

Black River High School
Junior Class of 2019
College Planning Guide

JUNIOR YEAR COLLEGE PLANNING CHECKLIST

Fall of Junior Year

- Start with you: Make lists of your abilities, social/cultural preferences, and personal qualities. List things you may want to study and do in college.
- Learn about colleges: Look at their websites. Talk to friends, family, teachers, and recent grads of your school now in college. Consider college features that interest you.
- Take the PSAT.
- Visit with college representatives that visit the school.

Winter of Junior Year

- Use your PSAT score report and College Board account to connect with Khan Academy. This free program allows you to create a study plan for the SAT based on your PSAT results.
- If appropriate (for example, if you're interested in drama, music, art, or sports), start to gather information for a portfolio.
- If you know you want to attend college, but are unsure of what major you should declare, look for opportunities to explore various career paths.
 - Meet with your school counselor to discuss job shadows, internships, or volunteer opportunities.
 - Talk with your favorite subject teachers about their journey and different career opportunities in that field.
 - Take a career inventory test and research career paths.

Spring of Junior Year

- Meet with your school counselor to talk about your thoughts/ideas for after high school. Check graduation requirements and community service hours. Find out about upcoming important events for juniors.
- Attend Junior Parent Night to learn about the college planning process and hear from VSAC on financial aid planning.
- Register to take the SATs, ACTs, and/or SAT Subject Tests if they are required (the more competitive schools often require Subject Tests). All juniors will take the School Day SAT in April at no cost.
- Visit local colleges over April vacation: Get a feel for what campus environment works for you. Remember to register with the admissions office, even if not touring the campus through them. See your counselor for information about upcoming college fairs.
- Develop a list of colleges that interest you. Request view books and information about financial aid and academic programs. Start a college binder or folder for all your information.

- Stay open to all the possibilities — don't limit your search. To find the best college for you, you should apply to colleges of varying selectivity. Selective colleges admit a portion of students who apply. Some colleges are highly selective while others are less selective. Make sure to apply to public, private, in-state, and out-of-state schools so that you have plenty of options from which to choose.
- Start to gather documents for financial aid: Be sure to keep a copy of your tax returns handy. You'll use these to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which opens on Oct. 1.
- Plan your senior year class schedule with your counselor. Pick challenging courses and electives that interest you. Be sure that all your graduation requirements will be met. Research your colleges of interest to see what they recommend for high school courses.

Summer before Senior Year

- If you are an athlete planning to play a Division I or Division II sport in college, register with the NCAA Clearinghouse. Go to www.ncaaclearinghouse.net
- Find a full-time or part-time job, volunteer, or participate in a summer internship program.
- Visit colleges. Take campus tours and, at colleges you are serious about, make appointments with admissions counselors.
- Create or update your resume with accomplishments, extracurricular activities, and work experiences since the beginning of high school.
- Become familiar with college applications. Check out when college application deadlines are. You can begin filling out the Common Application as early as August.

COLLEGE AND CAREER RESOURCES

Big Future: This CollegeBoard website offers career and college search engines. Students can see if they are academically on track for college, compare colleges side by side, and create a favorites list. The website also gives tips for applying, writing the college essay, and interviewing.

www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org

College Data: This website offers a unique tool that allows students to calculate their chance of admission. Students can compare their application with other applicants who have applied or been accepted, compare financial aid awards between colleges, calculate their EFC for the FAFSA, search for scholarships, and more.

<https://www.collegedata.com/>

My Next Move: A free career interest inventory tool for students who want to attend college, but are still unsure of a major.

<https://www.mynextmove.org/>

Occupational Outlook Handbook: This website allows you to compare hundreds of careers by exploring specific training requirements, duties and responsibilities, the salary you can expect to receive, and the outlook on job availability.

<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

Virtual College Tours: If you want to narrow down your college list before scheduling visits or cannot physically travel to visit a college campus, take a free 360° virtual tour of over 600 colleges.

