

How to use this: The families who start in June spend August assembling and polishing instead of starting from zero. Check items off as your student goes. Every month has slack built in; a week at the beach does not break the plan.

June

Lay the groundwork

- ☐ **Ask for recommendation letters.** Teachers get swamped in the fall; asking now moves your student to the front of the line.
- ☐ **Start the personal essay brainstorm.** Not the draft, the ideas. A 20-minute brain dump is enough to begin.
- ☐ **Research colleges seriously.** Move from vibes to data: programs, size, cost, and what admitted students look like.
- ☐ **Register for fall standardized tests.** Seats and preferred test centers fill up; register before deadlines sneak past.
- ☐ **Create FSA IDs.** Both student and a parent need StudentAid.gov accounts, and identity verification can take days.

July

Draft and decide

- ☐ **Write the first draft of the personal essay.** It will not be good yet. That is fine; drafts are for fixing.
- ☐ **Finalize the college list.** A balanced mix of reach, target, and safety schools your student would actually attend.
- ☐ **Visit campuses.** In person or virtual; take notes the same way every time so schools stay comparable.
- ☐ **Start supplemental essay research.** Note which schools on the list require supplements and how many.
- ☐ **Begin the scholarship search.** Deadlines start earlier than most families expect; a running list now pays off all year.

Behind already? Do not try to catch up all at once. Pick the single earliest-deadline item (usually recommendations or test registration), do it this week, and move forward from there.

August: The Common App Opens

August 1 is when it becomes real. The Common App opens and your student can start the actual application. If June and July went to the tasks on page 1, August is assemble and polish, not panic.

August

Assemble and polish

- ☐ **Open the Common App and fill out the profile.** Personal info, family, education history, and the activities section, where a completed brag sheet makes the 150-character descriptions dramatically easier.
- ☐ **Polish the personal essay.** Revise the July draft. Read it aloud. One or two trusted readers, not five with five opinions.
- ☐ **Start supplemental essays.** The exact prompts appear once the Common App opens. "Why us?" answers need real research, especially for reach schools.
- ☐ **Set up a counselor meeting.** Email before school starts to grab a first-or-second-week slot; confirm access to Naviance, Scoir, or whatever platform your school uses.
- ☐ **Prepare for financial aid.** Gather tax returns, W-2s, and bank statements before the FAFSA opens in the fall; check whether any school needs the CSS Profile, and note those deadlines.

The goal is not a finished application by Labor Day. It is a student who walks into senior fall with the essay drafted, the list set, recommendations arranged, and nothing starting from zero.

Track the whole summer in one place. CollegeHound gives your family one free shared college planning workspace for deadlines, essays, and every school on the list. Scout, our AI guide, is the paid upgrade. Start free at collegehound.com/get-started