



# **Eagle Valley High School Junior Parent College and Career Readiness Night**

## **Tues, Feb. 9, 2021**

For more information or to set up an individual meeting, please contact your counselor:

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## College Entrance Exams: A Guide to Junior Year Tests

High school juniors are typically well-versed in their ABCs; however, the eleventh grade is positively alphabet soup when it comes to standardized testing. Keeping your child's tests straight can be tricky, so we have developed this guide to help you navigate the transition into the busiest testing year of your child's life. Knowing what to expect can considerably reduce anxiety for both you and your child during this time. Save this in your inbox or keep it in your child's college folder to refer to as-needed.

PSAT (also known as the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT))	
<b>What it covers:</b>	The PSAT covers reading, vocabulary, grammar and usage, writing, and math (Arithmetic, Geometry and Algebra 1). There is not an essay portion included in the writing section of this exam.
<b>Why it's offered:</b>	The PSAT offers college-bound students a practice shot at standardized testing. A superior score on the PSAT can also lead to recognition as a National Merit Scholar during a student's junior year. This scholarship offers a monetary award and looks excellent on a college transcript.
<b>When it's taken:</b>	PSATs are administered in October, primarily to juniors since only they are eligible for the National Merit Scholarship. However, it's becoming more common for younger students to take them exam as a means to familiarize themselves with the exam and the testing process.
<b>Registration Dates:</b>	Unlike the SAT and ACT, registration for this exam is done through a student's high school. Students must contact their guidance office in September to register.
<b>How it's scored:</b>	Each of the three sections on the PSAT (Math, Critical Reading, and Writing) is scored out of 80 points. The maximum total score a student can achieve is 240. Students get one point for each correct answer and lose $\frac{1}{4}$ point for each incorrect answer. Because the test is standardized, students are given a scaled score. Scores are distributed to school guidance departments from the College Board; students typically receive scores from their guidance departments between December and early January.

SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test)	
<b>What it covers:</b>	The SAT tests reading, vocabulary, grammar and usage, writing (including an essay) and math (Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra 1 and 2)
<b>Why it's offered:</b>	The SAT is offered as a tool used by college admissions officers to quantitatively gauge the college-readiness of students continuing their education after high school.
<b>When it's taken:</b>	The SAT is offered seven times per year: October, November, December, January, March, May and June. It's traditionally taken in the spring of junior year and fall of senior year although advanced students may complete testing by the end of junior year.

<b>Registration Dates:</b>	Regular registration is done <b>no later</b> than 5 weeks in advance; late registration, which incurs an additional charge, must be completed no later than 3 weeks before <a href="#">the test date</a> . Click <a href="#">here</a> to register.
<b>How it's scored:</b>	Each of the three sections on the SAT (Math, Critical Reading, and Writing) is scored out of 800 points (students seeking to compare their PSAT scores can simply add a zero to each PSAT individual section or composite score to get an equivalent SAT score.) The maximum total score a student can achieve is 2400. Students get one point for each correct answer and lose ¼ point for each incorrect answer. Since the test is standardized, students are scored on a scale. The essay portion of the writing section is one third of the total score in that section. Two graders will score the essay and award between 1 and 6 points each, yielding a total score between 2 and 12 points. If essay scores differ by more than one point, a third individual will score the essay.

### ACT (American College Test)

<b>What it covers:</b>	The <a href="#">ACT</a> tests reading, grammar and usage, science reasoning, and math (Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra 1 and 2, and limited Trigonometry). It also has an <b>optional</b> writing section.
<b>Why it's offered:</b>	The ACT is a tool used by college admissions officers to quantitatively gauge the college-readiness of students continuing their education after high school.
<b>When it's taken:</b>	The ACT is offered six times per year: September, October, December, February (except in NY), April and June. It is traditionally taken in the spring of junior year and fall of senior year. For a list of this year's test dates, click <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Registration Dates:</b>	Regular registration is done <b>no later</b> than 5 weeks in advance; late registration, with an extra charge, can be done no later than 3 weeks in advance of the test date. Click <a href="#">here</a> to register.
<b>How it's scored:</b>	Each of the four sections on the ACT (Math, Reading, English and Science) is scored on a scale between 1 and 36. Students receive 1 point for each correct answer and do not lose any points for incorrect answers. Therefore, it is to the student's advantage to guess on any question he or she doesn't know. The raw score of each section is then scaled. Scores from each section are averaged to yield a composite score between 1 and 36. The optional essay is scored by two readers who award between 1 and 6 points each, yielding a total score between 2 and 12 points. If essay scores differ by more than one point, a third individual will score the essay.