<https://www.youvisit.com/collegesearch>

VSAC: The VSAC website helps families plan for college and also learn ways to pay for college. Helpful tools include student loan calculator and loan repayment estimator, EFC contribution, scholarship search, and more.

<http://www.vvac.org/>

HOW TO CHOOSE A COLLEGE

When starting to search for a college or university, the first place to start is with **YOU!**

- What are **your** interests and abilities?
- What are **your** goals?
- What classes and activities have **you** enjoyed the most?

Career interest inventories, personality inventories and other information can be helpful in considering personal and career goals.

College Characteristics to Consider:

Type of Institution (two or four year; coed or single sex; public or private, liberal arts, technical, business)

- **Liberal arts** colleges stress a broad undergraduate education rather than professional training, such as an engineering degree.
- **Universities** offer mainly four year programs in both liberal arts and professional training. They grant both graduate and undergraduate degrees and are made up of a number of schools or colleges.
- **Technical and junior colleges** offer one and two year vocational and academic programs.
- **Military academies** prepare officers for a particular branch of the military. Most require recommendations for admission by a member of Congress.

Geographic Location (New England, the South, the West or Mid-coast) How far of a driving distance from home are you willing to be?

Setting (urban, rural or suburban) How would you feel attending school in a big city? What about way out in the country?

Size of Institution (small, medium, large, very large)

Selectivity (very difficult to open admissions – and in between!)

Cost of Attendance (tuition + fees, room + board, travel – minus financial aid)

Diversity of Student Body (race, religion, international, age)

Extracurricular Activities (sports, clubs, cultural, religious, educational)

Housing (on or off campus, coed, single sex, special interest, size of room, food and meal plans, roommates, house rules, car on campus)

Facilities (sports and recreation, libraries, classrooms and labs, lecture halls, handicapped access, laundry facilities, computer availability, student unions, Greek housing)

COLLEGE COMPARISON CHART

COLLEGE NAME			
Location -distance from home			
Size -enrollment -physical size of campus			
Environment -type of school (2 or 4 year) -school setting (urban, rural) -location & nearest city size -is the school co-ed -religious affiliation			
Admission Requirements -deadline to apply -are tests required -is there an essay -letters of recommendation			
Academics -offered majors of interest -is there a learning center -student-faculty ratio -typical class size -study abroad opportunities -internship availability			
College Expenses -tuition, room and board -estimated total budget -application fee, deposits			
Financial Aid -deadline -required forms -percentage receiving aid -scholarships			
Housing -residence hall requirement -food plan -parking			
Facilities -academic -athletics, recreational -library, computer labs			
Activities -clubs, organizations -Greek life -athletics, intramurals			

THE COLLEGE VISIT

A personal visit to a college or university is often the most useful step in helping you and your parents decide whether or not to apply to a particular school. Group tours and open house events are good ways of getting a first-hand impression of a school you are considering

Visits made during the regular academic year can give you a more accurate view of the academic and social life of a college campus. However, schools at a greater distance cannot often be visited except during family vacation times. When possible, try to avoid times such as registration, final exams or special campus events like homecomings or festivals. Visits at these times can be disruptive, and you may not get a true picture of what is a regular day at that school. Also, you may be unable to sit in on classes during exam times.

Many colleges allow students to:

- Attend a class
- Talk with a professor
- Meet with an admissions officer
- Meet with a financial aid officer
- Attend a sports practice or club meeting
- Eat in the dining hall
- Have an overnight visit

Good questions to ask:

What is the average size of a freshman class? How difficult is it to sign up for classes you need? Is priority given to upper classmen?

How much interaction is there between faculty and students? Does faculty have office hours?

How good are the library and computer facilities? What are their hours of availability?

Ask students you meet: Why did you choose this particular college? Are you happy with your choice?

What is the makeup of the student body? Where are students from? What is the male/female ratio?

What kinds of financial aid are available?

How comprehensive are the infirmary/health facilities? What is the availability of doctors and mental health counselors?

Are there professional career planning services on campus? What is the percentage of students who obtain a job after graduation?

What are the opportunities for playing intercollegiate or intramural sports?

