

Top Ten Things Rising Seniors Can Do This Summer to Get a Jump on the College Search

1. Write a generic admission essay

Applying for college can take up as much time as a regular class during the senior year. By preparing a generic essay in advance that can be tailored to different applications, the student can spend more time on studies and extra curricular activities once school begins.

2. Complete one college admission application

This application can serve as the prototype for all other applications. The Common Application is accepted by hundreds of colleges and may be a good place to start.

3. Collect reference letters

Normally reference letters come from junior year teachers who have taught the student for the last full year. Teachers usually appreciate having the extra time over the summer to write a reference when the memory of the student's achievements is fresh.

4. Visit (or plan to visit) campuses

While summer is not the ideal time to visit campuses because there aren't many students there, this is the time high school students are free and parents' schedules are usually more flexible. These visits can also be made in the early fall and should include sitting in on a class, looking at the dorm rooms, eating in the cafeteria, and meeting with coaches and professors in areas of interest.

5. Develop preliminary list of colleges

Call, write or use the Internet to request information. Some colleges may even give out names of alumnus

in the student's neighborhood who may be willing to share experiences. Use this information to create a list of colleges to consider.

6. Participate in interesting activities

Summer is a time to act on interests through internships, volunteer work, clubs or paid positions. Try something productive and creative, preferably in an area of interest.

7. Keep a summer journal

A journal can help students chronicle their activities as well as determine what they want and need for the next few years. Journals also serve to help improve communication skills, critical for later success.

8. Plan to take SAT, ACT, SAT II

Rising seniors should have taken SATs and ACTs at least once by this point but may want to look at when they're offered again in the fall. Those taking SAT II subject tests will need to decide which subjects to take. If SAT prep courses are planned, sign up now for early fall.

9. Begin scholarship search

Use books and web-based services to begin a search for private money.

10. READ!

IECA experts point to reading as the best way to improve vocabulary and prepare for standardized tests. While reading, have a dictionary handy to look up unfamiliar words.

In a survey, the members of the Independent Educational Consultants Association listed the top things rising seniors can do to get a jump on the college search. IECA is a professional association of full-time experienced independent educational consultants who work with families on school placement issues.



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