

# All Throughout High School

## Grades

Your grades don't need to be perfect. But always make an effort to keep your grades up. This may mean going in to talk to teachers, getting tutoring, or spending long hours in the library. That's OK. Remember that you lack of resources is not used against you and your grades are looked at in the context of you experiences.

## Keep a record of your extracurriculars

What you do when you're not eating, sleeping, homework-ing or school-ing. These are not just things you do after school, but things that take up your time that are not classes.

Community service  
Volunteering  
Clubs  
Sports  
Church  
Jobs  
Community Groups

## Summers

Consider working, participating in academic enrichment programs, summer workshops or volunteering at community organizations.

## Letters of Rec

Start forming relationships with teachers, employers, religious institutions or community organizations. Letters of rec should be from someone who knows you well and can speak positively and honestly about you. For instance, you're better off getting a letter of recommendation from a teacher who knows you well but got a low grade with than from a teacher whose class you did well in but doesn't know you at all.

# Junior Year: Research! Choose colleges to apply to

Start looking at colleges you are interested in before your senior year. Check out their websites and visit them if possible. Also start checking the requirements to apply to ensure that you meet them!

## Types of Colleges

**Public**  
are usually bigger  
have lower tuition

**Private**  
are usually smaller  
have higher tuition

*Examples:*  
Community Colleges  
PASSHE

*Examples:*  
Lists on Common  
Application

## Useful Sources

online  
family  
public library  
counselors  
teachers  
friends

## Location

Don't get stuck locally. Sometimes you may have a better chance of getting into schools out of state. Keep in mind tuition changes for out-of-staters.

## Tests: ACT, SAT I (Reasoning), SAT II (Subject Tests)

Some schools require that you submit certain test scores when applying. *Ask your school counselors if you are eligible for a fee waiver for reduced testing cost!*

Usually you can choose between the ACT and the SAT I, you don't have to take both. But make sure you check with the school(s) that you're applying to.

You can take up to three SAT subject tests at once, check what kind of tests the school(s) you are applying to require.

These tests are offered during specific dates a few times a year. Make sure to check the calendars and sign up in time to take the tests and keep in mind that you may want to retake them. You can retake tests if you did not do as well as you would have liked. If you do then you can usually submit your highest score to the school(s) that you're applying to.

Don't just pick one school! Come up with a list of colleges and divide them into three categories. Make sure you have a few schools in each category:

### Safety

You can get easily accepted.

### Meet

It's possible that you'll get accepted, but maybe you won't.

### Dream

It's difficult, but it happens! (Ivy Leagues)

# Senior Year: Applications

Go to school websites or call them to get a copy of the application you need to fill out. Make sure you have the **necessary requirements**: test scores, transcripts, language courses, letters of rec, personal statements, etc.

## Personal Statement

The personal statement is one of the most important parts of an application. This helps you be more to a college than simply grades and test scores. This is a written narrative that gives you the opportunity to write about your life and your experiences. This ranges from one to one and a half pages double spaced.

Writing personal narratives can be a long process that takes a lot of drafts. Start early and find one to two people who are willing to work with you on the editing process. It helps to have 2-3 different personal statements. You can use the same personal statement in different applications, you don't need to write a new one for every application. This applies to college and scholarship applications.

### Things to think about:

- What makes you unique/stand out?
- Who has influenced you?
- A challenge you've overcome
- Something about you and the world

### Three Themes

- International issue
- person that influenced you
- conflict/crisis

## Helpful Websites

### College Planning:

[www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org)  
SAT: [sat.collegeboard.org/](http://sat.collegeboard.org/)  
ACT: [www.actstudent.org/](http://www.actstudent.org/)  
PASSHE: [www.passhe.edu/](http://www.passhe.edu/)  
Common App: [www.commonapp.org/](http://www.commonapp.org/)

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