



COLLEGE ADMISSIONS GUIDE

Getting into a good college can be the start of a great career and fulfilling life. But for juniors and seniors, it can be a daunting task. With such a wealth of choices, applying to college can sometimes be a confusing and difficult process. There are so many variables at play other than just good grades and extracurricular activities. It can be hard to know where to start.

In order to get an advantage when applying, students and parents alike need to master not only the academics but the application process as well.

This guide is designed to help you manage your college admissions process by including everything you need to know in one easy to use resource. Our goal at Tutor Doctor is to make the process as easy as possible by focusing on simple, actionable information.

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THE TUTOR DOCTOR WAY

Tutor Doctor is more than just a tutoring company; it is a pathway to changing the trajectory of students' lives. If this seems like a lofty goal, it is – and it's one we take very seriously.

Rather than drilling content and delivering a one-size-fits-all approach to education, Tutor Doctor's mission hinges upon matching the best tutors in the world with the students they are best suited to support. In doing so, authentic pathways to learning and understanding can flourish.

Tutor Doctor ensures that our tutors are equipped to deliver tailored learning experiences that go beyond the content to impact the student as an individual. Our educational professionals are vetted for essential skills and values like understanding, curiosity, ingenuity, ownership, and grit so that they are prepared to instill those same values in the students they serve.

Getting the most out of students is a work of passion, not an algorithm. During our **free in-home consultation**, we assess each student to find the gaps in his or her learning while also identifying existing strengths to build on. This information is then used to pair each student with the qualified tutor best suited to address the identified needs and the student's personality. Tutoring experiences are then custom-made and optimized to help students become better learners and achieve success.

Whether it's college prep, providing academic support for veterans, providing summer learning opportunities, or supporting those with special needs, academic and skill-based growth requires an individualized touch.

Learning is personal – so that's the way we approach the work that we do.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This resource is intended to help you navigate the world of college admissions and testing. If you have any questions about the information in this resource, be sure to **contact your Tutor Doctor education consultant for more information.**

WHERE TO BEGIN

The college admissions and testing processes look different depending on where you are in your educational career when you get started.



If you are a Freshman or Sophomore in high school

Use this guide as a resource. Read through to familiarize yourself with the overall college admissions process and timings. Make a list of any questions you have and **schedule a time to sit down with your Tutor Doctor education consultant to discuss with them.** It is never too early to start planning!



If you are a Junior or Senior in high school

Start with the Admissions and Testing Timelines section of this guide. Make sure that you are aware of all the important dates and establish a pace to meet the upcoming deadlines. Do not wait to **contact your Tutor Doctor education consultant.** You are already in the middle of a very important time in college admissions!

OVERVIEW OF COLLEGE ADMISSIONS AND TESTING

What Do Colleges Consider in College Admissions?

Colleges are attempting to determine whether you will be successful at their school. To make that determination, they consider the following:

1 YOUR HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT

Colleges look at both your grades and the substance of your high school career. While your Grade Point Average (GPA) matters, so does the level of academic rigor you took on.

Admissions counselors use these factors to assess how willing you are to take on a challenge and how well you perform when doing so. Keep in mind that an easy A may not be as impressive to a college as a B- in a more difficult course.

2 YOUR TEST SCORES

While some schools have moved to a testing-optional approach to college entrance exams, taking the SAT and/or ACT remains a vital component of your application.

More information on each of these tests can be found in the **About the Tests** section of this guide.

3 YOUR APPLICATION ESSAYS

These personal writings are a chance to reveal who you are beyond test scores and grades. Use your essay to give admissions professionals a sense of your personality, character, and what it is that makes you unique as a prospective student.

4 YOUR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

These endorsements from your teachers, counselors, coaches, and advisors give colleges insight into your character and attitude. Securing these recommendations can really help you stand out from the pack.

Furthermore, these letters also provide important context for your GPA and high school experiences in ways other parts of your application cannot. Having a third-party attest to things like your attitude, approach to new challenges, and overall school involvement often means more than doing so on your own behalf.

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YOUR EXTRACURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT

Colleges care what you do outside of the classroom, too. When deciding what to do with your spare time, consider the following:

- **Follow your interests.** You'll get more out of participating in an activity or cause that matters to you than one you chose because it "looks good on a college application."
- **Less is more.** Don't do a "little bit of everything." Find a few activities that fit with your personal passions and stick with them.
- **Do your part.** You don't have to be the leader of the organization or team to make an impact. Demonstrating a commitment carries weight with admissions offices.
- **Don't overdo it.** School still comes first. A jam-packed resume means little without concurrent academic success. Colleges want students who will get involved on campus, but also ones who will be able to excel in their academic pursuits while doing so.
- **Solo activities can be important, too.** Quality extracurricular time isn't about demonstrating that you enjoy socializing; it's about committing to an activity and sticking with it. If you have a personal passion, dedicating yourself to it can be just as impressive as joining a club or organization.

6

INTERVIEWS

Simply put, interviews are now rarely required and generally not super important. Most colleges offer the opportunity as a chance for a student to shine while also providing an opportunity to discuss any questions a student may have about the school.

7

DEMONSTRATED INTEREST

Have you reached out to the college? Have you visited the campus or coordinated a tour? Schools keep these records and often use them to determine how serious a candidate is about attending.

ABOUT THE TESTS

There are two major players in the college entrance exam world: College Board and ACT. Each company offers tests designed to assess a student's aptitude for success at the collegiate level. This common purpose results in each company offering tests that have a lot of similarities to each other. That said, there are also some notable differences.

One of the most critical decisions to make is which test (or tests) would be the best way to showcase your strengths and help you get into the colleges on your list.

PSAT & PREACT

The College Board's PSAT and ACT's PreACT are both tests aimed at underclassmen. Unlike their cousins the SAT and ACT, these two tests are not directly tied to college entrance requirements. However, there are several reasons why students opt to take one (or both) each year.

The PSAT

The PSAT is comprised of three sections just like the SAT: Reading, Writing & Language, and Math (divided into calculator and non-calculator sections). Each has a unique number of questions and amount of allotted time to complete them:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Reading | 47 questions | 60 minutes |
| Writing & Language | 44 questions | 35 minutes |
| Math (with a calculator) | 17 questions | 45 minutes |
| Math (without a calculator) | 31 questions | 25 minutes |
| TOTAL | 139 questions | 165 minutes of testing |

Why take the PSAT?

