

Career & College Planning for Juniors



Oakmont Regional High School

Ashburnham, Massachusetts

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THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

AN OVER VIEW

During the spring of your junior year you will meet with your guidance counselor to complete the selection of your senior year courses, to discuss possible career pathways and begin the process of researching colleges that you may be interested in attending if appropriate. You will be encouraged to use Naviance to complete the “Strengths Explorer” and “Career Interest Profile.”

Naviance is a comprehensive web-based tool that contains data on colleges throughout the country. Students may search for colleges based on criteria such as size and location, majors, cost and more. Students can look up admissions requirements, activities offered and statistics about the student body at the click of a button. Information on specific careers is also available here. You may access Naviance as frequently as you wish- link available under Guidance Tab on Oakmont Web page.

- * After a list of schools has been identified and researched, it is recommended that students (and parents) visit a number of these schools. College tours and/or interviews can be arranged through the college admissions office. “College Visit Permission Forms” are available on Naviance. Also, representatives from many colleges visit the Guidance office throughout the fall. Check your Naviance account to see which college reps are scheduled to visit and sign up for the visit using your Naviance account.
- * Students planning to apply to four year colleges must take the necessary college entrance exam (SAT or ACT) during the spring of their junior year and/or fall of their senior year if not satisfied with test results.
- * It is recommended that three to five applications be submitted in the fall of the senior year (on-line is preferred), no later than the **first week of December** - even if the college deadline is not until much later in the winter.
- * Finally, financial aid forms should be filled out on-line beginning in October of your senior year. Whereas all colleges require the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), most private colleges also require that the CSS/Financial Aid Profile be completed. It is your responsibility to be aware of important deadlines

CHOOSING A COLLEGE

The process of choosing a college involves matching your own personality, interests, talents and academic profile to that of any number of colleges which would be "right" for you. Remember, there are many colleges at which you can be both happy and successful. Log in to your Naviance account and use the Super Match College Search. If you wish, answer the following questions and create a chart (you'll find one in appendix A) to compare your answers with characteristics found at the colleges that you may be interested in attending.

FIVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

- * What type of college would you like to attend and what field of study do you think you want to major in? (It is common to be unsure of this, so don't panic. You might want to consider a college with a variety of majors.)
- * In what climate and how far away from home do you want to be?
- * What characteristics do you seek? What size school are you interested in e.g. small or large, co-ed or single sex, private or public, two-year or four-year?
- * What environment would you be most comfortable in e.g. a rural, urban or suburban campus?
- * What type of organizations would you want to have access to e.g. marching band, fraternities/sororities, Division I, II, III athletics, ROTC, special education services, etc.?

COMPARING COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS

Gathering information about colleges begins with talking to friends, family, teachers, alumni and guidance counselors. College fairs offer an opportunity to collect data on a large variety of schools while minimizing travel expenses. Make sure you sign up to attend this year's college fair in May.

Using the "Super Match College Search" on Naviance you can "pin" and compare schools easily and create a list of schools to visit. Remember that this is the place where you may be living for the next four years. Choose it with your own needs and interests in mind.

CHOOSING A COLLEGE

Whereas most students at Oakmont tend to apply to three or four colleges, those who apply to highly selective schools sometimes apply to more than five. It is generally recommended that schools from three different categories be considered:

1. "Top" choices which might be viewed as "long shots" or "reach schools";
2. "Realistic" choices or those at which you have at least a 50% chance of getting accepted to;
3. "Insurance" or "safety" schools at which your acceptance would be highly probable.

Although a similar philosophy of choosing a range of schools for financial reasons might be advisable, in reality the Financial Aid process often minimizes these differences.

The most important consideration, however, is that you find a school at which you will be happy, regardless of cost and name recognition - it does not have to be the most prestigious to be the best for *you*!

Some more questions to answer while researching individual colleges...

1. What are the admission requirements?
2. Does the college use the Common Application?
3. Do they have all possible majors you are considering?
4. What are the core classes required to graduate?
5. What are the specific course offerings in the major of choice?
6. When can you schedule a campus visit or take a tour?

THE COLLEGE VISIT

After a list of possible colleges has been identified, visiting a number of schools is highly recommended. These visits can be arranged through each college's admissions office. Log on to college websites and look under "Prospective Students" to learn more about individual versus group tours, open houses, and their policy on interviews - some schools require them, some recommend them and many do neither. Plan to visit campus when classes are in session, and to see as much of the campus as possible. Talk directly to any students you meet on campus to get a feel for the place.

College visits that take place during the school day at Oakmont must have Guidance Counselor and Administration's approval, a parent signature, and verification from the college admissions office. This will be considered an excused absence. Up to five visits are allowed during junior and senior year.

COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES AT OAKMONT

Each Fall, we are fortunate to have many college representatives come to our school to meet with students. Most often these representatives are from the New England area. If you watch the visitation schedule (on Naviance) carefully you may have a chance to meet an admissions counselor from one of your favorite schools or you might sign up to hear about a new school. Students are encouraged to spend some time gaining information in this convenient way. The schedule for college rep. visits is posted on Naviance, students must sign up in Naviance to attend a meeting.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Because transferring from one college to another requires additional effort and can mean a loss of credit plus extra expense, it is important to think ahead and anticipate what you will need and want from the college experience. Consider whether you might like the opportunity to participate in special programs. For example, you might want to participate in an internship to prepare you for the world of work. You might like an opportunity to study abroad. You may want to consider an ROTC program. Check whether these or other options are available at the schools you select.

Campus Visit Checklist

Visiting a college campus helps you get a sense of what a college — and life at that college — is like. This can help you decide whether the college is right for you.

GATHER INFORMATION

Find out what you need to do to apply, and see if the college's class and major offerings are what you want:

- Take part in a group information session at the admission office.
- Interview with an admission officer.
- Pick up financial aid forms.
- Sit in on a class that interests you. If classes aren't in session, just see what the classrooms are like.
- Meet a professor who teaches a subject that interests you.
- Talk to students about what they think of their classes and professors.
- Get the names and business cards of the people you meet so you can contact them later if you have questions.

EXPLORE THE CAMPUS

Get a feel for student life, and see if this college is a place where you will do well:

- Take a campus tour.
- Talk to current students about the college and life on campus.
- Check out the freshman dorms, and stay overnight with a student, if possible.
- Visit the dining hall, fitness center, library, career center, bookstore, and other campus facilities.
- Talk to the coaches of sports that you may want to play.
- Walk or drive around the community surrounding the campus.

CHECK OUT CAMPUS MEDIA

Tune in to learn what's happening on campus and what's on students' minds:

- Listen to the college radio station.
- Read the student newspaper.
- Scan bulletin boards to see what daily student life is like.
- Go to the career center and learn what services it offers.
- Browse the school's website and any campus blogs.
- Read other student publications, such as department newsletters, and literary reviews.

GET THE MOST OUT OF A CAMPUS VISIT IN **6 STEPS**

1 DECIDE WHERE AND HOW

See if your school arranges group trips to colleges or if you could get a group of friends together and visit the campus. A family trip is another option and allows you to involve your family in the process.

2 PREPARE FOR YOUR VISIT

Before you set out, get a map of the college campus and pick out places of interest. Call the college's admission office to schedule a guided tour of the campus.

3 TAKE YOUR OWN TOUR

Just wandering around the campus on your own or with friends can be the best way to get a feel for what a college is like.

4 EXPLORE THE FACILITIES

Finding the spots on campus where students gather or asking a student where the best place to eat can give you a feel for the character of the college. Visit the library and check out the gym or theater. Ask an admission officer if you can tour a dorm and a classroom.

5 MAKE CONNECTIONS

Talk to current students. Ask the students at the next table or sitting nearby what they like best about the college.

6 TAKE NOTES

During your visit, write down some notes about your experience. What did you see that excited you? Are there aspects of the college that you don't like? If so, what are they?

Questions to Ask During Your Visit:

ASK TOUR GUIDES/STUDENTS

- What are the best reasons to go to this college?
- What's it like to go from high school to college?
- What do you do in your free time? On the weekends?
- What do you love about this college?
- What do you wish you could change about this college?
- Why did you choose this college?
- What is it like to live here?
- What does the college do to promote student involvement in campus groups, extracurricular activities, or volunteerism?

ASK PROFESSORS

- What are the best reasons to go to this college?
- Can a student be mentored by professors, graduate students, or upperclassmen?
- How are professors rated by the college? Does the college think mentoring and meetings for project guidance are important?
- How does the college help students have access to professors outside class? Do professors join students for lunch, help with community service groups, or guide student organizations?
- How many students do research or other kinds of projects for a semester or more?

ASK FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

- How much has your total college cost for each student risen in the past year?
- How much do your students usually owe in loans when they graduate?
- What is the average income of graduates who had the same major that interests me?
- Will my costs go up when your tuition goes up, or can we use the same tuition rate I started with so I'll know the costs for four years? What should I expect in terms of increases in living expenses?
- How many students usually graduate in the major that interests me? How long do these students usually take to get their degrees? In what ways does the college help students graduate in four years?



OAKMONT REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL
"Educating for success – Now and in the Future"

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CAMPUS VISIT EXCUSED ABSENCE FORM

For _____
(student name)

College Name _____ Date of Visit _____

Student Information:

- You must be a junior or senior in good academic standing.
- Permission must be granted prior to college visit.
- Parent, Student, Guidance, Administrator signature all required *before* college visit.
- College/admissions representative signature required.
- Student to return completed form to the Main Office.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Information:

- Due to unforeseen circumstances, parent must call school the day of the visit to verify absence.
- Absence is considered unexcused until completed form is returned to main office following the college visit.

