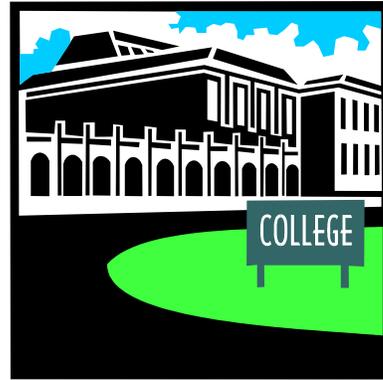


GUIDE TO

COLLEGE



ADMISSIONS &

FINANCIAL AID:

THE INS & OUTS OF

GETTING IN TO &

PAYING FOR COLLEGE

By

DAVID LY



A QUEST SENIOR PROJECT (CLASS OF 2013)

Dear Reader,

My name is David Ly and I am the author of this guide to college admissions and financial aid. I chose to pursue writing this guide as my Quest Senior Project (Capstone). My motivations for tackling this project were two-fold. As an underclassman, I felt overwhelmed by the immense world of college admissions. My parents had never gone through the process of applying to college, so I had to be very much independent in figuring this all out. My hope is that this guide will serve as an invaluable resource for prospective college applicants. Another reason why I chose to write this guide is because I wanted to demystify, to an extent, the financial aid process. The cost of college is one of the main deterrents to higher education for many students, but I feel that with increased awareness and education about financial aid and scholarships that many students can make paying for college more manageable. Most of the material in this guide is my own written work, though I included relevant material pieces produced and written by others. I hope this guide proves helpful to you and I wish you all the best of luck in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

David Ly
Millikan High School QUEST
Class of 2013

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CHOOSING A COLLEGE → LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE VS RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

The two main types of four year institutions are liberal arts colleges (LACs) and research universities. Many people are familiar with schools that fall under the latter category, but are not familiar with schools that fall in the former. There are similarities between the two types of institutions, but also many differences that make each type of school unique.



Duke University (Durham, NC)

Both LACs and research universities grant bachelor's degree. Both institutions have undergraduates who live and dine on campus and participate in any number of extracurricular activities from sports to the arts.

Although similar in many respects, LACs and research universities have fundamental differences that make one type of school a perfect fit for one type of student, but a poor fit for another. The largest difference between LACs and research universities is that LACs do not have any graduate students; all students at the college are undergraduates seeking a bachelor's degree. Research universities on the other hand, enroll both undergraduates seeking bachelor's degrees and graduate students seeking master's degrees or any other professional degrees. Another major difference is that professors at LACs are primarily there to teach undergraduates whereas professors at research universities conduct research and teach simultaneously.

The size of the student body and average class sizes also differ. LACs tend to have a small student population, sometimes numbering under 1500 students. Research universities tend to have a larger student body, sometimes numbering over 30,000 students. As a result of these trends, LACs

tend to have smaller class sizes and more discussion-based classes. Research universities tend to have larger class sizes that are more lecture-based. As a result of the large student body, many classes at research universities are taught by graduate students (who are called teaching assistants) rather than by professors. On the other hand, there are no teaching assistants at LACs because there are no graduate students and professors teach all classes.



Williams College (Williamstown, MA)

There are both pros and cons of both types of schools that should be considered as you make your college choices. Research universities usually have more resources, more opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, more people to interact with, and more opportunities to conduct research. The drawbacks of a large research university are large class sizes, lack of on-campus housing, classes taught by teaching assistants, professors who may be more focused on research and graduate students than on teaching undergraduates, and difficulty getting into desired classes.

LACs are great because there is more faculty attention, smaller class sizes, and a tight-knit community of students on campus. However, LACs may not have as many extracurricular and academic opportunities. For example, engineering is not offered as a major at most LACs. In addition, LACs tend not to be as well-known which means that employers may not be so keen to hire graduates from liberal arts colleges. These are among some of the factors to be weighed when considering whether a liberal arts college or a research university is the right fit for you.

Some examples of research universities include: **Duke University, University of Southern California,** and **UCLA**. Some examples of liberal arts colleges include: **Williams College, Pomona College, Swarthmore College,** and **Occidental College.**

CHOOSING A COLLEGE → COMMUNITY COLLEGE

There are 112 community colleges in the state of California and many more across the nation. If you decide that you would like to go to a two-year community college, you must submit an application to each community college for which you are seeking admissions.

To apply to a community college in California, go to

<<http://home.cccapply.org/apply>>

To apply to Long Beach City College, go to

<<http://www.lbcc.edu/Admissions/onlineapplication.cfm>>



Orange Coast College (Orange County, CA)

In order to be eligible for admission to a community college, students must be either a high school graduate, over 18 years old, or have earned a general education diploma (GED). Applications are free, simple to complete, and do not ask for grades, standardized test scores, extracurricular activities, or essays. Note that if a student is applying to a community college's honors program, he/she may be required to submit grades and standardized test scores. Honors programs have better advising and priority enrollment. Before enrolling at a community college, students must take English and Math placement tests.

Pros of Community College

- Inexpensive (low tuition costs)
- Ability to transfer to a four-year school (complete general education classes)
- Transfer guarantees (priority admission for California community college students to CSUs and UCs)
- Occupational programs (can earn an associate's degree and enter the workforce)
- Flexible class schedule and ability to work
- Small class sizes
- Close to home
- Ability to reinvent oneself (maybe didn't do as well in high school)

Cons of Community Colleges

- Difficult to transfer to a four-year school
 - ⊗ lack of adequate advising
 - ⊗ some credits are not transferrable
 - ⊗ state budget cuts means reduction in transfer acceptances at CSUs and UCs
 - ⊗ difficulty in passing Math or English
 - ⊗ work interference
- Lack of "the college experience" and campus life
- Limited curriculum and course options
- Close to home (pro or con depending on how you look at it)

CHOOSING A COLLEGE → CURRICULUM (GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS)

The curriculum and graduation requirements of a college should be one of the first things that you research. In order to earn an undergraduate degree from any institution, you must declare a major and complete all the courses and requirements outlined by the major. Where colleges differ in terms of academic curriculum are the courses that they require their students to take outside their major. These are usually referred to as "general education" or "distribution requirements". Colleges and universities range greatly in their graduation requirements.



Amherst College (Amherst, MA)

Some schools have an open curriculum, which means that there are no general education requirements and that the only requirement to earning a degree is to complete the courses in the major. Some schools with an open curriculum include **Amherst College**, **Bennington College**, **Brown University**, **New College of Florida**, **Smith College** (an all-women's college), and **Vassar College**. An open curriculum gives students more independence over their educations by allowing them to choose which courses to enroll in. Another benefit to an open curriculum is that students can pursue classes that they are interested in and be surrounded by people who share similar passions and interests in their classes. The downside to an open curriculum is that some students choose to concentrate on classes in one department or field and are shortchanged of a well-balanced, liberal education. In addition, the independence associated with an open curriculum can prove to be problematic for students who need guidance or are not yet

mature enough to take control of their own education.

On the other end of the spectrum are colleges and universities that require all of their students to take a set of specific, prescribed courses in order to graduate. These schools employ a core curriculum. Two schools that are famous for their core programs are **Columbia University** and the **University of Chicago**. Core classes generally constitute about one-third of a student's courses, which leaves little room for students to pursue classes of their own choosing. Despite the rigidity of the core curriculum, there are benefits. Since all students take the same exact courses, students are granted a standardized education that serves as a common bond or foundation for students with distinct interests, passions, and majors. Furthermore, a core curriculum leads to the cultivation of critical thinking, risk taking, and writing skills that come with a well-rounded education.

A majority of institutions have a moderate curriculum. These schools have general education or distribution requirements that ask students to take a certain number of courses in various fields or areas. Students are free to choose which courses to take, so long as they fall under the field or area requirement. For example, a student could take "Introduction to Chemistry" to fulfill the physical sciences requirement of a college. Alternatively, student at the same school could choose to take "Introductory to Physics" to fulfill that same requirement. Most schools employ this type of curriculum in order to advance the goals of providing a balanced education, while allowing students the freedom to choose their classes.

When doing your college search, you should ask yourself which academic environment you feel would best suit your learning style. Do you prefer to have freedom to choose your classes or do you thrive under a structured education? Before deciding on a school, make sure to look up each school's graduation requirements to ascertain whether the school's curriculum is a good fit for you.

CHOOSING A COLLEGE → MAJORS

When conducting your college research, majors should be a factor you consider. According to Merriam-Webster, a major is "a subject of academic study chosen as a field of specialization." At most colleges and universities, courses required for majors constitute anywhere from one-third to two-thirds of a student's total classes. This underscores the importance of researching majors prior to applying to college.

Say that you know you want to study a specific field in college and one that may not be offered at all schools. It is imperative that you research school choices thoroughly. For example, if you are interested in architecture know that there are only so many colleges and universities that offer architecture as a major. It would be wise to seek out and apply to these schools.



Northwestern University (Evanston, IL)

The same holds true for journalism. Of course, you don't have to major in journalism to become a journalist. However if you would like to major in journalism, it is necessary that you look for schools that offer it as a major. One such school, **Northwestern University** in Evanston, Illinois is renowned for its journalism program. Also, look into schools with traditionally strong student-run newspapers.

Although far more common than architecture and journalism, engineering is not offered at every college. If you have your heart set on studying engineering, chances are you wouldn't attend a liberal arts college which generally do not offer engineering degrees (with the exception of **Harvey Mudd, Swarthmore**, and a few others). Liberal arts colleges are making attempts to remedy this by participating in 3-2 programs, which grant a degree from the college after three years and then send students to universities for two years to earn an undergraduate degree in engineering.



Swarthmore College (Swarthmore, PA)

If you want to major in something more common like biology, psychology, or history, your options are more varied. Many schools have excellent programs in these fields, which make majors less of a critical factor in choosing a college. However be wary that at some schools, popular majors might be impacted. This means that the requirements to get into the major may be more difficult than the requirements to get into the school.

Or maybe, you are undecided. Look for schools that don't require students to declare a major immediately. Schools like **Stanford University** and its other highly selective peers do not require their students to declare a major until the end of sophomore year, which gives students ample time to discover their interests.

I do want to point out a common misconception that students have about majors. A major is a field of study that a student chooses to pursue in depth in his/her undergraduate years. Contrary to popular belief, it does not necessarily determine what career you will have. For example, you don't have to major in biology to become a doctor. The same holds true for becoming a lawyer. A degree in political science, economics, or history is not required for admission into law school.

Majors will hold different weight for different students as they consider college choices. If you know what you want to study, seek out schools that are excellent in those fields. If you have no clue as to what you want to focus your studies on, seek out colleges that encourage their students to dabble in different fields before declaring a major. Also realize that most students change their majors and end up in careers that are completely unrelated to their majors.

CHOOSING A COLLEGE → POST-GRADUATION

Without a doubt, the spike in students pursuing higher education has occurred because higher education means better career prospects in the future. College is ultimately an investment in one's future therefore students should be savvy consumers when choosing a college in order to get the best return possible.

Career Development Centers/Offices

To begin, students should research the career development centers/offices of colleges and universities that they are interested in. A great career development center or office will offer a range of services including career counseling, resume writing help, career workshops, case interview prep, career fairs, and on-campus employer recruiting.



Pomona College (Claremont, CA)

Internship Programs

Another factor to consider is an internship program. Does a school have a specific internship program? For example, **Pomona College** has the Pomona College Internship Program (PCIP). PCIP pays students an hourly wage including the cost of gas in order to encourage students to pursue unpaid internships and gain job experience.

Post-Graduation Employment Prospects

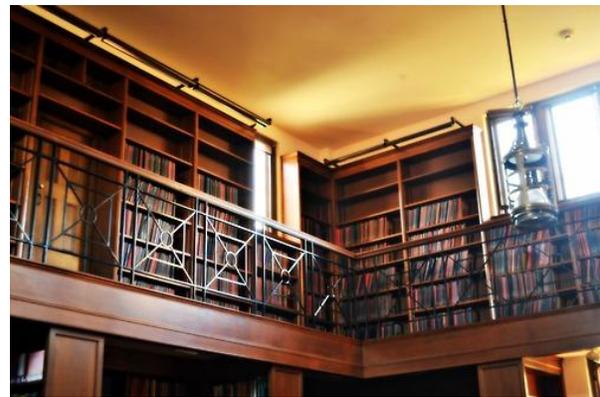
How successful are graduates at obtaining jobs is another factor to consider when choosing schools. Does the college you are considering have on-campus employer recruiting and strong alumni ties? Among the greatest benefits to going to an Ivy League or top-tier school are the connections borne out of having incredibly

successful alumni. Another measure to consider is average salary of graduates.

<http://www.payscale.com/> allows a student to research the average salary of graduates of his/her college.

Pre-Professional Advising & Graduate School Admissions

In this day and age, a bachelor's degree does not ensure employment and economic stability. In order to secure the most skilled jobs, masters and professional degrees are sometimes necessary. For example, an MD or DO is necessary to become a physician and a JD is necessary to become a lawyer. Students interested in becoming a doctor or lawyer should research whether or not a college offers pre-professional advising. Many schools have medical and law school advising boards that help students choose classes, prepare for standardized exams, complete applications, and prepare for interviews.



Theses Tower at Reed College (Portland, OR)

For students interested in pursuing masters or doctoral degrees, research how successful a school is at producing PhD candidates and fellowship (e.g. Rhodes, Truman, and Fulbright) winners. For example, the **California Institute of Technology, Harvey Mudd College, and Reed College** have the three highest percentages of PhD recipients. **Yale University, Harvard University, and Stanford University** are well-known for producing Rhodes Scholars. The Rhodes Scholarship provides full financial support, allowing 32 post-graduates from the US to study at the **University of Oxford** in the UK.

College is one of the best investments for bettering one's career and economic prospects, therefore applicants should consider a college's career and post-graduation resources as well as the success of alumni in securing jobs and graduate school admissions.

CHOOSING A COLLEGE → CAMPUS LIFE & CULTURE

During your college search, you should be looking for schools that would be the best fit for you. A major factor in determining how good of a fit a college is for you is to research campus life as well as the culture of the school and student body (including extracurricular activities). After all, you will be spending four-plus years of your life at college.

The best way to gauge whether a college is a perfect fit for you is to visit the campus. Staying on campus for a few nights is even better. It's an excellent way to gain an authentic view of life on campus as it allows you to immerse yourself fully in student life and to see whether you can see yourself living and thriving on campus for the next four years.

If you can't visit campus, you have other options for researching campus life and extracurricular offerings. Many colleges have interactive online tours. Youiversity (<http://www.youniversitytv.com/>) has videos of campus tours. Unigo (<http://www.unigo.com/>), College Prowler (<https://collegeprowler.com/>), and the CollegeBoard's Big Future (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>) are all websites that provide invaluable information about each individual college. Unigo and College Prowler include compilations of comprehensive student reviews of life on campus and the College Board's Big Future site is a comprehensive guide about anything and everything to do with every college and university across America.

Reading the school newspaper (which can be found through a simple Google search) is another option for students who cannot visit campus. The newspapers are informative because they give readers an inside look at the events and news relevant to campus. Editorials and op-eds also give prospective students a chance to gauge political leanings, student opinions on hot-button issues, and other fascinating tidbits about life on campus.

The people who will be your classmates, dorm mates, and friends in college will undoubtedly influence your college experience. As a result when looking for "good-fit" colleges, you should certainly research the culture of the student body. Some aspects to consider include diversity of the student body, religious life, and political leanings.

Diversity of the student body should be a priority or at least a consideration for any student applying to college. Diversity takes on many forms beyond race or ethnicity, however researching the breakdown of the student body by race or ethnicity would be a good place to begin. One of college's many intended purposes is to prepare students for the real world. As such, it would only

make sense for students to be exposed to the many peoples, cultures, and ideas that make up the microcosm of America and even the world. Colleges publish breakdowns of race and ethnicity on their admissions websites. CollegeBoard's Big Future (<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>) also makes this data available under each school's profile.

Beyond race or ethnicity, another form of diversity to be explored is socioeconomic diversity. As we all know, the world is not made up of predominantly wealthy people therefore attending a school where virtually all students come from the upper economic brackets will not adequately prepare you for the real world. Exposure to people from economic classes different from yours will allow for the greatest amount of learning and growth. Socioeconomic diversity is measurable by the percentage of students on financial aid and the percentage of students who are first-generation college students.



Georgetown University (Washington DC)

Religious life is another aspect to explore when applying to college. Depending on the extent of your religious beliefs, choosing a college with a religious affiliation may be an important consideration. Some examples of colleges with religious affiliations include **Georgetown University**, **Santa Clara University**, **Biola University**, **Point Loma University**, and the **University of San Francisco**. The presence of religion is different from campus to campus. Some schools require students to take theology class, others have loose religious affiliations, and others like **Biola** consider religion a defining aspect of the college experience.

Another factor to consider when looking for a college is the political ideology of the campus and student body. Many colleges, by virtue of enrolling college students, tend to have liberal student bodies. This isn't to say that all colleges will be liberal leaning. Colleges in the South or

CHOOSING A COLLEGE → CAMPUS LIFE & CULTURE

Midwest will likely have a more conservative student body than colleges in the Northeast or West. How politically active the student body at a college is should also be a consideration for students interested in political activism or for those who have no interest in politics whatsoever. Some of the most politically active colleges (according to the Princeton Review) include: **American University**, **Georgetown University**, **George Washington University**, the **University of Chicago**, and **New York University**.



University of Chicago (Chicago, IL)

Campus life and extracurricular activities go hand in hand. Maybe you want to pursue activities that you pursued in high school or get involved with new activities. Either way, it is vitally important that you research the array of extracurricular opportunities available at the colleges you want to apply to.

Whether you are interested in the arts, sports, community service, or Greek life, looking for colleges where you can explore these interests is a must. The primary goal of college is to pursue an education, but this entails more than just academics. Non-academic activities are important because people are defined by more than just what they are studying. Participating in a school production, competing on the field, volunteering in the community, interning, and studying abroad are some of the ways that students can get involved on campus and beyond.



Oberlin College (Oberlin, OH)

I advocate that students get involved on campus, because it not only is enriching to pursue non-academic interests concurrently with academic interests, but also a great way to balance one's life. When considering where to apply to college, consider what schools have to offer outside of majors and classes. For example if you are an athlete or if you just love sports, you may want to consider going to an NCAA Division 1 school. If you are passionate about music, a school with a music conservatory might be the right decision. For example, Oberlin College has an excellent music conservatory. If you want to join a fraternity or sorority in college, choosing colleges with a Greek presence should be a consideration.

No matter your interests, it is necessary that you look into each college's extracurricular offerings. Choosing where to spend the next four years of your life living and learning is likely one of the biggest decisions you've ever had to make. In order to make the best decision, research everything about your college choices vigorously from the diversity of the student body to the number of NCAA championships a school has (if that's important to you).

If you have trouble finding where to begin, start with a campus tour of a local school (or one far away). Look to see what is offered at the school in terms of activities, the student body, and of course academics. Then proceed to visit another school and compare. This way, you can narrow down what is important to you in a college; essentially you can find what out what types of things make a college a great fit for you.

CHOOSING A COLLEGE → HOUSING & DINING

Quality of life in college should be a factor to consider when considering where to apply and eventually enroll. Housing and dining options are two factors that should be thoroughly researched. You do not want to arrive to campus with the shock of having to scramble for housing because it is not guaranteed or the shock of realizing that you must purchase a meal plan when you had no intention of doing so. A little research goes a long way in preparing for life in college.

When considering housing, begin by looking at whether a school is a commuter or residential campus. A commuter school is an institution where a majority of students do not live on-campus, but rather live off-campus and commute to school each day. A residential campus is one where a majority of students live on campus. Generally speaking, residential campuses have more vibrant student life, school spirit, and campus culture than commuter campuses because virtually most of the students live amongst one another.



Harvard College (Cambridge, MA) is a residential school

Dining options and requirements should also be considered when choosing colleges. Some colleges require students to purchase a meal plan for a number of years, while others may not. Cafeteria dorm food generally draws complaints from many students, but there are some pros. Not having to deal with cooking or finding places to eat makes hectic college life a little less hectic. For those who scoff at the notion of having to eat meals on campus, research schools that have flexible meal plans or ones where students are not required to purchase meal plans. If you do find that you want a meal plan, the quality of food should be a factor to consider. Not all dorm cafeterias are made equal. A good place to research food quality is College Prowler or Princeton Review. On these websites, student reviews and rankings are offered for not only housing and dining but also virtually every important factor and aspect of college life.

