



## **The Foundry Admissions College Guide - Everything You Need To Know From Freshman To Senior Year of High School**

Each year the college admissions process becomes more complex, the acceptance rate at top colleges declines, and cost of college increases.

Given these conditions, it's no wonder that so many of our high school students and their families are overwhelmed at the prospect of navigating the college admissions process!

**Finding and applying to the right colleges should be exciting and enriching, not incredibly stressful.**

**This guide will walk you through the steps and actions needed to significantly increase your chances of gaining acceptance to the best colleges in the country.**

It'll share tips and strategies that you should be implementing each *year of high school* to impress college admissions counselors and earn acceptance to the college of your dreams.

## ***Important Information:***

**We have the keys to developing an admissions strategy that will maximize your ability to gain admission to your dream school.**

And while the concepts are simple to grasp, mastering them is very difficult.

Want to maximize your SAT/ACT scores?

Want to have a comprehensive and impactful high school resume that college admissions teams will love?

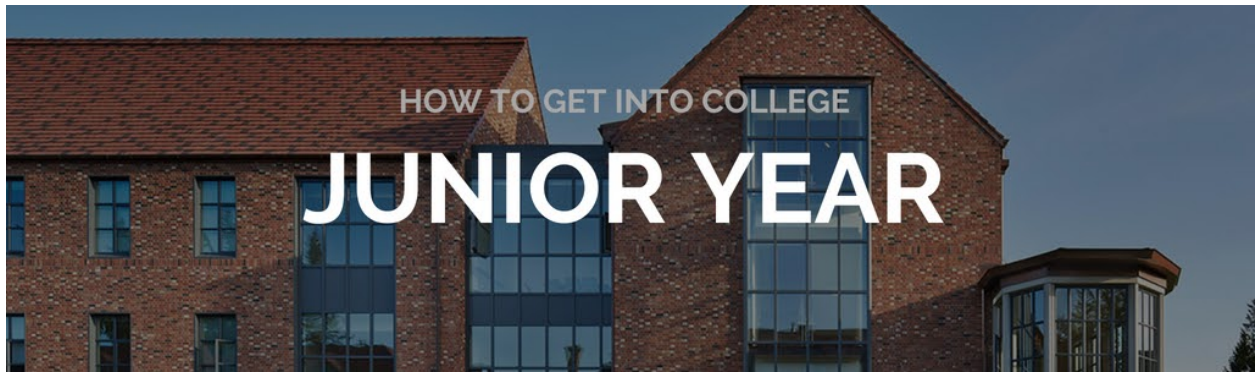
Want to write compelling and engaging college application essays?

To be successful in your quest to attend the school of your dreams, you **must start early, stay on track, and remain organized.**

Before we dive in, we want you to keep two themes in mind while reading this guide and preparing for college:

1. **The key to crafting an impactful college application is the ability to tell your story** in a comprehensive manner through essays, recommendations, extracurriculars, and leadership so that admissions officers are left with a strong sense of your talents, experiences, goals, and values. As early as possible, you should be thinking about what kind of story you'd like to tell and how you plan to tell it.
2. **When refining your college list in order to ultimately choose a college to attend, nothing is more important than fit.** Although it's discussed often, college fit is frequently ignored by students choosing a college. Don't choose a college because it makes others - friends, family, parents - excited, choose the college that makes you excited to attend and meets your fit criteria, regardless of how others feel. Others don't have to attend the college you choose, you do!

Let's get started!



## Junior Year: College Crunch Time

*"Don't follow your dreams. Chase them down with aggressive pursuit" - Darren Hardy*

This is crunch time.

This will likely be your most stressful year of high school.

This is the most important year when it comes to high school coursework. This is the year that you need to challenge yourself.

**The work and sacrifices you put into your Junior year will pay dividends in your Senior year.**



**By front-loading a lot of the work during your Junior year, you're setting yourself up to have a more fun, less stressful Senior year.**

**During your Junior year:**

- **Determine whether you'd like to take the SAT or ACT:** Most students find that they perform better on one of the two test formats.

The decision of which test to take should be largely based on scores from the PSAT and Pre-ACT. Additionally, consider the courses you've already taken heading into Junior year to help determine which test might be best.\*

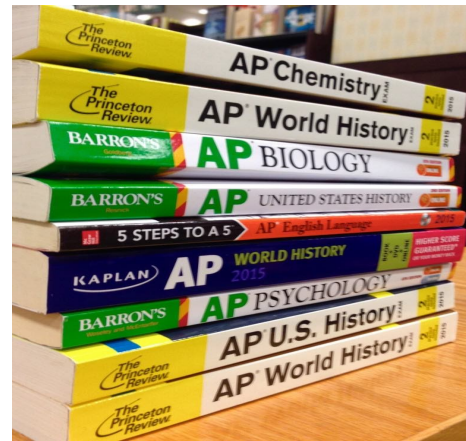


*\*Some students who have not yet taken Algebra II should choose to wait until Spring of Junior year to take the SAT because some limited Algebra II concepts are tested in the SAT (they are not tested in the ACT, so Juniors should feel comfortable taking the ACT regardless of math level).*

- **Take the SAT and/or ACT at least once (preferably twice):** Most students take the SAT and/or the ACT 2-3 times in total. We recommend all Juniors take the test at least once during Junior year (the earlier the better).

From here, you can decide whether you need to take the test again. Either way, you will have built in enough time for additional study so that the test can be taken in the Fall of Senior year prior to early application deadlines.

