

# THE ACT

## Information & Tips

*Most four-year colleges require ACT or SAT scores as part of the application process. If you plan to go to college, be sure to take one of these tests. Here is some basic info on the ACT.*

### ABOUT THE TEST

The ACT consists of four multiple-choice tests: English, Reading, Math, and Science. There is also an optional Writing Test. The ACT is given in September, October, December, February, April, June, and July.

### WHEN TO TAKE THE ACT

You should take the ACT in the spring of your junior year. If you want to improve your scores, you then have time to retake the ACT in the summer or fall.

### HOW TO REGISTER

To register for the ACT, go to [act.org](https://act.org). Registration deadlines are about six weeks before the test dates. After you're registered, you'll receive instructions and a ticket to get into the test.

### HOW THE ACT IS SCORED

Students receive a score (1-36) for each section, along with a composite score (an average of the four scores). ACT Section Retesting allows you to retake one or more single-section tests. Your highest score from each of the four subject tests is then used to calculate a new composite score—your superscore.

**Questions? Visit [act.org](https://act.org) or see your counselor.**

# HOW TO PREPARE

In order to become familiar with the types of questions and the test format, take advantage of the free test prep resources and practice tests at [act.org](http://act.org).

-  Download *Preparing for the ACT* at [act.org](http://act.org). This free booklet provides valuable information, strategies, and a practice test.
-  Visit [act.org](http://act.org) for information and recommendations on ways to prepare for the ACT (e.g., the *Official ACT Prep Guide*, the *ACT Online Prep*, and *ACT Academy*).
-  Be sure to take at least one full-length practice test. Time yourself and go over the questions you got wrong.

***Following a strong college prep program in high school is the best preparation for the ACT!***

## TIPS FOR TEST DAY

These tips will help ensure that you are able to perform your best on the ACT.

**Be well rested.** Cramming the night before the test won't do any good. Get a good night's sleep.

**Dress in layers.** Testing centers can be too hot or too cold. Dress in layers so that you'll be comfortable no matter what the temperature of the room is.

**Arrive early.** Give yourself plenty of time to get to the testing center so that you're not rushed. Bring your ticket, a photo ID, two #2 pencils, a watch, a permitted calculator, and a high-energy snack for the break.

**Relax, be confident, and do your best!**

# THE SAT

## Information & Tips

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*Most four-year colleges require SAT or ACT scores as part of the application process. If you plan to go to college, be sure to take one of these tests. Here is some basic info on the SAT.*

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### ABOUT THE TEST

The SAT consists of four sections: Reading, Writing and Language, Math, and SAT Essay (optional). The SAT is given in August, October, November, December, March, May, and June.

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### WHEN TO TAKE THE SAT

You should take the SAT in the spring of your junior year. If you want to improve your scores, you then have time to retake the SAT in the fall of your senior year.

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### HOW TO REGISTER

To register for the SAT, go to [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org). Registration deadlines are about five weeks before the test dates. Once you're registered, you'll receive instructions and an Admission Ticket.

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### HOW THE SAT IS SCORED

Students receive a total score (400 - 1600) and two section scores: one for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (200 - 800) and one for Math (200 - 800). Students who take the Essay test receive three scores ranging from 2 - 8.

Questions? Visit [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org) or see your counselor.

# HOW TO PREPARE

In order to become familiar with the types of questions and the test format, take advantage of the free test prep resources and practice tests at [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org).

- ✓ The SAT partners with Khan Academy to provide valuable test prep materials: practice tests, videos, and personalized suggestions. You can connect to these resources at [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org), or you can visit [khanacademy.org/sat](https://khanacademy.org/sat) directly.
- ✓ Answer an official SAT question each day using the **Daily Practice for the New SAT** app. You'll get immediate feedback.
- ✓ Be sure to take at least one full-length practice test. Time yourself and go over the questions you got wrong.

***Following a strong college prep program in high school is the best preparation for the SAT!***

## TIPS FOR TEST DAY

These tips will help ensure that you're able to perform your best on the SAT.