CSULB (Long Beach, CA) is considered a commuter campus

If you decide that you want to attend a residential college and want to live on campus, there are a few things to consider. Some colleges mandate that their students live on-campus for a certain number of years, while others will guarantee on-campus housing for a certain number of years. There are both pros and cons to living on-campus. Proximity, friendships with other students, not having to deal with landlords, and a vibrant campus life are among some of the pros. Some cons include lack of privacy, small living spaces, and being surrounded by college students all the time. Depending on your priorities, on-campus housing may or may not be right for you. If you decide that you want to live off campus, research the surrounding areas of your college choices including price rent, lease terms, and proximity to campus.



Bowdoin College (Bowdoin, ME) is rumored to have served lobster!

CHOOSING A COLLEGE → GEOGRAPHY & LOCATION

Location is a big factor to consider when contemplating college options. College is four years of your life, and so where you choose to study should be given weight in your research. Some factors to consider include distance from home, weather, and the professional and cultural opportunities of a given location.

Distance from home will hold different weight for different students. Ask yourself "Do I want to be as far away from home as possible or do I want to be close enough to be able to make the drive home on weekends?" If you decide that you want to get away from home, consider the costs of airfare to and from school for winter, summer, and even spring break. Many students like the idea of being far from home, but there are some pros to staying close to home. Staying close to home means cheaper transportation costs and the ability to go home on the weekends.



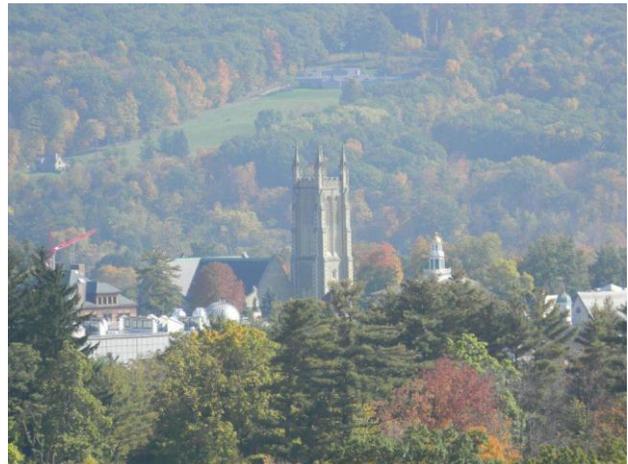
University of Washington, Seattle (Seattle, WA)

Another factor to consider when choosing where to spend your next four years is weather. As trivial as this may sound, it should still be considered. If you are used to the year-round sunshine of Southern California and shiver at the thought of fifty degree weather, schools on the East Coast may not be the right fit for you. Maybe you want to experience seasons and snow? Consider a college on the East Coast. If you like rain, maybe the **University of Washington** would be perfect for you. It all depends on your preferences.

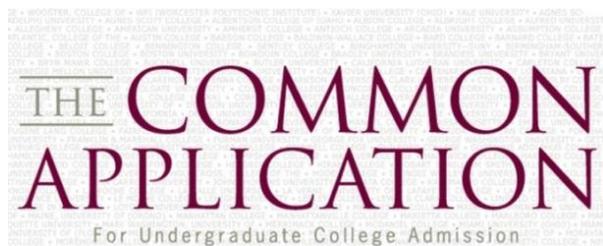


Columbia University (New York City, NY)

Job, community service, and cultural opportunities of the surrounding area of a college should also be researched. Consider the differences between urban and rural colleges. Schools in the heart of New York City, like **Columbia University** or **New York University**, afford so many more academic, cultural, and professional opportunities than a college located in the middle of nowhere like **Williams College**. On the other hand if you prefer a quieter college experience surrounded by natural beauty, a rural college may be a better choice than a school in the city. Once again, it all depends on your priorities.



Williams College (Williamstown, MA)



When it comes time to apply to college, you will more likely than not encounter the Common Application. The Common Application, or Common App for short, is a standardized application used by 488 colleges and universities nationwide. The Common App is popular because it allows students to apply to more colleges than ever before with only one application. One result of the advent and growth of the Common App is the increasing number of students applying to college and thus lower admissions rates.

For a list of schools that use the Common App and to apply, go to
<https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/Members.aspx>
<https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/default.aspx>

The Common App is a five-page long application with a page dedicated to each of the following sections: Applicant & Demographics, Family, Education & Academics, Honors & Extracurricular Activities/Work Experience, and Writing.

The first page of the application asks for information about the applicant including name, date of birth, social security number, phone number, email address, and home address. The first page of the application also asks for demographic information including citizenship status, birthplace, years lived in and out of the US, and language proficiency. There are also optional questions about race, ethnicity, military service, and religious affiliation.

The second page of the application, Family, asks for information about the applicant's parents and siblings. The parents section asks questions about the student's parents' marital status, occupation, and highest level of education. The siblings section asks for information about the applicant's siblings' ages and levels of education.

The third page is dedicated to education, and academics. The education section simply asks

for high school and counselor information. The academics section includes questions about GPA, rank (if applicable), standardized test scores (SAT/ACT, SAT Subject, and AP), and current courses (classes taken during senior year).

The fourth page is dedicated to honors/awards and extracurricular activities/work experience. The honors section provides space to list up to five awards received during the applicant's high school years including highest level of recognition (e.g. national, state, local, etc.). The applicant is asked to list activities, years participated, positions held, honors won, letters earned, employers, and a brief description of the activity. Activities include sports, clubs, jobs, hobbies, community service projects, and anything done outside of academic classes (like church groups). Refer to the article on extracurricular activities for more information.

The last page of the application is the writing section. The standardized application includes a short answer (less than 1000 characters) that elaborates on an extracurricular activity or work experience important to the applicant. The application also asks for a 250-500 word essay. The essay allows the applicant to demonstrate to colleges how he/she thinks. It also provides the applicant the opportunity to elaborate on another aspect already mentioned in the application or to show the admissions officers a side of the applicant that cannot be ascertained by reading through the rest of the application. Refer to the essay section of the guide for advice on the writing section.

In addition to the five-page application, the Common App also has a section for supplements and letters of recommendation that may or may not be required by individual schools. It is up to the college to decide whether applicants must submit a supplement (a document asking specific questions and essay prompts crafted by the college). Some colleges also require letters of recommendation. Check with each individual school to see what components are required. Refer to the essay section of the guide for advice on supplements and read the article on letters of recommendation for advice on who to ask for letters and what to provide your recommender so that he/she can write the best letter possible.

On the next few pages, you will find a sample of the Common App.

APPLICANT

Legal Name _____
Last/Family/Sur (Enter name exactly as it appears on official documents.) First/Given Middle (complete) Jr., etc.

Preferred name, if not first name (only one) _____ Former last name(s) _____

Birth Date _____ Female Male US Social Security Number, if any _____
mm/dd/yyyy Required for US Citizens and Permanent Residents applying for financial aid via FAFSA

Preferred Telephone Home Cell Home (_____) _____ Cell (_____) _____
Area/Country/City Code Area/Country/City Code

E-mail Address _____ IM Address _____

Permanent home address _____
Number & Street Apartment #

City/Town County or Parish State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

If different from above, please give your current mailing address for all admission correspondence. (from _____ to _____)
(mm/dd/yyyy) (mm/dd/yyyy)

Current mailing address _____
Number & Street Apartment #

City/Town County or Parish State/Province Country ZIP/Postal Code

If your current mailing address is a boarding school, include name of school here: _____

FUTURE PLANS

Your answers to these questions will vary for different colleges. If the online system did not ask you to answer some of the questions you see in this section, this college chose not to ask that question of its applicants.

College _____ Deadline _____
mm/dd/yyyy

Entry Term: Fall (Jul-Dec) Spring (Jan-Jun)

Decision Plan _____

Academic Interests _____

Career Interest _____

Do you intend to apply for need-based financial aid? Yes No

Do you intend to apply for merit-based scholarships? Yes No

Do you intend to be a full-time student? Yes No

Do you intend to enroll in a degree program your first year? Yes No

Do you intend to live in college housing? _____

What is the highest degree you intend to earn? _____

DEMOGRAPHICS

Citizenship Status _____

Non-US Citizenship(s) _____

Birthplace _____
City/Town State/Province Country

Years lived in the US? _____ Years lived outside the US? _____

Language Proficiency (Check all that apply.)
S(Speak) R(Read) W(Write) F(First Language) H(Spoken at Home)

_____	S	R	W	F	H
_____	<input type="radio"/>				
_____	<input type="radio"/>				
_____	<input type="radio"/>				

Optional The items with a gray background are optional. No information you provide will be used in a discriminatory manner.

Religious Preference _____

US Armed Services veteran status _____

1. Are you Hispanic/Latino?
 Yes, Hispanic or Latino (including Spain) No If yes, please describe your background.

2. Regardless of your answer to the prior question, please indicate how you identify yourself. (Check one or more and describe your background.)

American Indian or Alaska Native (including all Original Peoples of the Americas)
Are you Enrolled? Yes No If yes, please enter Tribal Enrollment Number _____

Asian (including Indian subcontinent and Philippines)

Black or African American (including Africa and Caribbean)

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Original Peoples)

White (including Middle Eastern)

FAMILY

Please list both parents below, even if one or more is deceased or no longer has legal responsibilities toward you. Many colleges collect this information for demographic purposes even if you are an adult or an emancipated minor. If you are a minor with a legal guardian (an individual or government entity), then please list that information below as well. If you wish, you may list step-parents and/or other adults with whom you reside, or who otherwise care for you, in the Additional Information section.

Household

Parents' marital status (relative to each other): Never Married Married Civil Union/Domestic Partners Widowed Separated Divorced (date _____)

With whom do you make your permanent home? Parent 1 Parent 2 Both Legal Guardian Ward of the Court/State Other mm/yyyy

If you have children, how many? _____

Parent 1

Mother Father Unknown

Is Parent 1 living? Yes No (Date Deceased _____)
mm/yyyy

Last/Family/Sur First/Given Middle

Former last name(s) _____

Country of birth _____

Home address **if different** from yours

Preferred Telephone: Home Cell Work (_____) _____
Area/Country/City Code

E-mail _____

Occupation _____

Employer _____

College (if any) _____ CEEB _____

Degree _____ Year _____

Graduate School (if any) _____ CEEB _____

Degree _____ Year _____

Parent 2

Mother Father Unknown

Is Parent 2 living? Yes No (Date Deceased _____)
mm/yyyy

Last/Family/Sur First/Given Middle

Former last name(s) _____

Country of birth _____

Home address **if different** from yours

Preferred Telephone: Home Cell Work (_____) _____
Area/Country/City Code

E-mail _____

Occupation _____

Employer _____

College (if any) _____ CEEB _____

Degree _____ Year _____

Graduate School (if any) _____ CEEB _____

Degree _____ Year _____

Legal Guardian (if other than a parent)

Relationship to you _____

Last/Family/Sur First/Given Middle

Country of birth _____

Home address **if different** from yours

Preferred Telephone: Home Cell Work (_____) _____
Area/Country/City Code

E-mail _____

Occupation _____

Employer _____

College (if any) _____ CEEB _____

Degree _____ Year _____

Graduate School (if any) _____ CEEB _____

Degree _____ Year _____

Siblings

Please give names and ages of your brothers or sisters. If they are enrolled in grades K-12 (or international equivalent), list their grade levels. If they have attended or are currently attending college, give the names of the undergraduate institution, degree earned, and approximate dates of attendance. If more than three siblings, please list them in the Additional Information section.

Name Age & Grade Relationship

College Attended _____ CEEB _____

Degree earned _____ Dates _____
or expected mm/yyyy – mm/yyyy

Name Age & Grade Relationship

College Attended _____ CEEB _____

Degree earned _____ Dates _____
or expected mm/yyyy – mm/yyyy

Name Age & Grade Relationship

College Attended _____ CEEB _____

Degree earned _____ Dates _____
or expected mm/yyyy – mm/yyyy

Honors Briefly list any academic distinctions or honors you have received since the 9th grade or international equivalent (e.g., National Merit, Cum Laude Society).

S(School) S/R(State or Regional) N(National) I(International)

Grade level or post-graduate (PG)	Honor	Highest Level of Recognition			
		S	S/R	N	I
9 10 11 12 PG					
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & WORK EXPERIENCE

Extracurricular Please list your **principal** extracurricular, volunteer, and work activities **in their order of importance to you**. Feel free to group your activities and paid work experience separately if you prefer. Use the space available to provide details of your activities and accomplishments (specific events, varsity letter, musical instrument, employer, etc.). **To allow us to focus on the highlights of your activities, please complete this section even if you plan to attach a résumé.**

Grade level or post-graduate (PG)	Approximate time spent		When did you participate in the activity?		Positions held, honors won, letters earned, or employer	If applicable, do you plan to participate in college?		
	9	10	11	12			PG	Hours per week
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____	<input type="radio"/>		
Activity _____								
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____	<input type="radio"/>		
Activity _____								
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Activity _____								
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____	<input type="radio"/>		
Activity _____								
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____	<input type="radio"/>		
Activity _____								
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____	<input type="radio"/>		
Activity _____								
<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	_____	_____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____	<input type="radio"/>		
Activity _____								

WRITING

Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences in the space below.

Please write an essay of 250 – 500 words on a topic of your choice or on one of the options listed below, and attach it to your application before submission. **Please indicate your topic by checking the appropriate box.** This personal essay helps us become acquainted with you as a person and student, apart from courses, grades, test scores, and other objective data. It will also demonstrate your ability to organize your thoughts and express yourself. *NOTE: Your Common Application essay should be the same for all colleges. Do not customize it in any way for individual colleges. Colleges that want customized essay responses will ask for them on a supplement form.*

- 1 Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.
- 2 Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
- 3 Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
- 4 Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.
- 5 A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity to you.
- 6 Topic of your choice.

Additional Information Please attach a separate sheet if you wish to provide details of circumstances or qualifications not reflected in the application.

Disciplinary History

- ① Have you ever been found responsible for a disciplinary violation at any educational institution you have attended from the 9th grade (or the international equivalent) forward, whether related to academic misconduct or behavioral misconduct, that resulted in a disciplinary action? These actions could include, but are not limited to: probation, suspension, removal, dismissal, or expulsion from the institution. Yes No
- ② Have you ever been adjudicated guilty or convicted of a misdemeanor, felony, or other crime? Yes No
[Note that you are not required to answer “yes” to this question, or provide an explanation, if the criminal adjudication or conviction has been expunged, sealed, annulled, pardoned, destroyed, erased, impounded, or otherwise ordered by a court to be kept confidential.]

If you answered “yes” to either or both questions, please attach a separate sheet of paper that gives the approximate date of each incident, explains the circumstances, and reflects on what you learned from the experience.

Note: Applicants are expected to immediately notify the institutions to which they are applying should there be any changes to the information requested in this application, including disciplinary history.

SIGNATURE

Application Fee Payment If this college requires an application fee, how will you be paying it?

- Online Payment Will Mail Payment Online Fee Waiver Request Will Mail Fee Waiver Request

Required Signature

- I certify that all information submitted in the admission process—including the application, the personal essay, any supplements, and any other supporting materials—is my own work, factually true, and honestly presented, and that these documents will become the property of the institutions to which I am applying and will not be returned to me. I understand that I may be subject to a range of possible disciplinary actions, including admission revocation, expulsion, or revocation of course credit, grades, and degree, should the information I have certified be false.
- I acknowledge that I have reviewed the application instructions for each college receiving this application. I understand that all offers of admission are conditional, pending receipt of final transcripts showing work comparable in quality to that upon which the offer was based, as well as honorable dismissal from the school.
- I affirm that I will send an enrollment deposit (or equivalent) to only one institution; sending multiple deposits (or equivalent) may result in the withdrawal of my admission offers from all institutions. [Note: Students may send an enrollment deposit (or equivalent) to a second institution where they have been admitted from the waitlist, provided that they inform the first institution that they will no longer be enrolling.]

Signature 

Date _____

mm/dd/yyyy

Common Application member institution admission offices do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, marital status, parental status, physical disability, learning disability, political affiliation, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

APPLICATION TIPS & POINTERS → UC APPLICATION

The University of California (UC) schools are fantastic college choices for top California high school seniors. The University of California system includes nine public undergraduate schools including **UC Berkeley, UCLA, UC San Diego, UC Davis, UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, UC Irvine, UC Riverside,** and **UC Merced**. The UC application can be used to apply to one or all of the nine campuses.



UC Berkeley (Berkeley, CA)

Like the Common App, the UC application asks for personal information about the applicant such as contact information, state residency, campuses to which the applicant is applying to, and potential major. In most cases, the choice of major on the application is non-binding. The application also includes a scholarship section, where the applicant is asked to check boxes of criteria that applies to the application. The applicant is then automatically considered for scholarships, with scholarships granted on the basis of information provided throughout the rest of the application.

Personal information about languages spoken, parents' occupations and highest levels of education, and family size and household income is also asked.

In addition, the application also asks applicants to list all coursework taken throughout the student's high school career (including grades) and the planned courses for senior year. Note that in order to be eligible for admission to a UC, applicants must have at least a 3.0 GPA and have completed the A-G requirements which are listed in the next column.

Test scores are also asked of the applicant. SAT/ACT tests are required and SAT Subject/AP tests are optional but highly recommended. Like the Common App, the UC application has a

section for activities. The activities are divided into volunteer & community service, work experience, and extracurricular activities. There is also a section to list awards and honors received in high school.

Area	Subject	Years
a.	History and Social Science (including 1 year of U.S. history or 1 semester of U.S. history and 1 semester of civics or American government AND 1 year of social science)	2
b.	English (4 years of college preparatory English composition and literature)	4
c.	Math (4 years recommended) including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or higher mathematics (take one each year)	3
d.	Laboratory Science (including 1 biological science and 1 physical science)	2
e.	Language Other than English (2 years of the same language; American Sign Language is applicable - See below about a possible waiver of this requirement)	2
f.	Visual and Performing Arts (dance, drama or theater, music, or visual art)	1
g.	College Preparatory Elective (additional year chosen from the University of California "a-g" list)	1
Total Required Courses		15

A-G Requirements

The final section of the application is the writing section. Applicants are asked to respond to the two following prompts:

1. Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community or school — and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.
2. Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

The total word count for the two personal statements may not exceed 1000 words and each personal statement must be at least 250 words long. For advice on personal statements, flip to the essays section of this guide.

To apply, go to
<<https://admissions.universityofcalifornia.edu/applicant/login.htm>>

The UC application opens on November 1 and is due on November 30.

APPLICATION TIPS & POINTERS → CSU APPLICATION

California has two public undergraduate school systems: the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) system. Like the UC system, the CSU system is popular among California high school seniors. The following is a list of the twenty-three CSU campuses:

- **CSU Bakersfield**
- **CSU Channel Islands**
- **CSU Chico**
- **CSU Dominguez Hills**
- **CSU East Bay**
- **CSU Fresno**
- **CSU Fullerton**
- **Humboldt State University**
- **CSU Long Beach**
- **CSU Los Angeles**
- **California Maritime Academy**
- **CSU Monterey Bay**
- **CSU Northridge**
- **California State Polytechnic University, Pomona**
- **CSU Sacramento**
- **CSU San Bernardino**
- **San Diego State University**
- **San Francisco State University**
- **San Jose State University**
- **California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo**
- **CSU San Marcos**
- **Sonoma State University**
- **CSU Stanislaus**



California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
(San Luis Obispo, CA)

The CSU system has its own application that can be used to apply to any and all of its campuses. **To apply, go to** <http://www.csumentor.edu/>. The CSU application opens on October 1 and the deadline to apply is November 30.

The CSU application is much simpler to complete than its UC counterpart. The most time-consuming portion of the CSU application is the high school preparation section, which asks the applicant to list all A-G courses taken along with grades. Rising seniors can complete this lengthiest portion of the application during junior year by going to <http://csumentor.edu>, clicking on the "Plan for College" tab, and filling out the high school planner with their high school classes and grades of the past three years. The information automatically transfers over when the student applies to a CSU in the fall of his/her senior year.

