

HIGH SCHOOL ACTION PLAN

Planning for college should begin on the first day of High School. Use the following list as guideposts to navigate the road to college.

FRESHMAN YEAR

FALL/WINTER

- ✔ Meet with school counselor to ensure you are enrolled in college prep courses (or honors/AP).
- ✔ Grades matter! Focus on doing well in courses and seek extra help when needed.
- ✔ Join a sports team or club to become involved in school and to see what you excel in and enjoy.
- ✔ Volunteer/Provide community service.
- ✔ Map out an academic plan that maximizes academic and career goals. Use electives to take courses in topics that interest you

WINTER/SPRING

- ✔ Keep focused on doing well in classes and seek extra help as needed.
- ✔ Meet with school counselor to select courses for sophomore year.
- ✔ Study and take AP exams for AP courses you have completed.
- ✔ Investigate the potential to attend a summer enrichment program at a local college.
- ✔ Attend sporting events, plays, or other activities at local colleges, to begin to get an understanding of what the college atmosphere is like.
- ✔ Start to track accomplishments, awards, activities, and work experience.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

FALL/WINTER

- ✔ Continue to focus on academic plan that maximizes academic and career goals.
- ✔ Meet with school counselor to ensure you are enrolled in right courses and on track with grades.
- ✔ Grades matter! Focus on doing well in courses and seek extra help when needed.
- ✔ Continue to participate in sports teams and clubs and/or volunteer in your community
- ✔ Begin to hone in more on those activities that really interest you.
- ✔ Talk to friends, relatives, etc. who are in college and ask them about their experiences. Be sure to ask about both positive and negative aspects of school.
- ✔ Consider taking the PSAT in October for practice.
- ✔ Track accomplishments, awards, activities, and work experience.

WINTER/SPRING

- ✔ Keep focused on doing well in classes and seek extra help as needed.
- ✔ Meet with school counselor to select courses for junior year.
- ✔ If you connected strongly with any teachers this year, ask them for a letter of recommendation. (It's never too early to ask for a recommendation!) Typically, you need three, and often it's your school counselor and two teachers.
- ✔ Study and take AP exams for courses you have completed.
- ✔ Investigate the potential to attend a summer enrichment program at a local college
- ✔ Plan spring break or summer visits to local colleges to experience the different types of college settings. Note your preferences for campus size, location, distance from home, etc.
- ✔ Attend college fairs and open houses.

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JUNIOR YEAR

FALL/WINTER

- ✔ Meet with school counselor to ensure you are enrolled in the right courses and on track with grades.
- ✔ Focus on doing well in courses and seek extra help when needed.
- ✔ Take a leadership role within your sports team, club, part-time work or volunteer organization.
- ✔ Take the PSAT or PreACT.
- ✔ Attend college/university fairs or open houses (virtually or in-person)
- ✔ Analyze what you want in a college/university to help create a first list of “wish-list” schools that meet your criteria. Here are some things to consider:
 - Do I prefer a small, medium, or large school?
 - Do I prefer an urban, suburban, or rural campus?
 - How far from home? How often do I want to be able to visit home?
 - Do I want a school with a widely recognized name?
 - Are there rigorous admission requirements (test scores, GPA, class rank, etc.)?
 - What academic program do I want to pursue? Does the school offer it?
 - What special programs are important (language, religion, music, etc.)?
 - Is the sports program at the school important? Social aspects of the college (Greek, community service, organizations, etc.)?
- ✔ Use the [Sylvan College/University Planning Guide](#) to help evaluate potential schools.

WINTER/SPRING

- ✔ Keep focused on doing well in classes and seek extra help when needed.
- ✔ Continue to track accomplishments, awards, activities, and work experience.
- ✔ Prepare to take the SAT or ACT by reviewing the test components and taking a practice test. Or choose to study via SAT/ACT prep books, online courses, or to enroll in an SAT/ACT prep course.
- ✔ Register for the appropriate SAT or ACT test dates. Find the dates that work best around your schedule but make sure to get at least one test in before summer.
- ✔ Meet with School Counselor to select courses for senior year.
- ✔ Make a list of teachers whom you'd like to ask write your letters of recommendation. Typically, you need three, and often it's your school counselor and two teachers. (If you know who you want, get those requests in before summer).
- ✔ Study and take AP exams for AP courses you have completed.
- ✔ Begin researching college scholarship opportunities.
- ✔ Plan visits to college/universities that are high on your interest list. Schedule tours of the campus and meetings with college staff who can answer your questions concerning campus life and program offerings. If you can't visit in person sign-up for virtual tours and meet and greets.
- ✔ Investigate the potential to attend a summer enrichment program at a local college.
- ✔ If you plan to take the SAT/ACT again at the end of the summer or beginning of Senior year, summer is a great time to study. Consider finding a test prep course like the ones Sylvan Learning offers.
- ✔ Summer is also a great time to begin the college/university application essay. [Tip: Sylvan Learning has college essay writing courses!](#)

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SENIOR YEAR

FALL/WINTER

- ✔ Meet with school counselor to ensure you have fulfilled all of your requirements and have what you need to apply to college.
- ✔ Confirm you have your letters of recommendation. If you haven't already, request letters of recommendation from teachers and school counselor ASAP.
- ✔ Focus on doing well in courses and seek extra help when needed (many colleges will still need to see good grades maintained in first half of senior year before allowing admittance).
- ✔ Take a leadership role within your sports teams, clubs, or volunteer organizations.
- ✔ If needed, register to take the SAT or ACT in the fall. This may be your final opportunity.
- ✔ If needed, prepare to take another attempt at the SAT or ACT by reviewing the test components and taking a practice test. You may also choose to study using SAT/ACT prep books, online courses, or by enrolling in a SAT/ACT prep course.
- ✔ Attend college/university fairs or open houses.
- ✔ Use the [Sylvan College/University Planning Guide](#) to help evaluate potential schools and select the schools where you will apply.
- ✔ Begin working on applications and completing any necessary essays. Prepare early decision/early action or rolling admissions applications as soon as possible. Check application due dates to ensure you are submitting them on time.
- ✔ FAFSA (and CSS Profile if applicable) becomes available on October 1st. Fill out the FAFSA as close to the start date as possible to improve your chances of getting the most grant, scholarship, and work-study aid.

WINTER/SPRING

- ✔ Confirm application due dates and be sure to have them submitted in advance of those dates.
- ✔ Confirm all transcripts, test scores, and letters of recommendation are sent.
- ✔ Be sure FAFSA (and CSS Profile if applicable) is completed.
- ✔ Finish researching scholarships and apply for them.
- ✔ Compare financial aid offers from schools.
- ✔ Keep focused on doing well in courses and seek extra help when needed.
- ✔ Study and take AP exams for AP courses that you have completed.
- ✔ Schedule an extended visit to schools where you have been accepted. Meet with students and faculty members in your program of choice. Virtual options are typically available.
- ✔ Once you receive your admissions offer letters and financial aid offers, use all the information you have gathered to determine which college/university you will attend.
- ✔ Before leaving for school, create a list of everything you will need and be sure you have it all. Most of this information can be located on your school's website.