Step

You do not need the whole plan today.

By now, you may have noticed what is not working, which paths are worth researching, what records you need, and which college-prep questions matter most.

The goal now is simple: choose **one next step** that gives you more clarity.



Choose one next step:

- ☐ I need to learn my state's homeschool or alternative education rules.
- ☐ I need to understand dual enrollment options.
- ☐ I need to research CLEP, DSST, AP, SAT, ACT, or PSAT planning.
- ☐ I need to organize my teen's transcript, credits, or course history.
- ☐ I need to compare college credit policies.
- ☐ I need to look into scholarships, deadlines, or funding options.
- ☐ I need to talk with my teen about what feels realistic.
- ☐ I need to slow down and gather more information before deciding.
- ☐ I need to create a simple weekly plan.



The next step I am choosing:



When will I do it?

Date: _____

What do I need before I start?



You are allowed to build a path that fits.

The default timeline is not the only timeline. Your teen does not need a perfect plan today. They need thoughtful support, useful information, and the next step that makes the path clearer.

Keep going with PresentPartner

For more flexible resources, systems, tools, and real-life next steps, visit:

partner.nightbirdco.com/family-education

