



2022 Winter Update

The Sage Quarterly Update is designed to help students and families learn about, anticipate, and take steps to prepare for successful enrollment in the college of their choice.

If you've been following these updates for a while, you'll notice we've moved to a single version for all high school students (Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors); with this new "all in one" format, you can focus on what your student should be concerned with right now or preview content that will become more relevant in the year(s) ahead.

If you're new to us, welcome! We hope you find this free quarterly newsletter useful in helping you and your student prepare for college.

To learn more about the topics in this edition, go to our website at [Sagecps.com](https://www.sagecps.com) to access our 2022 Winter Update with live links!

All Students

- **Choose your courses for 2022-2023!** Most high schools will be registering students for the 2022-2023 academic year over the next 4-8 weeks. Stay tuned to the deadlines at your school and be prepared to select courses that keep you on track for admission to your target colleges. Academic performance remains the central factor in college admissions and colleges prefer students who have taken advantage of the most academically challenging courses their high schools offer. Check through the course catalog and use the 4-Year planning tool available at your school to create and track your academic plan.
- **Do's and Don'ts of choosing classes.** Both your grades and the strength of your curriculum matter when it comes to college admissions. Find out [why course selection is important](#) and learn [how to balance GPA with academic rigor](#).
- **Consider AP courses.** Advanced Placement classes offer an important opportunity for students to challenge themselves, improve college admissions chances, earn college credits, and arrive at college better prepared. Learn more about [why students should take an AP class](#), check out the [complete list of AP courses and tests](#), and scroll down a bit on this link to find [data on course popularity and passing rates](#). (Note that your high school may not offer all of these courses.) Read this blog for guidance on [how to choose your AP courses](#).
- **Explore dual enrollment.** [Dual enrollment](#) offers students college credit by taking college-level classes in high school in partnership with a local or regional university (e.g., Running Start). Learn more about the [requirements and benefits of dual enrollment](#), specifically about [Running Start's benefits and challenges](#), and talk to your counselor about the options available at your school before deciding whether to enroll.
- **Explore colleges.** It's never too early to begin exploring colleges in person as well as in conversation. The more students know about college generally (including what fits within your family's finances) and the more they've explored specific colleges, the more prepared they'll be when it comes time to apply and enroll!

Freshmen

Key tip for freshmen: Develop and demonstrate strong academic performance. This means opting for a challenging but manageable curriculum and maintaining a high GPA. Beyond this, we encourage freshmen to develop one or more extra-curricular activities that encourage their special interests, skills, and talents.

- **Take control of homework (so it doesn't control you).** Here are some [tips to help you deal with homework](#) more efficiently and effectively.
- **Develop your best study habits.** Figuring out how you study best is critical to strong academic performance. If you study best in a group, search out students who are on a similar track as you and set aside a regular time to work together. If you study best alone, take time to create a comfortable and practical working space dedicated to homework and study; parents can help by maintaining a background environment conducive to studying.
- **Extracurricular activities – quality over quantity.** Admissions officers want to know what you do with your free time outside of the classroom. If you don't yet know what excites or interests you, your freshman year is a great time to explore. As you do, keep in mind that colleges look for quality over quantity (or, depth over breadth) when it comes to extracurricular activities. This article offers [6 pointers on extracurricular activities and college admissions](#) and this one offers one way to think about [breadth vs. depth in developing your personal story](#).

Sophomores

Key tips for sophomores: Stay strong on grades and pay attention to extracurriculars. Maintaining strong academic performance with a challenging curriculum should continue to be the top priority for Sophomores, especially for students targeting more selective colleges. It's also important that students continue to explore and develop activities outside of class that demonstrate growth in and commitment to an interest, organization, or cause.

- **Get the facts about getting into college.** College admission doesn't have to be a big mystery nor is it necessarily daunting. Learn [5 things you need to know about getting in](#).
- **Feeling stuck when it comes to extracurriculars?** COVID severely limited extracurricular activities for most students over the last two years and many students are finding it difficult to re-engage in something they find exciting and worthwhile. Read here for inspiration on [how to create your own online extracurricular initiative](#). Don't be deterred by the title: this article on [how to stand out through extracurricular activities](#) offers excellent practical advice for finding and demonstrating commitment to an interest.
- **Look up an interesting college major.** Read up on a college major that sounds interesting and see which high school classes can help you prepare for that major. Use this Career Finder tool to [browse interests, majors, and careers](#).
- **List what matters to you in a college.** Identifying your learning and living preferences for college — for example, college location, size, and available majors— helps keep your search focused on what you want and need in a college. This article discusses [what's key to finding a college that fits](#) and [here are 10 ways to learn about colleges online](#).

