

10 Life Hacks

TO DIMINISH PARENT'S STRESS OF SENIOR YEAR

Your student's senior year of high school is a whirlwind of milestones, deadlines, activities, and events. Although highly anticipated, it can catch even the most organized families by surprise.

This season offers so many moments to savor and celebrate, but you can't enjoy them if you are continually playing catch-up. Here are ten life hacks to help you stay on top of the tasks, diminish the stress, and make the most of every moment.



CREATE & USE A DIGITAL CALENDAR

Google Calendar is the top choice among digital calendars, but there are other free options available. Whatever you choose, create a personal calendar for every family member, as well as a family event calendar.

Record and sync appointments and events on the go, color-code each calendar or all senior events, and set multiple notifications (aka reminders) for each entry. Don't forget to share each calendar with everyone in the family.



CALENDAR TRIGGERS

A calendar trigger is a reminder to accomplish a task. It functions like a notification, but it is not related to an event. Instead, it reminds you of a routine or behavior. For example, on the 1st Monday of every month, you can set a calendar "trigger" to check in with your student's college counselor. It doesn't have to happen at a particular time, but it reminds you to be consistent.



PHOTO STORAGE/ORGANIZATION SYSTEM

If you are a mom, you've probably wanted to organize your photos for 18 years. Don't start now! You will be tempted to go through every photo album and folder since your student's birth, but this is not the point of this hack.

The goal is to establish a place to save all of your senior year photos and moments. Create a social media album, a Google Drive or Dropbox folder, or set up an album on a photo-sharing site. As you capture events and moments throughout the year, save them directly and immediately to this place where you can access them in moments at any time.



SENIOR YEAR FOLDER (EMAIL & COMPUTER)

Create a folder in your email inbox and on the desktop of your computer for Senior Year Docs/Forms. As you process your emails, put **everything** related to the senior year in the folder (even if you respond).

As documents or forms come in, scan them immediately into your computer and save them in the desktop folder (Extra hack: download a scanning app on your phone so that you can scan docs and forms on the go).



COLLEGE APPLICATION FOLDER (EMAIL & COMPUTER)

Create a folder in your email inbox and on the desktop of your computer for college-related information. As you process your emails, put **everything** related to the college application process in the folder (even if you respond). As documents or forms come in, immediately scan them into your computer and save them in the desktop folder.



EASY, FREEZER LATE-NIGHT MEALS

When life gets crazy, meal-planning is a challenge. The senior year schedule takes everything to a new level. Freezer meals are a great item to prepare and have on hand. But when you come home late after a game with a hungry crew, you don't have time to cook a casserole—even if it is prepped and ready to bake. You need 5-minute meals! Here are some great late-night meal hacks.

- ◆ Barbecue Sandwiches. Pre-purchase barbecue from a local restaurant, divide it into meal-size portions and freeze. “Quick Thaw” in the microwave, put it on a bun, and add some sauce. Hot and delicious!
- ◆ Chicken Wraps. Purchase frozen, pre-cooked chicken strips or chunks. “Quick Thaw” in the microwave, add veggies, cheese, sour cream, salsa, etc. and roll in a fresh tortilla.
- ◆ Tacos. Freeze meal-sized portions of cooked ground beef. “Quick Thaw” the meat in the microwave, stuff in taco shells, and dress with cheese, lettuce, taco sauce, sour cream, and salsa.
- ◆ Mexican Bowls. “Quick Thaw” meal-sized portions of ground beef or chicken. Layer over pre-cooked rice, along with chopped peppers and onions, cheese, salsa, sour cream, etc. You can also add black or pinto beans.
- ◆ Spaghetti. Make your favorite homemade spaghetti sauce. Freeze individual portions. “Quick Thaw” in the microwave and serve over fresh-cooked pasta (You will have to prepare the pasta, but it’s still less than 10 minutes from freezer to table).



LOCATION REMINDERS

Location reminders are perfect for those items you always forget to purchase or that errand you never remember to include. When you are near the address you have designated, you will receive a notification reminder!

Need to borrow your friend’s tablecloth or party decorations? Set a reminder triggered by a location near her house (so when you drive by, it will remind you to stop!).

Do you need to pick up a gift card for a teacher or coach? Create a location reminder for the mall complex or nearby shopping center.

Do you keep forgetting to pick up the prescriptions? You got it—set a location reminder for the pharmacy.



SENIOR TRACKER

((FIND MY FRIENDS, LIFELINE360, OR SNAPCHAT MAPS))

As your student exercises his or her newfound independence, he may forget to tell you about his last-minute plans or that he volunteered to drive someone home or that the entire team decided to go out for burgers after the game. Tracking apps can ease your mind, eliminate unnecessary arguments, and give your student some additional freedom and responsibility.



SCHEDULE FREE TIME

Add it to your digital calendar as a timed event. Protect it. Honor it. Consider taking a nap. Trust me! You need it.



JUST SAY NO

Learning to say “no” is the best life hack. By saying no, you never add the stress to your life in the first place and you leave room to say “yes” when the opportunity comes along.

If your calendar is full, say no. If you need some downtime, say no. If you feel overwhelmed and over-committed, say no. You can't do everything. You can't please everyone. It's okay just to say no.