



AcademicAlly Guidance Center

December 1, 2022

Volume XI, Number 12

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For info about SAT I, II, and AP Tests go to:

www.collegeboard.com

For info about ACT test go to:

www.act.org

For info about test optional schools go to:

www.fairtest.org/university/optional

For info about financial aid go to:

www.FAFSA.ed.gov

www.fastweb.com

www.finaid.org

For college search info go to:

www.collegenavigator.gov

www.collegeprowler.com

Gifts: They Don't Have to Cost Much to Matter

So Black Friday and Cyber Monday have passed us by, and some of you may be feeling the pressure to continue your pursuit of the “perfect” gift. Great news! You need not look any further than yourselves to find or create the consummate gift for your loved ones and friends. “Say what?!” you gasp. “How is **that even possible?**” Sit back and let me explain.

I don't mean to wax sentimental here, but some of the best gifts I ever received came from -you guessed it- the heart. I am talking about the gifts that come from **you**. Here are some ideas:

Special Talent: are you musically inclined? Maybe your vocals don't match that of Beyoncé-or maybe they do- but if you have even 1/8 of the voice of one of the world's favorite divas, sing a song for someone special in your life. Take it a step further and write new lyrics to an already-existing song or go one step further than that and write the music for a new song altogether! If you can't sing, play a little ditty on your instrument of choice.

Art: Do you know how to throw pottery? Create a unique jewelry or coin and key dish. Sketch or paint a

To take a virtual tour of college campuses go to:
www.youniversitytv.com

To learn about Colleges That Change Lives go to:
www.ctcl.org

Keeping on Track:

Seniors: Rest easy knowing your college applications are DONE!! Double check to be sure you sent in your test scores, transcripts, and letters of recommendation to the colleges to which you are applying. If you are applying for scholarships, pay attention to deadlines.

Enjoy the winter break; get some rest; and have fun with family and friends. You deserve it!

If you have not finished your applications, use the lull in activity over winter break to wrap up this process.

Juniors: Have in mind which teachers you would like to write letters of recommendation for you and start making requests next month. Keep reviewing for the SAT or ACT –but take a break over the winter vacation! (See deadlines below.) Plan ahead for college campus visits beginning in February. Happy holidays!

Registration Deadlines for ACT and SAT:

SAT: www.collegeboard.org

ACT: www.act.org

portrait of a friend's beloved pet. Put your pedal to the metal and design one-of-a-kind jewelry.

Write: the written word can be one of the most beautiful expressions of friendship and love. Write a letter to your intended recipient and tell them what you appreciate about them. Author a short story or poem about something you and your prospective reader shared in the past. Be creative: write an ad describing the perfect friend, family member, or significant other, using the qualities of the person you will gift this to and share it with them.

Cook/Bake: Got a knack for baking a cake that will put the Cake Boss to shame? Go for it. Know how to whip up a mean filet mignon or a delicious vegan dish that will make Gordon Ramsay's head spin? Knock it out of the ballpark! (Just a word of caution: when preparing foods for others, make sure there are no food allergies or preferences you need to be aware of ahead of time.)

Time: Still scratching your head? The gift of time can be the most precious offering you can give someone. Spend time with an elderly neighbor or relative. Bring photos of a trip you recently took and tell them about it. Humor can be the best source of healing-find a book of jokes and bring that along to your host.

Your gifts do not have to be expensive. In fact, some of the best gifts come from the giving of yourself. Wishing all of you the very best that this season has to offer.

Did You Know?

Wrapping paper originated in China, where paper was invented during 2nd century BC. The Southern Song dynasty saw monetary gifts wrapped with paper, which created a chih pao, or envelope.

Gift giving can promote awareness of others. According to researchers, gift giving creates positive emotions, which increase your own happiness. Gift giving increases mood, self-esteem, enhances your social connections, decreases stress, and is contagious!

Midterm Madness:

Keep in mind that midterms are approaching in January. If you have not been doing so already, start putting together your old tests, notes from each chapter you have read, and papers so you can create a system of review. Save these documents and stay tuned for next month when I give you some helpful study tips!

Pay it Forward: Do you know someone who is looking for college admissions advice? Send them this newsletter or forward us their contact information. We want to help!

Contact Us

<http://www.Academic-Ally.com>

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****We recognize that we have run this article every December, but its content is really worth noting.**

Freshman Winter Break: The Coming Home Highs and Lows

Ahh, winter break is fast approaching, and college freshmen are looking to return home for a well-deserved winter vacation. There is so much to look forward to: Mom's homemade cooking that does not look like an experiment from a nuclear power plant, privacy in the form of a single bedroom and a bathroom that can only accommodate one person at a time, the ability to shower without the use of shower shoes, peace and quiet and the absence of a hallmate's screaming session with her boyfriend at 4 o'clock in the morning. Who needs holiday gifts when there are so many benefits to coming home from college?

Many freshmen are excited to return home. For some it marks the first time they've been home since they left for college this fall. There is so much to tell and so many details to share with friends and family. How does one do justice to the hallmate who bathes in the quad pond and wears tea bags for deodorant? (True story!) Or how about the girl who has developed her own on-line business selling products she made from duct tape? (Also true.) And what about the college student who has used his entrepreneurial skills to create a Chinese food delivery service for late-night snackers? The stories are endless and there is an urgency to share it with one and all.

No sooner will your freshman return home than she will be out the door to reunite with high school friends. Notes are always compared about the colleges' alcohol policies, professors, classes, and significant others. Small world encounters remain as intriguing as the first day the commonality was discovered. "Do you remember Jack? He said you played travel soccer together and he lives on my hall!" Or "This girl Tracy is in my Intro to Psych class, and we got to talking and we discovered that she knew you from summer camp." There is a buzz in the air as everyone wants to catch up and find out the latest about each other's lives over the course of the past four months.



The return home is also marked with some reservation and trepidation. Junior has grown accustomed to calling the shots in his life. He has decided his schedule, his meals, and may have even successfully recruited a nice female co-ed to fold his laundry for him. Knowing that his parents might expect life to return to the state of normalcy that existed before he left for school could cause concern. In such cases, a conversation about both parties' expectations is critical to avoid potential conflict from coming to fruition.

Similarly, coming home to face one's friends might be chock-full of stress. There is an expectation that everyone is happy with their choices. That life at college has been a dream come true with amazing classes, accessible professors, cool roommates and hallmates, an abundant amount of extra-curricular activities to choose from, and active romantic lives. It does not always happen this way for everyone, and even if it does, for some students, leaving home for college is a difficult and trying experience. It may take more than one semester for these students to acclimate and find their comfort zone. These students may find it embarrassing to share their feelings and experiences with their peers, especially if their friends are beaming about their own successful transitions to college. It is important for parents and students alike to remember that, just as was the case in high school, everyone finds their way at their own pace. If you have a friend who is struggling to find her way, don't feel obligated to fix the situation; sometimes listening can be the best way to help.

As you prepare to enjoy the festivities of the winter season, enjoy one another's company. Be grateful for your health and abundance, and remember that the best way to bring peace to your home is to communicate your needs, love, and appreciation for one another.
