



COLLEGE PREPARATION TIMELINE - JUNIORS

Junior year marks a turning point because for most students and families, it's when college planning activities kick into high gear. Here are some things you can do this year to support your child and provide the best options. Remember, it never hurts to start preparing earlier if you can.

CHECKLIST AT A GLANCE

Summer Before Junior Year

- Stay involved

Fall

- Update/create your college prep journal
- Meet with guidance
- Review class choices
- Start Looking More Closely at Colleges
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT
- Consider taking the SAT early

Winter

- Review your PSAT/NMSQT results
- Prepare for the Spring SAT/ACT
- Consider your course-load for senior year
- Consider taking SAT Subject Tests

Spring

- Develop a Solid College List
- Take SAT/ACT and AP Exams if applicable
- Begin compiling financial documents during tax season
- Attend college fairs/financial aid events
- Make productive summer plans
- Request letters of recommendation
- Apply for a summer job

Summer Before Senior Year

- Visit colleges
- Build a brag sheet
- Explore scholarships
- Download college applications
- Create your FSA ID
- Consider possible essay topics
- Cleans up your social media presence

SUMMER BEFORE JUNIOR YEAR

Stay Involved.

Keep active with the extracurricular activities, sports, clubs, volunteering or jobs you've done in your first two years of high school.

FALL

Update/create your college prep journal.

If you haven't already, create a journal or a spreadsheet to keep track of your college prep information. Make lists of your abilities, achievements, preferences, and experiences. Create a list of possible subjects you'd like to study in college. Start a preliminary list of colleges of interest to you.

Meet with your school counselor.

This meeting is especially important as a junior because that is when you begin to engage in the college application process. Find out when college representatives might visit your school. Discuss possible careers and what majors prepare you for them.

Review your class choices.

Are you showing a college that you are taking an appropriate level of academic challenge?

Start looking more closely at colleges online.

Learn about different types of colleges. Look at their websites to determine their locations, enrollment numbers, and requirements. Start a list of schools that appeal to you and why.



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Take the PSAT/NMSQT.

The PSAT/NMSQT is conducted in October. If you didn't take it in 10th grade, now is the time. This is a preliminary test that helps students practice for the SAT and assess their academic skills. Juniors who score well on the test are also eligible for scholarship opportunities.

Consider taking the SAT early.

If you take the SAT early in your Junior year, you will have plenty of time to study and retake it if necessary.

WINTER

Review your PSAT/NMSQT results.

Your score report shows what you should work on to get ready for college, lists Advanced Placement courses that might be a good match for you, and connects you to free, personalized SAT practice on Khan Academy® based on your results.

Prepare for the spring SAT/ACT.

Many students take the SAT in their junior year. If you didn't take the SAT in the fall, now is the time to prepare for the spring test. If you took it already and weren't happy with your result, you can re-take it in the spring.

Consider your course load for senior year.

Taking honors courses or college-level courses as a senior can help you prepare for college work. Additionally, challenging courses are what college admission officers like to see in applicants.

Consider taking SAT Subject Tests.

Many colleges require or recommend taking these tests to get a sense of your child's skills in a certain academic area. In general, it's best to take a Subject Test right after taking the relevant course.

SPRING

Develop a solid college list.

Make a list of 15 or 20 colleges that are of interest to you. Consider who you are and what you want out of a school, but don't limit yourself. The college search is about exploration. Make sure your list includes different types schools: public, private, in-state, and out-of-state schools, and also schools of varying degrees of selectivity. You want to be sure to have many options.

Take SAT/ACT and AP Exams as applicable.

The SAT is typically offered in March, May, and June. Many students take the test a second time to improve their scores. Some colleges require the ACT instead. If you took Advance Placement Classes, you can take the AP Exams to possibly earn college credit.

Begin to compile financial documents during tax season.

You and your family will need copies of your federal tax returns and W-2s from 2020 when you complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) next fall. We recommend locating and making copies of those documents for your college file in the spring while you're working on your current tax year filing.

Attend college fairs and financial aid events.

At these events, you can collect literature about numerous schools, meet with representatives of the colleges, and get answers to any questions you may have.

Make productive summer plans.

Summer is a perfect time to explore interests and learn new skills. Colleges look for students who pursue meaningful summer activities like volunteering, internships, or job shadowing.



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Request letters of recommendation.

It is a good idea to request letters of recommendation from your teachers or mentors prior to school ending for the summer. That will allow plenty of time for consideration and completion before things get busy again in the fall.

Apply for a summer job.

It doesn't matter if you have a full time job, a part time job, or a volunteer opportunity. The important point is to do something productive with your summer break.

SUMMER BEFORE SENIOR YEAR

Visit colleges.

Make plans to check out the campuses of the colleges of most interest to you.

Build a brag sheet.

The format is not important, but it is helpful to create a résumé, or even just a checklist of your academic accomplishments, extracurricular activities, and work experiences.

Explore scholarship opportunities.

These include scholarships given directly from the colleges as well as from private sources.

Download college applications.

Go to the website of each college's admission office and either download them or request a paper application. Check due dates at each institution and make a note of them. Be sure to also check whether your college choices offer Early Decision, Early Action, Regular Decision, or Rolling Admissions, and which application type appeals to you.

Create your FSA ID.

Before you can fill out your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), you need to create a username and password (also known as an FSA ID). This can be done at **fsa.ed.gov**.

Consider possible essay topics.

Review your journal or think back about experiences or people who have had great influence on you. Or, maybe you have an interesting background, identity, interest, or talent to share. Maybe you've overcome a great obstacle, challenge or failure, or solved a difficult problem. Whatever you decide, it should reflect your own personal experience.

Clean up your social media presence.

Not all colleges and universities take into account an applicant's social media profiles, but many will look to determine if there is inappropriate content.