Step 1: Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Step 2: Guidance Counselor Approval Signature: _____

Step 3: Administration Signature Approval Signature: _____

Step 4: For college/admissions representative (Below):

Date: _____

College Name: _____

College Representative Signature: _____

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING PROGRAMS

Standardized tests, which are used as a basis for comparing students from a wide variety of high schools, serve as only **one** of the many factors which colleges use when making admissions decisions.

- * This process typically begins in October of the sophomore/junior year with the taking of the **PSAT/NMSQT** (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test). Whereas a handful of students at Oakmont benefit each year by qualifying for National Merit Scholarship recognition, most benefit by using this as an introductory experience in this style of testing.
- * The **SAT TEST**, The new SAT will provide two scores (a combined Reading and Writing score, and a Math score) on a 200 to 800 scale rather than the three scores on the old SAT. There will not be a penalty for wrong answers on the new SAT. The Essay section on the new SAT is optional (each college will set its own policy about requiring or not requiring the Essay. This year we are recommending that students take the essay portion. Students typically take the SAT in the spring of the junior year and again in the fall of the senior year if not satisfied with test results. Registration bulletins available in guidance. Register on-line! www.collegeboard.org
- * The **SAT SUBJECT TESTS**, refers to the achievement tests which measure actual knowledge acquired in any one of twenty different subject areas. These can also be taken during the spring (May or June) of the junior year or fall/winter (November, December or January) of the senior year. These tests are more often required at highly selective colleges and are usually used for placement purposes rather than for meeting certain admission standards. The SAT Subject Tests are also a way to compete for the MCAS Mastery (Stanley Koplik) Scholarship. Eligible students are notified by the Department of Education.
- * The **ACT** (American College Testing) program should not be confused with the SAT. The ACT is a content-based test and includes a science component. Most Colleges accept either test to determine college readiness. Students planning to take the ACT should also elect to complete the optional **WRITING TEST**. Registration bulletins are available in the guidance office. Register on-line! www.act.org
- * The **TOEFL** (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is for students whose native language is other than English. You must register on-line at Educational Testing Services.org

The "School Code Number" for Oakmont at all of these testing programs is **221958**.

FACT SHEET FOR JUNIORS/SENIORS CONCERNING ADMISSIONS TESTING

Dates to remember

Junior Year SAT Reasoning Test and/or
SAT Subject Tests* May 7 or June 4, 2016

* Check to see if these are required by your specific college. They should be taken as close in time as possible to the completion of the related courses.

ACT April 19 or June 11, 2016

Senior Year SAT Reasoning Test October 1, 2016
SAT Subject Tests* November 5, 2016
December 3, 2016

ACT September 10, 2016
October 22, 2016
December 10, 2016

* Check to see if required by specific colleges and universities. Also, be aware of application deadlines of your colleges.

Special Notes

The bulletin for the SAT and ACT Programs is available in the guidance office. This bulletin contains specific information for both SAT Reasoning and SAT Subject Test registration as well as ACT registration. Students are encouraged to register on-line at www.collegeboard.com (for the SAT) or www.act.org (for the ACT).

PLEASE BE VERY AWARE of the SAT and ACT sign-up **deadlines** which are *more than one month* before the actual test date.

FACT SHEET FOR JUNIORS/SENIORS CONCERNING COLLEGE BOARDS

SAT Fees

2016 – 2017 Fees are:

\$43.00 SAT Reasoning Test (no essay)

\$54.50 SAT with essay

\$26.00 * SAT Subject Tests Basic Registration Fee (\$26.00) plus *\$18.00
extra per test; up to 3 tests may be taken on any
given test date.

ACT fees

\$39.50 ACT Assessment (No writing)

\$56.50 ACT Plus Writing

Note: Late registration fee is \$23.00 for the ACT. Late registration for the
SAT is \$28.00 in addition to the basic test fee.

Other service fees are outlined on the SAT/ACT Bulletins.

Many services are also available via the internet.

Remember

The School Code for Oakmont is 221958 (also referred to as the CEEB code.)
This is used on registration forms and on the college application forms as well.

The PSAT test (October) helps to prepare students for the SAT and for National
Merit Scholarship consideration.

The New SAT Reasoning Test is a 3 hour test that measures reading, writing
and mathematical abilities. (plus 50 minutes for essay).

SAT Subject Tests measure knowledge of particular subjects as well as one's
ability to apply that knowledge. Some selective colleges require one or more of
these tests for admission or placement. Some colleges will specify which test(s)
to take. Others permit students to choose their own.

