



# COLLEGE PREPARATION TIMELINE - SENIORS

Senior year is right around the corner, and it is critical that you're prepared.

Below is a month-by-month timeline to keep you on track as you navigate through senior year and complete your college applications. Some dates and information may vary, depending on your college choice, your individual circumstances, and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

## CHECKLIST AT A GLANCE

### Summer Before Senior Year

- Start College List
- Common Application
- Register for SAT and/or ACT
- Campus Visits
- Start College Essay

### September

- Meet with Guidance
- Recommendation Letter Requests
- Start Applications
- Grades and Extracurriculars

### October

- Narrow College List
- College Fairs
- Request Transcripts
- SAT/ACT Testing
- Submit Early Decision and Early Action Apps
- Submit Financial Aid Forms

### November

- Submit Regular Decision Applications
- Scholarship Applications
- SAT/ACT Retakes
- Maintain Grades

### December and January

- Confirm Applications
- Verify Other Application Components
- Early Acceptance Decisions
- Send Grades
- Review Student Aid Report

### February and March

- Acceptance Letters Begin Arriving

### April

- Evaluate Financial Aid Awards
- Make Final Decision
- Notify Other Schools
- Open House

### May and June

- Deposit Deadline
- Final Transcripts
- AP Exams
- Thank You Letters

### Summer Before College

- Housing
- Roommate
- Register for Classes

## SUMMER BEFORE YOUR SENIOR YEAR

### Narrow Your College List

Make a list of all of the schools of interest to you. By the end of the summer, narrow your list down to 10 or 12. Be sure to include reach, match and safety schools.

### Get Familiar with the Common Application

Many colleges and universities use the [Common Application](#). Register for a Common Application account and familiarize yourself with requirements and timelines.

### Register for SAT and ACT Testing

Go to the [ACT website](#) or College Board for the [SAT](#) to find testing locations and dates, and register. Dates are being added to the fall schedule due to COVID-19 scheduling conflicts over the summer.

### Conduct Campus Visits

Most, if not all campus visits will be virtual because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is still a good way to get a sense of the campuses and offerings at the schools you'd like to attend. Try to get several completed before you get back to the busy schedule once school starts.



## COLLEGE PREPARATION TIMELINE - SENIORS (p2 of 4)

### **Start Your College Essay**

Allow plenty of time to formulate your essay, a critical component of the college application process. Students who have spent months reflecting on the essay will stand out.

### **SEPTEMBER**

#### **Meet with Guidance Counselor**

If you didn't meet with your guidance counselor during your junior year, now is the time. If you did, it's a good idea to meet again to review your school list and ensure that you're fulfilling your graduation requirements.

#### **Request Letters of Recommendation**

Ask two teachers, preferably those from your junior year with whom you have a good relationship, to write letters for you. Those who know you best will be able to provide the most valuable information.

#### **Start Applications**

Start actively working on applications to your selected schools. If you're using the [Common Application](#), make sure to tailor each application to each school. Take care when copying and pasting—it can lead to errors.

#### **Maintain Grades and Extracurriculars**

Don't let your grades drop and continue challenging yourself. Senior year is your opportunity to transform from a young adult into a student leader.

### **OCTOBER**

#### **Narrow Your List**

Whittle your list to a handful of schools, and break it down into three categories: reach, match and safety.

#### **Attend College Fairs**

Colleges and universities often host college fairs in the fall where students and parents can see the campus and learn more about academics and student life. Due to COVID-19 schools may offer virtual fairs online. Check each school for their schedules and offerings.

#### **Request Transcripts**

Request your high school transcripts and verify that they are accurate. If anything is wrong or missing, correct it.

#### **Take SAT and ACT Tests**

Around this time you should be taking your SAT and ACT exams. The sooner the better, as you may get a lower-than-expected score and will need time to take the exam again.

#### **Complete Early Decision or Early Action Applications (if applicable)**

If you are applying to a school through early decision or early action, applications are due by the end of October or the beginning of November.

#### **Submit Financial Aid Forms**

The sooner you apply the better. The amount of money each school allots for financial aid is finite. If you wait too long to apply, there may not be funds left to award. You should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, even if you don't think you'll qualify for financial aid.



