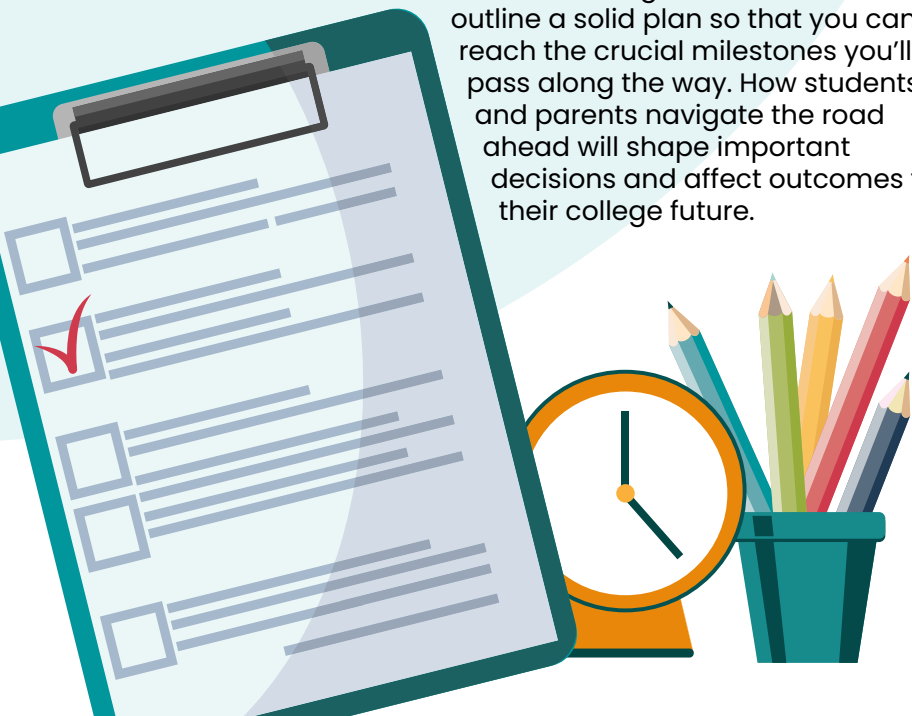


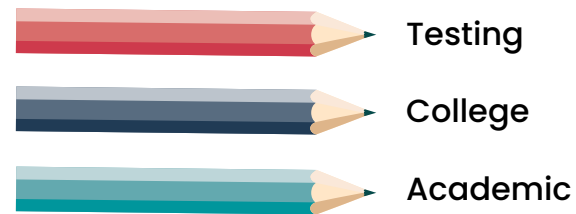
# COLLEGE JOURNEY CHECKLIST

In less than 24 months, your high school junior will be a college freshman. It's not uncommon for parents and students to feel the clock ticking, so now's the time to outline a solid plan so that you can reach the crucial milestones you'll pass along the way. How students and parents navigate the road ahead will shape important decisions and affect outcomes for their college future.



Over the last 25 years, PrepMatters has helped thousands of families reach these milestones with confidence and focus, and we have developed a simplified checklist for families to understand how to tackle the challenges ahead. Our list is a recommendation informed by our extensive experience of working with families like yours. The items that are shown below should serve as a starting point and help you to develop a plan that works for your family.

## LEGEND



## SOPHOMORE YEAR: SUMMER

- Learn About the SAT and ACT:** If you haven't yet taken a practice SAT or ACT, that's ok. We have developed a simple [6 question quiz](#) to help give you a general idea of which test might be the better fit for you. Right after completing the quiz, we will email your results along with some recommendations. We also host live proctored practice testing most weekends for those of you who like taking tests and can have detailed score reports ready for you the next day. You need only contact our team about [setting up a time](#).
- Assessment and Strategy:** Equipped with your quiz results, PSAT, or practice test scores, you may want to talk with a tutor about the right test for your student and craft a test prep plan and testing calendar. [Schedule your test prep assessment](#) appointment.
- Academic Kickstart:** Summer learning loss is real and does nothing to prepare students for the increased workload that junior year brings. Those students who are looking to avoid the summer rust will benefit from an academic kickstart, which will lay the foundation for a strong school year. Summer is a great time to [build a relationship with a tutor](#).

