



CLARKE  
COLLEGE  
INSIGHT

# College Application Timeline

## Eighth grade

- Start saving examples of your child's best graded schoolwork, especially in core classes (aka "solids"): English, science, math, social studies, and foreign language. Establish a place to keep it physically and/or digitally.
  - If your child does art, keep the art too.
  - Collect schoolwork and art until your child is admitted to college.
- Start keeping a record of your child's academic awards and honors, hobbies and interests, summer activities, internships, community involvement, volunteering, paid work, sports, and any other extracurricular activities.
  - Record the activity, beginning and end dates, positions held, hours per week, and weeks per year.
  - Add separate lines as roles and involvement change. You and your child should maintain it throughout high school.
- If you attended a college that gives legacy preference, get involved in alumni activities (interviewing, volunteering, donations).
- Decide what language your child will take in high school. It should be the same one all four years.
- Look at the AP, IB, or honors classes available at the high school your child will attend.
  - In which could your child reasonably do well (i.e. get an A or B)?
  - Are there any prerequisites for those classes? Could he or she take any of those prerequisites in summer school?
  - Plan out your child's high school coursework. If you're aiming for the most selective colleges, aim to take 8 AP or IB courses.
  - Frontload them in freshman (if allowed), sophomore, and junior years as much as possible.
  - Focus on academic "solids": English, math, foreign language, science, social studies.
  - Email the high school counselor to run this tentative schedule by him or her.
  - If your child isn't on track to take AP calculus, consider taking a math class in summer school to move him or her ahead on the math sequence.

- Consider your child's extracurricular interests. Are there activities available at the school that meet the Clarke College Insight extracurricular criteria? Decide what clubs he or she wants to join or start.

### **Summer before ninth grade**

- If your child's high school allows freshmen to take AP, IB, and/or honors courses, and any of those classes require prerequisites, consider whether he or she could take those prerequisites in summer school.
  - Take math classes as necessary to be on track to take AP calculus.
- Participate in a summer activity that meets the Clarke College Insight extracurricular criteria.

## **Ninth grade**

- Your child should meet the school counselor as early in the school year as possible. He or she should introduce him or herself and tell the counselor that he or she is eager to discuss his or her college trajectory.
- Plan your child's summer in December. Lean towards activities that meet the Clarke College Insight extracurricular criteria. If any options require applications, submit them. Your child should discuss these summer plans with the school counselor.
- In January, you and your child should plan coursework for next year. Is he or she on track to take 8 AP or IB classes? Your child should discuss this plan with the school counselor.
- In April or May, consider your child's extracurriculars. Is he or she excited to stick with them through all of high school? If not, now is the time to switch.

## **Summer before tenth grade**

- Your child should do the summer activity arranged in December.
- If any AP, IB, or honors classes he or she will take next year have prerequisites, he or she should take those prerequisites in summer school.

We change here to address the student, who will begin to be more responsible for him or herself.

### Tenth grade

- Throughout the year, attend college info sessions or college fairs, especially for schools you haven't heard of.
- As soon as school starts, meet with your counselor to register for the PSAT or PSAT<sub>10</sub> and PreACT. If possible, take both tests in the fall.
  - If your school doesn't offer these tests in the fall, take timed, proctored SAT and ACT practice tests with Compass Education Group in the fall.
  - After you get your results, decide which test you will take, using a concordance table to compare your scores.
- As soon as you have decided whether you'll take the ACT or SAT, hire a test prep company (ideally Applerouth) to start working with one-on-one in June.
- In October, register for your AP tests, if your school requires you to.
- In December, plan next summer. Lean towards activities that meet the Clarke College Insight extracurricular activity. If any of your options require applications, send them in. Discuss your plans with school counselor.
- During winter break, start making the list of colleges you will apply to.
  - Enter your test scores and GPA into Naviance, if your school uses it, or Cappex to see which schools are academically feasible.
  - Discuss affordability with your parents. Ask your parents to use the net price calculator available on colleges' websites to assess whether your family can afford each school.
  - Fill out the Clarke College Insight research template for each school you're considering.
  - Set up a filing system for college materials: folders (digital, analog, or both) for materials received from and sent to each college.

