

College Admissions Handbook

Top 10 Tips for Admissions

- 1. Take a rigorous academic course load.** The variety and difficulty of your courses in high school does matter; don't take courses that simply raise your GPA. Challenge yourself by taking advanced placement (AP) or honors courses.
- 2. Ace the entrance exams.** Familiarize yourself with the test by taking sample versions beforehand. Read the directions and test questions carefully and pace yourself so you have time to review your work.
- 3. Develop your ideal college profile.** Find matches with the help of your guidance counselor and FastWeb's college search: <http://www.fastweb.com>.
- 4. Submit applications as early as possible.** If you are not applying early-decision, many colleges require applications to be in by early January. Online applications are a great alternative for submitting your forms more quickly.
- 5. Craft excellent application essays.** Brainstorm for an original topic. Be clear, concise and well-organized in your writing and check for grammar and spelling.
- 6. Do volunteer and community service work.** Volunteer for activities that matter to you and reflect your personality. Volunteering looks great on an application and adds to your quality of life.
- 7. Fill out the admissions application accurately and well.** Approach each application as if it were the *only* one that you're filling out. Read the directions carefully and follow them precisely.
- 8. Finish high school academically strong.** Because your junior and senior year courses are more comparable to college courses, some schools give more weight to the grades you earn in those years.
- 9. Follow up on your applications.** Don't be afraid to check on your application. With thousands of applications being processed, mistakes do occasionally happen.
- 10. Dazzle them at your college interview.** Practice with friends and formulate a few questions to ask. Dress for the occasion. After the interview, follow up with a thank-you note to the interviewer(s). You may want to ask for a business card at the end of the interview.

Admissions Calendar: Fall Term

Junior Year

- Start thinking about college choice and make an appointment to talk to your counselor.
- Register with FastWeb at www.fastweb.com to start searching for possible scholarships.
- Plan to take the PSAT this year and start preparing for the SAT and ACT.

Senior Year

September:

- Create files for your target schools, listing application requirements (essays, transcripts, etc.) and deadline dates.
- Prepare and register for the ACT and SAT.

October:

- Talk to your parents about college costs and decide how much you and your family can afford.
- Visit www.finaid.org to learn more about financial aid.
- Take the ACT and SAT.

November:

- If you're applying Early Action or Early Decision, submit your application this month.

Find free college scholarships!
www.fastweb.com

Test Prep Guide

Test Day Tips

The ACT and SAT can be a big source of stress for many high school students. What can you do to maximize your score?

Know your test. Know the format and scoring standards ahead of time. Take a sample test to help pace yourself and become familiar with the levels of difficulty.

Double-check the where and when of your test. If you miss your test date, you may not be able to take the test before college applications are due. Also, be sure you know exactly what you need to bring with you: I.D. card, admissions ticket, calculator (with extra battery), etc.

Give your body what it needs. Get plenty of sleep the night before and make time for a well-balanced breakfast.

Arrive early. Locate bathrooms and drinking fountains and make yourself at home.

Upcoming Dates

ACT

Reg. Deadline: Sept. 21
Late Reg. Deadline: Oct. 5
Test Date: Oct. 27

Reg. Deadline: Nov. 2
Late Reg. Deadline: Nov. 15
Test Date: Dec. 8

SAT I & II

Reg. Deadline: Sept. 11
Late Reg. Deadline: Sept. 15
Test Date: October 13

Reg. Deadline: Sept. 28
Late Reg. Deadline: Oct. 10
Test Date: Nov. 3

Review your work. Make sure you've marked your answers clearly and completely and that your responses on the answer sheet correspond to the correct questions.

Be prepared for emergencies. Bring extra pencils and erasers just in case.

Pace yourself. Pay attention to how many sections you must complete and allot a reasonable amount of time for each section. If you get stuck, move on. You can always return to the more difficult questions once you've answered the easy ones. The SAT will penalize you for guessing, while the ACT will not.

Study Materials

Free Materials

Start with the free publications available at your high school. They feature test-taking tips, a sample test, the correct answers, an answer sheet and scoring instructions. Ask your guidance counselor for a copy.

Software

An advantage of test prep software is its ability to tailor a training program to your needs. After assessing your strengths and weaknesses, the program will create a personalized course of study.

Traditional Prep Courses

Prep courses typically span a 10-week period, meeting once a week. The cost of these courses ranges from \$500 to \$1,000.

Books

Books offer test-taking strategies, expert advice and practice tests and are priced between \$10 and \$50. Your local library may have these books for free; however, check publication dates and obtain the most recent ones.

Online Prep Courses

Many test prep companies provide courses over the Web. They feature lectures in RealVideo, practice tests, e-mail help, test-taking strategies and intensive practice exercises. An online SAT course can cost significantly less than a classroom course.