

# College Planning: 12th Grade

Want to know if you're on track in the college application process? This checklist shows you what you should be doing, and when.

When you complete steps marked with \* you may be eligible for College Board Opportunity Scholarships. Learn more at: **cb.org/opportunity**.

## FALL

- ☐ **Strengthen Your College List\***: Meet with a counselor about your college choices and, if you've not yet done so, download college applications and financial aid forms. Make sure you have a balanced list of academic safety, fit, and reach schools. 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
- ☐ **Ask a counselor** to help you request a fee waiver if you can't afford application or test fees.
- ☐ **Improve Your Score\***: Many seniors retake the SAT in the fall. Additional coursework and practice with Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy® since your last test could help you boost your performance. Plus you already know what to expect on test day.
- ☐ **Be sure** to have your SAT scores sent to the colleges to which you are applying.
- ☐ **Complete the FAFSA\***: To apply for most financial aid, you'll need to complete the FAFSA. Oct. 1 is the first day you can file the FAFSA.
- ☐ **Complete the CSS Profile**: CSS Profile™ is an online application used by certain colleges and scholarship programs to determine eligibility for their aid dollars.
- ☐ **Prepare** early decision/early action or rolling admission applications as soon as possible. Nov. 1–15: Colleges may require test scores and applications between these dates for early decision admission.
- ☐ **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.
- ☐ **Write first drafts** and ask teachers and others to read them if you're submitting essays. If you're applying for early decision, finish the essays for that application now.
- ☐ **Apply to College\***: Submit your applications to the schools that you want to attend.
- ☐ **Ask counselors** to send your transcripts to colleges. Give counselors the proper forms at least two weeks before the colleges require them.

## WINTER

- ☐ **Keep photocopies** as you finish, and send your applications and essays.
- ☐ **Give the correct form** to your counselor if the college wants to see second-semester grades.
- ☐ **Have your high school send a transcript**—it is sent separately by mail to colleges if you apply online to colleges.

## SPRING

- ☐ **Keep active in school.** If you are waitlisted, the college will want to know what you have accomplished between the time you applied and the time you learned of its decision.
- ☐ **Visit your final college before accepting.** You should receive acceptance letters and financial aid offers by mid-April. Notify your counselor of your choice. If you have questions about housing offers, talk to your counselor or call the college.
- ☐ **Inform every college** of your acceptance or rejection of the offer of admission and/or financial aid by May 1. Colleges cannot require your deposit or your commitment to attend before May 1. Talk to your counselor or adviser if you have questions.
- ☐ **Send your deposit** to one college only.
- ☐ **Take any AP® Exams.** Show what you've learned in your AP classes. A successful score could even earn you credit, advanced placement, or both in college.
- ☐ **Waitlisted 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.
- ☐ **Ask your high school** to send a final transcript to your college.
- ☐ **Review your financial aid awards:** Not all financial aid awards are the same, so it's important to choose the aid package that's best for you and your family. Be sure to note what you have to do to continue receiving financial aid from year to year, and how your aid might change in future years.



# Family Action Plan: 12th Grade

Senior year is a whirlwind of activity. It's a big year for your child—balancing schoolwork, extracurricular obligations, and the college application process. Use the suggestions below so you and your child can meet these challenges.

