

Sophomore Checklist – Preparing for College Admissions

Your sophomore year is a great time for learning about colleges, majors, and career tracks. Your sophomore year is also the perfect time to figure out which extracurricular activities are best for you and to get yourself on the right track for success in the classroom. Use the following checklist to stay organized and to keep track of important deadlines. And remember, if you have questions or if you need assistance, Ivy Academic Prep is here to help! Just email us at contact@ivyacademicprep.com

All Year

- Have fun! Your sophomore year is the perfect year to figure out which extracurricular activities you love and to deepen your involvement. Remember, depth of involvement and leadership are more important for college admissions than the number of activities that you are involved in, so devote a little extra energy to the activities that excite you the most.
- Get organized. Minimize college application stress by creating an organizational system to keep track of paperwork and use calendars and spreadsheets to keep track of important dates.
- Become a good student. Your sophomore year is a critical time for figuring out how to study, how to get good grades, and how to follow your academic passions. If you had any low grades last year, now is the time to turn your weaknesses into strengths so that you can be on track for having a great GPA. Consider working with a private tutor if you need additional help.
- Attend college and career fairs. Most fairs take place in the fall at your high school or in a nearby meeting place. Your guidance counselor or school website should be able to provide you with dates and locations.
- Read, read, read! Developing strong reading skills and reading for fun will hone your intellect, turn you into a well-rounded person, and give you the critical thinking and reading skills that you'll need to succeed in college. Read for fun and do it often.
- Go over every item on this checklist at least once every 3 months to make sure that you are planning appropriately and that you aren't missing any important dates.

August-September

- Revisit your 4-year plan. Last year, you should have made a 4-year plan that will keep you on track for your college applications. Go over this plan to make sure that you are going to meet the coursework, GPA, and testing requirements for the schools that you want to apply to. Meet with your counselor to discuss the year ahead and to be sure that your courses and extracurricular activities are adequately preparing you for college admission. Also, inquire about AP courses, AP exams, and PSAT test dates.
- Plan ahead for the PSAT if your high school offers it. Be sure to mark important dates down on your calendar and create a plan for studying. The PSAT isn't as important as the SAT or the ACT, but you should still prepare for it.
- Sign up for new extracurricular activities and seek out leadership experience in the activities that you are already involved in.
- Keep your GPA up. Your GPA and class rank are the most important factor in college admissions, so set aside time for homework, develop your study skills, and make sure that you get good grades.
- Create a list of schools that interest you. This isn't a time for being selective, just make a big list of at least 15-20 colleges that seem interesting to you. You'll have plenty of time to narrow your list down next year.
- Contact the colleges that excite you. Go to the admissions websites of the colleges that interest you the most. They will have an online form or an email address that you can use to sign up for their mailing list. Receiving regular mail and email from the colleges that interest you will help you figure out which schools are right for you.
- Learn about the ACT and the SAT. Begin researching what these tests are and how to prepare for them so that you'll be ready to start studying in the summer.

October-December

- Start thinking about life after high school. Take some time to start exploring jobs that are a good fit for you. Talk to other people, for example, your parents and your high school guidance counselor, about careers. You can also take personality tests, read books about how to choose a career, and begin shadowing professionals. For example, if you've always been interested in human health, look for opportunities to shadow a doctor or to observe a physical therapist for an afternoon after school.

- Begin educating yourself about college costs and about financial aid. Meet with your family and develop a plan together that will help you save for college and that will help all of you understand what financial aid is, where it comes from, and how you can apply for it.
- Become a good writer. Developing your writing skills now will not only improve your grades in high school, but will also help you write better college application essays and help you be more successful in college. Find an adult such as an English teacher or a professional tutor who can help you practice and improve your writing.
- Begin developing a résumé and update it at least once per semester. This list of extracurricular activities, awards, accomplishments, and work experience will be helpful when you fill out your college applications.

January-February

- Explore summer opportunities such as internships, camps, volunteer opportunities, summer jobs, and programs on college campuses. Not only is the summer a great time to have fun, but it is the perfect time to learn about what you want to do after high school. In many ways, your summer experiences will teach you more about what careers that you want to have than your high school courses will. Be sure to give your summer plans serious thought.
- Familiarize yourself with the college application process. Speak with your guidance counselor, read a book about college admissions, and explore the Internet to learn about entrance requirements, when to apply, how test scores are reported, and what kind of information is included in your college applications.
- Meet with your counselor to discuss and create your junior class schedule. You should enroll in the most challenging courses. Also, make sure that you are on track to meet your academic requirements for college admissions such as foreign language requirements and AP requirements.
- Become a leader. You should be seeking out leadership roles in the extracurricular activities that interest you. Even if no leadership roles are available now, you should find out which roles will be available in the upcoming year and start working towards them.
- Become involved. If you aren't involved in community service or other volunteer activities, you should begin now.
- Prepare for the PSAT 10 if your school offers it.

March-May

- Tour college campuses. Try to visit at least 2 local colleges or universities if you live near them. If you are traveling or taking a family vacation, you can also visit a college campus during that time. Many schools also offer “virtual tours” on their websites. Even if you aren’t interested in the college you are visiting, it is a valuable learning experience where you can discover more about college life and what kinds of things you should be looking for as you search for your “best fit” school.
- Continue exploring careers. Use online tools such as the College Board’s “Big Future” website to learn about career paths, projected income levels, how different college major prepares you for careers, and more. If you are lost and you don’t know what you want to do, ask your guidance counselor for help.
- Create a summer reading list. Ask your teachers for help since they will know which books will help you with your classes next year. But your main goal should be to read for fun and to spend some time at the library every few weeks learning more about the topics and careers that interest you most.
- Find a summer job if you want or need one. Many students find that a summer job can be a great way to build experience, to save money for college, and to make new friends. A summer job also looks good on your college applications.

June-August

- Begin planning for your junior year. You will need to take the most challenging classes possible and you will also need to start studying for the SAT or ACT. Use your summer time to get prepared. You can work with a private tutor from Ivy Academic Prep if you want help preparing for your exams.
- Use your summer time wisely. Yes, you should have fun and take some time to relax. But you should also be volunteering, working at a summer job, or doing other constructive summer activities. The summer is also an excellent time to “shadow” someone who works in a profession that you are interested in.



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Note: This checklist is just a resource to help you get started. You should always be checking in with your guidance counselor and scrutinizing the admissions requirements of the schools that you want to attend to make sure that you are on track. And, remember, if you have questions or if you need assistance, Ivy Academic Prep is here to help! Just email us at contact@ivyacademicprep.com