

College Application Timeline

A year-by-year guide for students and families

FRESHMAN YEAR

Fundamentals

Freshman year is all about improving your academic skills and managing your GPA. Remember, you'll be applying to college early in your senior year, which means your profile will only show your Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior year GPA and transcript.

Your Freshman year GPA is extremely important. Aside from that, you should be building strong fundamentals in Reading, Grammar, and Math. Ideally, be on pace to finish Geometry and Algebra II by the end of your sophomore year. If that isn't possible, that's ok. But you'll definitely need Algebra II and Geometry for your college entrance exams (ACT, SAT, and CLT), so trying to get through those subjects before you start junior year is a good idea.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

The College Process Begins

Parents and their students need to start talking about college Sophomore year. We suggest three core questions.

THREE QUESTIONS TO ANSWER THIS YEAR

- 1 What is realistic financially?
- 2 Why are you planning to go to college?
- 3 What are you going to do to make college more affordable?

Why are you planning to go to college?

To oversimplify this, we suggest two primary motivations:

- 1 Financial Return on Investment
- 2 Continued development of knowledge, wisdom, and virtue

CAN WE HAVE BOTH?

Yes. However, at some point, you will likely need to make a decision about which one is a priority — and that's okay! Once you know which of these options is a priority, you build a first draft college list of schools that can help you achieve your goals.

What are you going to do to make college more affordable?

Dual enrollment, employment, AP courses, and/or scholarships are the most common approaches. Of course, you can always plan to go to college in-state, which keeps cost down — but we suggest having a plan that goes beyond saying "I'll just stay in-state."

If you do the college application process right, in our opinion, junior year should actually be your busiest year.

JUNIOR YEAR CHECKLIST

- ✓ Standardized test prep (ACT, SAT, CLT)
- ✓ College visits
- ✓ Dual enrollment courses
- ✓ Securing letters of recommendation
- ✓ Scholarship hunting

All of this happens while making progress in school — it makes for a busy year. But you can do it. And you'll be glad you knocked these things off the list before senior year!

If you've knocked everything off your list except your applications before senior year, you'll be very glad you did.

Because the application process is stressful, even if it's the only thing you have left to do.

Make a final list of schools to which you'll apply, write the application deadlines down along with all of the essays you must write, and get to work.

FINAL NOTE

What Should I Do When I'm Stressed Out?

Remember why you are going to college. Return to the questions you answered sophomore year (or whenever you answered them!). You're going to college for a reason. It's not status.

Most families and students get stressed out because they think the college they get into says something about them — and they worry about not getting in to *that school*. It does not. Replace that fear with knowledge of your purpose. There are many schools that can help you achieve your goals. It will be okay; just meet the application deadlines.

READY TO GET STARTED?

Classic Test Prep offers **online courses** and **1-on-1 online tutoring** for the ACT, SAT, and CLT. To claim your discount, book a meeting at [ClassicTestPrep.com](https://www.classicprep.com) and tell us who sent you!