- **You want to bolster your college applications.** Taking the PSAT enters you into the **National Merit Scholarship Contest (NMSC)**. Perform well, and you could earn one of the **several commendations, and/or scholarships** awarded each year.
- **You are planning to take the SAT.** The PSAT's format translates well to the SAT. The PSAT is a good choice if you are looking to experience SAT-style questions in SAT-style testing conditions.
- **You want SAT practice without consequences.** While some schools require students to submit all of their SAT results as part of their application, PSAT scores are typically not included in said requests. This means you get the practice, but a poor performance won't come back to haunt you.
- **It's a cost-effective practice.** Many high schools administer the PSAT school-wide; if yours isn't one of them, it only costs \$15 to register.

The PreACT

Just like the PSAT mimics the content of the SAT, the PreACT is based upon the content and format of the ACT.

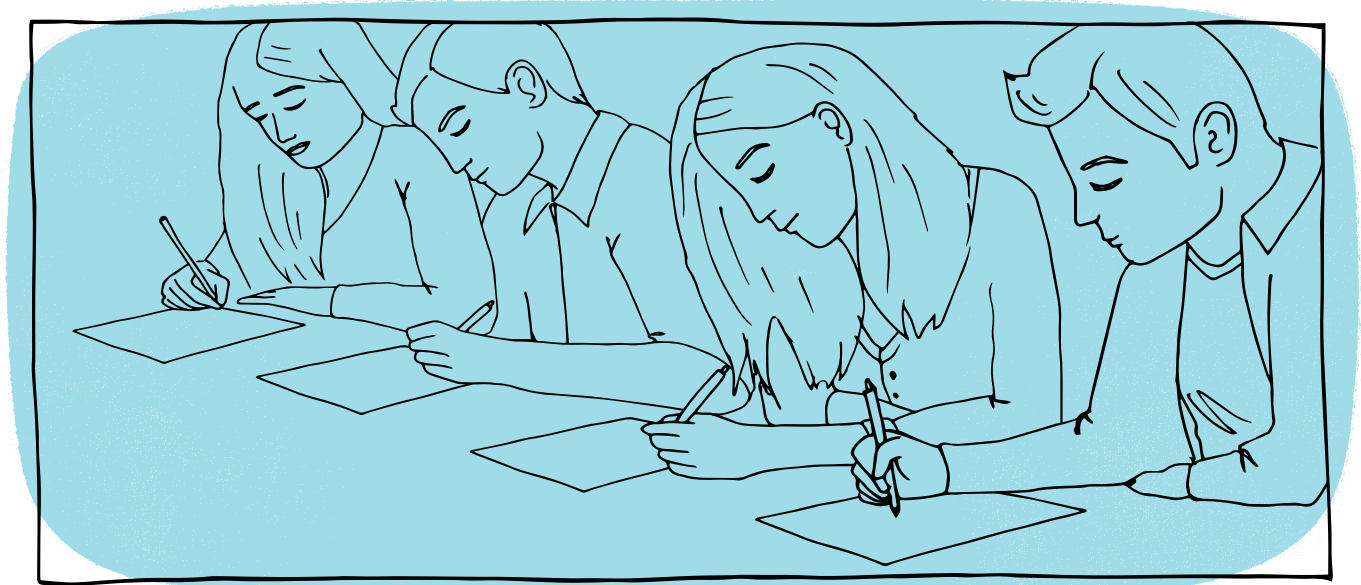
Unlike the PSAT, the PreACT contains a science section (just like the ACT does). Furthermore, the entire math section of the PreACT is calculator-optional – there is no separate non-calculator section for you to contend with.

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| English | 45 questions | 30 minutes |
| Math (with a calculator) | 36 questions | 40 minutes |
| Reading | 25 questions | 30 minutes |
| Science | 30 questions | 30 minutes |
| TOTAL | 136 questions | 130 minutes of testing |

Why take the PreACT?

- **You are planning to sit for the ACT.** The PreACT is aligned to the ACT in terms of both content and testing conditions. As such, the test provides an excellent opportunity to try out the test.
- **Your high school administers the ACT to every student.** If you are going to wind up taking the ACT in school anyway, taking the PreACT is an excellent way to see how prepared you are to be successful when your school will administer the ACT.
- **It's cheaper than the PSAT.** Currently, registering for the PreACT only costs \$12.
- **The Interest Inventory.** The PreACT score report includes a metric for translating test performance into suggested colleges and potential career tracks. It's hard to say how much useful information can be gleaned from these results, but for students unsure of where to aim their collegiate and career paths, something may be better than nothing!





SAT & ACT

When most people think about college entrance exams, they think of the SAT and the ACT. These two tests are taken by millions of students each year in an effort to demonstrate collegiate aptitude. The tests are similar enough that they have become interchangeable in the eyes of most colleges – most accept either. That said, some noteworthy differences between the two may make one test a better choice for you than the other.

The SAT

The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) has been one of the pillars of college entrance exams for nearly a century. While the test has undergone multiple changes over that span, its current iteration is comprised of a combination of writing, language, and math sections.

There is also an optional essay portion that some colleges require and others strongly urge applicants to submit. Some won't consider it at all. Before registering for the SAT (and shelling out the extra money for the essay), check out what your colleges of choice are looking to receive.

Format

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Reading | 52 questions | 65 minutes |
| Writing & Language | 44 questions | 35 minutes |
| Math (with a calculator) | 20 questions | 25 minutes |
| Math (without a calculator) | 38 questions | 55 minutes |
| Essay (optional) | 1 prompt | 50 minutes |
| TOTAL | 154 questions (not counting optional essay) | 180 minutes of testing (not counting optional essay) |



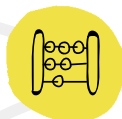
Content

By design, the SAT aims to assess your ability to grapple with “real world” problems. Some questions are evidence-based while others are content-based. Similarly, many of the questions require multi-step solutions.

- **The writing and language section** is all about editing content. Test takers are asked to read texts, find errors, and choose the best remedies for improvement. Be prepared – some charts and graphs will appear in this section as well.
- **The reading section** is focused on vocabulary, historical texts, and interpreting charts and graphs. There is no separate science or social studies section on the SAT, so the nonfiction content in the reading section serves to assess some of the overlapping skills.
- **The math section** includes both calculator and non-calculator portions and features a mix of multiple-choice and grid-in answers.

The problems focus on foundational mathematical elements like algebraic equations and systems, problem-solving, data analysis, and working with complex equations. There are some geometry and trigonometry questions as well, but these areas receive less focus than the other subjects.

- **The (optional) essay section** is designed to assess your ability to analyze an author’s argument rather than asking you to come up with one of your own. Citing evidence and unpacking persuasive techniques are crucial skills for success.