## JUNIOR YEAR: FALL SEMESTER

- Finalize your test preparation calendar:** Look at the [specific test dates](#) for the SAT or ACT to decide which administrations to target so that you can plan your test preparation schedule. Be sure to factor in school and personal events so that you are testing when you have time to be both well-rested and well-prepared. Armed with those test dates, you can work backwards to build out a [proper test preparation schedule](#).
- Start conversations with a professional college counselor:** Encourage your student to talk with their school college counselor to learn about important steps at school. This will also create an opportunity for the counselor, who will write the important counselor college recommendation, to get to know your student. [An independent counselor](#) can be an additional resource, offering advice and insight that will complement the information obtained from school and help your student reach their ideal college destination.
- Build your initial college list and travel plans:** Fall is the time to meet with your college counselor and to begin to build your initial college list. You can also plot out travel to a few select locations during the upcoming fall, winter, and spring breaks, which will help you adjust your list.
- Academic gut check:** During the fall semester of junior year, students must learn to balance increasingly difficult coursework with extracurricular demands on their time. Since junior year grades matter most to colleges, students are advised to make sure that they have in place the structure and support they'll need to be consistently successful throughout the year.
- Prepare for and/or Take the ACT or the SAT:** By the end of the first semester, you should either be deep into your test prep, be taking practice tests and maybe even an official test, or have a solid plan in place for the start of the new year. Ensure that whatever prep schedule you put in place includes proctored practice testing so that you get the feedback you need and can make any necessary adjustments to your testing calendar.

## JUNIOR YEAR: SECOND SEMESTER

- ❑ **Letters of Recommendation:** Develop a strategy with your counselor to gather letters of recommendation that are consistent with your application strategy. Typically, students will need one letter from a science or math teacher and one from a humanities teacher. Because this is not always the case, it is important, early in the process, to check to see what each college requires.
- ❑ **Optimizing Test Scores:** Decide with your tutor and counselor whether retesting makes sense and, if so, optimize your prep time by focusing on specific areas of growth. Ideally, you'll be able to realize your score goal – or at least come close to it – by the end of your junior year.
- ❑ **AP exam preparation:** AP exams give you the chance to demonstrate your ability to handle college-level academic rigor. Our tutors are not only content experts but can also help you craft a study plan so that you feel confident and ready to perform your best on the exams in May.
- ❑ **College Visits:** Use spring break to visit college campuses. Nothing replaces in-person visits for getting a feel for the places your student may spend the next four years. Make a list of criteria that matter to you and craft follow-up steps after your visits.

## SENIOR YEAR: FIRST SEMESTER

- ❑ **Don't coast on grades:** First semester is NOT the time to start your senior slide! In fact, most students are shocked by how difficult it is to balance their coursework with the college admissions process. Until students are admitted – and even thereafter – grades will matter. When needed, tutors can help keep kids stay on task.
- ❑ **Submitting Applications:** The first semester of senior year is when all of the hard work and planning over the last few months and years come together. During this time, your student will be working very closely with their college counselor(s) to make final adjustments to lists and

## JUNIOR YEAR: SUMMER

- ❑ **Solidified Application Strategy:** Meet with your college counselor to develop a finalized college list and application strategy, one that includes score submissions, letters of recommendation, interviews, additional visits, in addition to determining whether supplemental essays, and additional application materials such as resumes and portfolios are required.
- ❑ **Essays:** The summer of junior year is a fantastic opportunity for students to begin working on the first drafts of their essay(s). It is common during these times for students to attend essay writing workshops and begin to [work with essay specialists](#). It is not uncommon for students to produce several iterations of their main essay before arriving at their first draft. Additionally, students will typically write between 10 – 20 supplemental essays depending on their college list, so it's important to start writing early.
- ❑ **Optimizing Test Scores:** SAT and ACT test administrations in June, July and August provide rising seniors with test dates outside the academic year. Many of those students are able to put the test behind them during the summer, which enables them to focus their efforts without having to simultaneously balance school, sports, and extracurriculars.

strategies, do final proofs of essays, and check that all the components of applications are complete before submitting.

- ❑ **Initial Application Results:** Celebrate! If necessary, work on your Plan B. Talk with your college counselor, using results from all early applications to update lists and strategies for applications to other colleges.
- ❑ **Final Opportunity to Retake the SAT or ACT** By now most students should have completed their standardized testing. Students who wish to take one final test should be careful to check on score release dates, which may fall after Early Decision deadlines.

# PrepMatters



## SENIOR YEAR: SECOND SEMESTER

- ❑ **Execute backup strategies:** Students don't always get admitted into their first choice schools and will need to work on their back-up plan with their college counselors. During this time, counselors help students maintain perspective and keep everyone focused and on track. This often means submitting Early Decision Two applications or even additional letters of recommendation.
- ❑ **Finish Strong:** The last semester of senior year is often the most difficult time for students to focus on academics. Try to view this unique time in your academic career when grades really don't matter as an opportunity to enjoy learning for learning's sake! Focus on yourself and make YOU your senior project!.
- ❑ **Commitment Day:** Once students have received all of their responses, it is time to work with their college counselor to decide what path is the best fit for them based on the last months of their work together. This important decision is why you have put in all of the hard. Professional counselors have prepared for this day since the beginning of the process.
- ❑ **Graduation Day:** Throw that cap up with pride as you have crossed a major life milestone!. Congratulations, and enjoy your new adventure!

