



EDISON HIGH SCHOOL

COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK

A reference guide for junior and senior students and parents

SCHOOL CEEB CODE: 363425

Dear Families:

The staff at Edison High School is dedicated to facilitating a successful experience with the college admissions process. Our goal is to help each student make an informed decision regarding the best match for his or her future. This process should include the student, the parent and the counselor working together as partners in one of life's most important decision-making experiences. This discovery process is dual tracked. It includes self-discovery by the student of what criteria he or she values most in a college, and then the research of what schools best meet his or her plans. This handbook is designed as a resource for juniors and seniors to use in the college exploration process. Please read it carefully – it covers most of the main topics you will need to consider in your decision process. I look forward to helping you through this exciting time!

Keep in mind that families have options and it is wise to keep those options open!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Elisa Brown
Edison High School

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CHECKLIST FOR JUNIORS

To-Do	When
<input type="checkbox"/> Review your high school course-work and activity plans to make sure they reflect the impression you want to make on college admission officers. Colleges pay close attention to the kinds of courses you take during high school, your GPA and the extracurricular activities in which you are involved.	Junior Year
<input type="checkbox"/> Research colleges via College Navigator (http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/), My Big Future (https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search), books, the internet and college visits. Begin to think about potential college majors.	Junior Year
<input type="checkbox"/> Get to know your junior year teachers, as they will likely write your letters of recommendation. Focus on at least one or two teachers who may be future sources for letters of recommendation.	Junior Year
<input type="checkbox"/> Attend at least one College Fair.	Junior Year
<input type="checkbox"/> Take on leadership roles in the extracurricular activities you care about most.	Junior Year
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with college representatives as they visit Edison.	Junior Year
<input type="checkbox"/> Read the Edison High School College Counseling Handbook.	October
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletes: Register with NCAA Eligibility Center (if applicable) – www.eligibilitycenter.org	October
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a tentative Testing and Preparation Plan. Take practice tests as much as possible. Utilize all the test preparation resources found on the Ohio Means Jobs website and practice tests available in the Guidance office. You may also want to download	October
TAKING THE ACT AND/OR SAT DURING YOUR JUNIOR YEAR IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT AS IT WILL GIVE YOU A BASELINE SCORE, VALUABLE EXPERIENCE IN TAKING THE TEST(S) AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO TEST AGAIN.	October
<input type="checkbox"/> Plan a challenging senior year schedule, as a rigorous senior curriculum communicates you are ready for college-level work.	February
<input type="checkbox"/> Take the state funded ACT held during the school day for all Juniors.	March
<input type="checkbox"/> Register for subsequent ACT attempts at www.actstudent.org	April
<input type="checkbox"/> Plan on visiting colleges during spring break of junior year. You can set up visits on the college website or by contacting the admissions office.	April
<input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for the mailing list for each of your target schools. This communicates your interest in the school and can be completed by visiting the admission's page	May

of each school's website.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Finalize your list of colleges that you are thinking about. Your list should include 8-10 schools.	Summer
<input type="checkbox"/> Spend your summer productively! Visit colleges, enhance your resume, begin the essay writing process and continue the scholarship search.	Summer

CHECKLIST FOR SENIORS

To-Do	When
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with college representatives from your schools of interest as they visit Edison for any additional information you may need.	Senior Year
<input type="checkbox"/> Get organized! Create a system to keep track of e-mails, essay drafts and all things college-related. It is suggested that you keep a designated folder or binder to keep all of your college information organized.	September
<input type="checkbox"/> Begin recording usernames and passwords for all college-related accounts in the <u>Username and Passwords to Remember</u> form (appendix).	September
<input type="checkbox"/> Register for ACT if you are planning to take the test again. Check college website to see if you have completed required testing for admission. Some colleges require supplemental writing tests.	September
<input type="checkbox"/> Finalize your list of colleges that you plan to apply for based on your research and college visits. Share your list of colleges with your parents, teachers and counselor. Involve important adults in the process! It is a good idea to have your list narrowed down to 4-5 schools to which you plan to apply.	September/ October
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify all application deadlines from your schools and fill out <u>College Application Deadlines</u> form (appendix).	September/ October
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask your teachers for letters of recommendation	September/ October
<input type="checkbox"/> Begin submitting applications.	September/ October
<input type="checkbox"/> If applying for Financial Aid, file FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1 st – the sooner you file, the better. www.fafsa.ed.gov	October 1 st
<input type="checkbox"/> Pursue scholarship funds. Set up an account on a national scholarship site (see appendix) to search for funds. Watch for deadlines.	October
<input type="checkbox"/> View and print your Student Aid Report (SAR) which has your Estimated Family Contribution (EFC – how much your family is expected to pay each year) – www.fafsa.ed.gov	October
<input type="checkbox"/> Have test scores and transcripts sent to schools for which you applied Early Decision, Early Action and Rolling Admissions. See page 10 for additional information on requesting transcripts.	October
<input type="checkbox"/> Male students who are US Residents or Citizens (upon turning 18) must register with Selective Service – www.sss.gov – required for financial aid purposes.	October
<input type="checkbox"/> Deadline to submit Early Decision and Early Action applications – check each school’s dates accordingly. This date is known as the Universal Application Date.	November 1 st
<input type="checkbox"/> Submit ACT/SAT scores to all colleges after your last time testing.	December
<input type="checkbox"/> Last chance to take standardized tests if applying for regular decision.	December
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask Mrs. Brown to send transcripts and mid-year reports if needed.	February
<input type="checkbox"/> Apply for local scholarships. Local scholarship opportunities will be released the beginning of February. Make sure to note the application deadline!	February
<input type="checkbox"/> Review and compare financial aid award letters.	February
<input type="checkbox"/> Colleges begin notification of admission decisions for regular admission	March

applicants. All admission decisions should be received by mid-April.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check portals for each college you applied to and submit any pending paperwork.	April
<input type="checkbox"/> Attend campus Admit/Preview/Open House Days.	April
<input type="checkbox"/> Select your college – you must decide by May 1!	April
<input type="checkbox"/> Accept attendance by submitting your Statement of Intent to Register (SIR) and send your deposit(s). Notify all other colleges that accepted you and let them know you will not be attending their school. This can be done via phone, e-mail or a letter. May 1 st is the national deadline for notifying schools of your intentions. If you do not notify the schools, you will be dropped from their list and will lose all scholarships and housing reservations. Inform your counselor of your choice so that final transcripts will be sent to the selected institution after graduation.	May 1 st
<input type="checkbox"/> Send thank you notes to those who awarded you scholarship money.	May
<input type="checkbox"/> Apply for housing (most require a deposit). Make sure to adhere to college specific deadlines.	May
<input type="checkbox"/> If you took any CCP courses during high school, work with Mrs. Brown to request official college transcripts be sent to your college.	May
<input type="checkbox"/> Accept the financial aid award from your college.	May
<input type="checkbox"/> Register for new student orientation.	May
<input type="checkbox"/> Create your campus e-mail.	May
<input type="checkbox"/> Check your college e-mail. Colleges will send important e-mails to your college e-mail account only.	June
<input type="checkbox"/> Final Transcripts – Your counselor will send your final transcript (with graduation date) to your future college as soon as grades are available.	June
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider creating a budget for the upcoming school year.	June
<input type="checkbox"/> If you are taking out student loans, complete MANDATORY Entrance Loan Counseling Session and sign your Master Promissory Note. Login to https://studentloans.gov using your FSA ID complete this process. If your parents took out parent loans, they need to complete this process too.	After July 1 st

COMMUNICATION ETIQUETTE

E-mail

Colleges typically use e-mail as the preferred method of communicating information, so it is imperative you check your e-mail daily. When e-mailing colleges, use proper grammar, don't abbreviate and avoid using slang. Try to maintain a professional identity as much as possible with all correspondence including a professional e-mail address. Do not use your Edison student e-mail account as you will not receive outside e-mails.