Scoring

Possible scores on the SAT range from 400-1600. Points are awarded for correct responses, and there are no point deductions for incorrect answers or unanswered questions. This means that if you’re stumped on a particular question, you should always take your best guess. Don’t leave any questions blank!

The mean scores for the class of 2019 were:

| SAT Section | Mean Score |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Evidence-Based Reading & Writing | 531 |
| Math | 528 |
| TOTAL | 1059 |

To put that into context or to assess your own performance, consider these score ranges:

| | |
|--------------------|-------|
| Outstanding | 1500+ |
| Excellent | 1400 |
| Very Good | 1300 |
| Good | 1200 |
| Average | 1090 |



Registration and test dates

The easiest way to sign up to take the SAT is to **register online**. Registration is also available **by mail**.

Be sure to stay up-to-date with **the latest test dates and registration deadlines** to ensure you will be able to take the test and receive your scores in time to complete your college applications.

The ACT

The ACT has continued to grow in popularity in recent years and has become the most widely taken college entrance exam in the United States. While its content is similar to the SAT, it is seen as the more quantitative and straightforward of the two.

The tradeoff for the more to-the-point question style is much more challenging time constraints. The ACT allows for fewer seconds per problem than the SAT.

The ACT includes English, math, and reading (just like the SAT does), but it also includes a separate science section. It is also worth noting that while calculators cannot be used on the science test, the ACT permits calculator usage for the entire math section.

Format

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| English | 75 questions | 45 minutes |
| Math (with a calculator) | 60 questions | 60 minutes |
| Reading | 40 questions | 35 minutes |
| Science | 40 questions | 35 minutes |
| Essay (optional) | 1 prompt | 40 minutes |
| TOTAL | 215 questions (not counting optional essay) | 175 minutes of testing (not counting optional essay) |



Content

The ACT is an entirely multiple-choice test divided into four subject-focused sections and an optional writing test (essay). While the sections are referred to as individual tests, they are all registered for and taken in a single test day session.

- **The ACT English test** focuses on grammar, syntax, and general editing skills. The content is similar to that of the SAT writing section but without the charts and graphs.
- **The ACT mathematics test** deals with the core math skills you should have learned throughout your educational career, up to and including your junior year of high school.

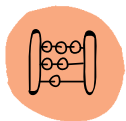
Approximately 60% of the test targets high school level math topics including algebra, geometry, probability & statistics, and working with various types of numerical and algebraic functions.

The remainder of the test deals with less complex mathematical skills but includes more multi-step computations requiring additional reasoning and skill-based connections.

- **The ACT reading test** has four sections each with its own prose reading passage(s). These texts are of a complexity mirroring the level you would see in a 100-level college course.

The questions focus on skills like comprehension, inference, sequencing, using context, and analyzing authors' crafts.

- **The ACT science test** is less about recalling scientific information as it is about employing science skills. You will see data sets, descriptions of experiments, and research summaries and then be asked to critically read and draw conclusions from them.
- **The (optional) ACT writing test** presents multiple perspectives on an issue and then requires you to present your own stance or argument. To be successful, you must be able to connect the provided perspectives to your own.



Scoring

Each section of the ACT is scored on a range from 1-36. The four scores are then averaged together and rounded to the nearest whole number to generate a composite score.

Like the SAT, points are awarded for correct answers. And just like the SAT, there are no point deductions for incorrect answers. Therefore, an educated guess beats a blank answer. Never leave a question blank!

In 2019, the average scores were as follows:

| ACT Test | Mean Score |
|------------------|-------------|
| English | 20.2 |
| Math | 20.5 |
| Reading | 21.3 |
| Science | 20.8 |
| Composite | 20.8 |

Source: **National Norms for ACT Test Scores for 2019-2020**



Registration and test dates

The ACT website contains **an up-to-date list of testing dates and registration deadlines.**

Once you have a test date selected, you will need to **register online** to secure your seat. Be advised that you will be **required to include a recent photograph of yourself** for security purposes.

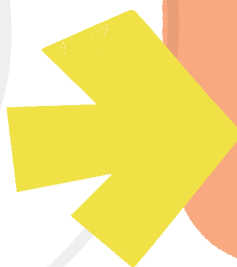
It is worth noting that registering by mail **is an option**, but not for all test dates. Save yourself the headaches and register online if possible.

SAT OR ACT - WHICH TEST SHOULD YOU TAKE?

Selecting the right test for you has a lot to do with how comfortable you are with the following aspects of each test. Your answer to these questions can help you determine which test is right for you.

| | ACT | SAT |
|---|--|---|
| How quickly do you work? | Less time per problem | More time per problem |
| How well do you perform with open-ended math problems? | All multiple choice | Multiple choice & grid-in |
| Do you NEED a calculator? | Calculator use permitted on all math questions | Calculator use permitted only on some math questions |
| How strong are your scientific reasoning skills? | Has a separate science section | Science-related problems and skills likely to appear in math and reading sections |
| Which optional essay is a better fit for your strengths? | Craft and defend an argument on a given topic | Identify and analyze an author's argument in a given text |

While some students opt to try both tests, you will be much better off selecting the one that is the best fit for your skills and experience. This way, you can focus and optimize your test prep experience for the best possible performance.



STILL NOT SURE
WHICH TEST IS
RIGHT FOR YOU?

We can help!



**tutor
doctor**
How learning hits home.



SAT SUBJECT TESTS

The SAT Subject Tests (formerly the SAT II tests) are used by colleges to evaluate your proficiency in particular subject areas. They test your knowledge of specific subjects on a high school level.

Each Subject Test is an hour long. They are all multiple-choice and scored on a 200–800 scale.

Some schools require particular SAT tests as admissions requirements, while others use them as placement exams to determine your course of study once you are enrolled.

The official SAT Subject Tests Student Guide provides up-to-date specifics about the full set of current offerings and examples of the types of content included in each test.

Why should you take SAT Subject Tests?

Highly selective colleges may require, recommend, or consider SAT Subject Test scores. Policies vary from school to school, so do your research early enough to make sure you give yourself enough time to prepare for and take the necessary tests.

Registration and test dates

Unlike the SAT, the SAT Subject Tests are not all available on every test day. It is crucial that you pay attention to **The College Board's list of SAT Subject Test registration and test dates** so that you don't miss an opportunity to take a test you need.

AP TESTS & COURSES

The College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Tests are designed to assess the level of mastery a student attained in an AP course. These 38 courses are designed to give students the opportunity to experience college-level rigor and potentially earn college credit for doing so.

