📌 College Application Timeline (U.S. Students)

🎯 **Purpose:** This timeline provides a structured overview of key milestones in the college application process. **It is divided by grade level and—once application season starts—month-by-month.**

Timeline: GRADES 9-11				
Grade	**Academics**	**Extracurriculars**	**Testing**	**Applications**	**Financial Aid**
Grade 9	Focus on strong GPA & study habits. Explore interests through coursework.	Explore interests broadly. Join clubs, sports, or activities of interest.	Identify required tests (SAT/ACT, TOEFL/IELTS).	Understand admissions processes & what colleges look for.	
Grade 10	Focus rigorous coursework (AP/Honors) on subjects where you're strongest/most interested.	Narrow ECs to 2-4 focus areas (academic & non-academic). Take leadership roles in meaningful activities. Join competitions. Consider internships, research, and passion projects.	Take PSAT/NMSQT. Take practice ACT & SAT to compare. If completed Algebra II, take first SAT/ACT.	Research schools broadly & major options.	
Grade 11	Advance with rigorous coursework in key academic subjects. Identify potential major/minor subjects.	Deepen commitment to top extracurriculars. Deepen activities in your core focus areas (academic and non-academic).	Take SAT/ACT (up to 3 times if needed) soonest after completing Algebra II.	Research schools & major options. **Request recommendation letters** with rec letter package. Evaluate application strategies / personas.	Research need-based vs. merit-based financial aid. Research scholarships.

Timeline: APPLICATION SEASON (summer before grade 12 + grade 12)

Month	Academics	Extracurriculars	Testing	Applications	Financial Aid
June		Summer programs / activities focused on your core academic or non-academic focuses.	Retake SAT/ACT if needed.	**Lock down your application strategy / persona.** **Draft Personal Statement.** Draft activities / honors lists. Virtual/in-person campus visits. **School research late stages.** If you haven't already, email teachers to request rec letters.	Identify financial aid forms required (CSS Profile, school-specific) & external funding opportunities.
July		Summer activities cont'd.		**Finalize Personal Statement.** Late draft activities / honors lists. **Create CommonApp account & fill out background info.** **Finalize early school list incl majors/minors** & late draft of regular schools.	
August		Summer activities cont'd.	Identify test policies at relevant schools.	**Finalize activities / honors lists (CommonApp format).** **Draft supplemental essays of early schools** (CommonApp prompts open Aug 1). If you haven't already, **ask for rec letters ASAP** & submit rec letter package.	
Sep, G12			Submit AP/SAT/ACT test scores to schools.	**Finalize supplemental essays** of early schools. Confirm recommendation letters are submitted. Fill in ALL CommonApp background & education info.	

Timeline: APPLICATION SEASON (summer before grade 12 + grade 12)				
Oct, G12	Keep challenging coursework and maintain grades.	Maintain EC depth. Highlight leadership roles & achievements in applications.	Submit test scores to early schools before deadlines.	Finalize apps, incl: **Review of ALL materials.** Minimum 2 external reviewers. Correctly uploaded to app portals. Formatting, typos, etc. **"Preview" all application materials as PDF.** Finalize regular decision school list.	Submit FAFSA. Submit CSS Profile for private schools and other school-specific forms. Apply for external scholarships.
Nov, G12	Maintain grades.	Maintain EC depth.		**Pay application fees.** **Submit Early Decision/Early Action applications** (Nov 1-15). Create school portal accounts. Draft RD & ED2 supplemental essays.	Apply for external scholarships.
Dec, G12	Maintain grades. Submit mid-year transcript updates if requested.	Maintain EC depth.	Submit test scores to ED2 & regular schools.	Finalize ED2 & early Jan RD supplemental essays. Review decisions & requests from early schools. If waitlisted, submit Letter of Continued Interest (LOCI).	Compare financial aid & appeal if needed.
Jan, G12	Maintain grades.			Finalize ED2 & RD applications (Jan 1-Feb 15). **Pay application fees & submit applications.** Create school portal accounts.	
Feb, G12	Maintain grades.			**Submit remaining applications.** Create school portal accounts.	

Timeline: APPLICATION SEASON (summer before grade 12 + grade 12)				
Mar to May, G12	Maintain grades. Submit final transcripts.			Review admission decisions. If waitlisted, submit LOCI. Accept offer & submit enrollment deposit by May 1 (unless ED acceptance).	Compare financial aid & appeal if needed.
Summer before College				Finalize travel plans, register for orientation.	Ensure tuition & housing payments are arranged.