What types of housing are available to freshmen? Is housing guaranteed all four years? Can you pick your roommate?

Is campus security adequate for students and faculty?

Can freshmen have cars on campus? Is there public transportation or campus transportation off-campus?

Ask the tour guide: Why did you choose this college? What has been your best experience here?

HOW TO JUDGE A COLLEGE AT ITS WORST

In their literature or on their guided tour, colleges usually manage to show themselves “at their best”. But during your four years there, you will see your campus at its worst, too. Would you like a preview of coming attractions?

- Have a meal in the student cafeteria on a Sunday afternoon.
- Ask a student, what is the worst thing about this school?
- Read the school paper the week before student government elections.
- Mingle with the crowd during a post-game party on Homecoming Weekend.
- Ask a freshman to tell you the name of the worst instructor for a required freshman course. Attend his/her 8:00 a.m. Monday section, sitting in the last row in a broken chair, wearing pajamas under snowy clothes and wet socks.
- In the freezing rain, try to park your car near a main classroom building two minutes before class.
- Ask a custodian what he thinks of the student body.
- Ask a member of a fraternity/sorority on social probation what he/she thinks of the Dean of Student Affairs. Then ask the dean what he/she thinks of the fraternity/sorority system.
- After the admissions office shows you the best side of the campus, go to the campus coffee shop and ask the shaggiest beard to route you to the other side; the oldest dorm, the shabbiest classroom or lab, etc.

THEN... Remind yourself that you are in college to *learn*, in spite of all the human and material frailties you will put up with. Ignore (or meet with a sense of humor) the occasional disappointments and frustrations, but be alert to signs more subtle than the above – or to instances of poor-quality instructions.

REMEMBER... Basically, all education is *self*-education. It requires you *and* enough good books. The student who really wants to learn can get an education at *any* college that doesn't lock the library as you walk up the steps!

THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS INTERVIEW

While the trend at colleges and universities is away from the once all-important personal interview and toward a more relaxed, general information meeting, some colleges may still recommend an interview (which is an offer students should not refuse!) while others may leave it up to the applicant. Though generally not as important as other items in the application process, an interview can prove crucial when the decision hangs in the balance.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Arrive promptly, dressed in a manner which you feel represents your “best foot forward”. Give a firm handshake when introduced and maintain eye contact.
- Conduct yourself in a friendly and interested manner. A person with no enthusiasm or questions can give a very poor first impression.
- While not necessary, please feel free to bring your parents. They probably shouldn’t sit in on the interview, but they, too, may have questions and concerns. While they wait, it may be a good time to visit the Financial Aid Office.
- Don’t be overly impressed by a “super-salesman” in the admissions office. However, also don’t be too critical of the school if the admissions person is unimpressive. Try to get the information you need to make a good decision, and avoid being too influenced by a personality.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask about the school. Having a written list handy will ensure that you don’t forget some important questions due to nervousness or excitement.
- Avoid asking questions that could easily be answered by reading the catalog. This will make effective use of your limited interview time, and shows a thoroughness of planning on your part.
- **Bring a copy of your transcript and SAT/ACT scores.**
- Take a campus tour, preferably before the interview. The library, student union, freshmen housing, computer center, athletic facilities, etc. are areas to consider in addition to classes and labs. Try to have a meal in a residential cafeteria!
- If possible, arrange for an overnight visit in a dorm.
- After the interview, send the admissions office a handwritten thank you note.

THE COLLEGE ESSAY

Colleges really want to get to know you as a person. The essay is the one part of the application process that gives you the chance to tell admissions about your special abilities, interests and qualities. You can also mention significant factors that might set you apart from the majority of applicants, but try to focus one or two things. If you include all that you have done, it will become a list and not an essay. The essay can also explain any gaps that appear in your record.