When it comes to the AP tests, each of the 38 exams has its own unique requirements; however, almost all of the exams have several things in common:

- **Most exams are two to three hours long.** Be prepared to tackle a challenging exam with limited breaks. Eat a good breakfast and, if you're taking more than one exam on the same day, pack a lunch and some healthy snacks to keep you going.
- **The first part of the exam usually consists of multiple-choice questions.** You will choose one of four or five answer choices for each question and use a pencil to bubble in your choice on your AP answer sheet. Your total exam score on the multiple-choice section is based only on the number of questions answered correctly. You won't lose points for incorrect answers or unanswered questions.
- **The second part of the exam usually consists of free-response questions** that require you to generate your own responses. Depending on the exam, your responses could be in the form of an essay, a solution to a problem, or a spoken response. In most cases, you'll be writing your response in pen in the free-response exam booklet.
- **Exams are scored on a scale from 1-5.** Depending on the school you enroll in, certain AP scores may qualify you for college credit or, at the very least, exempt you from certain introductory-level courses. The cut score varies by school while some schools do not accept AP credit at all. That said, success in AP courses and on the accompanying AP tests looks great on a college application!

TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are legally entitled to certain educational modifications in school, odds are you can qualify for similar modifications on college admissions tests.

Be aware, both The College Board and ACT have very strict procedures and deadlines for acquiring these modifications. If you think you may qualify, begin getting your ducks in a row prior to registration.

For more information about testing accommodations, follow the links on the right for the current policies and practices.



[**SAT for students with disabilities**](#)

[**ACT accommodations**](#)

[**AP Exam modifications**](#)

TEST PREP

Once you know the test you are planning to take and when you're taking it, it's time to get to work! Regardless of the test you are preparing for, start with a free, full-length practice test which can be found online. This accomplishes several key things at the same time:

- **It establishes a baseline score.**
- **It identifies areas of greatest potential improvement.**
- **It increases your test-taking stamina.**

From there, **schedule a time to meet with your Tutor Doctor education consultant** to determine the best test prep option for you:

NOTE: Test prep course offerings may vary according to demand, availability and location. Not all features described below are available in all locations. Ask your education consultant for details.

TUTOR DOCTOR TEST PREP BOOT CAMP

Tutor Doctor's Test Prep Boot Camp is perfect for students just starting to consider test prep. Enrollment includes:

- **Tutor Doctor's Test Prep Workbook**
- **Up-to-date overviews of the test**
- **Introduction to test-taking strategies**
- **Tips & Tricks**
- **4-8 hours of classroom instruction**
- **Free recommendations for continuing test prep**

TUTOR DOCTOR GROUP COURSES

Tutor Doctor Group Courses are great for students who need a test prep program that goes beyond the basics. Enrollment in a group course includes:

- **Tutor Doctor's Test Prep Workbook**
- **Up-to-date overviews of the test**
- **Basic and Advanced test-taking strategies**
- **Hundreds of skill-builder exercises, tips, and tricks**
- **18-32 hours of classroom instruction covering every section of the test**
- **Full use of the Tutor Doctor Test Prep System**
 - Student login
 - Detailed test score reports
 - Instant feedback and support on lessons, quizzes and full-length tests
 - Access to 50+ hours of video solutions
 - Ability to flag problems for review at the next session
 - Weekly email progress reports for parents

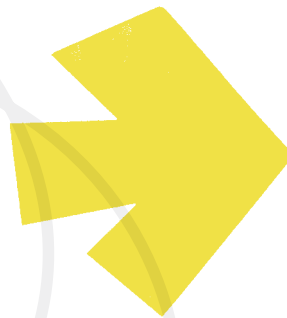
TUTOR DOCTOR ONE-TO-ONE TEST PREP

This is the best option for students who are serious about increasing their test scores and/or those that require flexible scheduling options.

A Tutor Doctor One-to-One Test Prep program includes:

- **Tutor Doctor's Test Prep Workbook**
- **Up-to-date overviews of the test**
- **Basic, Advanced and Personalized test-taking strategies**
- **Hundreds of skill-builder exercises, tips, and tricks**
- **18-40 hours of one-to-one instruction, providing in-depth coverage of the student's areas of greatest potential improvement**
- **3+ full-length practice tests**
- **Full use of the Tutor Doctor Test Prep System**
 - Student login
 - Detailed test score reports
 - Instant feedback and support on lessons, quizzes and full-length tests
 - Access to 50+ hours of video solutions
 - Ability to flag problems for review at the next session
 - Weekly email progress reports for parents

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CONTACT US TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT OUR TEST
PREP PROGRAMS.

ADMISSIONS AND TESTING TIMELINES

Depending on where you are in your college application process, your testing timeline will look different. Ideally, the process begins as an underclassman with strong academic work, taking the PSAT and/or PreACT, getting involved in your school and community, and doing some exploratory work visiting colleges and reading up on your options. However, some students get a later start on the process – and that’s OK!

The following timeline goes through the steps you need to take to ensure a smooth and optimal college admissions process starting with the summer prior to your junior year. If you are past that point already, be sure to do what you can to complete the relevant steps prior to where you are in the journey.



JUNIOR YEAR

The Summer Before

- Read for fun. Read for practice. Strong reading comprehension is essential for success on college admissions exams.
- Locate your Social Security Number. You’ll need it for college applications.
- Start thinking about college. Which classes do you enjoy? What are you good at? What do you enjoy doing outside of school?
- Some students should begin preparing for the PSAT/NMSQT. Most will just take the PSAT without preparation as a baseline practice activity. Should you prepare? Find out more on page 6 of this guide.

September

- Meet with your school counselor or an education consultant to make sure the classes you’re taking will make you a strong applicant for college.
- Begin participating in one or more extracurricular activity that you really care about.

October

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT.
- Begin researching colleges by attending a college fair. Start a list of colleges you may be interested in attending.
- Begin learning about financial aid by attending a family financial aid night at your school.

November

- Begin to research scholarships using **collegeboard.org** or another reputable service. Beware of scams!
- Begin to learn about the SAT and ACT. Consider taking a diagnostic test to identify the areas of greatest potential improvement.

December

- Review your PSAT/NMSQT Score Report with your school counselor or an education consultant to identify the areas of greatest potential improvement.
- Make a list of the features that matter most to you in a college. Refine your list of potential colleges.
- Make arrangements to prepare for the SAT or ACT. If you haven't already signed up to take a FREE practice test, do so now.
- Plan your SAT and/or ACT dates. Be sure to register for the test(s) as soon as registration begins. If you wait too long, you may have to take the test further from home or at an unfamiliar location.