Online Identity

This may come as a shock, but more and more admission offers are being rescinded due to inappropriate online behavior. The last thing you or your parents would want is for a social media horror story to occur. Keep your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs, etc. private. Think before you post an inappropriate picture or comment.

Student Portals

Many colleges require students to set up what is referred to as a student portal. After you submit your application, the college will likely send you an e-mail with a link to setup your portal. Be sure to write down your username and password for each school's portal on the Usernames and Passwords to Remember form (appendix). Each college uses portals differently, but most commonly a portal is used as a means of communication. Notification of missing documents, confirmation that all documents have been received and admission notices are common uses for the portal. Once you enroll as a student at a particular college, you will likely register for classes and pay your tuition through your portal.

UNDERSTANDING TRANSCRIPTS

Do you know where you stand academically? What does your academic record say about you? Do you think your academic record accurately reflects your abilities? To answer these questions, you have to start with a review of your high school transcript.

Transcripts are academic records that document the courses and grades earned since the beginning of your high school career. Other information included on a transcript include: attendance, cumulative GPA, class rank, standardized test scores and credits earned.

Transcripts are arguably the most important source of information for college admissions officers as it is a summary of your academic career. Students and parents are welcome to stop by the Guidance Office at any time to get a copy.

When you are ready to apply to colleges, an “official” transcript including authorized signatures will have to be requested from your school counselor for each college. You can request transcripts on the Guidance website or in the high school office. These “official” transcripts must be sent directly from the high school to the college of interest.

BEGINNING THE COLLEGE SEARCH PROCESS

Know Yourself

Who are you? This question may seem odd, but it's an important one! Your own assessment of your interests, attitudes and abilities is central to finding the right college. The purpose of searching for colleges is to find the right match. Presenting yourself in an authentic way will make it more plausible for you and your prospective college to find a perfect match. Honestly assessing your interests, personality, goals, aptitudes and characteristics will be beneficial for the college application process...and you may even learn something new about yourself along the way! In getting to know yourself, remember to examine yourself as a person and as a student. A great resource to help you understand who you are:

- **Ohio Means Jobs:** Ohio Means Jobs is a website designed for high school students to take self-assessments and explore college and career options. The interest profiler, skills profiler and quick assessment will be especially helpful in understanding your interests, skills and personality type. Assessments are easy and quick! <https://Ohiomeansjobs.com>

For a list of useful questions to ask yourself in terms of finding the right college: Questions for Self-Research (appendix).

Research

Deciding where to apply and attend college is one of the biggest decisions of your life, if not the biggest decision you have made to date. Spending quality time and energy researching appropriate schools will pay dividends. The college application process can be a daunting one; however, if you are equipped with the right information, the process becomes much more streamlined. There are a few rules to live by when conducting your college research:

- **Be open minded:** There are thousands of colleges in the United States and abroad, and it is likely that you could find your place at the majority of them.
 - **Ask questions:** In conducting your research, if there is information you come across that you don't understand, ask your counselor, parent or a friend.
 - **Don't get caught up with the numbers:** Statistics allow us to gain an understanding of how one school stacks up to another. However, at the end of the day, statistics are simply numbers. **Reading statistics with a cautionary eye is always recommended.** One statistic that can be particularly telling about a school is graduation rates. A school with a high graduation rate likely has fewer impacted majors and students carrying an exorbitant amount of debt.
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- **Gathering quality information:** It is crucial to gather information from multiple sources when conducting college research. Luckily, we live in a time where information is easily accessible. It is up to you, however, to be the smart consumer! I recommend the following resources when conducting research:
 - **College Fairs:** Attending a college fair is a great way to learn about many schools at once. A college fair is a gathering of many colleges in one place, each with its own table of resource materials and representatives ready to talk to prospective students like you. For tips on what to do before, during and after a college fair visit: <http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/articles/Pages/College-Fair-Tips.aspx>
 - **Internet:** Combing the internet is a great way to find information on specific schools. Each college has a robust website with more information than you could imagine. Visiting a school's website is a valuable way to see the school from their own lens.
 - **Rankings:** Rankings can be useful, but it is important to realize that each person's college list is unique to him or her. What may be considered a "best" college may not be the best fit for you. Also, remember that rankings are generated each year by private companies.
 - **Admission Counselor Visits:** Each year, Edison hosts admission officers from all over the state. The admission officers enjoy visiting our campus because it gives them a chance to meet prospective students and educate you about their school and unique programs. Admission officers often provide advice regarding the application and use these school visits as an opportunity to meet prospective students.
 - Visits will be advertised on the morning announcements.
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BUILDING YOUR COLLEGE LIST (Adapted from College Admission by Robin Mamlet)

Understanding the Difference: College and University Types

Below is a summary that addresses the most common college considerations that students and their families deal with when choosing a college.

- **COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY**
 - A COLLEGE is an institution that offers education instruction beyond high school level in a two or four year program.
 - A UNIVERSITY is an institution that grants degrees in a variety of fields and is composed of a number of schools or colleges, each of which encompasses a general field of study. Universities are typically much larger than colleges.
 - **PUBLIC OR PRIVATE**
 - PUBLIC institutions are supported primarily through funds from the state in which that school resides. The taxpayers of that state support them. Therefore, you will pay more to attend a public institution that is not in your state of residence. It is usually more difficult to get admitted as an out-of-state applicant to a public institution due to state mandates.
 - A PRIVATE college is primarily funded through tuition and money raised from private resources (i.e. alumni, corporations, foundations, etc.). You pay the tuition price whether you live in the state or not. These schools have the same admission criteria and requirements for all applicants. These requirements are determined by the school faculty, administration and governing board.
 - **IN-STATE OR OUT-OF-STATE**
 - This only refers to public institutions. You will pay a lower tuition rate for a public institution in Ohio because you and your family have supported that school indirectly through taxes. Typically, out-of-state public schools tend to be more selective in their admission choices for out-of-state students. Generally, they also tend to provide less financial aid to out-of-state students.
 - **RESEARCH, COMPREHENSIVE OR LIBERAL ARTS**
 - RESEARCH colleges and universities emphasize research. While not always the case, research institutions tend to be large schools with extensive graduate programs. Graduate students who are hired as teaching assistants often teach undergraduate students.
 - COMPREHENSIVE schools offer both undergraduate and graduate programs in a wide array of academic disciplines. They generally base their focus on outcomes, i.e. helping a student accomplish his or her career goal. They tend to serve a wide array of needs for their regional communities like graduate programs, continuing education and off-campus courses.
 - LIBERAL ARTS colleges tend to emphasize undergraduate education. They also tend to be, though not always, private and smaller in enrollment. The emphasis is on teaching undergraduate students rather than on research. These colleges feel students are best served for their futures by having a broad-based education in a variety of subject areas.
 - **JUNIOR/COMMUNITY COLLEGES**
 - These two-year institutions provide academic programs that lead to an Associate's Degree. Students can then transfer to a four-year institution to get their Bachelor's Degree if they so choose.
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- **CAREER TECHNICAL SCHOOLS**

- These schools offer specialized training in a specific work field intended to prepare students for immediate employment in the field. Programs can vary from certificate, diploma, associate and bachelor degrees.