**Be well rested.** Cramming the night before the test won't do any good. Get a good night's sleep.

**Dress in layers.** Testing centers can be too hot or too cold. Dress in layers so that you'll be comfortable no matter what the temperature of the room is.

**Arrive early.** Give yourself plenty of time to get to the testing center so that you're not rushed. Bring your Admission Ticket, a photo ID, two #2 pencils, a watch, an approved calculator, and a high-energy snack for the break.

**Relax, be confident, and do your best!**

# THE COMMON APP

commonapp.org

If you're applying to more than one college, you may want to complete the Common Application (Common App). Over 850 colleges accept the Common App, so completing this one application can save you a lot of time. Here are the steps.

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## STEP 1 - Create your account

Go to [commonapp.org](https://commonapp.org) and click on **Get Started**. The new edition of the Common App opens each year on August 1. You can, however, create an account anytime.

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## STEP 2 - Add colleges to your list

Search for the colleges that meet your needs by name, location, or distance from your home. Add these schools to your **My Colleges** list.

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## STEP 3 - Check requirements

You will get detailed information on the admission requirements for each school on your **My Colleges** list: test(s) required, application deadlines, etc. A worksheet is provided to help you keep track of these requirements.

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## STEP 4 - Complete the application

It's helpful to gather the information you need to complete the Common App ahead of time. The checklist on the back of this card will help you know what information you will need.

# Information and materials to gather for the Common App

## Parent / Guardian Information

- Birthplace, education, occupation, employer information

## Information on Your High School

- High school address and CEEB Code
- Your counselor's name, phone, and email
- Graduation date
- Graduating class size

## Your High School Record

- Copy of your high school transcript
- List of your current year courses
- List of your activities, both in and out of school (e.g., clubs, hobbies, work, family responsibilities) 10 activities maximum
- List of honors and/or achievements

## Testing Information

- Your college entrance test scores and test dates (ACT, SAT, SAT Subject Tests)

## Personal Essay

If any of the schools you are applying to require an essay, the Common App gives you seven prompts to choose from. Essays are limited to 650 words.

*Start early. Give yourself at least six weeks to get the Common App completed. If you need your counselor and/or teacher(s) to write a letter of recommendation, give them plenty of time.*

# College Admissions



While you need to prepare for college throughout high school, the college admissions process generally begins early in your senior year. The information below will give you an idea of how this process works.

## The College Admissions Process

### **STEP 1 – Submission**

All colleges have admissions information and applications on their website. Be sure to submit everything that's required before the deadline.

### **STEP 2 – Review**

The college admissions office will put all of the information regarding your application into a file. When all of the required documents have been received, your application is evaluated by an admissions committee.

### **STEP 3 – Notification**

Once your application has been evaluated, the college will let you know whether you have been accepted, rejected, or put on a waiting list. Most acceptance letters are sent out by mid-April.

### **STEP 4 – Your Decision**

After comparing all college and financial aid offers, you decide which college you want to attend. This decision generally needs to be made by May 1.

# College Admissions Terms

## Common Application (Common App)

This college admissions application is accepted at 850+ colleges. Students applying to two or more colleges that accept the Common App can save themselves hours of work by using this online college admissions application. [commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org)

## Deferred Acceptance

Sometimes students aren't accepted or rejected; they are deferred. This means the college is postponing the admission decision. Deferred students can often improve their chances for admission by providing additional information (e.g., evidence of improved grades or higher test scores, an impressive letter of recommendation).

## Early Action / Early Decision

Students who apply Early Action or Early Decision submit their application for admission early in their senior year. These students then receive early notification of the college's decision. *Early Decision is binding. Students applying Early Decision make a commitment to enroll if accepted.* Early Action is not binding.

## Rolling Admission

Colleges with rolling admission make decisions on applications as they receive them. Applicants are typically notified of their acceptance within four to eight weeks.

## Selectivity

Colleges have varying levels of selectivity. Colleges with open admissions generally accept any high school graduate until spaces are filled. Selective colleges seek students with high GPAs and test scores.

## Waitlisted

Waitlisted students may be reconsidered if enough accepted students don't enroll. Like deferred students, waitlisted students may improve their chances of acceptance by providing additional information.

