



Spring Quarterly Update

For 2018-2019 Sophomores

Making School Count

- **Get to know your counselor.** As you approach the halfway point in high school, make sure that you know your high school guidance counselor and that she knows you. Almost all colleges require a recommendation letter from your school counselor, and the more your counselor knows about you and your college goals, the more convincing the recommendation will be. Find out [why you should talk to your counselor](#) and how she can help prepare you for college.
- **Quality over quantity in extracurriculars.** Don't forget that [quality matters more than quantity](#) when it comes to extracurriculars for college admissions. By now, you should be able to list a few interests that you will continue to develop, possibly through more than one activity, and through which you demonstrate commitment and initiative. What few activities or interests do you want to focus on over the next two years of high school?
- **AP tests and college credit.** You don't need to take the AP test in order for AP courses to help you stand out in college admissions. However, students who take and pass the AP test can earn college credits that will create greater flexibility in their college curriculum. This blog explains [how AP tests are scored](#) and how those scores translate to college credit. When considering your test decision, keep in mind that colleges differ in their policies regarding what students must score on their AP test in order to receive college course credit – use this [AP credit policy search](#) tool to explore college-specific policies on AP test scores.
- **Reminder: Consider SAT subject tests.** Last quarter, we suggested you consider taking the SAT subject test that corresponds to your AP curriculum while the subject is fresh in your mind. While most schools do not require SAT subject tests, a good test score can add value to your admissions package. Subject tests are offered at the same time students take the standard SAT assessment (May 4 and June 1). Learn about [SAT subject tests](#) and [what colleges require them](#).

Looking Ahead to College

- **Review your PSAT results.** If you took the PSAT last fall, talk to your counselor about your score report and discuss what it means to you. Here's a [good video to help interpret the PSAT results](#). Consider a summer practice plan to help you prepare for the SAT next spring - the Khan Academy offers [free tailored practice](#) based on your PSAT scores.
- **Create a college admissions test plan.** It's useful to have a test plan before you begin your junior year. The plan should include what tests you will take, when you will take them, and how you'll prepare. Learn more [about college admissions tests here](#). You can find test dates on the [SAT](#) and [ACT](#) websites.
- **For athletes – How does college athletic recruiting work?** If you are a student athlete who hopes to play collegiate sports and you have not yet researched or initiated the recruiting process, now is the time to begin. This article provides an [overview of the recruiting process](#), along with some tips for getting started.

Careers & Majors

- **Try a career exercise.** Many high school students feel that they need to have their whole lives planned before graduation. That's a lot of pressure to take on, and it really isn't practical because your goals and desires will change over time. At this point, the best way to prepare for the process of career planning, including ideas about college majors, is to get to know more about yourself. Consider these [5 ways to find career ideas](#).
- **How will you spend your summer?** Summer provides a much-needed break for everyone from school schedules and pressures. It's also a great time to earn money for college, try a new skill, and build your college resume. Here are [11 summer activities to step up your college applications](#).
- **Job shadowing.** Summer also offers a great chance to explore possible careers and obtain valuable experience by spending time observing ("shadowing") professionals doing their jobs. Job shadowing opportunities may take time to set up, so start exploring options now and don't limit your search to formal programs – you can expand your search by asking parents, relatives, teachers, and coaches for potential job shadowing opportunities. Find out more about the [benefits of and tips for successful job shadowing](#).

Finding Colleges for You

- **Plan college visits this summer.** Last quarter, we suggested you begin exploring colleges using the College Board's [online guide to colleges](#) and [step-by-step college search tool](#). Summer offers a great opportunity to further explore what you like and don't like in a college and to begin culling your college list – read about the [pros and cons of visiting colleges in the summer](#).

Paying for College

- **See how you can afford college.** College can be expensive, but it may be more affordable than you think. Listen to [frequently-asked questions about college costs](#) and [tips for getting a family conversation started](#) about paying for college.
- **Is some financial aid better than others?** What's the difference between a grant and a loan? What is work-study? Get to know your options when it comes to financial aid. Listen to an interview with Myra Smith, Executive Director, Financial Aid Services, at the College Board to hear about the [different types of financial aid](#).

Mark Your Calendar!

- **April 8, 2019 – Start of 4th Quarter.** Spring break marked the end of 3rd quarter and the beginning of the final quarter for the 2018-19 academic year. Now is a good time to make any mid-course corrections needed to reach your GPA target.
- **May 6 -17, 2019 – AP Testing.** Learn more about AP tests and testing schedule [here](#).