In order to be eligible for admission to a CSU campus, applicants must have at least a 2.0 GPA, taken the SAT or ACT, and completed all A-G requirements as listed in the table below:

Area	Subject	Years
a.	History and Social Science (including 1 year of U.S. history or 1 semester of U.S. history and 1 semester of civics or American government AND 1 year of social science)	2
b.	English (4 years of college preparatory English composition and literature)	4
c.	Math (4 years recommended) including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or higher mathematics (take one each year)	3
d.	Laboratory Science (including 1 biological science and 1 physical science)	2
e.	Language Other than English (2 years of the same language; American Sign Language is applicable - See below about a possible waiver of this requirement)	2
f.	Visual and Performing Arts (dance, drama or theater, music, or visual art)	1
g.	College Preparatory Elective (additional year chosen from the University of California "a-g" list)	1
Total Required Courses		15

Realize that these are bare minimums. The CSUs use what is called an eligibility index (which is calculated by multiplying a student's GPA by 800 and adding it to the combined score of a student's CR and Math sections of the SAT) to determine admissions. The minimum score needed to get into a CSU is 2900 for California residents and 3502 for out-of-state students. The minimum GPA and SAT/ACT combinations can be found here:

http://www.csumentor.edu/planning/high_school/ca_residents.asp These campuses:

http://www.csumentor.edu/planning/high_school/campuses_that_have_higher_standards.asp require applicants to have much higher eligibility index scores in order to be offered admissions.

Like the UC application, the CSU application also asks for residency, personal, demographic, economic, and high school information. Something to note about CSUs is that they do not require essays, honors/awards, or extracurricular activities. Admission to a CSU is purely based on academic achievement, test scores, and residency.

APPLICATION TIPS & POINTERS → EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & WORK EXPERIENCE

Balance is the key to success in any endeavor, including applying to college. Participating in extracurricular activities and having work experience will not only strengthen a student's college applications, but also will allow a student to make friends, pursue non-academic interests and passions, have fun, and achieve balance in his/her life.

In order to gain admission to some of the most selective colleges and universities, students will be expected to demonstrate more than academic achievement. Participating in extracurricular activities such as sports, community service, clubs, and the arts or working while maintaining a high level of academic achievement demonstrates to a college an applicant's interests, passions, and hobbies outside of the classroom. Colleges are looking to admit people who will contribute both inside and outside the classroom and as a result use criteria such as involvement in extracurricular activities and work experience to evaluate an applicant's potential.

Sports

Sports are one of the most common extracurricular activities among high school students, and for good reason. Sports help to cultivate important skills such as communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork. They also can improve a student's discipline, patience, and confidence. Being a successful student-athlete requires an ability to balance, prioritize, and sacrifice which are qualities that are impressive to college admissions officers. In addition to improving a student's college applications, sports provide an outlet for students to be competitive, have fun, and make friends. If you are exceptional at sports, you may even be recruited.

Community Service

Community service is another great endeavor to pursue during and after high school. Some schools even require their students to complete a certain number of service hours in order to graduate. There are so many opportunities for students to get involved in volunteerism and service in their respective communities including soup kitchens, after school programs, retirement homes, libraries, hospitals, and other nonprofits. The key to community service is to pursue service in an area that interests a student. For example, if a student is passionate about remedying inequitable education, he/she might volunteer as a tutor for disadvantaged students. If a student is interested in healthcare disparities, he/she might volunteer his/her time at a clinic. Colleges like applicants who volunteer because doing so demonstrates empathy, initiative, and a desire to contribute to society.

Clubs

School clubs and organizations offer students the ability to get involved on-campus. Clubs can be academic, social, cultural, service-based, or anything in between. In addition to impressing colleges, clubs also give students the opportunity to meet people with similar interests, passions, cultures, and ideas.

The Arts

The arts (drama, instrumental music, choir, and the fine arts) are also considered extracurricular activities. For people who are creative and talented in the arts, performing in concerts, acting in plays, and making art offer great outlets to showcase talent and have fun. Some colleges even allow students to submit artistic supplements showcasing their work, which can help boost their admissions chances.

Work

Many students don't consider work as an attractive extracurricular activity. While maybe not as flashy as sports or community service, work is still looked upon favorably by colleges and universities. A student who works 20 hours a week to help his/her family pay the bills while maintaining a 4.0 is incredibly impressive. This ability to balance work and school demonstrates to colleges that a student is emotionally mature. Students who are unable to pursue "traditional" extracurricular activities because they must work to support their families or must take care of their siblings while their parents work should not worry that they will be at a disadvantage during the college admissions process. As long as students list work experience or "babysitting" in the activities section of the college application and briefly explain their family circumstances, they will not be penalized for not pursuing "traditional" activities.

Leadership

Leadership roles in extracurricular activities are looked upon favorably by colleges because it reveals that the applicant not only has leadership traits, but also that he/she is respected by his/her peers. This does not mean that a student without a leadership position will be looked upon as unfavorable. As long as the student contributes and can articulate his/her contributions, passions, interests, and accomplishments, not having a leadership role will not hurt him/her.

A Note on Quality vs. Quantity

Balance, as mentioned earlier, is the key to success. Do not feel compelled to have ten or twenty extracurricular activities. In other words, aim for quality over quantity. Prolonged involvement and achievement in one activity is better than involvement in five clubs during senior year. Pursue activities that match your passions and interests and it will show in your application.

APPLICATION TIPS & POINTERS → LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of recommendation are letters written on your behalf by counselors, teachers, employers, club advisors, coaches, or community leaders to colleges and scholarship organizations. Some colleges require letters of recommendation. UCs, CSUs, and community colleges do not require letters, unless you are applying for specific scholarships offered by these schools. Many private schools require letters of recommendation. It is up to you to research the requirements of your school.

Who to ask?

Most schools that utilize the Common App want what is called a secondary school report, which includes a school profile, school report, unofficial transcript, and letter of recommendation. A student's counselor is responsible for completing the secondary school report. The school profile provides information about the applicant's school such as enrollment, racial/ethnic make-up of the student body, number of AP/honors classes offered, standardized test score averages, and postsecondary plans of the senior class. This allows colleges to evaluate a student's application in the context of the opportunities he/she has been provided. The school report is a form that allows a college to compare the applicant to other college-bound students in his/her school. The unofficial transcript lists all the student's grades to date. For students wondering why they did not have to enter classes and grades into the Common App, the transcript takes care of this. Finally, the last component of the secondary school report is a letter of recommendation.

In addition, some schools want letters of recommendation from one, two, or even three teachers who have taught you in core subjects (English, Math, Science, History, and Foreign Language). When choosing teachers to ask for letters of recommendation, consider teachers you know well and who can speak highly of not only your academic talents, but also your character. A good place to begin is a teacher who is also your club advisor or coach. He/she will know what you are like not only as a student, but also as a person. Choose teachers whose classes you loved or teachers whose classes you struggled in. The latter may sound counterintuitive but if you had difficulty with a class and worked hard to improve, a letter from a teacher that speaks of your determination, perseverance, and improvement is much more effective than a letter that says you were an A student in Spanish.

What to give your recommenders?

My counselor had me fill out a lengthy questionnaire with short answers when I asked for a letter of recommendation. The questionnaire can be found on the few next pages. I advise that students fill out the same questionnaire or something similar and give it to their

recommenders. I actually advise against giving recommenders a resume because letters of recommendation sometimes turn into a laundry list of all an applicant's activities and awards. This type of letter is ineffective because the applicant has already been asked to list his/her activities and accomplishments. This repetition shows college admissions officers that a recommender may not know a student that well or is not able to provide meaningful insights into the student's motivations or goals.

When to ask?

You should give your recommenders at least three weeks to write your letters of recommendation.

What makes an effective letter?

Many letters of recommendation are not as outstanding as students think. Although it is easy to understand that recommenders would write great things about an applicant, many do it in a way that is not effective. Selective colleges probably receive tons of letters about how an applicant is a 4.0 student, and "one of the best" a teacher has ever taught. They also receive letters that in essence list a student's activities and achievements, rather than explaining the student's involvement, contributions, motivations, and goals. The reason that these letters are ineffective is because they do not provide new insights into the applicant; this information is already listed somewhere else in the application. Colleges spend about 15-20 minutes per application which means an applicant should try to provide as much information as possible.

Effective letters are those that speak of the student beyond his/her grades, activities, and awards. They should explain how a student contributes to class discussions, helps out classmates, or asks insightful questions to demonstrate interest and a desire to learn. Letters should explain why a student joined a club, sport, or activity, what he/she has contributed, and how it reveals the student's qualities and goals. Effective letters of recommendation, like effective applicants, are those that stand out from the crowd.

How to ensure effective letters?

It is the applicant's job not the recommender's job to ensure that the recommender has all he/she needs to write an effective letter of recommendation. A student should provide detailed answers to questions like those posed on the questionnaire, which can be found on the next few pages. Establishing a relationship with the recommender will also improve the quality of the letter. A teacher who also coaches you in a sport or a teacher who knows of struggles in your home life will write better letters than a teacher whose class you aced.

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

In order for your counselor/teacher to write a meaningful recommendation, we need to include insights that the reader will not find anywhere else in your application. Please return this form to your counselor/teacher at least **THREE WEEKS** before you need the letter. Feel free to write in the back or attach a separate sheet.

Describe your home situation. (Siblings, family situation, has anyone else gone to college, financial situation)

Which courses have you enjoyed the most? Why?

Describe your interests/hobbies/extracurricular activities. What are you passionate about?

Which activity (in or out of school) has been the most important to you? Why?

What has been the greatest challenge of your high school years? Explain.

Describe your community service and/or work experience. What have you learned from it?

What is your greatest personal achievement?

List your three most distinguishing, most admirable qualities. Explain each with several sentences. (Think about what aspects of yourself you would like to have stressed to colleges.)

What type of student are you? What academic settings or assignments make you thrive? What interests you the most?

Please describe the single academic accomplishment that you are the most proud of (major paper, science project or experiment, artistic project or accomplishment). You may attach a copy.

Anything else you would want the college/scholarship committee to know about you.

Attach your Student Information Sheet or Resume to this form if available
I realize the college and scholarship recommendations are confidential in nature. My signature on my application waives my right to see the recommendation submitted to colleges and scholarship committees. Parent signature is required if 17 or younger.

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature (if student is under 18)

Date

APPLICATION TIPS & POINTERS → INTERVIEWS

Some colleges require an interview as part of the admissions process. It is up to you to research the requirements of your school. I have only done one interview for a college, so I am not really an expert on the topic. I found a great interview guide written by Ryan Christopher Gourley, a student at Brown University who is quite experienced with interviewing. So instead of writing my own article on interviewing, I will defer to him instead. Here is his guide in its entirety:

Acing the College Interview: A Comprehensive Guide (by Ryan Christopher Gourley)

The college interview is a strange beast, reserved only for nervous prospective undergraduate and graduate students vying for entry into a top-notch college. The scary part about it is that for most high school seniors, this is their first time interviewing... EVER! Not to worry, however, this article will make sure you understand the ins and outs of the interview process, demystifying any ambiguity you will have.

Step One is to understand what the interview is and how it is used. The college interview is a way for the college/university to add a personality to your application by having a question and answer session with you in person (or sometimes over the phone or even through video chat). As a part of the college admissions process, it is one of the least weighted parts of your application – in most cases it is optional. Most Ivy League colleges weight the interview at a percentage of around 10% of your entire application. Do not, however, take this for granted and skip the process all together. A good interview can be the difference between being waitlisted and accepted; between accepting your application or someone else's application from your city. The good news is that a poor or average interview won't hurt your entire application that much. With preparation, the interview process is well worth your time – especially in regards to top university admission. A one hour Q&A session with someone on a Saturday is an easy way to gain bonus points for your application and is far less painful than your admissions testing Saturdays; it is actually usually quite enjoyable. If your safety/backup school offers you an interview, take it (or call to set up one). This may get you into their honors college if they have one or put you in the running for more scholarships. Not all people can make it to an interview – this is perfectly fine, spend your time fretting over other more important details of your application, but if you have the opportunity, seize it!

Step Two is the setup. The big tips here are to **1. Know your interviewer** and **2. Maintain a business and friendly contact** with your interviewer. Most interviews are set up online through the college's website either through a form or by calling the admissions office to schedule an on campus interview. In general, there are 4 different kinds of interviewers (the person who is interviewing you): A Student Interviewer, an admissions representative

interview, a departmental/artistic interview, and finally an alumni interview. A **Student Interviewer** is usually a senior on the campus that you will interview with. These interviews are interesting because you get a window into what an actual student is like from that campus. Most of these interviews are scheduled when you have an on campus visit through the admissions process. Make sure that you clear it with the admissions office before you go interview with a random student though! The **Admissions Representative Interviewer** is one of the most daunting interviews. You are speaking with the very person who decides your fate. Most of these people are extremely kind, however, and have a real interest in advocating for your application so that you can be accepted. A **Departmental/Artistic** interview is one of the most overlooked, yet valuable interviews. If you want to be a physics major, go talk to a physics professor! A departmental interview is usually very casual and gives you great insight into the strengths of the department and what the professors are like. A simple phone call/email to the department can set that up. In terms of an artistic interview, if you are applying as a music/theatre/art major you will probably be required to have one of these. Always bring your portfolio! The **Alumni Interview** is probably the most common interview. These usually happen off campus, in either your hometown (or in a nearby city), at their place of work or in a neutral setting (coffee shop, bakery, bookstore). Alumni have a ton of school pride and love to see what the new generation has to offer. The usually will offer to buy you a cup of coffee if it is available. In some cases, universities will have mass gatherings of alumni and host several interviews at once in different rooms. The vast majority of the rest of this article can apply to any of these interviewers and situations.

Tip 1. Know your interviewer. In some cases, you will be prompted to pick an interviewer from a list. Web search each name. Check out their personal website or business profile if they have one. If they are a professor, check out their "rate my professor" scores and comments. You will feel like a stalker, but it will be worth it. Knowing that you are interviewing with a physics major instead of an underwater basket weaving major will help. Knowing that he/she teaches college level calculus will let you know that you should be prepared to talk about math. If you have the choice, go with whoever you are most comfortable with. Always research your interviewer – not only will it give you an idea of what to expect

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but it may also give you points to bring up in your interview so that you can sort of tailor how you approach certain topics.

Tip 2. You will most likely share several emails with your interviewer. Keep the emails in business standard format (Dear Mr./Ms... And Sincerely...). Keep an upbeat tone and triple check your wording so that what you mean to say does not become misconstrued. Even if your interviewer breaks business format in the emails, keep your composure and always respond in the correct format. This will make you appear as mature and level-headed. **NEVER, EVER** miss an interview. **ALWAYS** respond to an email within 1-2 days. **ALWAYS** double check the time, date, and location – make sure it works with your interviewer. **ALWAYS** exchange phone numbers so that you can call them in case of an emergency on interview day. 1 to 2 days before the interview, send an email confirming that the interviewer is still free and available to meet with you (this will remind them that you are coming and it will impress them).

Step Three is The Self-Preparation stage. As the interviewee (the person being interviewed), you should show up to your interview prepared with a clear mind. The way to accomplish this is to prepare yourself. **Interviews are not scripted – but you should always have a general idea of what you are going to say about yourself.** Your interviewer does not want test scores and grades (the college already has this); remember that they want a personality to add to your application. Start making a mental list of things you will want to say about yourself. Good things to have on this list are: your extracurricular involvements, employment, hobbies, passions/interests, research ideas, etc. Tell yourself how you want to be presented. In general, when you are asked a question in an interview, you want to be able to respond in about 10 seconds. By already knowing what you want to say, you will come across as articulate and quick witted. It is okay to think for a second to formulate your sentences coherently, but going beyond 30 seconds before answering a question is frowned upon. Each response should be approximately 1-3 minutes long, and in depth.

The next part of self-preparation comes with practice. Yes, you are going to practice for an interview; it is a must! There are certain questions that every interviewer will ask you and you should know how to respond to these questions. You will be thrown a curve ball question once or twice in an interview too, but if you are able to think on your feet, it will be no problem. Expect to answer the following questions:

1. Tell me about yourself. (the mental list comes in handy here)

2. What are you interested in/passionate about? (essentially, why do you want to major in that?)
3. Why are you going to college? (knowledge is a better answer than money)
4. Why ____ University? (research the college beforehand!)
5. Where do you see yourself in 10 years? (practical answers work best)
6. What was your favorite/least favorite class?
7. How will you contribute to ____ University? (research departments/student groups)
8. Recommend a good book to me. (something of literary merit & something you haven't read in class is preferable)

Here are a few common curve balls you may be thrown:

1. What do you think about ____ news event (always read the paper/watch the morning news before you go)
2. Have you ever felt like a dissenting voice? (be an individual, not a follower, but also not a pure rebel)
3. What hardships have you gone through/Biggest struggle? (don't be afraid to tell a sob story, not only will it make your interviewer empathize with you but it will make you seem determined and strong as long as you keep your composure)
4. What is your greatest weakness? (with some circumlocution you can actually make this question a positive point in your interview).

Practice these questions with a friend, or better yet, your parents! You will be surprised how much a simple car ride Q&A session can help. In addition to practicing, do a little bit of research on your school as well – especially in the field(s) you want to possibly major in. Find out things that make that college different from all other colleges so your answers do not sound generic. Find a group you might want to join (choir, student group, debate, etc.) so that you can tell your interviewer; they love that.

The last part of the self-preparation stage is the physical self-image. Once you nail your speaking skills, you need to look sharp as well.

For Males: Slacks, dress shirt (one color or a nice stripe), and a tie (a nice sweater over the shirt/tie if necessary for the weather is nice). Learn how to tie your own tie – not only will it make you look better but it will make you feel more confident knowing that you did it. Some interviewers will not require you to wear a tie, but the rule is to always be over-dressed rather than under-dressed. Keep

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everything conservative and business-like. Comb your hair, make sure you look well-groomed and smell nice.

Quick tip: Match your belt with your shoes and your socks. Black belt = black dress shoes, black/grey dress socks depending on your slacks. Brown belt = topsider style shoes with brown/tan dress socks. Black shoes go best with grey/blue slacks. Brown shoes go best with khakis.

For Females: Do not wear your sun-dress to an interview! A conservative dress that is appropriate for the workplace is appropriate here. A skirt with a nice blouse is fine. Keep it clean cut without too many extra patterns. A business blazer with the right cut can look very nice.

Quick tip: Casual shoes don't work here. You don't have to bust out your high heels, but make sure they aren't your plaid school shoes. Make sure your makeup is age appropriate and clean looking.

Step Four: Speaking from the heart. Its interview day and you are nervous. This is okay, you've been training for a week now and you know what you want to say about yourself. Take some deep breaths. Get there 15 – 30 minutes early (**NEVER BE LATE TO AN INTERVIEW AT ALL COSTS**). If you are going to be late to an interview, call the interviewer and tell them. This will negate the effects of you being late because they will be happy you are being so professional with them. If you arrive early, go ahead and sit down. Bring a book (of literary merit please!) or buy yourself a cup of coffee and watch the people coming in and out. Make sure you keep an eye out for your interviewer. I have heard horror stories of people missing their interviewer or making them wait for hours on end when they are sitting 10 feet apart. Stay alert, stay focused.

You see your interviewer. They will most likely ask "____ (your name), is that you?" Respond politely and confidently. Shake his or her hand. Keep it respectful. Remember that even though you are the interviewee, you essentially are running the interview because you have prepared information you want to share. Answer their questions promptly and don't be afraid to go on a small tangent topic if they like where you are going. Speak the truth and speak from your personality. Be how you want to be viewed on your college application. Remember that each response should be approximately 1-3 minutes long, in depth, and about 10 – 30 seconds after the interviewer asks it.

At the end of the interview, he or she will ask you "Is there anything else you want to say?" This is your chance to summarize your entire interview briefly, highlighting your best points and possibly adding anything else you want to contribute. Next your interviewer will ask "Do you have any

questions for me?" This is your chance to reverse the roles for a bit. **AWLAYS** ask a few questions, even if you are nervous. An easy one is "What was your experience like at ____ University?" This will make the interviewer happy and you will probably hear a long story about their experiences in college (especially if they are an alumnus). If this isn't enough, ask them "How did you like living in ____ (city where the college is located)?"

Keep everything light, yet professional and say your goodbye. Be sure to thank them (especially if they bought you something!) Most interviews will last 30 minutes – 1 hour. Some interviewers can push 1½ hours if the interviewer really likes talking to you. Some interviews will rush by at 15 minutes if your interviewer is not as talkative (just be sure you are!).

