

# The College Cheat Sheet for Seniors

## Take the ACT one last time.

December or January will be your absolute last chance to take the ACT before most college applications are due. You gain an average of two points every time you take it, so that one last try could mean the difference between getting into a more selective school or getting a merit-based scholarship. Both are well worth one last Saturday morning.

## The Common Application is your friend

Many colleges now accept the Common Application ([commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org)), which means you only have to fill out one application. The sooner you load it up, look it over, and start working your way through it, the more polished it will be.

## Take a second (or first) look at colleges

You're probably familiar with nearby colleges, but who says they're necessarily right for you? It might be tempting to go where your friends are going or someplace where you can come home every weekend, but both of those are against what college is all about: meeting new people and making it on your own. Take a look at schools a little farther away (Ohio Wesleyan, Wooster, Denison, Ohio Northern, Kenyon, Capital, Otterbein, etc.) that may offer you much more than the colleges that happen to be nearby.

## The Myth of "I just want to have fun senior year"

You might think you have to choose between being responsible about your college applications and having a fun senior year. You don't. The only time college applications interfere with having a good time is when you leave them to the last minute and have to spend a few painful weeks in March putting them together. Who doesn't have an hour a week to spend on something that will decide the next four years of your life?

On the same note, don't let your grades slide now. Your fall grades will be on your transcript for your application, and colleges will notice if they're significantly lower. Slacking now just wastes any effort you made in your freshmen, sophomore, and junior years.

## Deadlines can kill

Each college has its own application deadline, its own deadline for scholarships, etc. For schools you're seriously considering, spend some quality time with their websites and make sure you're on track to meet those deadlines. Otherwise you'll realize one day that you missed the opportunity to get major money from your first choice school or that you can't apply at all.

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## General Timeline of College Applications

**November:** Submit Early Decision application. Start scholarship search.

**January:** Continue scholarship search. Last chance to take ACT/SAT.

**April:** Most admission decisions mailed.

**June:** Graduation.

**September-October:** Take ACT/SAT again. Work on college apps. Visit colleges.

**December-March:** Submit Regular Decision apps.

**February-March:** Stay current on Senior Project.

**May:** Most deposits due for college tuition.