

Parent 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 your child is interested in. 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 find out 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](#).

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 and the ACT, in the fall. Learn more about helping your 12th-grader [prepare for admission tests](#).
- Offer to look over your senior's college applications. But remember that this is your child's work so remain in the role of advisor and proofreader and respect his or her voice.
- Help your child find and apply for scholarships. He or she can find out about scholarship opportunities from the school counselor. Your high schooler will need to request and complete scholarship applications and submit them on time. Learn more about [scholarships](#).
- 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 he or she is interested in 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.
- Fill out the FAFSA to apply for aid. 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.
- Learn about college loan options together. Borrowing money for college can be a smart choice — especially if your high schooler 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 accept a college's offer, mail a tuition deposit and submit other required paperwork. Learn more about your high school senior's [next steps](#).