- During winter break, consider your extracurriculars. If you're not on track to be in a leadership role in your extracurricular(s) next year, consider starting a club.
- In January, meet with your school counselor to discuss your list and college trajectory: your test scores, grades, extracurriculars, and colleges on your list.
- In January, plan your coursework for next year with your school counselor.
  - Which AP or IB classes can you take? Are you on track to take eight?
  - Are you on track to take AP calculus? If not, what do you need to do to get there?
- In January, talk to a school official or private evaluator about extra time on standardized tests, if you qualify.
- One month before spring break, contact admissions offices, professors, and students at the colleges you plan to visit. If you're a good enough athlete to be recruited, get in touch with coaches too.
- In March, start studying for your AP tests.
- During spring break, visit colleges.
  - After your college visits, consider whether there are any you'd like to remove or add. Be sure to consider affordability and chances of admission for each one.
- In May, if there were any teachers you liked especially and vice versa, ask if they'd be willing to write letters of recommendation. Fill out the Clarke College Insight brag sheet template and give it to your recommenders.
- In May, register for the PSAT next fall, if your school will let you.
- In May, submit forms for extra time on standardized tests, if you qualify and the school official or private evaluator agrees.

### Summer before eleventh grade

- All summer, do the one-on-one test prep you arranged last winter.
- Do the summer activity you planned.
- If you added any colleges to your list after spring break, plan a second college visit during winter break of junior year.
- Register for three SAT or ACT attempts:
  - SAT: November, March, August
  - ACT: December, April, July (June for New Yorkers)

### Throughout eleventh grade

- Be extra respectful and engaged in class. Stand out in a good way: help your classmates if they're struggling, do an independent project, or talk to your teacher outside of class. These teachers will almost certainly write your letters of recommendation.
- Attend college info sessions or college fairs.
- If you're a recruitable athlete, maintain contact with coaches. Try to gauge how interested they are and how much sway they have in the admissions process.

### Eleventh grade month by month

- As soon as school starts, check in with your counselor.
  - Figure out your high school's deadlines for requesting the counselor letter of recommendation/secondary school report, mid-year report, transcript, and final report. Add them to this timeline.
  - Figure out your school's procedures for requesting letters of recommendation, the secondary school report, mid-year report, transcript, and final report.
- In October, take the PSAT.
  - Review your results with your school counselor and test prep provider.
- In October, register for your AP tests, if your school requires it.
- In November, if you're taking the SAT, take your first test.
- In December, if you're taking the ACT, take your first test. Request a copy of your graded test via the Test Information Release service.
- Plan your summer in December. Lean towards activities that meet the Clarke College Insight extracurricular criteria. If any of your options require applications, send them in. Discuss plans with school counselor.



- In December, if you plan to submit a portfolio or audition tape to colleges, start working on it.
- If you're going to visit more campuses, one month before winter break, contact admissions offices, professors, and students at each school. If you're a good enough athlete to be recruited, get in touch with coaches too.
- During winter break, visit any colleges you didn't get to during spring break last year, or any you've added to your list. Repeat the same approach as last spring. After that visit, finalize your list.
- In January, plan your coursework for next year with your counselor.
  - Which AP or IB classes can you take?
  - Are you on track to take AP Calculus, if you haven't already?
  - While you're there, discuss your college trajectory: your test scores, grades, extracurriculars, and colleges on your list.
- In March, if you're taking the SAT, take your second test. Request a graded copy of your test using the Question and Answer Service.
- In March, start studying for your AP tests.
  - If you're taking the SAT, don't let AP test prep interfere with SAT focus; the AP tests are less important.
  - If you're taking the ACT, get a lot of studying for the AP tests in now, before your test next month.
- In April, if you're taking the ACT, take your second test. Request a copy of your graded test via the Test Information Release service.
- If you are not satisfied with your test scores, arrange for more test prep with your test prep provider before your final test attempt.
- In May, ask teachers whom you liked and who liked you to write letters of recommendation for you. Fill out and give them the Clarke College Insight brag sheet template.

- In May, consider which other adults could write letters of recommendation: an alumnus/a you know for each school, a religious leader, volunteer supervisor, etc. Ask them to write letters of recommendation. Fill out and give them the Clarke College Insight brag sheet template.

### Summer before twelfth grade

- Do your summer activity.
- If you weren't happy with your spring test scores, do a test-prep refresher before your final attempt.
- In June, if you live in New York and are taking the ACT, take your third test.
- In June, figure out what the application for each college on your list requires.
  - Find the deadlines for EA/ED, RD, EDII, and financial aid. Add them to this timeline. Post them somewhere in the house for easy reference.
  - Make a checklist for each school, including last year's essay questions.
  - Request staff (rather than alumni) interviews with every school you're applying to that offers them.
  - Remind your parents to start filling out FAFSA, CSS Profile, or any other forms required for financial aid.
  - Begin to assemble what you need to fill out the applications.
- In June, begin to write your essays.
- In July, if you live anywhere but New York and are taking the ACT, take your third test.
- In August, if you are taking the SAT, take your third test.
- When you receive your test scores, send them to each school on your list.
  - Optimize according to each college's testing policy: superscoring, single sitting, or all scores.

