



# College Counseling Handbook

Upper School Counseling Office

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Welcome to the college counseling stage of your high school career!

The Minnehaha Academy's Upper School Counseling Office exists to assist families as they navigate through the ever-changing college search process. We realize this stage is a stressful time in the lives of students and parents, and your counselors are here to walk you through the necessary steps so you will attend an institution that meets your academic and career goals. We believe the college search process is about finding the right fit for you, and your counselor will encourage you explore a wide variety of universities of which you can attend.

You may not have realized it, but this college search process is a lot less about college; it's more about *you*. It's about pulling together everything that you've learned about yourself thus far, asking the right questions, researching a variety of institutions, and ultimately finding a place that will challenge you to learn even more.

More importantly, this stage in your life will challenge you to step up and take ownership of the process, and will also make you think about what matters to you and why. Your counselor is delighted to help you clarify your personal vision so you can discover and develop your God-given gifts to achieve your God-intended purposes.

This handbook is meant to give you an overview of the college admissions process. We as counselors realize this handbook may not answer all of your questions, but it's a great starting point. After reading this handbook, your counselor will individualize your college search to ensure that your college list reflects your interests and goals.

Proverbs 3:5-6 reads, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight". We pray that through this process, you will discover God's unique path for your life, and that you will take a deep breath and enjoy the adventure that awaits!

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# Junior Timeline

## September

- Make appointments with admissions offices to visit colleges during the fall break.
- Attend meetings with college representatives that visit Minnehaha Academy during the school day.
  - A calendar with this information is available on NAVIANCE, in the daily bulletin, in the monthly PRINCIPAL'S NEWSLETTER, and posted outside of the Guidance Office.
- Take note of college scholarship opportunities posted on Naviance.
- Register for the PSAT/NMSQT.

## October

- Continue to attend meetings with college representatives that visit Minnehaha Academy.
- Practice writing college application essays in English class.
- October: Visit college campuses when MA is not in session.
- October: Christian College Fair

## November

- Complete the 'DO WHAT YOU ARE' inventory in Naviance.
- Mid-terms
- When MA is not in session – consider visiting local colleges.

## December

- Students are encouraged to continue to make use of the Naviance college search program. And if you haven't all ready done so, complete the 'DO WHAT YOU ARE' inventory on Naviance before meeting with your College Counselor.
- Begin to prep for the ACT and/or the SAT to be taken during 2<sup>nd</sup> semester.
- Register for the optional ACT Test Prep Class which is held at Minnehaha Academy.
- Register for the February ACT Test which is given at Minnehaha Academy.

## January

- Take the ACT Test Prep Class or take advantage of test preparation materials available in the Minnehaha Academy College & Counseling office, online, at a bookstore, your local library, or [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).
- Begin to investigate Advanced Placement opportunities for your senior year.
- Review college admissions course recommendations.

## **February**

- Counselors will begin meeting with junior students individually to begin the college search.
- Consider what individuals (e.g. teachers, pastor, etc.) you may ask to write college admissions recommendations for you.
- Discuss family financial resources with parents.

## **March**

- If applicable, register for the Advanced Placement exams with Mrs. Rahm in the College & Counseling Office.
- Investigate summer opportunities in your areas of interest.
- If applicable, register for the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, or the ACT.

## **April**

- Consider attending some of the regional college fairs.
- If applicable, register for the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, or the ACT.

## **May**

- Consider community service work for the summer.
- Consider taking a test preparation course during the summer.
- Perhaps schedule a summer college campus visit.
- Advanced Placement Exams

## **June**

- SAT Test administration at Minnehaha Academy.
- Final Exams
- June Term

# Senior Timeline

## September

- Begin to finalize a list of colleges with your family & College Counselor.
- Attend meetings with college representatives that visit Minnehaha Academy during the school day.
  - A calendar with this information is available on NAVIANCE, in the weekly PRINCIPAL'S NEWSLETTER, and posted outside of the Counseling Office.
- Check application, financial aid and scholarship deadlines for the schools to which you plan to apply. Deadlines vary so it's important that you are aware and meet ALL deadlines!
- Begin filling out college application(s).
- Request teacher recommendation(s).
  - Provide teacher with a recommendation form and a Student Profile or Resume.
  - Give the writer at least three weeks from the date that you need the recommendation.
- Schedule a visit at your top college choice(s).
- If applicable, register for the SAT subject test(s).
- Remain focused on coursework and grades.

## October

- Continue to work on college application(s).
- Schedule an appointment with your College Counselor to discuss the next steps of the application process.
- Have the standardized testing service (ACT or SAT) send your test scores to your list of colleges.
- If applying for early decision or early action, send in your application for a November 1 or November 15 deadline. Remember, if you are accepted under the early decision option, you are expected to enroll at that college and to withdraw all other applications.
- Research scholarships and note deadlines.
- Stay focused on coursework and grades.

## November

- Stay focused on coursework and grades.
- November 1-15 – Early Decision and Early Action Deadlines.

## **December**

- See your counselor for financial aid information for seniors.
- If applying for financial aid, get started on preparations by filling out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Complete this document as quickly as possible.
- Stay focused on coursework and grades.
- December 15 – Application priority date for some institutions (i.e. University of Minnesota). Some university programs fill early.

## **January**

- See your counselor to have your 1<sup>st</sup> semester grades sent to institutions that you have applied to.
- Stay focused on coursework and grades.

## **February**

- If you completed a FAFSA, you should receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) within four weeks after submitting the FAFSA. Review the SAR for any inaccuracies. If necessary, make corrections on the SAR and return it to processing at FAFSA.
- Fill out scholarship applications.
- Stay focused on coursework and grades.
- Be aware of any housing or notification dates for colleges you are still considering.

## **March**

- Registration deadline for Advanced Placement Exams.
- Finalize financial aid information.
- Fill out scholarship applications.
- Stay focused on coursework and grades.