Now you have the knowledge to ace the college interview! Don't be afraid to search the web for more interview questions (I recommend doing so) or even watching some videos (Yale has a great one on the interview process).

All in all, make sure you:

- Arrive promptly
- Dress for success
- Maintain a business contact
- Sound and act professional
- Come prepared

Bonus points in the interview:

- Bringing your own business card (simple, just your name, address, school, etc.)
- Bringing your professional resume (only bring it out if they ask for it! some interviewers don't want to know grades/test scores/ranks).
- Bringing an artistic portfolio (if you have one)
- Bringing pictures of something amazing you have accomplished. (make sure its interview worthy – national accomplishments, not test score copies)

I have no doubt that you will do awesome in your interviews (you may have more than one for a single college and most likely one for at least half the colleges you are applying to)! Follow the steps in this article and you will appear as a well put together high school senior ready for admission into any university. Best of luck and happy interviewing!

APPLICATION TIPS & POINTERS → EARLY ACTION/DECISION

Many private and some public schools have options for applying early. Early application options are ideal for students who have thoroughly conducted their college searches and know which school(s) is/are their top choice(s). They are also ideal for students who are prepared to submit their applications in the fall (usually around November) and would not benefit from retesting for standardized exams or an additional semester on their transcripts. Colleges that have early application options employ one of two types: **early decision** or **early action**.



Cornell University (Ithaca, NY)

Early decision (ED) is a **binding** early application option. This means that if a student applies through ED and is admitted, he/she must attend that school and withdraw his/her other active applications. The exception to this is if the student cannot pay for the college (financial aid is inadequate). ED applications are usually due in early to mid-November and a decision is given by mid-December. Note that a student may only apply to one school through ED.

There are a few benefits to applying to a school through ED. Not only will the student be finished with the college application process in December (assuming acceptance), he/she will also have a greater chance of being admitted if he/she applies early as opposed to applying through regular decision (RD). Students who apply ED are bound to a school, therefore it is more appealing to a college to admit and “lock in” a student during ED than to admit a student during RD and hope that he/she chooses to matriculate. Last year for example, **Brown University** accepted 19% of its ED applicants as opposed to 8.5% of its RD applicants and **Cornell University** accepted 32.7% of its ED applicants as opposed to 14.5% of its RD applicants. Refer to the chart on the next page for a list of schools where applying through ED increases an applicant’s statistical odds of acceptance. The information is a few years old, but the trends remain the same.



Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, MA)

Early action is a **non-binding** early application option. This means that a student will not be required to attend if he/she is admitted under an early action program. Like with early decision, early action applications are due in early to mid-November and students are notified of their admissions decisions in mid-December. Unlike with ED, EA only slightly improves an applicant’s admissions chances. There are two types of early action programs: **early action** (EA) and **restrictive early action** (REA).



Yale University (New Haven, CT)

EA allows a student to apply multiple schools through EA, unless he/she applies to a school through ED or REA. Schools with EA programs include the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** (MIT), the **California Institute of Technology** (Caltech), the **University of Chicago**, and **Georgetown University**. Schools with REA programs only allow a student to apply to its school early. It’s like ED in the sense that a student can only apply to that school early, but like EA in the sense that the applicant is not bound to the school if he/she is accepted. Some examples of schools with REA programs include **Harvard University**, **Princeton University**, **Yale University**, and **Stanford University**.

Institution Name	Early Decision Deadline	ED Acceptance Rate	ED # of Applicants	Overall Acceptance Rate	Overall # of Applicants
Alfred University (NY)	12/1	84.6	52	76.1	2557
Allegheny College (PA)	11/15	70.9	86	60.6	4243
American Jewish University (CA)	12/31	100.0	4	100.0	58
American University (DC)	11/15	75.1	397	52.9	15413
Barnard College (NY)	11/15	47.7	392	28.5	4274
Bates College (ME)	11/15	45.5	549	29.2	5098
Bennington College (VT)	11/15	60.0	75	61.6	1056
Bentley University (MA)	11/1	54.0	187	37.6	7238
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania	11/15	100.0	151	58.6	10840
Bowdoin College (ME)	11/15	30.0	690	18.6	6033
Brandeis University (MA)	11/15	53.1	458	32.4	7724
Brown University (RI)	11/1	22.6	2453	13.7	20633
Bryant University (RI)	11/15	58.6	239	45.1	6253
Bryn Mawr College (PA)	11/15	53.1	130	48.8	2150
Bucknell University (PA)	11/15	65.3	567	29.9	8024
California Polytechnic State University--San Luis Obispo	10/31	25.2	3450	33.5	33352
Carleton College (MN)	11/15	55.2	375	27.5	4956
Carnegie Mellon University (PA)	11/1	29.1	855	37.9	13527
Champlain College (VT)	11/15	74.9	331	73.5	2979
Claremont McKenna College (CA)	11/15	27.8	316	19.2	4178
Clark University (MA)	11/15	73.3	90	56.4	5299
Clarkson University (NY)	12/1	93.8	113	78.7	3204
Colby College (ME)	11/15	46.8	455	30.9	4835
Colgate University (NY)	11/15	51.0	741	23.9	9416
College of New Jersey	11/15	57.3	450	42.4	9692
College of the Atlantic (ME)	12/1	79.5	39	69.1	314
College of the Holy Cross (MA)	12/15	55.7	522	33.8	7227
College of William and Mary (VA)	11/1	53.9	900	34.1	11636
College of Wooster (OH)	12/1	87.4	87	61.7	4504
Colorado College	11/15	41.1	414	26.0	5338
Columbia University (NY)	11/1	23.8	2509	10.0	22584
Connecticut College	11/15	64.8	301	36.6	4716
Cooper Union (NY)	12/1	16.0	449	9.3	3055
Cornell College (IA)	11/1	41.9	105	43.6	2916
Cornell University (NY)	11/1	37.0	3094	20.7	33073
Curry College (MA)	12/1	38.2	136	67.3	3944
Dartmouth College (NH)	11/1	27.9	1428	13.5	16538
Davidson College (NC)	11/15	40.4	549	25.7	4412
Denison University (OH)	12/1	78.4	153	38.2	5305
DePauw University (IN)	11/1	82.0	50	64.6	4064
Dickinson College (PA)	11/15	83.6	348	44.2	5282
Duke University (NC)	11/1	38.3	1239	22.4	18774
Duquesne University (PA)	11/1	71.8	294	75.6	5715
Earlham College (IN)	12/1	97.6	41	75.4	1825
Elmira College (NY)	11/15	90.0	50	74.4	2090
Elon University (NC)	11/1	75.4	422	42.3	9434
Flagler College (FL)	12/1	72.9	573	45.0	2368
Florida Southern College	12/1	98.7	78	67.3	2110
Franklin and Marshall College (PA)	11/15	70.4	582	35.9	5632
Furman University (SC)	11/15	66.4	639	57.3	4414
George Washington University (DC)	11/10	66.8	1159	37.4	19430
Gordon College (MA)	11/15	97.8	45	71.1	1570
Grinnell College (IA)	11/15	68.5	200	43.0	3217
Hamilton College (NY)	11/15	36.4	612	28.1	5073
Hampshire College (MA)	11/15	71.4	98	53.1	2842
Hartwick College (NY)	11/15	84.8	112	83.0	2532
Harvey Mudd College (CA)	11/15	34.0	103	31.1	2532
Hillsdale College (MI)	11/15	80.0	100	64.3	1502
Hobart and William Smith Colleges (NY)	11/15	68.3	265	53.7	4298
Howard University (DC)	11/1	71.2	1745	48.5	9750
Juniata College (PA)	12/1	87.0	92	69.2	2349
Kalamazoo College (MI)	11/10	77.3	22	70.3	2059
Kenyon College (OH)	11/15	55.0	340	31.3	4509
Lafayette College (PA)	2/15	56.2	436	37.2	6357
Lawrence University (WI)	11/15	94.6	37	58.8	2618
Le Moyne College (NY)	12/1	71.4	56	61.2	4212
Lehigh University (PA)	11/15	57.8	939	27.9	12941
Lynchburg College (VA)	11/15	52.2	205	67.9	4501

Macalester College (MN)	11/15	46.8	252	41.1	5041
Marist College (NY)	11/15	77.0	161	37.5	9198
Meredith College (NC)	10/15	53.8	143	69.4	1557
Miami University--Oxford (OH)	11/1	75.6	636	80.4	15009
Moravian College (PA)	2/1	77.3	176	69.7	2098
Nazareth College (NY)	11/15	91.1	45	74.5	2181
Northwestern University (IL)	11/1	39.7	1395	26.2	25013
Ohio Wesleyan University	12/1	31.1	61	64.3	4238
Pomona College (CA)	11/15	21.7	598	15.6	6293
Presbyterian College (SC)	11/1	78.6	56	68.6	1403
Prescott College (AZ)	12/1	93.8	16	76.7	365
Purchase College--SUNY	11/1	29.4	34	24.2	8905
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (NY)	11/1	49.8	1288	44.1	11249
Rhodes College (TN)	11/1	47.9	140	49.9	3747
Rice University (TX)	11/1	34.0	674	23.0	9813
Rider University (NJ)	11/15	29.4	51	74.0	6829
Rollins College (FL)	11/15	61.5	156	53.2	3485
Russell Sage College (NY)	12/1	90.0	10	74.3	378
Sacred Heart University (CT)	12/1	84.5	193	65.1	7568
Scripps College (CA)	11/1	48.1	81	43.4	1931
Sewanee--University of the South (TN)	11/15	54.1	185	64.0	2488
Skidmore College (NY)	11/15	59.4	497	29.8	7316
Smith College (MA)	11/15	63.7	256	47.7	3771
Southwestern University (TX)	11/1	87.5	64	65.4	1923
St. Anselm College (NH)	11/15	75.9	79	69.9	3835
St. John Fisher College (NY)	12/1	62.6	155	62.4	3231
St. Mary's College (IN)	11/15	90.4	115	79.6	1422
St. Mary's College of Maryland	11/1	43.2	373	51.8	2723
St. Olaf College (MN)	11/15	92.7	151	58.9	3964
Stetson University (FL)	11/1	91.2	34	53.9	4110
Stevens Institute of Technology (NJ)	11/15	69.7	399	51.8	2889
Stonehill College (MA)	11/1	65.7	67	45.0	6838
SUNY Institute of Technology--Utica/Rome	11/1	60.0	35	38.7	1731
SUNY--Fredonia	11/1	62.1	66	51.8	6489
SUNY--Oswego	11/15	53.3	150	47.0	9965
SUNY--Plattsburgh	11/15	51.7	89	49.4	6909
Susquehanna University (PA)	11/15	82.7	173	72.6	2777
Swarthmore College (PA)	11/15	33.8	480	15.7	6121
Sweet Briar College (VA)	12/1	96.9	64	82.7	629
Syracuse University (NY)	11/15	77.4	826	52.5	22079
Tabor College (KS)	12/31	100.0	98	93.6	405
The Citadel (SC)	10/26	72.2	126	75.2	2024
Trinity College (CT)	11/15	69.3	417	41.7	5136
Trinity University (TX)	11/1	72.0	50	58.2	3754
Union College (NY)	11/15	77.1	327	39.2	5271
University at Buffalo--SUNY	11/1	70.5	555	51.9	19784
University of Miami (FL)	11/1	22.2	1210	38.6	21773
University of Puget Sound (WA)	11/15	90.2	132	65.3	5580
University of Rochester (NY)	11/1	46.7	583	42.7	11633
Ursinus College (PA)	1/15	61.9	197	54.7	6192
Vanderbilt University (TN)	11/1	36.2	1468	25.3	16944
Vassar College (NY)	11/15	38.3	582	25.0	7361
Virginia Military Institute	11/15	60.8	283	53.6	1600
Virginia Tech	11/1	54.7	2288	65.4	20615
Wabash College (IN)	11/15	74.6	63	49.1	1365
Wagner College (NY)	1/1	63.3	90	60.8	3012
Wake Forest University (NC)	11/15	50.7	671	38.4	9050
Washington and Jefferson College (PA)	12/1	50.0	8	38.3	6826
Washington and Lee University (VA)	11/15	44.4	428	16.8	6386
Washington College (MD)	11/1	92.6	68	69.0	3413
Wellesley College (MA)	11/1	51.4	208	36.0	4001
Wells College (NY)	12/15	63.2	19	63.8	1117
Wesleyan University (CT)	11/15	45.5	650	27.2	8250
Western Carolina University (NC)	11/15	65.6	1687	51.1	7331
Wheaton College (MA)	11/15	85.6	195	38.8	3832
Whitman College (WA)	11/15	74.5	145	45.8	3096
Williams College (MA)	11/10	37.4	605	17.0	7552
Wittenberg University (OH)	11/15	60.8	51	68.8	3344
Wofford College (SC)	11/15	64.1	587	58.9	2278

<<http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/right-school/timeline/articles/2009/09/30/colleges-where-applying-early-decision-helps>>

APPLICATION TIPS & POINTERS → APPLICATION COSTS & FEE WAIVERS

Applying to college isn't cheap. From application fees to standardized testing fees, the cost of applying to college adds up quickly. The following is a breakdown of application costs:

Application Fees

Common Application	varies (\$0-\$90) per school
University of California Application	\$70 per campus
California State University Application	\$55 per campus

Standardized Testing Fees

SAT	\$50 per sitting
ACT	\$50.50 per sitting
SAT Subject Tests	\$23 for first exam, \$12 for each additional test
SAT/SAT Subject Test Score Report	\$11 per school per sitting
ACT Score Report	\$11 per school per sitting

Financial Aid Forms (CSS Profile)

CSS Profile Report	\$25 for first college, \$16 for each additional college
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As you can see, applying to college can be quite expensive. This may or may not impact your college applying habits. For example, you might not be able to apply to all fifteen schools that you would like because of how costly it is. For students with financial hardships, there are fee waivers for virtually every component of the application process.

Common App fee waivers can be attained three ways: the College Board fee waiver (four maximum), the NACAC fee waiver (unlimited), and other. The College Board fee waiver is granted to students who qualify for a fee waiver for the SAT/SAT Subject Tests. The criteria for qualifying for the fee waiver for the SAT/SAT Subject Tests will be explained later in the article. See the NACAC fee waiver form, which is included after this article, to see if you would qualify for a fee waiver. The other option is to have your guidance counselor write a letter on your behalf explaining any of your family's financial difficulties or extenuating circumstances. For UCs and CSUs, application fee waivers are automatically granted for up to four campuses per system (e.g. four UCs and four CSUs) based on family income and household size (information provided on the applications).

SAT/ACT/SAT Subject test fee waivers are offered for students with financial hardships. The following links outline the criteria and steps needed to obtain a fee waiver for the exams:

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/waivers/guidelines/sat>

<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/waivers/guidelines>

<http://www.actstudent.org/faq/feewaiver.html>

When applying to college, you must send official test score reports of the SAT, ACT, and SAT Subject tests to each college you are applying to. Each score report costs \$11 as mentioned earlier in the article. If you qualify for an SAT/SAT Subject Test or ACT fee waiver, you also qualify for four free official score reports. Registration for the SAT/SAT Subject Tests also comes with four automatic free score reports as long as you send your scores within seven days after taking the exam. The downside is that you do not see your scores before they are sent.

Many private schools require students applying for financial aid to complete the CSS Profile. It costs \$25 to send the CSS Profile to the first school, and then \$16 for the subsequent schools. Based on the information entered in the CSS Profile, a student may be eligible for fee waivers. Up to six fee waivers are granted. Refer to the Financial Aid section of the guide for more information about the CSS Profile and for a list of schools that require the CSS Profile.

If you qualify for fee waivers, take advantage of them because they can save you and your family a significant amount of money on college application costs!



National Association for
College Admission Counseling
Guiding the way to higher education

Request for Admission Application Fee Waiver

SEND THIS FORM DIRECTLY TO THE POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION/ORGANIZATION

TO: DEAN/DIRECTOR OF ADMISSION AT _____
NAME OF COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

STUDENT: Print or type the information requested below. You must **personally** sign the Certification Statement.

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT: *I certify that I understand and meet all eligibility requirements to request an admission application fee waiver.*

STUDENT'S NAME _____ STUDENT'S SIGNATURE _____

STUDENT'S ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: Print or type the information requested below, and check the indicator(s) of economic need. You must **personally** sign the Certification Statement.

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT: *I certify that the student named on this form is currently enrolled in the 11th or 12th grade at this school and meets the indicator(s) of economic need checked below.*

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL'S NAME _____ AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL'S SIGNATURE _____

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL'S TITLE _____ AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL'S EMAIL _____

NAME OF SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION OR ORGANIZATION _____ CEEB# OR PROGRAM # _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

ECONOMIC NEED: The student must meet at least one of the following indicators of economic need. If no item is checked, the request will be denied.

- Student has received or is eligible to receive an ACT or SAT testing fee waiver.
- Student is enrolled in or eligible to participate in the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch program (FRPL).
- Student's annual family income falls within the income Eligibility Guidelines* set by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.
- Student is enrolled in a federal, state or local program that aids students from low-income families (e.g., TRIO programs such as Upward Bound).
- Student's family receives public assistance.
- Student lives in federally subsidized public housing, a foster home or is homeless.
- Student is a ward of the state or an orphan.
- Other request from high school principal, high school counselor, financial aid officer, or community leader:

Given my knowledge of this student's family circumstances and after reviewing the eligibility guidelines, I believe that providing the application fee would present a hardship. Explanation:



SCHOOL SEAL/STAMP

*To view USDA Income Eligibility Guidelines for the Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program or review FAQs related to this form visit <http://bit.ly/NACACfeewaiver>.

ESSAYS → PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Personal statements and college application essays are among the greatest sources of anxiety for many college-bound applicants. The writing section of any college application will likely take the longest time to complete. Common App schools require the Common App essay at the least. Some require supplemental essays, which will be touched on in the next article. UCs require two personal statements, but CSUs and community colleges do not require any.

Essay Topics

The following are the prompts you can choose from for the Common App essay:

1. Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.
2. Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
3. Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.
4. Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.
5. A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity to you.
6. Topic of your choice.

Note that only one essay, between 250 and 500 words, is required for the Common App. There will be changes to the Common App for students applying for admission for the Fall of 2014 and beyond. The Common App will be doing away with prompt 6 and will be changing prompts 1-5 each year according to the Chronicle of Higher Education. This

means it will be more difficult for students to prepare essays in advance. However, a great personal statement will be flexible enough to fit most—if not all—prompts thrown at an applicant. The purpose of the essay is to find out about what makes an applicant tick, and no matter how prompts are worded the goal of the essay is still the same.

The UCs require two personal statements, which do not change from year to year:

1. Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community or school — and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.
2. Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

Either of the two UC prompts can be used for the Common App essay, so do not feel compelled to write three separate essays for the two applications.

Where to begin?

So many students have difficulty knowing where to begin. Applicants spend so much time trying to find the perfect topic rather than writing the perfect personal statement. It's not the topic that makes an essay great but rather the substance. For my two UC personal statements, I wrote about a trust fall and about how running has impacted my life. They were simple topics, but I didn't dwell on that. Instead I focused my time and energy into writing an essay that showcased who I was, what I thought, and how I felt. How you write about a topic is far more important than the topic itself.

What to avoid?

I know I said that it's not the topic that makes the essay, but there are some topics that are so overdone and cliché that they should be avoided if possible. Volunteering for a week abroad or scoring the winning goal in a soccer game come to mind. Although you could write a perfectly fine essay about these

ESSAYS → PERSONAL STATEMENTS

two topics, there are so many drawbacks of choosing such topics. For one, they are common. The essays and students who stand out are more likely to get admitted. Second, these topics can reflect negatively on the writer. Volunteering abroad usually implies having the means to do so and colleges know that so many students do it just so that they can have a topic to write about.

The soccer/football topic also should be avoided. Plain and simple, it's bragging and nobody likes a braggart. Bragging about anything in the college essay is not a good idea. Another thing to be avoided in the essay is repetition of elements found elsewhere in your application. There is no need to relist your achievements and activities in the essay. There is a difference between relisting and elaborating on something already presented in the application. Although some would advise against writing essays about sports, it would be perfectly fine if you wrote an essay about sports or any activity you listed in your activities list. On sports essays, it is perfectly fine to write about sports so long as it doesn't have predictable and cliché elements like teamwork, discipline, scoring the winning goal, etc.

