

College Application Timeline

College applications won't seem so overwhelming if you know what's coming, and what needs to be done when. Use this timeline to get a bird's-eye view of the whole process. This is only a general guide and may not apply to all colleges, so check the specific requirements and deadlines of the colleges you are applying to.

SUMMER BEFORE SENIOR YEAR

- Create your list of colleges that really interest you. Match them up against your list of "must haves" and "like to haves." (See the "What You Want Checklist" on page 70.)
- Visit some colleges on your list. Call ahead for the campus tour schedule.
- Register for the SAT and/or SAT Subjects Tests if you intend to take them in the fall.
- If you plan on competing in Division I or Division II college sports, register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.
- Find out about local scholarships offered by church groups, civic associations, and businesses in your area.

SEPTEMBER

- Meet with your school counselor to **finalize your list of colleges**. Be sure your list includes "safety," "probable," and "reach" schools. (See "Your Short List of Colleges" on page 72.)
- Start a checklist of all application requirements, deadlines, fees, etc. (See the "College Application Tracker" on page 118.)
- If you are going to apply under an **Early Decision or Early Action plan**, get started now. Deadlines for early applications tend to fall in October or November.
- Set up campus visits and interviews and attend **open houses** at colleges on your list.

OCTOBER

- Register for the SAT and/or SAT Subject Tests if you want to take them in December or January.
- Ask for **letters of recommendation** from your counselor, teachers, coaches, or employers. Give them plenty of time to meet your deadlines and make sure to provide them with stamped and addressed envelopes.
- If you need to fill out the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE, you can register on collegeboard.com starting October 1.
- Write **first drafts of your college essays** and ask your parents and teachers to review them.

NOVEMBER

- Submit **Early Decision and Early Action** applications on time. Save a copy for yourself and your school counselor.
- Finish your application **essays**. Proofread them rigorously for mistakes. Follow up with your teachers to ensure that letters of recommendation are sent on time to meet your deadlines.
- Apply to colleges with rolling admission (first-come, first-served) as early as possible.
- Give your school counselor the proper forms to **send transcripts** to your colleges at least two weeks in advance.
- Get **PINs for the FAFSA** for both yourself and one of your parents at www.pin.ed.gov.

DECEMBER

- Try to **wrap up college applications** before winter break. Make copies for yourself and your school counselor.
- If you applied for early decision, you should have an answer by **December 15**. If you are denied or deferred, submit applications now to other colleges.
- Apply for **scholarships** in time to meet application deadlines.
- Contact the financial aid office at the colleges on your list to make sure you have all required financial aid forms.

JANUARY

- Submit your **FAFSA** as soon as you can after January 1. If a college you're applying to has a financial aid priority date of February 1, use estimates based on your end-of-year pay stubs and last year's tax returns.
- Submit other financial aid forms that may be required—such as PROFILE or the college's own forms. Keep copies.
- If a college wants to see your **midyear grades**, give the form to your school counselor.
- If you have any new honors or accomplishments that were not in your original application, let your colleges know.

FEBRUARY

- Correct or update your **Student Aid Report (SAR)** that follows the FAFSA.
- Contact your colleges to confirm that all application materials have been received.
- If any special circumstances affect your family's financial situation, alert each college's financial aid office.

MARCH

- Admissions decisions start arriving. Read everything you receive carefully, as some may require prompt action on your part.
- **Revisit colleges** that accepted you if it's hard to make a choice.
- Don't get senioritis! Colleges want to see strong second half grades.

APRIL

- Most admissions decisions and financial aid award letters arrive this month. Carefully **compare financial aid** award letters from the colleges that accept you.
- Make a final decision, **accept the aid package** and **mail a deposit check** to the college you select before May 1 (the acceptance deadline for most schools).
- Notify the other colleges that you won't be attending (so another student can have your spot).
- On the waiting list? Contact the admissions office and let them know of your continued interest in the college and update them on your spring semester grades and activities.

MAY

- AP Exams are given. Make sure your AP Grade Report is sent to your college.
- Finalize your **housing** plans if you're living away. Send in all required forms and deposits.
- Study hard for final exams. Most admission offers are contingent on your final grades.
- **Thank everyone** who wrote you recommendations or otherwise helped with your college applications.

JUNE

- Have your counselor send your **final transcript** to your college choice.
- If you plan on competing in Division I or Division II college sports, have your counselor send your final transcript to the NCAA Eligibility Center.
- Enjoy your graduation, and **have a great summer!**