## **April**

- Make final college decision and send in deposit on or before May 1.
- Notify all colleges of your final decision.
- Reserve housing, if applicable.
- Evaluate financial aid packages offered by colleges and respond.

## **May**

- Request that a final transcript be sent to the institution you will attend.
- Advanced Placement Exams

# **Top Ten Strengths and Experiences Colleges look for in a High-School Student**

1. A high school curriculum that challenges the student.
2. Grades that represent strong effort and an upward trend. Grades should show an upward trend over the years. However, slightly lower grades in a rigorous program are typically preferred to all A's in less challenging course work.
3. Solid scores on standardized tests (SAT, ACT). These should be consistent with high school performance.
4. Passionate involvement in a few activities, demonstrating leadership and initiative. Depth, not breadth, of experience is most important.
5. Community service showing evidence of being a "contributor." Activities should demonstrate concern for other people and a global view of service.
6. Work or out-of-school experiences (including summer activities) that illustrate responsibility, dedication and development of areas of interest. Work or other meaningful use of free time can demonstrate maturity.
7. A well-written essay that provides insight into the student's unique personality, values and goals. The application essay should be thoughtful and highly personal. It should demonstrate careful and well-constructed writing.
8. Letters of recommendation from teachers and counselors that give evidence of integrity, special skill, and positive character traits. Students should request recommendations from those who respect their work in an academic discipline.
9. Supplementary recommendations by adults who have had significant direct contact with the student. Letters from coaches or supervisors in long-term work or volunteer activities are valuable; however, recommendations from casual acquaintances or family friends, even if they are well known, are rarely given much weight.
10. Anything special that makes the student stand out from the rest of the applicants! Include honors, awards, evidence of unusual talent or experience, or anything else that makes the student unique. Overall, colleges are seeking students who will be active contributing members of the student body.

# Seven Myths About College Admissions

**Myth #1: Colleges receive so many personal essays they probably only glance at them.**

**Fact:** Private college admission officers read personal essays with great care. Writing about yourself in a way that makes you unique is the one significant thing you can do to overcome lackluster test scores and a mediocre school record. Don't wait until just before the deadline to write your essay just to get the application in the mail on time. A well-written essay can tip the scales in your favor; the personal essay *can make a difference*.

**Myth #2: Colleges don't look at the senior year grades.**

**Fact:** All college admissions committees analyze not only senior year grades in the first semester, but also the degree of difficulty of the senior year course of study. As for the second semester grades, if there is a significant change (decline) in academic performance from February to June (spring semester), the college that originally accepted you might require summer school work, put you on probation for the first semester of college, or rescind your acceptance on the grounds that you are not the same strong student they originally admitted. Some universities will not officially accept you until they see your final transcript.

**Myth #3: It is important to have as many extra-curricular activities as possible to impress college admission people because it "looks good."**

**Fact:** Colleges are "looking" for *quality* of involvement, not simply *quantity*. They want a well-rounded student body made up of students who are passionately interested in particular activities, those who haven't spread themselves so thin that their extra-curricular commitments are superficial. Colleges prefer, for example, the student solely dedicated to being the yearbook editor over the student who has some participation in 10 different activities. This is what is called "productive follow-through."

**Myth #4: It is better to go to a big university that is well known than to a small college that few people have heard of.**

**Fact:** This generalization about large versus small schools is quite misleading. While a large university with wide name recognition (such as UW- Madison) may be ideal for many students, others may perform better in a smaller, more personalized environment (such as Carleton College). Just because your next-door neighbor hasn't heard of a particular college doesn't mean the school is not prestigious. Graduate schools and employers make it their business to know which colleges turn out the brightest and most capable graduates, and the size of the school has very little to do with it. It is important to define the things *you* want in a college – to understand yourself, not to be unduly influenced by the opinions of others.

**Myth #5: The only private colleges worth applying to are the Ivy League colleges.**

**Fact:** This is another cliché. The eight Ivy League colleges are among the most selective schools in the nation, but they may not offer what *you* want; besides, did you know that the “Ivy League” is simply an athletic league like the Big 10 or the Pac 10? Certainly the Ivy League is known for its academic quality, but it does *not* have a monopoly on academic quality.

Suggested reading: *Looking Beyond the Ivy League* by Loren Pope.

**Myth #6: Colleges just don’t have enough money to give families financial aid.**

**Fact:** Financial aid continues to be more readily available than you might think in the forms of grants, loans, work-study, and merit scholarships. Read the financial aid section in this handbook and investigate websites such as [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) or [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org).

**Myth #7: If I make the wrong decision about college, my life will be ruined.**

**Fact:** While it is important to realize the significance of your college choice, take it seriously, and spend time on all the steps of the college process, you should remember to keep things in perspective. If you find, in spite of an informed choice, that you are not well suited to your college, you can transfer to another college. So be conscientious about the selection process.

## **Factors to Consider In Making Your College List**

### **Location:**

California, East Coast, Midwest? Where do relatives live? What type of transportation is necessary to travel to and from home?

### **Size:**

The size of the campus: 1 acre or 400 acres? Enrollment: 25 students or 50,000 students?

### **Setting of campus:**

Rural, Suburban, Urban. Which are you more familiar with?

### **Academics:**

What majors? What minors? Double major? Can you change your major, how often?

### **Learning environment:**

Large classroom, discussion group, small class size, and accessibility of professors: What works for you?

### **Extracurricular options:**

Intramural sports, clubs, and organizations: What to do outside of class.

### **Housing options:**

Type and availability of dorms and other student housing.

### **Cost to attend:**

\$12,000 to \$58,000 per year. Do you plan to attend graduate school?

### **Academic reputation:**

Ranking of college often is subjective and developed over time.

### **School spirit:**

NCAA sports? Banana slug vs. Trojans: PAC 10 or Patriot League? Gophers or Badgers?

# **Admission Factors**

## **ADMISSION STANDARDS**

Every school has its own admission standards. It is important for you to know what they include. Please use this information when comparing yourself to your schools of interest. There are always exceptions to these classifications.