A Hodgepodge of Advice

- The point of the essay is to allow the reader to see into you the applicant. Think of it this way, admissions officers will likely spend no more than 15-20 minutes reading through your application. Your personal statement is your opportunity to talk directly to an admissions officer and win him/her over.
- Tell a story. Allow your reader to picture the event or scene you are describing. Show, not tell.
- Telling: "I was frightened."
- Showing: "Trembling on the platform, I took short rapid breaths of the crisp air."
- Write the essay as if you are having a conversation. Read it aloud. Does it sound like you? Act as if you are

talking to a close friend or family member.

- Don't get hung up on grammar or structure. This is an essay to get into college, not for English class. You still must write well and demonstrate that you have a mature command of the English language, but don't nitpick on punctuation or paragraph structure.
- Follow word/character counts closely.
- Be introspective. Contemplate what you are passionate about and why you are passionate about it. Write about an event that changed the way you thought or molded a trait of yours.
- Be confident but not overtly so. Admissions officers try to gauge potential. An applicant who is so sure of himself/herself demonstrates an inability to grow or change, whereas the applicant who expresses an ounce of doubt is more human and has room to grow. Be a work in progress.
- Be concise (do not use ten words when two will do).
- Write the way you write. Don't use a thesaurus.
- Have others give you feedback, but change only what you want to change.
- Have fun. Relax. It's not as big a deal as you might think. People overthink essays/personal statements.

On the next few pages, you will find sample essays. They are simply there as examples. Do not feel compelled to write in the same style or manner as the example essays.

Activity: The Personal Statement

Based on what you have learned from the Personal Statement presentation, assess the following essay:

Sample Essay #1

I remember the moment like it was yesterday. I was sitting on my bed in my polka dot blue pajamas. My little sister was getting ready to go sleep on the top bunk of the bunk bed. And then my mom came in with a very serious look on her face. She paused for a second to catch her breath. Then she said, "Travis, your dad..."

And then she started crying. "Your dad has left."

There was a lot I wanted to ask her. Where had he gone? When was he coming back? Why didn't he tell me himself? Wouldn't he still be at my 11th birthday party in a few weeks? But I never got the answer to these and other questions. My mom just ran out of the room. She didn't want to talk about it then and she still doesn't want to talk about it today. When my father left, he ruined our lives, and my mom made it even worse by not talking to us about it. My dad never came to any of my birthday parties after that. He barely even pays child support and hasn't visited me since he left.

Sometimes I wonder where he is now. I imagine he's on the beach, or he's fishing at the creek he used to take me too. Sometimes I wonder if he has a new family now and he's forgotten about us. Mostly I just wonder why he left. I work hard and I'm the top student in my class so that if he hears how much I've accomplished, he'll be embarrassed that he's not here. He'll be embarrassed that I'm starting on the varsity soccer team and that he's never gone to one of my games. He'll be embarrassed that I'm the editor of the newspaper and he's never read one of my articles. He'll be embarrassed that I'm on the honor roll and he's never had a chance to see one of my report cards.

And I know in the end I'll get the last laugh. Because when I have son, my goal will be to act exactly the opposite way my father has, because my father doesn't deserve to be called a father.

In one sentence, summarize what you learned about the writer:

List two things the writer did well:

1.

2.

List two things the writer needs to work on:

1.

2.

QUEST BRIDGE

Activity: The Personal Statement

Based on what you have learned from the Personal Statement presentation, assess the following essay:

Sample Essay #2

As soon as I entered the village, I was hit by a wave of hot air, and an appalling stench. It was like someone had placed a wet, fetid sock over my nose and mouth. I begin to panic. I thought I couldn't breathe. Welcome to Ecalpa, I thought.

In front of me was row after row of shanties as far as I could see – but I couldn't see very far because I had to dodge small children who reached up at me for money with boney hands. In two seconds, my conception of what poverty was had shifted. These kids were barely wearing rags. From their exposed ribs, I could tell they had not eaten much, if anything, in days. Their parents were nowhere to be seen. It was the middle of the day on a Monday, and they were nowhere near a school.

I had many experiences like this while I was in Ecalpa during a one-week-service trip for Springfield United Methodist Church. Things were so much simpler there. As we helped to build a home, I met child named Manuel who was happy to just have a little bread to eat for a lunch. All he had in life was his mom and his dog. And the family whose home we helped to build was happy beyond their wildest dreams.

At the end of the trip, we went to a dinner at the home of an uncle of one of the family members whose new home we constructed. We all sat outside around a fire as a chicken twirled on the roast. As we waited for it to be finished, several people banged drums and played native Ecalpan instruments. They showed us how to do traditional dances. As the sun set I looked around the fire at all the happy faces and thought about how nice everyone had been to us. If one can be happy with so little, what does it say about our current American society, where people demand so many material things?

In one sentence, summarize what you learned about the writer:

List two things the writer did well:

1.

2.

List two things the writer needs to work on:

1.

2.

Weak Sample College Essay

The problem with this essay is that it is not effective as a personal statement. It could have been written by anyone. It is also a common essay topic that contains no personal details that make the writer stand out to the admissions officer. Every word of the personal statement needs to be carefully measured to tell more about the writer.

Prompt: Choose a photograph of something important to you and explain its significance.

A photograph of Martin Luther King, Jr. hangs in a silver frame on my wall.

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’”

Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke those words on August 28, 1963, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. They helped transform a nation, exposing hatred, silencing prejudice, and forging common bonds. But before he did any of this, many people doubted the nation could change. Segregation and the aftermath of slavery were entrenched in every aspect of American life. It was difficult for black people to vote, earn wages, gather, and travel in the way that all other Americans were able to.

King founded the SCLC, a Christian organization, to try to combat these policies – but few thought he could accomplish anything. What could a young, black preacher do in the face of a society that had all of its forces amassed against him? Despite his non-violent approach, he was dismissed as a radical. Many called him a criminal. The FBI even tapped his phones.

And yet he persisted. And because of his efforts the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965. Time Magazine named him Man of the Year. And he became the youngest person in history to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

We need another Martin Luther King, Jr. today.

Again our society faces a slew of problems. Poor people and minorities are disproportionately unable to gain access to health care. Urban schools are failing and urban school children have little chance to catch up with their wealthier peers. Violence and crime are so rampant that gang-life has become idolized.

Again, people believe that these problems cannot be solved. They think that the forces that created the problems are too powerful.

Who will be the next Martin Luther King, Jr.? I do not know, but I do know that as long as people are worried about these problems, I will work on them.

Strong Sample College Essay

This student also writes on a common topic, but he is able to use Martin Luther King, Jr. as a character to frame his personal statement. The majority of the essay explains the student's personal background and future goals. As a result, the reader has a better understanding of the student's character rather than Martin Luther King, Jr.'s achievements.

Prompt: Choose a photograph of something important to you and explain its significance.

Every night my eyes meet a familiar image in the faded black-and-white photograph that hangs from a nail over my bed. I take it down and stare at it in my hands every time I feel myself wavering over what I see as my future. The edges are fraying now. The picture was taken on August 28, 1963. There is a long flowing crowd gathered around a reflecting pool, and at the top of the page, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, you can just make out the shape of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Before I wrote a paper on Martin Luther King, Jr. for my history class, I knew the general outlines of his story, but I had never really challenged myself to think about what it meant to my generation or to me. I knew that he had played a crucial role in the passage of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act, was Time Magazine's "Man of the Year," and was the youngest person in history to win the Nobel Peace Prize. But I had not realized how difficult it was for black people to vote, earn wages, assemble, and travel in the way that white Americans were able to during that difficult time in U.S. history.

The difficulties that the disadvantaged faced then made me think about all the problems in my neighborhood today. The shards of broken glass, restless young people, and distressed houses that I walk by on the way to school perhaps were common then too. And they once seemed like intractable obstacles to me. The vacant stares of old people sitting on the neighborhood stoops suggest they too probably experienced seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Their situation made me feel deeply ashamed. It was easy to assess on an intellectual level what Martin Luther King, Jr. had done and to write a paper praising him. On another level, I felt I was being hypocritical to support with words someone who fought for change, then do nothing with my own actions.

I am particularly inspired by something King wrote about the transformative power of education. I put the photo above my bed to remind me of future possibilities. Then I gathered some friends from my history class and we talked to our teacher, Mr. Smith, about forming the Jefferson High School Adult Literacy Club. With his help we formed an official school club with 25 members. Once a week, we go to local community centers and read to adults who cannot read. The number of illiterate adults is higher than I thought. We read with them, sound out words by pronouncing each letter, and practice spelling.

I realize that this is just a small step in solving big problems, but it has reaffirmed to me the importance of making my education more than an intellectual exercise. Now, it is beginning to inform my life-decisions for the better. Recently on my walk to school, I passed an older man who used to seem so vacant and unreachable. I now recognized him as "Tobias" from Literacy Club, and I saw a gleam in his eye for the first time I could remember.

ESSAYS → COMMON APPLICATION SUPPLEMENTS

In addition to the Common App essay, many schools require applicants to complete a supplement to the Common App. The supplement is school-specific, meaning that colleges get to ask specific questions and craft unique essay prompts. Common App supplements usually include room for students to rank majors and extracurricular activities that they are most interested in and add additional standardized test scores if they exceed the space provided on the Common App.

Quick Takes

Common App supplements usually include a few short questions that allow an admissions officer to get to know an applicant better. Some "quick takes" that may appear on a supplement include:

- "If you could witness one moment in history, what would it be and why?" (**Yale University**)
- "Please tell us how you spent the last two summers." (**Princeton University**)
- "What is the most significant challenge that society faces today?" (**Stanford University**)
- "List the books read for pleasure that you most enjoyed in the past year:" (**Columbia University**)
- "Describe yourself in three words." (**University of Southern California**)

Colleges will usually allow an applicant up to fifty words to complete short takes, so be concise! Do not overthink these questions. Be honest and showcase who you are to admissions officers.

Short Answer Questions

Colleges and universities also include some short answer questions on their supplements. Usually an applicant is given between 100-250 words to answer these questions. Some common short answer questions include:

- "Choose a book you have read—at any point in your life—that most affected you and clarify its effect." (**Occidental College**)
- "What is something you created that makes you especially proud, and why?" (**Brown University**)
- "What motivated you to apply to Rice University?" (**Rice University**)
- "Describe your intellectual interests, their evolution, and what makes them exciting to you." (**Cornell University**)

These questions are best answered honestly. They also require an applicant to be introspective and reflect on what is important to them and why.

Why X College

The "Why X College" question will most likely appear on most college supplements. It may not be worded exactly the same format (see the Rice example), but the intent and purpose of the question is the same. Colleges want to gauge student interest and fit. This question requires the applicant to not only consider what he/she loves

about a school, but also what he/she loves period. In order to be able to answer this question effectively, applicants must examine what they are passionate about and be able to articulate why they feel going to "X College" will allow them to cultivate this passion (whether it be academic or extracurricular). Some things to be avoided when answering this question include generic facts, prestige, or other superficial characteristics that might reflect negatively on the applicant. Some examples of what not to write include:

- "I am applying to X College because it is my safety school."
- "I am applying to Columbia because it is in New York City and I love the Core curriculum."
- "I am applying to Cornell because it is an Ivy League school."

The examples are ineffective because they are either superficial, demonstrate disinterest, or reveal little about the applicant as a person. Instead, applicants should discuss academic programs they are interested in, extracurricular activities they hope to contribute to, and resources they would utilize on campus to advance their passions and interests.

The Essay

Usually supplements will include a long essay of comparable length to the Common App essay. Topics range greatly and are usually open-ended. Some examples include:

- "Othello and Iago. Dorothy and the Wicked Witch. The Autobots and the Decepticons. History and art are full of heroes and their enemies. Tell us about the relationship between you and your arch-nemesis (either real or imagined)." (**University of Chicago**)
- "Virtually all of Stanford's undergraduates live on campus. Write a note to your future roommate that reveals something about you or that will help your roommate—and us—know you better." (**Stanford University**)
- "Sculptor Jacques Lipchitz once said, 'Cubism is like standing at a certain point on a mountain and looking around. If you go higher, things will look different; if you go lower, again they will look different. It is a point of view.' With this in mind, describe a moment when your perspective changed." (**Brown University**)
- "What makes you happy?" (**Tufts University**)

These supplement essays can be thought of as additional personal statements. The essays give applicants a significant amount of freedom to write about whatever they would like, which likely explains why the Common App is doing away with the "topic of your choice" essay. The same advice given in the personal statements article should be followed here as well. Good luck and happy writing!

TESTING → SAT

The SAT is one of the most important tests you will take during your high school career in terms of getting into college. The following is a comprehensive and well-organized guide to the SAT written by Muhammad Jalal, a freshman at Pomona College who scored a 2390 on his SAT:

Guide to the SATs (written by Muhammad Jalal, Pomona College Class of 2016)

Congratulations on your progress juniors! I'm very proud to see you all have tackled arguably the hardest academic semester. As you are all edging closer to college admissions, an important obstacle is awaiting: The SAT Admission test. The SAT is used in the college process to gauge your performance compared to the millions of to-be college students in the US- it tells colleges important information that your GPA won't be able to.

On my last SAT, I got a 2390, just 10 points away from a perfect. Therefore I believe I have the qualifications to make such a guide. I have prepared for you all resources and practices to help you get the best score possible. Without a doubt however a good score will only come with extensive practicing and studying, meaning your individual determination will be your greatest asset in the process.

The best way to practice for the SAT is by practicing with **OFFICIAL test** materials. I have looked at Princeton Review and Kaplan and their tests are simply too easy/controversial to reflect accurate material. These resources include:

- The Official Guide to the SAT- Around 20\$, Available at most book stores. This book is only good for the ten practice tests it has in it. The first three tests are actual released exams, while the last seven are created by the test makers. The first three tests have accurate scoring scales while the last seven have ranges that will make it hard to gauge your performance compared to actual tests.
- The Online SAT Course- Includes ten more tests and a really inaccurate essay checker. You can go register at <https://satonlinecourse.collegeboard.com/SR/login/splashSchoolLogin.jsp>. Register with the school code 443378.
- PSAT Tests- The test is very similar to the SAT and makes a good practice for the test, though the math portion is somewhat inaccurate in that it lacks Algebra II. By taking the PSAT you have gauged where you're standing and where your weakness lies.

How much does the SAT cost? When can I take it?

The SAT is available for seven months on the first Saturday of each month. The seven months are January, March, May, June, October, November, and December. The test costs 50\$, but if you register late, there is an additional fee associated with it of around 15\$. Fee waivers are available for people with financial difficulties: contact your counselor and ask him/her for one. Do note that the fee waivers must be used before regular deadlines- you cannot use them for late registration - so it's important to keep up with the deadlines.

What does a fee waiver cover? How many are available?

The fee waiver covers the entire cost of the test and the expense of a QAS, which is a copy of your released examination, or a SAS, which is a copy of your answer sheet that indicates difficulty levels and which ones you got right or wrong. QAS is available on January, May, and October, while SAS is for the other test dates. The fee waiver grants four additional score reports to be sent to colleges. You can use a fee waiver a maximum of four times- two times for the SAT, and two times for the SAT subject tests (three subject tests each time).

What should I bring on the day of the test?

Bring your ID or some form of a photo ID that will allow the test administrator to identify that the person taking the test is you. Bring around three to four sharpened number two pencils, a good eraser, and your SAT admission ticket which is printable from the email the College Board sends you. Bring a calculator for the math section if you need it, but it is true that one can do all the questions in the allotted time without a calculator. You can bring light snacks as well which you can eat during break time. I personally chew gum while taking the test; it keeps me awake and focused. **BRING A WATCH.** Time flies by incredibly fast and you need to pace yourself accordingly. You do not have time to keep turning your head and looking at the clock in the room.

What mentality should I approach the SAT with?

Do not, at all costs, hate the test while you're taking it! You will get bored with it and miss a lot of questions. Take the SAT as a fun little challenge and put its consequences out of your mind. Love the critical reading passages you read- treat them as editorials from the New York Times (which many are from) and that you're reading them for pleasure. For the math, smile a little inside when you figure out a particularly difficult problem and move onto the next one. Do not let the test hinder you! Zone out of all your present problems: for the four hours you take it, it'll just be you and the test.

What should I do on the night before the test and the day of the test?

Get a good night's sleep. DO NOT STUDY. DO NOT CRAM. Rest is important because it will allow you to focus on the test and prevent any silly mistakes from occurring (especially for the math part). On the day of the test, please eat a nice breakfast consisting of protein, fruit, and dairy. You do not want an empty belly distracting you from taking the test seriously. I personally exercised in the morning to get myself pumped and energized. The SAT is a four hour ordeal and lack of focus and exhaustion can be detrimental to your scores.

How is the SAT different from the PSAT?

Like the PSAT, the SAT measures three sections- critical reading, math, and writing. The math for the SAT is more advanced than the PSAT, and the writing

TESTING → SAT

section includes an essay- more on that later. The SAT has more sections than does the PSAT and as a result is a longer test: an additional math, writing, and reading section, as well as an unscored variable section- more on that later. Unlike the PSAT, which is scored from a 60-240, the SAT is scored from a 600-2400.

What sections does the SAT include?

- Section 1 is always an essay. The essay includes a quote and asks a question based on the quote. These questions tend to be philosophical and argumentative in nature. This section lasts 25 minutes.
- Sections 2-7 are 25 minute sections consisting of two math sections (one with grid-ins(18), one without(20)), two critical reading sections of 24-questions each, and one writing portion with 35 questions, and one variable unscored section(which could be anything) that is used for studies and doesn't count toward your score. You will NOT know which section is variable, so it's crucial that you approach each section with the same mentality.
- Sections 8-9 are 20 minute sections consisting of one math portion of 16 questions and one reading portion of ~19 questions.
- Section 10 is ten minutes long and covers 14 questions of writing- determining the correct grammar with a list of choices given.

The multiple choice sections are virtually identical to their PSAT counterparts. Critical reading covers long passages, short passages (which is not found in the 20 minute section), and vocabulary. Math covers multiple choices and a grid-in section. Writing covers three unique types of multiple choice questions: the first highlights a part of a sentence and asks you to identify if it could be changed with one of the choices or if it should be kept the same, the second takes chunks of a sentence and asks you to identify the error, and the last gives you a paragraph.

How is the SAT scored?

The essay is scored by two readers who assign a score from 1-6 to your essay. The numbers are tallied to reflect your essay score, thus yielding a score from 2-12. The essay counts for around 30% of your writing portion score. Your MC subscore and your essay score are matched to find what your writing score will be. For example, a 70 MC subscore with a 12 essay yields a 770 on the section.

The multiple choice portion is scored by a machine. Each incorrect answer deducts one-fourth of a point from the number you got right, and the omitted ones do nothing to your score. This is tallied up to make your final score. For example, assume out of the 63 CR questions, you got 19 of them wrong and omitted 2. You got 42 questions right - $(19 \times 1/4) = 37.25 = 37$, which is your final score. Anything with a .5 or above gets rounded above, and vice versa. One exception is the grid-in section: if you get a question wrong on it, you do not earn any penalties. For each test, the CollegeBoard makes up curves for the numerical scores, which corresponds to your overall score. A 37 on CR corresponds to around a 550, while on the math it's a 600, and on the writing it is a 60.

The three scores, which range from 200-600, are then tallied up to create your composite score.

What constitutes a good SAT score?

It depends on the schools you are aiming for or the type of merit scholarship you need. For the top 20 national schools, scores of 2200+ are the typical norm, while for most state schools the number hovers around 1600-1800. The average score is around a 1500 for your typical teenager. Merit scholarships are based on your SAT scores, more particularly your Math + Critical Reading score, and thus more is awarded for higher scores. Check your school's 25%-75% SAT range to get a good idea of what admitted students' scores are like. For example, Pomona's 25% is 2150 while their 75% is 2350. This means that 25% of the class got at or below a 2150, 25% of the class got at or above a 2360, and 50% of the class got scores in between.

How many times should I take the SAT maximum?

Three is the maximum you should aim for. After your third SAT, colleges will begin averaging all of your SATs to make a composite score and/or penalize you. If however your school practices score choice (more on that later), the number of times you take it will not matter.

When should I take the SAT? Are some dates more favorable in terms of the curve than others?

Take it when you feel you're ready. Do not take a SAT just to get a gauge on where you are- there are countless practice exams to do just that. Traditionally however, October tests have incredibly generous reading curves, the May test is quite generous in general, and the March and December tests are notorious for being brutal. For example, a -3 on October/May this year was an 800 on CR, while a -1 on March was a 780.

