



# College Preparation Checklist

## for Senior High School Students

Senior year is an exciting and busy time for students. When it comes to college preparation and your senior year, there is a lot to do and so many things to keep track of. 12th grade is the time to apply for admission to college and to apply for student aid, however there are also testing deadlines to track, letters of recommendation to collect, records to send... The list goes on and on. That's why we created this college preparation checklist for busy college-bound students.

This tool will help guide you through the college preparation process and keep you on track during your senior year. It provides guidance on what to do, when to do it, complete with quick access to the related resources and information to help you along the way. Remember to connect and engage with your school counselor throughout the process. Every step brings you closer to the start of your college experience!

### Senior Year: August through September

#### ☐ **Status Check! Schedule a check-in with your school counselor.**

- Confirm that you are on track to graduate and to fulfill college admission requirements.
- Student athletes should discuss their plans and options with coaches and counselors.
- Tips for getting the most out of your counselor from the National Association of College Admissions Counseling.
  - [NACAC How to Use Your School Counselor](#)

#### ☐ **Register for the SAT and/or ACT and/or other needed college entrance exams.**

- If standardized tests are needed for your desired colleges, review registration and test dates.
  - [CollegeBoard SAT Dates and Deadlines](#)
  - [ACT.org Dates & Deadlines](#)
- Needs based application fee waivers are available for these exams. Ask your counselor for help.
  - [CollegeBoard SAT Fee Waiver](#)
  - [ACT.org ACT Exam Fee Waiver](#)

#### ☐ **Compare schools and create your shortlist! Research colleges and review the data.**

- Compare schools: US Dept. of Education and Transparency Center: [US Dept of Education College Scorecard](#)
- Information, statistics and data on 7K colleges and universities: [NCES College Navigator](#)
- Notes on the different types of colleges and schools: [NACAC College Types](#)
- Considerations for Comparing Schools: [NACAC Determining the Right Fit](#)
- Notes on college rankings: [NACAC College Rankings - What Do They Really Mean?](#)
- Review nationally ranked programs, schools and Universities: [US News & World Report Best Colleges](#)

#### ☐ **Dig deeper and do your research! Visit college sites and social sites from your short list.**

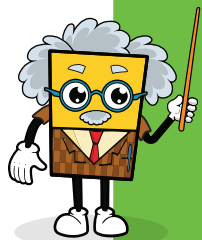
- Review the enrollment and financial aid sections of each school's website.
- Take a look at the enrollment application process and requirements.
- Note the documents, records and pieces of information you will need to apply.
- Note the information regarding the financial aid process and deadlines.

## □ Get out there! Connect with college reps, attend college fairs, and visit a few campuses.

- If possible attend local college fairs in your area: [NACAC College Fairs Schedule & Info](#)
- You can meet with hundreds of schools virtually: [NACAC Guide & Schedule of Virtual College Fairs](#)
- Tips for college campus visits: [NACAC Guide for the College Visit](#)

## □ Stay Organized! Use a Calendar. Gather the transcripts, and records needed to apply.

- Make note of important tasks, such as gathering records and letters of recommendations.
- Enter important events and due dates on your calendar.
- Letter of recommendations are a common element of college applications. Start requesting them now!
- Transcripts and official records of completion will be required for all college applications. Start preparing now!



### Parchment Prep Tip: Use our free college research tools to explore schools and options.

Our college predictions, ranking, and recommendations software is powered by more than 765K college applications – the largest application database online. With data from hundreds of thousands of students like you, we create statistical predictions to give you a meaningful estimate of your chances of admission to any college in our database. To access, **Log In** or create a Parchment **New Learner Account** here.

### Parchment College Tools - Available at no cost for Parchment Learners.

- **College Search:** Search on a specific school for a quick overview of that school's profile.
- **College Rankings:** View a list of schools ranked using a complex algorithm based on student preferences.
- **College Matches:** Get a display on chances of admission for similar schools outside of your region.
- **College Match Up:** See which schools are chosen most often and compare analytics side by side.