- In August, begin your applications as soon as the Common App (or the colleges' individual applications) become available.

## Twelfth grade

- In September, talk to your school counselor to make sure you're on track to graduate.
- In October, register for the AP tests, if your school requires it.
- Finish your applications.
  - Submit them by October 1, for early and regular decision rounds.
  - Submit your financial aid forms as soon after as possible. The forms open around October 1.
  - Have the secondary school report, letters of recommendation, and transcript sent to colleges, according to your high school's procedures and deadlines.
    - The only exception: if any of the schools on your list have an EDII round, hold off on applying to them. If you don't get in the early round, you want to use that option. But have those applications ready to submit.
  - On October 15, check on the Common App website or college websites to make sure everything has been submitted. If anything is missing, send it in.
  - On October 21, check again, if anything was missing. If anything is still missing, send it in.
  - On October 25, check again, if anything was missing. If anything is still missing, send it in.
  - On the day of the EA/ED deadline, check again to make sure everything is in for your application for each college. If anything is missing, send it in immediately.
  - Once you submit your applications, write a handwritten thank-you note to counselor and the teachers who wrote letters of recommendation.
- For each college where you did not have a staff interview, check the procedure for getting an interview. Are interviews offered, optional, or required? Who initiates the process?
  - If it's you, initiate the process when you submit your application.
  - If it's the college, and you have not heard from them a month after you submit your application, email the admissions office to request an interview.

- Prepare un-Googleable questions for each college for interviews.
- If you are deferred:
  - Consider adding another likely or possible school to your list.
  - Email the admissions office, ideally the person responsible for your school or region, to express your strong, continued interest in attending.
  - If the school provides a form, fill it out with any academic or extracurricular updates. If not, put any new and flattering grades, tests, activities, or achievements in that email.
  - If the admissions office doesn't forbid it, send in a flattering graded paper or project and/or an extra letter of recommendation
  - If the admissions office doesn't forbid it, consider visiting the school again and asking to meet with an admissions officer.
  - Keep your grades and your extracurricular leadership up. They are now even more important, because the college will see more of your senior-year record.
- At the end of the first semester, ask your school to send the first semester transcript to all schools on your list.
- Ask your counselor to send the midyear report, using your school's method and deadline.
- After your applications are in, start looking for scholarships. Complete and submit those applications.
- Between when you submit your applications and hear back from colleges, send them any new accomplishments or honors.
- In March, begin studying for your AP tests.
- After you hear back from colleges, choose one and submit a deposit by May 1 – even if you're still on the waitlist somewhere.
  - Act as if you were not on any waitlists when choosing a college.
  - Notify the other colleges that accepted you that you do not plan to attend.

- Go to admitted student programs and compare financial aid packages.
- If the financial aid offer is inadequate, ask respectfully for a review, providing documentation for any updates in your family's financial situation.
- At the end of the school year, ask your school to send the final transcript.
- At the end of the school year, ask your school counselor for his or her summer contact information, just in case.
- If you are waitlisted:
  - Know that you can remain on as many waitlists as you want. You don't have to pick just one.
  - If you want to remain on a given college's waitlist, contact the admissions office (ideally, the person responsible for your school or region) right away to express how much you want to attend. You can do this for every college.
  - Use the card or template the college provides, if it does, to respond.
  - Look back at your "why us" essay and notes from your college visit. Emphasize why you and the college are a good fit for each other.
  - Send in your current grades, information on any awards or activities, and an extra letter of recommendation, if the college doesn't forbid these.
  - Ask your high school counselor to convey your continued interest and any new accomplishments or grades to the admissions office too.
  - Ask an alumnus/a of that school to write to the admissions office on your behalf.
  - Check with the financial aid office to see if policies differ for waitlisted students.
  - Be easy to contact: answer your phone, listen to your voicemail and keep your voicemail inbox empty, and check your spam filter. Search your email inbox by the college name to make sure you don't miss an email.

### **Summer after graduation**

- If you're in, relax! Take a break before college work begins.
- Sign up for orientation, get ready to move, and consider your fall classes.



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