

Action Plan for High School Seniors

It's fall of your senior year -- what should you be doing right now?

Autumn is an exciting time. You have new classes and clubs, homecoming games and dances, not to mention upcoming holidays. Make sure you don't fall behind on your college planning -- now it's more important than ever to stay on track.

Get and send your scores for ACT/SAT tests

Your score report is mailed about three to four weeks after the test. If you took the October ACT/SAT, your ACT/SAT scores are sent to colleges in early November.

Plan and prepare for tests

Visit the SAT Prep Center to download a free diagnostic Mini-SAT. Focus your practice where you need it most with SAT PrepPacks[™]. For those taking the ACT, there is a free booklet, Preparing for the ACT Assessment, which should be available through your school.

Finalize your College list

- Finalize your list of colleges. Make sure your list includes "safe" as well as "reach" and "realistic" schools.
- Contact each school's admission office to request a catalog/application, brochure, and financial aid information.
- Visit as many colleges on your list as possible. Get a feel for the school by sitting in on a class, taking a guided tour, talking to the students, and possibly staying overnight in a dorm. Also, be sure to schedule an admission interview and an appointment with a financial aid officer.

Apply to college

- Deadlines for applying early decision or early action usually fall in November or December.
- Meet with your guidance counselor about the colleges to which you're planning to apply.
- Practice for college interviews with your parents or friends.
- Ask your teacher, counselor, coach, etc. to write your recommendation letters. Make sure you give them plenty of time so they don't have to rush to meet your application deadline.
- Start drafting your application essays.
- Most regular application deadlines are in January. Be sure to get all the necessary forms from your teachers and counselors before high school offices close for the holidays.

Plan for college costs

- Create a financial plan with your family. Use financial aid calculators to estimate how much money your family will be expected to pay towards college costs.
- Assist your parents with completing CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE.
- Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. Check with the schools you are applying to, to make sure that you fill out all of their required financial aid forms as well.
- Use Scholarship Search to find scholarships, grants, and loans that match your skills and interests.
- Check your library and ask your counselor about special state, federal and local aid programs.

Enroll in Advanced Placement courses in your strong subjects

Talk to your teachers about requirements for enrollment in the course. Talk to other AP students to get an idea of what to expect.

Consider taking a CLEP/AP exam to earn college credit

If you do well on a CLEP/AP exam, you can earn the same amount of credit that you'd get if you took -- and did well in -- a one-semester or year-long college course covering the same material.