Juniors

Key tip for Juniors: Crush your standardized tests...if you can! Junior year is “testing year” for many students heading to college. In response to COVID conditions, colleges have instituted changes involving standardized tests that may affect your college applications. Most colleges will remain “test-optional” for the 2022-23 admissions cycle, meaning they will consider but do not require test scores from applicants. Whether or not students submit test scores (and how much they invest in preparing for tests) depends on whether they can score well on those tests. This is a good time to narrow down the list of colleges to which you intend to apply and research the admissions policies and standards for your highest priority schools so you can plan and prepare accordingly!

- **Learn, earn and get school credit.** Worksite Learning offers options to get school credit with on-the-job training opportunities; some internships also give you a college admissions advantage. Check out worksite learning opportunities through your high school’s Career or Counseling Center. Be aware that applications for internships next year may be due as early as the end of this month!
- **How colleges use admission tests.** Learn [8 things about how colleges use admission tests](#).
- **Are you on track?** Are you on track to meet your college application requirements or do you need to adjust your plan? How do you compare to students who enrolled at the colleges you’re interested in? Use the [College Board’s Big Future College Search tool](#) to explore admission data at colleges you’re interested – just type in the name of a college, select “Admissions,” and look at the GPA and tests core distributions of incoming freshmen for that school.
- **Using your PSAT results.** If you took the PSAT, your scores provide valuable information to help you understand how you can best prepare for the SAT this spring, summer or fall. Here’s a [good article and accompanying video to help interpret your PSAT results](#).
- **Get your personal free SAT study plan.** Your PSAT/NMSQT results come with a free, online SAT study plan in partnership with the Kahn Academy. This customized plan is based on your PSAT results (or, if you haven’t taken the PSAT, a short diagnostic test) and helps you address areas you need to work on. [Watch this Kahn Academy video to learn how your personal study plan works!](#)
- **Wondering whether to take the SAT or ACT?** Learn [how the ACT and SAT differ](#), take a look at an [ACT practice test](#) and [SAT practice test](#), and then explore free [ACT test prep resources](#) and free [SAT test prep resources](#) to find out which test might be best for you. Colleges accept either or both ACT and SAT scores. Read this blog for insight into [which test might be better for you](#).
- **Register for college admissions tests.** Most juniors take the SAT and/or ACT during the spring semester of their junior year. You can find 2022 test dates and register for a test on [the College Board \(SAT\)](#) and [ACT](#) websites. Once you know what tests you will take and when you will take them, **register early** - seats at local sites can fill up quickly!

Call Sage for professional tutoring! Sage College Prep Services offers prep classes for both the SAT and the ACT, in which we teach both content and strategies for success. [Visit the Sage website](#) (SageCPS.com) for more details.

Seniors

Key tip for seniors: Pay attention to the details in your admission letters. For seniors applying to college, the application and admissions process is in the final phase, with just a few college deadlines still ahead and regular application admissions decisions expected beginning in March. As you receive your admissions information, pay attention to the specific instructions you receive from each college regarding the deadline for your decision, questions about financial aid, and what to do in case you are wait-listed.

- **Check that you are on track to graduate.** Even diligent students may find that they are missing a core requirement as they approach graduation. Now is a good time to check with your counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate!
- **Financial award letter.** College acceptance letters will include a financial award statement describing what level of scholarship, work study awards, grants, and/or loans you are approved for at the college to which you've been admitted. But award letters can take different forms and may omit important information. The FAFSA website includes a [guide to financial award letters](#) and you can review examples here with tips on [how to read a financial award letter](#).
- **Understanding and negotiating financial aid decisions.** How do you determine if the financial aid award that a college offers is as high as it could or should be? This article explains [how colleges award financial aid](#) and the College Board offers this advice for [selecting a financial aid package](#). Don't be afraid to ask colleges to explain their financial aid decisions or to explore options for increasing the offer at a preferred school if it doesn't meet your need or is not competitive with what other schools are offering. From CNBC, here's [how to negotiate for more college financial aid](#).
- **Plan college visits.** Many students apply to colleges without first making a campus visit. If you are among them, make sure you've set aside time during your spring semester or spring break to visit colleges that admit you but that you haven't yet seen. [The college campus visit](#) is important to your final decision, even during COVID, so find ways to do this safely!
- **Making your college decision.** Although admission decision schedules are shifting to accommodate COVID-related changes in the admissions process, colleges will typically communicate their admissions decisions for regular decision applications beginning in March, and will be asking students for decisions starting May 1 (traditionally College Decision Day). While creating your short list and completing your applications was challenging, making your final decision can also be stressful. This article offers some [college decision day strategies](#).
- **Managing the college waitlist.** What do you do if you are neither accepted nor rejected from a preferred college? Compliments of Forbes, here are some [steps for getting off a college waitlist](#).
- **Continue your scholarship search.** Learn about [how to focus your scholarship search](#) and give yourself an hour or two each week to exercise [a good scholarship search tool \(or two\)](#) that may help make your preferred college more affordable. Even a few small scholarships can help make college life less stressful and more productive.