

Timelines and Checklists for College

12th Grade Year – The Year of the Forms

Senior year is a busy and extremely important time in the college admissions process. This is your last chance to get the ACT and SAT scores you need, and to narrow down your college options to the handful of schools to which you'll apply. You need to get your college essay up to snuff, line up your letters of recommendation and apply for financial aid. You also need to keep active in extracurricular activities and keep up your grades.

August before senior year

- Register for the September ACT if appropriate.
- Make a preliminary list of colleges that includes reach, match and safety schools.
- Explore the websites of the colleges that interest you to learn about admissions requirements.
- Check your senior year class schedule to make sure you're taking the English, Math, Social Science, Science and Foreign Language classes you'll need for your top-choice colleges.
- Look over the Common Application and begin thinking about potential topics for your personal essay.
- Visit campuses and interview with college representative if appropriate.
- Mark your calendar with important dates.
- You can begin applying to meet the early admission deadlines if you are ready. If you are going into the fine arts, begin working on audition/portfolio pieces.

September

- Register for October or November SAT and SAT Subject exams.
- Meet with your guidance counselor to discuss the colleges to which you're thinking of applying. You may also talk with a parent, relative or any adult whom you respect.
- Request letters of recommendation, especially if you are applying early.
- Continue to visit campuses and interview with college admissions representatives.
- Request applications from all the school to which you might apply. Most colleges have online applications so the request is only for those that use paper applications. Create an account with The Common Application if the colleges you've selected use it.
- Create a chart of deadlines. Pay particular attention to early decision, early action and preferred application deadlines. Note when auditions and portfolio admissions are due as well as applying to the school of fine arts within those universities that require it. For example, Oberlin Conservatory of Music or College of Liberal Arts at CSU requires you to be admitted into the regular university FIRST and then apply with an audition for the music program.

- If appropriate, register for the October ACT exam.
- Work on your college essays.
- Try to assume a leadership position in an extracurricular activity.
- Work to strengthen your academic record.
- Research and complete any paperwork for financial aid and scholarships. Do your parents' places of employment offer college scholarships for employee children?
- Finalize your essay this month. You will need it for early admission applications or scholarship applications. Fine arts majors need to set up audition appointments.

October

- Take the SAT, SAT Subject exams, and/or ACT as appropriate.
- Continue to research schools to narrow your list to roughly 6 – 8 schools.
- Make a list of each school's deadlines.
- Take advantage of college fairs and virtual tours.
- Complete your application if you are applying early decision or early action.
- Request your high school transcript and check it for accuracy.
- Keep track of all application components and deadlines: application, test scores, letters of recommendation, essay if required, transcript, resume, and financial aid materials. An incomplete application will ruin your chances for admission.
- Update your resume of academic work, athletic activities, work activities and achievements. If going into the Arts, put together a portfolio.
- Send thank you letters to those who have given you letters of recommendation.
- Generally most colleges/universities have an application fee. Plan your applications with this in mind and in your budget.

November

- Register for the December SAT or ACT if appropriate.
- Take the November SAT if appropriate. These scores will not be available for early admission, as scoring may be too late.
- Keep your grades up.
- Make sure you've submitted all components of your applications if you are applying to colleges with November deadlines for early decision or preferred application. Be sure to make copies for yourself.
- Put the final touches on your application essays (editing to answer clearly the topic the application requires) and get feedback on the essays from your counselors and/or teachers.
- Continue to research scholarships and apply to those you qualify for.

