



Elite College Knowledge®
From Paradigm Financial Group, Inc.

Your Journey to College Starts with High School

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS





Plan Ahead Toward College Applications

Developing a plan and sticking to the plan throughout your high school years will make the college application process easier when it's finally time to apply.

Freshman year is a perfect time to start on the right path. Merely thinking ahead and jotting down notes of your activities and accomplishments as you do them will go a long way to simplifying the application process later.

As a **sophomore**, you should continue to challenge yourself academically, and start joining clubs or other extracurricular activities if you didn't do so during your first year in high school.

Though you won't apply until senior year, **junior** year transcripts are what the colleges will see and consider with your application. If you have prepared well over the first two years, and performed well academically, you'll be in good shape. If not, junior year is your last opportunity to improve your GPA and figure out which schools might be good options based on your goals and achievements.

As a **senior**, you should be finished with your college search. It's time to decide on your top choices for schools and get your applications submitted.

The key to successful admission is providing the best possible presentation of yourself on the admissions application. Remember, the application is the entry point into college. It gives you a chance to help the college understand why you are a strong candidate for their school. Nothing outlines a student's ambitions, desires and strengths better than their college application.

This guide provides suggestions for high school so you're prepared and successful in the college application process.



Suggestions for Success Throughout High School

- ✓ Challenge yourself
- ✓ Get involved
- ✓ Start a college prep journal
- ✓ Make note of significant people and experiences
- ✓ Clean up social media
- ✓ Enjoy the journey

DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

Throughout your high school years, you may find that the person who can offer you the most insight on courses, colleges and a plan for you is your Guidance Counselor who knows you well. This relationship could even develop into a solid college recommendation in the application process.

START A COLLEGE PREP JOURNAL

Dedicating a notebook or journal to your college prep information will help you stay organized and provide a place to keep notes that will help simplify the application process.

Keep track of your activities and accomplishments to help build your resume during your junior year.

Record class names and grades, and maybe teacher names, as a reference to easily recall highlights, successes or possible recommendation opportunities.

Make note of the people and experiences that have a significant impact on you. One of those experiences may present itself as great content for your college essay.

APPROACH ACADEMICS WITH PURPOSE

Work with your guidance counselor to decide what courses you should take based on your interests, strengths, and goals.

Keep a good record of your courses. The application may ask for specific courses you have taken throughout your high school journey. Be specific. Don't just put math class, but instead list the official name of the class, like Advanced Calculus for Business.





PURSUE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST

Extracurricular activities are important for a college application. Reflect on your interests and participate in clubs and/or activities that appeal to those interests or encourage you to try something new. You may be surprised to find new avenues to explore towards a major or career.

If there are no clubs within your interests, consider creating a new one. This will look great on an application; it shows initiative and purpose.

Don't feel the need to participate in too many things. Find something you like and stick with it. It's far better to do one or two activities consistently and well, than to do many with half-hearted effort.

CONSIDER LEADERSHIP ROLES AND SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

It is never too soon to start to engage in leadership and service activities. Involvement in these is a great way to highlight to colleges that you have initiative, commitment, and drive, and could contribute positively to their college culture.

LOOK INTO SUMMER JOBS

A summer job can be anything from full-time work to a few hours a week. It could be a retail outlet, a recreational endeavor, or even a community service project. Use your summer wisely to learn more about what you like to do and earn a bit of money in the process! Don't forget to check out the possibility of a summer internship for high school students. Your high school may know of a few opportunities.

CREATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR TEACHERS

The beginning of your sophomore year is the optimal time to establish relationships with teachers. These relationships can allow you to stand out in admission applications due to the positive evaluation that they can provide for you. A positive relationship with a teacher can also allow for support and encouragement during your high school years.

WORK TO KEEP YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE APPROPRIATE

Not all colleges and universities take into account an applicant's social media profiles, but you never know who is looking. You can damage your credibility with an irresponsible like, share, photo, or post.





Juniors

CONSIDER WHO WOULD BE SUITABLE TO WRITE YOUR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

By the end of your Junior year you will want to ask teachers, mentors, or employers for a Letter of Recommendation to send to colleges during the application process in your Senior year. It is always helpful to do this early so that whomever you choose will have plenty of time to think about and compose a recommendation for you.

Choose people who will speak highly of your character, work ethic, or your academic performance. You may want to provide a resume for them to give them some background on your interests and accomplishments inside and outside the classroom.

BEGIN TO DEVELOP ESSAYS TO ADD TO YOUR APPLICATIONS

Most schools that require an essay have prompts you will need to answer through your essay. Look online for these prompts to see how to develop your essay. Commonapp.org has prompts that may help you start. Make sure to have your essay reviewed for content and wording.

BECOME FAMILIAR WITH WHAT IS REQUIRED ON COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Be prepared prior to your Senior year by checking becoming familiar with the different types of applications and their requirements on individual college's Institutional Applications, the Common App (<https://www.commonapp.org/>), and the Coalition App (<https://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/>). Every school has a different process.

FINALIZE YOUR RESUME OR BRAG SHEET

Keeping track of all involvement as it occurs helps you remember exactly what roles you have taken on. You can begin to see what areas may need more involvement if you start to lay out your activities in a resume format.

The important categories to focus on are: Honors/Awards, Extracurricular Activities, Leadership, Service, Athletics, and Employment.





Seniors

YOU'VE COME SO FAR!

Even though you're almost finished with high school, there are a few more things to take care of before you go. To make sure you graduate on a high note and maintain your standing with the colleges to which you apply, it's important to maintain your grades.

To keep yourself happy and sane, it's critical to talk to your parents about your concerns, maintain your social relationships, and take some time to reflect on all of your accomplishments so far.

All that's left is the application process.

THE BASICS OF APPLICATIONS

When preparing to apply to college, carefully research each school's policy.

Applications to colleges typically become available in the fall of your senior year, but it varies from institution to institution.

Additionally, the deadlines are different depending on how you decide to apply.

Start to log the schools of interest and write down all information needed to apply to their school and the deadlines for application.

Many times a school may waive an application fee if you visit the school.

TYPES OF ADMISSION APPLICATIONS

Early Decision — Early Decision (ED) applications are a legally binding contract. If you apply ED to a school, be prepared to attend this school and rescind all other applications if you are accepted. ED applications are typically due sometime in October to mid-November.

Early Action — Submit EA applications if you would like to know early if you are accepted. You should make be sure that you are at, or above, the range of typically admitted students in GPA and test scores. EA applications are typically due sometime in October to mid-November.

Regular Decision — RD is the most common type of application students submit. RD applications are typically due January 1st.

Rolling Admission — RA school applications can be submitted at any time. RA applications are reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis, so spots can fill early.

YOUR ESSAY IS YOUR CHANCE TO SHINE

Make it personal, passionate, and well-written. Admissions officers will learn a great deal about you from reading your essay. Make sure that your essay conveys your uniqueness so they feel you are a candidate they can't pass up.

OTHER APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Many different components are required when applying to colleges. Make sure you are following the schools' deadlines for each requirement.

ACT and SAT scores should be sent from the testing sites www.act.org or www.collegeboard.org.

Letters of recommendation and **transcripts** will go directly from your high school, but be sure to double check that they are sent.

If you have a **resume**, or **brag book** make sure to attach them to your official application or send them separately.

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION AND ENJOY THE REST OF YOUR YEAR!