

College Application Prep - Calendar

Freshman Year

- **Select classes that challenge you:** Ask your counselor or someone you trust to help you find the right amount of rigor to match your capabilities. Grades and rigor are important to colleges.
- **Read voraciously:** Books, newspapers, magazines, blogs – choose what engages you and remember to look up unfamiliar words.
- **Get involved:** Join organizations, extracurricular activities and competitions that are genuinely interesting to you. Do volunteer work.
- **Start a resume:** Keep a record of activities, jobs and accomplishments and continually update it so you don't forget details

Sophomore Year

- **Consider an AP course:** Review options and consider enrolling in an AP course for great preparation and experience.
- **Get some practice tests:** Will you take the PSAT this year? You'll get a better sense of where you stand if you know what is on the test before you take it.
- **Make the most of your summer:** Work, volunteer, play sports or take a class. Find an activity that builds on a favorite subject or extracurricular interest.

Check out colleges while on a family vacation just to gain exposure or for comparison.

Junior Year

- **Evaluate gaps in your resume:** Round out your experience and develop leadership opportunities.

- **Think about teachers who could write recommendation letters:** You will need to ask two junior-year teachers to write recommendations. They can't know you without hearing your thoughts.

- **Plan your testing calendar:** First up, the PSAT. If your 10th-grade scores put you in reach of a national merit scholarship, it might be wise to spend concentrated time prepping. Then take the SAT or ACT in winter or early spring.

Don't worry if you don't get your ideal score; you can try again. The SAT subject tests are also an option for May or June in areas where you shine or in subjects you covered junior year.

- **Explore Naviance and start building your target college list:** Once you have a handle on your test scores, talk to a counselor and start your list of target schools, reaches and safeties. Explore college websites and online resources.

- **Make some college visits:** Spring break and summer vacation are ideal times to check out a few campuses. Also try to attend college fairs and talk with the folks behind the tables.

- **Write draft college essay(s):** Aim to have first drafts done by Labor Day. Share them with an English teacher or counselor.

Senior Year

- **Review high school coursework:** Make sure you're completing all of the requirements for graduation as well as course requirements of the colleges on your list.

Check requirements for schools on your list: Before the academic year even starts, become familiar with the Common Application and know whether schools on your list require a supplemental application.

- **Check into college fairs and/or take advantage of visits scheduled at York:** Before investing in a visit, you can obtain lots of helpful information about prospective colleges by visiting information sessions nearby.

- **Finish testing:** In the fall of senior year, retake the SAT, ACT or sign up to take SAT subject tests, if needed. The early fall test dates will give you time to apply early.
- **Ask for recommendations:** Early in the school year, ask two teachers who can offer different perspectives on your performance if they are willing to write a letter on your behalf. Choose teachers with whom you have a good relationship and who will effectively communicate your academic and personal qualities.
- **Apply:** Fill out each application carefully, and ask someone to look over your essays with a critical eye. Check that your colleges have received records and recs from your high school, and have your SAT or ACT scores officially sent in. A month from the date you submit your application, call the college and confirm that it is complete.
- **Follow the money:** Many colleges require the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and CSS/Financial Aid Profile forms to be turned in by February. But the earlier the better.
- **Make the choice:** Explore the colleges where you've been accepted. Visit their campuses again, talk with alumni, attend an accepted student reception. Then confidently make your college choice official by sending in your deposit.