

College Planning

for juniors

Fall

Start with you: Make lists of your abilities, social/cultural preferences and personal qualities. List things you may want to study and do in college.

Learn about colleges. Look at their websites (www.collegeboard.org has links). Talk to friends, family members, teachers and recent grads of your school now in college. List the college features that interest you.

Resource check: Visit the counseling office and meet the counselors there. Is there a college night for students and families? When will college representatives visit your school? (Put the dates in your calendar.) Examine catalogs and guides.

At school, sign up early to take the PSAT/NMSQT[®], which is given in October. If you plan to ask for testing accommodations (because of a disability), be sure the College Board has approved your eligibility.

Make a file to manage your college search, testing and application data.

If appropriate (for example, if you're interested in drama, music, art, sports, etc.), start to gather material for a portfolio.

Along with your family, do some research about how to obtain financial aid. Read the U.S. Department of Education's *Funding Your Education* (about federal aid programs). Use the College Board's *Getting Financial Aid* and the financial aid calculator at bigfuture.org to estimate how much aid you might receive.

Winter

With your family, make an appointment with your counselor to discuss ways to improve your college-preparation and selection processes.

Sign up to take the college admission tests in the spring. You can register online or through your school. SAT fee waivers are available for students with financial need. To prepare for the SAT, download practice booklets from www.collegeboard.org. You can also take the SAT and/or ACT again next fall.

Begin a search for financial aid sources. National sources include the College Board's *Scholarship Handbook* and electronic sources. Don't overlook local and state aid sources (ask a counselor for help or check your public library).

Ask a counselor or teacher about taking the SAT Subject Tests[™] in the spring. You should take them while course material is still fresh in your mind. You can download *Getting Ready for the SAT Subject Tests*, which offers test-prep advice, from www.SATSubjectTests.org.

If you're in Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®]) classes, register for the AP Exams given in May. You can earn college credit for courses not given in the AP Program by taking CLEP[™] tests at a college test center. Visit clep.collegeboard.org to learn more.

Spring

Visit some local colleges — large, small, public and private. Get a feel for what works for you. Attend college fairs, too.

Scan local newspapers to see which civic, cultural and service organizations in your area award financial aid to graduating seniors. Start a file.

Develop a list of 15 or 20 colleges that are of interest to you. Request viewbooks and information about financial aid and academic programs. Visit some colleges during your spring break.

If you are considering military academies or ROTC scholarships, contact your counselor before leaving school for the summer. If you want a four-year ROTC scholarship, you should begin the application process the summer before your senior year.

Summer

If you are an athlete planning to continue playing a sport in college, register with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility Center (www.ncaaclearinghouse.net).

Find a full-time or part-time job, or participate in a summer camp or summer college program.

Visit colleges. Take campus tours and, at colleges you're serious about, make appointments to have interviews with admission counselors.

Create a résumé — a record of your accomplishments, activities and work experiences since you started high school.

Download applications (or request paper copies) from colleges to which you'll apply. Check application dates — large universities may have early dates or rolling admission.

For more college planning tools and guidance, visit bigfuture.org.

Source: The College Board.

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College Planning

for seniors

September

Narrow your list of colleges to between five and 10. Meet with a counselor about your college choices and, if you've not yet done so, download college applications and financial aid forms. Plan to visit as many of these colleges as possible.

Create a master list or calendar that includes:

- Tests you'll take and their fees, dates and registration deadlines
- College application due dates
- Required financial aid application forms and their deadlines (aid applications may be due before college applications)
- Other materials you'll need (recommendations, transcripts, etc.)
- Your high school's application processing deadlines

If you can't afford application or test fees, a counselor can help you request a fee waiver.

Be sure to have your college admission test scores sent to the colleges to which you are applying.

October

Try to finalize your college choices.

Prepare early decision/early action or rolling admission applications as soon as possible.

Ask a counselor or teacher for recommendations if you need them. Give each teacher or counselor an outline of your academic record and your extracurricular activities. For each recommendation, provide a stamped, addressed envelope and any college forms required.

If you're submitting essays, write first drafts and ask teachers and others to read them. If you're applying for early decision, finish the essays for that application now.

Be sure to have your college admission test scores sent to the colleges to which you are applying.

November

Nov. 1-15: For early decision admission, colleges may require test scores and applications between these dates.

Complete at least one college application by Thanksgiving.

Ask counselors to send your transcripts to colleges. Give counselors the proper forms at least two weeks before the colleges require them.

December

As you finish and send your applications and essays, be sure to keep photocopies.

If the college wants to see second-semester grades, be sure to give the form to your counselor.

January

If you apply online to colleges, be sure to have your high school send a transcript — it is sent separately by mail to colleges.

February

No senioritis, please! Accepting colleges *do* look at second-semester senior grades.

March

Keep active in school. If you are wait listed, the college will want to know what you have accomplished between the time you applied and the time you learned of its decision.

April

You should receive acceptance letters and financial aid offers by mid-April. If you've not done so yet, visit your final college before accepting. As soon as you decide, notify your counselor of your choice.

If you have questions about housing offers, talk to your counselor or call the college.

May

May 1: Colleges cannot require your deposit or your commitment to attend before May 1. By that postmarked date, you must inform every college of your acceptance or rejection of the offer of admission and/or financial aid. (Questions? Talk to your counselor.)

Send your deposit to one college only.

Wait listed by a college? If you intend to enroll if you are accepted, tell the admission director your intent and ask how to strengthen your application. Need financial aid? Ask whether funds will be available if you're accepted.

Work with a counselor to resolve any admission or financial aid problems.

June

Ask your high school to send a final transcript to your college.

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Source: The College Board.

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