

College Admissions Checklist

1. Start Early
2. Gather Personal Information (June)
3. Research and Shortlist Colleges (June-July)
4. Prepare and Take Standardized Tests (June-September)
5. Take Standardized Tests (August-September)
6. Write Your Common App Essay (August)
7. Request Letters of Recommendation (August)
8. Write School-Specific Essays (September)
9. Apply for Scholarships (September-October)
10. Understand Financial Aid (September-October)
11. Submit Test Scores (September)
12. Prepare Application Fees (September)
13. Finalize and Review Applications (October)

1. Start Early

Begin preparing the summer before your senior year. Starting early helps manage deadlines, refine applications, and minimize stress. Staying organized and methodical is key.

2. Gather Personal Information (June)

1. Collect essential personal documents for applications, such as:

- **Personal Information** (legal name, date of birth, contact information)
- **Transcripts** and **education history**
- **Social Security Number** (if applicable)
- **Immunization records**

2. Application Platforms such as Common App and Coalition for College

3. Apply to Community Colleges:

- Visit the community college's website and find the application form
- Fill out the online application with your personal information
- Submit required documents
- Apply for financial aid by completing FAFSA form

3. Research and Shortlist Colleges (June-July)

Step 1: Create List of Colleges

Identify schools that fit your academic interests and personal preferences. Use tools like **College Navigator**, **Niche**, or **US News** to explore rankings, costs, and campus cultures.

Step 2: Plan Campus Visits

Schedule in-person visits to get a feel for the campus environment. Use virtual tours if in-person visits aren't possible

Step 3: Attend College Fairs

Attend college fairs to gather information, ask questions to representatives, and collect brochures or other materials to review later.

Step 4: Categorize Colleges

Categorize them as:

- **Reach:** High academic standards, highly competitive
- **Match:** Fits your academic profile well
- **Safety:** Likely to be admitted based on academic credentials

3. Create and Refine Your Activities List (July)

Step 1: Compile a List

- Brainstorm all extracurricular activities, leadership roles, community service, awards, and honors.
- Organize by listing the name of the activity, your role, and the duration (e.g., Student Council - President, Grades 11-12).

Step 2: Draft Descriptions

- Write concise descriptions for each activity, focusing on role, accomplishments, and impact.
- Use action verbs (e.g., led, organized) and follow the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to highlight achievements.

Step 3: Format the List

- Ensure clarity by using a simple format: Activity Name – Your Role (Grade Levels) followed by a brief description.

Step 4: Create a Resume

- A resume can supplement your activities list, especially for interviews or scholarships.

Step 5: Refine and Review

- Review for accuracy and clarity. Seek feedback from teachers or counselors.

4. Prepare and Take Standardized Tests (June-September)

- Decide whether to take the **SAT** or **ACT** and begin studying by June.
- Use free resources like **Khan Academy** or **ACT Prep** to practice.

5. Take Standardized Tests (August – September)

- **Prepare in Advance:** Start studying 2-3 months ahead using resources like Khan Academy, The Princeton Review, and Kaplan, and take practice tests
- **Manage stress:** practice relaxation techniques, get enough sleep, and visualize success
- **Revise Strategically:** focus on weaker area and study with others for better understanding
- **Test Day Prep:** pack essentials, eat healthy breakfast, and arrive early

6. Write Your Common App Essay (August)

- Select a prompt that resonates with you, brainstorm and outline ideas
- Draft your essay, focusing on personal growth, challenges, or values
- Use clear, concise writing and specific examples to tell your story
- Revise and seek feedback from a teacher or mentor before finalizing
- Use essay writing tools like The College Essay Guy, Harvard College Writing Center, or Grammarly for additional support

7. Request Letters of Recommendation (August)

- Ask teachers, counselors, or mentors who know you well and can provide detailed examples of your strengths
- Request their recommendation at least one month before the application deadline
- Provide them with a resume or “brag sheet” summarizing your achievements, and remember to follow up politely

8. Write School-Specific Essays (September)

- Understand each school's prompt and write a unique, focused essay
- Research school and highlight programs, professors, or activities that excite you
- Brainstorm and outline to keep your essay organized and on track
- Write authentically with your own voice, honesty and relevance to topic
- Revise and tailor each essay to ensure it is customized for the specific school and prompt

9. Apply for Scholarships (September-October)

- Start researching and applying for scholarships early
- Use databases like Fastweb, Scholarships.com, College Board, local organizations, and school counselor to find opportunities
- Focus on scholarships that align with your qualification, prioritizing those related to your major or background
- Gather documents like transcripts and recommendation letters, and tailored essays for each application

10. Understand Financial Aid (September-October)

- Understand the types of financial aid such as grants, scholarships, loans and work-study programs. Focus on grants and scholarships first
- Gather financial documents like tax returns and W-2 forms early to streamline the process.
- **FAFSA:** Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to access grants, loans, and work-study programs. FAFSA opens on October 1st.
- Research state and institutional aid programs for additional support.

11. Submit Test Scores (September)

- Check the test score submission policies for each school (SAT/ACT)
- Use official testing accounts (College Board or ACT) to send scores
- Select the colleges, confirm your submission, and pay the required fee
- Make sure all scores are submitted before application deadlines

12. Prepare Application Fees (September)

- Set aside funds for application fees, which range from \$50-\$90 per school.
- Request fee waivers if the cost is prohibitive. Many schools offer waivers for students with financial need.

13. Finalize and Review Applications (October)

Before submitting applications:

- Double-check that every section is complete and accurate.
- Proofread essays and short answers for grammar and clarity.
- Confirm that letters of recommendation and test scores have been submitted.