The ACT is a 4 hour test without the written portion; it measures skills in
English, Mathematics, Reading and Science. Add 1 hour for the written portion.

ADMISSIONS STANDARDS MASSACHUSETTS STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) admissions standards for the state colleges and UMass system emphasizes a strong academic high school background so that students enter college ready to learn. The standards were adopted in the fall of 1996 and have been amended and represent the following requirements. These standards represent the minimum requirements for admission and could be higher based on program and college selectivity. (For example: Physical Therapy, Nursing, and Engineering programs may require higher grade point averages.)

Freshmen Admission:

I. Grade Point Average Requirement for State College and Universities: 3.0
The grade point average requirement for admission consideration to any four-year public college or University in Massachusetts is 3.0. The admissions officers at each public college will re-calculate the student's high school grades of all college preparatory courses. Calculations include additional value for Advanced Placement and/or Honors courses. These grade point average recalculations may reflect a different overall average than that reported by the high school.

II. SAT Sliding Scale Range: The Scale applies only when students fall below the minimum grade point average listed above. For example, a student who has a

Applicant G.P.A.	SAT score must be for:		ACT Score
	State College	University	
3.00-4.00	NA	NA	NA
2.51-2.99	920	950	19
2.41-2.50	960	990	20
2.31-2.40	1000	1030	21
2.21-2.30	1040	1070	22
2.11-2.20	1080	1110	23
2.00-2.10	1120	1150	24

No State of Mass. College or University will admit a student with a GPA below 2.0

III. Academic Unit Requirements: 17 Core Courses must be successfully completed.
Only courses designated as College Preparatory levels or above are counted.

English	4 Units
Mathematics	4 Units (Algebra 1, Geometry & Algebra 2)
Sciences	3 Units (including 2 courses with labs)
Foreign Language	2 courses (in a single language)
Social Sciences	2 courses (including 1 course in U.S. History)
Electives	2 courses (from the above subjects or from Arts & Humanities areas or Computer Science.

Transfer Admission:

Transfer students must meet one of the following criteria:

- 12 or more transferable college credits and a minimum 2.5 college grade point average.
- 12-23 transferable college credits, a minimum 2.0 college GPA, and a high school transcript that meets minimum admissions standards or,
- 24 transferable credits and a minimum 2.0 college GPA.

Joint Admission Programs:

Students who have not met the standards for admission to any one of the state colleges or universities have the option of pursuing the Joint Admission Program at a Massachusetts Community College. Students are guaranteed admission to a four-year public college based on the student's academic program. A grade point average of 2.5 and the completion of the Associate's degree at the community college are required.

Learning Disabled Applicants

Applicants with professionally diagnosed and documented learning disabilities are exempt from taking standardized tests for admission to any public institution in Massachusetts. Such students, however, must complete the 17 academic units with the required minimum grade point averages above. Students with documented language based disabilities are not required to complete the foreign language requirement. Students may also present other evidence of the potential for academic success. According to the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education eligibility for admission to a public four-year college is not an entitlement for any applicant, including learning disabled students.

Individual Enrichment Programs

Students who display the ability to succeed at a four-year institution but do not meet the minimum standards for admission set by the MBHE may be considered for admission to an Individual Enrichment Program. These programs, which are typically held in the summer, offer students a four-week residential pre-enrollment experience designed to enhance their academic skills.

ADMISSIONS TERMINOLOGY

- **Regular Admission** - Applications are filed based upon the college's specific deadlines. Students are typically notified no later than April 1st.
- **Rolling Admissions** - This is a common practice in college admissions where specific deadlines are not used. Instead, applications are processed when, and in the order that, they are received. Applicants are usually notified of the decision within a matter of weeks. (Please note that with rolling admissions, competitive or popular programs often fill up early.)
- **Early Decision** - A plan wherein students apply early in the fall (usually by November 1st) to one college which is their first choice. If accepted, there is an ethical obligation to attend that college providing that a reasonable financial aid package can be worked out. One advantage to this program is that students are notified in December as to whether or not they have been accepted. A disadvantage is that you have no other financial aid packages to utilize for comparison. Early decision applicants may be outright rejected, or in many cases they are "deferred". This means that they are reviewed again with the regular deadline applicants.
- **Early Action** - Like Early Decision, this program requires application early in the fall with notification coming in December. It is different, however, in that students:
 - a) may apply to more than one college offering this program
 - b) are not ethically obliged to accept or attend a particular school
 - c) do not have to commit themselves until spring (usually May 1st)

If rejected, your application is usually returned to the regular application pool.

