

# Countdown to Senior Year

## [THINGS TO DO BETWEEN NOW AND AUGUST]

### GRADES | COURSE SELECTION

- The rest of this year matters: Focus firmly on **grades**. This is the last semester to impact your GPA for college admissions applications next fall.
- Complete a **credit check** with your counselor; be sure you have the courses you need to graduate and to be competitive in your chosen major.
- Register for relevant, meaningful senior classes. **Course selection** is very important to most colleges; they want to see you challenging yourself academically and/or demonstrating your genuine interests. Your senior year schedule will be submitted as part of your college application next fall. See your counselor to make changes to your course requests.

### TESTING: PSAT | SAT | ACT

- Use the 11<sup>th</sup> grade PSAT as a baseline score from which to **prep for spring's SATs and ACTs**. Create an account with [Khan Academy](https://www.khanacademy.org/sat) for FREE test prep using your personalized PSAT access code.
- If you have not taken SAT or ACT – sign up for the May or June tests. We encourage students to try both exams to see which is your stronger test.
  - [sat.collegeboard.org](https://sat.collegeboard.org)
  - [www.actstudent.org](https://www.actstudent.org)
  - If appropriate, take SAT II's (the Subject Tests) at the end of your junior year (required by some colleges for some majors). Check college websites for requirements.
- If you regularly receive **accommodations** on tests, contact your counselor for information on applying for appropriate accommodations on SAT/ACT.

### CHOOSING COLLEGES

- Attend **College Fairs** and talk to college representatives; this allows you to establish contact with various schools of interest to you.
- Talk with **college representatives** when they visit the high school – they can eventually be your “best friends” at the college admission selection table when applications are reviewed.
  - To be notified of visits, be sure to **add colleges of interest to Naviance**. Then register to attend.
- Make a preliminary **list of potential colleges** ( 3 - 8 is best)
- **Visit college campuses** to help refine your choices. Students have two excused college visit days their junior year and two more their senior year.
- If you plan to be a collegiate athlete, register with the **NCAA eligibility center** at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](https://www.eligibilitycenter.org). (They will want your SAT/ACT scores, so be sure to add school code “9999” when you register for those tests.)

## PREPARE FOR THE COLLEGE APPLICATION

- There is more to the application than just academic information: Extracurricular involvement, service hours, employment, letters of recommendation, essays.
- **Letters of Recommendation:** Teacher, Counselor
  - Consider which teachers you want to ask – pick those who know you best as a student.
  - Request 3 weeks in advance of due date
  - Fill out questionnaires to help us write better letters for you (find them on the WHS home page under “Counseling” > “Senior Information”)
    - Counselors require TWO questionnaires: both a student form AND a parent form
- **Essays:** Complete rough drafts (check current college applications for essay topics)
  - Find links to essay topics on the counseling website under [Senior Information](#)
  - Westlake English teachers host a “boot camp” in the summer; stay tuned for more information

## SUMMER | RESUME

- Make your summer “meaningful.” Consider internships, enrichment programs on college campuses, work experiences, volunteering, etc.
- Search for scholarships on FREE websites – [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com), [www.zinch.com](http://www.zinch.com)
- Explore [scholarships](#) listed on the Counseling website (under Senior Information > Scholarships)
- Begin to develop your resume. Go online to view samples of high school resumes – there is no single “right way” to build a resume. It’s okay to be creative; it’s critical to be clear and concise. Proofread carefully. You can also build your resume in Naviance.
  - The counselors will be meeting with all seniors the second week of school to review all procedures for applying to college.