How hard is the SAT?

The questions are organized on a level from 1-5, with 1 being easy and 5 being difficult. The occurrence of each type of question follows a bell curve- 1s and 5s are rare, 3s are the most common, and 2s and 4s are somewhat common.

I believe this is what the difficulty levels stand for:

- 1- 90% of test takers or more get that question right.
- 2- 75%- 90%
- 3- 50%-75%
- 4- 25%-50%
- 5- Less than 25%

For tests 4-10 in the blue book, difficulty levels E, M, and H are used because there is no statistical data to support those tests. E means easy, M means medium, and H means hard.

All in all, this means the SAT is generally speaking a medium test. However how hard it is for you will depend on your individual strengths and weaknesses. For most people, including me, the critical reading section was the hardest. This is because it has obscure vocabulary, and the questions require a really strong sense of logic. It is also a hard section to improve on. College statistics have shown this is the section most people struggle in and thus higher scores are more valued. For example, Amherst accepted 52% of the

800 CR takers compared to an overall 12.7% acceptance rate.

Math is the easiest section for most people and the highest scored. This is because the concepts are quite basic and there are strategies to tackle it.

Writing is the hardest section statistically speaking, but most people find it relatively easy. 800s on Writing are even rarer than in CR, but they're not valued as much as 800 CR folks.

As you progress later on in critical reading vocab, math, and writing, the questions generally get progressively harder. Therefore it's important to tackle the easy questions first since each question is worth the same. Passages on the other hand toss varying difficulty levels at you so there's no trend to them.

Should I do test prep? At places like Princeton Review, Test Masters, and Rocket Revolution?

If you're scoring above a 2000 composite, test prep will probably not help you. Those businesses are dealing with people whose average SAT is around a 1500 and thus focus the education on that scale. You will be much better off doing practice tests and focusing on your own strengths and weaknesses. If you lack motivation to commit yourself to a SAT study plan, or make below a 2000, test prep may help you grasp the concepts more solidly and/or focus on the SAT. Whether that's worth 750\$ will be up to you and your parents.

How often should I take a practice test?

Once a week/every two weeks seems to be reasonable for people who want to gauge where they are. The test must however be taken in its entirety to replicate testing conditions (such as exhaustion) and under the assigned time limits and break times. If you're focusing on a specific section, I'd initially take the limit out of the way so you can do the test without any pressure and see if the problem is attributed to lack of understanding the concepts. After you determine where your weakness is, you hone it with the tips given below and then start timing accordingly. I would highly recommend you only focus on the sections you feel you're weak at and not the ones you believe represent a good score. The test is time consuming and junior year is rigorous.

My weakness is the Critical Reading section.

If your issue is vocabulary, you need to find a high frequency vocabulary list and start memorizing the words within it and their meaning. Learn the words on <http://talk.collegeconfidential.com/sat-preparation/1163656-list-common-tone-mood-classification-words-sat.html> for the occasional trippy vocabulary question on the passages with unfamiliar terms such as didactic and esoteric.

For the short passages, read the entire passage and then answer the question. If your issue is the long passages, you need to find a strategy that works for you in approaching the section. You will need to practice so that you can find out what works for you.

- Strategy 1- Read the entire passage, and then move onto the questions, checking back on the passages if necessary to help you answer the question. PROS: Will allow you to get a better grasp of the passage and thus answer the

questions more smoothly. CONS: Incredibly time consuming and redundant. Bore easily.

- Strategy 2- Move immediately to the questions, take the line references, and mark them on the passage. Go to the marked lines and read a sentence above them to the sentence below them. Move onto the next marked line. PROS: The least time consuming of the strategies. Helps people who get bored easily. CONS: Will not help with questions that lack line references, and you can get short-sighted by jumping big sections at a time.
- Strategy 3- Do the first step of strategy 2, then start reading from the beginning. As you get to a line reference, move onto the questions and answer it, and continue reading. After you read the entire passage answer the questions that lack line references. PROS: Efficient way of tackling the issues of understanding the passage and managing time. CONS: Jack of all trades means that it doesn't excel in a particular area.

The most important advice for the passages is **THAT YOU CAN ASSUME NOTHING**. If it is not mentioned in the passage or at least implied, **IT WILL PROBABLY BE WRONG**. A lot of smart people, that I've met, struggle with the hard questions because their prior knowledge and presumptions distort objectivity in approaching the passage. Take what you're given in the passage, make valid and reasonable connections, and you will discover that there is only one right answer. The makers of the SAT must make the answers clear otherwise they will face lawsuits.

Use the line references the test makers give you. The line references are where you will find your answer- nowhere else.

Choices with strong or absolute connotations are usually wrong, though not necessarily. If a choice has words like never, absolutely, or so forth, you should treat it more harshly than you do the other choices. This was a case with the October 2011 SAT. Two choices were given that seemed right- vehement and caustic. However caustic is a bitter and very strong word and thus was the wrong answer.

Do not choose an answer because it sounds right.

Choose an answer because it's supported by the author's point of view. You paid nearly 50\$ for the test so you should have control over it. Treat all answers ruthlessly- find out why they could be WRONG, not right. The test takers throw good sounding choices because people fail to take heed of this advice.

Double passages work differently. This means a section that includes two long comparative passages or two long passages in one section. This is how you should tackle them.

- Double Passages with the words "Author 1" and "Author 2" include two types of questions. One deals with just one passage, while the other deals with both passages. For the first type of question, underline the line references, while for the second type circle them and connect them so you know what goes with what. Then start reading from the first one, ignoring the circled ones until you reach the other circled one, and following strategy two above. Then as you move on to the 2nd passage, start answering its underlined ones and the circled ones. Finally, after you read both

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passages, answer the questions without a line reference.

- Sections that include two long sections are hard. You will be crunched for time in trying to finish them. Do not waste time on one passage- move onto the next one and try to get the easy question points. In here strategy 3 will be particularly useful. Strategy 1 will take too long. Practice truly helps with this hard-to-master section. By practicing you will learn to answer questions through the test maker's perspective. But it's crucial to go over the answers and understand why the answer it is what it is. Otherwise you will not be able to see the rationale behind the test makers and thus be stuck in the same pattern of faulty reasoning.

My weakness is the Writing section.

Raw practice makes perfect here. The test makers repeat the same patterns in each rendition of the SAT and by mastering the content in the practice tests you will be prepared to deal with every question they toss at you. As with the critical reading section you must understand the reason why the answer is the answer or you will get nothing out of the experience. Pretty soon by the practice your ear will be able to distinguish right from wrong. Another important strategy is that you should have two to four no errors on the find the error section: any more or less and you will be doing something wrong.

For the essays, I'd recommend the following:

- Fill up the two pages! This is sadly the **MOST IMPORTANT** factor for the essay. You will rarely get above a 9 for anything less than 1.5 pages.
- Your introduction is the most important part of your paper and it should convey your point soundly. A lot of essay graders give you a score simply on the basis of the first few lines.
- If you can't think of an example, you can lie, as long as your lies fit the prompt. Essay graders are checking you off for how well you explain your points, not your content. That means there is no difference between using personal examples and historical examples- both can be used effectively, both can earn a 12.
- Get your grammar mechanics correct and don't be afraid to toss high proficiency vocabulary into it.
- You do not need a conclusion! Focus on getting your point across and if you have time for a conclusion toss one in.
- Do not dilly-dally on brainstorming. 25 minutes is actually quite a small amount of time and it will go by quickly. Spend no more than five minutes on brainstorming.

My weakness is the Math section.

If you're consistently making 700 or more on the math section, your problem is unlikely to be resolved. The math section always has nasty curves- missing one will usually result in a penalty perhaps as severe as 30 points. I'd recommend slowing down and making sure you read the question carefully. Unfortunately getting a perfect score is quite luck based as the slightest slip of a number or sign or a misread can occur to the best of us. The people who I know have gotten 800

have mastered the art of math- that is, they can do it without careless mistakes.

If you're consistently making 600 or more on the math section, your problem is most likely attributed to careless mistakes or/and spending too much time on a question. I'd recommend following the steps above, but practicing as well. By practicing you will build up confidence to answer questions quickly, and you learn of shortcuts to tackle repeated problems. I'd do a quick brush up on your concepts with <http://www.erikthered.com/tutor/facts-and-formulas-1.pdf> and review strategies with <http://www.erikthered.com/tutor/math-strategies-quiz.pdf>

If you're making below a 550, your problem is most likely attributed to you not understanding the concepts. If that is the case you will need to get a guidebook to understand those concepts. I have one that I give to people who struggle with math known as Gruber's Guide to the SAT, because it truly teaches these concepts. SAT prep will work well too as those instructors deal with students who struggle with math. After the concepts are understood begin practicing with the tests and progress upwards as indicated above.

To omit or not to omit?

This is an incredibly controversial question. I personally believe you should omit only when you have no idea about a question. This is really only plausible for the last few vocabulary questions where you might not know a single word in the choices.

Studies have shown that guys are less likely to omit than girls. The same studies have also shown that boys do significantly better (nearly 30-40 points more) than girls. Therefore, I believe you should omit only when it's absolutely crucial. Do recall that while an omitted question has no penalty, it still counts as a -1 because it's a question you didn't get right. Make educated guesses. For the CR section and the Writing in particular, three choices are particularly wrong while two sound reasonable. That means you have a one-half chance of getting it right compared to a one-fifth chance. In that case I'd go with the guessing. That is not to underestimate the potential penalty of incorrect answers. A -7 omit corresponds to around a 740/750 SAT on the CR. A -7 incorrect turns to a -9 raw, which is usually a 700/710. Ultimately it will be up to you to decide whether it's worth always omitting, always answering, or finding a balance between both.

Will retaking the SAT raise my score?

Not as significantly as many people think but it depends from person to person. For the average person, the increase is around 10-20 points in the composite score. However if you follow the strategies I've listed here and keep up with your game I do not believe a 100+ point increase is unlikely.

Tell me about Score Choice and Superscore.

Score choice is a feature of the SAT that allows you to decide which scores you want to send to the colleges. If you did horribly on your first test and your second test is much better, you can tell the CollegeBoard to not include the first score when

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they're sending the score reports and the college will only see your better test. Not all schools allow Score Choice though; Yale and Rice require all of your scores. Google the school and the word score choice to see if your school follows it or not.

That is not to say all hope is lost because you have to send your bad score! Nearly all colleges in the US follow a protocol known as super score. Superscore means that your highest math, reading, and writing scores are used to create perhaps a new composite score, which will be used for the admission purposes. To demonstrate the example:

On the first SAT, you make a 630 CR 720 M 730 W= 2080

On the second SAT, you make a 710 CR 690 M 750 W= 2150

On the third SAT, you make a 690 CR 800 M 720 W= 2210

Your highest scores are 710 CR 800 M 750 W, or a 2260 superscore. That is what will be used in the college process.

If however you take a fourth SAT and get an 800 CR 800 M 800 W= 2400, your scores will be averaged and not superscored. This means a 2210 SAT will be used to judge you instead of a 2260. It's important that you make your first three tests count!

Is the writing section useless?

Many colleges, most notoriously Northwestern, do not count the writing section at all. Many colleges release statistics predominantly on the math section and the reading section only. This is because the writing section is subjective and easily mastered (though ironically the nation performs the worst on it). Surprisingly though, studies have shown that it is the best measure of collegiate success and thus it's gaining a turn point in importance. Most of the top 20 schools consider the writing section just as important as the other two sections, so it's important you focus on it just as you would the other two sections.

Why should I send my SAT scores/SAT II scores through the College Board?

Colleges will accept nothing less than official test scores from the College Board, because the sheets you're sent can be easily modified to change the scores. For each test you take, you will get four free score reports. **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE. THEY EXPIRE QUICKLY-only a few days after you take the SAT- AND IF YOU DON'T USE THEM YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY 44\$ FOR four SCORE REPORTS, AS EACH IS 11\$.** I'd wait till the 2nd or 3rd test to take advantage of them though because the score reports indicate what you got on the other dates too.

I felt like I bombed the SAT I took. Can I cancel the score? Will I be penalized for it?

You can cancel your score only until the Wednesday after the test. You can cancel the score by telling your test proctor, but anytime afterwards you will have to rush a written and signed letter to the College Board. You will not be penalized- the score will not appear on any of your reports- but you will not get a refund.

When is the last day I can take the SATs/Subject Tests?

For Early Decision/Early Action, November is the last date.

For Regular Decision, January is the last date.

No matter what I do, I keep doing really badly on the SAT. Advice?

Look at the ACT! It is an alternative to the SAT that all colleges in the US are required to accept; in fact, more people take the ACT than do the SAT. Some key differences are listed below.

- The ACT is an easier test conceptually, but much more frantic in terms of the time limit.
- The ACT is usually not superscored.
- The ACT's essay is more casual than the SAT, but it is also more stringently graded.
- The ACT includes a science section which is basically an elaborate game of detective. You take all the data given to you and formulate your answers based on them.
- The ACT's math covers basic trigonometry. Its reading passages are easier and measure comprehension rather than logical reasoning. The English section is similar to SAT's writing section.

Good luck to you all!

***NOTE: Starting in the 2012-2013 school year, students will be required to upload a photograph when registering for the SAT/SAT Subject Test. The photograph will appear on the admission ticket and will be sent to high schools and colleges on the official score reports.**

How much does the ACT cost? When can I take it?

There are two versions of the ACT: ACT No Writing and ACT Plus Writing. Some colleges accept the ACT No Writing, but most want the ACT Plus Writing. Visit <https://actapps.act.org/writPrefRM/> to see whether your college requires the ACT Plus Writing. The difference between the two exams is that the ACT Plus Writing has a 30 minute section where you are required to write an essay, whereas the ACT No Writing does not. The ACT No Writing costs 35.00\$ and the ACT Plus Writing costs 50.50\$. The ACT is offered 6 times a year: September, October, December, February, April, and June. For each test date, you must register a month or more in advance otherwise you will incur a late fee of 22.00\$. If paying for the ACT presents a financial difficulty to your family, you can request a fee waiver from your counselor. The fee waiver covers the cost of basic registration (e.g. 50.50\$ for ACT Plus Writing) and does not cover the cost of late registration fees, standby fees, and additional score reports (you get to send four free score reports during registration). Note that in order to qualify for a fee waiver, you must be in 11th or 12th grade, be testing in the US, and meet one of the indicators of financial need on the ACT fee waiver form (e.g. free or reduced lunch). You are allowed up to 2 fee waivers total.

What should I bring on the day of the test?

You must bring your test center ticket, which can be printed out after you register, and photo ID. Bring a few lead number 2 pencils (no mechanical), a watch to pace yourself, an acceptable calculator (check ACT guidelines), and snacks. The watch isn't a necessity but it can be helpful for pacing during the

exam and snacks can be eaten during breaks.

What sections does the ACT include?

The ACT Plus Writing has 5 sections:

- Section 1 is the essay (like the SAT). The ACT provides students 30 minutes to write an essay taking and defending a position on the question or prompt proposed.
- Section 2 is the English section. You will have 45 minutes to answer 75 questions based on 5 passages. The English section of the ACT tests Usage/Mechanics (punctuation, grammar & usage, and sentence structure) and Rhetorical Strategies (strategy, organization, and style)
- Section 3 is the Math section. You will have 60 minutes to answer 60 questions. The Math section tests 3 areas: Pre-Algebra/Elementary Algebra (24 questions), Intermediate Algebra/Coordinate Geometry (18 questions), and Geometry/Trigonometry (18 questions).
- Section 4 is the Reading section. You will have 35 minutes to answer 40 questions. The Reading section of the ACT tests reading comprehension and consists of 4 passages (1 on prose fiction, 1 on social studies, 1 on the humanities, and 1 on the natural sciences).
- Section 5 is the Science section. You will have 35 minutes to answer 40 questions. The Science section does not test scientific knowledge, but rather a student's ability to interpret, analyze, and evaluate scientific sources. The sources are presented in different formats

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(e.g. charts, tables, schematic diagrams, summaries, and passages).

Note the ACT No Writing does not have the writing section, but the other four sections are the same.

How is the ACT scored?

A raw score is calculated for each of the four multiple choice sections of the ACT (English, Math, Reading, and Science). The raw score is simply the number correct on that section; unlike the SAT, there is no penalty for an incorrect answer. The raw score for each section is then converted to a scaled score (1-36). Raw scores convert to different scaled scores for different ACT tests because the difficulty (as determined by the test makers) varies from test to test. So a 73/75 on the Reading test might convert to a scaled score of 36 on one test but a 34 on another. To give an example of raw to scaled scores, here's how I scored on the practice test I took: 69/75 (raw) on English=32 (scaled), 57/60 on Math=35, 38/40 on Reading=34, and 37/40 on Science=33.

The Composite score is then calculated by averaging the four scores on each section (with $.5$ and higher rounding up). My Composite score then was $(32+35+34+33)/4=33.5=34$. The ACT Writing section is scored like the SAT Writing section; two graders score each essay giving it a score of 1-6. The two scores are then added to together to make up the Writing score, which is combined with the English score to give a scaled score. The Combined English/Writing score does not affect the composite score. On the ACT score report, you will see a composite score (an average of the four multiple choice sections), a score for each of the four multiple choice sections, and a

Combined English/Writing score (e.g. a 32 on the English section and a 10 on the Writing section gives a combined English/Writing score of 31). Colleges will give the most weight to your Composite score.

What's a good score?

Ideally a 36! Honestly though, it depends on what schools you are applying to. Usually a composite score that falls in the college's middle 50% would make you a good candidate for a school with the exception of Ivy League and other top 25 schools, which are honestly a crapshoot in terms of admissions. No score at these schools can guarantee acceptance. Obviously though, scoring higher increases your chances. To put things into perspective, the average composite score of all test takers is about 21. A good score is one that will make you a competitive applicant to the schools you are applying to.

How to prepare?

The best way to prepare for the ACT is to take official ACT practice tests under test conditions. I would recommend taking anywhere from 3-5 official ACT practice tests under test conditions (exact timing, breaks, etc.) before taking an actual test. The more you prepare, the better the odds of getting a score you will be happy with and the less likely you will have to retake the test again. Think of it this way, if you prepare and do well the first time, you won't have to pay 50.50\$ again and give up another Saturday morning.

The best resource that you could use in preparing for the ACT is *The Real ACT Prep Guide*

(<http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/book.html>). The guide includes 5 official, previously administered ACT tests

complete with answer explanations and scoring guidelines. In addition, the book also provides test taking strategies, review for each section of the ACT, and everything you need to know about taking the test. The ACT also has a question of the day (<http://www.act.org/qotd/>) to keep you on your toes every day.

Many students consider hiring test prep companies, but I would advise against doing so. A diligent student could prepare effectively simply by reading *The Real ACT Prep Guide* and taking official exams. In my opinion, the most valuable aspect about test prep through companies like Revolution Prep, Kaplan, and the Princeton Review are the practice tests they administer during their tutoring sessions. In essence, you are paying a company to babysit you while you are taking a practice test: something you could have done on your own. The strategies they teach can be found online or by simply taking practice tests and learning to recognize patterns in the tests. So, I would recommend saving your money and preparing on your own.

Approaching the Writing section

The writing section of the ACT is essentially the essay. The ACT essay is very similar to the SAT essay. For the ACT essay, you will have 30 minutes to respond to a prompt asking you to take a point of view on an issue presented. The intent of the essay is to gauge whether students can formulate an opinion and pick a side on an issue and defend that point of view. Like with the SAT essay, using examples to support your point of view is necessary to score well on the ACT essay. Examples to support your thesis can include personal anecdotes, literary examples,

pop-culture references, news stories, and historical events. For this section of the ACT, the most important elements are a strong thesis and concrete examples that support the thesis. Of course, use all the skills you've learned in your English classes such as varied sentence structure, collegiate vocabulary, proper grammar, accurate spelling, and correct punctuation but realize that you will not be penalized for small errors in composition.