- **Early Admission** - A program which allows students to apply to college during their junior year in high school. This is a unique program usually reserved for exceptionally talented students and rarely is utilized as an application option.
- **Deferred Admission – College:** On "early decision applications" the admission action is postponed for re-evaluation as part of the "regular" application pool.
- **Deferred Admission – Student:** Admitted student delays or defers enrollment for one year or one semester with a guarantee of enrollment at the time he/she chooses.
- **Confirmation of Intent** – Students should submit a deposit – by May 1st – to the school that they plan to attend, and notify their other schools that they will be attending elsewhere. At schools where housing is in short supply students may benefit by submitting their deposit prior to the May 1st deadline.

To Interview or Not?

Some colleges **require** an interview as part of the admissions process. Usually very competitive schools or programs may require them. If the school is a good distance from home, say over 200 miles, the college may have a local alumni interview you locally instead of you having to travel there.

Contact the admissions office to see if they schedule interviews spring of junior year or fall of senior year. If you are traveling a distance to visit a campus, it is recommended that you contact admissions early. Let them know you are coming in case they want to interview you while you are there, especially if it's unlikely you will return again before admission decisions are made.

Some colleges **recommend** an interview as part of the admissions process. This is often the case for smaller private colleges. We strongly suggest that you schedule an interview and believe it will only help your chances for acceptance. Apply the same rules if you are traveling a distance.

Larger universities do not often have the ability to interview candidates simply because of the sheer number of applicants. Some exceptions would include fields of study that are very competitive, ie Computer Science, Engineering, Nursing. Contact admissions to inquire.

Special Note: Those students who are studying Music or Dance may have to audition for acceptance. Contact admissions to understand the scheduling process. Usually an admissions application must be submitted prior.

Those students who are pursuing Art as a field of study must often submit a portfolio for review. Some colleges have Portfolio Review Days expressly for that purpose. Other colleges require that you submit your portfolio on-line.

SURVIVING THE INTERVIEW

The best preparation for the interview is to be familiar with the two subjects most likely to be discussed: the school and you. Reread the college catalog and your resume before each interview. You may want to ask your guidance counselor for a copy of your transcript for review. Below are some tips to help.

- Be on time!
- Be yourself.
- Speak clearly.
- Relax! An interview is an exchange of information, not something you pass or fail. Your presence on the campus and your readiness to talk about yourself and your school plans are indications of your seriousness. The interview can help you determine if that school is the right place for you. The exchange of information and the impressions gained on both sides – yours and the interviewer – should be meaningful.
- Be prepared. The interviewer may encourage you to “just talk,” so you should be ready to discuss topics ranging from the very general (“Tell me about your school experience”) to the very specific (“How do you feel about nuclear disarmament or capital punishment?”).
- Respond directly and articulately to questions. Keep the “you knows” and the “likes” to a minimum – none. It is perfectly alright to say “I don’t know” or “I need to think about that” in response to a question.
- Be familiar with your academic record. This will enable you to answer general questions about your academic performance in school and your scores on your SAT or ACT tests.
- Know your interests and your areas of strength. Look over your list of extracurricular activities and be prepared to talk about them.
- Have plausible explanations for any weakness in your record. Remember, an explanation is different from an excuse.
- Be prepared to discuss one or two books you have read. Think about why they meant something to you.
- Be aware of current events.
- Thank the interviewer before you leave and consider sending a brief thank you note.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO EXPECT

A large part of being prepared is knowing what to expect. The questions below are typical of the kinds of questions school and college interviewers ask. You may want to write out your answers on a piece of paper.

1. How would you like to see yourself grow over the next four years?
2. What might your teachers say is your greatest strength?
3. Do you have a hero or heroine? Who, and why?
4. If you could reach for a telephone and talk to any living person, who would you call? Why?
5. Have you ever thought of not going to college? What might you do instead?
6. If your best friend was asked to describe you, what would he or she say?
7. What events this year have made you feel indignant? Involved?
8. What do you do in your spare time?
9. How do you contribute to the school or local community?
10. Why are you considering this school/college?
11. What do you enjoy reading? What books did you read this year that influenced your thinking? What newspapers and magazines do you read regularly?

INTERVIEWING – QUESTIONS TO ASK AT A COLLEGE INTERVIEW

At some point in almost every interview, you will be asked if you have any questions. There are no perfect questions; the best ones are those you want the answer to. Below are examples of the kinds of questions students ask.

1. When must I declare a major? Is it difficult to switch?
2. Do senior faculty members teach freshmen?
3. Which departments are considered the strongest on this campus?
4. Are off-campus programs available for credit? Co-op programs? Internships? Study abroad program? Inter-college exchange?
5. How diverse is the student body?
6. What happens on weekends? Do many students go off campus?
7. What fraternities, sororities, or clubs are available? What is the effect of choosing to belong – or not – on an individual's social life?
8. What activities (such as lectures, concerts, dances, and informal athletics) take place on campus?
9. What facilities are available for organized athletic programs? For individual exercise? Is the college involved in intercollegiate sports? Is there an intramural program?
10. What publication, drama, choral, and music groups, etc. are available on campus?
11. What kinds of counseling and placement services are available if I need them? What is the job placement rate after graduation?
12. What religious facilities and organizations are involved with the campus?
13. How do you see the campus/college changing or growing?
14. What are the current social issues that students are discussing?
15. What kind of housing is available? Are all freshmen housed on campus? What percentage of students live off campus? Is housing guaranteed for all four years?
16. How would you describe school spirit at this college?