January

- If you haven't already done so, now is the time to meet with an education consultant to plan your test prep.
- If English is not your primary language, choose a date to **take the TOEFL**.
- Spend some time thinking about potential college majors and careers. It's never too early to get excited about your future!
- Schedule trips to visit the colleges you are interested in attending. Be sure to time your visits so you can see the campus when classes are in session.

February

- Make a list of the teachers or counselors you would like to ask for letters of recommendation.
- If you are taking AP courses, register for the relevant AP tests and allocate time on your calendar in May to study for the tests.
- Ask your counselor or education consultant whether you need to take SAT Subject Tests.



March

- Register for SAT or ACT if you plan to take one of them in May.
- Refine your list of potential colleges further.
- Continue your test prep.
- Plan your courses for your senior year. Make sure that you're not only meeting graduation requirements but that you're also taking classes that will impress the colleges you're interested in attending.
- If you plan to play Division I or II sports in college, be sure to talk to your athletic director about NCAA requirements.

April

- Register for the SAT or ACT if you plan to take one of them in June.
- If you haven't already done so, schedule trips to visit the colleges you are interested in attending. Be sure to time your visits so you can see the campus when classes are in session. (Most American universities end for summer break in mid-May.)
- If you plan to work or volunteer over the summer, now is the time to coordinate those opportunities.

May

- Register for the ACT, SAT and/or SAT Subject Tests if you want to take them over the summer.
- Now is the time to formally request letters of recommendation from your counselor, teachers, coaches, or employers.

June

- Research local scholarships offered by community organizations, churches, and businesses. Your high school counselor should be able to help with this.



SENIOR YEAR

The Summer Before

- Register for the ACT, SAT, and/or SAT Subject Tests if you want to take them in October or November.
- If you plan to play Division I or II sports in college, register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.
- Visit the remaining colleges on your list. Be sure to call ahead to schedule a tour.
- Begin working on college application essays.
- Compose your resume to help you with college applications.

September

- Organize your final list of colleges. Be sure to include safety schools, reach schools, and likely schools.
- Visit **fafsa.ed.gov** to **get a FSA ID** for yourself and one of your parents. You'll need these to submit FAFSA forms.
- Schedule campus visits and interviews.
- Research family financial aid nights in your area.
- Apply to colleges with rolling admission (first-come, first-served) as early as possible.

October

- Register for the ACT, SAT and/or SAT Subject Tests if you want to take them in December or January.
- Complete and submit your FAFSA at **fafsa.ed.gov**. FAFSA may be submitted as early as October 1.
- If you're applying for Early Decision or Early Action, complete and submit your applications as soon as possible. Some colleges have October deadlines!
- Compose the first draft of your college essays. Be sure to review them with a teacher, parent, or tutor.



November

- If applying Regular Decision, most applications will be due in January. Continue to work on your essays and applications. Work with your parents, teachers, and/or a college essay expert to make sure they are flawless.
- Confirm that your SAT and/or ACT scores will be sent to the colleges of your choice.
- Make sure your counselor has the proper forms to submit your transcripts to your colleges before their deadlines.

December

- Finish all your college applications before winter break. Retain hard copies for you and your counselor.
- If you applied for Early Decision or Early Action, you should hear back by mid-December. If you were not granted admission, make plans to apply for admission elsewhere.
- Apply for scholarships before deadlines.
- Double-check with the financial aid office at the colleges on your list to see whether they require any additional financial aid forms.

January

- Submit your FAFSA or CSS Profile if you haven't already. Deadlines can be as early as February 1.
- Submit other financial aid forms. Always retain hard copies for your records.
- If a college has requested to see your midyear grades, provide the appropriate forms to your high school counselor.
- Notify your colleges if you have earned any additional honors or accomplishments.

February

- Contact your colleges to confirm that your applications have been received and are complete.
- If necessary, update your Student Aid Report. If any special circumstances affect your family's financial situation, contact each college's financial aid office.
- If you plan to take AP exams, make sure you're registered for the tests you wish to take. If your school doesn't offer AP tests, be sure to contact AP Services by March 1 to make arrangements.



March

- Read your admissions letters VERY carefully. Some may prompt you to take additional action.
- Consider visiting colleges a second time if you are having trouble making a final decision.
- Send copies of your FAFSA to any scholarship programs that require it.
- Keep your grades up!

April

- Work with your parents to compare financial aid offers from the schools you've been accepted to attend.
- Make your final decision. Formally accept the financial aid package and mail your deposit check to the college you've selected before the deadline (generally May 1).
- Notify the other colleges that you won't be attending so they can offer admission to another student.

May

- Take your AP exams. Be sure you've opted to have your AP Grade Report sent to your college.
- Keep your grades up! Be sure to plan ahead and study for finals.
- Write a letter of thanks to everyone who provided you with a letter of recommendation.

June

- Confirm that your counselor has sent your final transcript to your college (and NCAA Eligibility Center if you plan to play Division I or II sports).
- Consider summer employment to earn some money for college.
- Celebrate your graduation safely and responsibly!

TIPS FOR TEST DAY

Test day can be a stressful one if you're not prepared. Be sure you are equipped for a successful performance and smooth experience by taking the following considerations into account:



HAVE THE TOOLS YOU NEED

Do not walk into your testing location without:

- **A current and valid photo ID** – A license or other government-issued ID will be the best bet. If you need more options, check out the **ACT** and **SAT** websites for more acceptable forms of identification.
- **Your printed testing admissions ticket** – Unlike tickets for sporting events and concerts, showing the digital version won't get you in the door.
- **A handful of sharpened, soft lead, No. 2 pencils** – For most tests, pens and mechanical pencils won't be allowed. Stick with the classic.
- **An eraser** – The hi-polymer variety tend to work best on standardized test materials.
- **A manual pencil sharpener** – Points break. Pencils get dull. You get the idea.
- **A watch** – Timing and pacing are essential for successful standardized testing. That said, you never know if the room you take your test in will have a clock you can see or trust. Come prepared with your own.

Be warned, “smart watches” are considered contraband in the testing center. Get a cheap digital watch or testing timer for test day and leave your fancy wristwatch at home.

- **A permitted graphing calculator** – The **ACT** and **SAT** are very particular about the models and types of calculators that can and cannot be used. Bring the wrong one, and you'll be doing calculations on your own.
- **Fresh batteries** – You should be walking into the test with a fresh set of batteries in your calculator. However, always be prepared with a spare set just in case!



