



SOPHOMORE SPRING:

1. Practice building relationships with your teachers:

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12	13	14	15	16
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If you skip ahead a year, you will realize you will need to request letters of recommendation from two of your junior year teachers.

With that in mind, now is a great time to think about how well you know your teachers and what impressions they have of you. It's a good practice to get to know your teachers and talk to them, even outside of class.



So this spring, try to stop by and talk to teachers—ask a question about something you didn't understand, or ask them if they had a nice weekend. It may feel awkward at first, but it will help you get more out of your education in the future and help you build the types of relationships with your teachers that eventually result in outstanding letters of recommendation!



2. DEVELOP COOL SUMMER PLANS AND TRY NEW THINGS:



If you're a sophomore, then the last time you went to school in-person without the changes wrought by COVID-19 was in middle school! So it's likely that your extracurricular activities have been limited due to the pandemic.



But remember that colleges are looking for students who demonstrate commitment and interests outside the classroom. So this summer is a perfect opportunity to try the activity you've always wanted or take an online class in something not offered at your school.



Maybe it's the first time you'll have the opportunity to volunteer or be part of a political campaign or have a job as a camp counselor. Whatever you choose to do, make sure you are spending your time intentionally, and remember that great summer plans are developed in the spring!

3. TAKE A DIAGNOSTIC



You have probably heard that Galín offers free diagnostic ACTs in March! A diagnostic test gives you the experience of a full-length ACT but without the pressure of a score that is sent to colleges. Taking a diagnostic test helps you better understand your strengths and weaknesses academically.



It gives you a sense of which colleges are realistic matches for you academically, and it assists in putting together a test prep plan. While many colleges are likely to be test-optional when you apply, standardized testing can still be helpful for many students, and sustained test prep over time is the best way to score the highest you can!

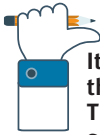
JUNIOR YEAR:

4. CHOOSE SENIOR COURSES WISELY:



For many students, senior year presents the opportunity for more choices in their classes than ever before. Many students consider AP or other more challenging courses than they have taken so far in high school.

This approach will show colleges that you are prepared for college-level work!



5. Take standardized tests:

It is ideal to complete your standardized testing in the spring of your junior year or the summer after. This time frame will avoid having to wait for late test scores and allow you to begin submitting your college applications right at the beginning of your senior year.

It also allows you to take your standardized tests when you would already be naturally preparing for academic exams, like APs, so your brain is in testing mode. :)

7. VISIT COLLEGES:

One of the most important things you can do this spring is visit colleges! Most schools have resumed in-person tours and information sessions. Visiting campuses in the spring, ideally when classes are still in session and students are on-campus, is the best possible way to get a feel for a college's academic environment and its location and campus culture.



In addition, many families choose to use spring break in junior year to visit schools that are further from home. Still, exposure to any college campuses helps you narrow down what you are looking for in a school, so if a big trip isn't in your plans this spring, make it a point to see some schools locally or within a short drive.

6. START FILLING OUT YOUR APPLICATIONS:



It might sound crazy, but we typically advise students to begin filling out their Common Applications in the spring of junior year! Of course, applications won't get submitted until senior fall, but getting an early start means that students can work on the applications over time and fill out each section carefully without feeling rushed or pressured for time.

8. DECIDE ON ESSAY TOPICS:

Some colleges change their essay topics each year, while others stay the same. One essay that pretty much every college requires is the personal statement—an essay of ~500 words on a topic of the student's choosing to help the college better understand the student's story and perspective.

The personal statement is one of the most important pieces of writing applicants do throughout the process, so take your time deciding on your topic and maybe even engage in some brainstorming activities before starting the writing process. I often tell students that the mark of an excellent essay is if you can read it to your best friend and have your friend think it sounds like you!

9. Request teacher and counselor letters of recommendation:



TEACHER

Many colleges ask for up to two letters of recommendation from teachers who have taught you and one from your school counselor. I recommend making a plan for who you will ask for this recommendation before spring break and then having conversations with those teachers in May to ask the teachers to write for you.



TEACHER

Remember that your teachers write these recommendations as a courtesy to you, so be sure to ask them well before any deadlines. Allowing them to write their letters in the summer when they may be less busy is an excellent way to show that you respect their time! Your school counselor may be expecting to write a letter of recommendation for you, but it is still good practice to ask!



COUNSELOR

Many teachers and counselors will ask you to submit information to them that will help them write their letters—of course, make sure you adhere to any requests or policies! Following their guidelines and respecting their time will ensure that they mention your politeness in their letters. :)



10. Prepare for college interviews:



Only a few colleges require interviews or are a recommended part of the college application process. Still, many colleges will offer the opportunity to connect individually with a student or even an admissions counselor in the summer before senior year.

These conversations are excellent ways to demonstrate your interest in a college, but it's essential to do some preparation before embarking on these interviews.

You'll want to practice an introduction of yourself and your college Major interests, make sure you can articulate a reason for being interested in the college, and have a few questions ready to ask.



With the Galín Method, our goal is to help you find the perfect college that's the very best fit for you. From helping you discover the colleges that are best for you, to advising on early decision applications, personal statements, supplemental essays and the right scholarship opportunities, we help parents and students through every aspect of the college search, admissions and acceptance process.