Your essay will be evaluated on three basic levels:

- Your ability to use standard written English. Grammar counts! Use correct punctuation, grammar and syntax – make sure there are no typos or spelling/grammatical errors. Let as many people proof read it as are willing; your English teacher, your parents.
- Content and depth of insight. How well can you reflect on yourself and convey your true feelings and opinions on a topic.
- Creativity and originality. Do you sound like an individual you would bring intellect, energy and fresh viewpoint to the college? Or are you writing what you think they want to hear?

Make sure your name is on each page in case it gets separated from your application. Some places are asking you to also include your Date of Birth and High School along with your name.

If you are including the name of the college in the essay, **make sure you send the right essay to the right college!**

Common Application Essay Prompts 2018-2019:

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

ASKING FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers are very happy to write recommendations for students – we enjoy doing everything we can to help you reach your dreams. Here are some steps that you can take to help us write the best possible recommendation for you, and get it there on time.

Give us time! Try to ask for your recommendations as early as possible. Even though two weeks might seem like plenty of time to write a letter, remember that many other people might ask for a recommendation during that same week – so if you’ve waited for the last minute, yours might not get the time it deserves.

*** A note about confidentiality.** Many applications will give you a chance to check a box indicating that you waive the right to see the recommendation. The reason they give you the option to do this is because a confidential recommendation is seen as more reliable: the colleges figure, if the teacher knows you won’t ever see it, they’re more likely to tell the whole truth and not sugarcoat. If you know that your teacher is going to write you an enthusiastic recommendation, it is highly advisable for you to check this box. It makes the rec. look more reliable.

Tell us about yourself. Write up a **brief** list of the things you’ve been most proud of from your high school career – especially things you might have done in the class of the teacher from whom you’re asking for this recommendation. List the AP courses you’ve taken or other challenges you’ve sought out. If you were in our class a couple of years ago, we might have forgotten some of the stellar things you did. Or we might just not be aware of awards you’ve won or extracurricular achievements. The more specific our recommendation, the more powerful it is. Ask guidance to provide a copy of your “About Me” form.

Don’t be shy about reminding us. We won’t get insulted! It’s fine to let a week or two go by and then ask, ‘Hey, did you get around to writing that recommendation for me?’ If we did, then we’ll let you know; if not, we’ll probably appreciate the reminder.

Take the time to write a thank you note. During college application crunch time, some teachers might spend a whole Saturday writing recommendations. When we’re all done with that, a short thank you note from you means a lot to us!

GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR THE POST-SECONDARY PROCESS

Post-Secondary: Any training (military, college, certificate program, apprenticeship) after high school.

CSS Profile: College Scholarship Service Profile is an application distributed by the College Board to give private member institutions a closer, more detailed look into the finances of a student and family. This application is required usually by the more selective schools.

Developmental Courses: Also referred to as remedial classes. Any class a post-secondary institution makes you take that is not going to count for credits or graduation progress to help you reach a certain academic level.

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This is an application to be filled out by you and your family requesting financial aid from the federal government. It will become available after October 1st. You may go on-line and set up a FSA ID now for both you and your parents. You will need this information to be able to fill out the form October. This will result in a student aid report, which will tell your family how much the government believes your family will be able to contribute towards your education.

Fees: The money you pay to cover costs of using the health care center, technology/lab, and other services that are college or university-wide.

Financial Aid Package: You will receive this report from schools in April or May of your senior year, which will tell you what the school will award you in financial aid. This can consist of scholarships, grants, and loans so read it carefully.

Grants: Money that is awarded to you based on need (also called need based financial aid). You don't have to pay it back.

Liberal Art: A course of study that allows you to explore a variety of interests while gaining credit towards graduation.

Loans: Money that will have to be paid back. With subsidized loans, the government pays the interest while the student is in school. With unsubsidized loans, the student pays the interest while in school.

Matriculated: To be enrolled in a college or university.

NCAA: National Collegiate Athletic Association. Register on-line to be able to play Division I or II sports in college. Visit www.ncaaclearinghouse.org/ for more information.

Non-Matriculated: A student who is taking classes at a college or university, but is not enrolled.

Room and Board: The money you pay to live and eat on campus.