### 1. Most Selective

Most applicants scored above 1980 on the SAT or above 29 on the ACT; Less than 15% of applicants are admitted.

### 2. Highly Selective

Most applicants scored 1760 on the SAT or above 26 on the ACT; Less than 30% of applicants are accepted.

### 3. Selective

Most applicants scored over 1500 on the SAT or above 21 on the ACT; Less than 60% of applicants are accepted

### 4. Less Selective

Many applicants score around 1500 on the SAT or 18-22 on the ACT; up to 90% of applicants are accepted.

### 5. Open

Virtually all applicants are accepted regardless of rank or scores. There may be additional requirements and placement tests that are a part of the admission process.

## **APPLICATION TERMINOLOGY**

### 1. Early Decision

In this plan one particular school is your top choice. The specific deadline for “Early Decision” is determined by the school. You may only apply to one school under an “Early Decision” plan. “Early Decision” is a binding agreement if you are accepted.

### 2. Early Action

With early action you will know if you are accepted at an earlier date than Regular Admission. This is a non-binding agreement. You may apply to more than one school under this plan.

### 3. Priority Deadline

Meeting this deadline allows you full access to admission, housing, scholarships, etc. Although a school may accept your application after their priority deadline your chances of admission may be changed drastically.

### 4. Regular Decision

If you apply under regular decision you are given full consideration for admission.

### 5. Rolling Admission

In this type of admission plan, admissions decisions are made continuously throughout the year. You are advised to apply no later than Dec. 1. The freshman class may fill quickly, which could result in you being wait-listed or denied.

## **MAJOR FACTORS EVALUATED FOR ADMISSION:**

- Grade Point Average
- Test Scores (ACT, SAT)
- High School Courses Taken
- Letters of Recommendations
- Special Talents (Arts, Athletics, etc.)
- Awards/Accomplishments

# **Maximizing Your College Search Contacting Colleges & College Visits**

## **CONTACTING COLLEGES**

You may contact colleges that you are interested in by:

- Calling
- Emailing
- Sending an inquiry through the school's web page

The telephone numbers and address of colleges may be found through Naviance or on the college's web page.

In contacting the colleges, you will want to communicate with an Admissions Counselor whose geographic assignment includes Minnehaha Academy. Be sure to make note of their name. When you call for information it is important that you state your full name, correct address and telephone number.

## **GENERAL VISIT INFORMATION**

Students are strongly encouraged to visit the colleges and universities that interest you. Visiting campus(es) is important for you to gather information and get a feel for the college(s). All colleges have different personalities and you will come away with a definite impression, which will help you make your final college selection.

It is best to plan your visit when the college is in session. Many colleges sponsor high school visit days during Fall break (MEA) and Spring break.

It is important to schedule your visit in advance. It is good practice to write a THANK YOU NOTE following your campus visit! It is important to get the name(s) of the admissions counselor, coach(s), professors, financial aid director and any additional people you have had contact with during your visit. Obtaining business cards assists you in maintaining the contact information you may need later.

## **ADMISSION INTERVIEWS**

Check the college's website to see if an interview is a required part of the admission process. If it is, remember:

- Make the most of it
- Allow for about 30-45 minutes
- Format of the interview
  - Academic Focus

## **CHECKLIST FOR YOUR CAMPUS VISIT**

It is important to develop a list of questions and plan specific activities in order to accomplish your goals while visiting a college.

- Meet with an Admissions Counselor
- Verify admission requirements
- Inquire about application process (when & how)
- Obtain a course catalogue and school calendar
- Determine college costs

- Inquire about financial aid opportunities, deadlines, scholarships, forms required, etc.
- Meet with faculty in the department of your intended major
- Attend a class to get an idea of academic atmosphere
- Placement record for graduates in the field you may study
- Career-planning services for undergraduates
- Tour the campus (include visits to the dorms, dining hall, library, etc.)
- Talk with current students
- Inquire about campus life and student activities on campus (clubs, organizations, intramurals, etc.)

## **COMMUNICATING WITH COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES**

At Minnehaha Academy, during a College Campus Visit, College Fair(s), Emailing, Telephone Conversation ask the following questions:

- *What are the most popular majors?*
- *What are the admission requirements?*
- *What are your campuses unique characteristics? (size, residential living, rural, urban, suburban)*
- *How accessible are the professors outside of class?*
- *What percentage of your courses are taught by Teaching Assistants?*
- *What additional academic services do you offer to students? (tutoring, career counseling, study skills workshops)*
- *What types of internship/co-op experiences are available?*
- *How extensive is your study abroad program? What types of co-curricular activities are there on campus?*
- *How safe is your campus? What safety measures have been put into place?*

## **Questions to Consider Asking College Representatives**

What was the profile of students most recently accepted for the incoming freshman class? Average GPA, SAT and ACT test scores? Are subject tests required as part of the application process; if so, how many do need?

What percentage of students do you accept early decision if you have an early decision acceptance program?

What was the acceptance rate for the last incoming class?

What is the average graduation rate?

What is the total cost for tuition, room and board?

What are the five most popular majors on campus and why?

Do you accept Advanced Placement Exam(s) for credit at your school?

What is the student/faculty ratio? What degree of training do the professors hold?

What is the average class size in upper division and lower division?

What are the most important factors in your college/university admission decisions?

What type of housing do you have for freshman and upperclassman? Are freshman required to live on campus?

What is your college or university best known for in the community?

Does your college or university accept transfer students from either a community college or another college or university?

What meal plan options do you have?

Can a student living on campus have a car?

What clubs and organizations are offered at your college or university?

Do you have fraternities and sororities?

What sports programs are offered and what division sports are played at your institution? Are there “club” sports that all students can join?

# Explore College Resources

## Where Can You Get Information?

All of these resources are available in the Minnehaha Academy Counseling Office.

As you use the following resources, request information from the institutions that are of interest to you. Colleges are eager to send you an admission application, financial aid information and much more.

