

# SURVIVING YOUR SENIOR YEAR

It starts piling up almost as soon as the bell rings on your first day of senior year: item after item appears on your ever-growing list of things to do. There's school work—books to read, papers to write, tests to study for. There are your activities—clubs, sports, community organizations—and as a senior, you're probably part of the leadership of at least one of those groups. Then there's a whole new set of responsibilities—the college search and application process. And of course, there are those little necessities like sleeping, eating and spending time with family and friends. If just thinking about your schedule makes you tired, read on for some tips for coping with your senior year.

## **Write It Down**

One of the best investments a busy student can make is a calendar or day planner. Take some time to write down (or type in to your cell phone) all of your upcoming commitments, such as academic deadlines, practice times for athletes or performers, club meetings, social events like bonfires, pep rallies and so on.

But don't stop with getting your schedule into your planner. Make sure that you *add the application deadlines* for all of the colleges to which you are interested in applying. In addition, add any standardized testing dead-lines that may apply. If you have not taken the SAT and ACT, it is essential that you do so immediately. The registration deadline for the October SAT is early September. Register at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). The registration deadline for the October ACT is early September. Register at [www.ACT.org](http://www.ACT.org). In addition, some colleges require students to take SAT II subject tests. Check the admissions testing requirements for each college to which you plan to apply and find out if you need to take these tests.

## **Simplify**

Even the most well-organized students can be overwhelmed by too many commitments. If you feel like you're drowning in activity, it may be time to cut back. Of course, blowing off that big Pre-Calculus test is not an option (at least, not if you want decent grades), but dropping extracurricular activities that no longer interest you or delegating more leadership responsibilities could give you some relief.

You may also want to look at "time-wasters"—things you do that get in the way of accomplishing your goals.

## **Adjust Your Attitude**

The college search and admission process itself can be stressful, let alone combining it with the busy schedule of senior year. You can't control which colleges will accept you, but you can control your attitude toward college admission.

Despite what others may tell you, you could be happy and successful at any number of colleges. So don't put pressure on yourself to find that one perfect college. Instead, set a goal of choosing a group of colleges that have the characteristics you want. There is no need to decide on a first-choice college right now, unless one college just stands out.

Maybe your worries aren't about choosing a college, but about whether colleges will choose you. Even though you hear a lot about how difficult it is to get into college, there are plenty of colleges that would welcome you with open arms.

"The college market is not really tight," says Robert Massa, vice president for enrollment and student life at Dickinson College (PA). "Only about 5 percent of the 2,400 four-year colleges in this country admit fewer than half of those who apply. There IS a place for you."

Remember, the goal of college admission is to find a college that fits your personal goals, values and personality. It is not a competition to see who among your classmates can get into the most selective or prestigious college. As much as possible, *focus on your own interests and goals*. Try to stay away from comparing yourself to your friends or classmates. *What's right for them may not be right for you*.

### **Take Care of Yourself**

No matter how busy you are, make sure you take care of yourself—physically, mentally and spiritually. For example, it's tempting to stay up an extra few hours or even pull an all nighter to get things done. But you'll pay the price over the next few days. And losing sleep regularly will take its toll on your health and well-being (not to mention your academic performance).

When you feel overwhelmed or fatigued, make some time to relax, spend time with friends or family, or do something that refreshes you. Talking to a sympathetic friend, family member or guidance counselor can also help.

Finally, this is YOUR senior year. You might be busy, you might feel stressed at times, but also take every opportunity to make your last year in high school a memorable one.