

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE: JUNIOR/SENIOR CHECK LIST

JUNIORS

Fall:

- Start your year off right by **talking with your school counselor about the year ahead**. Confirm that your courses will put you on the right track for college admission. Be sure to ask about test dates for the PLAN, PSAT, ACT, and SAT. You'll need to register up to six weeks ahead of time.
- Starting developing a résumé**—a record of your accomplishments, activities and work experiences. This will be an important part of your college application.
- If you haven't participated in many activities outside of class, now is the time to sign up**. Consider clubs at schools, team sports, leadership roles, or involvement in your religious or civic community group.
- Take the PSAT**. Taking the test as a junior will qualify you for some scholarship consideration and identify you to colleges as a potential applicant. When you receive the results (usually in December), review them to learn more about your strengths and weaknesses. Discuss the results with your family and school counselor.
- Begin to prepare for the ACT or SAT**. Free test preparation may be available at your school, your local community colleges, and community-based programs; in addition, there are many free resources on the Internet. If you can't find the best websites, ask your counselor. You should plan to take at least one of these tests in the spring and again next fall during your senior year. **Ask your counselor if you qualify for a fee waiver**.

January/February:

- Meet with your school counselor again to develop your senior schedule**. Make sure that you will be enrolled in the most challenging courses for which you are qualified.
- Register for a spring offering of the SAT and/or ACT**. Ask your counselor if you should take an SAT Subject Test this spring.
- Ask your counselor about summer opportunities on college campuses**. These can be a great way to find out what college life is all about and make you a more attractive candidate for admission to colleges.



March/April:

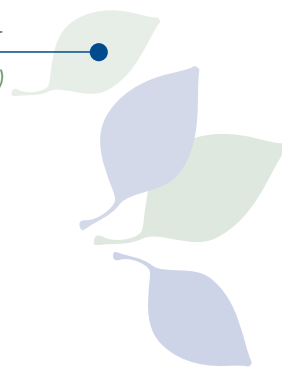
- Begin taking a more serious look at colleges and universities.** Make a file for each college and gather information about academics, financial aid, and campus life. Go to college fairs and open houses and learn as much as you can about the colleges online.
- Begin planning college visits.** Spring break is a good time to visit. Try to visit colleges near you and include a large, medium size, and small campus.
- Develop a preliminary list of colleges that interest you.** Write or email to request a viewbook and additional information.
- Think about lining up a summer job, internship or co-op.**

May:

- Take a look at some college applications** and consider all of the different pieces of information you will need to compile.
- Make a list of teachers, counselors, employers, and other adults you might ask to write letters of recommendation** for your college applications.

Summer:

- Continue investigating colleges.**
- Begin thinking about your applications. Generally, colleges will have their applications online by the beginning of August. Work on the essay before you return to school.**



SENIOR YEAR TIMELINE

August/September

- Register for the SAT and/or ACT** if you didn't take it as a junior, or if you aren't satisfied with your score and want to take it again. (Your counselor can help you with fee waivers).
- Take a look at some college applications** and consider all of the different pieces of information you will need to compile.
- The SAT test date most popular with high school seniors is this month.**
- Visit with your school counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate** and fulfill college admission requirements. If you're ahead of schedule, consider taking courses at a local university or community college to get a jumpstart on college credit.
- Take every opportunity to get to know colleges:** meeting with college representatives who visit your high schools during the fall, attending local college fairs, visiting campuses (if possible). Ask your counselor if they know of special campus visitation programs.
- Narrow down your list of colleges** and begin to consider "safe," "reach," and "realistic" schools. Make sure you have the application and financial aid information for each school. Find out if you qualify for any scholarships at these schools.
- Create a checklist and calendar** to chart:
 - Standardized test dates, registration deadlines, and fees
 - College application due dates
 - Financial aid application forms and deadlines
 - Other materials you'll need for college applications (recommendations, transcripts, essays, etc.)
 - Your high school's application processing deadlines
- Some schools require the CSS/Financial Aid Profile.** Ask the colleges to which you are applying for their deadlines. Register as early as September. See your school counselor about fee waivers.