1. Web-based Counseling Tool-“Naviance”
2. The Fiske Guide
3. Index of Majors
4. College Board Guide to Two Year College
5. College Board Guide to Four Year Colleges
6. America’s Best Colleges
7. Best Buy in College Education
8. Directory of College Athletics
9. Peterson’s Travel Guide to Colleges
10. Guide to Christian Colleges
11. Barron’s Guide to Colleges
12. College Cost Book
13. Who Gets In? A Guide to College Selection
14. Comparative Guide to American Colleges
15. Rugg’s Recommendations on the Colleges

## Accessing College/University Sites:

Minnehaha Counseling Office Web Site:

- ▶ [www.minnehahaacademy.net](http://www.minnehahaacademy.net)
- ▶ Click on upper school
- ▶ College Counseling

It’s time to choose a college. You will need to spend a great deal of time thinking about yourself and what is important to you. You will also need to discuss your future with your family, your counselor and other trusted individuals. Your job is to make the best college match for you.

## College Search Web Sites:

- [www.collegeview.com/](http://www.collegeview.com/) - College View
- [www.campustours.com](http://www.campustours.com) – Campus ‘Virtual’ Tour
- [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) – College Board Online
- [www.studentedge.com](http://www.studentedge.com) – College & Career Planning
- [www.xap.com](http://www.xap.com) – College & Career
- [www.weapply.com](http://www.weapply.com) – Apply for Various Colleges/Universities, Scholarships, Etc.
- <http://hbcuconnect.com> – Historically Black Colleges and Universities

[www.act.org](http://www.act.org) – ACT online  
<http://www.ctcl.com> – Colleges That Change Lives  
<http://www.campusexplorer.com> – Campus Explorer  
<http://www.collegeweeklive.com> – Online College Fair  
<http://www.youniversitytv.com> – Video Tours

**General questions to consider:**

Choosing a college will depend on how your goals, interests, strengths, and background fit with the college philosophy, atmosphere and expectations.

**Types of institutions:**

- Two year college
- Four year college/university  
(i.e.: liberal arts, math, science, engineering)
- Technical college
- Professional school
- Public or private school
- Large, medium or small school

**Atmosphere at Institution:**

- Coeducational
- Clubs, sports and organizations
- Competitiveness
- Campus setting
- National / International flavor
- Religious Affiliation

## Best Ways to Test Drive a College

- 1. Learn about the college before you visit.** Read materials from the college and check out their website. If you are visiting more than one on a particular day, refresh your memory about that school just before you arrive. Be sure to spend at least one-half day at each college.
- 2. Evaluate the environment of the campus.** Is the campus too big or too small for you? Do you like the nearby town or do you feel isolated? Consider how you would get around campus particularly in the rain or snow.
- 3. Visit the admissions office and participate in the information session.** Ask questions that help you clarify the academic program at the school and the type of student who is most comfortable and successful there. You may choose to have a formal interview with an admissions staff member. Bring a resume of your grades and activities. Dress nicely, but not out of character.
- 4. Take the student-led tour of campus.** Take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions about campus life from a peer. Recognize, however, that tour guides are not necessarily typical of all students since they formally represent the school.
- 5. Check out the dorms.** Find out about the dorm options available, such as all-Freshman or co-ed. Arrange in advance to spend the night in a dorm, if possible. Picture yourself living in a dorm. Are you comfortable with where they are located on campus, such as the proximity to classes or the campus center?
- 6. Arrange for campus meetings with department heads in the subjects that interest you, coaches in sports where you excel, and former graduates from your high school.** Bring a resume that highlights your experience in your area of expertise. Ask about opportunities based on your skills and interests. Write down the names of any officials you meet with and send personal thank-you notes when you return home.
- 7. Look into life beyond academics.** Check out the athletic facilities, theater, and student center. Read the notices up in the dorms or on bulletin boards. Can you see yourself joining in?
- 8. Have lunch in the student center and watch student interactions.** Talk with students all over campus about their impressions of the school. Look at the students themselves. Do you feel comfortable among the students?
- 9. After each visit, write down your impressions of that college.** After a while, the visions of different schools start to blur if you don't immediately stop to record your thoughts! Keep a list of pros and cons for comparison.

## Safe, Target, and Reach Colleges

Students should apply to a variety of colleges that fall under these three areas.

***SAFE ... A college where you would have been easily accepted the previous year.***

- You want to attend
- You have visited the college
- You meet all the requirements for the *recommended* coursework
- Your ACT/SAT score is **significantly above** the average that was accepted last year
- Your GPA is **significantly above** the average accepted last year
- You have taken the average number of honors/AP courses
- The major you want is available and you have checked the graduation requirements
- You meet every requirement for admission and you submit a complete application before the deadline

**TARGET ... A college where you should have been accepted the previous year**

- You want to attend
- You have visited the college
- You meet all the requirements for the *recommended* coursework
- Your ACT/SAT score is **at** or **above** the average that was accepted last year
- Your GPA is **at** or **above** the average accepted last year
- You have taken the average number of honors/AP courses
- The major you want is available and you have checked the graduation requirements
- You meet every requirement for admission and you submit a complete application before the deadline

**REACH... A college you really want to attend, you have some qualifications, but you might not have been accepted the previous year.**

- You want to attend
- You meet some of the requirements for the required coursework
- Your ACT/SAT score is **below** the average that was accepted last year
- Your un-weighted GPA is **below** the average accepted last year
- You have taken below the average number of honors/AP courses
- The major you want may not be available
- You meet few requirements for admission and you submit a complete application before the deadline

**Remember: You should be comfortable attending every college you apply to!**

## **Types of Admissions Decisions**

After you submit your application to colleges, waiting for them to make a decision can be an anxious time for you. Some of you will be accepted at the colleges to which you have applied. Others will be wait listed and still others denied admission to their first choice college. **REMEMBER — there is more than one college at which you can succeed and be happy.**

### **ACCEPTANCE**

Good news! You will be excited about this news and need to share it with your family and counselor. Be sure to send in the necessary documents before the deadline, (i.e. confirmation that you plan to attend there, deposit, housing information, sports participation forms).

