



Westminster School at Oak Mountain

College Advising:
Summer Activities

Summer Activities

Summer is a great time to find an activity to help in the college application process – it helps build a **resume**

This activity should **NOT** be about impressing the colleges

Summer activities should be about doing something **meaningful** to the student

Meaningful Activity vs “Impressive” Activity

When an activity is meaningful or exciting to a student, they are good at it and can see themselves in a related career

This excitement is then naturally translated to the college application and is where the “magic” happens

When a student is excited about an activity, their teachers notice it and write about it in letters of recommendations

The student goes deeper by participating all 4 years, taking leadership positions, and going beyond a local level

Their essay and academic class selection also complements and supports this activity

These “layers” of the application create a story about who they are and what is meaningful to them

Admissions officers have 10 minutes to read an application, so helps when the activities match with student’s major

When all the parts of the application give a clear the picture of a student’s interest – a college application will stand out!



**What are
Meaningful
Summer
Activities?**

Meaningful Summer Activities

Summer Job

Summer Camp

College Courses

ACT/SAT/PSAT Prep

Research and Homegrown Ideas

Sports, Drama or Music Training

Mission Trips/Community Volunteer

Start your College Search

Relax

Summer Job



Colleges are just as impressed with summer jobs as they are with anything else you choose to do

Earning money, keeping to a schedule, and gaining real life skills are hugely beneficial to a student

Summer jobs can include working for a family business, babysitting, dog walking, cleaning, cashier, watching younger siblings, mowing the yard, or scooping ice cream

A job does not have to relate to one's interest or even make money to be meaningful. A job can be service oriented

Good idea to eventually find something related to interest just so the student will know this is really what they want to do for life – helps to develop the narrative of who you are

Summer Jobs that Provide Money for College

Some jobs can lead to scholarships

[Chick-Fil-A](#): Remarkable Futures Scholarship

Companies have tuition reimbursement [programs](#):

[Papa Johns](#)

[Amazon](#)

[Ford](#)

[Taco Bell](#)

[UPS](#)

[Best Buy](#)

[Chipotle](#)

[Disney](#)

[Publix](#)

[Wells Fargo](#)

[Home Depot](#)

[Apple](#)

[Target](#)

[Starbucks](#)

[McDonalds](#)

[Walmart](#)

[Fidelity](#)

[Verizon](#)

Summer Camp



There are many types of summer camps available to students

YMCA camps, church affiliated camps, academic camps, scouting camps, leadership camps, and others

Summer camp counselor jobs offer skill-building, leadership, training, and enrichment opportunities as well as income

Being the camper allows you to learn from experts and develop skills, showcase talents, or obtain certifications

Avoid expensive programs hosted on Ivy League campuses

Choose camps that you enjoy and supports your interests



Examples of Local Summer Camps

YMCA Camps

Boys State

Girls State

Camp
Empower

Church Camps

JH Ranch

Summit
Ministries

Alabama
Governors
School

Joni and
Friends

Auburn
Summer
Camps

Mississippi
State Vet Camp

Samford
Academic
Camps

SPACE camp

Sports,
Academic or
Arts Camps

University of
Alabama Youth
Programs

Examples of National Academic Program Camps

University of
Nebraska
Computer Science

Center for Talented
Youth

National Security
Language Initiative
for Youth (NSLI-Y)

Concordia
Language Village

Michigan Math and
Science Scholars

The Naval Academy
STEM Camp

National Institutes
of Health –
Summer Internship
Program (SIP)

West Point
Summer STEM
Workshop

Clark Scholars
Program

Bank of America
Student Leader

Foundation for
Teaching
Economics

Indiana University
Young Woman's
Institute

College Courses



If a student is set on doing something academic, they can take a summer college course locally or online

This is one of the best ways to experience a taste of college

It also gives a student a sense of what to expect from a real college course, both academically and online platform type

If student gets an A in a course that relates to planned major, they can send grade to the colleges they are applying

It's reassuring to a college admissions officer to see an A in a course from the academic area the student hopes to pursue!