## SUMMER

- ☐ **Visit colleges together.** If you haven't already, make plans to check out the campuses of colleges that interest your child. Use the **Campus Visit Checklist** to learn how to get the most out of these experiences.
- ☐ **Ask how you can help your senior finalize a college list.** You can help your 12th grader choose which colleges to apply to by weighing how well each college meets their needs. Learn **how to finalize a college list**.
- ☐ **Find out a college's actual cost.** Once your 12th grader has a list of a few colleges of interest, use the **Net Price Calculator** together to discover the potential for financial aid and the true out-of-pocket cost—or net price—of each college.
- ☐ **Encourage your child to get started on applications.** Together you can get the easy stuff out of the way by filling in as much required information on college applications as possible. Read about **how to get started on applications**.
- ☐ **Help your child decide about applying early.** If your senior is set on going to a certain college, they should think about whether applying early is a good option. Now is the time to decide because early applications are usually due in November. Read about the pros and cons of **applying early**.
- ☐ **Gather financial documents:** To apply for most financial aid, your child will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You'll need your most recent tax returns and an FSA ID to complete the FAFSA, which opens October 1.
- ☐ **Encourage your child to opt in to the College Board Opportunity Scholarships.** Your child can earn scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 by completing individual college planning steps. When they complete all six steps, they'll be eligible for a \$40,000 scholarship. Visit [cb.org/opportunity](http://cb.org/opportunity) to learn more.

## FALL

- ☐ **Encourage your child to meet with the school counselor.** This year, your 12th grader will work with the counselor to complete and submit college applications. Learn more about **the counselor's role in applying to college**.
- ☐ **Create a calendar with your child.** This should include application deadlines and other important dates. Your child can find specific colleges' deadlines in **College Search**. Your child can save colleges in a list to get a custom online calendar that shows the deadlines of those colleges.
- ☐ **Get your child ready for college admission tests.** Many seniors retake college admission tests, such as the SAT®, in the fall. Learn more about helping your 12th grader **prepare for admission tests**.
- ☐ **Help your child find and apply for scholarships.** Your high school student can find out about scholarship opportunities from the school counselor and how to request and complete scholarship applications and submit them on time. Learn more about **scholarships**.

## FALL (CONTINUED)

- ☐ **Offer to look over your senior's college applications.** But remember that this is your child's work, so remain in the role of adviser and proofreader. Respect your child's voice.
- ☐ **Complete the FAFSA.** The government and many colleges use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to award aid. Now it's easier than ever to fill out this form because you can automatically transfer your tax information online from the IRS to the FAFSA. Read **How to Complete the FAFSA** to learn more.
- ☐ **Complete the CSS Profile™, if required.** If your child needs to submit the CSS Profile to a college or scholarship program, be sure to find out the priority deadline and submit it by that date. Read **How to Complete the CSS Profile**.
- ☐ **Encourage your child to set up college interviews.** An interview is a great way for your child to learn more about a college and for a college to learn more about your child. Get an overview of the **interview process**.

## WINTER

- ☐ **Work together to apply for financial aid.** Have your child contact the financial aid offices at the colleges of interest to find out what forms students must submit to apply for aid. Make sure your child applies for aid by or before any stated deadlines. Funds are limited, so the earlier you apply, the better.
- ☐ **Learn about college loan options together.** Borrowing money for college can be a smart choice—especially if your high school student gets a low-interest federal loan. Learn more about the **parent's role in borrowing money**.
- ☐ **Encourage your senior to take SAT Subject Tests™.** These tests can showcase your child's interests and achievements—and many colleges require or recommend that applicants take one or more Subject Test. Read more about **SAT Subject Tests**.
- ☐ **Encourage your child to take AP® Exams.** If your 12th grader takes AP or other advanced classes, have your child talk with teachers now about taking these tests in May. Read more about the **AP Program**.

## SPRING

- ☐ **Help your child process college responses.** Once your 12th grader starts hearing from colleges about admission and financial aid, you need to help your child decide what to do. Read about **how to choose a college**.
- ☐ **Review financial aid offers together.** Your 12th grader will need your help to read through financial aid award letters and figure out which package works best. Be sure your child pays attention to and meets any deadlines for acceptance. Get more information on **financial aid awards**.
- ☐ **Help your child complete the paperwork to accept a college's offer of admittance.** These steps should be taken once your child has decided which college to attend: review the offer, accept that college's offer, mail a tuition deposit, and submit other required paperwork. Learn more about your high school senior's **next steps**.

Visit **bigfuture.org** for more information.



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