

So You Want To Audition for A College/University Program?: A Relatively Realistic Timeline

Fall & Spring of Freshman and Sophomore Year

- Maintain strong study habits
- Keep your grades up
- INVOLVE yourself with your theatre program
 - Performing
 - Technical
 - Officer or Volunteer work

Fall of Junior Year

- [Research college programs](#)
- Apply for pre-college summer programs (if available)

Spring of Junior Year

- [Register for SAT](#)
- [Register for ACT](#) (if necessary)
- Take the ACT/SAT
- Begin college essays
- Continue researching college programs (if required)
 - Begin setting up appointments for college visits, at this time
- Ask current English teacher to read/critique essays
- Build & Refine repertoire book
- Keep training and performing
 - Stay involved with your theatre program
 - Visit a resume workshop clinic
- Connect with Performing Arts/Theatre Teacher when inquiring about a Letter of Recommendation
 - This timeline is important, as it will give your instructor the necessary time to craft the start of the letter
 - You'll need 2-3 academic recommendations for the application process (recommend)

- You'll need 2-3 performing arts recommendations that will be requested later in the process (recommended)

Summer before Senior Year

- Visit schools, if you choose to
- Have your headshot taken, or update your current headshot if necessary
- Resume should be updated and readied to send to College program coordinators
- [Narrow down your list of school \(see Bookmark 1\)](#)
 - [\(See Bookmark 2 for parental advice\)](#)
- [Create a spreadsheet to track schools, applications & information](#)
- Draft & edit essays
 - Maintain connection with English teachers in order to continue refining this
- Do a summer show or intensive
- Select, prepare & rehearse repertoire
 - Work with voice teacher or coach to perfect your songs and cuts (approx. 60-90 seconds)
 - Work with an acting coach to perfect monologues and cuts (approx. 60-90 seconds)
- [Begin planning/recording pre-screens \(see September for specifics\)](#)
- Create a Common App account
 - Other Colleges/Universities may run from a separate platform - be sure you have registered with these programs as well
- Register for the ACT/SAT again (if necessary)
 - Study to improve ACT/SAT scores
- Keep training and performing
 - Involve yourself with your theatre program

September of Senior Year

- Begin submitting college applications
- Develop and Edit essays ad nauseum

- Check in with requested recommendation writers
- Prepare & record prescreen material for your top schools. This means (note that these are suggestions):
 - Work with a choreographer to prepare and coach dance excerpts and auditions
 - Book a studio, camera & tripod for recording your dance auditions
 - Book an accompanist to play for your recorded prescreens/auditions
 - Book a studio, camera & tripod for recording your songs & monologues
- [Submit prescreens and program applications as soon as possible](#)
 - [Try to hold true to this deadline as the window to submit and be processed becomes tighter by the months](#)

October of Senior Year

- Oct. 1 is a key application deadline. Don't miss it.
 - For early action/early decision only
- Take the ACT/SAT again (if necessary)
- Submit your prescreens, if you haven't already
- [Auditions begin](#) (see Bookmark on "Audition Coaches")
 - It is recommended that you try to attend the earliest slot possible, as this will free you up to attend multiple auditions throughout the month.
- Visit reps at college fairs and when on campus, even if just to say, "Hello".
- Look at scholarship opportunities and review deadlines
 - All colleges and universities have much to offer - DO YOUR RESEARCH
 - This also includes scholarship opportunities at your school, and within your town/city.

November of Senior Year

- Nov. 1 is a key application deadline

- Regular decision (College and Program Only)
- Begin scheduling virtual auditions
 - In-person auditions (under non-COVID circumstances)
- Book travel to regional sites, and colleges (under non-COVID circumstances)
- Touch up resume, and repertoire book
- Set up time to receive any last minute coaching from voice/acting/movement coaches/instructors
- Attend your audition date, if available
 - Write and send a “thank you” email to your audition panel

December of Senior Year

- Dec. 1 is a key prescreen deadline
- Work through/prepare live audition material for each of your schools
- School acceptances begin coming in
 - Early Decision/Early Action
- Complete & submit the FAFSA
 - Each College and University has its own ins-and-outs - DO YOUR RESEARCH

January of Senior Year

- [Prep/tweak material for Unifieds](#)
 - Work with various coaches in voice/acting/movement
- [New York Unifieds](#)
- Major audition & travel month (under non-COVID circumstances)
 - Write and send a “thank you” email to your audition panel
- Results & Financial Aid offers from Early Action/Decision become determined
- Apply for outside scholarships
 - Within school/town/city

February of Senior Year

- Prep/tweak material
- [Chicago Unifieds](#)