### **DEFERRAL**

This is a communication that some schools will use to let an applicant know that although they cannot make a final decisions on admission at that time they are a qualified candidate and could possibly be admitted at a later date. This applicant would then be placed in the regular decision category.

### **WAIT LISTED**

If you are wait listed, it usually means you are well qualified for admission; however, the college had more applicants than they could accept.

### **If you are wait listed, what should you do?**

1. Respond as they have requested. Usually that means returning a post card or note indicating your interest in pursuing the college.
  2. Attach a letter letting them know that you are disappointed but still interested. Offer to provide additional information. If you have additional new academic or extra curricular information, be sure to include it.
  3. If you are serious, indicate that you will attend that college if accepted. If it was your first choice and you have not told them previously, do so now.
  4. Follow up this new information with a phone call. Talk with the admissions representative to get an indication of your chances of acceptance (i.e. number on list, your rank on that list, what additional information they need).
- Obtain the name of an individual admissions person so that communication with the same person is possible throughout this process.

### **DENIAL**

This is a difficult communication to receive. You probably will have applied to more than one college so you should be accepted at one of your other choices.

# Applying to a College or University

Follow these steps:

1. Schedule an appointment with your Counselor.
  - Please make the appointment at least **3 weeks** before the application deadline. Counselors need this amount of time to process the application(s).
  - Request teacher recommendations at least **3 weeks** before the deadline.
  - You must make an appointment with your counselor even if you are submitting your application online.
2. Listed below are items you need complete before or bring to the appointment.
  - A copy of your Resume.
  - \$2.00/**per** application to cover postage and transcripts.
  - Application fee (if required) and not submitting online.
  - Any college/university specific counselor form(s).
  - If you are applying by the Common Application please sign the FERPA waiver on Naviance.
  - Your paper application if you are not submitting online.
    - any supplemental items that cannot be submitted online (e.g. music resume/CD, pictures, writing sample, scholarship forms) Please be aware that colleges prefer you send only what they ask for. Additional items should be sent sparingly.
3. This is a list of things you need to complete after the appointment.
  - Submit your application online.
  - Request that your test scores be sent from either ACT or SAT.
  - [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)
  - [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
  - Double check with teachers who are writing your letters of recommendation.
4. Check **My Colleges** section on **Naviance** for the status of your application. (application, teacher recommendations and school forms) for each college/university.
5. **Be sure that you are meeting all deadlines set forth by the colleges or universities that you are applying to!**

## **College Entrance Tests**

### **SAT, ACT and Subject Tests**

Most four-year college and universities require applicants to take the SAT **or** ACT test. Some selective schools additionally require a certain number of SAT Subject Tests (SAT II).

#### **SAT Test:**

- This is a 3.75 hour test with a math, critical reading and writing sections.
- It is offered 7 times each year on a Saturday, usually at 8:00am.
- There is a penalty for wrong answers.
- All test scores become part of the student's official SAT Score Report.
- A student earns a score that can vary from 200 to 800 in each of the three sections.
- The admission committee can take the scores from only one test date or "mix and match" the highest score for each section without regard to the date the test was taken.

#### **ACT Test**

- This is a 3 to 4 hour test covering English, math, reading and science. Additionally, an optional writing section may be taken.
- It is offered 6 times a year, never the same day as the SAT and usually at 8:00am.
- There is NO penalty for wrong answers.
- The student selects which score to send to the colleges.
- The student earns a score in each section and a composite score.

#### **Subject Tests (SAT II)**

- Each test is one hour. A student may select which subjects. *Every subject test is not offered on every test date.*
- A student may take up to **3** Subject Tests on one day.
- The SAT II is offered the same dates and times as the SAT I. Student can take the SAT I **OR** SAT II test on one day.
- Every SAT II test score becomes part of the student's SAT Score Report. *SAT I & II scores are on one report.*
- There is a penalty for wrong answers.
- The subjects are: English Literature, US History, World History, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Math I, Math II, Foreign Languages (*Spanish, French, German, Italian, Latin, Modern Hebrew, Spanish with listening, French with listening, German with listening, Chinese with listening, Japanese with listening and Korean with listening*).

#### **PSAT/NMSQT - Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test**

- The PSAT/NMSQT test is given in the fall of sophomore (practice) and junior year. It measures verbal, writing and mathematical reasoning abilities. This test is part of the National Merit Program and top scorers in the nation, who are juniors, may qualify for scholarship opportunities.

**The SAT Tests are usually offered in October, November, December, January, March/April, May and June.**

**The ACT Test is usually offered in September, October, December, February, April, May and June.**

Registration for college entrance tests is available at:

SAT I and Subject Tests: [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

ACT Test: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

# SAT and ACT Testing Tips

## ACT

1. Carefully read the instructions on the cover of the test booklet.
2. Read the directions for each test carefully.
3. Read each question carefully.
4. Pace yourself—don't spend too much time on a single passage or question.
5. Pay attention to the announcement of five minutes remaining on each test.
6. Use a soft lead No. 2 pencil with a good eraser. Do not use a mechanical pencil or ink pen; if you do, your answer document cannot be scored accurately.
7. Answer the easy questions first, then go back and answer the more difficult ones if you have time remaining on that test.
8. On difficult questions, eliminate as many incorrect answers as you can, then make an educated guess among those remaining.
9. **Answer every question.** Your scores on the multiple-choice tests are based on the number of questions you answer correctly. **There is no penalty for guessing.**
10. If you complete a test before time is called, recheck your work on that test.
11. Mark your answers properly. Erase any mark completely and cleanly without smudging.
12. Do not mark or alter any ovals on a test or continue writing the essay after time has been called. If you do, you will be dismissed and your answer document will **not** be scored.

