

Action Plan: Your Senior

Where did the years go? In the blink of an eye, it seems, your freshman turned into a senior, and is now knee-deep in the college application process. Perhaps the most important advice you can give her as she enters her senior year is that it really does count! Contrary to popular belief, senior grades do matter even after you've gotten into the college of your choice. So, don't let your high schooler catch senioritis. Especially important this year is staying organized and meeting application deadlines.

September

- Your child may opt to take the SAT[®] again to aim for higher scores. Help her [register online](#) for fall tests.
- Your child should request applications, brochures, and financial aid information from the admissions offices of the colleges to which she's applying.
- Make [campus visits](#) to as many of the colleges on your child's list as possible this fall. To get a feel for the campus, encourage your child to talk to students, take a tour, sit in on a class and try to stay overnight in a dorm. Be sure to schedule an [admissions interview](#) and meet with a financial aid officer.
- Review **admission requirements** for each college.
- Help your child review admission requirements for each college to which she's applying. You can do this online with [College Search](#). She should check in with her counselor to review her transcript and confirm that she's meeting all the required academic and testing requirements. If necessary, she should adjust her course schedule. She should also talk to her counselor about financial aid options and local scholarships.
- Have your child request application materials for targeted scholarships and grants, and confirm that she meets the eligibility requirements for each program.

October

- [My College List](#) can help your child manage her list of schools online, compare them side-by-side at a glance, and track requirements and her application for each college.
- It's time for your child to ask teachers, counselors, coaches, and other mentors to write [recommendation letters](#).
- Is your child applying [Early Decision or Early Action](#)? If so, be careful to meet all application deadlines. Most fall in October or November.
- Your child should work on [college application essays](#).
- Some colleges and scholarship programs require the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE[®] application. Visit [PROFILE Online](#) to learn more and to submit your application online. Get help [tackling the PROFILE](#).
- Encourage your child to use collegeboard.com's [Scholarship Search](#) and to ask her counselor about local scholarships.

November

- Encourage your child to practice [college interviews](#) with trusted family members or friends.

- Review your child's completed school and scholarship applications and essays to make sure they're error-free and clear. You may want to have another person review them, too. Note that many scholarship application deadlines are in December.

December

- Your child should complete and send in [college applications](#) and scholarship applications this month.
- Get a copy of the Free Application of Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, after January 1, complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Get help [tackling the FAFSA](#).
- Male students who will be 18 at the time they complete the FAFSA must register with Selective Service.
- Have your child [send SAT scores](#) online to the colleges on her list.
- Advise your child to **avoid senioritis** and stay focused.

January

- Submit the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1. Complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov.
- Colleges like to see strong second semester grades, so advise your child to [avoid senioritis](#).

February

- Most priority financial aid deadlines fall in February. Complete the necessary aid forms, including FAFSA and [CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE](#). Keep copies of everything that you send.
- About four weeks after mailing in your child's FAFSA, you'll receive the Student Aid Report (SAR). Review it for accuracy.
- Attend a Financial Aid Night with your child at a school in your area.

March

- Encourage your child to start looking for a summer opportunity—either a [job](#), [internship](#), or [volunteer opportunity](#). Real-world experience can give your child a preview of careers in which she's interested. This may help her to focus her studies in college and when she's selecting a major.

April

- Most admission decisions and financial aid award letters arrive this month. You and your child should read each carefully, and note all reply deadlines.
- Review financial aid packages. Use the [Compare Your Aid Awards](#) tool to do a side-by-side comparison.
- Send the enrollment form and deposit check to the college your child will attend.
- Your child should notify the other colleges to which she was accepted of her decision.

- [If waitlisted](#) by a college, encourage your child to contact the admission director to reiterate her interest in the school. [Use College Search to find colleges whose deadlines haven't passed.](#)
- [If not admitted](#) to any of the colleges to which she applied, your child should see her counselor immediately. Use [College Search](#) to find colleges whose application deadlines haven't passed.
- Your child should concentrate on studying for May AP Exams. She can earn credit or advanced placement at many colleges with a qualifying grade. Visit the [AP[®] Prep Center](#).

May

- AP Exams are administered the first two weeks in May. Your child should have her scores sent to her final-choice college.
- If it will be difficult for your family to pay the Expected Family Contribution for the semester, it's time to start pursuing alternatives such as parent loans or private loans to close the financial aid gap.
- Taking [SAT Subject Tests™](#) may enable your child to place out of freshman academic requirements or help placement in advanced classes.
- Have your child send thank-you notes to teachers and other mentors who wrote recommendations.

Summer

- A final transcript should be sent to your child's college.
- Encourage your child to finalize summer plans.
- Have your child send thank-you notes to scholarship programs that have given her aid.
- Notify the financial aid office of your child's college about any scholarships she's been offered.
- Give your child a chance to relax and enjoy herself this summer. She's earned it!
- Help your child [start packing](#).