

What to Do About Senioritis

Help Your Child Make Senior Year Count

Your senior has worked hard for three years, taking tests, completing projects and preparing for college admission. At this point, many seniors are tempted to just get through college applications and relax before heading off to college. Warn your child not to yield to this temptation.

Taking it easy during 12th grade — or developing senioritis, as some call a senior-year slump — is likely to do more harm than good. Although your child's goal is in sight — graduating from high school and entering college — school isn't over yet and college admission officers are still paying close attention to your child's performance.

Senior-Year Grades and College Admission

Many students mistakenly believe that preparing for college ends after the 11th grade or the first semester of senior year. However, senior year — the entire senior year — is actually of particular interest to colleges.

Applying

Many college applications require a list of senior courses, including information about course levels and credit hours. It will be obvious to admission officers if your child has decided to take the year off.

As part of the application process, many colleges include a midyear grade report form. The school counselor completes this form with first-semester grades and sends it to the colleges to which your child has applied. It then becomes a crucial part of your child's application.

If Your Child Is Accepted

Often, college acceptance letters include warnings to students such as "Your admission is contingent on your continued successful performance." This means colleges reserve the right to withdraw an offer of admission should your child's senior year grades drop. Colleges ask high schools to send them the final, year-end transcripts of the students they've accepted. Again, a senior slump will be obvious.

Keeping Your Child Focused Senior Year

Senior year is your child's opportunity to strengthen skills and broaden experience, in school and out, to prepare for all the challenges ahead. A successful senior year can help launch your child on the path to a successful future.

As Stanley E. Henderson, associate provost at the University of Illinois, explains, "Just as you would want to be in top condition for the start of an athletic season, so, too, do you want to be in top condition for the academic season ... The habits you form now — your academic strength conditioning — will either help or hurt you in your transition from high school to college." (*College Counseling Sourcebook, 6th edition*, College Board)

Maintaining a Challenging Course Load

To gear up for college, your child should take the most rigorous courses available and be sure to continue taking college-track subjects. Encourage your child to consider taking AP® courses and exams, which can also earn credit at many colleges.

Colleges check seniors' transcripts not only to make sure that they've maintained their grades but also to see if they dropped any classes in senior year. They want to make sure that there have not been any major changes to the applicant's academic program.

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Staying Active and Involved

Continued involvement in activities, sports and volunteer work helps your child stay active and focused throughout senior year. A great internship or career-focused job opportunity may motivate students to start considering career options. Meaningful and significant experiences help prepare your child to make informed decisions about education and career goals.

Trying Out College Early

If your child is interested in pursuing a subject further, and has excelled at high school classes so far, encourage taking a class at a local college. This challenge can prevent an academic slump, and stimulate interest in the possibilities of college.

In many areas, schools allow students to spend their last two years taking classes in both college and high school. Early exposure to college classes introduces your child to the rigor of college work while easing the transition from high school.