

SHS JUNIOR-SENIOR YEAR

12 MONTH COLLEGE CHECKLIST

The SHS Counseling Office takes pride in guiding students through their individual college admissions experiences. We understand students' timelines will vary, but the checklist below provides a general guideline. Working closely with your school counselor will ensure that students and families successfully navigate the year ahead. Please visit our web page for the full SHS College Planning Guide.

December

- _____ Attend College Night for Juniors at SHS on 12/11/23.
- _____ Review your full PSAT score report online via your College Board account. All students who took the PSAT should have received correspondence from Blue Book with instructions for viewing your score report.

January

- _____ Discuss appropriate course selections for senior year with your teachers.
- _____ Attend your Junior Conference (Students and parents will set up appointments through the Bookings app). Note that course selection will occur during the conference.
- _____ Plan your spring standardized testing schedule (SAT or ACT; see attached testing dates).
- _____ Begin your Junior College Planning Survey in Naviance.
- _____ If interested, attend the Gap Year Fair at Scarsdale HS on 1/10/24.
- _____ Attend Curriculum Night at SHS on 1/11/24.

February

- _____ Junior Conferences continue. Note that course selection will occur during the conference.
- _____ Consider visiting one or two college campuses over winter break. (One public and one private)
- _____ Begin thinking about summer plans. If you are considering a summer enrichment program, visit the College and Career Center for more information.

March/April

- _____ Visit college campuses during spring recess.
- _____ Schedule an appointment in the Writing Center and start drafting your college essay.
- _____ Ask two current teachers if they will write college letters of recommendation on your behalf.

May

- _____ AP and IB exams are administered, if applicable.
- _____ Parents and students attend the College and Career Night at Yorktown High School on 5/2/24.

June

- _____ Review your academic record and ensure progress towards graduation. Your transcript at the end of junior year is the document that will be sent to colleges.

July/August

- _____ Continue to research colleges and universities.
- _____ Visit college campuses.
- _____ Work on your college essay and consider attending the PTSA Essay Writing Workshop.
- _____ Check and verify your transcript in the Campus Backpack.
- _____ Complete as much of the Common Application as possible.
- _____ If not already completed, finish your Junior College Planning Survey in Naviance

September

- _____ Complete your main essay and begin any supplemental essays.
- _____ Request teacher letters of recommendation in Naviance (after a verbally accepted request in the spring) and follow up with teachers if needed.
- _____ Match your Common App and Naviance accounts.
- _____ Attend Senior College Night.
- _____ Attend student/counselor Senior Check-in Meeting.
- _____ Begin meeting with college representatives in the College and Career Center.

October

- _____ Individual Senior Check-in Meetings continue.
- _____ Set up appointment to process first completed Transcript Request Form. (Note that this must be given to your counselor no less than ten school days prior to your earliest deadline.)
- _____ Send official SAT/ACT score reports to colleges (if applicable).
- _____ Attend the Northern Westchester College Conference at the JV Mall on 10/23/24.
- _____ Complete the FAFSA online (tentative), and if required, the CSS Profile.

November

- _____ Complete a First Quarter Grade Request Form if you want those grades sent to colleges. Note that first quarter grades are sent upon student request, but mid-year grades go to all colleges automatically.
- _____ File any remaining applications.

December

- _____ EA, ED and some rolling applications admissions decisions will begin arriving either electronically, or via the mail. Keep your counselor informed of all decisions!
- _____ Plan final visits to colleges you've been accepted to and are seriously considering.
- _____ File any outstanding applications prior to the middle of the month to ensure school materials can be sent before the holidays.
- _____ Plan to finish the year strong as colleges receive your final transcript, and all acceptances are contingent upon your final senior year grades. Be sure to continue good work habits, as senior slumps often translate to freshman year work habits.

Standardized Testing for Juniors Q & A

Q: What tests should I be taking this year?

A: No one testing schedule fits every student, but after taking the PreACT in sophomore year, most juniors should consider taking the PSAT, the ACT and/or the SAT. Note that Community Colleges do not require standardized testing, and many colleges are test optional. You can see this list at Fairtest.org.

Q: When should I take my tests?

A: Ideally, students should develop a plan to complete testing in the spring semester of junior year. The most common testing dates are April through June of junior year, although some students begin testing during the winter of junior year, and some also test in the fall of senior year. Whenever possible, it is advisable to complete your standardized college admissions testing prior to your senior year.

Q: Do I need sign up to take the optional Writing/Essay portion?

A: Most colleges do not require the written portion of the ACT, but more selective colleges may recommend it. Students must review the application requirements of their prospective colleges to determine if this is needed.