To prepare for your interview, write a few questions of your own.

Essay Preparation

Many colleges require that an applicant submit an essay or personal statement as part of the college application. In general, the essay helps the college assess your critical thinking and writing abilities. It is also designed to shed light on your special interests or experiences, values, attitudes and expectations of the future.

Make sure you are aware of the essay requirements for each college you are applying to. If you apply to multiple colleges with supplements you may need to write multiple additional essays. As always, the best source for this information is a college's website.

The Essay: Step by Step

If you are like most students, you see the college essay as another hurdle you must jump over on the way to being accepted at the college of your choice. In fact, the essay is not a hurdle but a rare opportunity. It is a chance for you to "talk" directly to the college's admissions committee and to help them "see" you as a thinking and feeling person, rather than simply a set of impersonal statistics. Except for the interview, it is your only chance to share your thoughts, insights and opinions, to highlight your accomplishments and to convey your maturity and outlook on life. If you see the college essay in this way, as an opportunity, then it is clearly worth the effort to put some extra time, thought and energy into writing it.

Purpose of the Essay

The college essay is extremely important for two major reasons:

1. It enables the college admission office to evaluate your communication skills. Through your essay they can assess the clarity of your thinking and your ability to convey your thoughts in written form.
2. It enables the admissions officer to learn more about you as a person, beyond what grades and SAT scores can convey. A well-written essay can speak volumes about your attitudes, feelings, personal qualities, imagination and creativity. For the admissions staff, it adds another important piece to the puzzle because it distinguishes you as an individual and differentiates you from other applicants.

Choosing a Topic

Regardless of whether you are writing an essay to meet the requirements of the Common App or a college's supplemental application, here are a few general hints about the most effective way to approach your topic:

- Narrow your topic and try to be as specific and illustrative as possible.
- The easiest topic to write about is you. No one knows more about you than you. Since one important purpose of the essay is self-revelation, this is not a time to be shy or modest, although you should not exaggerate. If you choose to write about yourself, remember that little incidents and facts are often the most revealing of one's character and outlook.
- Do not be afraid to write about something you think is a little different. A unique topic or approach is often refreshing to a college admissions officer who has been reading applications all day. Further, an unusual or off beat essay may be an excellent way to show your creativity.

Preparing To Write

Before sitting down to write a first draft of your essay, spend time organizing your thoughts. Develop a framework for your essay so it will have a smooth and logical progression from one idea or incident to the next. Consider your purpose in writing, what you want to convey and the tone you think is most appropriate for the topic. Decide on a style that is comfortable for you, not one that you think the admissions committee prefers. Finally, remember that organizing your thoughts and deciding on a framework does not mean you must be overly rigid at the start: leave room for flexibility and creativity as you actually begin writing.

Writing the Essay

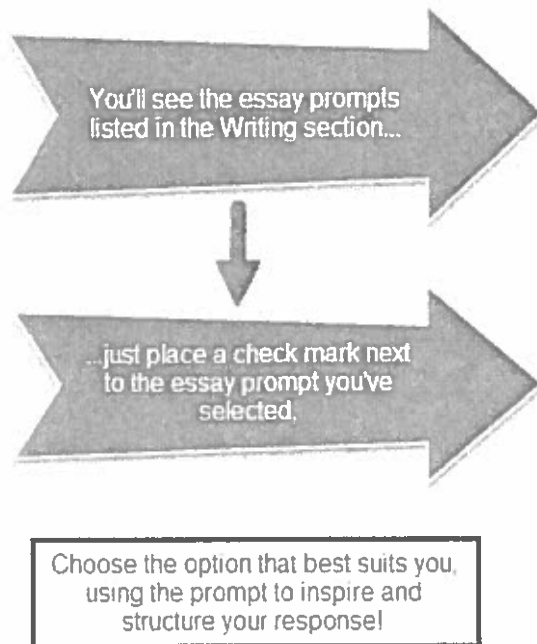
You do not have to get it right the first time! Instead, write the first draft of your essay with the main focus on having the content communicate your thoughts. Then set it aside for a day or two, reread it with a fresh perspective and make any necessary changes. This is also the point at which you should consider matters of organization, style, grammar, spelling and tone. Once you have rewritten your first draft you may wish to try it out on your family, friend, English teacher, or school counselor. While automated spellcheck is helpful, do not solely rely on it. Find a person to proofread your essay. While the final product and final "voice" should be yours, outside readers may be able to offer helpful suggestions for technical or other improvements and see what kind of impression you would make on someone who doesn't know you as well.