October

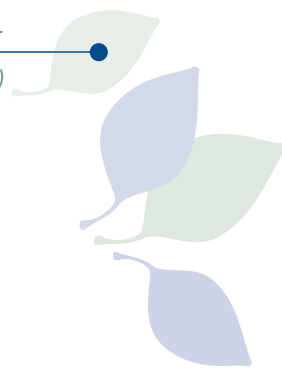
- Some colleges will have deadlines as early as this month.** These would include Rolling Admission, Early Decision and Early Action deadlines.
- If you cannot afford the application fees that many colleges charge, **ask your counselor to help you request a fee waiver.**
- Finalize your college essay.** Many schools will require that you submit at least one essay with your application.
- Request personal recommendations from teachers, school counselors or employers.** Follow the process required by your high school or provide a stamped, addressed envelope, the appropriate college forms, and an outline of your academic record and extracurricular activities to each person writing you a recommendation.
- Research possibilities of scholarships.** Ask your counselor, colleges and religious and civic groups about scholarship opportunities. There are also some good scholarship websites, including FastWeb (www.fastweb.com) and The College Board (<http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>). You should NEVER pay for scholarship information.

November

- Finalize and send any early decision or early action applications due this month.** Have a parent, teacher, counselor, or other adult review the application before it is submitted.
- Every college will require a copy of your transcript from your high school.** Follow your school's procedure for sending transcripts.
- Make sure testing companies (ACT or SAT) have sent your scores directly to the colleges to which you are applying.**
- The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) will be available this month,** but cannot be completed before January 1. Visit www.fafsa.gov to complete this form.

December

- Begin to organize regular decision applications** and financial aid forms, which will be due in January and/or February.
- Register for the January SAT (if needed). It is the last one colleges will be able to consider for a senior.**



January

- Many popular and selective colleges will have application deadlines as early as January 1.** Others have deadlines later in January and February. Keep track of and observe deadlines for sending in all required fees and paperwork.
- If necessary, register for the February ACT (some colleges will be able consider it).**
- Ask your guidance office in January to send first semester transcripts to schools where you applied.** At the end of the school year, they will need to send final transcripts to the college you will attend.
- It is time to file the FAFSA (no later than Feb 1).** The sooner you complete it, the sooner you will have an idea of your financial aid options. Watch the mail for your Student Aid Report (SAR)—it should arrive four weeks after the FAFSA is filed or watch your email if you filed electronically.

February/March/April

- While most of your applications are complete and you are waiting to receive admission decisions, **don't slack in the classroom.** The college that you do attend will want to see your second semester transcript. No Senioritis!
- Acceptance letters and financial aid offers will start to arrive.** Review your acceptances, compare financial aid packages, and visit your final choices, especially if you haven't already.

May

- May 1 is the date when the college you plan to attend requires a commitment and deposit.** When you've made your college decision, notify your counselor and the colleges. Send in your deposit by the postmark date of May 1. If you've been offered financial aid, accept the offer and follow the instructions given. Also notify schools you will not attend of your decision.
- Make sure that you have requested that your final transcript be sent to the school you will be attending.**
- If you are "wait listed" by a college you really want to attend, visit, call and write** the admission office to make your interest clear. Ask how you can strengthen your application.



Summer

- It's been a long journey through high school and to college. **Enjoy your summer.**
- Summer jobs** can help pay some of your college expenses and give you great career preparation.
- Make a list of what you will need to take with you for your dorm room.** The suggested list of items, room and furniture dimensions and many other questions can usually be answered by visiting your college's website and searching under "Housing" or "Residence Life" for further information.
- You will most likely get a roommate assignment** from your college. Call, write or email to get acquainted in advance. In your conversations and communication, you should be able to figure out who will bring what for your room.
- Some colleges will offer a summer orientation/registration.** Make sure to attend to meet fellow students and other important people on campus and to familiarize yourself with your new school. This is often the time you sign up for your fall courses.