Q: How do the tests I take get delivered to the colleges to which I decide to apply?

A: In senior year students must request (online) official scores from College Board or ACT be sent to the colleges to which you are applying. Some people stress over which scores to send, but in the end admissions offices will only be interested in your highest score, and will often "superscore", meaning that they will combine your highest sections from different test dates.

Q: What is the difference between the ACT and the SAT?

A: The ACT and the SAT are more similar than they ever have been, yet most students have a preference after sitting for both, and take one of these tests at least one more time to ensure their best score is achieved. Here are some key differences between the two tests:

ACT

SAT

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English, Math, Reading, and Science sections are each scored between 1-36, and are combined for a Composite Score of 1-36. - Includes an optional Writing Test, scored 2-12. - Includes a separate Science section (not based on content knowledge, but on reading a science-related passage and responding.) 	Topics and scoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence-based Reading and Writing and Math are both scored between 200-800, and are combined for a total score of 800-1600.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Test is 2hrs., 55 mins., which overall is a slightly shorter test, but contains more questions, so you have less time per question. - Optional Writing Test is 40 mins. 	Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Test is 3 hrs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In addition to an emphasis on algebra with some trig, a greater percentage of math is devoted to geometry. - A calculator can be used on all math problems. - No formulas provided. 	Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One of the two math sections covering algebra, some geometry and some trig does not allow the use of a calculator. - A greater percentage of the overall score is based on math. - Formulas are provided.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More questions in less time related to five reading passages, but more straightforward. 	Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fewer questions related to four reading passages, but more complex. - Includes reading and comprehension of charts, graphs, and tables.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires analysis of documents and producing evidence to support a position taken. There is no wrong opinion, but reasoning through quality writing are important. 	Essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No longer offered as of June, 2021

Q: How do I prepare for either test?

A: Students take a variety of approaches, from enrolling in group prep courses, to hiring individual tutors, to taking advantage of free online resources. Regardless of the route taken, the single most effective strategy towards achieving your best score is taking multiple, timed practice tests. Free ACT/SAT prep is available online through www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat, or <https://academy.act.org>.

Q: How do I register for a test, and where can I find the testing dates?

A: Below are links and steps for registering for both tests. You will also find details on test dates and registration deadlines on each site.

SAT Registration: <https://www.collegeboard.org/>

SHS CEEB Code = 335245

It's a good idea to plan ahead — and get comfy — before you start to register.

1. Sign in to your free College Board account. Your parent or counselor can't register for you.
2. Provide your full, legal name and other identifying information. Make sure it's the exact same name and information shown on your photo ID.
3. Decide if you want to answer other questions about yourself. This takes time, but it's worth it if you want colleges and scholarship organizations to find you. Learn why you should opt in to Student Search Service®.
4. Decide whether to sign up for the SAT with Essay. See which colleges recommend or require it.
5. Upload a photo that meets very specific photo requirements.
6. Check out, and print your Admission Ticket.


Reminder: In order to receive accommodations (extended time, etc.) on any standardized test you must apply for approval with that company (College Board or ACT). Be sure to discuss this with your counselor at least two months prior to testing.


You Might Also Need ... If you're using a fee waiver, enter the identification number on your fee waiver card.


If you've been approved by the College Board to test with accommodations, enter the SSD number on your eligibility letter.

ACT Registration: <http://www.act.org/>


What You'll Need

 **About 40 Minutes** - Information you provide will be visualized on your score report to help you to explore possible careers that align with your stated interests

 **Desktop or laptop with an internet connection** - Mobile and tablet not recommended

 **Credit Card or other form of payment**

 **High school course details**

 **Headshot photo** - Now or anytime before the photo deadline

ACT Composite Score	SAT Composite Score
36	1590
35	1540
34	1500
33	1460
32	1430
31	1400
30	1370
29	1340
28	1310
27	1280
26	1240
25	1210
24	1180
23	1140
22	1110
21	1080
20	1040
19	1010
18	970
17	930
16	890
15	850
14	800
13	760
12	710
11	670
10	630
9	590

2023-2024 SAT/ACT Test Dates

SAT Test Dates 2023-2024

Test Date	Deadline	Late Registration
August 26, 2023	July 28, 2023	August 15, 2023
October 7, 2023	September 8, 2023	September 26, 2023
November 4, 2023	October 6, 2023	October 24, 2023
December 2, 2023	November 3, 2023	November 21, 2023
March 9, 2024	February 24, 2024	February 27, 2024
May 4, 2024	April 19, 2024	April 23, 2024
June 1, 2024	May 17, 2024	May 21, 2024

