# Don’t Catch Senioritis! It Could Cost You Your College AcceptanceAcceptance

by ELIZABETH CHUCK

The college application process is over, graduation is approaching and spring is in full bloom, making conditions ripe for a highly contagious phenomenon among high schoolers: "senioritis."

Also nicknamed a "senior slump," senioritis is when students get a bad case of slacking off at the end of senior year of high school. While it can be tempting to stop caring about schoolwork and start focusing more on fun activities like prom and parties, letting final grades slide can have serious consequences.

"That college acceptance isn't the ticket to check out of your last few weeks of high school," said Dr. Kat Cohen, CEO and founder of Ivywise, a New York-based college consulting firm. "Although it's rare, there have been incidences of colleges rescinding acceptances from students who received very low grades at the end of the year."

According to the [National Association for College Admission Counseling](http://www.nacacnet.org/issues-action/LegislativeNews/Pages/Rescind.aspx), 22 percent of colleges revoked an admissions offer in 2009, the most recent year that the group collected data of this sort. Final grades were responsible for the majority of the revocations — 65.3 percent — followed by disciplinary information learned about a student and falsified applications.

All colleges, whether they've accepted an applicant during early-decision rounds or in the regular admissions period, require a final high school transcript to show that the student has actually graduated. While a drastic drop in grade-point average can affect the admissions offer in extreme cases, more often, there are financial implications that come from shirking your studies.

For example, said Cohen, a high school student who takes five or six advanced placement (AP) courses in their senior year could rack up enough credits to shave off a semester of college by enabling them to bypass college classes — but only if they score high enough on tests at the end of the year.

And one semester could be worth thousands. With the [average annual cost](http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/average-published-undergraduate-charges-sector-2014-15)for tuition, room and board at a private four-year institution now at $42,419,[college costs are soaring](http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/your-dream-college-worth-it-sure-if-you-graduate-time-n327341); the class of 2014 inherited the most debt of any college graduating class, with the average graduate with student-loan debt owing $33,000.

Alex Bender, a high school senior in Aurora, Colorado, is going to Northeastern University in the fall. Even while maintaining straight A's throughout his senior year, he admitted, "I'm definitely not immune to senioritis."

Instead of rushing to do homework the day it was assigned, Bender said he started waiting until the night before it was due to get it done.

"There wasn't as much motivation for me to do it early," Bender said. "Once you get accepted to college, your mind's not about high school anymore."

For the next seven months, NBC News will be following Bender and nine other high school seniors from across the country as they navigate everything from graduating high school to meeting their roommates to studying for finals at the end of their first semester. Like millions of other students, they have chosen the school where they will spend the next four years, and are now coasting toward graduation.

While reasons for senior slumps seem pretty basic — being distracted by warmer weather, feeling burnt out on homework — there can be deeper issues at play, experts say.

"A couple theories in psychology can help explain this," said Dr. Darcia Narvaez, professor of psychology at the University of Notre Dame.

One draws a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Students who are intrinsically motivated to study hard because they love what they're doing, while students who are extrinsically motivated are oriented to work for rewards, such as good grades, praise or getting accepted into college.

"For some students, it could be that now that the rewards system no longer matters in high school, they're shifting their extrinsic motivation. They don't feel motivated for high school anymore," Narvaez said.

Another theory is that students are reacting to the overwhelming emotions of leaving high school and their friends and family.

"It could be that the pain of separation is so much that they're already detaching emotionally from the experience of high school. We call that dissociation," Narvaez said. "You're just absent. You're not really there, present in the moment."

The best way to avoid falling into a senior slump? Keep a routine, suggests Cohen of Ivywise.

"It's very important to set aside time every day to review your class notes," she said. "Also, students should rewards themselves for completing assignments. Maybe going to that movie with friends is the reward. Did you get your math homework done? Set small, attainable goals."

She also recommended hanging out with positive influences.

"I've also seen students have offers of admission revoked for getting into trouble, drinking alcohol on a senior spring trip and getting caught, or doing something like cheating on a test," Cohen said. "The high school is responsible for telling the college where the student has been accepted, and then it goes into the hands of the college whether they want to revoke the admission decision."