

# College planner: What parents and rising seniors should know

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Published 1:10 p.m. CT June 27, 2025

Parents of seniors, I am feeling your vibes right now. Senior summer is finally here, and if you are lucky, your teen has come out of their room at least a few times to eat or ask you for something. You both are probably feeling some pressure regarding college applications. Should we be getting started? Are we behind? Why am I looking ahead to this 'year of lasts' with a mix of trepidation, nostalgia and a pinch of protectiveness all at once?

The senior year is an emotional roller coaster for parents and students, and it will be over in what seems like a few minutes. Having just seen my daughter walk across the graduation stage with an enormous smile on her face, my guidance has much to do with the practical, yet is equally steeped in the emotional. Here is my best advice:



## Finish your homework

Though school is out, your teen still has homework. It is important that they finalize their balanced college list with a blend of safety, target and reach schools. I frame it to students this way: "If you were given the choice to go to \_\_\_ college or be locked in your room for four years, convince me that the college is the perfect fit for you?"

Seriously, ask for a persuasive speech. If your teen can't come up with five true academic and two social reasons why they want to apply to a school, then it won't be worth the application fee.

## Application mechanics

Create a Common Application account and fill out the sections in the middle tab. Create your activities list and main essay, and copy and paste it into the Common Application once it goes live on Aug. 1. You can add colleges to your list, but don't fill out any college specific information just yet as this information will not roll over. Wait until after Aug. 1 to add information to college-specific sections.

## Get it done: Write away

One of the most important things you can finish in the first half of summer is your main essay, which is a 650-word personal statement that goes to all colleges. Don't put this off.

Students can also collect their short answer questions from the Common App, understanding that they could change. They usually don't, and the most common questions such as the 'Why This Major?' or "Why This College?" are asked frequently.

## Apply early

Grab that admit rate boost by applying early action. This is not binding, but it does demonstrate interest and will get your application reviewed sooner than later. Have all of your rolling admission applications ready to go just as soon as you can after Aug. 1. I recommend a soft deadline of applying to most of your colleges (except University of California System schools) by Sept. 1.

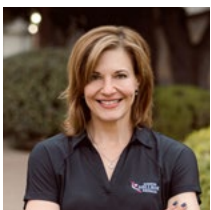
## Cultivate patience

And here it begins: the great wait. Keep checking your application portals. In the meantime, finish up those honors college applications and search for scholarships. Many scholarship deadlines come as early as Nov. 1, and it is a little-known fact that you don't need to be accepted to a school to apply for institutional scholarships;

## Pass the tissues

Somewhere in between disappointment and relief will come the final decision. If it is down to two or three favorites, attending admitted student's day is an excellent way to help your student make up their mind. Whatever the outcome, hold your child close. Understand that you have hit an important milestone, too, mom and dad. You have successfully raised a beautiful person who is intelligent and focused enough to go to college. You have also been able to provide for them so that college is attainable. That is an incredible feat. As hard as this truth is, remember that this was the goal when you started.

So as I book my lodging for move-in weekend, I implore you, parents of rising seniors, that we don't get to keep our children, we only get to guide them for a time until they are able to guide themselves. Keep the practical in mind this year, and by all means, if you need assistance, ask for it. We are here to help, and to empathize, with the year of lasts that is ahead of you.



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