ACT Test Dates 2023-2024

Test Date	Deadline	Late Registration
September 9, 2023	Aug 4, 2023	Aug 18, 2023
October 28, 2023	Sept 22, 2023	Oct 6, 2023
December 9, 2023	Nov 3, 2023	Nov 17, 2023
February 10, 2024	Jan 5, 2024	Jan 19, 2024
April 13, 2024	Mar 8, 2024	Mar 22, 2024
June 8, 2024	May 3, 2024	May 17, 2024
July 13, 2024 (NOT IN NY STATE)	June 7, 2024	June 21, 2024

*PRE-ACT test for sophomores will be held Saturday, March 23, 2024. Students and families will be notified when registration opens.

College Application Terms

Associate's degree	A two-year degree. Students may apply credits from a two-year program to a four-year program.
Bachelor's degree	A four-year, undergraduate degree.
Binding decision	If you are accepted, you must attend that college (ED only.)
The Common Application	An application that over 1,000 colleges subscribe to, which is filled out once and submitted to multiple colleges.
CSS Profile	A financial aid application (more detailed than the FAFSA) for private colleges, available in October of senior year at www.cssprofile.collegeboard.org
Deferral	An EA or ED application may be deferred for review to the regular applicant pool.
Deposit	This is your non-refundable fee that is paid to <u>one</u> college by May 1 st to acknowledge that you will be attending.
Early Action (EA)	An application deadline as early as October 15 th , which will generally provide a non-binding response from the college by mid-December. Students may apply to multiple EA colleges. Exceptions to this rule are Single Choice, or Restrictive EA plans, which allow only one EA application (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Georgetown, Stanford, Notre Dame, and Caltech.)
Early Decision (ED)	An application deadline as early as November 1 st , which will generally provide a binding response from the college by mid-December. Students may only apply to one college ED. ED II is a later round of ED.
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid, typically available in October of the senior year (2023 is an exception and FAFSA will be available by 12/31/23) at www.fafsa.ed.gov . Beware sites ending in .com, or .org, or programs that charge fees (scams.)
NCAA Clearinghouse	Organization that determines student athletic eligibility for Division I and II programs.
Official Testing	Standardized testing (SAT's or ACT's) which students must request to request to be sent directly from the College Board or ACT to colleges.
Regular decision	This application deadline generally ranges from early January to mid-February. Decisions will generally arrive by early April.
Rolling admissions	Rolling applications are typically reviewed according to the date that they are received. State schools, (SUNY and out of state, state colleges), generally follow this practice. It is recommended to submit any rolling applications on the same timeline as EA or ED applications.
Waitlist	A regular applicant who cannot be offered acceptance at decision time, but may be offered admission at a later date can be placed on this list.

College Campus Visit Tips

If getting started on college visits is difficult, go see whatever is most convenient.

You can start locally by seeing a private school and a state school to gain perspective and begin to understand what you're looking for. There are a variety of colleges an hour or less away. Many high school students have never stepped foot on a college campus, so gaining some exposure is key. Don't make decisions about the type of campus that will work before experiencing it firsthand.

Plan your campus visit around something else in the area – anything.

If the sole purpose of your trip is to see the college, it can be a far more stressful and less interesting trip. If you can't find anything that appeals to you on campus, in the town or on the way there, that should tell you something.

Know yourself.

Are you high maintenance or low maintenance? Do you need the campus to have a very specific look and feel, or will you be good just about anywhere that seems like it's holding up? One way isn't better than the other. This is about who you are and what you need.

Will you attend the 500 seat lecture hall and can you learn that way, or do you need a more intimate academic setting? (Keep in mind that lectures are generally supplemented by discussions led by TAs.)

Are these students you see while on campus people you could see yourself going to class with, engaging with socially and creating bonds?

Take pictures and take notes

The college campuses you visit will become a blur after you've seen a few, and your likelihood of remembering the distinguishing features is similar to the likelihood of you remembering that different online password you set up that you didn't need to write down, because you'll never forget it.

Talk to students on the campus about their experience there.

If students don't ask the questions, parents will need to, regardless of how embarrassed the applicant might be. If someone were trying to sell you a car for \$200,000, would you be embarrassed to check under the hood? Get over it. You need to hear directly from students, and you need to hear from multiple students to filter out responses from students who may just be unhappy with everything.

Sample the dining hall food.

Food is important.

Find out what student supports are available on campus, and how easy they are to access.

College can be stressful, and for many students the supports that existed in high school are suddenly far away. Even if you think you've got it all under control now, it's still smart to know what you're getting for your money, and you never really know what you or a friend is going to need until you're there.

