### How To Survive Freshman, Sophomore, Junior & Senior Year (SHS PTSO 2016)

#### FRESHMAN

**ACADEMICS**

- Develop good study habits. Use a planner and record HW assignments and assessments. Organization is the key to an independent learner.
- Students should get involved in a high school activity, such as a fall sport or marching band, over the summer. This may help you tone the muscles you’ll need in the weight lifting up to the test.

**COMMUNICATION**

- Attend conferences to check in on progress early and nip issues in the bud.
- Email teacher once or twice a marking period to check in. Be proactive not reactive.

**THE SOCIAL DIMENSION**

- Get involved! Join at least one club, athletic or academic team this year.
- Get involved in community service early in the school year and complete 10 hours of service prior to May 1st as required by the SAT.
- Want to take AP biology, start a poetry club or do it. Don’t worry about the fact that your BFF won’t be in the class, this is your life. Not only will this help you find your passion, it’ll also look great on that future college transcript!

**SUMMER Before…**

- Attend a school event you normally wouldn’t.
- Make a playlist of songs that you played the most.

#### SOPHOMORE

**ACADEMICS**

- Don’t forget extracurricular activities. Colleges care what a student does outside the classroom, but it is secondary to their academic profile. It’s not the number of activities they are involved in, but their quality. Students should devote time to activities that they care about and resist any temptation to get involved in activities strictly to impress admission officers.
- All sophomores and juniors at SHS will take the PSAT in October. The PSAT can provide students with an idea of how they might fare with the SAT. By getting on an assessment early, there is plenty of time to address weaknesses.
- If a student is interested in schools that require SAT Subject Tests, he or she should try to take the relevant exam right after completing the high school course. These tests are available in such courses as U.S. history, chemistry, mathematics, foreign languages, and molecular or ecological biology. Most colleges and universities don’t require these extra tests.

**THE SOCIAL DIMENSION**

- Biggers matters. Challenge yourself. This not only helps you to prepare for the heavy workload you will get in college, but it also shows college admissions boards that you are a diligent student. Consider AP or high level honors courses that will stretch your abilities without jeopardizing your GPA.
- Hopefully nothing dramatic will happen but there’s often a bit of a shake up in sophomore year and beyond within your friend group. Some of you will be driving, some won’t, and some of you will just end up hanging very different social lives. Try to take it all in stride and keep in mind that you’re changing too.

**SUMMER Before…**

- Visit schools. The summer between sophomore and junior year can be a convenient time to begin checking out colleges and universities. The visits may help motivate students by showing them what all their hard work can lead to.
- Be proactive! Start doing your own laundry if you haven’t already. Clean up your social media presence! This time for you to set your path in life. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses will likely look you up! Enough said.
- Read, read, and read some more. Being a strong reader makes it easier to perform well in college. Reading may also lead to higher grades. Don’t wait until the fall, as teachers to ask for recommendation letters now. Students may need to retake the SAT or ACT, to meet the requirements of their preferred colleges.

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- Get new friends, and keep the old. Roommates, potential employers, etc. Remember that prospective colleges are there for a reason — use their resources! They can help you research colleges of interest and schedule your visits accordingly. School counselors are also the ones who have direct contact with college admissions officers, so build strong relationships with them if you want to get an extra edge when applying.

#### JUNIOR

**ACADEMICS**

- Get involved. Now’s the time to dive into extracurriculars. By junior year, you should know the one or two that you are most passionate about – focus on those. It’s better to have a leadership role in one than to be a member of 12 different clubs and do nothing in any of them. If you have already found what extracurricular activities you enjoy being part of, that’s great! As your next challenge, try taking on some leadership roles.

- Take challenging courses. Even if your grades aren’t all A’s, taking AP or advanced classes shows admissions committees that you push yourself. If you take a foreign language, work toward the highest level you can. You might be able to test out of language courses in college, if you do well.

- Contacts. Get to know your school counselors. They are there for a reason — use their resources! They can help you research colleges of interest and schedule your visits accordingly. School counselors are also the ones who have direct contact with college admissions officers, so build strong relationships with them if you want to get an extra edge when applying.

**THE SOCIAL DIMENSION**

- Make contacts. Get to know your counselors. You’ll work together a lot in the next year or so as you begin the college application process. The better they know you, the more useful your meetings will be.

- Think about your weaknesses. Assess yourself as a candidate. Any bad grades in the past? Disciplinary problems? No activities? You still have time to make up for past mistakes and plan now to do something about them.

**SUMMER Before…**

- Whether you are volunteering at a local animal shelter or taking on your first internship or job, this is the time for you to set your path in life. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses will likely look you up! Enough said.

- Get good grades. Obviously. All your grades matter, and colleges do look at them. If you were hit or miss in your freshman and sophomore years, now’s the time to buckle down.

- Prioritize 21’s! It’s very important that you don’t neglect your schoolwork with the excuse that college applications are more important. Not only do colleges and universities still look at your grades and work throughout your senior year, but it is important for you too. Letting your study habits slide into chaos now won’t set you up very well for when you actually begin college. And use your calendar to stay organized.

- Take a practice exam to determine your weakest subjects, and then plan how to study in the weeks ahead with these areas in mind. (Make a note to review your strengths too!) Not only will you accomplish more, but you will have the satisfaction of seeing your ACT/SAT progress.

- Combat Senioritis. You’re winding down, applications are out. Yes, grades aren’t everything at the moment. But don’t throw away all you’ve worked so hard for over the past three years. Developing bad habits now can follow you into college. So stay the course! And don’t forget, colleges still ask for a final transcript.

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- Make a creative photo of you and your family. Attend a school event you normally wouldn’t.

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- unthanked the staff members including the secretary, custodian, etc. Tell the teachers who meant something to you just that.

- Get a job if you have even a tiny amount of interest in doing so.

#### SENIOR

**ACADEMICS**

- Purchase a large, well-bound, multi-month calendar. Mark important academic and extracurricular dates. Viewing more than one month at a time can help you see what lies ahead and avoid forgetting important dates that are several weeks away. Remember that the calendar app on your smartphone is perfect for routine homework assignments and recurring events, but a multi-month calendar is better for keeping track of weeks ahead. Record deadlines right away!

- Take practice exams to determine your weakest subjects, and then plan how to study in the weeks ahead with these areas in mind. (Make a note to review your strengths too!) Not only will you accomplish more, but you will have the satisfaction of seeing your ACT/SAT progress.

- College preparation. Get involved. Now’s the time to dive into extracurriculars. By junior year, you should know the one or two that you are most passionate about – focus on these. It’s better to have a leadership role in one than to be a member of 12 different clubs and do nothing in any of them. If you have already found what extracurricular activities you enjoy being part of, that’s great! As your next challenge, try taking on some leadership roles.

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- Take a great photo of you and your family. Attend a school event you normally wouldn’t.

- Thank the staff members including the secretary, custodian, etc. Tell the teachers who meant something to you just that.

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- Make a playlist of songs that you played the most.