
Preparing for college as a high school senior

Your senior year of high school is usually a whirlwind of events. Between senior pictures, class trip, prom, homecoming, and so many more activities, it is easy to let the college application process hit the back burner. There are many things that need to be done your senior year of high school to make sure that your entrance into college is not stressful and hectic.

APPLY

Many colleges have fall deadlines of November or December. As soon as your senior year starts, you need to have a meeting with your guidance counselor. He/she will help look over your transcript to make sure that you have completed the correct classes during your high school years. They can also help ensure that you have the correct materials for submission to your intended colleges. If you need letters of recommendation, be sure to ask teachers early as they may receive other requests. You need to give them time to give you a thoughtful and personalized recommendation. Make sure you submit all of your materials by the college deadline to ensure proper review of your application.

SAT

Usually this is taken during your junior year of high school, however if you did not receive the score that you hoped for you can take it again, just be sure to take it early in your senior year so that your scores can be included with your college application.

VISIT COLLEGES

By now you should have narrowed down your choice of colleges to a handful. If possible, you may want to make a visit to these schools to make sure that they truly interest you. A school may look appealing on any brochure, but in person can have a different view.

FINANCIAL AID

Fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Even if you think you will pay for college with cash, fill this out anyway. It will see if you are qualified for loans, work-study, and grants. Although the federal deadline for this application is June 30, many states have individual deadlines that you need to be aware of. To ensure that your application receives priority handling, check with your guidance counselor or the financial aid office at your intended college. Even if you are undecided as to which college you will be attending, you can fill out the FAFSA and list all of the colleges you are considering.

MAKE A DECISION

It is wise to make a decision as soon as possible as to which college you would like to attend. Once accepted, you will often have to put down deposit money and if you will be living on campus, you will have to secure your spot for a dorm. This is sometimes done on a first come, first serve basis. So if you wait too long, you may lose your chance for the better dorm or may lose your spot in the upcoming freshman class.

The important thing is not to stress. A well-prepared student will get through their senior year with all of the activities and deadlines with no problem. Ask for help when needed and remember that you have resources, such as your guidance counselor or parents to turn to if you run into a problem.