# Completing an Impressive College Application

Your college application is a representation of you, and it's important that you present yourself in the best possible light. Here are some tips to help you submit an impressive college application.

## Be sure to do the following:

- ▶ Follow the instructions exactly and answer every question honestly.
- ▶ Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- ▶ Submit an application that is clean, neat, accurate, and complete.
- ▶ Include all of your activities and awards. (Quality is more important than quantity.)
- ▶ If you have a noteworthy achievement, special talent, unique characteristic, or something that will bring diversity to a campus, be sure it's included.
- ▶ Proofread, proofread again, and then have someone else look over your application.

## Submit forms, scores, and transcripts

Applications for admission require a high school transcript, and most have sections for your counselor to complete. Follow your school's procedures for submitting applications, requesting transcripts, and getting the required forms completed.

Most 4-year colleges also require ACT or SAT scores. Make sure your scores have been sent to any college requiring them.



## If an essay is required...

College applications often ask that you write an essay or personal statement. Your essay should not include information that can be found on your application or transcript. Instead, it should offer insight into who you are and what makes you unique. Think of it as an opportunity to share your dreams and passions, talk about an obstacle you've overcome, or show how an event has helped shape who you are. *Admissions officers read lots of essays. Take the time to write an essay that stands out.*

## If recommendations are required...

Many applications require one or more letters of recommendation. Choose people who know you well, give them plenty of time, and tell them: 1) what information should be included; 2) when it needs to be completed; 3) what to do with it once it's written.

Anyone you ask to write a recommendation will welcome written information with regard to your strengths, interests, talents, leadership skills, and future plans.

## Make copies

Before you submit an application, make a copy and note the date it was submitted. You should receive confirmation from any college you've applied to that they've received your application. If you don't receive confirmation, contact the college to make sure they have everything they need.

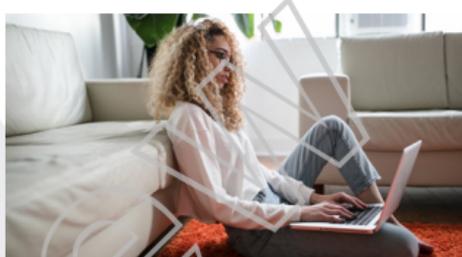
## Be aware of deadlines

Start early, and give your others plenty of time to prepare transcripts, complete forms, and/or write recommendations. Have all required information submitted well before the deadline.

*If you have questions or need help with an application, see your counselor.*

# WRITING A COLLEGE ESSAY

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**If you're asked to write an essay, think of it as an opportunity to provide the admissions committee with insight into who you are and what makes you unique.**

***Here are some tips to help you write an outstanding college essay.***

▶ **Start early**

Give yourself enough time to be able to put your essay away and come back to it several times. When you take it out and read it again, you'll see things you didn't notice before.

▶ **Showcase your writing skills**

Colleges want students who can effectively convey their thoughts and ideas in writing—and your essay is an excellent opportunity for you to demonstrate your writing skills.

Follow the instructions regarding length and subject matter; use concise, clear sentences; and write an essay that could only be written by you.

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# WRITING A COLLEGE ESSAY

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## ▶ **Choose your topic carefully**

Your essay should tell the reader something new—something that can't be learned from your application or transcript.

Narrow the focus. Instead of giving an overview of your life, focus on one aspect or event that reveals something personal about you.

Don't feel that you need to write about something big or important. Some of the best essays are about ordinary people or common events that had an impact on the writer.

Colleges are looking for students who will bring something of value to their campus. If you have leadership skills, a talent, a unique experience, or something else that would make you an asset to a college campus, consider writing an essay that highlights this.

## ▶ **Get the reader hooked**

In your introduction, set the scene, use interesting language, and make it clear that this is a story the reader will want to hear.

## ▶ **Focus on the impact**

If you are writing about a person, place, or event, the focus of your essay should be on how that event, person, or place affected you—how it changed you, impacted your life, or made you into the person you are today.

## ▶ **Make it perfect**

Proofread your essay, proofread it again, and then have at least one other person whose opinion you trust read it.

*Admissions officers read lots of essays.  
Take the time to write an essay that stands out.*