**Create** a New Learner Account – **Log In** to your Parchment Learner Account – **Order My Credentials** through Parchment

## Senior Year: October

## □ FAFSA Time! File your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) starting Oct. 1

- Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form allows you to be considered for federal student aid. In addition, states and colleges use FAFSA information to award their own grants, scholarships, and loans. To be eligible you have to meet the application deadlines for federal and state programs!
- It is in your best interest to submit as soon as possible.
  - [Studentaid.gov - FAFSA Form Start Page](#)
- You will want to know your eligibility details for federal student aid as early as possible.
- Many state and federal grant programs distribute limited funds on a first-come first-serve basis based on the information on your FAFSA form.
- The latest date to file your federal FAFSA is June 30, but the due dates for State issued grant funds vary.
- What is the application deadline for student aid in your State?
  - [Studentaid.gov - FAFSA & STATE FAFSA Application Deadlines](#)
  - [NASFAA State Financial Aid Programs](#)
- Watch the mail for your Student Aid Report (SAR), which should arrive three to four weeks after you apply.
  - [Studentaid.gov SAR: Student Aid Report](#)



## ❑ Request letters of recommendation at least three weeks in advance of need.

- Take a moment to review some tips and best practices for requesting college letters of recommendation.
  - [CollegeBoard.org How to Get a Letter of Recommendation](#)
- Request letters of recommendation promptly and consider requesting more than the minimum required for your applications so that you can review and submit the strongest options.
- Letters of recommendation can be uploaded and saved for future use on your [Parchment Learner Account](#).

## ❑ Develop your college essay! Many schools will require at least one essay to apply.

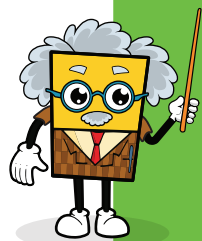
- If applying to multiple colleges, develop a baseline template with general info, then create customized versions.
- NACAC tips on college essays: [NACAC Top 10 Tips for Writing A College Essay](#)
- US News & World Report guide to the college essay. [USNWR How to Write a College Essay](#)

## ❑ Application Time! Narrow your list of colleges and start submitting applications.

- Some colleges will have application submission deadlines as early as this month.
  - [NACAC: Parts of a College Application Guide](#)
  - [CollegeBoard Guide to the College Application](#)
- College application fee waivers are available. Reach out to your counselor for assistance.
  - NACAC Guide to Fee Waiver Request Forms: [NACAC Request for Admission Application Fee Waiver](#)

## ❑ Ask for free money! Research and apply for scholarships, grants and aid programs.

- Submit and apply as soon as possible. Aid is limited and often distributed on a first-come first serve-basis.
- General information on scholarships & grants: [Studentaid.gov Finding and Applying for Scholarships](#)
  - CollegeBoard Scholarship Search Tool:
    - [CollegeBoard Search For Scholarships Tool](#)
- You should never have to pay for scholarship information. Services exist, but free resources are plentiful.
  - US News & World Report Guide to Finding Scholarships & Grants:
    - [USNWR Guide to Scholarships and Grants](#)
    - [USNWR Scholarship Finder Search Engine Tool](#)
  - Fastweb.com Free Scholarship Search Platform
    - [Fastweb National Scholarship Directory](#)
    - [Fastweb College Scholarships and Grants Search Tool](#)
  - Scholarship.com Free Scholarship Search Platform
    - [Scholarships.com Scholarship Directory](#)
    - [Scholarships.com Student Resources](#)
- Consider completing the optional CSS Profile, an online application used by certain colleges and scholarship programs to determine eligibility for their aid dollars.
  - CSS profiles and programs are used by some, but not all colleges, so be sure to check your schools.
    - [CollegeBoard CSS Profile for Grants and Scholarships](#)
    - [CollegeBoard How to Complete the CSS Profile](#)
- Talk to your counselor, family, trusted members of your community and civic organizations. Ask around.
- You should never have to pay for scholarship information.



### **Parchment Prep Tip: You can use Parchment to quickly and easily send transcripts to schools.**

Before submitting your college application, consider sending your transcripts and records on [Parchment.com](#). Parchment makes the process easy and keeps you informed on the status of your records every step of the way.

- When initially applying, you will self-report your grades or may upload an unofficial transcript initially, but you will need to send official records to secure a spot. Parchment lets you do that digitally.
- In May, you will receive a form on which you will indicate your final college choice, and an official transcript will automatically be sent to that college after graduation on your behalf.
- Parchment will keep you notified in real time – When your records have been sent, and when they are received.

**Create** a New Learner Account – **Login** to your Parchment Learner Account – **Order My Credentials** through Parchment

## Senior Year: November through January

### ☐ **Remain aware of early college application deadlines!**

- Many selective colleges will have application deadlines as early as January 1st.
- Most others will have application deadlines set later in January and February.

### ☐ **Submit for early decision or early action applications which are due this month.**

- Have a parent, teacher, counselor, or other adult review the application before it is submitted.
- Resources for Early Decision and Early Action. [CollegeBoard Guide for Early Decision and Early Action](#).