Example of College Credit Courses

- Early College Credit – Westminster has agreements with 4 local colleges to allow a student to earn credit at college and high school at the same time – dual enrollment
 - [AuburnFirst](#)
 - [UAB](#)
 - [Jefferson State Community College](#)
 - [UA Early College](#)
- Benefits include automatic acceptance and lower cost courses
- More information in January about how to sign up
- May also take courses online at colleges all over United States
- Colleges use dual enrollment courses to attract students
- Go to a desired college website and search for “High School Credit”

Standardized Test Prep



- There is no better time to study for the PSAT/ACT/SAT than the summer!
- During the school year, it is difficult to add a test prep course to a busy schedule or take four hours out of a day to take a practice test
- Students who devote considerable time to test prep over the summer see better results on standardized tests in the fall
- Preparing between 10th and 11th grade is particularly helpful
- If 11th grader, study for ACT which counts towards college admissions or scholarships
- If 10th grader, study for PSAT which counts towards National Merit Scholarships

Research and Homegrown Ideas



Summer is the perfect time to pursue that one thing that you don't have time to do during school

Write the book, start a blog, or devote considerable time to a project you have been thinking about

Homegrown ideas usually yield the most meaningful results for the students

Homegrown ideas translate into a powerful piece of the student's story in college applications

Other ideas include volunteer at a hospital, shadow at a clinic, or work in a science laboratory

Research can be enlightening for the student, helping them decide if this career is right for them

Think of something that sounds interesting and fits naturally into your life, then go deeper

Sports, Drama or Music Training



If student is an athlete and wants to play college sports, summer camps are the place to improve skills and showcase their talents in front of college coaches



If student is musician, summer is time to practice and perfect those pieces needed for college auditions – some colleges are very specific about music program audition pieces and it can take time to learn



If film, drama, or art is your intended college major, summer is the time to build that portfolio. Some college programs are very specific about what they want to see – investigate these admissions websites and start preparing application materials

Mission Trip & Community Volunteer

From [article](#) by Sara Harberson

Almost every student has some form of community service on their college application because it is usually part of a high school graduation requirement or a requirement for an honors organization, like National Honors Society

There is an expectation that students will have at least one service-oriented experience in high school, but this is not an admissions requirement for most colleges

Doing community service is appreciated in the college admissions process, but it rarely is the reason a student gets admitted to a specific college

Students who connect service work to something they may be interested in pursuing academically in college, or students who volunteer with an organization close to their heart, get the most out of the experience

For example, a student who is interested in going into real estate and urban redevelopment could get involved with a community-wide clean up or a project to plant trees in their city

Mission Trip & Community Volunteer

Colleges are more impressed with a student who spends 10 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, 9th through 12th grade, doing a community service project, rather than one who does a one-time experience with little time or commitment devoted to it

Impact matters more than titles when it comes to service work

During freshman year, a student should try out a few service-oriented opportunities then stick with the one that is related with the student's interests and future major

As much as colleges claim to value volunteer work, they are rarely moved to admit a student because of it unless the student's impact is so far-reaching and unusual

It is a good reminder that service work is more about "giving" than "receiving," and those students who recognize this tend to volunteer for all the right reasons in the end

Community Volunteer Opportunities

[OMPC \(VBS, Bloom, Crazy Days of Summer\)](#)

[Camp Empower](#)

[Briarwood \(The Edge, Camp Briarwood, VBS\)](#)

[Christian Service Mission](#)

[Urban Hope \(contact Michael Bowen, 256-509-0787\)](#)

[McWane Science Center](#)

[Ronald McDonald House Student Leadership Council](#)

[Special Equestrians](#)

[UAB Hospital Teen Volunteer](#)

[Birmingham Humane Society](#)

[Lovelady Center](#)

[Grace Klein Ministries](#)

Visit Colleges or Relax

- While summer is generally quieter on college campuses, there is still plenty to learn about a prospective college during a summer visit
- Sign up in advance for tours, information sessions, and interviews if they are available. Register your visit even if admissions office is closed
- You can learn a lot by researching colleges online or talking to friends and family about their experiences
- Don't forget to hang out with friends, vacation with family, and recharge
- If a student spends their entire summer on the go, they will be exhausted before the school year even begins

In Conclusion

- Consider your intended college and major when choosing your summer activities
- Make a plan and use summer to reach goals
- Test prep, academic classes, summer camps, and volunteer work are all valuable
- A job or family responsibilities are also respected activities to admissions officers
- Be creative and be excited about your activities
- If you need to relax and hang out with family, there is always time for the homegrown idea
- Make sure activities are meaningful to you