- **Continue to pursue as rigorous a class load as possible:** Junior year should be difficult! Without overdoing it, you should attempt to take as many AP, IB, and honors programs as possible and achieve solid grades in those courses. Your performance in these courses is a signal to college admissions officers about how you will likely perform once in college.



- **Establish yourself in leadership roles at the school and in the community:** As a Junior, you're continued participation in extracurriculars throughout high school should yield multiple opportunities for leadership. Take advantage of these opportunities.

Additionally, don't forget leadership opportunities present within your local community. Whether through religious groups, jobs, boy/girl scouts, etc., there are a lot of activities in which to engage off the high school campus.

- **Refine your college list and take college visits:** By January of your Junior year, you should have a pretty solid list of 10-20 colleges of interest (at a maximum!). If possible, visit as many college campuses as your schedule (and finances) permit. **We strongly recommend the list is narrowed to 15 or less colleges by May of Junior year and 10 or less by the end of the Summer after Junior year.**

As you refine and narrow your list, remember the various components of college fit – size, location, academics, social life, cost.

- **Begin “expressing interest” in colleges:** Many colleges, especially smaller ones, take note of high school students who express interest in their programs. This is because colleges ultimately want to send acceptance letters to students more likely to accept admission.

There are a number of ways to “express interest” in a college: “like” them on Facebook and “like” or comment on their posts, follow them on Twitter and Instagram, meet with admissions officers while visiting the campus or call and speak with admissions officers over the phone.



While “expressing interest” will not gain you admission to a college on its own, it might end up being the small nudge needed if your application ends up on the bubble.

- **Meet with your high school counselor to determine what classes you will take Senior year:** Your Senior year will likely be less academically overwhelming than your Junior year, but you should still strive to take difficult courses, especially in the first semester of Senior year. Colleges frequently ask to see grades from the first semester of your Senior year, even after admitting students. Make sure your showing colleges that you are willing to continue pursuing challenges and excelling through the end of high school.
- **Identify which teachers you’d like to write recommendations:** The end of Junior year is a good time to identify and talk with the teachers you’d like to write your recommendations. The recommendations don’t need to be written yet but providing teachers a “heads up” early will help them think about how to best write a compelling recommendation for you.



- **Continue to develop your leisure reading habit:** During Junior year, life will be busy! That said, you should still have 10-15 minutes each day to devote to leisure reading.

### ***Summer After Junior Year:***

“All men [and women] are created equal, some work harder in preseason”  
- Emmitt Smith

Just like the academic year, the Summer after Junior year should be rigorous (in addition to relaxing!)



- **Continue refining your list of colleges and visiting campuses:** As you work to narrow your list of colleges (hopefully down to no more than 10 colleges by the end of Summer), pay close attention to the application requirements and deadlines for each.

Does the school use the Common Application? The Coalition Application? Do they accept both...or neither? This is very important information to know early.

In addition to a Common or Coalition Application, does the college require additional supplemental essays?

What type of early application options does the college provide? Early Acceptance (non-binding)? Early Decision (binding)?

What types of teacher recommendations are required for the college?  
(Some colleges no longer require any recommendations).

- **Begin working on the [Common App](#) and/or [Coalition App](#) essays as well as any supplemental essays specific to schools where you know for sure you'd like to apply.**

You're still early in the process, but once your Senior year begins, you will have less time to devote to essay writing. The key to solid writing is allowing yourself enough time to continuously review and improve upon drafts.



Additionally, if you are able to complete your essays in the Summer, you will be in an excellent position to apply to college early, resulting in greater odds of acceptance to your top colleges and lowered stress during Senior year of high school.

- **Review the [FAFSA](#) and the paperwork requirements:** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the form everyone, regardless of financial background, needs to fill out and submit during October of their Senior year.

The form is relatively straightforward but requires a lot of tax-related documents. Spend some time in the Summer reviewing the form with your parents and collecting the necessary paperwork so that you are able to submit the form as early as possible (typically October 1).

- ***Continue pursuing enriching opportunities and experiences in a similar manner as last Summer:*** This might include employment, travel, or taking a class. You should find some time to rest and relax each summer, but summers are not for sitting on the couch all day.
- ***Officially decide whether you need to take the SAT or ACT again in the Fall of Senior year:*** This is often a difficult decision. We recommend looking at the average scores of students accepted to the colleges where you are interested in applying the previous year. From there, determine whether your scores fall into the middle range of averages or higher. If they do, you are likely fine. If they don't, consider retaking. If you're a bit late to the start and have yet to take one of the tests, you definitely need to sign up now (unless you are only applying to "test optional" schools and have chosen to forego the tests).

If you do decide to retake one of the tests, use the summer to re-establish a study plan and timeline similar to the prior summer.

## **Your Junior Year Checklist:**



*Determine which standardized tests you'd like to take and take SAT and/or the ACT in the Fall **and** Spring.*



*Continue pursuing a rigorous course load.*



*Establish yourself in leadership roles at your school and/or in your community.*



*Refine your list of colleges down to around 10 colleges and visit as many campuses as possible*



*Begin expressing "interest" in colleges.*



*Determine which classes you will take during Senior year.*



*Identify and notify teachers of your intent to ask them for a recommendation.*



*Decide whether to retake the SAT and/or ACT and prepare a study plan.*



*Begin working on and possibly completing your college essays (Coalition App, Coalition App, supplementals, etc.).*



*Review and prepare the necessary paperwork for the FAFSA.*



*Continue pursuing enriching opportunities and experiences.*