

College Planning for Junior Year

QUICK FACTS SHEET



Course Selection for Senior Year

As you review your senior year schedule, please be sure to keep these senior year course requirements in mind. You need to ensure you have completed the requirements for graduation. These are imperative to have on your schedule to keep you on track for graduation. You are required to take:

- Civics and Government **and** 1 History Elective (Psychology, AP Psychology, Sociology, Economics, or Exploring the Legacies of Little-Known Changemakers), or AP Government
- Senior English Seminar
- Full year of Math (if college-bound)
- Gym or Senior Athletic Exemption
- Science (optional) If college-bound; a fourth year of science is recommended for students planning to pursue a science-related field
- Also, it is extremely important that you have met your art requirement (2 Visual or Performing Arts elective courses).
- If you have any questions regarding whether or not you have fulfilled this requirement, please see your counselor as soon as possible.

Letters of Recommendation

Do not do this until the end of May or early June!

Start thinking about which two teachers you may ask for a letter of recommendation. Before you leave for summer break, be sure to **verbally ask** two teachers if they are willing to write you a letter. Keep the following in mind:

- The official invite to teachers will be done through SchoolLinks after Aug 1st
- The two teachers should be from different subject areas
- It is helpful to have a resume or activity list to provide to anyone writing you a letter
- Your School Counselor can provide you with a template of a Teacher Recommendation Questionnaire or find it in SchoolLinks under forms
- Always be sure to provide anyone writing you a letter with as much notice as possible

SAT / ACT Testing

Preparations for the SAT and/or ACT should start as soon as possible. We highly recommend signing up for at least one test date during your junior year. All NHS sophomores and juniors take the PSAT. That will help guide you on your strengths and areas you need to improve before taking the official SAT Exam. Dates and registration deadlines for spring 2026 are listed below. NHS offers SAT prep courses during the spring and fall semesters. We work with our Adult Education and Revolution Prep to offer paid or FREE test prep. CollegeBoard also offers a free “SAT Question of the Day” emailed to you for daily practice.

SAT

SAT Date	Registration Deadline
March 14, 2026 *Offered at Newburyport High	Feb, 27, 2026
May 2, 2026 *Offered at Newburyport High	April, 17, 2026
June 6, 2026	May 22, 2026

ACT

ACT Date	Registration Deadline
April 11, 2026	March 6, 2026
June, 13, 2026	May 8, 2026
July 11, 2026	June 5, 2026

To register for the SAT through CollegeBoard:

- Go to the official SAT website: <https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/sat/registration>
- Click "**Sign In**" or "**Create Account**" if you don't already have one.
- Once logged in, click "**Register for the SAT.**"
- Select your test date and preferred test center.

To sign up for the ACT, follow these steps:

- Visit the official ACT website:
<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration.html>
- Click "**Sign In**" or "**Create MyACT Account**" if you don't already have one.
- Once logged in, click "**Register for the ACT**"
- Select your preferred test date and test center.

College Admission Deadlines

The following terms are used to describe the various types of college admissions deadlines:

- **Early Action (EA):** Non-binding. You can apply to a school early in your senior year. You receive an early application review and notification of admission.
- **Early Decision (ED):** Binding. You will have to sign a contract with the college/university at the time you apply to acknowledge that if you're accepted, you're obligated to attend that college/university without receiving the Financial Aid Award yet. In order to apply ED you need to check the box on the Application, your parent/guardian signs off on it and your School Counselor also will need to sign off on it, that way all involved are aware of the process.
- **Regular Decision (RD):** The normal process by which students apply by published deadlines, with the promise of receiving an admissions decision no later than April 1.
- **Rolling Admissions:** The college will review your application once all required materials have been received.
- **Restrictive Early Action (REA):** A non-binding early application option that allows students to apply early to one school, signifying a strong interest in that institution, without being obligated to attend if accepted. However, you are restricted from applying early to any other private colleges.

Should you apply Early Decision or Early Action?

Early Decision is a binding agreement and you can only apply to one College ED, if you are accepted that is where you will be attending. You would need to make the financial decision without knowing your full financial aid award package before being accepted.

Applying to an ED or EA plan is **most appropriate** for a student who:

- Has researched colleges extensively.
- Are absolutely sure that college is their first choice.
- Has found a college that is a strong match academically, socially, and geographically.
- Meets or exceeds the admission profile for the college for SAT® scores and GPA.
- Has an academic record that has been consistently solid over time.

Applying to an ED or EA plan is **not appropriate** for a student who:

- Has not thoroughly researched colleges.
- Is applying early just to avoid stress and paperwork.
- Is not fully committed to attending that college.
- Is applying early only because friends are.
- Needs a strong senior fall semester to bring grades up.

Demonstrated Interest

Demonstrated interest is the degree to which you show a college that you are sincerely interested in coming to their school. It shows a school that you are more likely to attend compared to another applicant. Some schools track this during the admissions process. Here are a few ways to show demonstrated interest:

- Official campus tour
- Filling out information sheets at a college fair and talking to the representatives
- Applying to the school
- Interview with Admissions
- Contact with Admissions Rep (phone call, email, in person)

Counselor Assignments

Be sure to keep your School Counselor in the loop when it comes to your post-secondary planning process. We are here to help guide you in the right direction. It is imperative that you have a meeting to discuss your plans with your counselor. Counselor assignments are listed below:

A - Downs	Ms. Fitzgerald	cfitzgerald@newburyport.k12.ma.us
Duncan - LeDuc	Mrs. Phelps	sphelps@newburyport.k12.ma.us
Linteris - Rathbone	Ms. Potter	mpotter@newburyport.k12.ma.us
Refour - Z	Mrs. Bohler	kbohler@newburyport.k12.ma.us

Important Resources

1. **SchoolLinks:** This program provides you with a College Search portal which can help you to start thinking about colleges you might want to apply to, and it will help you narrow down your list. <https://app.schoollinks.com/login/k12>
2. **Common App:** You will most likely use this website to apply to many colleges on your list. Feel free to peruse the site to get a better feel for what to expect this fall during the application process. <http://www.commonapp.org/>
3. **STARS:** Self-Reported Transcript and Academic Record System is another platform students may need to create their own account and use an unofficial transcript to fill-in all the academic courses taken throughout high school. Check the list of participating colleges. <https://srar.selfreportedtranscript.com/Login.aspx>
4. **College Board:** This website also has a great college search function. This is where you will register to take the SAT and the website through which you will send your SAT scores. <https://www.collegeboard.org/>
5. **Niche:** Another great free resource to search for colleges, find direct admissions, and scholarship opportunities. <https://www.niche.com/colleges/search/best-colleges/>

Excused Absence for College Visits

Juniors and Seniors are allowed up to three excused absences per semester from school to attend a college tour. Reasonable proof of the visit is required. Examples include a parking pass, a dated note from the admissions office, or the “Request to be absent to visit a college” sheet found in Student Support.

Common Application Essay Prompts

Part of the college application process includes writing essays that tell the college something about you as a person and demonstrate your writing style and ability. The following are the [essay prompts from the 2025-2026 Common Application](#) to give you an idea of what the essay questions may be like (they may change for the 2026-2027 application year so stay posted).

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you’ve solved or a problem you’d like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you’ve already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