Other Factors to Consider

There are several big factors to consider when developing your college list.

- **Location:** Location encompasses considerations of geography, climate and distance from home. Are you ready to be far from home? Do you want to live in a part of the country or world you've never experienced?
 - **Setting:** Do you want a school with an urban, suburban or rural setting? Do you want the peace and quiet of a college located in a quiet suburb, the isolation of a school in the Rockies, or the hustle and bustle of a big-city campus with access to museums, shopping and entertainment?
 - **Size:** School enrollments can range from a few hundred students to tens of thousands. Size can impact the range of majors offered, a school's athletics, extracurricular activities, opportunities for involvement, the sense of community and the amount of attention a student will receive from faculty and staff.
 - **Academic Programs:** What courses of study does a school offer? Does it offer a major in the specific subject in which you are interested? If you're undecided, does the school offer a range of courses and majors that may ultimately satisfy what you want to do? Can you change from one college to another within the university –for example from engineering to liberal arts? Does the school have a core or open curriculum? Are classes large lectures or small seminars? Do faculty or graduate students teach introductory courses?
 - **Cost:** If cost is a concern for your family, keep this in mind as you look at schools. But if you are a student with good grades and test scores, don't rule out any school at this point on the basis of cost alone; just be sure your list includes colleges with a range of price points and financial aid.
 - **Athletics:** Do you want to be at a school with NCAA Division I/II athletics? Is a "big-game" atmosphere important to you? Is it important to you to be able to participate in intramural or club sports?
 - **Extracurricular Activities:** What kind of entertainment is available – music, art, theater, improvisational comedy? Is there a lecture series and if so, whom do they bring to campus? What kind of public service and volunteer opportunities are there? Is there a strong internship program? Is there an active religious community? Are there ethnic organizations?
 - **Campus Culture:** What is the social climate? Is it dominated by a Greek system? Populated by artsy students? Is it known as a party school? Is the library busy on a Friday night? Is reputation or prestige a factor for you? Do most students live on or off campus?
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VISITING COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Importance of Tours

How will you know which college is right for you? **There is no better way to get to know a college than by visiting the campus.** By visiting a college's campus, no longer is the school something you read about in a book or on the internet. Instead it comes to life, and you can gain a sense of the school's climate, atmosphere and student body.

Types of Tours and How to Set Up a Tour

Most colleges offer a visit program which can include: student led campus tours, classroom visits, admissions group sessions, seeing dormitory life, discussions with professors and interaction with current students. Tours can be set up by calling the admission office or online. It is best practice to have the student call to set up the tour as this illustrates initiative.

College Visit Checklist (Adapted from Nacacnet.org)

When touring a campus there is a lot of information to take in. Follow this simple checklist and you will be sure to develop a thorough understanding of the school.

- **Formal:** Activities that will likely need to be scheduled in advance
 - ✓ Take a campus tour
 - ✓ Have a meeting with an admission officer
 - ✓ Participate in group information session at the admission office
 - ✓ Sit in on a class (or two!)
 - ✓ Talk to a professor (or two) in your chosen major(s)
 - ✓ Talk to a coach in your chosen sport
 - ✓ Talk to a student or counselor in the career center
 - ✓ Spend the night in the dorm with a current student
 - **Informal:** Those pieces of information you can gather as a "fly on the wall"
 - ✓ Read the student newspaper
 - ✓ Eat in the cafeteria
 - ✓ Ask a student why he/she chose this college, and what his/her favorite part is
 - ✓ Wander around the campus by yourself
 - ✓ Read the bulletin boards in the student union and in the academic department in which you are interested
 - ✓ Ask a student what he/she dislikes about the college
 - ✓ Browse in the college bookstore
 - ✓ Walk or drive around the surrounding community to explore the area
 - ✓ Find out if you can have your vehicle on campus
 - ✓ Ask a student what he/she does on weekends
 - ✓ Ask career services about upcoming job opportunities
 - ✓ Look into clubs and organizations on campus in which you are interested
 - ✓ Try to see a dorm that you didn't see on the tour
 - ✓ See if you can imagine yourself at this college
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Questions to Ask on a Campus Visit: (Adapted from: <http://www.usnews.com/education>)

Many tours are given by current students who can give you insight from a student perspective. Take advantage of the opportunity and ask them a lot of questions!

Academics

- What are the admission requirements?
- Is there a foreign language requirement for admission and/or graduation?
- How much time do students typically spend on homework?
- Is there an honors program or college?
- What is the average class size of freshman classes and then in future years?
- How widely used are teaching assistants on your campus?
- **What CCP credits will the college accept?**

Costs, Scholarships and Financial Aid

- What is your average financial aid package?
- What is the typical breakdown of loans versus grants?
- What percentage of financial need does the school typically meet?
- What scholarships are available? Are they renewable?
- What percentage of students receive college grants?
- What is the average college debt that students leave with?
- What work-study opportunities are there?

Graduation Track Record

- What is your four-year graduation rate?
- What percentage of freshmen return for sophomore year?

Academic Support

- What type of tutoring programs do you have?
- How do you provide academic advice to students?
- Do you have a writing center and how do I access it?
- What kind of learning disability resources do you have?
- What career resources are available?

Student Life

- What kind of dorm choices are there?
 - What percentage of students live on campus? Am I required to live on campus?
 - How are roommates assigned?
 - How long are dorm accommodations guaranteed?
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- How many students live on campus?
- Do most students go home on the weekend?
- What percentage of the study body belongs to a sorority or fraternity?
- What activities are offered to students?
- What clubs do you have on campus?
- What is the surrounding community like?
- What type of internships, career counseling and placement services are available?

Virtual College Tours and Other Useful Websites

If physically visiting a certain college campus isn't feasible, the next best thing is taking a virtual college tour. I recommend taking a virtual college tour prior to visiting and as part of the research process so you are as informed as possible.

- **CampusTours:** <http://www.campustours.com/> - CampusTours allows students to take virtual tours of colleges and universities. In addition to video tours, students can view photorealistic interactive campus maps and take mobile walking tours.
 - **CollegeWeekLive:** <http://www.collegeweeklive.com/> - CollegeWeeklive helps students with their college search. The website enables students to live chat with admissions representatives and students from hundreds of U.S. universities and to watch presentations from education experts on topics such as mastering the SATs/ACTs, writing a standout college essay, choosing a college and more.
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COMPONENTS OF THE APPLICATION

Early Action and Early Decision Plans

- **Early Action:** Some colleges offer an opportunity to apply early and receive an answer early. Normally, the student applies in November and would receive a response in December. This is a non-binding admission plan and the student does not need to reply until May 1. If you are deferred under this plan, you will be reconsidered with the regular applicant pool. The major benefit to early action is that you will know your admission outcome much sooner than if you applied under regular decision.
- **Early Decision:** With an Early Decision (ED) plan, the student applies in November and would receive a reply in December. Acceptance is binding, and the student must attend if accepted and withdraw all other applications. If you are deferred under this plan, you will be reconsidered with the regular applicant pool. If you are denied under this plan, your application will not be further reviewed.

Mamlet (251) writes there are four main benefits to apply ED:

1. Applying ED lets the college know you have decided it's the one you most want to attend.
2. Cost savings – if you are accepted ED, you've filed just one application and paid only one fee.
3. A less stressful senior year. You are free from the anxiety of waiting to hear from multiple schools.
4. A jumpstart on getting to know the school where you will spend the next four years.