Approaching the English section

The English section of the ACT will include 75 questions testing a student's knowledge of usage/mechanics and rhetorical strategies. This entirety of the English section is passage-based. Questions will ask students about underlined portions of the passages, alternatives to underlined portions of the passages, and the passages as a whole. The questions are asked in chronological order and each question number refers directly to the texts (either under underlined portions of the passages or inside boxes). The questions that refer to rhetoric and the overall meaning of the passages can be approached in the same manner as the passage-based questions on the Critical Reading section of the SAT. For the questions on the ACT that refer to underlined portions of the passages, pay careful attention to grammar and usage. Look to see whether there is subject-verb agreement (e.g. He *talks*, They *walk*), correct direct object pronouns (e.g. I gave *them*), and pronoun-antecedent agreement (e.g. The corporation gave *its* approval). The ACT tests for more than these three grammatical elements, however these tend to give students the most trouble.

Approaching the Math section

The math section of the ACT consists of 60 questions. Students are given 60 minutes for this section and are allowed to use a calculator. Compared to the SAT Mathematics section, the ACT Mathematics section is much more straight-forward and content-based in nature. The ACT will not require students to memorize complex formulas but rather utilize important concepts in algebra, geometry, and trigonometry to solve problems. The best preparation for the Math section is to do sample tests because the concepts tested on the ACT do not change. For questions that seem difficult to solve, try to work backwards using the answer choices. Also, make sure to check your work as mistakes are likely to occur given the short time limits. A quick note on calculators: they are not required to solve most problems and in many cases will slow you down. If you can solve a problem quickly without a calculator, do so. For these types of questions, you can use a calculator to check your work if you have time.

Approaching the Reading section

The reading section of the ACT measures reading comprehension in the form of 40 questions. The Reading section of the ACT is similar to the Critical Reading passages of the SAT. Both exams will require students to answer questions about passages. Some questions are straightforward, while others will ask students to make inferences. It is imperative that students read the passages carefully and refer to them liberally when answering questions. A good strategy is to take notes while you are reading to summarize the main points of each paragraph of the passages. Also, it might be a good idea to mark lines in the passages that are directly referred to in the questions. Some students may

be concerned that there are 4 different types of texts in this section: Social Studies, Natural Sciences, Prose Fiction, and Humanities. Realize that no outside knowledge is needed to understand the passages and that all the answers to the questions can be found in the text or inferred.

Approaching the Science section

The Science section of the ACT is what makes the ACT most unlike the SAT. Students will have 35 minutes to answer 40 questions based on scientific information (provided in the form of data, research summaries, and conflicting viewpoints). Although this section may be daunting, no outside scientific knowledge is necessary for success. The best approach to this section is to read the questions first and then search for the answers in the sources. You will not have time to read over and completely understand the scientific information and answer the questions. Do your best to find the answers among the sources. If you find the science section to be among the most difficult, do not worry. Some colleges will give little weight to the science section of the ACT because they know that it is unlike anything students have ever had to do and provides little indication of future academic success.

Hope this was helpful. Good luck!

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In addition to the SAT or ACT, some colleges and universities will require their applicants to submit results for the SAT Subject Tests. The SAT Subject Tests are hour-long, subject-specific exams that test a student's aptitude and knowledge in specific subjects. As with the SAT, the College Board administers the SAT Subject Tests.

What Subjects are Offered?

SAT Subject Tests are offered in each of the following subjects: Literature, Biology (Environmental), Biology (Molecular), Mathematics (Level 1), Mathematics (Level 2), US History, World History, French (Reading Only), French (with Listening), Spanish (Reading Only), Spanish (with Listening), German (Reading Only), German (with Listening), Modern Hebrew (Reading Only), Latin (Reading Only), Italian (Reading Only), Chinese (with Listening), Japanese (with Listening), and Korean (with Listening).

Test Dates

The SAT Subject Tests are offered in October, November, December, January, March, May, and June and are administered concurrently with the SAT so a student cannot take both on the same day. Exams such as World History and the Languages are only offered during certain months so check <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-subject-test-dates> to see when these exams are offered.

Cost

A student can take up to 3 SAT Subject Tests on the same exam day. The cost of the first exam is \$23. Each additional subject test is \$12 each with the exception of Language Tests with Listening, which cost \$23 per test. As with the SAT, fee waivers are available. Follow the same protocol outlined in the SAT article to obtain a fee waiver and to register.

How to Practice

The best way to practice for the SAT Subject Tests is to use released College Board materials. Visit the College Board's website

<<http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice>> for practice questions. The College Board publishes official practice tests for the history and math subject tests as well.

Additional Notes

- The tests are scored on a scale of 200-800. To see how well you scored in comparison to other test takers, visit <<http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/SAT-Subject-Tests-Percentile-Ranks-2012.pdf>>
- You can decide on the day of the exam to change subject tests. So say you register for Literature, World History, and Spanish (Reading Only). You could change any or all of these exams to say Biology (E), US History, and/or Mathematics Level 2.
- You cannot take the two Mathematics exams (Level 1 and Level 2) or the two Biology exams (Environmental and Molecular) on the same test dates.
- If you have taken Precalculus, take Mathematics Level 2 and not Mathematics Level 1.
- A good time to take exams is after completing the corresponding AP course.
- Even if not required for admission, taking the SAT Subject Tests are a great way to bolster an application.

Cost of Attendance

Every college publishes what is called the **cost of attendance**, sometimes referred to as the sticker price or student budget. The cost of attendance includes direct costs (tuition, room & board, and other fees) as well as indirect costs (books & supplies, travel, and personal expenses). For example, UCLA has a cost of attendance (before financial aid) of \$31,999 for in-state students living in the residence halls. This cost of attendance includes the following direct costs: Tuition & Fees-\$12,685, Room & Board-\$14,208, Health Insurance-1,323, and Loan Fees-\$93. Keep in mind that colleges will waive the health insurance fee if the student already has health insurance. Likewise the loan fee only applies if the student chooses to borrow to finance his/her education. UCLA, like most schools, include allowances such as Books & Supplies-1,521, Transportation-\$786, and Personal Expenses-\$1,383 in the cost of attendance. These indirect costs are not paid to the school itself. Realize that each student's cost of attendance may be different depending on the allowance for travel.

Determining Financial Need

For some students, paying the full cost of attendance for college is not feasible. Many of these students will turn to financial aid to help pay for the direct and indirect costs of college. The federal government and individual colleges determine eligibility for financial aid through a simple formula: **COA (cost of attendance)-EFC (expected family contribution)=Financial Need**.

Public institutions use what is called the federal methodology to determine a student's EFC. This information is ascertained through details provided in the **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**. The FAFSA opens on January 1st of each year, and students must reapply each year to be eligible for financial aid. Different states and colleges have different application deadlines, but a good rule of thumb is to apply as early as possible. The FAFSA prompts students for information about their parents' annual incomes and assets (excluding their first home) along with the student's income and savings. Using this information, the federal government calculates the expected family contribution which is the amount that a student and his or her family is expected to contribute toward the costs of college. Using the example of UCLA, suppose that a student's EFC is determined to be \$1,999. The student's financial need would then be \$31,999 (COA)-\$1,999 (EFC)=\$30,000 (Financial Need).

Private colleges and some public schools (e.g. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) will require students to complete the **CSS (College Scholarship Service) Profile** in addition to the FAFSA to determine a student's EFC and eligibility for

financial aid. The CSS Profile is a comprehensive financial aid application that asks for information beyond what is asked on the FAFSA. In this section of the guide, you will find more information about the CSS Profile. In addition to asking for more detailed information about a student's family's financial information, private colleges will (in most cases) factor in the first home as an asset. Although this might affect financial aid eligibility, in most cases annual family income is the biggest factor in determining EFC and financial need.

Federal & State Grants

After EFC is factored in, each institution (whether public or private) comes up with a student's financial need. In the above example, financial need is \$30,000. Through completing the FAFSA, the student is eligible for federal and state grants. The federal government provides grants, which is money that does not have to be repaid back, to low-income students called **Pell Grants**. To qualify, a student's EFC must be \$5,500 or less. The maximum Pell Grant is \$5,500. The UCLA student would receive a Pell Grant worth \$3,501 (\$5,500 (Max Pell Grant)-\$1,999 (EFC)=\$3,501). In addition, because the student is a CA resident, he/she would be eligible for **Cal Grants**, which grant up to \$5,970 for CSU students, \$12,192 for UC students, and \$9,223 for private school students. Note that students must attend a private school in California to be eligible for the \$9,223 Cal Grant. This student would be eligible for a Cal Grant worth \$12,192.

Self-Help: Federal Loans

Loans are funds provided to students that, unlike grants, must be paid back to the lender with interest. The federal government offers **Direct Subsidized Loans** for students with financial need and **Direct Unsubsidized Loans**. The main difference between the Direct Subsidized Loans and the Direct Unsubsidized Loans is the interest rate. The interest rate on Subsidized Loans is 3.4% and the federal government pays the interest while the student is enrolled in school, whereas the interest rate on Unsubsidized Loans is 6.8% and the student is responsible for paying the interest even when enrolled in school. The maximum borrowing limits for students is \$5,500 (\$3,500 maximum can be subsidized) for first-year students, \$6,500 (\$4,500 maximum can be subsidized) for second-year students, and \$7,500 (\$5,500 maximum can be subsidized) for third-year and beyond students.

Self-Help: Work-Study

The federal government also offers **work-study** for students with financial need. The work-study program provides students with part-time jobs to assist them with paying for college. Work-study is administered by each individual college. The maximum hours a student may work and the maximum amount a student may earn from work-study is determined by each individual college.

FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS → FINANCIAL AID

Putting It All Together

For the UCLA student, here is a breakdown of the cost of college after all sources of aid.

-	\$31,999 (COA)
	<u>\$1,999 (EFC)</u>
	\$30,000 (Financial Need)
	\$3,501 (Pell Grant)
+	\$12,192 (Cal Grant)
+	\$3,500 (Direct Subsidized Loan)
+	\$2,000 (Direct Unsubsidized Loan)
+	<u>\$3,000 (Work-Study)</u>
	\$24,193 (Financial Aid)
	\$30,000 (Financial Need)
-	<u>\$24,193 (Financial Aid)</u>
	\$5,807 (Unmet Need)

After EFC and all sources of financial aid (government grants, loans, and work-study) are factored in, the student is left with \$5,807 in **unmet need**. The student will be required to either borrow money from private lenders or win institutional and outside scholarships to cover unmet need. See the article on scholarships for advice on scholarships. Outside scholarships are usually first used to cover unmet need then self-help (loans and work-study). Suppose the student in the previous example won a \$15,000 scholarship. The scholarship would be used to pay off the \$5,807 in unmet need and then the self-help component of financial aid (\$5,500 in loans and \$3,000 in work-study). The remaining amount of the scholarship will then be credited back to the student unless the student is receiving institutional grants or the scholarship organization requests the remaining amount of money back.

Private Schools & High-Endowment Schools

In addition to federal aid, many private and especially **high-endowment** schools will provide students with institutional grants to help cover the costs of college. A common misconception among students is that private schools are more costly to attend than public institutions. In some cases, this holds true. Usually the published cost of attendance (before financial aid) of a private school is much higher than the published cost of attendance of a public school. While this may be the case, among many high-endowment private schools such as those in the Ivy League: **Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, UPenn, Dartmouth, Cornell, and Brown** and their high-endowment counterparts: **Stanford, MIT, UChicago, Williams, Amherst, Swarthmore, and Pomona** provide incredible financial aid packages to their students. Many of these schools will meet 100% of financial need with solely grants and work-study! This means that students will not be required to borrow to finance their educations. Here is a compilation of the Best Value Colleges according to the Princeton

Review:

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/2013/02/05/princeton-review-best-value-colleges-interactive/1890969/>

The Project on Student Debt lists colleges who have pledged to reduce student debt through measures that replace loans with grants or limit loan requirements:

http://projectonstudentdebt.org/Type_and_Coverage.vp.html

To better plan for the costs of college and estimate financial aid, use the Net Price Calculator provided by the College Board:

<http://studentnpc.collegeboard.org/> or Google "College Name" + Net Price Calculator.

Undocumented Students

Students who are undocumented are not barred from attending college in the United States, but are not allowed to receive financial aid of any source from the federal government. Many states also consider undocumented students out-of-state students and charge them out-of-state tuition. Currently, the following twelve states allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition: **California, Texas, New York, Utah, Washington, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Maryland, and Connecticut**. Of the twelve states, only three (**California, New Mexico, and Texas**) allow undocumented students to be eligible for state-funded financial aid. Usually undocumented students must be accepted into a college, prove in-state residency, and agree to file for citizenship to be eligible for in-state tuition in these states. To receive state-funded financial aid, undocumented students must file a distinct financial aid application (called the **Dream Act** in California) and not the FAFSA.

For undocumented students who do not reside in one of the twelve states that charge in-state tuition, it is imperative to research private colleges that are need-blind when it comes to international students. For logistical purposes, private schools consider undocumented students internationals. Unfortunately for undocumented students, a majority of schools consider financial need for international students when evaluating their applications. This means that international students (and therefore undocumented students) must be able to pay the cost of attendance in order to be admitted. Eight schools in the US are need-blind when it comes to international students. They are **Amherst, Dartmouth, Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Yale, Cornell, and Georgetown**. The first six schools in the list also guarantee to meet 100% of demonstrated financial need of international students (and therefore undocumented students). If you are undocumented, it is important that you research thoroughly and follow the news closely as there has been talk as of late of comprehensive immigration reform!

CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®

Student Guide

This guide provides the basic information you need to complete your PROFILE application at www.collegeboard.org beginning Oct. 1, 2011.

WHAT is the PROFILE? The **PROFILE** is an online application that collects information used by certain colleges and scholarship programs to award institutional aid funds. (All **federal** funds are awarded based on the **FAFSA**, available after Jan. 1 at www.fafsa.ed.gov.) Some colleges may require additional information, such as tax returns or an institutional application. If your parents are divorced, some colleges will also require your noncustodial parent to complete the Noncustodial PROFILE.

WHEN do I file the PROFILE? You may file the **PROFILE** as early as Oct. 1, 2011. However, you should file no later than two weeks before the **EARLIEST** priority filing date specified by your colleges or programs.

WHO must file the PROFILE? Check your colleges'/programs' information to determine whether they require the PROFILE. A list of colleges that require the PROFILE from at least some of their applicants is found on the back of this page. The most up-to-date list, including search capabilities and additional information, can be found by clicking on "list of colleges, universities, and scholarship programs" on the PROFILE Index Page.

HOW do I file the PROFILE? You file the PROFILE online at www.collegeboard.org by selecting "CSS/PROFILE" under "Pay for College." If you do not have a computer at home, register for PROFILE at your high school or local library, print the Pre-Application Worksheet and Instructions, and review them with your parents. Return to your high school or library and enter the information by logging back in to your application using your secure username and password.

WHAT does the PROFILE cost? The fee for the initial application and one college or program report is **\$25**. Additional reports are **\$16**. Payment may be made via credit card, debit card (Visa or MC) or online check. A limited number of **fee waivers** are granted automatically — based on the information entered on the PROFILE application — to students who are first-time college applicants and are from families with very low incomes and assets. International students are not eligible for fee waivers. This waiver covers the application fee and the reporting fees for up to six colleges or scholarship programs.

Information to have available when you register:

- Type of tax return you and your parent(s) will file for the current year (e.g., 1040, 1040 EZ, foreign return)
- If your parents receive TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) or SSI (Supplemental Security Income)
- If your parents are self-employed or own business(es) and/or farm(s)
- Your parents' housing status (e.g., own, rent)
- Your personal information, including your Social Security number

Once you register, you will find detailed instructions and an extensive Help Desk, including Frequently Asked Questions, online.

The Process: Three Easy Steps

- 1. Register** — Your PROFILE application is tailored to your family situation, based on your registration answers and the colleges or programs you select. After registering, you can securely save your application and return to complete it at any time, 24/7, using your collegeboard.org username and password.
- 2. Complete the Application** — Use the customized Pre-Application Worksheet and Instructions to help you complete the PROFILE. As you answer questions, the system provides online help and edits to minimize mistakes.
- 3. Submit the Application** — The date and time you submit your completed application will be recorded based on **Eastern Time**. You pay online and will receive an online PROFILE Acknowledgment as a record of your payment and application information. The Acknowledgment may include your next steps to complete your financial aid application process, so be sure to print a copy for your records.

At any time, you may **add** a college or program by going to the PROFILE home page and clicking "Add Colleges to Submitted Application." You will be charged \$16 for each college or program you add. Any unused fee-waiver eligibility will be automatically applied to your charges. You may not **delete** any recipients once you have submitted your application.

Questions? Contact customer support at **305-829-9793** (Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time, with extended hours from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., January through April) or e-mail help@cssprofile.org.

The colleges below all accept the PROFILE application. Instructions distributed by their financial aid offices will describe their application requirements in detail. A college with an asterisk (*) next to its name uses PROFILE for early decision or early action applicants only. For the most up-to-date and comprehensive list, go to <https://profileonline.collegeboard.org>.