- [L.A. Unifeds](#)
- Major audition & travel month (under non-COVID circumstances)
- Results & Financial Aid offers from Early Action/Decision become determined
- Apply for outside scholarships
 - Within school/town/city

March of Senior Year

- Usually the last month of auditions
 - Write and send a “thank you” email to your audition panel
- Compare offers and make decisions
 - Refer to self-composed spreadsheet for comparison chart
- Results & Financial Aid offers from Early Action/Decision become determined

April of Senior Year

- April is declared as a “*you’ll know by*” date
- Compare offers, ask for more funding and make decisions
 - Refer to self-composed spreadsheet for comparison chart
- Decisions & deposits due by May 1 (Regular Decision)

May of Senior Year

- May 1 Decision & deposit deadline
 - First college bill
 - Apply for outside scholarships
 - Within school/town/city
 - Compose and send Thank You notes/gifts to those who helped you along the way
 - Recommendation writers
 - Coaches
 - Admissions faculty
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FAQ's for Students and Their Families

When do we need to start actively working on the college audition process? What is the timeline? Now. No really, now. If you/your child are thinking about a college career in the performing arts, you should be thinking about what you can be doing to prepare them for that. Suggestions would be: weekly dance classes, voice lessons, acting classes, and performing arts summer programs are all things you should be making sure are part of your student's regular schedule. It's time to start researching schools by their junior year (sometimes late Sophomore year!), and by the spring of their junior year, they should have a nearly-finalized list of schools, registered to take the SAT/ACTs, and have that FAFSA filled out by June. The summer before your senior year it's time to update headshots and resume, pick your audition materials and prepare with coaches (settle for 2-3 in order to gather differences of opinion - use your Theatre Arts teacher). August of senior year is a time to have everything in place to film your prescreen auditions by September when applications go live online. Audition season starts in October, with most auditions happening January through March.

If my son/daughter doesn't get lead roles in high school programs, can they get into a program? Short answer: there are never any guarantees, even if they are getting lead roles every time they audition. The trick is making a smart list of schools after you do your research. There are many fantastic programs out there that are newer programs or have a higher acceptance rate. Colleges aren't looking for students who are already Broadway-caliber performers, they are looking for performers that show great potential that will be a good fit for their program, and can be molded/shaped. With a little research, you can make a good list of schools where you have a great shot at being accepted, and where you will be able to grow as a performer and a person, so you are ready to face the industry after four years with them.

Alternately, my son/daughter always gets lead roles in their high school, community theatre, and summer program shows. Can't they just look at the big-name schools? The top schools, which are often referred to as "Dream Schools" or "Reach Schools," should be looked at like a lottery, and talent, and being the right place at the right time just gets you your lottery ticket. Most of the top schools (Carnegie Mellon, Juilliard, Michigan, Tisch) have an acceptance rate of less than one percent. In many cases, getting accepted to these programs is just as much to do with your talent level as it does with what type of student they need to accept into their program to have a diverse group of students so they can put on great shows. A good list of Reach School, Target Schools, and Safety Schools will ensure your best chances of getting accepted into a program.

How many schools should be on my audition list? An easy and safe to give en masse is to use a ratio of 1:3:1. **ONE** dream/reach school, to **THREE** target schools, to **ONE** safety school.

How professional do the prescreen auditions have to be? What if you can't afford to have a choreographer prepare your routine? Pre-screen auditions should be well-lit, on a plain/non-distracting background, free of background noise, and should be a good depiction of both your talent and your body. The only time you should need to spend money to have them

professionally filmed is if you don't have the ability to meet the above criteria on your own. As far as dance prescreens go, they are normally fairly specific on exactly what they need to see. In most cases, students have learned choreography from shows they have been in and can use that. Some schools even provide a combination video online that they ask students to learn. If you have no dance experience, or you have two left feet, a school that is asking for a dance prescreen might not be the best choice for your student. Don't be afraid to ask questions to your college audition coach, or the admissions people at the school directly.

Is there a preference given to students who audition on-campus vs. auditions at Unifeds or other off-campus auditions? This answer is a definitive NO. In 99% of all cases, you will be auditioning for the very same people on-campus as you will if you audition in another city. If the school prefers that you audition on-campus, they will not have off-campus auditions.

Do I need to hire a college audition coach? No. While college audition coaches are becoming the new norm, it is not necessary. You can absolutely do this on your own. Having a coach can save you some timely and costly mistakes along the way, though. Even though it's not necessary, you probably wouldn't think twice about hiring an SAT tutor to make sure that your student is as ready as possible to take those SATs because it will have a huge bearing on their future. Think of a college audition coach as much the same. A qualified coach has done this for several years, knows the colleges and their faculty well, and can guide you in the right direction so you can present your best self during this process. As a general rule of thumb - defer to your theatre teacher!