

Family Action Plan: 12th Grade

Senior year is a whirlwind of activities. This is a big year for your child as he or she balances schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and the college application process. Use the suggestions below to help you and your child successfully navigate this important time.

SUMMER

- **Visit colleges together.** If you haven't already, make plans to check out the campuses of colleges in which your child is interested. 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 him or her choose which colleges to apply to by weighing how well each college meets his or her needs, for example. Find out more about [how to finalize a college list](#).
- **Find out a college's actual cost.** Once your 12th-grader has a list of a few colleges he or she is interested in, use the [Net Price Calculator](#) together to determine 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.** He or she can get the easy stuff out of the way now 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, he or she 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 Oct. 1.

FALL

- **Encourage your child to meet with the school counselor.** This year, he or she 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](#). If your child saves colleges to a list there, he or she can get a custom online calendar that shows those colleges' deadlines.
- **Help your child prepare 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.** He or she can find out about scholarship opportunities from the school counselor. Your high school student will need 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 and respect his or her voice.
- **Fill out the FAFSA to apply for aid beginning Oct. 1.** 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/Financial Aid PROFILE[®], if required.** If your child needs to submit the 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/Financial Aid 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 in which he or she is interested to find out what forms students must submit to apply for aid. Make sure he or she 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 Tests. Read more about **SAT Subject Tests**.
- **Encourage your child to take AP[®] Exams.** If your 12th-grader takes AP or other advanced classes, have him or her 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 child starts hearing back from colleges about admission and financial aid, he or she will need your support to 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.** Once your child has decided which college to attend, he or she will need to 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.collegeboard.org for more information and to access these resources.

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College Resources for Students and Families

GENERAL WEBSITES

- **Campus Tours: Virtual College Tours.** Virtual tours with still pictures and descriptions, webcams, campus maps, and videos of hundreds of colleges throughout the United States. Provides a first look at colleges. www.campustours.com
- **The College Board.** A complete site, with college and scholarship searches, information about the SAT® and SAT Subject Tests™, and other material pertaining to the college search and application process. Easy-to-use college search feature. www.collegeboard.org
- **eCampusTours.com.** Virtual tours of colleges. Useful for its 360-degree views of dorm rooms and other buildings. www.ecampustours.com
- **NCAA Eligibility Center.** Official NCAA website that gives details of student-eligibility requirements to play NCAA sports. Watch this site for changes in eligibility; students can print the *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete*. <https://www.ncaapublications.com>
- **Peterson's Education Portal.** An all-purpose site including a college search, as well as information about summer programs, summer camps, and jobs. The site asks you to register before using some of the search engines and other resources, but there is no registration fee. There is a charge for some of the services provided. www.petersons.com
- **U.S. Department of Education.** The federal government's website is easy to use and an excellent source of information on financial aid, much of it in Spanish as well as English. www.ed.gov

FINANCIAL AID WEBSITES

- **The College Board.** A website that includes a scholarship search, a loan calculator, and an online application form for the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®, which is required by some colleges. www.collegeboard.org
- **FAFSA on the Web.** The website for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This form must be submitted in the senior year for families applying for need-based aid. Students may complete it electronically at this site. www.fafsa.ed.gov
- **Fastweb.** Extensive information on merit- and need-based scholarships and aid. www.fastweb.com
- **FinAid!** Good site for information about types of financial aid and applying for financial aid. www.finaid.org

BOOKS

Comprehensive objective directories

- *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*. New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc. Updated every two years.
- *College Handbook*. New York: The College Board. Published annually.
- *Four-Year Colleges*. Princeton, N.J.: Peterson's Guides. Published annually.
- *Two-Year Colleges*. Princeton, N.J.: Peterson's Guides. Published annually.

Subjective guides

- Fiske, Edward, and Robert Logue (contributor). *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*. Naperville, Ill.: Sourcebooks Trade. Updated annually.
- Pope, Loren. *Colleges That Change Lives: 40 Schools You Should Know About Even If You're Not a Straight-A Student*. New York: Penguin. Paperback 2014.
- Yale Daily News staff. *The Insider's Guide to the Colleges*. New York: St. Martin's Press. Updated annually.