Note that while you can type the essay directly into the Common App form, it is best to write it in a Word document (or other editing software on your computer) and cut and paste it into the Common App. This strategy avoids potential accidental submissions and lets you use the advanced spellchecking and formatting capabilities of your editing software. It also makes the essay available to you for use elsewhere if necessary.

WARNING: Be careful if you are personalizing your essay for a particular school because there are **STRICT LIMITS** as to how many times you can make changes inside the Common App essay section.

What are the 2015-16 Common Application Essay Prompts?

The essay demonstrates your ability to write clearly and concisely on a selected topic and helps you distinguish yourself in your own voice. What do you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores?



- Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
- The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
- Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
- Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma—anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
- Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE



Eligibility Center

NCAA Division I Initial-Eligibility Requirements

Core Courses: (16)

- **Initial full-time collegiate enrollment *before* August 1, 2016:**
 - Sixteen (16) core courses are required (see chart below for subject-area requirements).
- **Initial full-time collegiate enrollment *on or after* August 1, 2016:**
 - Sixteen (16) core courses are required (see chart below for subject-area requirements).
 - Ten (10) core courses completed before the seventh semester; seven (7) of the 10 must be in English, math or natural/physical science.
 - These courses/grades are "locked in" at start of the seventh semester (cannot be repeated for grade-point average [GPA] improvement to meet initial-eligibility requirements for competition).
 - Students who do not meet core-course progression requirements may still be eligible to receive athletics aid and practice in the initial year of enrollment by meeting academic redshirt requirements (see below).

Test Scores: (ACT/SAT)

- Students must present a corresponding test score and core-course GPA on the sliding scale (see Page No. 2).
 - **SAT:** critical reading and math sections.
 - Best subscore from each section is used to determine the SAT combined score for initial eligibility.
 - **ACT:** English, math, reading and science sections.
 - Best subscore from each section is used to determine the ACT sum score for initial eligibility.
- All ACT and SAT attempts *before* initial full-time collegiate enrollment may be used for initial eligibility.
- **Enter 9999 during ACT or SAT registration to ensure the testing agency reports your score directly to the NCAA Eligibility Center. Test scores on transcripts will not be used.**

Core Grade-Point Average:

- Only core courses that appear on the high school's List of NCAA Courses on the NCAA Eligibility Center's website (www.eligibilitycenter.org) will be used to calculate your core-course GPA. Use this list as a guide.
- **Initial full-time collegiate enrollment *before* August 1, 2016:**
 - Students must present a corresponding test score (ACT sum score or SAT combined score) and core-course GPA (minimum 2.000) on Sliding Scale A (see Page No. 2).
 - Core-course GPA is calculated using the **best 16 core courses** that meet subject-area requirements.
- **Initial full-time collegiate enrollment *on or after* August 1, 2016:**
 - Students must present a corresponding test score (ACT sum score or SAT combined score) and core-course GPA (minimum 2.300) on Sliding Scale B (see Page No. 2).
 - Core-course GPA is calculated using the **best 16 core courses** that meet both progression (10 before seventh semester; seven in English, math or science; "locked in") and subject-area requirements.

DIVISION I Core-Course Requirement (16)	
4	years of English
3	years of math (Algebra I or higher)
2	years of natural/physical science (1 year of lab if offered)
1	year of additional English, math or natural/physical science
2	years of social science
4	years of additional courses (any area above, foreign language or comparative religion/philosophy)

DIVISION I – 2016 Qualifier Requirements	
<i>*Athletics aid, practice, and competition</i>	
•	16 core courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Ten (10) core courses completed before the start of seventh semester. Seven (7) of the 10 must be in English, math or natural/physical science. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Locked in" for core-course GPA calculation.
•	Corresponding test score (ACT sum score or SAT combined score) and core-course GPA (minimum 2.300) on Sliding Scale B (see Page No. 2).
•	Graduate from high school.

DIVISION I – 2016 Academic Redshirt Requirements	
<i>*Athletics aid and practice (no competition)</i>	
•	16 core courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ No grades/credits "locked in" (repeated courses after the seventh semester begins may be used for initial eligibility).
•	Corresponding test score (ACT sum score or SAT combined score) and core-course GPA (minimum 2.000) on Sliding Scale B (see Page No. 2).
•	Graduate from high school.