Writing

The writing component (typically referred to as the personal statement, supplement or essay) is the highest ranked non-academic feature of the application. The less a college relies on grades and tests scores, the more important the writing becomes. The writing component is the one thing over which students have absolute control. It provides a sample of your writing and a reflection of your interests and values.

The writing component will range anywhere from 200 to 1,000 words with varying topics ranging from “tell us about yourself” to “describe a character in fiction, a historical figure or a creative work that has influenced you.” Try to view the writing component as an opportunity to express who you really are.

Writing Advice For Students

- **Advice for the Personal Statement:** (Adapted from Nacacnet.org)
Look critically at the information in your application: your grades, awards, activities and work experience, family and income. Anticipate questions an admissions evaluator will have after reading your application. The personal statement is your opportunity to answer those questions. Present your information and ideas in a focused, thoughtful and meaningful manner. Support your ideas with specific examples. A personal statement that is simply a list of qualities or accomplishments is usually not persuasive. Your personal statement should reflect your own ideas and be written by you alone, but others - family and teachers - can offer valuable suggestions.
 - **Into, Through and Beyond**
Lead the reader INTO your story with a powerful beginning—a story, an experience. Take the reader THROUGH your story with the context and key parts of your story. Make sure the reader understands your initiative, leadership, development and continuity. Leave your reader with the BEYOND message about how this story has affected who you are now and who you want to be in college and potentially after college.
 - **Writing Tips:**
 - ✓ Always write in the first person; college essays are autobiographical
 - ✓ Find ways to reveal different core qualities in each essay
 - ✓ Use active writing: avoid passive sentences, use power verbs.
 - ✓ Don't write about something you don't want readers to know.
 - ✓ Never make excuses.
 - ✓ Essays don't make up for poor grades or scores but they can provide context.
 - ✓ Essays can tip you in.
 - ✓ Use them again for scholarships.
 - ✓ Let your personality emerge.
 - ✓ The more specific to you the better.
 - ✓ If a story starts in the past, very quickly get it to the present day.
 - ✓ Use the 1/3-2/3 rule if writing about someone else or an external event: 1/3 on the event and 2/3 on its effect on you with specific and then more general examples.
 - ✓ Be proud of your life and accomplishments
 - ✓ You only have two to five minutes to grab the attention of an essay reader
 - ✓ You will need weeks, not days, to write effective college essays.
 - ✓ Prepare each application as if it is the only one you are submitting!
 - ✓ **One final piece of advice: PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD**
-

Grades

Many applications require students to self-report their academic history. It is crucial you are accurate when entering your grades. Please be sure to refer to your transcript as you are filling out your academic history and triple check each entry. All information will be verified when the college receives your official transcript.

Resume/Activities List

Traditionally, resumes are used in the job application process; however, creating and using a resume for the college application process will be valuable. Think of the resume as a document that highlights your extracurricular accomplishments and provides the viewer with a reflection of who you are. Not only will it be beneficial for you to create a resume for the college application process, but also, you will now be prepared for upcoming internship and job interviews.

Interviews

A college interview is an opportunity for students to talk about their accomplishments, goals and interest in the respective school. Few colleges require an interview, but many offer an evaluative or informational interview as an option. An evaluative interview is one that is used by an institution as another means of evaluation. The evaluative interview is intended to assist the admission officer in assessment of the candidate.

Letters of Recommendation

Most private and competitive admission schools require letters of recommendation. With competitive admission standards, a compelling letter of recommendation can make all the difference.

Recommendations give colleges valuable information about you as both a student and as a person. Look for specific guidelines from school to school on how many recommendations are required and from whom. This will vary based on the institution.

- **Who to Ask:** You should give careful thought to those you will ask to complete your recommendations. Ask teachers who know you well and can comment on both your intellectual skills and potential, as well as your personal strengths. Recommendations should come from teachers in grades 10, 11 and 12 in academic subjects: math, science, foreign language, history or English.

Sending Scores/CEEB Codes

Send test scores to ALL universities through which you applied. ACT test scores are included on your high school transcript. However, some schools require standardized test scores be sent directly to the college from the testing organization. Edison's CEEB Code is: **363425**. This code will be required every time you fill out an application, take a test or request scores.

High School Documents

There are documents your counselor will send on your behalf if requested by the college. It is your responsibility to request these documents be sent and to give your counselor plenty of time to adhere to all deadlines.

- **Transcript:** You will be asked to provide your classes and grades in most of your applications. Some colleges use this self-reported data instead of an official transcript initially. Colleges that rely on self-reported data will ask for an official transcript once you are accepted. Other colleges may want an official transcript sent with the application and then again after your first semester grades from senior year are available. Read all instructions carefully and adhere to deadlines.
 - **Secondary School Report:** Be prepared to ask your counselor to fill out a Secondary School Report for most of the schools on your college list. A Secondary School report is a supplemental form that your counselor will complete and mail directly to the college. Information requested on the report usually includes GPA, disciplinary history and several open-response-questions relating to your academic and personal character. The main function of the Secondary School Report is to allow the counselor to elaborate on any special issues of which he or she thinks the college should be aware.
 - ✓ **Note:** These forms are usually submitted online and colleges contact the counselor directly when this information is required.
 - **Mid-Year Report:** The mid-year report is typically requested if no senior-year grades were available when your transcript was sent. **The mid-year report validates why it is so crucial to not slack off during your senior year, because with a decline in grades admission may be completely rescinded.**
-

STANDARDIZED TESTING (Adapted from Nacacnet.org)

Have you ever wondered why colleges require standardized test scores as a criterion for admission? High schools use various grading scales and curricula, which can make it difficult for college admission officers to accurately compare students' grades. Standardized tests provide colleges with a common measure to help them sort through credentials from thousands of applicants. Additionally, standardized tests can help indicate a student's readiness to complete college-level work. In some cases test scores may be used as a criterion for awarding merit-based financial aid. Standardized tests are a part of the college admission process that often causes anxiety for students. However, it is essential to remember that standardized test scores are never the sole factor in making admission decisions.

Note: Some colleges are adopting "Test Optional Admission Policies" which are admissions pathways for students who's potential for academic success is not accurately captured by standardized test scores. By opting to apply under a test optional policy, students will not be required to submit ACT or SAT test scores. The applications are evaluated based on application information, high school transcripts, and admissions essay(s). Each college that has adopted this policy should have a published list of eligibility requirements and exceptions. Consider the student profile from the last freshman class when making this decision.

ACT vs. the new SAT: See the next page for a comparison graphic.

Preparing for the Test

Test prep has become a big money making business. I encourage you to first explore all free resources that are available (guidebooks or computer programs) and then decide if you would like to pursue a fee-based option. Ohio Means Jobs, ACT and Khan Academy offer free practice activities. If you decide paid test preparation (a course or individual tutoring) might benefit you and if you are willing to devote time to extra study, you might find test preparation worth it. The courses vary widely in quality, so investigate before investing the money.

Develop a Testing Plan

Your testing plan will greatly depend on the selectivity of the colleges to which you plan to apply, as well as your original score. It is recommended that all college bound juniors test at least twice during spring semester of Junior year. This allows for the student to get a baseline score, valuable experience in taking the test(s) and the opportunity to test again if deemed necessary. The student is always responsible for registering for each test. The exception is the state funded ACT to be administered in March. Visit the following websites for additional information on test dates, current fees and FAQs.

Important Websites Related to Testing

ACT: www.actstudent.org

SAT: www.collegeboard.com

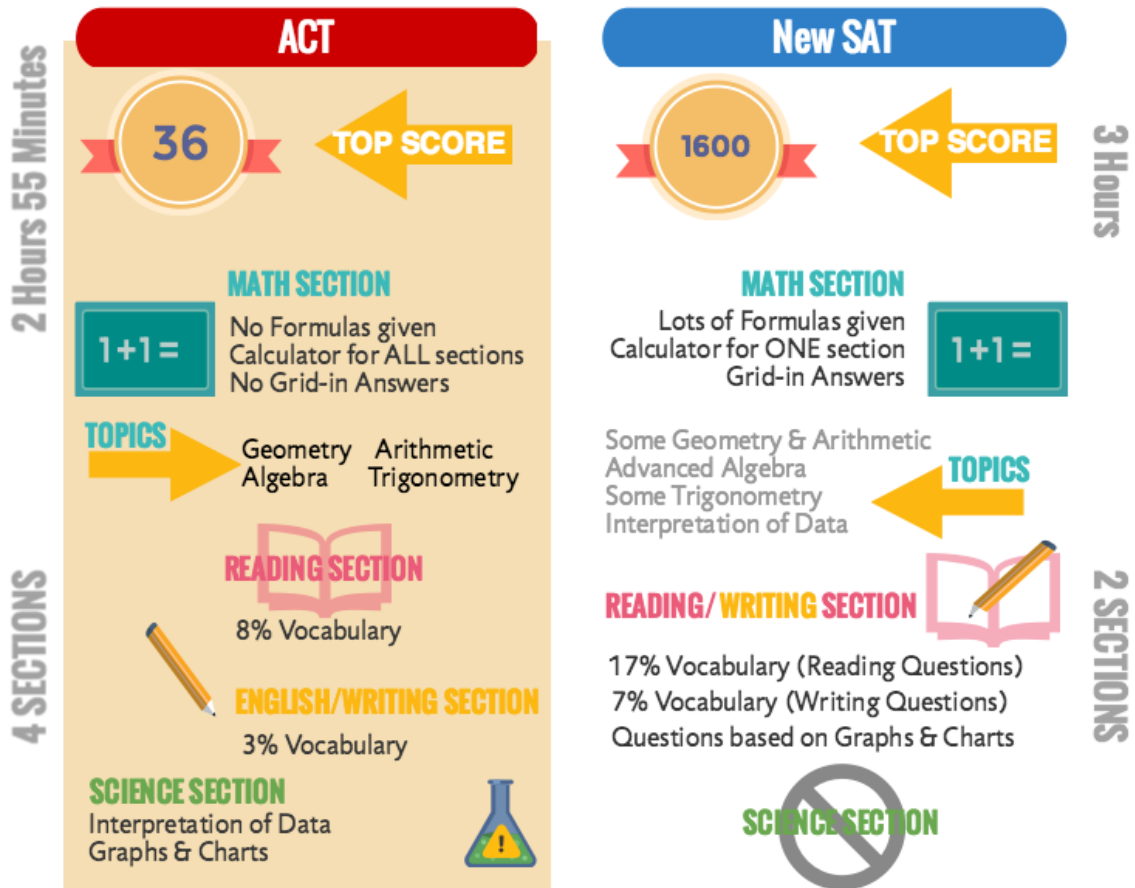
- The Ohio Means Jobs website offers free ACT and SAT test preparation materials including full length practice tests and study games!
-

ACT vs NEW SAT

What's the Same?

No penalties for guessing
Curriculum-focused content
Score choice
Optional essay

What's Different?



THE COMMON APPLICATION

The Common Application is an undergraduate college admission application that applicants may use to apply to any of the member colleges and universities. There are more than 700 member institutions. These member colleges/universities range from: public to private, large to small, highly selective, modestly selective, and East Coast, West Coast and every region in between.

Five sections exist within the application: family, education, testing, activities and the essay. In addition to submitting the common application to each of the schools on your list, many schools require what is known as a supplement. Supplements vary from school to school; however, most supplements collect more in-depth personal information from the applicant and an additional essay or series of questions is required.

Essay Prompts: Applicants are required to respond to one of the below essay prompts:

1. 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. [No change]
2. The lessons we take from *obstacles we encounter* can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a *challenge, setback, or failure*. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience? [Revised]
3. Reflect on a time when you *questioned* or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your *thinking*? What *was the outcome*? [Revised]
4. 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. [No change]
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or *realization* that *sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others*. [Revised]
6. *Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?* [New]
7. *Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.* [New]

The Common Application: <https://www.commonapp.org>

FINANCIAL AID

The cost of attending college varies greatly, and students and families should explore both public and private institutions as they look at college costs. The Federal Student Financial Aid homepage offers ample information about the types of financial aid that are available for students. **Use the “Net Price Calculator” available on each college site to approximate costs.**

Types of Aid

There are two major sources of aid available to families.

- **Grants and Scholarships:** Funds awarded to the student without expectation of repayment. Grants can come from federal and state governments, colleges and private organizations.
- **Loans:** Loans are borrowed by students and parents to help meet college costs. A loan must be repaid with interest and this type of aid is available through the federal and state government, institutions and private lenders. Be mindful of interest rates and terms, for some loans are more favorable than others.

FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a free application that each student must file every year to be eligible to receive federal and state financial aid. The federal government uses the information you report on the FAFSA to determine how much aid a student will be eligible for based on theirs and their parents' income (if the student is a dependant). They determine how much your Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) will be. EFC is the amount of money the government says that your family can contribute to your education.

- **How to File:** To file the FAFSA log-on to: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. Four to six weeks after you submit your FAFSA, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR), which will tell you your expected family contribution (EFC). The colleges you designated on your FAFSA will receive this information and, in conjunction with other data, each college will come up with a financial aid package.
- **Early Estimate:** Want an early estimate of your eligibility for federal student aid? Visit: FAFSA4Caster.
- File the FAFSA as soon as possible after October 1st – the sooner you file, the better.

Scholarships

- **Merit Scholarships:** Some colleges and universities will have scholarships based solely on merit and superior academic qualifications. Requirements and processes vary from institution to institution. Checking appropriate boxes on the application form is one way of letting colleges know that the student wants to be considered for a scholarship. Some applications for scholarship have earlier deadlines. Winning such awards may depend on an outstanding high school record or talent. For many schools, the application for admission will serve as the application for merit scholarships. For other schools, a separate application, nomination forms, recommendations and essays may be required.
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- **Private Organizations and Corporate Scholarships:** Numerous private organizations (the Elks, Soroptimist, the Rotary Club, etc.) and companies send applications for scholarships to the Guidance and Counseling Office. The criteria may range from an outstanding academic record to the excellence of a specific project to an unusually high degree of volunteer involvement in the community. In addition, there are a number of competitions for scholarships available to students with special qualification having to do with ethnic background, special talent, affiliation with a fraternity or sorority, club membership and religious belief. Many companies offer scholarships to children of employees.
- **Local scholarships applications will be released at the beginning of February with a deadline in mid-March. These scholarships are made possible by the continued generosity of our great community!**
- **Any information received by the Counseling Office will be posted under the Scholarship Tab on the Guidance and Counseling website.**

Negotiating Your Aid Package

In some cases, after careful review, you may feel that an aid package is inappropriate. If you have a special need or a significant change in resources has occurred, asking for consideration may be warranted. Legitimate requests are considered based on any situation which significantly reduces a student's ability to pay for college. Some examples are: job loss or change, serious long-term illnesses, costs associated with a disability, elementary/secondary private tuition obligations, natural disaster, responsibility for elders, business reversal, etc. If this is the case, it is recommended to contact the financial aid officer at the college directly to see if other arrangements might be made to help you meet college costs. Prior to contacting an aid officer, it is worth noting that the majority of colleges have limited funds and strict policies on adjusting aid packages. Similar to the college appeal process, the financial aid officers will be interested in any compelling and supplemental data you can provide. Such data may include letters explaining unusual circumstances affecting your family's financial situation. Each school will have their own unique appeal process. Be sure to follow directions and adhere to all deadlines.