CSS CODE	INSTITUTION	STATE									
2003	Adelphi University	NY	1202	Edgewood College	WI	3526	Middlebury College	VT	2823	Syracuse University	NY
1001	Adrian College	MI	0042	Eliot School Fine Applied Arts	MA	5327	MIUAD: Fine Arts College	FL	6820	Texas Christian University	TX
2013	Albany College of Pharmacy*	NY	2226	Elmira College	NY	1484	Monmouth College	IL	1817	Tiffin University	OH
7041	Albany Law S of Union U	NY	5183	Elon University	NC	1486	Moody Bible Institute	IL	1808	Transylvania University	KY
2995	Albert Einstein C of Medicine	NY	3367	Emerson College	MA	2418	Moravian College	PA	1809	Trevecca Nazarene University	TN
2005	Alfred University	NY	0140	Emory U: Sch of Medicine	GA	5417	Morris Brown College	GA	3899	Trinity College	CT
1010	Alma College	MI	5187	Emory University	GA	3529	Mount Holyoke College	MA	8865	Tufts U: Sch of Dental Med	MA
7363	Amer Assoc of C of Osteo Med	MD	1192	ETSU: Quillen C of Medicine	TN	1490	Mount Mary College	WI	3901	Tufts University	MA
5007	American University	DC	3390	Fairfield University	CT	2424	Muhlenberg College	PA	6832	Tulane University	LA
0866	American University of Paris	CO	2259	Fordham University	NY	0300	National Achievement Schol Prg	IL	3936	U Mass: Medical School	MA
3003	Amherst College	MA	2261	Franklin & Marshall College	PA	0085	National Merit Schol Corp	IL	7152	U of California: San Francisco	CA
6293	Aquinas Inst of Theology	MO	0922	Franklin College: Switzerland	NY	2511	Nazareth College of Rochester*	NY	2920	Union College	NY
1031	Archeworks	IL	5222	Furman University	SC	4546	New College Franklin	TN	4832	Univ of Arizona	AZ
1029	Athenaeum of Ohio	OH	5246	George Washington University	DC	2504	New York C of Podiatric Med	NY	1832	Univ of Chicago	IL
3075	Babson College	MA	7306	Georgetown U: Law Ctr	DC	3667	Northeastern University	MA	4842	Univ of Denver	CO
2037	Bard College	NY	5244	Georgetown University	DC	1561	Northland College	WI	6869	Univ of Dubuque	IA
3795	Bard College at Simon's Rock	MA	2275	Gettysburg College	PA	6490	Northwestern College	IA	1839	Univ of Michigan	MI
2038	Barnard College	NY	3417	Gordon College	MA	1565	Northwestern University	IL	3663	Univ of New Haven	CT
3076	Bates College	ME	5257	Goucher College	MD	2060	NY State College Ceramics - AU	NY	5816	Univ of North Carolina Chapel	NC
3080	Bennington College	VT	0275	Great Lakes Teacher Training	WI	2785	NYU Abu Dhabi	NY	1841	Univ of Notre Dame	IN
3098	Bentley U: McCallum Graduate	MA	3418	Green Mountain College	VT	1587	Oberlin College	OH	2933	Univ of Pennsylvania	PA
3096	Bentley University	MA	6253	Gustavus Adolphus College	MN	4581	Occidental College	CA	4067	Univ of Puget Sound*	WA
1079	Bethel College	IN	2662	Gutenberg College	OR	1594	Ohio Wesleyan University	OH	5569	Univ of Richmond	VA
3083	Boston College	MA	2286	Hamilton College	NY	1595	Olivet College	MI	2928	Univ of Rochester	NY
8928	Boston U: Goldman Sch Dental	MA	3447	Hampshire College	MA	5186	Oxford College of Emory Univ	GA	4852	Univ of Southern California	CA
3116	Boston U: Sch of Medicine	MA	3434	Harvard College	MA	2804	Patrick Henry College	VA	5820	Univ of Virginia	VA
8930	Boston U: Sch of Public Health	MA	3454	Harvard Kennedy Sch Gov't	MA	4620	Patten University	CA	2931	Ursinus College	PA
3087	Boston University	MA	3441	Harvard U: Dental Sch	MA	4619	Pitzer College	CA	1874	Valparaiso University	IN
3089	Bowdoin College	ME	3455	Harvard U: Grad Sch of Design	MA	4607	Pomona College	CA	1871	Vanderbilt University	TN
9785	Boyce College	KY	4341	Harvey Mudd College	CA	2672	Princeton University	NJ	2956	Vassar College	NY
3092	Brandeis University	MA	2289	Haverford College	PA	1630	Principia College	IL	2959	Villanova University	PA
3269	Bridgton Academy	ME	1344	Hebrew Union College - CA	NY	3693	Providence College	RI	1895	Wabash College	IN
3189	Brown University	RI	2290	Hebrew Union College - NY	NY	0949	Queen's University at Kingston	ON	5084	Wake Forest U Sch of Medicine	NC
2049	Bryn Mawr College	PA	1305	Hebrew Union College - OH*	NY	3712	Quinnipiac University	CT	5885	Wake Forest University	NC
2050	Bucknell University	PA	9814	Henrico Cnty-St Mary's Hosp S	VA	4654	Reed College	OR	6964	Washburn U: Sch of Law	KS
1073	Butler University	IN	1295	Hillsdale College	MI	2757	Rensselaer Polytechnic Inst	NY	5887	Washington and Lee University	VA
4034	California Institute of Tech	CA	2294	Hobart and William Smith Coll	NY	3726	Rhode Island School of Design	RI	6929	Washington Univ St. Louis	MO
1100	Cardinal Stritch University	WI	1309	Holy Cross College	IN	1730	Rhodes College	TN	3957	Wellesley College	MA
6081	Carleton College	MN	5854	Holy Spirit College	GA	6609	Rice University	TX	2971	Wells College*	NY
2074	Carnegie Mellon University	PA	1654	Illinois Institute Technology	IL	3729	Roger Williams University	RI	3959	Wesleyan University	CT
1105	Case Western University	OH	1320	Illinois Wesleyan University	IL	3780	Sacred Heart University	CT	1905	Wheaton College	IL
3984	Chinese U of HK: Intl Asian SP		2325	Ithaca College	NY	1702	Saint Mary's College	IN	3963	Wheaton College	MA
4054	Claremont McKenna College	CA	3665	Jacobs University Bremen		3759	Salve Regina University	RI	4951	Whitman College	WA
3279	Clark University	MA	2339	Jewish Theol Sem of America	NY	4851	Santa Clara University	CA	4954	Willamette University	OR
1124	Cleveland Institute of Music	OH	2618	Jewish Theol Sem: Cantorial S	NY	2810	Sarah Lawrence College	NY	3965	Williams College	MA
2894	Cochran School of Nursing	NY	2679	Jewish Theol Sem: Grad S	NY	4693	Scripps College	CA	3969	Worcester Polytechnic Inst	MA
3280	Colby College	ME	2470	Jewish Theol Sem: Rabbinical S	NY	0097	Seabury-Western Theo Sem	IL	6975	Xavier University of Louisiana	LA
2086	Colgate University	NY	5332	Johns Hopkins University	MD	1717	Shimer College	IL	3987	Yale University	CT
3282	College of the Holy Cross	MA	0274	Kamehameha Schools	HI	1719	Siena Heights University	MI			
1134	College of Wooster	OH	1370	Kenyon College	OH	2815	Skidmore College	NY			
4072	Colorado College	CO	1672	Kuyper College	MI	3762	Smith College	MA			
5117	Columbia College	SC	2361	Lafayette College	PA	3775	Smith College: Sch Social Work	MA			
2174	Columbia U: Business School	NY	0664	LaPenta Med Scholarship Trust	NH	9856	Southern Baptist Theo Sem	KY			
2116	Columbia University	NY	1398	Lawrence University	WI	4392	Southern Calif C of Optometry	CA			
3284	Connecticut College	CT	2365	Lehigh University	PA	6660	Southern Methodist University	TX			
2097	Cooper Union Science and Art	NY	4384	Lewis & Clark College	OR	3748	St. Anselm College	NH			
2822	Cornell U: C of Vet Med	NY	2369	Long Island Univ: Brooklyn	NY	5598	St. John's College	MD			
2098	Cornell University	NY	2070	Long Island Univ: C. W. Post	NY	4737	St. John's College	NM			
3351	Dartmouth College	NH	5370	Loyola University Maryland	MD	2805	St. Lawrence University	NY			
3355	Dartmouth College: Thayer Sch	NH	5437	Lynn University	FL	3757	St. Michael's College	VT			
5150	Davidson College	NC	6390	Macalester College	MN	6638	St. Olaf College	MN			
5151	Davis and Elkins College	WV	1753	Madonna U: St Mary's College	MI	0265	Stanford U: Grad Sch of Bus	CA			
0266	Delaware State Dental Society	DE	2396	Manhattan School of Music	NY	4704	Stanford University	CA			
1166	DePauw University	IN	1452	Marygrove College	MI	2819	Stevens Institute Technology	NJ			
2186	Dickinson College	PA	3514	Massachusetts Inst of Tech	MA	3770	Stonehill College	MA			
5156	Duke University	NC	0935	McGill University	QC	2820	Susquehanna University	PA			
2704	Eastern Baptist Theo Sem	PA	7549	Meharry Medical College	TN	2821	Swarthmore College	PA			

Financial Aid: Making College Affordable

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Financial Aid: Making College Affordable

2012 QuestBridge
College Admissions Conference

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A Look at College Costs

- **Tuition & Fees** → Tuition can vary greatly depending on the type of college you attend.
- **Room & Board**
- **Books & Supplies**
- **Travel**
- **Personal Expenses** } These costs are similar at most colleges.

Total: Around \$15,000 to \$55,000 per year, depending on the college

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Where Does the Money Come From?

- **Financial Aid**
 - Grants & Scholarships
 - Loans
 - Work-study and summer job
- You and your family
 - Expected Family Contribution (EFC)



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Grants & Scholarships

- Money for college that doesn't need to be repaid
- Sources
 - Federal & state government
 - Colleges & universities
 - Scholarships offered by outside organizations

→ **Best type of financial aid**

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Loans

Federal government loans: guarantees low-interest rates with favorable borrowing conditions.

- Student Loans – *repaid by student*
 - Subsidized loans
 - Unsubsidized loans
 - Perkins loans
- Parent Loans - *repaid by parent*
 - PLUS loans

College loans: some colleges offer their own low-interest loans.

→ **Minimize loans as much as possible**

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Work-Study and Summer Job

Work-Study

- On-campus or community-based jobs
- Preferable to a regular job because earnings are not counted as part of income you must contribute to next year's tuition

Summer Job

- Expected to earn money during the summer to put towards your college expenses for the next academic year

Financial Aid: Making College Affordable

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Where Does the Money Come From?

- Financial Aid
 - Grants & Scholarships
 - Loans
 - Work-study and summer job
- **You and your family**
 - **Expected Family Contribution (EFC)**



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Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

- Parent contribution
- Student contribution

→ The EFC is based on the income and assets in both the parents' and student's names

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Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

When calculating EFC, colleges consider many factors including:

- Parents' income
- Cash assets, such as savings or investments
- Non-cash assets (house, other real estate, business value, etc.)
- Household size
- Any siblings in college

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Goal: Reduce Unmet Financial Need



Sticker Price - EFC + Financial Aid = Unmet Need

→ Look for colleges that guarantee to **meet 100% of demonstrated financial need**

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Reduce Unmet Financial Need

College	Sticker Price	EFC	Gift Aid	Loans and Work-study	Unmet Need	You Pay
A	\$51,000					
B	\$25,000					
C	\$15,000					

Which college looks most affordable?

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Reduce Unmet Financial Need

College	Sticker Price	EFC	Gift Aid	Loans and Work-study	Unmet Need	You Pay
A	\$51,000	\$2,000				
B	\$25,000	\$2,000				
C	\$15,000	\$2,000				

Financial Aid: Making College Affordable

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Reduce Unmet Financial Need

College	Sticker Price	EFC	Gift Aid	Loans and Work-study	Unmet Need	You Pay
A	\$51,000	\$2,000	\$44,000	\$5,000		
B	\$25,000	\$2,000	\$10,450	\$8,000		
C	\$15,000	\$2,000	\$3,500	\$5,500		

QUEST BRIDGE

Reduce Unmet Financial Need

College	Sticker Price	EFC	Gift Aid	Loans and Work-study	Unmet Need	You Pay
A	\$51,000	\$2,000	\$44,000	\$5,000	\$0	
B	\$25,000	\$2,000	\$10,450	\$8,000	\$4,550	
C	\$15,000	\$2,000	\$3,500	\$5,500	\$4,000	

Now which college looks most affordable?

QUEST BRIDGE

Reduce Unmet Financial Need

College	Sticker Price	EFC	Gift Aid	Loans and Work-study	Unmet Need	You Pay
A	\$51,000	\$2,000	\$44,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$2,000
B	\$25,000	\$2,000	\$10,450	\$8,000	\$4,550	\$6,550
C	\$15,000	\$2,000	\$3,500	\$5,500	\$4,000	\$6,000

→ Focus on whether colleges cover all need, not just the sticker price

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Financial Aid Strategy

- Maximize grants
- Minimize loans
- Minimize unmet need

- QUEST BRIDGE
- ## Net Price Calculators
- Net price = amount you pay after financial aid is subtracted from the college's "sticker price."
 - Available online through colleges' financial aid offices.
 - Enter financial and household information.
 - A tool to help you estimate the amount your family will pay to attend that college.
 - A valuable resource in researching colleges.

- QUEST BRIDGE
- ## How to Apply for Financial Aid
- Required Financial Aid Forms:
- FAFSA
 - CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE
 - College-specific forms

Financial Aid: Making College Affordable

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FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid

- Determines Federal financial aid eligibility
- Available starting January 1
- Available at www.fafsa.gov
- Apply as soon as possible

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CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE

- Provided by the College Board
- **Required** by many private colleges
- Application fee of \$25, plus \$16 for each additional college (waivers are automatic if you qualify in the application)
- Room to explain special circumstances
- Available October 1 of senior year

QUEST BRIDGE

Non-Custodial Parents

- *Non-custodial parent*: A parent with whom the child does not live the majority of the time (definition may vary by school).
- Fill out a Non-Custodial Parent Waiver Request form if your parent has been long absent or you have no contact with him/her.
- Establish a relationship with an objective third party (teacher, clergy, counselor) who can write a letter to verify your situation.

QUEST BRIDGE

Advice and Examples

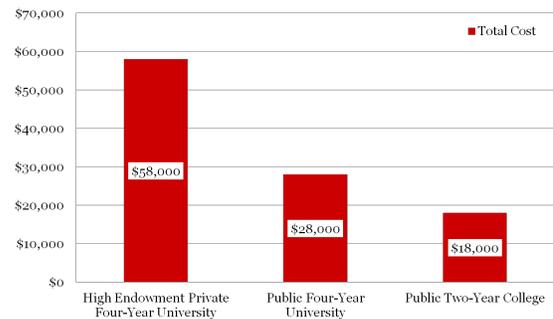
QUEST BRIDGE

Financial Aid Advice

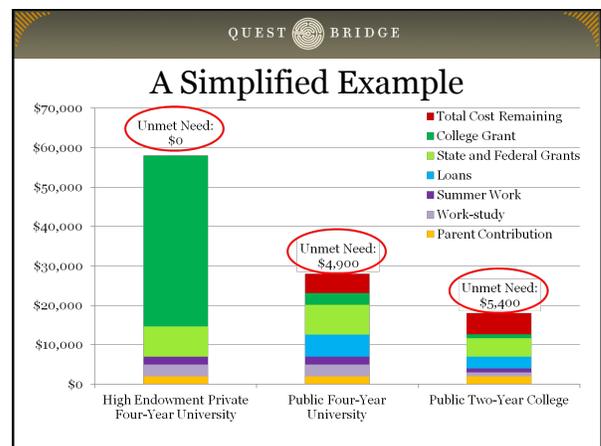
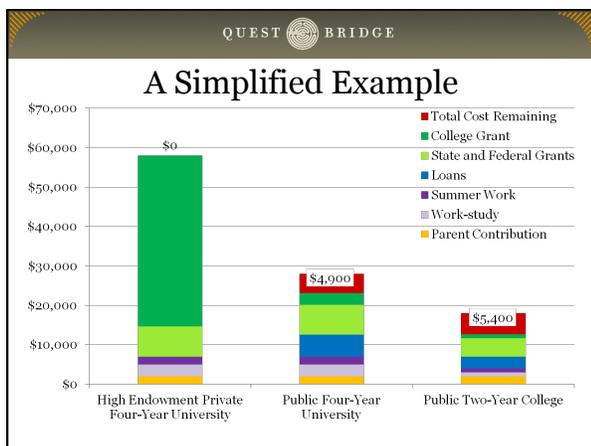
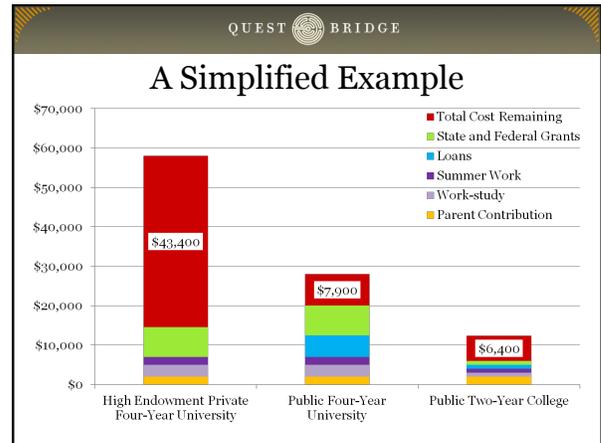
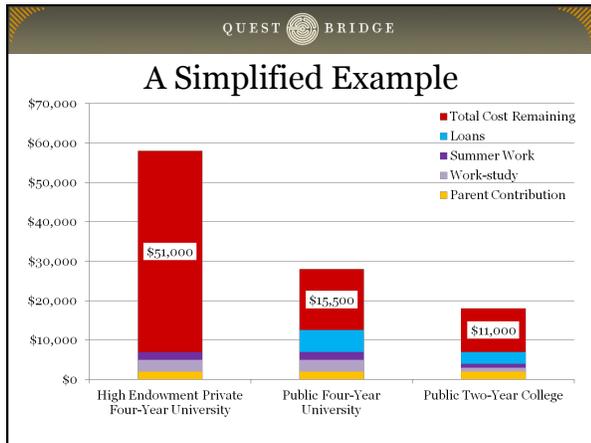
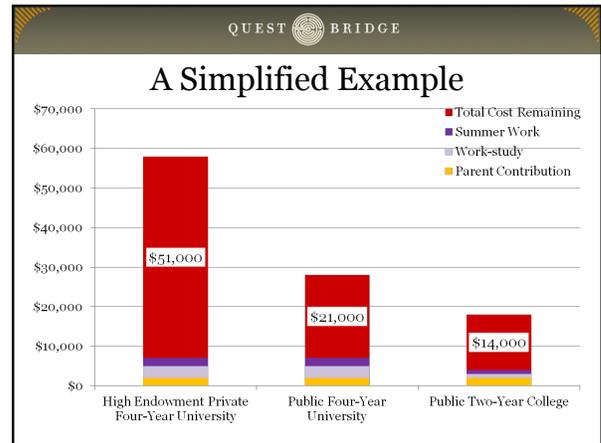
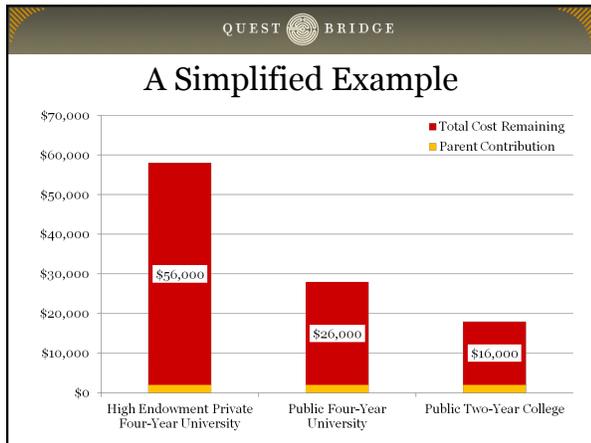
- Observe deadlines carefully.
- Discuss your financial aid package if:
 - Another college gives you a better offer.
 - Your books/supplies cost more than you anticipated.
 - There is a change in your family's financial situation.

QUEST BRIDGE

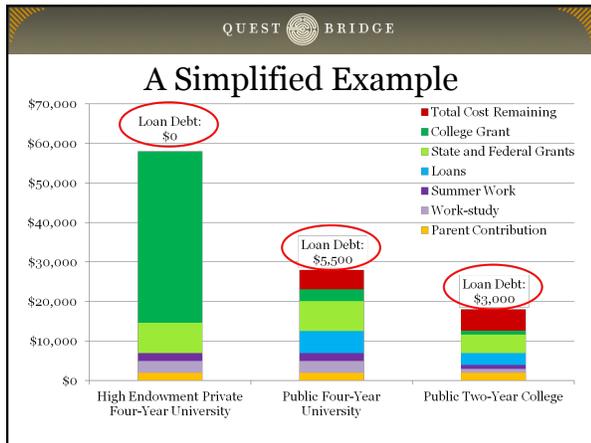
A Simplified Example



Financial Aid: Making College Affordable



Financial Aid: Making College Affordable



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Conclusion

- You can afford a top-tier college.
- Don't limit which colleges you apply to based on their sticker price.
- Look for colleges that guarantee to meet 100% of demonstrated need.
- Minimize loans. Look for colleges that have made "no loans" pledges.

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Additional Resources

- www.fafsa.gov
- www.FinAid.org
- www.fastweb.com
- www.collegeboard.com/student/pay
- http://www.nasfaa.org/students/About_Financial_Aid.aspx
- www.collegegoalsundayusa.org/
- <http://questbridge.org/for-students/understanding-financial-aid>

In addition to financial aid provided by the government (state and federal) and individual colleges and universities, scholarships offered by outside organizations serve as a great way to reduce the costs of college. Scholarships can be merit-based, need-based, or both. **Merit-based scholarships** are scholarships given to the most deserving applicants (based on the criteria outlined by the scholarship organization) regardless of financial need. **Need-based scholarships** are given to applicants who demonstrate financial need. Usually need-based scholarships have eligibility criteria (such as household income) and then award their scholarships to the strongest applicants, who meet the eligibility criteria.

What Scholarships are Out There?

Hundreds of thousands! Scholarships are offered for virtually everything imaginable and each has its own criteria. Scholarships are offered by private entities, whether they are corporations, businesses, charities, or individuals.

Scholarship Application Advice

Applying for scholarships is like applying for college. Usually, they both require transcripts, essays, interviews, test scores, and/or a combination of the above. The best advice for securing scholarships is to be persistent and to apply to as many as one qualifies for. Also, reuse and recycle scholarship and college admissions essays as great personal statements can be molded to fit almost any prompt.

Where to Find Scholarships

The following websites are great search engines for scholarships. Each will prompt students to make accounts

and enter relevant information, so that they can be matched to scholarships.

- <http://www.cappex.com/>
- <http://www.fastweb.com/>
- <http://www.zinch.com/>
- <http://www.studentscholarshipssearch.com/>
- <https://collegeprowler.com/>

Also, check with your counseling department at your high school for local scholarships.

Scholarship Scams

Beware of scholarship scams. Red flags should go up if scholarships prompt students for credit card or bank information. Also, scholarships should never require an applicant to pay a fee. Be savvy and exercise common sense to avoid falling for a scholarship scam.

How do Outside Scholarships Affect Financial Aid?

The answer is that it depends on the individual institution. Usually outside scholarships are first used to cover unmet need, then self-help aid (loans and work-study), and then used to reduce institutional grants. For an explanation of financial aid, see the article on financial aid.

Note that scholarships generally will not be allowed to cover a student's EFC (expected family contribution). The reason is that the federal government will not allow federal grants, EFC, and scholarships to exceed the COA (cost of attendance).