

NOVEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

MCNEAL SAMS
COLLEGE CONSULTING



WHO WE ARE

McNeal Sams College Consulting provides expert, personalized guidance to students and families throughout the college admissions process. With decades of experience in counseling, admissions and career services, our team helps students identify best-fit schools and build strong, strategic applications.

SENIORS, CONGRATS ON YOUR HARD WORK

The McNeal Sams team has helped students submit more than 1,400 applications this season! To our seniors and their support systems, you have done wonderfully during the last several months. We are proud of your accomplishments and cannot wait to hear what is next on your journey.

WHAT WE ARE READING

Straight from the *New York Times* Bestseller list, "Never Enough: When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic - and What We Can Do About It," by Jennifer Breheny Wallace, provides an in-depth look into the high pressure to achieve and ways to remove the toxicity.

IMPORTANT DATES

Nov. 7 - Early registration closes for ACT testing on Dec. 13

Nov. 8 - SAT testing

Nov. 21 - Early registration deadline for SAT testing on Dec. 6

Nov. 27 - Thanksgiving Day



THE WAITING PERIOD



You did it! You turned in your applications! What a relief, right? Now all you have to do is... wait.

Anticipating a college admissions decision isn't easy. You've put so much into the process; in fact, this is the culmination of tremendous thought and action on your part. Each test, each quarter grade, the time you spent volunteering, the conditioning you did for sports - you made that happen. And then there's the application process itself, which can be exhausting!

But now, the outcome is completely out of your hands. That sudden lack of control can make the waiting period feel endless. It's natural to hope that if you think about it enough, check your email constantly, or "will it" to happen, your wishes will come true. But in your heart, you know that agonizing won't change the decision.

What you *can* control, however, is how you use your time during this period.

- Whatever you do, don't sit and moulder. Get up, get out, and get moving. Endorphins are your friends. Exercise boosts your mood and lowers stress. And if it's vigorous enough, it also gives your mind a break from the cycle of worry. Run. Walk. Stretch. Lift. Cycle. Kick. Throw. Play. When you've finished, you'll feel a sense of accomplishment that you dearly need. (And you will have used up a little more time!)
- Don't doomscroll. Easier said than done, right? No, really. *Put the phone down* and turn your attention *outward*. When was the last time you played the piano? Or took a younger sibling out for ice cream? Create something: a batch of cookies, a vision board for your graduation party, a letter to your grandma. (Don't you owe her a thank-you note? Now you have the time!). Hobbies and distractions can help fill the empty space and the tortoise-like passage of time. They also remind you that there's *far more to life than waiting than checking your email.*

This waiting period is tough for everyone. So much coalesces around the college application process: family expectations, vicarious living, financial decisions, hopes, dreams. But it's especially hard for students, who feel like their future is at stake. (On that note, remember: you don't need a college acceptance to validate you. You're already wonderful.)

Shifting your focus to things you enjoy is more productive. So - get off that admissions portal, and get busy. No matter what the outcome may be, surely you deserve a break from anxiety while you wait for it.

NOVEMBER TO-DO LISTS

Seniors

1. Create your applicant portals for all applications you have submitted. Then check them often!
2. Complete all remaining applications for admission. You should plan to have your applications completed before your December break.
3. If applicable, submit your FAFSA and CSS Profile.
4. Seek scholarships! This is a great time to spend time identifying appropriate scholarships for you to seek. Contact your consultant for information.

Juniors

1. Please share your PSAT or, if applicable, your P-ACT or actual SAT / ACT scores with your McNeal Sams college consultant when you receive them.
2. It is time to start thinking about which schools are the best fit for you. Schedule an appointment with your college consultant.
3. Maintain good grades. Your first term of your junior year either is just concluding or will shortly. Junior year grades are very important. Be sure to prepare well for your end of term exams, including taking care of yourself. Get plenty of sleep, eat well, and plan de-stressing time into your schedule.
4. Register for your official SAT and/or ACT. If you are not certain which exam to focus on or concerned about preparing for your exams, your McNeal Sams college consultant can assist you.

Sophomores

1. Please share your PSAT / P-ACT scores with your McNeal Sams college consultant when you receive them. If you have not taken either, let your college consultant know. We can arrange for you to take a diagnostic SAT and ACT.
2. Begin to explore college types. Answering the big three questions this year - what size, setting and distance you want in a school - will ensure you are ready for your junior year. It is not too early to begin touring colleges. Your college consultant can prepare a list of colleges for you to visit close to your home or during a Spring Break trip.
3. Maintain good grades. Your first term of your sophomore year either is just concluding or will shortly. Be sure to prepare well for your end of term exams, including taking care of yourself. Get plenty of sleep, eat well, and plan de-stressing time into your schedule.

Freshmen

1. Maintain good grades. This year is essential to laying a strong foundation for your grades. Be sure to prepare well for your end of term exams, including taking care of yourself.
2. Have you gotten involved in at least two activities at school yet? What about volunteering in the community? If you are struggling to find things that you want to do, reach out to your McNeal Sams college consultant. We can help you identify some interesting options.