

Take a breath. This summer is about setting up habits, not getting ahead. No SAT prep, no college list, no pressure. Just a handful of practical things so your family is not scrambling to catch up later. You have four years.

Academics

- ☐ **Review the fall course schedule together.** If something needs to change, contact the school counselor before the year starts, not during the first week.
- ☐ **Get ahead on required reading.** Don't leave summer reading for the last week of August. No assignment? Reading anything keeps the brain engaged.
- ☐ **Set up a homework system.** A planner, a digital calendar, a whiteboard. It doesn't matter which, as long as it exists before the first assignment lands.

Activities and Interests

- ☐ **Check for summer requirements now.** Fall sports often have physicals and tryouts over the summer, and marching band may start rehearsals in June or July. Deadlines can come weeks before orientation.
- ☐ **Follow the school on social media.** The school, athletic boosters, teams, band programs, the principal. Join the parent Facebook pages too, so you're in the loop before the year starts.
- ☐ **Research what's available.** Look through the club and sports list together. Ask your student what sounds interesting, not what looks good on a resume.
- ☐ **Try something new.** A volunteer project, a coding camp, a sport they've never tried, a part-time job. Anything that expands their world counts.
- ☐ **Don't over-schedule.** Downtime matters. Boredom leads to creativity. Let your student have space to figure out what they actually care about.

Organization

- ☐ **Start a record.** One simple place to track classes, grades, activities, awards, and volunteer hours. You won't remember the details three years from now.
- ☐ **Set up an email address.** Something professional with their name, not the handle they use for gaming.
- ☐ **Know the school calendar.** Orientation, first day, early release days, parent night. Put them on the family calendar now.

A few honest conversations now are easier than the same conversations in the middle of October. And the second list below is just as important as the first: things you can happily skip this summer.

Conversations to Have

- ☐ **Talk about what high school will be like.** The independence, the workload, the social dynamics. Acknowledge the nerves without making it sound scary.
- ☐ **Mention college casually.** No sit-down about "the plan." Just normalize that college is one of many paths, and the next four years will help them figure out what's right.
- ☐ **Discuss grades honestly.** Freshman year grades count and are part of the transcript. That doesn't mean perfection. It means effort and asking for help when things get hard.
- ☐ **Set expectations about balance.** How will your family handle homework, screen time, activities, and sleep? Talk about it before the pressure starts.

What You Do NOT Need to Do

- ☐ **Build a college list.** Your student will change their mind many times. Let them.
- ☐ **Start test prep.** SAT and ACT testing is years away. There is no advantage to starting now.
- ☐ **Visit colleges.** Unless you're nearby on vacation, save formal visits for when your student knows what they're looking for.
- ☐ **Hire a counselor.** Freshman year does not require professional guidance. If you want support later, there will be time.
- ☐ **Panic.** You have four years. This summer is about getting ready, not getting ahead.

The real goal this summer: the families who feel most in control during junior and senior year are not the ones who started college prep earliest. They're the ones who built simple habits and kept a record from the beginning. Set the stage, have a few good conversations, and let your student explore.

Keep the record in one place. CollegeHound gives your family one free shared college planning workspace, and Scout, our AI guide, is the paid upgrade. Start free at collegehound.com/get-started