



Family Action Plan: 12th Grade

Senior year is a whirlwind of activity. It's a big year for your child—balancing schoolwork, extracurricular obligations, and the college application process. Use the suggestions below so you and your child can meet these challenges.

SUMMER

- Visit colleges together.** If you haven't already, make plans to check out the campuses of colleges that interest your child. Use the [Campus Visit Checklist](#) to learn how to get the most out of these experiences.
- Ask how you can help your senior finalize a college list.** You can help your 12th grader choose which colleges to apply to by weighing how well each college meets their needs. Learn [how to finalize a college list](#).
- Find out a college's actual cost.** Once your 12th grader has a list of a few colleges of interest, use the [Net Price Calculator](#) together to discover the potential for financial aid and the true out-of-pocket cost—or net price—of each college.
- Encourage your child to get started on applications.** Together you can get the easy stuff out of the way by filling in as much required information on college applications as possible. Read about [how to get started on applications](#).
- Help your child decide about applying early.** If your senior is set on going to a certain college, they should think about whether applying early is a good option. Now is the time to decide because early applications are usually due in November. Read about the pros and cons of [applying early](#).
- Gather financial documents:** To apply for most financial aid, your child will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You'll need your most recent tax returns and an FSA ID to complete the FAFSA, which opens October 1.

FALL

- Encourage your child to meet with the school counselor.** This year, your 12th grader will work with the counselor to complete and submit college applications. Learn more about [the counselor's role in applying to college](#).
- Create a calendar with your child.** This should include application deadlines and other important dates. Your child can find specific colleges' deadlines in [College Search](#). Your child can save colleges in a list to get a custom online calendar that shows the deadlines of those colleges.
- Get your child ready for college admission tests.** Many seniors retake college admission tests, such as the SAT®, in the fall. Learn more about helping your 12 grader [prepare for admission tests](#).
- Help your child find and apply for scholarships.** Your high school student can find out about scholarship opportunities from the school counselor and how to request and complete scholarship applications and submit them on time. Learn more about [scholarships](#).

FALL (CONTINUED)

- Offer to look over your senior's college applications.** But remember that this is your child's work, so remain in the role of adviser and proofreader. Respect your child's voice.
- Fill out the FAFSA to apply for aid beginning October 1.** The government and many colleges use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to award aid. Now it's easier than ever to fill out this form because you can automatically transfer your tax information online from the IRS to the FAFSA. Read **How to Complete the FAFSA** to learn more.
- Complete the CSS Profile™, if required.** If your child needs to submit the CSS Profile™ to a college or scholarship program, be sure to find out the priority deadline and submit it by that date. Read **How to Complete the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®**.
- Encourage your child to set up college interviews.** An interview is a great way for your child to learn more about a college and for a college to learn more about your child. Get an overview of the **interview process**.

WINTER

- Work together to apply for financial aid.** Have your child contact the financial aid offices at the colleges of interest to find out what forms students must submit to apply for aid. Make sure your child applies for aid by or before any stated deadlines. Funds are limited, so the earlier you apply, the better.
- Learn about college loan options together.** Borrowing money for college can be a smart choice—especially if your high school student gets a low-interest federal loan. Learn more about the **parent's role in borrowing money**.
- Encourage your senior to take SAT Subject Tests™.** These tests can showcase your child's interests and achievements—and many colleges require or recommend that applicants take one or more Subject Test. Read more about **SAT Subject Tests**.
- Encourage your child to take AP® Exams.** If your 12th grader takes AP or other advanced classes, have your child talk with teachers now about taking these tests in May. Read more about the **AP Program**.

SPRING

- Help your child process college responses.** Once your 12th grader starts hearing from colleges about admission and financial aid, you need to help your child decide what to do. Read about **how to choose a college**.
- Review financial aid offers together.** Your 12th grader will need your help to read through financial aid award letters and figure out which package works best. Be sure your child pays attention to and meets any deadlines for acceptance. Get more information on **financial aid awards**.
- Help your child complete the paperwork to accept a college's offer of admittance.** These steps should be taken once your child has decided which college to attend: review the offer, accept that college's offer, mail a tuition deposit, and submit other required paperwork. Learn more about your high school senior's **next steps**.

Visit **bigfuture.org** for more information.