Sliding Scale A		
<i>Use for Division I prior to August 1, 2016</i>		
NCAA DIVISION I SLIDING SCALE		
Core GPA	SAT	ACT Sum
	<i>Verbal and Math ONLY</i>	
3.550 & above	400	37
3.525	410	38
3.500	420	39
3.475	430	40
3.450	440	41
3.425	450	41
3.400	460	42
3.375	470	42
3.350	480	43
3.325	490	44
3.300	500	44
3.275	510	45
3.250	520	46
3.225	530	46
3.200	540	47
3.175	550	47
3.150	560	48
3.125	570	49
3.100	580	49
3.075	590	50
3.050	600	50
3.025	610	51
3.000	620	52
2.975	630	52
2.950	640	53
2.925	650	53
2.900	660	54
2.875	670	55
2.850	680	56
2.825	690	56
2.800	700	57
2.775	710	58
2.750	720	59
2.725	730	59
2.700	730	60
2.675	740-750	61
2.650	760	62
2.625	770	63
2.600	780	64
2.575	790	65
2.550	800	66
2.525	810	67
2.500	820	68
2.475	830	69
2.450	840-850	70
2.425	860	70
2.400	860	71
2.375	870	72
2.350	880	73
2.325	890	74
2.300	900	75
2.275	910	76
2.250	920	77
2.225	930	78
2.200	940	79
2.175	950	80
2.150	960	80
2.125	960	81
2.100	970	82
2.075	980	83
2.050	990	84
2.025	1000	85
2.000	1010	86

Sliding Scale B		
<i>Use for Division I beginning August 1, 2016</i>		
NCAA DIVISION I SLIDING SCALE		
Core GPA	SAT	ACT Sum
	<i>Verbal and Math ONLY</i>	
3.550	400	37
3.525	410	38
3.500	420	39
3.475	430	40
3.450	440	41
3.425	450	41
3.400	460	42
3.375	470	42
3.350	480	43
3.325	490	44
3.300	500	44
3.275	510	45
3.250	520	46
3.225	530	46
3.200	540	47
3.175	550	47
3.150	560	48
3.125	570	49
3.100	580	49
3.075	590	50
3.050	600	50
3.025	610	51
3.000	620	52
2.975	630	52
2.950	640	53
2.925	650	53
2.900	660	54
2.875	670	55
2.850	680	56
2.825	690	56
2.800	700	57
2.775	710	58
2.750	720	59
2.725	730	60
2.700	740	61
2.675	750	61
2.650	760	62
2.625	770	63
2.600	780	64
2.575	790	65
2.550	800	66
2.525	810	67
2.500	820	68
2.475	830	69
2.450	840	70
2.425	850	70
2.400	860	71
2.375	870	72
2.350	880	73
2.325	890	74
2.300	900	75
2.299	910	76
2.275	910	76
2.250	920	77
2.225	930	78
2.200	940	79
2.175	950	80
2.150	960	81
2.125	970	82
2.100	980	83
2.075	990	84
2.050	1000	85
2.025	1010	86
2.000	1020	86

For more information, visit www.eligibilitycenter.org or www.2point3.org.

APPENDIX A - COMPARING COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS

Name of College						
Enrollment	Men					
	Women					
Location	Rural					
	Urban					
	Suburban					
Majors offered						
Activities of Interest						
Total Costs						
Early Decision						
Early Action						
Average SAT Reasoning/ACT Scores						
SAT Subject Tests Required						
% of students on Financial Aid						
Favorable Characteristics						
Negative Characteristics						
Other Factors						
Application Deadlines						

APPENDIX-B

MILITARY ACADEMY ADMISSION PROCEDURE

The application process to a U.S. Military Academy such as West Point, Annapolis, the Coast Guard or the Air Force, must be started in the spring of the junior year. If a student wishes to apply to a military academy, a congressional nomination request must be submitted to your Senator and State Representative (not applicable for the Coast Guard).

A sample format for the Congressional nomination request is as follows:

REQUEST FOR CONGRESSIONAL NOMINATION TO A MILITARY ACADEMY

Date _____

The Honorable _____

The Honorable _____

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

OR House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

I desire to attend the _____ Name Academy _____ and to be commissioned in the class entering in July, 20__.

The following data are furnished for your information:

Name:

Permanent Address:

Telephone Number:

Temporary Address and telephone number (if different from preceding):

Date of Birth:

High School:

Social Security Number:

Names of Parents:

I have/have not requested that a pre-candidate file be initiated for me at the Admissions Office.

Sincerely,

PASSWORD MANAGER

Naviance Email acct: Username: Password:	Fastweb or other Scholarship Search Email acct: Username: Password:
Collegeboard Email acct: Username: Password:	ACT Email acct. Username: Password:
Common Application Email acct: Username: Password:	Other: _____ Email acct: Username: Password:
FAFSA Email acct: Parent FSA ID: Student FSA ID: Password:	Other: _____ Email acct: Username: Password:

