

HABERSHAM

T H E H A B E R S H A M S C H O O L

Year-By-Year College Planning Guide

Freshman & Sophomore Year

- Building moral and intellectual habits is essential during this time. Focus on increasing independent work, and think about the courses you are interested in and what areas you would like to explore. These areas of early interest will become important as you near the end of high school and begin searching for colleges.
- Reading is always important but is especially significant in these early years of high school. Life is busy, but if you can squeeze in time to read, you'll be better for it. Reading other people's writing will make you a better writer. Plus, you'll have something interesting to talk about in those college interviews down the road. And most of all, you'll be a more interesting person.
- The more you write, the more prepared you'll be for life. The more you write, the better prepared you are for college essays, the SAT, high school, college, your career, and beyond. Take care when writing for your classes. Your teachers can help you hone your writing skills. Work with them. Write letters to family and friends. Start a journal. Find any excuse to get your ideas on paper.

Summer

Most kids think, “Ahh, the summer. Time to relax and watch lots of TV.” That's fine, and it is important to take time to relax and be a kid, but it would be good to do something productive, too. We advise students to: get a job; volunteer; attend an academic program somewhere; travel to a far away land. Students can enhance their interests by doing summer activities that include things they like to do – there is not a summer program that is “better” than another, except that the best options align with a student’s interests.

Campus Visits

Is it okay to visit colleges before junior year? Yes it is, but you need to pay very close attention to the interest of the student. If a student is not interested and parents drag them to a bunch of places they don't want to be, then it can get the college process off to a very poor start. On the other hand, if a student is interested and curious, it is fine to explore some campuses. We recommend being flexible and opportunistic. If you happen to be near a campus on a vacation or trip, you might consider taking a look. Campus tour and information session schedules can be found on colleges’ admissions websites.

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Junior Year

Junior year is an important time in the college admissions process. The formal college advising program will begin this year. The following is a college admissions calendar for the junior year as we present it directly to our students. It provides a good overview of what students may expect and what they need to do over the year.

September

- Concentrate on doing well in your classes. Remember that junior and senior year grades are often weighed more heavily than freshman and sophomore year grades in the college admissions process.
- Begin thinking about preferences in colleges such as location, size, liberal arts or technical emphasis, coed or single-sex, activities available, majors available, cost, etc. You will have your first meeting with the college counseling team to discuss goals.
- Do a general search using criteria you've set for yourself on college information websites:
 - www.collegeboard.com
 - www.petersons.com
 - www.princetonreview.com
- Begin preparing for the PSAT and SAT Reasoning Test. You may read preparation books on your own.
- Or visit: www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/
- Attend the Regional College Fair. This will be done during the school day.
- Begin working through your *PrinciplesYou* assessment in SCOIR.
- Representatives from colleges will visit Habersham throughout the year. Attend these visits and come prepared with questions. Check the visit schedule regularly.

October

Take the PSAT. Although the sophomore year PSAT was given for practice, the junior year scores may qualify you for National Merit Semifinalist status and make you eligible for possible National Merit scholarships.

- Indicate on your PSAT answer page that you wish to receive materials from colleges, and schools will send you information if your PSAT score suggests that you might qualify for admission.
- Complete your *PrinciplesYou* assessment in SCOIR.

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November

- Juniors who feel prepared to take the SAT Reasoning Test can take their first administration of the SAT in November (you can opt to take the SAT for the first time in January as well).

December

- PSAT scores will be emailed to you, and handed out at school. Estimate your SAT score based on the PSAT handbook. Establish what areas you need to work on and organize a study routine to improve those areas.
- For students who feel prepared to take the ACT and want to take that test instead of or in addition to the SAT, December is a good time to take the ACT for the first time (you can opt to take the ACT for the first time in February as well).
- Attend the junior college planning meeting that will be held.
- Enjoy having a break from school!

January

- Start the second semester working hard in your classes. Strong second-semester grades may be a key factor in an admission decision. Remember admission committees often weigh junior and senior year grades more heavily than grades you earned earlier in high school.
- You will get mail from colleges based on your PSAT scores. Read the materials thoroughly from the schools you find most interesting. They contain a great deal of information and will help you narrow down your choices.
- Plan college visits for later in the spring. Colleges offer information sessions and tours year round, but the spring is one of the most popular times to visit, so sessions and tours book up early. You will find more flexibility and access if you plan in advance - especially if you plan to visit colleges during spring break.
- January is a good time to make your summer plans. Many summer college programs, internships, or study abroad programs have February or March deadlines.

February

- Between now and the end of the school year, parents may schedule a meeting with the advising staff. At this point, we encourage you to take an active role with your student in the college process.
- Plan college visits. The spring sessions and tours book up early. You will find more flexibility and access if you plan in advance - especially if you plan to visit colleges during spring break.
- Register for the March/April SAT. We strongly urge all juniors to take the SAT or ACT at least one time before the end of junior year.

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March

- We strongly urge all juniors who have not already taken the SAT or ACT to take the SAT in March or the ACT in early April.
- Plan college visits for spring break.
- Continue to focus on your studies. Doing well in school during the second semester of your junior year can make a big difference.
- The college advising staff is available for junior parents and students for meetings to answer questions and plan the months ahead.

April

- Continue to gather information and evaluate colleges you are considering.
- Attend any spring college fairs and evening programs held at area hotels and high schools that catch your eye.
- Attend the Junior College Planning meeting.
- Register for the May and/or June SAT Reasoning or Subject Tests. Not all colleges recommend or require Subject Tests (in fact most colleges do not). However, you should determine if the colleges you are considering require them and register for them for the May or June test date (you can take up to 3 Subject Tests on one test date).

May

- You may take SAT Subject Tests, or take the SAT Reasoning Test again. Determine which subject tests are recommended by the colleges you are considering. Contact the college advising staff if you have any questions.
- Set up accounts with GAFutures and the Common App.

June

- You may take the SAT Reasoning Test again, particularly if you are not satisfied with your score or you are considering applying under an early decision plan; or take the SAT Subject Tests if you did not do so in May and the colleges on your list recommend or require Subject Tests.
- If you feel your SAT Reasoning Test score could improve with some studying and/or tutoring, the summer is a good time to work on SAT skills.
- The ACT is also administered in June.

Summer between Junior and Senior Years

- Visit college campuses in which you are interested, recognizing that you may need to return to some campuses when they are in session to get a complete view of the schools.
- Most college websites will have a schedule of tours and information about making an appointment.

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- Research the schools on your list you developed with your college advisor. Try to narrow your list to fewer than 10 schools that meet your criteria and accept students with your profile.
- Request application materials from the colleges on your list. You may do this online or by calling the Office of Admission.
- Plan to attend summer programs: camp, sports, travel, volunteer, or enrichment programs. Colleges often ask you to write about your summer experiences in an essay or describe them in an interview.
- If you are not satisfied with your standardized test results, use the summer months to hone your testing skills in a regimented fashion. You could use a tutor or use test prep materials on your own.
- Begin brainstorming about possible college essay topics and work on your rough drafts.
- Many colleges open their applications over the summer. Work on your applications early and get ahead of them before school starts. Students need to look at specific colleges to develop a college application game plan. Many schools use the Common App. To find out more about the Common App, you can visit www.commonapp.org.

Senior Year

The summer before and fall of your senior year is when the real work begins in the college admissions process. This is the time to finalize a college list and prepare applications. This is also the time when students work closely with their college advisor on these tasks. The more open the lines of communication are, the better the process. The following is a college admissions calendar for the senior year as we present it to students. It provides information about what to do and what is available to students and families as they go through the year.

August and September

- Meet with your college advisor to let us know where you are in the process. Come prepared with a list of colleges you have researched and are seriously considering for application.
- Begin to narrow your college list. We recommend you have two to four schools that look likely, have a reach or two (based on objective data), and have a sure bet or two. That rule of thumb has been around for decades because it's based on experience and realism.
- Register for the October and/or November SAT Reasoning or Subject Tests. Consider the ACT as well. You may register at www.collegeboard.com or www.act.org.
- Attend the Regional College Fair in September.
- Make arrangements to visit the colleges to which you have decided to apply. Arrange for an interview with the admissions office if it is required or recommended. Fall break could be an excellent time to visit schools while they are in session.

