

JUNIOR YEAR TIMELINE

August and September

- Get serious about your schoolwork if you haven't already; junior-year grades are extremely important in the college admissions process, as is the rigor of your coursework.
- Attend college fairs and gather information.
- Talk with your parents about what limitations they plan to set on where you'll attend college. Knowing now how much your parents will contribute or whether they object to a campus far from home may affect your decision about where to apply.
- Start researching scholarships. You may find useful information in your school or public library and at www.finaid.com and www.fastaid.com.
- If you hope to play for a college team, and perhaps qualify for an athletic scholarship, introduce yourself to coaches at colleges you are considering.

October

- Take the PSAT to practice for the SAT I and to qualify for scholarships offered by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

December

- Review your test results with your counselor, and decide whether you'd benefit from an SAT I preparation course or from using test-prep software.

January and February

- Check with your schools to see if they prefer, or require, the ACT, the SAT I, or neither. Most colleges will accept either test, and some counselors recommend taking both, since many students do better on one than on the other. The ACT examines knowledge learned in school; the SAT I is an aptitude test.

March

- Identify the characteristics of a college that matters to you—size, location, cost, academic rigor, social environment and diversity, for example. View college brochures in your counselor's office, or search online.
- Visit web sites such as www.collegeview.com or www.review.com or go to specific college site. Work up a list of schools to visit during spring break (or in the fall) with your parents or with a counselor who takes groups of students on tour. It's best to plan to be on campus while schools are in session if you can, so that you can visit classes and talk to students and professors.

April and May

- Register for June SAT or ACT tests.
- Take Advanced Placement tests if you are eligible, and prepare to take June SAT or ACT tests if you plan to apply early.

Summer

- Send for college applications and think about essay topics. Consider whom to ask for recommendations.
- Counselors advise entering senior year with three or four schools in mind that are apt to accept you and one or two "reaches." If you haven't already been to campus, visiting schools now or in the early fall will help you create a list. Map an itinerary, and set up admissions interviews.
- Compile a résumé of activities, honors, leadership positions, and job experience. You'll need this information for college applications and scholarship forms.
- Continue to read extensively and work on your writing skills.
- Try to find a job that will give you experience in a field that interests you and that will sharpen your leadership skills as well as add to your savings account.

- Talk honestly with your parents about how you will finance your college costs and how much they expect you to contribute. Colleges typically expect freshmen to contribute about \$1,500 to their own college costs.