PREPARE YOUR BODY

- **Get some sleep** – Be sure to go to bed at a reasonable time the night before test day. Limit exposure to screens and electronic devices starting a few hours before going to bed to improve your overall sleep quality.
- **Start your day with a healthy breakfast** – Be sure to load up on all the major nutrients your brain and body will need. Opt for protein-rich food over sugars and carbohydrates. Don't overdo the caffeine, either!
- **Dress in layers** – Give yourself the option to counteract a testing room that is too cold or too hot by wearing multiple layers of clothing. Test day is definitely a function over fashion day.
- **Stay hydrated** – Have bottled water on hand to keep yourself hydrated. Your brain and body need it to perform their best!
- **Have healthy snacks available** – A steady intake of protein-rich foods (nuts, peanut butter, cheese, dairy, granola bars, trail mix, etc.) will help keep you going during long testing sessions.



PREPARE YOUR MIND

- **Have some go-to relaxation techniques** – We all feel stressed at some point, but the key is to be prepared with reliable ways to combat that stress. Try out different meditation and mindfulness strategies as a part of your test prep process. Figure out what works for you to quell anxieties and worry in the moment. Come test day, you'll be glad you did.
- **Choose a carrot** – You've worked really hard to prepare for your test. What's next? Give yourself a fun activity or treat to look forward to once you leave the test center. It will help keep your spirits up and shake off any lingering stress.



LIMIT SURPRISES

- **Practice the route** – Test day should never be your first experience traveling to your testing location. If you're scheduled to take the test at a location you've never been, perform a trial run the week before. If possible, make the drive at the same time as you'll need to make the drive on test day. This will help you prepare for any traffic or detours while also giving you a chance to identify key landmarks along the way.
- **Park it** – Once you've done a trial drive to your testing center, don't just drive past. Take a few minutes to figure out where you'll park on test day. If it appears that parking is limited or requires payment, be sure to plan a little extra time and bring money for the permit or meters. Remember, it doesn't matter how early you arrive to the testing location if you can't find a spot for your car!
- **Don't wait to pack** – You'll be stressed enough on test day, why add more responsibilities? Pack up your supplies, ID, testing ticket, and snacks the night before, so you aren't scrambling in the morning.



LEAVE PROHIBITED ITEMS AT HOME OR IN THE CAR

- **Cellphones** – Do not bring your cellphone into the testing center if you can avoid it. Turn it off and leave it in the car. If that is not an option, double and triple-check that your phone (and any other electronic device you bring with you to the testing room) is turned off and completely out of sight. There is no faster way to get your test disqualified than being seen (or heard) with an unauthorized electronic device.
- **Non-pencil writing implements** – Pens, highlighters, mechanical pencils, or any other writing implement you can think of that's not a trusty No. 2 pencil needs to be left at home.
- **Written material and books** – Last minute studying in the car or outside is one thing, but do not bring any books, flashcards, notes, dictionaries, or other printed material (other than your testing ticket, of course) into the testing center.
- **Other stuff** – A good rule of thumb is that if the item isn't explicitly listed as both necessary and approved to be in the testing room, it's probably banned. Music players, smartwatches, cameras, fitness bands, tablets, wearables, laptops, pagers, Game Boys, transistor radios, walkie-talkies... leave them at home.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I need to take the SAT or ACT?

The answer depends on your goals. Are you planning on applying to college? If the answer is yes, then you should plan on taking either the SAT or ACT.

What are “Test Optional” schools?

Schools that identify as “Test Optional” have removed tests like the SAT and ACT as entrance requirements. Scores are still considered when a student includes them in his or her application.

The reality is, the majority of the “Test Optional” schools are affiliated with specific trades, religious affiliations, online schools, and/or exist as for-profit universities. If you are looking to maximize your post-secondary school options, you should take the ACT or SAT.

Can I take both the SAT and ACT?

You can. However, it may be in your best interest to **figure out which test is a better match** for your skills and academic experience and then prepare for one test rather than taking swings at both.

How many times can I take the SAT or ACT?

There are theoretically no limits on the number of attempts of the SAT or the ACT. Be warned, some schools (including several in the Ivy League) require applicants to submit their entire admissions testing history. That means they will see the results of every one of your attempts – good, bad, or ugly.

What does “Score Choice” mean?

The College Board allows test takers to choose where their scores will be sent to schools. That said, you will still need to “choose” to send all of your scores to the schools that require applicants to submit all of their scores.

What is “Super Scoring”?

“Super Scoring” means combining your best results on individual test sections to create one, optimal composite score. For schools that allow it, “Super Scoring” sounds like a great way to boost your numbers – but remember: everyone else can do it too!

What is the benefit of hiring a tutor rather than using free resources like Khan Academy or ACT Academy?

There's nothing wrong with the free, reputable test prep resources out there. However, they only represent one component of a successful test prep program.

Think about it this way:

If your goal was to get in shape, you could start exercising and eating healthy. In time, you should see some overall improvement.

Compare that approach to someone who, rather than going it alone, hires a personal trainer and consults with a nutritionist to create a total body, personalized approach to fitness and wellness. With professionals offering tailored advice and providing accountability, both the degree and pace of success are likely to increase dramatically.

Tutors are the personal trainers of the academic world. By taking advantage of comprehensive and personalized support, students are more likely to achieve better results and do so faster than those who rely upon free online resources alone.



COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS GLOSSARY

Academic Advisor - A member of a school's faculty who provides advice and guidance to students on academic matters, such as course selections.

Accreditation - Recognition that a college meets acceptable standards in its programs.

ACT - A standardized college admission test. It features four main sections: English, math, reading and science — and an optional essay section.

AP (Advanced Placement) Program - A program offered by the College Board, a U.S.-based nonprofit educational organization, that allows students to take college-level courses while in high school. Students can then take standardized AP exams; those with qualifying scores can earn credit at certain colleges and universities.

Articulation Agreement - An agreement between two-year and four-year colleges that makes it easier to transfer credits between them. It spells out which courses count for degree credit and the grades you need to earn to get credit.

Associate Degree - An undergraduate degree awarded by a college or university upon successful completion of a program of study, usually requiring two years of full-time study. An associate degree is typically awarded by community colleges; it may be a career or technical degree, or it may be a transfer degree, allowing students to transfer those credits to a four-year bachelor's degree-granting school.

Award Letter - A letter notifying students that they've received financial aid.

Bachelor's Degree - An undergraduate degree awarded by a college or university upon successful completion of a program of study, typically requiring at least four years (or the equivalent) of full-time study. Common degree types include Bachelor of Arts (B.A. or A.B.), which refers to the liberal arts, and Bachelor of Science (B.S.). A bachelor's degree is required before starting graduate studies.