[www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)

## SAT

1. Learn the section directions now. Use the time saved during the test to work on questions.
2. Answer easy questions first. Mark skipped questions in your exam book so you can quickly return to them later.
3. Guess...if you can eliminate at least one choice.
4. You can write in the test book: cross out wrong answers; do scratch work.
5. Take care when filling in the answer grid for the student-produced response questions.
6. Avoid stray marks on the answer sheet. A machine scores your test and can't distinguish between a correct answer and a careless doodle.
7. Easy questions usually precede hard ones.
8. Mark only one answer per question.
9. Skip any question if you haven't the faintest idea about the answer. You don't lose points.

10. Understand the scoring! You get a point for a right answer. You lose a fraction of a point for a wrong answer. There is no deduction for omitted answers, or for wrong answers in the math section's student-produced response questions.
11. Keep checking that you are placing your answer in the correct section and number on the answer sheet.
12. Don't spend too much time on any one question. You should spend only seconds on the easiest questions, and hesitate to spend more than 1-2 minutes on even the hardest ones.
13. Practice, practice, practice!
14. Remember that the SAT consists of a series of small, timed, mini-tests. Keep track of the time you're allotted for each one and how much time remains.
15. Bring a watch to the test center. You can't be guaranteed that there'll be a working clock there.
16. Don't change an answer unless you're sure you made an error.
17. Read the words in the question carefully. Be sure to answer the question asked and not the question you recall from a practice test.
18. Know the Question Types to Expect on the SAT I: \* 19 sentence completion \* 40 reading comprehension \* 35 math multiple-choices \* 10 student-produced responses.

[www.testinfo.net/sat/sat-tips.htm](http://www.testinfo.net/sat/sat-tips.htm)

# SAT Subject Tests

SAT Subject Tests are the only national admission tests that measure students' knowledge and skills in particular subject areas, and their ability to apply that knowledge. They are closely linked to the high school curriculum and have a proven track record of providing colleges with a highly reliable, objective assessment of student readiness for college-level work. The SAT Subject Tests give students an additional opportunity to distinguish themselves and showcase their skills in a particular subject area.

## **Literature**

Tests how well you can read and interpret literature. Questions focus on issues of theme, argument, tone, etc.

## **Math Level 1**

Tests: Algebra, geometry, basic trigonometry, algebraic functions, elementary statistics, logic, elementary number theory, and arithmetic and geometric sequences.

## **Math Level 2**

Tests: Algebra, three-dimensional and coordinate geometry, trigonometry, functions, probability, permutations, combinations, logic, proofs, elementary number theory, sequences, and limits.

## **History: World History / US History**

Tests, among other concepts: a student's knowledge of events that have shaped history, as well as a student's ability to determine concepts important for historical analysis. Also examines the ability to interpret maps, tables and cartoons.

## **Sciences: Biology / Chemistry / Physics**

Concepts tested include: knowledge of major concepts in a specific scientific discipline, the ability to analyze and organize scientific results and familiarity with the metric system of units.

## **Foreign Languages**

Tests a student's reading ability in a specific language. "Language with Listening" tests examine reading and listening skills and are only offered in November.

## Tips on Writing your College Admissions Essay

### **Step 1. Capturing the reader's initial attention should be first and foremost on your mind.**

Now, after reading that first sentence can you guess the topic of the essay? Don't have a clue? Well, that is the entire point. An admissions essay doesn't have to spell things out for the reader. You don't need a topic sentence or an executive summary like we are taught to do in school for research or term papers. An admissions essay is a different type of animal. Feed the reader something interesting and unique, and you have satisfied the first condition in mastering the admissions essay.

### **Step 2. A reader's concentration is held by consistent and logical flow.**

Consistent flow doesn't just mean from paragraph to paragraph, it means from idea to idea, from sentence to sentence. Every idea, every word, should not be sitting on its own little island, it should be part of an interconnected stream of words that take the reader on a smooth ride from point A to point B. Often overlooked, transitions are the easiest and most effective way to give your essay that even feel. Once your reader finally approaches the end of their literary journey, but one task remains- you must craft a "Lasting Impression" Conclusion. For what good is your essay if nobody remembers it?

### **Step 3. Leave the reader with a lingering thought or lasting impression that is difficult if not impossible to shake.**

In order to leave your indelible mark, you must make a connection with the reader. A connection isn't necessarily forged by the fact that you *saved the world from famine*, or *that you won the Nobel prize for literature*. Something that is significant to you, can and should come across as significant to the reader.

### **Step 4. Avoid these common traps.**

Over use of the thesaurus. Often this only confuses readers and interrupts that consistent flow of a well written essay.

### ***Use of your resume as an essay outline.***

Many students see the admissions essay as an opportunity to put his or her best foot forward. The problem occurs when the aspiring college student tries to condense his or her attributes, awards, and extracurricular activities into one single literary masterpiece. The admissions essay is not a resume. The admissions essay is an opportunity to show the admissions committee one or two interesting tidbits about you as a person. Attempting to jam eighteen years of accomplishments into a few sheets of paper is a difficult task that should be held off until graduation day.

### ***Clichés Use these very sparingly – original ideas or statements are better.***

Coming up with different ideas or a unique perspective is the challenge of any writer. This is what separates an average admissions essay from an exceptional one. Leave the reader thinking about you as an individual that will add to the college community.

# Typical College Application Essay Topics

**The Common Application:** over 400 private and public colleges accept this application.

Essay Question: minimum 250 words: Select one topic

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

## **University of Colorado:**

**Essay A: Required, Maximum 500 words.** The University of Colorado at Boulder's Flagship 2030 strategic plan promotes exceptional teaching, research, scholarship, creative works, and service distinguishing us as a premier university. We strive to foster a diverse and inclusive community for all that engages each member in opportunities for academic excellence, leadership, and a deeper understanding of the world in which we live. Given the statement above, how do you think you could enrich our diverse and inclusive community and what are your hopes for your college experience?

## **Essay B (required, choose topic 1, 2, or 3, maximum 250 words)**

1. Who are the influential people in your life? How have they contributed to your development as a person?
2. Briefly discuss how your family, school, neighborhood, and background have impacted your educational goals and aspirations.
3. Discuss any events or special circumstances that have affected your academic record, as well as any adversities you have overcome.