Questions to ask your Financial Aid Officer: (Adapted from College Admission by Robin Mamlet and Collegeboard.org)

1. Does the college offer institutionally funded gift aid? What percentage of freshman aid recipients receive such aid?
 2. What is your average total aid award?
 3. Are merit scholarships available? Are these awarded with or without regard to financial need? What percentage of freshman receive merit scholarships?
 4. What is the average amount of debt for your graduates?
 5. How is the first-year financial aid package going to compare to packages for the remaining college years?
 6. **Is completing the FAFSA required to grant institutional aid?**
-

AFTER YOU APPLY

Checking Portals

Be sure to set up all requested portals and continually log in to see updates. I recommend checking your portal at least twice a week.

Spring Semester Grades

Keep your grades up! Contrary to a popular belief, your senior year grades do count. While your sophomore and junior year grades are most significant in terms of calculating your GPA, senior year grades are important for two main reasons. First, it is possible for your admission offer to be rescinded after receiving low or failing grades during senior year. Colleges have access to your Fall semester grades via the mid-year reports, and, of course, a final transcript will be sent to your selected college once you graduate. Secondly, slacking during the senior year will make you less prepared for the college-level work that lies ahead!

May 1 Deadline

May 1st is the universal reply date for candidates. May 1st is also the deadline to request to stay on the wait list. No college or university belonging to NACAC can require a non-refundable deposit before May 1. May 1st is the absolute deadline by which to send your SIR (Statement of Intent to Register) to inform the college of your decision. You may **ONLY ACCEPT ONE** college. It is unethical to do otherwise (known as “double depositing”), and you could risk being disqualified from all your schools if you break this rule.

It is also best practice to notify the schools you are turning down. Once your final decision has been made, notify **ALL** colleges so that your spot may be offered to others. The acceptance packet that was mailed to you likely included a withdrawal card, so be sure to fill this out and mail to the school if applicable. Remember to tell Mrs. Brown which college you have decided to attend!

Reporting to Colleges

Edison High School reserves the right to report any serious academic or disciplinary violations which result in suspension, probation or dismissal to matriculating schools, including high schools, colleges and universities. Edison may report any illegal behavior, repeated serious disciplinary violations or any offense that could cause harm to a school community on the Secondary School Report and the Midyear Report for colleges. Any serious offense during the senior year that results in suspension or probation may also be reported to colleges.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS, TALENTS AND NEEDS

Athletes (Adapted from ncaa.org and eligibilitycenter.org)

There is a multitude of information for you and your family to understand when preparing you for transitioning from high school to becoming an NCAA Division I, II or III student-athlete.

- **Factors to Consider for the College Bound Athlete:** When selecting a school where you will be a student-athlete, it is important to ask yourself if you will be happy at college X if you are not an athlete. In other words, is college X a good fit besides athletics? Every counselor and parent wants their student/child to develop life long skills in college. Playing college sports affords this opportunity in many ways; however, it is essential to remember that the vast majority of college student-athletes will become professionals in something other than sports.
- **NCAA:** “Founded more than one hundred years ago as a way to protect student-athletes, the NCAA continues to implement that principle with increased emphasis on both athletics and academic excellence. The NCAA is made up of three membership classifications that are known as Divisions I, II and III. Each division creates its own rules governing personnel, amateurism, recruiting, eligibility, benefits, financial aid, and playing and practice seasons – consistent with the overall governing principles of the association. Every program must affiliate its core program with one of the three divisions.”
- Please visit the comprehensive NCAA website for information. Your coach or athletic director will have additional information to contribute.

Special Talents (Adapted from Nacacnet.org)

Students who are particularly gifted in an extracurricular area will receive careful attention on their application if the information is adequately presented. Special talents can include activities like art, dance, music and theater. Some colleges require supplementary materials, usually referred to as a portfolio. Several art pieces, a CD highlighting your musical talents, a video of a recent dance competition or a theatrical video are some examples of supplemental materials. A portfolio is a way for you to bring your special talent to life and illustrate your unique style to the admission committee. These extra materials can help the college understand what makes a student special and what he or she will bring to that campus.

- **The Portfolio and Audition:** In addition to completing a typical college application, students in the visual or performing arts should prepare a portfolio or audition. I recommend beginning the portfolio process during the junior year. Each arts program has different requirements, so you should contact the schools as early as possible to obtain their portfolio or audition requirements. Although your portfolio or audition is an important part of the application, arts programs also heavily consider your academic record and test scores.
-

Learning Differences

The college application process can be overwhelming for all involved. This process can be especially overwhelming for students with learning disabilities, as one considers admission standards, testing and access to support services at the college level. Luckily, most colleges and universities provide support for students with documented learning disabilities. It is the student's role to advocate for themselves and take the initiative to seek out proper services.

- **Testing Accommodations:** The College Board and ACT are committed to providing accommodations to students with disabilities. Each testing agency has specific protocol to request accommodations. Please consult your counselor to learn how to apply for accommodations. It is important to remember that not all accommodations will be approved, and accommodation requests go through a lengthy review process. All documentation submitted to testing agencies is kept confidential and is used solely to determine the applicant's eligibility for test accommodations. Score Reports do not include any specifics about the disability or accommodations provided.
 - **Strategies for Students with Disabilities:**
 - **Be sure that your disability is well documented and current, within 12 months of graduation.**
 - **Learn the federal laws that apply to students with disabilities.**
 - **Visit several colleges and make appointments to talk with the individuals facilitating the support programs available on the campus.**
 - **Ask about the services available and how to access these services. Ask about the college's expectations for students with disabilities.**
 - **Ask if there is an extra cost for support services or a need for additional testing prior to enrollment.**
 - Useful websites and books:
 - **SAT Services for Students with Disabilities:**
<http://student.collegeboard.org/services-for-students-with-disabilities>
 - **ACT Services for Students with Disabilities:**
<http://www.actstudent.org/regist/disab/policy.html>
 - **Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD):**
<http://www.ahead.org>
 - **Tips for College Bound High School Students with Diagnosed Learning Problems:** <http://www.ldonline.org/article/7760>
 - **PostHigh School Options for Students with Learning Disabilities:**
<http://www.nclld.org/adults-learning-disabilities/post-high-school>
 - **Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or AD/HD – Peterson's**
 - **K&W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities – Princeton Review**
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COLLEGE TERMS DEFINED (Adapted from Nacacnet.org & Finaid.org)

ACT: The American College Testing assessment is a curriculum-based aptitude test that includes four sections: English, Math, Reading and Science Reasoning. Each section is scored 1-36 and students receive a single composite score of 1-36, representing the average of the four individual scores. There is an optional writing section of the ACT. The ACT is accepted by all colleges in lieu of the SAT. Additional information, including practice questions and registration forms, can be found at www.act.org.