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- Work on and finalize your college essays! Familiarize yourself with what you will need to complete each of your applications.
- Ask your teachers for recommendations. Choose teachers who know you well and can offer anecdotes about your classroom contributions. Ask your college advisor if you have questions about who to ask for a recommendation.
- Representatives from colleges will visit Habersham in the fall. Attend these visits and come prepared with questions. Check the visit schedule regularly.
- Most important of all, keep focused on your schoolwork. First semester senior year grades are a very important part of a selective college application.

October

- Take the SAT Reasoning Test again, especially if you are applying under an Early Decision or Early Action program. You can take the ACT again in October or November.
- If the colleges on your list recommend or require SAT Subject Tests, the October test date is a good time to take them if you did not take them in May or June.
- Continue to narrow and refine your list. Your college advisor can help you with this task.
- Work on your applications. Get serious about your essays! The college advising staff is happy to look at drafts and answer any questions.
- Continue to meet with college representatives visiting Habersham.
- If you haven't done so, ask your teachers for recommendations.
- Many scholarship deadlines are in November and December. Read the Financial Aid and Scholarships section of our website to learn more.
- If you are applying for financial aid and a college requires the College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile, you can fill out that form now. Check what the colleges require for consideration of need-based financial aid. Some colleges ask for the CSS Profile and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Finish any applications with November 1 and 15 deadlines.

November

- Take the SAT Reasoning Test again if you did not take it in October. Or, take the SAT Subject Tests if your school recommends or requires them. You can take the ACT in November as well.
- Continue working on your applications. We **STRONGLY** suggest you complete all of your applications before the Holiday Break.

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December

- Finalize your college list if you have not done so.
- You can take the SAT Reasoning Test or Subject Tests in December.
- Prepare for first semester exams. First semester senior grades are a very important part of a competitive college application.
- Complete all of your applications. We **STRONGLY** suggest you complete your applications before the Holiday Break. You'll be very glad you did. If you have January 1 deadlines to meet, you will need to have your applications completed and submitted by mid December. **The advisement office will not send documents out over Christmas Break.**
- If you are applying for Financial Aid, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) becomes available online in December. Most colleges ask that you fill out the FAFSA by early to mid February, so we advise getting your tax documents in order as early as possible.
- The college advising office will send an updated transcript with first semester senior year grades to every college to which you have applied.
- Enjoy your break!

January

- After completing all of your college applications, this is the time to relax and wait for the college admission decisions.
- Focus on doing well in the second semester.. Don't let senioritis take over! Procrastinating on Senior Thesis is no fun in April! The colleges' acceptances are conditional upon your successful completion of your senior year at the level at which you were performing when you applied.

February

- Keep waiting, although some of you will hear decisions in February.
- If you hear from a college, let the college advising office know!
- If a college requests additional information, let the college advising office know.
- Keep a close eye on financial aid application deadlines.
- Keep senioritis at bay. Stay focused on doing well in school.
- If needed, updated copies of your transcript will be sent to colleges you have applied to.

March

- College decisions will continue to arrive, and you can begin deciding which college you would like to attend from those to which you are admitted.

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- Many colleges will offer admitted student programs on campus. These are helpful if you are unsure about your college choice(s).

April

- Most colleges will notify you of a decision by mid-April. Notify the college advising office when you hear news from a college.
- Carefully choose your college based on all the information you have gathered throughout this process. If you need someone to talk things over with you, don't hesitate to talk to the college advising staff.
- Inform the college you choose to attend and enclose the required deposit. May 1st is the universal reply date for notifying colleges of your intention to attend.
- Decline any other offers of admission in writing.
- Don't let senioritis kick in just yet! You're almost there!

May

- May 1st is the deadline for you to notify colleges of your decision. **You may place only ONE deposit!**
- Senior Thesis. This is such an accomplishment and such a foretaste of college life. Finish strong!

June

- The college advising office will mail a final transcript to the college you are attending. Keep us posted on how things are going your first year in college! We'd like to know how you're doing!