## **USC: 500 to 700 words**

1. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century French philosopher Denis Diderot said, "Only passions, great passions, can elevate the soul to great things." Describe one of your passions and discuss its contribution to your personal growth.

2. It is common knowledge that Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. Less well known is the fact that he failed 6,000 times before succeeding. Reflect on an accomplishment you achieved in an unlikely way

3. Newton's First Law of Motion states that an object in motion tends to stay in motion in the same direction unless acted upon by an external force. Tell us about an external influence that affected you and how it caused you to change direction.

**University of Michigan: 500 words**

1. Describe a setback that you have faced. How did you resolve it? How did the outcome affect you? If something similar happened in the future, how would you react?

2. Discuss an issue of local, national or international concern. Why is this issue important to you? How do you think it should be addressed?

3. Advances in science and technology often create ethical dilemmas for individuals and society. How does a recent scientific or technological innovation pose an ethical challenge for you?

## Financial Aid

The first smart step in the college application process is to apply to a college that is a financial safety college.

Who is most likely to get financial aid?

- Students with “A” averages who apply to schools where there are mostly “B” students. Another way to look at it is this - apply to colleges where academically you will be in the top 25% of the class, not the middle 50% or the lowest 25% of the class.
- Students who have demonstrated proficiency in extracurricular activities (ex:) star athletes, band members, theater performers.
- Students whose family income is in the lower range.
- Underrepresented students (African Americans, Hispanics, or Native Americans) who apply to schools where they will be at least in the middle academic range for that college.

Next, apply for financial aid. Many colleges require that you apply even if you are interested only in a merit-based (versus need-based) scholarship or loan. To apply for financial aid, your parents will have to fill out one or more financial aid forms.

If a college’s financial aid materials state that their admissions policy is “need aware”, that means the college is likely to admit applicants who are willing to pay the full sticker price. If paying full price for four years might jeopardize your family’s financial security, then by all means, apply for financial aid.

If you are hoping to get need-based financial aid, then study hard. The better your grades and test scores, the more likely you are to receive a generous package. As noted above, you are more likely to receive aid if you apply to a school where you will be in the top 25% of the applicants.

You must meet each college’s financial aid deadlines. Check with each college. For early decision and early action, deadlines can be as early as October of your senior year.

There are three main financial aid forms. The most important one is the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**. It is best to fill out this form as soon as possible after January 1<sup>st</sup> of your senior year; the deadline is March 2<sup>nd</sup>. If your parents’ tax returns are not finalized by that date, they must use estimates rather than miss the deadline. There is time to file an amendment if the estimates are way off – just don’t miss that deadline. The FAFSA form is available online at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>.

The FAFSA is automatically reviewed for:

- **Federal Pell Grants:** Unlike a loan, a Federal Pell Grant does not have to be repaid. Generally, Pell Grants are awarded only to undergraduate students who have not earned a BA or professional degree. The maximum amount of the award is \$4,000 per year.
- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG):** A FSEOG is for undergraduates with exceptional financial need and gives priority to students who receive Federal Pell Grants. The FSEOG does not have to be paid back.
- **Federal Work-Study:** The Federal Work-Study Program provides jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing them to earn money at a campus job to help pay education expenses. The total Federal Work-Study award depends on when you apply, your level of need, and the funding level of your school.
- **Federal Perkins Loan:** A Federal Perkins Loan is a low-interest loan for both undergraduate and graduate students with financial need. Your school is your lender, with government funds, with a share contributed by the school. You must repay this loan to your school.
- **Federal Stafford Student Loan:** These loans may be subsidized or unsubsidized. Subsidized loans are awarded based on need, and interest does not accrue until after you have completed your studies. Unsubsidized loans are not based on needs and start accruing interest during your studies.
- **Federal PLUS Loan:** These are loans available to parents of dependent students.

The third form you might be asked to fill out is the **CSS/Profile**. This is a financial form used in addition to the FAFSA by *some* private colleges. If the school you are applying to is listed on the CSS Profile registration form, then you must fill it out. Go to [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) to complete your personalized Profile application. This site typically opens on October 1<sup>st</sup>. It is not free, so be sure to fill out the registration form and send in the correct payment well in advance of January 1<sup>st</sup>. Individual forms customized for each college will be sent to you so that you can file them during the same time period as the FAFSA.

For complete financial aid information, go to [www.fafsa.org](http://www.fafsa.org).

**Scholarships:** Most students who receive large scholarships earn them from the institution they end up attending. There are however, thousands of outside scholarships that range from very small amounts (\$25) to very substantial amounts (\$10,000). Most of these scholarship applications will ask for an essay. Here are some ideas for researching scholarships:

- If your parents work for a large company, be sure they check with their Human Resources office to see if scholarships are offered to children of employees.
- The most reliable website for scholarships out there is [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com). It is really difficult to get through the thousands of entries, but there is a search engine

- that can help you sift through some of it. It is not always realistic in its search results, but at least it will narrow the list of those you have to read.
- If you belong to an ethnic group with an active club, they likely will offer scholarships. Call and find out.
  - Local chapters of civic organizations such as the Optimists/Soroptomists, Rotarians, Eagles, Elks, etc. all offer some type of scholarship. Call the local offices and ask.
  - Watch for announcements and advertisements in the local newspaper. It is amazing how many organizations decide to offer a scholarship and simply tell the local press.

**Note:** Whatever you do, **stay away from the scholarship scam artists.** You will receive very official looking envelopes that offer to do the scholarship search for you. If you have to spend money, then it is a scam. If they promise to find money for you that no one else can find, then it probably is a scam. There is no scholarship out there that a scam artist can find for you that you cannot find for yourself.