## COLLEGE PREPARATION TIMELINE - SENIORS (p3 of 4)

### NOVEMBER

#### **Complete Regular Decision Applications**

If you are applying to schools with regular decision, we recommend submitting them prior to the Thanksgiving holiday.

#### **Submit Scholarship Applications**

Private scholarships can be a good way to supplement your financial aid award. There are three key places to look for worthwhile scholarships:

1. Your high school guidance counselor
2. Parent and student employers
3. Clubs and associations you belong to

#### **Retake SAT and ACTs**

If you haven't taken or would like to retake either the SAT or ACT, be sure to register now for the December test. Spring will be too late!

#### **Maintain Your Grades**

If you need to improve your grades, now is the last chance. Even if you are accepted to a school, the decision can be reversed if your grades plummet.

### DECEMBER and JANUARY

#### **Confirm Applications**

If you haven't received confirmation of your applications from any of your schools, be sure to follow up.

#### **Verify Other Application Components**

Confirm that your exam scores and grades have been officially submitted to every college to which you're applying, and verify that any letters of recommendation have been mailed.

#### **Look for Early Acceptance (if applicable)**

Early decision or early action acceptance letters arrive sometime in December. Review the timetables and deadlines. Notify the schools you won't attend so they can give your spot to another applicant.

#### **Send Grades**

As soon as you receive them, send your fall grades to every school to which you've applied. Admissions counselors will factor grades into their decision even if you submitted your application prior.

#### **Review Your Student Aid Report**

You should receive a [Student Aid Report](#), or SAR based on your FAFSA submission. Review this carefully and verify the accuracy. Discrepancies may result in the loss of thousands of dollars in financial aid.

### FEBRUARY and MARCH

#### **Start Looking for Acceptance Letters**

Some acceptance, rejection and waitlist letters will arrive in February or March, but don't worry if you don't receive any letters until April.

### APRIL

#### **Evaluate Financial Aid Awards**

As you receive financial aid awards from the colleges, we will want to review them. We will assess whether you've been offered a fair award, or if there are grounds to appeal for additional aid.



## COLLEGE PREPARATION TIMELINE - SENIORS (p4 of 4)

### **APRIL** (continued)

#### **Make Your Final Decision**

Weigh all your options. Talk with parents, other family members, teachers, mentors and friends. Closely evaluate finances, including financial aid and cost of living expenses. Once you have weighed all factors, you can make an informed decision.

#### **Notify Other Schools**

As soon as you've made your decision, notify the other schools that accepted you. There will be plenty of waitlist applicants anxiously waiting for seats to open up.

#### **Attend an Open House**

Similar to college fairs in the fall, many colleges host spring open houses for incoming freshman. An open house provides a chance to learn more about the school directly from current students. Check your school's website for virtual options due to COVID-19.

### **MAY and JUNE**

#### **Pay Your Deposit**

Most colleges have "Decision Day" and deposit deadline on May 1st. You may have already signaled your intent to enroll, but now it's time to commit financially. Check your acceptance letter for specific details.

#### **Send Final Transcripts**

Once you've graduated, send your final high school transcript to your new college. This may help you secure a scholarship or qualify for other competitive academic programs.

#### **Take AP exams (if applicable)**

If you took AP classes in high school, you can take the AP exams at the end of the school year. Scores of 4 or 5 on AP exams can translate to college credit.

#### **Send Thank You Letters**

Write personalized thank you letters, to guidance counselors, teachers, or anyone who helped you along the way. They will appreciate the gratitude and will be happy to know where you enrolled.

### **SUMMER BEFORE COLLEGE**

#### **Figure Out Housing**

If you're planning to live in student housing, you will start receiving information about this, including meal plans. If you're planning to live off-campus, start researching neighborhoods so you can find a decent place, reasonably close to campus.

#### **Contact Your Roommate**

Once you receive your dorm and roommate assignment, make contact by phone, email or social media. The transition to living with someone new is much easier if you've established some level of familiarity with your roommate ahead of time.

#### **Register for Classes**

Classes fill up fast! Take some time to review the schedule and find classes that are right for you before you feel rushed.

## **CONGRATULATIONS!**

**Start packing your bags and getting ready to begin your exciting college journey.**