

Senior Fall Application Timeline

How to use this: Work backward from your earliest deadline instead of waiting for deadlines to become urgent. The official due date is rarely the only date that matters. Set internal targets that fall well before it, and confirm each college's actual dates. Yours may differ from the typical ones here.

August

Build the master list

- ☐ List every college with its application type and official deadline in one place
- ☐ Note supplemental essay requirements for each school
- ☐ Note recommendation requirements and testing policy for each school
- ☐ Add scholarship, honors college, and financial aid dates. They often have separate deadlines
- ☐ Flag the earliest deadlines first: Early Action, Early Decision, and rolling admission schools
- ☐ Set internal deadlines for each application: first draft, revision, final review, and a submission target several days before the official date

September

Essays, recommendations, testing

- ☐ Get the personal statement to a solid first draft
- ☐ List supplemental prompts by college and set first-draft dates for each
- ☐ Confirm recommenders: who was asked, who agreed, and what each one needs
- ☐ Find out when your school's recommendation forms and requests are due
- ☐ Settle testing: remaining test dates, score-release timing, and whether a retake is realistic or it's time to stop testing and focus elsewhere
- ☐ Start a weekly 15-20 minute check-in: what got done, what's due next, what feels stuck

October

The early push

- ☐ Finish and revise essays for early applications
- ☐ Do parent review and application checks ahead of the rush
- ☐ Follow up politely with recommenders on letters needed for early deadlines
- ☐ Complete the FAFSA when it opens for your cycle, plus the CSS Profile if any of your colleges require it
- ☐ Track scholarships tied to early applications. Some require earlier submission for merit consideration

The early round is not the finish line. Keep the weekly check-in going, and keep regular decision work moving while you wait on early results.

November

Submit early, keep moving

- ☐ Submit Early Action and Early Decision applications several days before the deadline (often November 1 or 15, but confirm each school)
- ☐ Check each portal to confirm recommendations and test scores actually arrived
- ☐ Decide school by school whether to submit test scores
- ☐ Keep drafting regular decision supplemental essays. Don't stop after the early round

December

Regular decision prep

- ☐ Finalize remaining essays: revision window first, then a final review date
- ☐ Watch for early results and adjust the list or plan if needed
- ☐ Gather any materials needed for merit scholarship consideration
- ☐ Aim to submit regular decision applications before winter break if you can

January

Wrap-up

- ☐ Submit any remaining applications ahead of January deadlines
- ☐ Check every portal one more time: application, letters, scores, and aid forms all received
- ☐ Keep tracking scholarship and school-specific aid deadlines. Money deadlines continue past the application ones
- ☐ Keep the weekly check-in going until the last application is in

A timeline should reduce panic, not create more. It isn't helpful because it shows the whole mountain. It's helpful because it shows the next steps clearly: what matters now, what can wait, what needs to happen this week, and what's already done.

Track every deadline 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