



## **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?

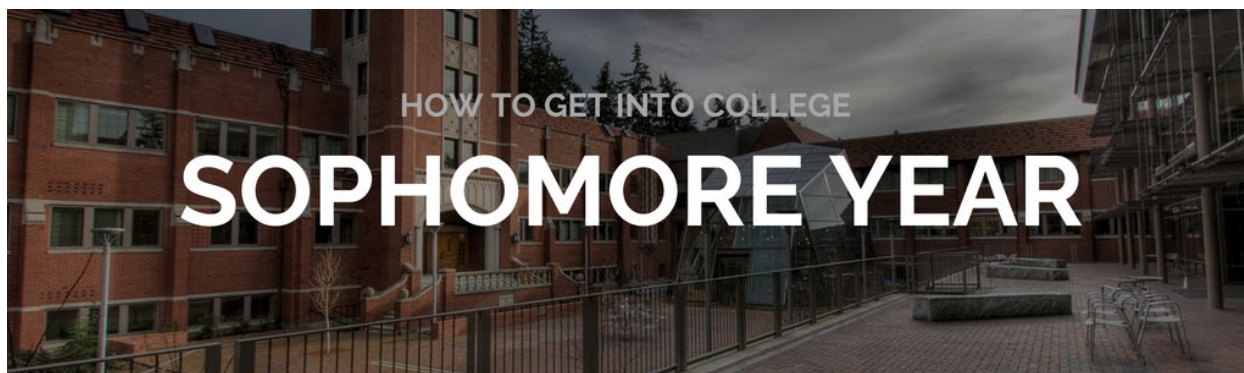
Want to write compelling and engaging college application essays?

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!



## Sophomore Year: Maintaining Momentum

*“Like the elephant, we are unconscious of our own strength. When it comes to understanding the power we have to make a difference in our own lives, we might as well be asleep. If you want to make your dreams come true, wake up. Wake up to your own strength. Wake up to the role you play in your own destiny. Wake up to the power you have to choose what you think, do, and say.” - Keith Ellis*

College planning begins to come into focus during Sophomore year.

This is the time to start pushing yourself academically. The momentum and positive study habits built in freshman year need to be maintained and enhanced.

More difficult courses, such as AP, IB, and honors courses will become increasingly available. Additionally, you will likely take a practice SAT test through your high school.

Extracurricular activities, such as athletics and clubs, should be of continued focus and participation. Additionally, during Sophomore year, opportunities to gain leadership experience will become more available.

As challenging courses, extracurriculars, and leadership experiences are pursued, research into colleges of interest should begin.

### **During your Sophomore year:**

- ***Pursue more challenging courses (AP, IB, Honors) wherever possible:*** As mentioned previously, the difficulty level of the courses you choose to pursue will play a strong factor in the way college admissions officers assess your application.



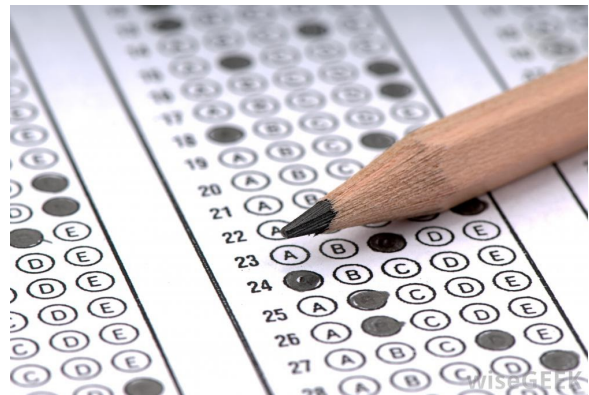
Additionally, taking more advanced courses earlier might give you a leg up in taking earlier SAT or ACT tests in the Fall of your Junior year. For example, it's recommended that students have taken Algebra 2 prior to taking the SAT. This course is typically taken in tenth or eleventh grade depending on skill level.

- ***Continue to Participate in Extracurricular Activities and Look for Leadership Opportunities:*** Maybe you're working hard on the basketball court to be the Team Captain of the JV squad. Or you've started a new club and you're trying to promote it on campus. Whatever your outside-of-class pursuits might be, keep them up!

In addition to participating, more opportunities for leadership will arise in the Sophomore year. Whenever possible, take advantage of those opportunities!

College admissions counselors will be impressed if you show leadership capabilities as early as your Sophomore year.

- **Take the PSAT:** Every 10th grader will take this test since it's typically sponsored by high schools. We recommend that you do not study for this test. Go in "blind" and see how you fare. This will be a great opportunity to see how you do and what you need to work on.



- **Take the Pre-ACT Test:** Most schools do not sponsor the Pre-ACT test. But we recommend that you take it during your 10th grade year.

Here's why:

Most students are geared toward one test more than the other. Some students perform well on the ACT while some perform well on the SAT.

By taking both the PSAT and Pre-ACT (without studying for either of them), you'll be able to see which test is a better fit for your test-taking style.

From there, you can create a study plan geared towards the test, whether ACT or SAT, that you're more likely to succeed with.



- **Create an initial college interest list:** What types of colleges are of interest? How far do you think you'd be willing to travel from home? Are you looking for a large or small school? These basic questions can be used at this stage in the process to generate an initial college interest list. Nothing is written in stone.

With the initial interest list created, you can begin conducting further research into the schools, speaking and friends and family who might know of people who attended the colleges, and considering when you might want to visit the campuses.

- **Continue to develop your leisure reading habit:** During Sophomore year, life begins to become a bit more busy. That said, you should still have 10-15 minutes each day to devote to leisure reading.
- **Meet with your high school counselor to determine what classes you will take Junior year:** Your Junior year will likely be your most difficult academic year of high school. When working with your counselor, you should push to pursue more difficult courses in your Junior year.

## ***Summer After Sophomore Year:***

- ***Maintain (and increase!) your leisure reading:*** The goal should be reading for pleasure at least 15-20 minutes per day.
- ***If possible, find a job:*** Working at a fast-food chain or any customer service position will not only put a little money in your pocket and expose you to leadership experience, but it will prove to admissions counselors that you're willing to work hard.



- ***Look for enriching opportunities to learn something new:*** This might involve learning a second language, attending class at a local college to learn about entrepreneurship, or taking a trip with your church to build homes in South America. The key is that you are doing something of personal interest and learning something new.
- ***Register for the ACT and/or SAT if you plan to take it the Fall of your Junior year:*** We recommend students take the SAT or ACT at least once during Junior year (and preferably twice!). If you plan to take one of the tests in the Fall of Junior year, sign-up for the test now. Which test you sign up for should be dependent how your PSAT and Pre-ACT tests fared.

Additionally, 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).

- ***Sign up for SAT or ACT prep through a tutor or subscribe to free test prep courses, such as [Khan Academy](#):*** Once the school year starts back up, it will be difficult to devote time to SAT or ACT study. If possible, spending time in the summer studying these materials should provide an advantage. We recommend at least 2-3 hours of study time per week.

## ***Your Sophomore Year Checklist:***



*Pursue difficult courses (AP, IB, Honors) wherever possible.*



*Read for leisure 10-15 minutes each day.*



*Take the PSAT and Pre-ACT.*



*Continue participation in extracurricular activities to pursue leadership opportunities.*



*Pursue difficult courses (AP, IB, Honors) wherever possible.*



*Create and initial college list and begin conducting preliminary research.*



*Determine which classes to take Junior year.*



*Find a job.*



*Look for enriching Summer opportunities.*



*Register to take the SAT and/or ACT during the Fall of Junior year and prepare a study plan.*