You can get scholarships directly from your prospective college, or apply for them on your own. There will be scholarships available in the Minnehaha Counseling Office, on our counseling website, and on Naviance. Lists of scholarships will be published every few weeks so that you will be aware of opportunities to apply. **You never need to pay any person or company to find scholarships for you! If you are unsure about a scholarship you have heard about, bring it to your counselor to check if it is legitimate.**

## How Financial Aid Works

Get a PIN for you and your parents at [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov) or at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

Fill out your FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) FAFSA. Keep a copy for your records!

If you are applying to certain private colleges, you may need to fill out a CSS PROFILE form at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). There is a built-in fee waiver on the form. If your college doesn't require a Profile form, celebrate—that's less work for you!

Apply for private scholarships! Check out scholarships in the Minnehaha Counseling Office or go to our website for more scholarship opportunities.

You will receive a STUDENT AID REPORT (SAR) from the FAFSA [online in a few days if you filed it online and through the mail in a few weeks if you mailed out a paper FAFSA. Check the form to make sure they are correct and look for the EFC [Expected Family Contribution] in the upper corner of the first page to see how much your family is supposed to contribute towards the cost of your college.

If there are corrections to be made, fix them online [for the FAFSA, go to [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) and use your PIN number to access your personal FAFSA.

From every college you list on your FAFSA that admits you, you will receive a FINANCIAL AID AWARD LETTER, usually by April. Compare your award letters to find out if you can afford the college that you want to go to. You may need to apply for student loans if your family has not saved money for your college education and the free grant and scholarship money doesn't cover all of your expenses. Send in your Statement of Intent to Register (SIR) by **May 1** for 4 year colleges to let them know that you are coming there. You may have to include a deposit.

Your money from all sources will arrive in an account with your name on it at your college. The college will take out the money you owe them for fees and tuition (and housing if you live on campus) and write you a check for the remainder!

If you have any questions, contact the Financial Aid Office of your college.

# The NCAA Requirements for College Athletes

For current NCAA rules and information: [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org)

If a student wants to play on an NCAA team in college they must meet the eligibility requirements through the NCAA. The NCAA has three divisions: Division I, II or III. Each division has different eligibility requirements and scholarship opportunities.

All NCAA athletes must meet the initial eligibility requirements:

- Graduation from high school
- Minimum core GPA
- Minimum ACT or SAT I test score
- Completion of 16 core courses by high graduation
- Completion of all the required NCAA forms, payment of the \$50 registration fee

All CORE courses MUST be on the approved list for the high school. The approved list of courses is available online at : [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org).

Students should register with the NCAA at end of their junior year. To register a student must:

- Complete the NCAA registration form and pay the fee. ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org))
- Send the NCAA an official copy of their transcript at the end of their junior year
- Send their SAT I or ACT test scores to NCAA (ETS code #9999)

Student-athletes are responsible for knowing ALL the NCAA rules including coach's visits and admissions requirements for the college.

The admissions office admits a student to the college not the coach.

The NCAA has requirements for continuing progress toward a degree for an athlete to continue to be eligible to play a NCAA sport at the college level.

## DIVISION I: 16 CORE Course Rule (classes taken 9 thru 12<sup>th</sup> grade)

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of Math (Algebra 1 or higher)
- 2 years of a natural/physical science (1 year of a lab, if offered by school)
- 1 year of additional English, Math, or physical/natural science
- 2 years of social science
- 3 years of additional courses, foreign language, approved electives, etc.

**Please speak with your counselor to receive additional information if you are interested in competing in college sports!**

## Colleges Attended by Minnehaha Graduates (2008-2010)

American University	Hampshire College	Swarthmore College
Arizona State University	Hampton University	The George Washington University
Art Institutes International of MN	High Point University	Trinity University
Augsburg College	Hobart & William Smith College	University of British Columbia
Augustana College IL/SD	Hope College	University of California Berkeley
Azusa Pacific University	Illinois Wesleyan University	University of Chicago
Bates College	Indiana University Bloomington	University of Colorado Boulder
Baylor University	Indiana Wesleyan University	University of Dayton
Beloit College	Iowa State University	University of Denver
Bemidji State University	Judson University	University of Evansville
Bethel University	Kalamazoo College	University of Houston
Boston College	Knox College	University of Iowa
Boston University	Lake Forest College	University of Maryland, College Park
Briar Cliff University	Lawrence University	University of Michigan
Buena Vista University	Lewis & Clark College	University of Minnesota, Duluth
Butler University	Luther College	University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
California State Mont. Bay	Macalester College	University of Missouri, Columbia
Calvin College	Marquette University	University of North Dakota
Carleton College	Miami University Oxford, Ohio	University of North Florida
Carthage College	Michigan State University	University of Northern Iowa
Coe College	Minnesota State Mankato	University of Notre Dame
Colgate University	New York University	University of Oregon
College of St. Benedict	North Dakota State University	University of Puget Sound
Colorado College	North Park University	University of San Diego
Colorado State University	Northwestern College	University of St. Thomas
Concordia University, St. Paul	Northwestern University	University of Vermont
Connecticut College	Oberlin College	University of Virginia
Cornell University	Oklahoma Christian University	University of Washington
Creighton University	Pacific Lutheran University	University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire
Curry College	Plattsburgh State University	University of Wisconsin, LaCrosse
Dartmouth College	Princeton University	University of Wisconsin, Madison
Davidson College	Purdue University	University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
DePaul University	Regis University	University of Wisconsin, River Falls
DePauw University	Rice University	University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point
Dickinson College	Roanoke College	University of Wisconsin, Stout
Drake University	Roosevelt University	Valparaiso University
Eastern Kentucky University	Saint John's University Collegeville	Vanderbilt University
Eastman School of Music U of Roch	Saint Mary's University of Minnesota	Vassar College
Elmhurst College	School of the Art Institute Chicago	Washington University in St. Louis
Florida Gulf Coast University	Sewanee: University of the South	Westmont College
Franklin College Switzerland	St. Catherine University, St. Paul	Wheaton College, IL
Gordon College	St. Cloud State University	Whitman College
Gustavus Adolphus College	St. Olaf College	Winona State University
Hamline University	Suffolk University	Wittenberg University

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