

What This Year Is About

Junior year is often the **busiest and most important academic year** of high school. Classes become more demanding, activities require more time, and college planning becomes real. The goal is to stay organized, protect academic performance, and begin the college process early enough that senior year feels manageable – not overwhelming.

Academic Priorities

- **Protect your GPA.** Junior-year grades are heavily reviewed during college admissions.
- **Choose appropriate rigor.** Take the strongest course load you can realistically manage. Challenging classes matter, but so does performing well.
- **Get help early.** Small academic gaps can become big ones quickly during junior year.
- **Manage your time.** Stay ahead of long-term papers, labs, projects, and major deadlines rather than relying on last-minute work.

Start the College Process

Junior year is the time to move from casually thinking about college to developing a plan:

- Meet with your school counselor and understand the college application timeline.
- Begin a balanced college list that includes **reach, target, and likely schools**.
- Visit different types of colleges when possible to learn what feels like a good fit.
- Understand terms such as **Early Decision, Early Action, Regular Decision, rolling admissions, superscoring, and test-optional**.
- Discuss college costs and affordability as a family while building the list.

Testing

- Decide whether the **SAT or ACT** makes sense for your college plan.
- Map out testing dates and allow enough time for preparation and possible retesting.
- Decide whether self-study, a prep course, or tutoring makes the most sense.
- Students with testing accommodations should confirm requirements and paperwork well in advance.

Activities + Recommendations

Junior year is about **depth, not quantity**.

- Focus on a few activities that are genuinely meaningful to you.
- Pursue leadership opportunities when they are authentic and earned.
- Keep an updated résumé or activity list with **activities, leadership, service, honors, jobs, and summer experiences**.
- Begin thinking about which teachers know you well enough to write strong recommendations.



Parents Should Watch For

Junior year can become overwhelming when students try to manage academics, activities, testing, and college planning without a system. Watch for taking on too much, putting off testing or guidance meetings, focusing on college names instead of fit and cost, or waiting until senior year to think about recommendations, essays, and deadlines.

FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Protect grades, establish strong routines, and stay meaningfully involved.	Meet with school counselors, begin college research, and create a testing plan if needed.	Build and refine the college list, visit schools, and think ahead about recommendations.

Junior Checklist

- ☐ Protect GPA and course performance.
- ☐ Meet with your school counselor and understand the application timeline.
- ☐ Plan SAT or ACT testing if needed.
- ☐ Build a balanced college list.
- ☐ Visit and research colleges.
- ☐ Keep an updated activity résumé.
- ☐ Think ahead about teacher recommendations.
- ☐ Use the summer before senior year to get ahead.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Junior year rewards consistency and preparation. Stay organized, protect your academic record, and start the college process early so you enter senior year with a clear plan.