

# How to Make the Most of It

## A month-by-month guide to a successful year

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### October

**Group Focus:** Get organized! Meet with your team's advisor to review plans for the year and make sure you're on task. Don't blow your budget on this month's homecoming fest when you still have almost a whole year left. Once you've identified long-term goals, allot resources accordingly, and take the initiative to introduce yourself to school administrators. That way, your name will be the first to pop into their heads when special opportunities arise for campus leaders.

**Just for You:** When scheduling club activities, don't forget to plan some time for you to recharge. Try setting up a weekly "appointment" for time on your own. If teachers or members ask for your help during that time, respond as you would for any other important meeting: "Sorry, but I have a prior engagement."

**Going to College:** Seniors! Gather up those college applications and fill 'em out, lick a stamp, and stuff 'em in the mail. Or simply visit [www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com), where you can apply on-line to more than 300 schools. Don't forget to double-check the dates for early admission, which allows you more flexibility as you negotiate financial aid packages and compare scholarship offers from other schools.

### November

**Group Focus:** This month traditionally is the time to kick-off holiday service projects. As your troupe's leader, don't forget to be a team player when it comes to getting your hands dirty. Prove you're not above doing what you ask of others, and you'll set the example that serving the community is fun and important throughout the year. Try an unusual project such as gathering gifts for nursing home residents or delivering treats to homeless folks' pets.

**Just for You:** Take the time to appreciate the support and love you get every day from your family. Imagine how much you'll miss them in a year or two when you're away at college. It's never too late to start a new tradition that keeps you close such as reserving Sunday mornings for a family breakfast or reading books and discussing them together every Wednesday night.

**Going to College:** November is the time for juniors to start researching colleges and pinpointing their top five choices. Visit [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com), which profiles nearly 4,000 colleges that you can narrow down using 13 criteria, including religious affiliation, ethnic mix, and athletic offerings.

### December

**Group Focus:** Want to lock in continued support from advisors, administrators, community leaders, and fellow officers? Take time this month to say thanks. Craft personal handwritten notes, put together a gift basket, or volunteer your services as a typist, babysitter, or gourmet chef. Showing your gratitude is a guaranteed way to strengthen your most reliable helpers' commitment for next semester.

**Just for You:** Audit your values and become more self-aware. Deep down, you may know what's important to you, but here's your chance to carve it in stone (or pen it on a legal pad). Use the heading "I believe in..." to guide your list of principles. For each entry, create an inventory of your extracurricular activities and daily behavior to assess how your actions reflect what you believe. Periodically refer back to your list to re-evaluate your progress as you strive to become the best you can be.

**Going to College:** Hey juniors! Instead of spending your December holidays catching up on *Buffy* reruns, get off the couch and prepare for your first or second take of the SAT, ACT, or placement tests this spring. Visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) where you can register on-line and order test-prep supplies that include practice exams to identify areas you should brush up on.

### January

**Group Focus:** Boost your credibility rating. Actions speak louder than words—and that includes inaction. Don't take on extra commitments unless you can follow through. When your word is solid, you'll earn respect and serve as a role model.

**Just for You:** Remember your best friend in middle school? You two were inseparable and talked every day...that is until your comrade's parents moved to Wyoming. Make a New Year's resolution to reconnect with old friends from school, camp, or conferences. Don't let broken promises of staying in touch or the awkwardness of talking to someone again keep you from rekindling relationships.

**Going to College:** Now that you've gotten an acceptance letter from your top choice school, senior, it's time to pull up to the bargaining table. With a resume full of achievements and a high GPA, you've got the leverage to negotiate, and college admissions staffers trying to raise the bar with recruits like you are in a position to offer up irresistible financial aid packages. Visit Florida's Department of Education at [www.firm.edu/doe](http://www.firm.edu/doe) to search for aid, and get a headstart on earning federal funding at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

### February

**Group Focus:** Delegate! Start searching for next year's leaders by monitoring which students work hard on "little" projects—they'll jump at the chance to take on bigger assignments.

So, create a win-win situation by giving dedicated members the opportunity to gain more experience while you get a break from doing all the work. Also, investigate district posts in the group for officers interested in expanding their involvement, or develop a shadowing program for future group leaders.

**Just For You:** OK, now that you've mastered work management, schedule some down time. If you typically arrange all of your crew's plans—let another friend take over. Who knows? You may actually learn something fresh from your partner in crime, or boost a not-so-confident friend's self-esteem.

**Going to College:** Juniors, take some time to research degree programs. Read the course descriptions in school catalogs, locate class web sites at college home pages, and visit your guidance office to take tests that will match your interests and skills to a career area. Web sites such as [www.myfuture.com](http://www.myfuture.com) also offer quizzes that will help you narrow down a major.

## March

**Group Focus:** Plan an outdoor retreat to discuss the group's achievements and to relax before last minute tasks start piling up. Schedule a block during which members tell each other what they add to the association. Focusing on each member's positive aspects will help motivate the group and be a nice change of pace from meetings filled with finger pointing and nitpicking. After the vacation, your teammates can go home stress-free, knowing their involvement is appreciated.

**Just for You:** After you organize a relaxing break, you may need a breather from all that planning. Go get a massage or lay out by the pool and finish a book you've wanted to read for months. Pamper yourself by focusing on your interests outside the organization such as writing poetry or biking.

**Going to College:** It's your turn, seniors, to move away from being shadowed to finding a mentor for yourself. Visit your school's career center to identify local professionals willing to take you under their wing and help you finalize future plans. Check out the index of professional organizations, and the "Network" and "Find a mentor" links at [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com), so you can contact industry pros for career tips.

## April

**Group Focus:** Get creative by teaming up with leaders of other groups to share resources, add social incentives for bored members, and spark imaginative ideas. Collaborate with these officers and plan a new school tradition such as an end-of-the-year bash. Keep the event exciting by picking a new theme annually such as a 60s party.

**Just for You:** Use the same innovative thought process you applied to bring life back into dazed members to revitalize yourself. Take some time after midterms to camp out with friends or have a sandcastle-building tournament at the beach. Go outdoors and attempt a new sport like surfing or rollerblading to get that summer energy into your veins.

**Going to College:** Hit as many college campuses as possible during spring break, juniors. You have all week to take day tours and speak with student leaders. College and high school vacations often occur at different times, so you'll also be able to see the schools during peak hours and determine how well-suited you are to the learning environment. If you don't have the time or money to trek all over, visit [www.campustours.com](http://www.campustours.com) to take virtual trips to colleges across the country.

## May

**Group Focus:** Make mini-scrapbooks focusing on the group's accomplishments and humorous moments of the year to thank your staff and most supportive members. Help your successor transition smoothly by designing a manual with leadership tips, helpful contacts, a member directory, and the organization's policies.

**Just for You:** While working on a guide for the group you're leaving behind, inspire yourself too by starting a journal. Writing down goals is the first step to achieving them. Jot down long-term plans and keep track of your progress, so you can review your personal achievements for the motivation to reach your dreams.

**Going to College:** Seniors, get in touch with the college leaders you'll join in the fall before they leave for summer break. Discuss how you can get involved, what you want to accomplish as a freshman, which organizations you find interesting, and what to expect as a new campus group member. Experienced undergrads can help you set realistic goals, so you won't overdo it. Go to your college's home page to find contact information and details about organizations, or call the student-activities office to reach club officers.