See the inside of a dorm room.

Try to see one other than the "model" room that's part of the tour. Ask about all the different options for freshmen housing. Ask what percent of students dorm on campus and how many commute. Is it a "suitcase school", meaning that students pack their suitcases to go home on the weekends? Answers to those two questions will tell you a lot about a college; but don't actually use the term "suitcase school" with the college when asking. It's not a compliment.

Don't judge the college by your tour guide.

How well a tour guide walks backwards shouldn't be part of your decision making process, nor should you assume everyone on campus is just like him or her (for better or worse).

Make sure the admissions office knows you were there.

Whether you have an on-campus interview, are part of a formal tour group or are conducting your own tour, be sure to leave your contact info with the admissions office. Many campuses will track visits to try to judge the likelihood of someone attending if offered admission.

And if you really want to step up your campus tour game...

Speak with a few professors in your intended area of study.

This isn't rocket science – you've got it. Talking to a college professor should be no different than talking to a high school teacher. You're assessing this person's interest and ability to connect to you as a person and as a student. If the professor doesn't seem interested in speaking with you, you could be at a school or in a department where professors are more interested in their research than in teaching. While this isn't a good sign, don't assume every professor is the same until you've spoken to a few.

Visit the area of town where most off campus housing is found.

On many college campuses upper class students move off campus to local housing typically rented out to students. Seeing what those areas are like will give you a good idea of what the future could have in store for you at that college. Similarly, if you're thinking of joining a fraternity or sorority, don't hesitate to drive by to see what some of their houses look like.

Speak with club or activity organizers or student government officers.

Just like in high school, being a student in college means being involved outside of the classroom as well, and where you'll meet students with similar interests. While meeting with athletic coaches usually follows the recruitment process, if you're interested in continuing athletics, but not at such a high level, be sure to ask about the intramural athletic programs they offer.

Identify campus mental health supports.

We are collectively becoming smarter in recognizing the need to acknowledge and support mental health challenges. This doesn't stop in college. The many supports students have at SHS will no longer be present, but colleges are improving these services to provide students with greater access at this much needed time in their lives. Stop by the campus' student support center (or other name they give it), and get a sense of the professional support offered. Note how accessible the services are, and what students would need to do to begin utilizing them.

Remember to go into each visit with an open mind and a confident attitude. By mid-April of senior year, you'll realize that the hardest part is deciding which college to attend. If you take these tips seriously and apply them on your visits, you'll be in a much better position to make a decision that's right for you.

College Process Advice from SHS Students

Don't let the application get ahead of you. Everyone goes at their own pace, which is perfectly fine, but you don't want to be a week out from the application deadline and not have any materials prepared. Do half an hour of work a day until you don't have anything left. It shouldn't be a super stressful process, but if you put things off until the last minute, it will be. And have fun!

Apply to wherever you like because you never know what the answer will be. Also, senior year is fun but don't mess around too much when it comes to your grades because colleges do actually look at your grades.

I would say to do your research on all the schools you are interested in and be sure to visit them. Also utilize the writing center during the year for help on your personal essay and supplements

Look at places in person. Find where you want to go, and if it's out of reach, there's almost 4,000 schools in America to choose from. One place is a home for you.

Don't apply to a school you really like but won't be allowed to go to. Talk everything through with your parents.

Honestly, have patience when applying to college and practice self-care because it could be really overwhelming and stressful while being a first semester senior. Also, a college decision doesn't define who you are.

Too often I recognized people driven to apply for, major in, or even attend certain schools just because it might have been seen as acceptable by others. If you let people's perceptions of you dictate your actions and behaviors, you will never truly thrive as an individual.

Be sure to apply to safety schools and schools that won't be your first choice. Initially I thought that some schools would be schools I wouldn't go to, but they ended up being my top choice. I thought I wouldn't go there because they weren't as highly ranked as I wanted. With my year being extremely selective, especially for the Ivy schools, having that second option really saved me. And I turned out to be very happy with my decision because the school had a lot of the qualities I was looking for.

Lose your ego and genuinely look at schools for their programs, cost (if applicable), campus, student population, etc., and not just their rank and acceptance rate.

Apply to more safety schools than you think you have to because a lot of colleges over-admitted in the past few years and are being more selective. People are getting rejected from their safety schools because of yield protection and/or lack of demonstrated interest. Additionally, with the new test-optional policy, applications are much more competitive. On the flip side, you also never know where you will get in or how much financial aid/merit you will receive, so I highly recommend going after your dream school. Make sure to write merit appeals if financing college is a large determining factor in your decision. Often all you have to do is request more money and schools are willing to give it to you (especially if it's closer to May 1st). Also keep in touch with your admissions counselor.

