

# A Junior's Guide to the College Admissions Process

## Choose your Senior Academic Program Wisely

It is important to remember that your senior year is very important in the college admission process. Admissions officers want to see that you are maintaining a solid academic program and that you are doing your best to prepare for college. We strongly recommend that you continue in math and science in addition to the other core course areas. If you are unsure about what colleges you are looking for, it is a good idea to speak to an admissions counselor at the college to which you intend to apply. Your course selection meeting will be in February or March of the junior year. Please take the time to go over your course requests with your parent prior to the course selection meeting in Guidance. And, as always, we encourage you to invite your parents to attend your conference if possible.

## Register for Standardized Tests

Most four-year and some two-year colleges require either the SAT I or ACT for admission to college. Some colleges require SAT II subject tests as well. It is important to check with your guidance counselor or the admissions office to which you intend to apply to ascertain which standardized tests you will need to take for admission.

The Guidance Office has registration information for the SAT and ACT programs. You will be given a copy of registration materials during your junior-year course selection meeting, but if you should need an additional copy, please feel free to stop in and pick up materials. These days, online registration is the preferred method for registering for both SAT and ACT. You can find registration materials for the SAT and ACT at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) for the two tests respectively.

Students can pick up a copy of the SAT and ACT review booklets at the Guidance Office. These booklets are also available online. The College Board, the organization that produces the SAT, offers free test preparation on its web site including SAT Question of the Day and a free diagnostic test. More thorough review is also offered on the site for an additional charge. If you are interested in taking an SAT review class or in a personal tutor, please contact the Guidance Office for a list of local contacts.

## Develop a Long List of Colleges

The Junior Year is the best time to start developing a list of colleges to which you might apply. What factors should you think about when developing a long list?

- Which majors are offered at the college?
- How selective is the college in terms of admission?
- What is the size of the school? Do I want to attend a small, moderate or large college?
- Is the school in a location where I would feel comfortable?
- Does the school offer the co-curricular activities that I am interested in pursuing?

- What is my GPA and rank in class? How did I score on the PSAT? Talk to your guidance counselor about getting a copy of your high school transcript.

Several guidebooks and online resources can help you develop your long list of colleges. Most book stores carry The College Board's College Handbook and Peterson's The Peterson's Guide. These heavy books are loaded with information that can help give you an idea of some of each college's highlights. US News and World Report publishes a controversial ranking of the colleges each year. This publication ranks the colleges in terms of type of college, programs, financial aid offered, etc. Online resources include [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com), [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com), and [www.nycareerzone.org](http://www.nycareerzone.org). The Guidance Office website, [www.berk.com/ichabod/hsguid.html](http://www.berk.com/ichabod/hsguid.html) also links to other online resources for choosing a college.

## Plan College Visits

The College Visit should be one of the most important elements in the college search process. Typically, the spring of the junior year is a good time to start visiting colleges. On a college visit, often you can have an admissions interview, tour the campus, meet with a professor or a coach, eat lunch in a dining hall and sometimes even stay overnight (we recommend you do a college-arranged overnight visit during your senior year).

Most colleges also host Open House programs. This is a great way to be briefed on all of the college's highlights. Most Open Houses consist of a group admissions overview, a tour, food, and a financial aid seminar and sometimes an opportunity to visit a class. Open Houses often will give you insight in terms of the students who may be attending the college.

While Open Houses are a great way to familiarize your student with the college, we generally recommend that a student also go for a personalized visit. An interview, even if only recommended not required for admission, can sometimes make or break an admissions decision. It is a good way for a college to get to know your student personally. An admissions counselor typically handles student interviews, and will often refer to his/her interview notes when reviewing your application for admission.

You can schedule an appointment for a college visit by calling the admissions office at most colleges. It is important to call several weeks in advance of your visit so that the college has time to make any special arrangements.

Stop by the Guidance Office and pick up a copy of your transcript before your visit. That way, you can discuss your academic record with the admissions counselor and get a feel for what the college is looking for and also explain any potential areas of question. The Guidance Office also has a list of potential questions that admissions counselors might ask, and that you might want to ask an admissions counselor. Be sure to pick this up as well before your visit.

If you should decide to just tour the campus yourself, please be sure to at least visit the admissions office to let them know that you've taken the time to visit campus. Colleges often note this kind of information and will place it in your file.

It is important to send a thank you note to the admissions counselor and to the tour guide after you have returned from your visit. See your guidance counselor if you have questions on how to construct such a letter.

## What are Colleges Looking for?

High School Transcripts, standardized test scores, activities and interests, essays, applications and recommendation letters are all important in the college admissions process.

## Things to do during the Summer before your Senior Year:

- Begin preliminary work on college essays; brainstorm ideas, develop rough drafts
- Visit more colleges
- Volunteer
- Work on an activity sheet, resume or “brag sheet.” Students use their activity sheet all throughout their senior year for college applications, recommendation letters, scholarship applications, etc.
- Read recreationally and prepare for the SATs or ACTs if you plan to re-take them in the fall
- Find a summer job
- Begin thinking about who you might ask to write you a letter of recommendation for college. Colleges often ask for 3 academic recommendations.
- Enroll in a summer program at a local, or not so local college. See your Guidance Counselor for more details.