### ☐ **Confirm that your SAT, ACT and other standardized testing results have been sent and received by your colleges.**

### ☐ **Remain aware of final SAT / ACT registration deadlines if additional tests are needed.**

- If needed, register for the January SAT. It is the last one that colleges will be able to consider for a high school senior prior to rendering college application decisions.
  - [CollegeBoard SAT Dates and Deadlines](#)
- If needed, register for the February ACT. Some colleges will be able to consider it, but some will not. Additional research may be required to confirm the exact timeframe for your prospective colleges.
  - [ACT.org Dates & Deadlines](#)

### ☐ **Time to Apply! Submit regular decision applications and financial aid forms.**

- Be sure to have submitted for colleges with regular enrollment application deadlines, which are often due in January and/or February.
- After you submit, be sure to actively monitor communications, in case additional action or documents are needed to complete your applications and financial aid forms.
- Expect to submit additional information and documentation in support of your financial aid forms.

### ☐ **In January, submit a request to your guidance office to send your first semester transcripts to the schools which you have applied to.**

- You should send your first semester transcripts to prospective schools and every college will require a copy of your final transcript in order to render a formal decision and save your seat.
- Follow your school's procedure for sending transcripts. Connect with your counselor if you need help.
- At the end of the school year, your high school will need to send final transcripts to the college you will attend.
- If you have a [Parchment Learner Account](#), you can use it to manage, track and review the status of transcript and record requests in real time.

### ☐ **Check in to the colleges you applied to confirm that your application was received.**

- Is any further action required?

### ☐ **Confirm that financial aid documents were received and are processing.**

- Is any further action required?



## Senior Year: February through May

### □ Keep asking for free money! Continue to apply for scholarships and grants.

- March has the most deadlines. Some deadlines can extend all the way to August.
- General information on scholarships & grants: [Studentaid.gov Finding and Applying for Scholarships](#)
- You should never have to pay for scholarship information. Services exist, but free resources are plentiful.
  - CollegeBoard Scholarship Search Tool:
    - [CollegeBoard Search For Scholarships Tool](#)
  - US News & World Report Guide to Finding Scholarships & Grants:
    - [USNWR Guide to Scholarships and Grants](#)
    - [USNWR Scholarship Finder Search Engine Tool](#)
  - Fastweb.com Free Scholarship Search Platform
    - [Fastweb National Scholarship Directory](#)
    - [Fastweb College Scholarships and Grants Search Tool](#)
  - Scholarship.com Free Scholarship Search Platform
    - [Scholarships.com Scholarship Directory](#)
    - [Scholarships.com Student Resources](#)

### □ Congrats! Acceptance letters and financial aid offers will start to arrive during this time.

- Review acceptance letters and financial aid packages... then make your final choices!
  - [CollegeBoard You're Accepted - Now What?](#)
- When you've made your college decision, notify your counselor.
- Remember, that you will need to formally accept offers of acceptance and financial aid packages.
- It is a best practice and professional courtesy to notify the schools that you will not be attending.  
If you get waitlisted, follow these tips: [College Board: What to Do if Wait Listed](#)
- What if I'm not accepted this round?
  - [NACAC Plan B: What if I'm Not Accepted](#)

### □ Decision Day! Officially accept offers and send in your enrollment deposit by May 1st.

- May 1 is the date when the college you plan to attend requires a formal commitment and an enrollment deposit.
- Be sure to review and accept your offer(s) for financial aid by May 1st.
- Send in your Enrollment Deposit by the postmark date of May 1 to save your spot.
  - If needed, Enrollment Deposit Fee Waivers are available. Ask your counselor for help.
  - [NACAC Request for Enrollment Deposit Fee Waiver Form](#)
  - [NACAC Fee Waiver Eligibility & FAQs](#)

### □ Confirm that your final transcripts and records have been sent to your selected college.

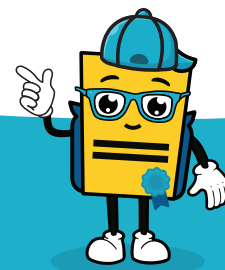
- Check with your counseling office or check your [Parchment Learner Account](#) dashboard.

### □ Register for your summer college orientation session!

### □ Determine your housing, supplies, and food program arrangements!

- [CollegeBoard Off-to-College Checklist](#)

### □ Go to college! Learn amazing things! Meet interesting people! Study hard! Have a blast!



# College Preparation Checklist

## for Senior High School Students

### Consolidated Resources Section

We reviewed and referenced several reliable resources, publications and organizations in order to create this guide including the Department of Education, StudentAid.org, the National Center for Education Statistics, National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC), CollegBoard and others.