Candidate's Reply Date - An agreement many colleges follow that gives applicants until May 1 to accept or decline offers of admission. This agreement gives students time to get responses from most of the colleges they have applied to before deciding on one.

Academic Unit - A unit of credit given for one year's study of a college-preparatory or academic subject in high school.

Career College - (Usually for-profit) college that trains students for a specific occupation. Also known as technical schools or vocational schools.

CB Code - A 4-digit code that students use to identify which colleges or scholarship organizations will receive their SAT score reports.

Class Rank - A measurement of how your academic achievement compares with that of other students in your grade. This number is usually determined by using a weighted GPA that takes into account both your grades and the difficulty of the courses you've taken.

CLEP (College-Level Examination Program) - A program in which students receive college credit by earning a qualifying score on a variety of exams (business, composition & literature, world languages, history and social sciences, science, and mathematics).

College - The generic term for an institution of higher education (after high school).

College-preparatory Subjects - Areas of high school study required for admission to, or recommended as preparation for, college.

Common Application - The standard application used by colleges that are subscribers to the Common Application Group.

Community/Junior College - A two-year college. Community colleges are public. Junior colleges are private.

Concentration - A specialized area of study within a major.

Conditional Acceptance - Admission offered on the condition that a student successfully complete specified requirements (e.g. attend summer school or maintain a minimum GPA).

Credit Hour - A standard unit of measurement for college courses. Each credit hour represents one classroom hour per week.

Credit/Placement by Examination - Students who demonstrate proficiency on tests such as CLEP or AP exams may be able to earn credit for college courses and be placed in higher-level courses.

Course Load - The number of classes or credits a student takes during a specific term.

Deferred Admission - Permission from a college that has accepted you to postpone enrolling in the college. The postponement is usually for up to one year.

Degree - An award given by a college or university certifying that a student has completed a course of study.

Dormitory - A residence hall.

Double Major - Any program in which a student completes the requirements of two majors at the same time.

Dual Enrollment - The practice of enrolling in college courses while still in high school.

Early Action - An option to submit your applications before the regular deadlines. When you apply early action, you get admission decisions from colleges earlier than usual. Early action plans are not binding, which means that you do not have to enroll in a college if you are accepted early. Some colleges have an early action option called EA II, which has a later application deadline than their regular EA plan.

Early Decision - An option to submit an application to your first-choice college before the regular deadline. When you apply early decision, you get an admission decision earlier than usual. Early decision plans are binding. You agree to enroll in the college immediately if admitted and offered a financial aid package that meets your needs. Some colleges have an early decision option called ED II, which has a later application deadline than their regular ED plan.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) - The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is a measure of your family's financial strength and is calculated according to a formula established by law. Your family's taxed and untaxed income, assets, and benefits (such as unemployment or Social Security) are all considered in the formula. Also considered are your family size and the number of family members who will attend college during the year.

Elective - A course that is not required for the completion of one's chosen major or the college's core curriculum, and can be used to fulfill the credit-hour requirement.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) - A form completed by all applicants for federal student aid. Most colleges require the FAFSA for awarding their own institutional funds, and in many states, completion of the FAFSA is also sufficient to establish eligibility for state-sponsored aid programs.

Federal Code Number - A six-digit number that signifies a specific college to which students want their FAFSA form submitted. Also known as a Title IV number.

Federal Direct Loan Program - an education loan program in which students or parents borrow directly from the U.S. Department of Education instead of a commercial bank. Federal loans often feature lower rates and do not require you to start making payments until you graduate, unenroll, or change your enrollment status to less than half-time.

Financial Aid Package - Money given or loaned to you to help pay for college. Financial aid can come from federal and state governments, colleges, and private organizations.

Financial Need - The difference between a student's expected family contribution (EFC) and the cost of attending the college.

For-Profit College - A private institution operated by its owners as a profit-making enterprise.

General Education Requirements - Courses that give undergraduates background in the primary academic disciplines: natural sciences, social sciences, mathematics, literature and language, and fine arts.

Grade Point Average (GPA) - A system used by many schools for evaluating the overall scholastic performance of students. Grade points are determined by multiplying the number of hours given for a course by the numerical value of the grade and then dividing the sum of all grade points by the total number of hours carried. The most common system of numerical values for grades is A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0.

Graduate Degree - A degree pursued after a student has earned a bachelor's degree. The master's degree which requires a one to three-year course of study is usually earned after the bachelor's. A doctoral degree requires further study.

Grant - A type of financial aid that consists of an amount of free money given to a student, often by the federal or a state government, a company, a school or a charity. A grant does not have to be repaid. "Grant" is often used interchangeably with "scholarship."

Greek Life - Fraternities and Sororities. Greek organizations have different missions and themes. Some are service oriented. Different schools place different emphasis on the Greek community.

Hispanic-serving College - A college where Hispanic students comprise at least 25% of the full-time undergraduate enrollment.

Historically Black College - An institution founded prior to 1964 whose mission was historically, and remains, the education of African Americans.

Honors Program - A special program for very able students that offers the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acceleration, or some combination of these.

Humanities - The branches of learning that usually include art, the classics, dramatic art, English, general and comparative literature, journalism, music, philosophy, and religion. Many colleges divide their offerings into three divisions: humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

In-State Tuition - The tuition that a public institution charges residents of its state.

International Baccalaureate (IB) - A high school curriculum offered by some schools in the United States and other countries. Some colleges award credit for completion of this curriculum.

Internship - A short-term, supervised work experience, usually related to the student's major field, for which the student earns academic credit. The work can be full or part-time, paid or unpaid.

Intersession Term - Intersession is a short break or mini-term between the traditional, standard academic semesters. An intersession may be a period of a few weeks between semesters or quarters during which students can take short, accelerated classes or complete other academic work.

Liberal Arts - The study of humanities (literature, the arts, and philosophy), history, foreign languages, social sciences, mathematics, and natural sciences. The focus is on development of general knowledge and reasoning rather than specific skills.

Liberal Arts College - A college where study is focused on liberal arts with little emphasis on pre-professional training.

Major - The field of study in which students concentrate, or specialize during their undergraduate study.

Master's Degree - A graduate degree pursued after the Bachelor's degree.

Merit Aid - Financial aid awarded on the basis of academic achievement, artistic or athletic talent, leadership qualities, or similar traits.

Minor - Coursework that is not as extensive as that in a major but gives students some specialized knowledge of a second field.

Need-based Financial Aid - Financial aid awarded on the basis of a family's inability to pay the full cost of attending a particular college.