Applications: Each college and university will require that students submit an application to be considered for admission. Applications are available from the office of admission and online.

Application Fees: Each application requires an application fee, with these fees ranging from \$25-\$100. Most colleges will provide fee waivers to students who have a demonstrated financial need. Students can request fee waivers themselves or counselors can request them by contacting the college or university office of admission.

Associate's degree: A two-year degree earned at a community college (some abbreviate A.A.).

Bachelor's degree (B.A. - Bachelor of Arts; or B.S. - Bachelor of Science): A diploma earned after successful completion (usually spanning four years) of required courses at a university or college.

Campus Visit: Campus visits are recommended when they are geographically and financially viable for the student. Colleges and universities expect that students living a reasonable distance from campus will make an effort to visit. Visits should always be arranged through the admission office.

CEEB Code (school code): A six-digit code assigned to each school by ETS (Educational Testing Services) that must be included on all applications and all standardized testing forms. Edison High School's CEEB Code is: 363425. Memorize this number. You will need it every time you fill out an application, take a test or request scores.

Class rank: How a student's academic performance, as determined by the grade point average, compares to other members of his/her graduating class. This is determined by your home school.

College Board: College Entrance Examination Board (College Board)

Common Application: The Common Application is created each year for use by applicants to nearly 700 member colleges, in the United States and abroad. Students are able to complete a single application and submit copies to participating colleges and universities. Many of the institutions will, however, require that supplemental items be submitted before the Common

Application is considered complete. More information about the Common Application is available at www.commonapp.org.

Core curriculum: A specified number of courses or credits in the humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and/or physical sciences, required of all students, regardless of major, to ensure a basic set of learning experiences.

Deposits: The money required by a college or university to hold a student's place in the entering class. There are several types of deposits: Non-refundable: Can be required only on May 1 or later; Refundable: Can be required at any time; Housing: Can be required at any time, but must be refundable until May 1.

Dual degrees: A program of study in which a student receives two degrees at the same time from the same institution.

Early Action: This plan is similar to early decision, but is nonbinding, meaning that although students receive their decisions early, they remain eligible to apply to other colleges and do not have to make a commitment until May 1.

Early Decision: Under this plan, a student applies to a single college or university (the student's first-choice college) and makes a commitment to attend if admitted. In this case, students apply by an early deadline (usually November 1) and are notified of the decision by mid-December. If admitted, the student must enroll in that college or university and cancel all other pending applications.

GPA: A student's grade point average (GPA) is determined at the end of each semester by averaging the grades received in all of the student's academic courses for that semester and all previous years.

Honors program: Any special program for very able students offering the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acceleration, or some combination of these.

Learning Differences: Learning differences (also known as learning disabilities) include a broad spectrum of conditions that complicate a student's ability to learn in a traditional setting. Accommodations, such as extended-time testing, verbal instructions, and other support services can be made available in school, based on the results of a student's evaluation. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires colleges and universities to make reasonable accommodations for students with documented learning disabilities. More information can be found at www.ada.gov.

Letters of Recommendation/Support: Colleges and universities may require up to three letters of support for each applicant. Many colleges and universities provide checklists as part of the application as well as including space for written comments.

Major: The field of specialization or concentration for a college undergraduate. The student normally does from a quarter to a third of the total undergraduate work in his/her major field. Most often the student is asked to declare a major at the end of the sophomore year.

Matriculate: A student matriculates in college when he or she enrolls in college for the first time. A student who just started the freshman year in high school will matriculate in four years.

Minor: A secondary area of academic concentration, which may or may not be required by an institution.

Personal statement/essay: Many colleges and universities require a personal statement as part of their applications. Students should take particular care with the essay, as it is an opportunity to showcase their writing ability. Students should also make sure that their essay answers the question completely. If no question is provided, students can use a brief biographical essay, or may use the essay questions on the Common Application as a guide.

Private Institutions: These colleges and universities are run primarily through the use of tuition, donations and endowments.

Public Institutions: Public universities are run primarily using state and federal funds that are supplemented by tuition, fees, donations and endowments. In general, public institutions are less expensive than private institutions.

Regular Admission: Under this plan, students usually apply between January 1 and March 15 of the senior year. Once a student's application has been reviewed, the college or university issues a decision. Most students will be either admitted or denied, meaning they are either offered a place in the freshman class or not. Students will generally receive their decision letters by April 15. Students who are not admitted, but who meet the college or university's criteria for admission, may be offered a place on the wait list. Students on the wait list may be offered admission if places in the class remain available once the May 1 reply date has passed.

Rolling Admission: Under this plan, the admission office notifies applicants as their applications are processed rather than waiting for a general spring mailing. A college typically informs the applicant of his/her status within a short time (usually four to six weeks) after the application is complete.

SAT: See comparison graphic on page 23. Information on the SAT, as well as practice tests and other preparation tools, can be found at www.collegeboard.com.

SSD: Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) allows for special administrations of the ACT, SAT and Subject Tests, with accommodations ranging from large-block answer sheets to extended-time testing. In order for a student to use SSD, the school must confirm that the student has a valid Individual Educational Plan (IEP) on file.

State Residents: (students who can prove that they live in a particular state) pay a lower tuition at their state's public institution because it is assumed that their families' taxes support the institution.

Transcript: The student's high school transcript is the official record of a student's coursework and grades from the four years of high school. The transcript is usually given considerable weight in the college admissions process.

Undergraduate: A college student who is a candidate for a bachelor's degree; a program of study leading to a bachelor's degree.

Universal Reply Date: Colleges and universities that are members of NACAC and have deadlines, use May 1 as their reply deadline for accepting offers of admission and requests to stay on the wait list. No college or university belonging to NACAC can require a non-refundable deposit before May 1.

Wait list: List of students who meet the admission requirements but will only be offered a place in the class if space becomes available. Most offers of admission from the wait list are made prior to the end of the school year. Most wait lists are not ranked; instead, they will admit students based on the college's needs and student interest.

FINANCIAL AID TERMS DEFINED (Adapted from Nacacnet.org & Finaid.org)

1040 Form, 1040A Form, 1040EZ Form: The Federal Income Tax Return. Every person who has received income during the previous year must file a form 1040 with the IRS by April 15. Keep these forms handy when filing out the FAFSA or CSS PROFILE.

Borrower: The person who receives the loan.

Bursar's Office: (Also called Student Accounts Office) The university office that is responsible for the billing and collection of university charges.

COA: The Cost of Attendance is the actual cost of a student's enrollment, and may include transportation to and from campus (as a resident or a commuter), books, lab fees and clothing.

Custodial Parent: If a student's parents are divorced or separated, the custodial parent is the one with whom the student lived the most during the past 12 months. The student's need analysis is based on financial information supplied by the custodial parent.

Dependent: For a child or other person to be considered your dependent, they must live with you and you must provide them with more than half of their support. Spouses do not count as dependents in the Federal Methodology. You and your spouse cannot both claim the same child as a dependent.

EFC: The expected family contribution is the amount the government believes a student and his or her family can pay for a student's college costs. The EFC is the same regardless of the actual cost of the institution the student attends.

FAFSA: Every student who applies for federal financial aid must complete the Free Application For Federal Student Aid. The form is available online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. The forms can be filed starting October 1st of the student's senior year and should be filed immediately thereafter. Students can include up to ten colleges and universities in their initial filing, and can add others using the FAFSA correction form. Families can also use the FAFSA4Caster, found at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov, to get an early estimate of possible aid packages.

