

College-Bound High School Senior Planning Calendar

Some of you have been planning for this year for quite some time, while for others it seems as though it has suddenly appeared from nowhere. Your senior year. Wow. For college-bound seniors, it's a time to savor your accomplishments, narrow down your list of colleges, gather all your necessary test scores and high school transcripts, request letters of recommendation, and begin work on your college admission essays... and in reality, for most of you, this process began at least a year ago, if not longer. Don't fret if you're late to the game, however, you still have plenty of time to get your college applications in -- as long as you're willing to put the time in to complete them. Here's how your senior year should look, month-by-month.

SEPTEMBER

- If you have not held any leadership positions while in high school, now is the time to step up and assume leadership of one of those organizations.
- Review college materials, college guidebooks, and other resources to narrow your college list.
- Begin to finalize list of colleges with your family and guidance counselor.
- Consider visits, overnight stays, and interviews at your top college choices. Visit (personally or virtually) any colleges you have not already seen.
- Register for one last shot at the SAT or ACT if you haven't taken one of them yet -- or if you aren't happy with earlier scores. And be sure to take the SAT Subject Tests, if required.
- Begin thinking about teachers who would be willing to write strong letters of recommendation on your behalf.
- Begin brainstorming ideas for your college essays.
- Request (or download from college's Website) any applications that you do not have. Be sure to review each college's application requirements carefully.
- Attend college fairs for one final review of college choices.
- Be sure your senior year mix of classes still includes challenging, college-prep courses
- Stay focused on grades.

OCTOBER

- Finalize list of college choices to reasonable number, ideally with one or more "stretch" schools and one "safety" school.
- Create a file for each of your college choices -- and keep all materials organized.
- Consider creating a master schedule of all your application deadlines.
- Begin working on drafts of your college essays.
- Start working on college applications.
- If you have a clear "first choice" college, consider applying for early decision.
- Have standardized testing service send your scores to your list of colleges.
- Get started on preparations by setting up a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) account.
- Stay focused on grades.

So ... what are your plans for next year? Write a paragraph describing your college/career plans for after high school. Then prepare a list of some actions or steps that you will be taking NOW to get ready for your future. Email your finished work.

“Failing to plan is planning to fail.”

-Benjamin Franklin

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NOVEMBER

- Finalize drafts of your college essays, but only after numerous edits, rewrites, and reviews by people you trust (family, friends, teachers).
- Complete college applications and submit.
- Be sure your guidance counselor knows your final list of colleges, as well as your preferences.
- Request key financial aid and scholarship information from your list of colleges.
- Complete the FAFSA, if possible. (You'll need your family's/guardian's tax records.)
- Stay focused on grades.

DECEMBER

- If you applied for early decision to a college, expect notification this month.
- If not completed, finish and submit remainder of college applications.
- Start detailed financial aid search, including outside sources for scholarships and loans.
- Stay focused on grades.

JANUARY

- Continue searching and applying for scholarships and grants.
- Stay focused on grades.

FEBRUARY

- Keep track of your college applications; be sure all schools have received all your materials.
- Continue searching and applying for scholarships and grants.
- Stay focused on grades.

MARCH

- College decision letters begin arriving.
- Celebrate your acceptances, decide about your wait lists, and deal positively with your rejections.
- Finalize financial aid applications.
- Continue searching and applying for scholarships and grants.
- Stay focused on grades.

APRIL

- Make decision about college choice from among the colleges that accepted you.
- Notify all colleges (that accepted you) of your final decision.
- Submit tuition deposit to your college of choice.
- Continue searching and applying for scholarships and grants.
- Stay focused on grades.

MAY

- Be sure to submit paperwork for room and board.
- Continue searching and applying for scholarships and grants.
- Stay focused on grades.

JUNE

- Celebrate your high school success!
- Send thank you notes (if you haven't already) to everyone who helped you this year.
- Start planning for college.
- Watch college's summer deadlines (orientations, housing options, registration, etc.) closely.