December - January

- Complete your application for regular admissions. Be sure to make copies for yourself.
- Make sure you've had your test scores sent to all colleges that require them. Any December tests will not be available until the end of December so make sure you are still meeting deadlines for admissions or scholarships.
- Confirm that your letters of recommendation have been sent.
- Submit the Free Application for Financial Aid (FAFSA). This should be done in [January](#) because it requires prior year tax information from the parent and you can only fill out the application in the year you plan to use it for aid. Note: the student fills out one section and the parents must use prior year tax return for their section, and finally, the student submits the application.
- If you are accepted to a school through early decision, be sure to follow directions carefully. Submit required forms, and notify the other schools to which you applied of your decision.
- Continue to focus on your grades and extracurricular involvement.
- Have mid-year grades and/or transcripts sent to colleges.
- Continue to keep track of all deadlines and application components. Continue to research scholarships. Apply for scholarship well in advance of deadlines. Some scholarships also require transcripts and/or an essay.
- Talk to your parents about completing their tax returns early.
- Check with your high school office to make sure that you have transcript requests turned in well in advance of not only the application date, but the high traffic transcript request time for your high school. Scholarship and applications have hard and fast due dates and procedures. Having a late transcript could put you out of contention. Plan ahead.
- Ask a number of individuals to write letters of recommendation to be utilized with your scholarship applications. These individuals can provide a number of signed, envelope sealed letters that can be enclosed with scholarship application.
- Plan to utilize time during your winter break to complete scholarship applications. The more you can complete during the break when your homework load is lighter, the better.

February – March

- If you submitted the FAFSA, you should receive the Student Aid Report. Carefully look it over for accuracy. Errors can cost you thousands of dollars.
- Contact colleges that didn't send you a confirmation receipt for your application.
- Don't put off applying to schools with rolling admissions or late deadlines – the available spaces can fill up.
- Talk to your school about registering for AP exams. The deadline for AP exam registration is March 15th.

- Keep your grades high. Colleges can revoke offers of admission if your grades take a nosedive your senior year.
- Some acceptance letters may arrive. Compare financial aid offers and visit campus before making a decision.
- Don't panic; many, many decisions are not mailed out until April.
- Continue applying for appropriate scholarships.

April

- Keep track of all acceptances, rejections and waitlists. Mark the deadlines on your calendar.
- If waitlisted, learn more about waitlists and move ahead with other plans. You can always change your plans if you get off a waitlist.
- Keep your grades up.
- If you have ruled out any colleges that accepted you, notify them. This is a courtesy to other applicants, and it will help the colleges manage their waitlists and extend the correct number of acceptance letters.
- Go to accepted student open house if offered.
- Most schools have deposit deadlines of May 1st. Don't be late! If needed, you may be able to request an extension.
- Register for the college orientation days. The early you attend, the earlier you know your course schedule and begin to feel a part of the school. Also, the earlier you attend the sooner you know your course load and the resulting financial obligation for your first semester.

May – June

- Avoid senioritis. An acceptance letter doesn't mean you can stop working.
- Prepare for and take any appropriate AP exams. Most colleges offer course credit for high AP scores. This gives you more academic options when you get to college.
- Have your final transcripts sent to the college you accepted.
- Most housing is first-come, first-served, so it is best to arrange your housing as soon after you've accepted admission to the college as you can. Often important housing material is sent shortly after you accept.
- Send thank you letters to everyone who helped you in the application process. Let your mentors and recommenders know the results of your college search. Send thank you to the scholarship programs that have given you aid.
- Keep on top of procuring student loans. Notify your college if you receive any scholarships.

Graduate! Congratulations!

July – August after senior year

- **Read all mailings from your college carefully. Pay attention to registration instructions.** Often important registration and housing material is sent in the summer. The college will tell you what to expect in the letters they send.
- Register for your classes as soon as possible. Classes often fill, and registration is usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Class registration is usually at the summer orientation where they can administer placements test for English, math, etc.
- If you get your housing assignment, take advantage of the summer to get to know your roommate (email, face book, the phone, etc). Figure out who will bring what. You don't need two TV's or 2 microwaves in your tiny room.
- If possible, taking a summer job will help you with finances at school.
- Once you know your course schedule, order/rent your course books. Waiting too long can make finding rentals more difficult and the book procurement experience more expensive.
- Make sure you have thought through all finances. What are the rules for accessing your college funds? How will your scholarship funds be applied? What is your personal banking situation and do you have the information you need to operate your debit cards, etc. away from home?

Off to college!

Sources:

<http://collegeapps.about.com>

www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/right-school/timeline

www.collegeboard.com/parents/apply/college-applications/21357.html

www.petersons.com

[www.collegeanswer.com/...college/applying...college/...application.../...](http://www.collegeanswer.com/...college/applying...college/...application.../)

www.getreadyforcollege.org

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