When possible and available, direct links to relevant resources have been provided and embedded within the checklist alongside with the related preparation item. We hope this consolidated resources page further aids you in your college preparations. You can do this!

### US Department of Education Resources and Links

#### US Department of Education:

- [US Department of Education - www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)
- [US Dept. of Education and Transparency Center College Scorecard](#)

#### US Department of Education - Federal Student Aid Information Center:

- [Federal Student Aid Information Center \(FSAIC\)](#)
- [Studentaid.gov - Homepage](#)
- [Studentaid.gov SAR: Student Aid Report](#)
- [Studentaid.gov Financial Aid Estimator](#)
- [Studentaid.org - College Preparation Checklists](#)
- [Studentaid.org - 12th Grade College Preparation Checklist](#)

#### FAFSA Form Start Page & Key Dates:

- [Studentaid.gov - FAFSA Form Start Page - https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa](#)
- [Studentaid.gov - FAFSA & State FAFSA Application Deadlines](#)

#### National Center for Education Statistics: [nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov)

- [NCES Home Page](#)
- [NCES College Navigator](#)

### Scholarship, Grant, Funding Resources

#### FastWeb.com Database for Scholarships, and Grants with Free Access for Students:

- [Fastweb National Scholarship Directory](#)
- [Fastweb College Scholarships and Grants Search Tool](#)



## Scholarships.com Database & Resource for Scholarships and Grants with Free Access for Students

- [Scholarships.com Home Page](#)
- [Scholarships.com Scholarship Directory](#)
- [Scholarships.com Student Resources](#)

## US News & World Report

- [US News & World Report Best Colleges](#)
- [USNWR Guide to Scholarships and Grants](#)
- [USNWR Scholarship Finder Search Engine Tool](#)
- [USNWR How to Write a College Essay](#)

## Testing Resources

### ACT.org

- [Act.org Home Page](#)
- [ACT.org Dates & Deadlines](#)
- [ACT.org ACT Exam Fee Waiver](#)

### SAT - CollegeBoard.org

- [CollegeBoard.org Home Page](#)
- [CollegeBoard SAT Fee Waiver](#)
- [CollegeBoard SAT Dates and Deadlines](#)
- [CollegeBoard Guide to the College Application](#)
- [CollegeBoard Guide for Early Decision and Early Action](#)
- [CollegeBoard Search For Scholarships Tool](#)
- [CollegeBoard CSS Profile for Grants and Scholarships](#)
- [CollegeBoard How to Complete the CSS Profile](#)

### PSAT and the National Merit Scholarship Program - CollegeBoard.org

- [CollegeBoard.org PSAT/NMSQT](#)
- [CollegeBoard.org PSAT/NMSQT Overview and Fast Facts](#)
- [CollegeBoard.org PSAT/NMSQT Test Dates](#)

## Student and College Counseling Organizations and Associations

### National Association for College Admissions Counselors (NACAC)

- [NACAC How to Use Your School Counselor](#)
- [NACAC College Fairs Schedule & Info](#)
- [NACAC Guide for the College Visit](#)
- [NACAC Determining the Right Fit](#)
- [NACAC College Types](#)
- [NACAC College Rankings - What Do They Really Mean](#)
- [NACAC: Parts of a College Application Guide](#)
- [NACAC Request for Admission Application Fee Waiver](#)
- [NACAC Request for Enrollment Deposit Fee Waiver Form](#)
- [NACAC Fee Waiver Eligibility & FAQs](#)
- [NACAC Guide & Schedule of Virtual College Fairs](#)
- [NACAC Top 10 Tips for Writing A College Essay](#)
- [NACAC Plan B: What if I'm Not Accepted](#)

### American Counseling Association( ACA)

- [ACA Home Page](#)
- [ACA College & Career Counseling Tools](#)

### American School Counselor Association( ASCA)

- [American School Counselor Association Homepage](#)

### National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)

- [NASFAA.org](#)
- [NASFAA FAFSA Tips & Common Mistakes to Avoid](#)
- [NASFAA Financial Aid in Your State](#)
- [NASFAA State Financial Aid Programs](#)
- [NASFAA State & Regional Tuition Exchanges to Waive Out of State Tuition](#)
- [NASFAA Tips to Help Students in Unique Situations](#)
- [NASFAA Tips, Programs, and Resources to Cut College Costs](#)

[illegible]