

RISING SENIOR SUMMER CHECKLIST - WHAT'S AHEAD

June: Reflection, Reflection, & Research

Focus on wrapping up junior year, setting the financial baseline, and organizing the preliminary list.

Organize and breathe

- Request Letters of Recommendation:** Before you leave the building, ask in-person two academic teachers for recommendations (a 3rd can be a coach or performing arts advisor), and confirm via email.
- Update Resume:** Add spring extracurricular activities, sports, dance, performing arts, and volunteer positions.
- Create an e-Folder:** Set up a dedicated e-folder to organize your college spreadsheet, notes, emails from interested colleges, and communication campaign.
- Register your Common Application:** Open up the application, set up an account, familiarize yourself with the app, and begin to complete the “My Common App” section.

Campus Visits & Showing Interest

- Continue to Evaluate Options:** Take formal tours or attend information sessions. If traveling isn't feasible, maximize interactive virtual tours and sessions, plus connect with current students. Start thinking of your final choices – 15-20.
- Communication Campaign:** Schedule 1-1 meetings with your admission counselor to elevate their awareness of your interest in them. Follow the college on social media

Financing College Prep

- Establish the Budget Baseline:** Run a mock paying for college assessment to understand your family's financial landscape. Learn your Student Aid Index (SAI), potential for need-based financial aid, and what might be expected to purchase a public or private college education.
 - Build a Weekly Scholarship Routine:** Don't wait for high school guidance offices to post local scholarships in the winter. Spend 1 to 2 hours, 2-3 days a week searching resources & databases (Fastweb) to identify independent scholarships.
 - Gain Practical Experience:** A part-time job, summer internship, or volunteer work teaches accountability, time management, and real-world skills.
-

July: The Deep Dive & Drafting

Focus on testing strategy, campus exploration, and tackling the main essay.

Admissions & Applications

- Begin Your Common App Essay (Personal Statement):** Review the Common Application essay prompts. Brainstorm, outline, and write a rough first draft of the main 650-word essay. Focus on a narrative, a story that highlights character, personal growth, and authenticity.
- Evaluate Standardized Testing:** Review spring SAT/ACT scores. If a bump in scores is needed for admissions or merit-based scholarships, establish a daily, targeted test-prep routine and register for a retake in August or September.

Campus Visits & Showing Interest

- Continue June work!!**

August: Make Your Fall Smooth

What you do before the start of your senior year will lift stress and anxiety off your shoulders.

Admissions & Applications

- **Common Application:** The Common App platform officially opens for the new cycle on **August 1st**. While continuing to update your personal information, begin adding your short list of colleges and universities of interest.
- **Polishing the Main Essay:** Share it with your parents, siblings, and me to obtain constructive feedback on message, tone, clarity, and grammar. Aim to have a final draft completed before September.
- **Refine the College List:** Narrow down the list to a balanced selection of 10-15 options, comparing your profile with three categories:
 - **Stretch** - highly selective colleges where your profile may sit lower than average percentiles accepted.
 - **Target** - you sit comfortably in the middle to 75% of admitted students.
 - **Likely** - admission is highly probable.

Financing College

- **Affordability** – continue the quest to understand the process of funding college, refining your financing strategy, and securing answers to your individual scenarios.
-

September – The Finish Line Awaits

This is when the hard work begins; your work this summer will lift stress and anxiety off your shoulders.

Admissions & Applications

- **Your short list:** 15 to 20 short-listed colleges to make your final selection to apply for admission.
 - **Map Out the Application Strategy:** Assign a definitive deadline pathway to each school on the list:
 - **Early Decision (ED):** Binding commitment (typically November 1 or 15).
 - **Early Action (EA):** Non-binding early review (typically November 1 or 15).
 - **Regular Decision (RD):** Standard deadline (typically January or February).
 - **Organize Documentation:** Update your resume based on summer activities, confirm your recommenders are writing for you, finalize your Common Application and Essay, and pull together performing arts portfolios.
 - **Review Supplemental Questions:** Questions seeking responses to learn more about you. We'll research and have you ready to write. (e.g., "*Why this college?*" or "*Major*").
 - **Financial Aid:** The official cycle for the 2026-2027 FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and CSS Profile (specific Institutional requirement) opens for completion on October 1st. We will review these applications and how to get started before October 1st.
-

The Golden Rule: The ultimate goal is to finish the heavy lifting before the high school senior-year workload, sports, performing arts, dance, and activities kick into high gear.