The most beneficial thing for me, when I looked at my final list, was not just touring the campus, but attending classes. Contact department heads of the programs you're interested in and show that interest. It gives you an opportunity not only to gauge the faculty and academics but your peers as well.

It's very cliché but everything always ends up working out. Choose the school that makes the most sense for you and not one that just seems appealing. I would recommend applying for as many scholarships as possible even though it's an annoying process. Enjoy it because it goes so, so, so fast!

My one piece of advice would be to remember that all of this work is being done for you and only you. Don't put it off or be annoyed that you have to do it, it is your future.

College Process Advice from SHS Parents:

Understand your child and the uncertainty and fear they may not be vocalizing which will affect how and where the child applies. Have continual contact with the counselor and discuss challenges and concerns about the process and your child overall.

Be engaged! Planning for career/college and the application process is complex and tedious and while it is important for your child to take the lead in the decisions for their future, to do it without parent support and guidance would be a huge undertaking. Attend every offering the school district provides, learn Naviance, talk to your child about course choices, and ask questions of the school counselors when uncertain! And if you feel your child needs more support from the school, ask for it.

Chill...your child will go somewhere. Highly recommend the book by Frank Bruni, *Where You Go is Not Who You Shall Be*. In addition, I hear many Somers parents refusing to allow their kids to apply to high price, private schools. We got an enormous amount of scholarships and grant money which made it not so far off from a state school.

Encourage your child to explore trades. College is not for everyone.

Go to all the informational programs they have for your child. Utilize your counselor and college and career center. They help you through every step.

Start early so it does not feel overwhelming in crunch time. Find the right fit for your student. Do not go into the whole process thinking that what looks the best on paper should be the best find for your kid. It should be the right choice for you as a parent as well with things like cost and location.

Do not start until your child is ready. Going on visits is not helpful if your child is not ready to engage in the process.

Enjoy the process as much as possible! Take the time to visit a variety of schools. Don't over apply! No one needs to send 20 applications; it will only confuse your student if they get in everywhere! Make sure your child writes an essay that really helps the reader get to know them as a person. Lastly don't waste your money on tutors for the standardized testing. Especially if more schools are going test optional.

Start early and create a calendar of due dates! With the demands of the school year, it can be difficult for students to manage multiple supplements/applications and school assignments. Students need to check emails and portals!



SOMERS HIGH SCHOOL PTSA

COLLEGE ESSAY WRITING WORKSHOP 2024

ATTENTION CLASS OF 2025:

This workshop is an effective and inspiring way to get started on your all-important college essay. Somers High School teachers, Mr. Matt Benedetto and Mr. John Murphy, will help guide you in crafting your essay. This is a popular workshop and seats are limited. Sessions 1, 2 & 3 will be held in the SHS Library and Session 4 will be held at Crystal Hall Somers Community Center.

Session 1:	Mon. July 8, Tues. July 9, Wed. July 10 SHS Library Lab	9:00 am – 11:00 am
Session 2:	Mon. July 8, Tues. July 9, Wed. July 10 SHS Library Lab	11:30 am – 1:30 pm
Session 3:	Mon. July 8, Tues. July 9, Wed. July 10 SHS Library Lab	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
*Session 4:	Mon. July 8, Tues. July 9, Wed. July 10	5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

*Crystal Hall Somers Community Center is intended for those students who work during the day

Each session is limited to 14 students. Students will be registered on a first-come, first-served basis based upon receipt of payment.

Cost: \$90.00 per student/per session
 Students are expected to attend all three (3) days/times in the session
 Students will be notified via email with session confirmation
 REFUNDS WILL NOT BE OFFERED FOR CANCELLATIONS WITHIN ONE WEEK OF START DATE. Please cancel by July 1st

- Payment Options:**
1. Omella link- <https://omella.com/plmkx>
 2. Check payable to **Somers High School PTSA** and mailed to:
Carolyn Brush 56, Watergate Drive, Amawalk, NY 10501

If you have any questions, please contact Carolyn Brush carolynbrush@gmail.com or Kelly Sposito dksposto@gmail.com

If you are not from Somers School District you must pay by check.

If paying by check, please complete and return the form below with your check (keep the top for your information)

Please write clearly

Student's Name: _____ District: _____

Student Email (non-school): _____ Guardian Email: _____

Student Cell: _____ Guardian Cell: _____

Session Choice: First Choice _____ Second Choice _____ Third Choice _____



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