

SENIOR YEAR COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Important college deadlines seem to dominate the senior year of high school, and with good reason; this year can heavily affect a student's future. In addition, many of these deadlines are inflexible; colleges will rarely make exceptions to their deadlines. College-bound students can use this checklist to orient themselves to major senior year milestones.

- **Continue taking rigorous courses.** Senior year grades matter. If you are applying regular decision, colleges will consider your first semester grades.

September

- **Narrow your list of preferred colleges down to a manageable number.** Include at least one or two safety schools (almost certain of acceptance), two likely schools (a good chance of acceptance), and one or two reach schools (unpredictable chance of acceptance). Aim for around eight schools to include on your list.
- **Request applications from each college to which you intend to apply and/or open online applications.** Check deadlines and application costs, and preview the essay questions and general formats of the applications.
- **Research scholarship opportunities available to you.**
- **Make a master calendar.** Include items such as:
 - College application due dates
 - Your high school's deadlines for application requests, such as transcripts, secondary school reports, and recommendations
 - College due dates for recommendations, secondary school reports, transcripts, and test scores
 - Deadlines for required financial aid applications and forms
 - Scholarship application deadlines
- **Draft your application essays and begin revisions.** You should continue working on your essay throughout the admissions process, and finalize around November or early December. Determine the extent to which you can use the same, or slightly modified, essays for different applications.
- **Re-take standardized tests** (SAT/SAT Subject Tests/ACT) as needed.
 - Depending on the admissions deadlines of the colleges to which you are applying, November may be the latest test date for which your scores can be considered by colleges. Registration for the November test is usually in late September or early October. Be sure to check whether colleges will accept scores from this test date.

October

- **Request recommendation letters** from your guidance counselor, teachers, coaches, or others who know you well starting in mid-October. As a courtesy, make your requests a month or more before the letters are due. Recommendation writers often appreciate being given a packet of materials to make their task easier, including each college's guidelines for recommendation letters, a list of your activities/achievements, a solid draft of your essay if possible, and stamped envelopes addressed to the proper recipients.
- **Turn in your Early Decision or Early Action application** if applicable. Most are due by November 1.

November

- **Request college application fee waivers** from your high school's guidance counselor.
- **Request that your high school send official copies of your transcript to the colleges.**
- **Order test score reports** and have them sent to the schools to which you are applying.

December

- **Remind/confirm with your counselors and teachers that all requested application materials are submitted.** It is *your responsibility* to make sure that recommendation letters and other materials are sent on time. Write a thank-you note to each recommender as soon as he or she submits their letter.



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- **Complete the CSS Profile.** Most schools will require that financial aid applicants submit this form in addition to the FAFSA. The College Board charges a small fee to fill out this form. Fee waivers may be available; they are automatically awarded when you submit the Profile online, if you are eligible.
- **Start submitting college applications!** (Be aware of the deadlines; many are in late December or early January.)

January

- **Submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA),** which is free of charge.
- **Complete your scholarship applications** and submit them in a timely manner.

February

- **Submit your parents' tax returns and W-2 forms** to the financial aid offices of the colleges to which you are applying, according to the school's deadlines.

April

- **Look for college acceptances and financial aid packages in the mail.** Some colleges send them together, while others send the financial aid package a week later.
- **Compare financial aid packages** before deciding on a college. (Here is a helpful financial aid comparison website: <http://www.finaid.org/calculators/awardletter.phtml>). Components you should compare include:
 - Type, amount, and overall cost of loans
 - Amount of grant aid
 - Amount of work-study
 - Parental contribution
 - Student contribution
 - How outside scholarships fit into the estimate. (Are they already included? Will they reduce loans, parental or student contribution, or work-study?)
 - The amount of travel and personal expenses estimates and whether these are realistic numbers for how much you plan on spending and where you would be attending school (New York City will most likely cost more than Omaha; travel and expenses should reflect this.)
- **Try to visit before accepting,** if you have not already visited the college you hope to attend. Most colleges will have a visiting weekend for their prospective freshmen. Schools may also have free or partially subsidized visit programs for accepted students, which pay for transportation and room/board expenses. Contact the college's admissions office for more information.

Early May

- **Notify the colleges to which you were accepted of your decision.**

June

- Ask your high school to **send a final transcript to the college you will attend,** if requested by your college.
- **Fill out any forms your college sends to you.** These might include requests for board and meal plan preferences, a roommate matching questionnaire, additional financial aid forms, course- or major-specific forms, and many others.

Enjoy your summer, and prepare for an amazing college experience!

Important: This document is intended to familiarize students with common senior year tasks. It is not necessarily comprehensive, as the tasks that each student needs to complete may vary according to their individual educational goals. Because requirements and deadlines vary and can change over time, applicants should consult the most current information provided by organizations including colleges and universities, their high schools, scholarship providers, and testing services.