Open Admission - A policy of accepting any high school graduate, no matter what his or her grades are, until all spaces in the incoming class are filled. Almost all two-year community colleges have an open-admission policy. However, a college with a general open-admission policy may have admission requirements for certain programs.

Out-of-State Tuition - The tuition a public college or university charges residents of other states. Out-of-state tuition can be three to four times as much as in-state tuition at the same school.

Pell Grant - A federally sponsored and administered need-based grant to undergraduate students. Congress annually sets the dollar range. Eligibility is determined by a student's expected family contribution, the total cost of attendance at the college, and whether the student is attending the college full or part-time.

Perkins Loan - A low-interest loan, federally funded campus-based on need, for undergraduate study. Repayment is deferred until completion of the student's education and may be further deferred for limited periods of time for service in the military, Peace Corps, or approved comparable organizations.

The total debt may be forgiven by the federal government if the recipient enters a career of service as a public health nurse, law enforcement officer, public school teacher, or social worker.

Placement Test - A battery of tests designed to assess a student's aptitude and level of achievement in various academic areas so that he or she can select the most appropriate classes.

Portfolio - A collection of examples of a student's work assembled to provide a representation of the student's achievements and skill level.

Priority Date - The date by which an application must be received in order to be given full consideration. This can apply to admissions, financial aid and on-campus housing. After the priority date passes, applications may be considered on a case-by-case or first-come-first-served basis.

Private College/University - A postsecondary institution controlled by a private individual or a non-governmental agency. A private institution is usually not supported primarily by public funds and its programs are not operated by publicly elected or appointed officials. Stanford University, for example, is a private school.

Preliminary SAT / National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) - The PSAT/NMSQT is administered by high schools to sophomores and juniors each year in October and serves as the qualifying test for scholarships awarded by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.

Public College/University - An institution that is supported by taxes and other public revenue and governed by a county, state, or federal government agency.

Quarter - An academic calendar period of about 12 weeks. Four quarters make up an academic year, but most students attend only three of the four quarters. Students can accelerate their progress by attending all four quarters.

Reach School - A school you'd be thrilled to attend but that you're not likely to be accepted to attend.

Registrar - The college official who registers students. The registrar may also be responsible for keeping permanent records and maintaining your student file.

Regular Admission - Admission during the college's normal calendar for admission, as opposed to Early Decision or Early Action.

Reciprocity Agreement - An agreement between neighboring states that allows students from both states to attend colleges in each state and pay the in-state tuition rate.

Residence Hall - On-campus living facility (also known as a dormitory or dorm.)

Rolling Admission - An admission policy of considering each application as soon as all required information (such as high school records and test scores) has been received, rather than setting an application deadline and reviewing applications in a batch. Colleges that use a rolling admission policy usually notify applicants of admission decisions quickly.

Safety School - A college you'd be happy to attend that's also sure to accept you.

SAT - The College Board's standardized college admission test. It features three main sections: math, reading and writing, which includes a written essay.

SAT Subject Test - Hour-long, content-based college admission tests that allow you to showcase achievement in specific subject areas: English, history, math, science and languages. Some colleges use Subject Tests to place students into the appropriate courses as well as in admission decisions. Based on your performance on the test(s), you could potentially fulfill basic requirements or earn credit for introductory-level courses.

School Day Testing - SAT and ACT tests that are offered during the normal school hours at a high school.

Score Choice - Allows students to submit only their best SAT or ACT score.

Self-help Aid - Student financial aid - such as loans and jobs - that requires repayment or employment.

Semester - A term or period of about 16 weeks. Colleges on a semester system offer two periods of instruction, fall and spring, per year. Often a shorter summer session is offered for certain courses.

Stafford Loan - A federal direct loan program that allows a student to borrow money for educational expenses. Subsidized Stafford loans are offered by colleges based on need. The federal government pays the interest while the borrower is in college. Unsubsidized Stafford loans are non-need-based and the interest begins accumulating immediately. For both programs, repayment does not begin until after the student has completed college.

Student Aid Report (SAR) - A report produced by the U.S. Dept. of Education and sent to students in response to their having filed the FAFSA. The SAR contains information that the student provided on the FAFSA as well as the resulting expected family contribution (EFC), which the financial aid office will use in determining the student's eligibility for Federal Pell Grant and other federal student aid programs.

Subsidized Loan - A loan awarded to a student on the basis of financial need. The federal government or the state awarding the loan pays the borrower's interest while they are in college at least half-time, thereby subsidizing the loan.

Technical College - (see **Career College**)

Super Scoring - The policy of allowing a student to submit his or her best scores from each section of the SAT, regardless of whether those scores were achieved on the same day.

Transcript - The official record of your coursework at a school or college. Your high school transcript is usually required for college admission and for some financial aid packages.

Transfer Program - An education program in a two-year college (or four-year college that offers associate degrees), primarily for students who plan to continue their studies in a four-year college or university.

Trimester - A period of about 15-weeks on the academic calendar. Three trimesters make up one year. Students typically attend two trimesters per year.

Tuition - An amount of money charged by a school per term, per course or per credit, in exchange for instruction and training. Tuition generally does not include the cost of textbooks, room and board, and other fees.

Undergraduate - A college student who is working toward an associate or a bachelor's degree.

University - A postsecondary institution that typically offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. University is often used interchangeably with "college."

Wait-List - The list of applicants who may be admitted to a college if space becomes available. Colleges wait to hear if all the students they accepted decide to attend. If students don't enroll and there are empty spots, a college may fill them with students who are on the waiting list. Learn more about wait lists.

Weighted Grade Point Average (GPA) - A grade point average that's calculated using a system that assigns a higher point value to grades in more-difficult classes. For example, some high schools assign the value of 5.0 (instead of the standard 4.0) for an A earned in an AP class.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

THE COLLEGE BOARD (SAT)

 <https://pages.collegeboard.org/contact-us>

AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING (ACT)

 <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/contact-act.html>

PSAT/NMSQT

 collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10

THE AP (ADVANCED PLACEMENT) PROGRAM

 apstudent.collegeboard.org/home

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE (IB)

 ibo.org

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - FINANCIAL AID

 studentaid.ed.gov

FAFSA

 Fafsa.ed.gov

PLEASE NOTE:

- The most up to date information can be found on the College Board and ACT websites.
- SAT is a registered trademark of the College Board. The College Board does not endorse Tutor Doctor and is not affiliated with these tutoring services.
- Where 'ACT' is mentioned, the following website is assumed to be found: **www.act.org**