Scholarships: Money that is awarded to you that does NOT need to be paid back. They are based on academic performance (also called Merit Scholarships), a talent, or other factors. There are Local, National, and Institutional Scholarships.

Tuition: The money you pay for classes. It will be listed by the credit. In general, college classes are 3 credits... so you would have to multiply the amount per credit by 3.

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Regular Application Deadline

Many colleges establish an application deadline by which all applications must be received. All students are then notified of the college's decision at a uniform response date, typically on or before April 15th.

Most colleges agree to reserve May 1st as the date by which accepted applicants must indicate their intention to enroll. By using a common reply date, students can evaluate all notices of admissions and financial aid before deciding on any one college.

Early Decision

Early decision is offered by many colleges to applicants who are absolutely sure that they want to attend a certain college. **This college should clearly be your first choice!** Traditionally, the deadline for early decision applications is in the fall, but you should check with the college to which you are applying to make sure that you have the right deadline date. In return, colleges give you an admissions decision soon after.

If accept under Early Decision, you are under a strong ethical obligation to withdraw or forego applications to all other colleges!

Early Action

Early action is similar to early decision, except that, if admitted, you are **not** ethically obligated to withdraw other college applications, and you have until May 1st to decide. Early action is simply a device that schools use to encourage very strong candidates to apply early. **It is a non-binding decision.**

Rolling Admissions

Under rolling admissions, a college will consider your application as soon as all required credentials have been received. Notification of your acceptance or rejection is mailed shortly after all your materials have been reviewed. Colleges that follow this practice make their admissions decisions continuously over several months.

Please keep in mind that although a school may have a rolling deadline, popular programs may fill up quickly! It is always a good idea to apply early!

Deferred or Delayed Admission

Most colleges will allow you to defer/postpone your enrollment, generally for up to one year. **Students who are considering taking a year off after high school are strongly encouraged to apply to colleges while still in school, and then opt for deferred admission.** Make sure you ask if there is a requirement for a deposit to hold your spot for that year.

Open Admissions

An open admissions policy grants acceptance to all high school graduates without regard to additional qualifications.

WHAT COLLEGES LOOK FOR IN AN APPLICANT

- 1. A high school curriculum that challenges the student.** Students ought to take classes that are a good fit and a challenge to them. For some students, this is general level or college prep level. For others, it is advanced or advanced placement (AP) classes.
- 2. Grades that represent strong effort and an upward trend.** Grades that increase over the course of four years shows a college that a student has progressed and is capable of working with college level material.
- 3. Solid scores on standardized tests.** While some colleges do not require SAT or ACT test scores for admission, many still do. These scores are often not the deciding factor in admission, but do play a role in an admission counselor's decision to accept or deny a student. Make your scores a good representation of you.
- 4. Passionate involvement in a few activities.** A college wants to see that a student is successful both inside and outside of the classroom and demonstrates leadership potential and initiative. For some students, this means sports or high school clubs. For others, it is maintaining a part time job afterschool. And for others, it is participation in a volunteer organization or in an internship.
- 5. A well written admissions essay.** Stand out from the crowd. An admissions essay shows a college that the applicant is a thoughtful and well-spoken person. An admissions essay, above all, is an opportunity to personalize a college application and give an admissions counselor the opportunity to understand a student as an individual.
- 6. Letters of recommendation.** Most colleges will ask for a letter of recommendation from a teacher and from your school counselor. Though you may include a letter from a coach or a supervisor at work, a college will likely want to hear about your performance in the classroom and your overall high school experience.

COLLEGE ATHLETES: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Questions to Ask During Recruitment:

What positions will I play on your team? Recognize that the coaching staff may decide to utilize your talents in a new position. Ask “What is the roster’s depth chart at your possible positions”?

What are my scholarship opportunities? Are athletic scholarships available? Where do you stand on the recruiting list? Are you eligible for partial or full scholarships? Are there other financial aid options available for student-athletes?

When does the head coach’s contract end? If the head coach left, would you still be interested in playing for this team? What is the level of interest from the coach? Is the coach’s position on campus full- time?