Financial Aid Package: After receiving reports from FAFSA, each college will prepare a financial aid offer, or package, for the student. The package will include a combination of the following types of assistance: Need-based aid, Merit-based aid, Loans, Grants, Work Study.

Grants: Financial aid that is a gift from the college or university.

Loans: Financial aid that must be repaid, either by the student or parents. The federal student loan programs (FFELP and FDSLPL) are a good method of financing the costs of your college education. These loans are better than most consumer loans because they have lower interest

rates and do not require a credit check or collateral. The Stafford Loans and Perkins Loans also provide a variety of deferment options and extended repayment terms.

Merit Based Aid: Financial aid that is based on factors other than income, such as SAT or ACT scores, GPA, special talents or community service.

Need: The difference between the COA and the EFC is the student's financial need --the gap between the cost of attending the school and the student's resources. The financial aid package is based on the amount of financial need. The process of determining a student's need is known as need analysis. $COA - EFC = \text{Financial Need}$.

Need-based aid: Financial aid that is given based on the student and his or her family's income.

Net Price Calculator: As of November 2011, the federal government has mandated that all college and university websites include a net price calculator, a tool which allows prospective students to obtain an estimate of the real cost of attending a particular institution. Net price calculators (and the information required to use them) will vary by institution, so students should complete the process at each college or university.

Perkins Loan: Formerly the National Direct Student Loan Program, the Perkins Loan allows students to borrow up to \$3,000/year (5 year max) for undergraduate school. The Perkins Loan has one of the lowest interest rates and is awarded by the financial aid administrator to students with exceptional financial need. The student must have applied for a Pell Grant to be eligible. The interest on the Perkins Loan is subsidized while the student is in school.

Private Loans: Education loan programs established by private lenders to supplement the student and parent education loan programs available from federal and state governments.

Promissory Note: A promissory note (or 'note') is a binding legal document that must be signed by the student borrower before loan funds are disbursed by the lender. The promissory note states the terms and conditions of the loan, including repayment schedule (e.g., level monthly payments for a term of 10 years), interest rate, fees (e.g., origination fees, guarantee fees, late fees, collection charges), deferments, forbearances and cancellations. It represents an agreement by the borrower to repay the debt according to the specified terms and conditions. The student should keep this document until the loan has been repaid.

SAR: The student aid report is sent to the student once the FAFSA form has been processed.

Scholarships: Legitimate scholarships are grants that do not need to be repaid, and can be awarded by the college or university or by an outside company or organization. Students should take care to seek scholarships through trusted sources.

Scholarship Scams: Scholarship organizations are in the business of giving money to students, not taking money from students. There should not be any cost associated with applying for legitimate scholarships and students should be suspicious of any scholarship with a fee.

Work Study: A federal program that gives students financial aid based on campus employment. The ratio of loans to grants within financial aid packages can vary greatly from institution to institution, and students should review the offers they receive carefully with an eye towards their actual cost of attendance. Financial aid packages will not necessarily cover the total cost for a student enrolling in the institution.

College Application Deadlines

College/University	Application Type (EA, ED, Rolling)	Application Deadline
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Notes:

Questions for Self-Research

Deciding to attend college and what college to attend are some of the biggest decisions you will make in your life. Use the following questions to start the exploration process.

Interests and Activities

1. What is your favorite thing to do?
2. What inspires you?
3. Which activity have you pursued outside of school that has been most meaningful to you?
4. What do you hate to do?
5. What are your favorite... books, movies, websites, news sources, food, type of music, TV shows, sports?
6. How much do you genuinely like to read, discuss issues and exchange ideas?
7. What did you do last summer?
8. Is there a career you've always dreamed of?
9. Do you see yourself as politically liberal or conservative?
10. Is there an issue of local, national or international concern that you find compelling?

Personality

11. What are the first words that come to mind when you're asked to describe yourself?
12. How do you go about making significant decisions?
13. How have you changed since 9th grade?
14. Complete this sentence: "People think that I am..."
15. What are you most proud of?
16. What are you afraid of being or becoming?
17. Name the three values that are most important to you.
18. What makes you happy?
19. Do you like hustle and bustle or peace and quiet?
20. How are you unique? What can you say about yourself that is only true for you?
21. What do you consider your coolest trait?
22. What do you consider your worst habit?
23. Are you a morning person or a night person or a night owl?

Friends and Family

24. What do you most appreciate about your family life?
 25. How would your parents describe you? What three words would they use?
 26. If you have siblings, how do you get along with them?
 27. How would your siblings describe you? What three words would they use?
 28. What are you known for in your family?
 29. Who are your closest friends?
 30. How would your friends describe you? What three words would they use?
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31. Describe a fun experience you have had with a friend.
32. Describe a difficult experience you had with a friend and how you handled it.
33. What person in your life has been most influential and why?

School

34. If you could start over at high school, what would you change? (“Nothing” is not an acceptable answer!)
35. What are you known for at school?
36. How would teachers describe you? What three words would they use?
37. What teacher do you have an important relationship with and why?
38. What do your friends and teachers not know about you?
39. What has been your greatest challenge in high school?
40. Which activity have you pursued in school that has been most meaningful to you?

Academics

41. What is your GPA? What is the highest GPA reported by your school?
42. Are the majority of your classes advanced, such as APs?
43. What is the most intellectually engaging class you have taken in high school? Why? How did it influence you?
44. What do you choose to learn when you learn on your own? Consider what topics you choose for research papers, lab reports or independent reading.
45. What subject have you excelled in?
46. What has been your greatest academic success?
47. What are your weaknesses academically?
48. When you have struggled in your class work, what did you do about it?
49. How do you respond to academic pressure?

Learning Style

50. Are you happiest when you are (a) significantly challenged and must be ever energetic in your efforts to keep up; (b) growing along with the rest of your classmates; or (c) learning while comfortably at the top of your class?
51. Are there any circumstances, such as a learning disability, that have impacted your academic performance?
52. What has been the best learning environment for you – a large lecture class or a small discussion group?
53. Is it important to you to have close relationships with your teachers?
54. What kind of schedule is best for you?

The Next Step

55. Why are you going to college?
 56. Do you already have an idea about what you want to study?
 57. Is there a career you are intent on pursuing?
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58. If not, are there professions you are considering?
 59. How do you define success? Are you satisfied with your accomplishments to date? What do you want to accomplish in the future?
 60. Which activities have you participated in so far that you are interested in pursuing in college and what haven't you been able to pursue that you would like to try in college?
 61. Is there an activity that you insist on continuing in college?
 62. If you took a year off before college, what would you do?
 63. What balance of study, activities and social life are you looking for?
 64. Do you like to socialize with a group or one-on-one?
 65. Is being in a leadership position important to you?
 66. Are there colleges that your family has significant ties to or is interested in having you look at?
 67. Are you ready to live far away from home?
 68. What kinds of surroundings are essential to your well-being?
 69. Do you want to live in a community where everybody knows your name, or one in which you can be anonymous?
 70. Are you used to advocating for yourself?
 71. Do you like being around people like yourself, or do you prefer a lot of diversity in your friends or community?
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Scholarship Sites

The following sites will help with your scholarship search. Start early and apply often!

Remember: Scholarships = Free Money

Scholly app (about \$3) in an app store on your device

www.unigo.com

www.studentscholarshipsearch.com

www.scholarships.com

www.fastweb.com

www.scholarships360.org

www.scholarshipmonkey.com

raise.me

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>

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