Who currently plays in my position? Is there is a former All-American in the position? If so, you may want to take that into consideration. When will he/she graduate? Will you realistically have the opportunity to play at this campus?

Other Factors to Consider:

What is the team’s makeup? Does the team’s game plan coincide with yours? Does the level of competition reflect your skills and potential?

What are my responsibilities off the field? Am I required to maintain a certain weight? Do I have to attend study hours? Will I participate in off-season training? Is there time to participate in other groups and activities?

What are my personal goals? Would I choose the campus if I were not playing a sport? What type of facilities are available on campus? Does the team have a successful history? Is the team well supported by the college and community?

Will college coaches notice me? They might find you on their own. But why wait? Be pro-active. Help college coaches recruit you by creating a recruiting packet. Remember to fill out a student athlete information form on the college’s athletic website.

What should I send to college coaches? [Cover Letter](#), high school transcript, an athletic resume, game or practice video, season schedule, newspaper clippings.

SAT TEST DATES

Spring 2018

April 10th, 2018 *School Day

May 5th, 2018

June 2nd, 2018

SAT Regular Registration Fee \$46

With Essay \$60

SAT Late Registration Fee +\$29

To register for the SAT and find a list of test centers, go to www.collegeboard.org

If you are eligible for free or reduced lunch, you are eligible for a fee waiver. Please see your school counselor.

ACT TEST DATES

Spring 2018

June 9th, 2018

July 14th, 2018

ACT Regular Registration Fee \$46

With Essay \$62.50

ACT Late Registration Fee +\$29.50

To register for the ACT and find a list of test centers, go to www.act.org

If you are eligible for free or reduced lunch, you are eligible for a fee waiver. Please see your school counselor.

ACT VS. SAT

What's the difference between the ACT and the SAT?

Both the ACT and the SAT are nationally administered standardized tests that help colleges evaluate candidates. Most colleges and universities accept either test. When weighing your options, keep in mind that there are differences in test structure and the type of content assessed. Use the chart below to see which test makes the most of your strengths to help you determine which test might be best for you.

	ACT	SAT
Test Length	2 hrs 55 mins 3 hrs 35 mins with Essay	3 hrs 3 hrs 50 mins with Essay
Test Structure	English: 45 mins Math: 60 mins Reading: 35 mins Science: 35 mins Essay (optional): 40 mins	Reading: 65 mins Writing and Language: 35 mins Math No Calculator: 25 mins Math Calculator: 55 mins Essay (optional): 50 mins
Time per Question	Less time per question and more questions	More time per question and less questions
» Reading	4 reading passages	5 reading passages
» Math	Better for those skilled in Geometry and Trigonometry Can use a calculator on all questions No formula chart	Better for those skilled in Algebra and Data Analysis Contains a no-calculator section Offers a formula chart
» Science	Yes- focus on scientific data, graphs, and hypothesis.	While it does test scientific concepts through reading passages, there is <u>no</u> specific science scored section.
» Essay	Optional. The essay will test how well you evaluate and analyze complex issues.	Optional. The essay will test your comprehension of a source text
Scoring	Scale of 1-36: Each section uses a scale of 1-36. Your total score is the average of your four section scores. The optional Writing section uses a scale of 2-12 and does not count toward your final score.	Scale of 400-1600: The Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) and Math sections each use a scale of 200-800 and are combined for a total score. The optional Essay uses three separate scales of 1-8 and does not count toward your final score.
Wrong Answer Penalty	No penalty	No penalty
Test Contact Information	ACT, Inc. 1-319-337-1000 actstudent.org	The College Board 1-866-756-7346 collegeboard.org

How can I find out if a school accepts the ACT, SAT or both?

You should be able to find this information by visiting the school's website or by calling their admissions office.

How can I figure out which test I might score better on?

The only way to know for sure is to take a practice test. Kaplan offers practice ACT, SAT, or SAT/ACT Combo Tests to help you identify which test could best showcase your strengths during the admission process.

http://www.kaptest.com/pdf_files/college/sat-act-practice-test.pdf