### SAT Subject Tests (formerly known as the SAT IIs)

<b>What it covers:</b>	There are 20 <a href="#">SAT Subject Tests</a> including math (level I and II), literature, several foreign languages, history and the sciences. The complete list can be viewed <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Why it's offered:</b>	SAT II Subject Tests are offered to assess a student's mastery of a particular subject area. They are used as additional criteria by particularly selective colleges or to gain admittance into majors that require a specific background or skill set.

<b>When it's taken:</b>	All SAT II Subject Tests are offered on the same dates as regular SATs, however there are no SAT Subject Tests in March. <i>The exception to this is the foreign language listening exam which is only offered in November and World History which is offered twice annually.</i> Students may not take the SAT and SAT subject tests on the same day. However, students may take up to three SAT IIs on one day. Subject tests are usually taken after a relevant course is completed or near completion, particularly with AP classes. For example, if a student takes Biology or AP Biology as a sophomore, they should plan on taking the SAT II in May or June of their sophomore year. This means many students will take an SAT subject test before they take a full SAT. Juniors typically take SATs in March and June of their junior year and focus on SAT Subject test in May around the same time as AP exams.
<b>Registration Dates:</b>	SAT II registration dates and deadlines are the same as those of the regular SAT. Most juniors typically take the SAT Subject tests in May at the same time as AP exams since there is content overlap. <a href="#">Click here to register.</a>
<b>How it's scored:</b>	The number of questions on each exam varies, but these tests are scored in the same manner as the SAT. The maximum score for each subject is 800. Students get one point for each correct answer and lose $\frac{1}{4}$ point for each incorrect answer. The exams are scaled, since the exam is standardized.

### AP Exams

<b>What it covers:</b>	An Advanced Placement course is a college-level accelerated course that is taught in high school. The test covers the curriculum from the entire year. There are AP exams in over 30 subjects including the sciences, foreign languages, math and English. A complete list of AP subjects can be viewed <a href="#">here</a> . AP exams consist of a multiple choice section and a free response section.
<b>Why it's offered:</b>	AP exams are given to students to allow them to gain college credit or receive advanced placement for satisfactorily completing a college-level course in high school.
<b>When it's taken:</b>	AP exams are usually taken during the second and third weeks of May. Since AP courses typically replace standard classroom courses, some subjects may only be available during certain years of a student's academic career. Students may take multiple AP exams and classes each year. Students may register to take an AP exam, even if they are not formally enrolled through a school course, as schools are not required to offer courses in all or any AP subjects. For example, some AP English courses focus on the AP English Language exam, but students may elect to also enroll in the AP English Literature exam.
<b>How it's scored:</b>	AP exams are given a rating 1 through 5 based on how successful the student would have been in a similar course taught in college. Many colleges offer course credit for AP exams scoring 3 or higher, but this depends greatly on the college and the subject.

## SAT 2021-2022 Test Dates

To register: Log on to your CollegeBoard account and select the desired date and follow the directions.

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

Test Date	Registration Deadline
March 13, 2021	February 12, 2021
May 8, 2021	April 8, 2021
June 5, 2021	May 6, 2021
August 28, 2021	
October 2, 2021	
November 6, 2021	

## ACT 2021-2022 Test Dates

To register: Log on to your ACT account to select the desired date and follow the directions.

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

Test Date	Registration Deadline
April 17, 2021	March 12, 2021
June 12, 2021	May 7, 2021
July 17, 2021	June 18, 2021

# Preparing for College: Senior Checklist

## August/September

- Register for the SAT and/or ACT if you didn't take it as a junior, or if you aren't satisfied with your score and want to take it again. (remember that your counselor can help you with fee waivers)
- Take a look at some college applications and consider all of the different pieces of information you will need to compile.
- The SAT test date most popular with high school seniors is this month.
- Visit with your school counselor to make sure you are on track to graduate and fulfill college admission requirements. If you're ahead of schedule, consider taking courses at a local university or community college to get a jumpstart on college credit.
- Take every opportunity to get to know colleges: meeting with college representatives who visit your high schools during the fall, attending local college fairs, visiting campuses (if possible). Ask your counselor if they know of special campus visitation programs.
- Narrow down your list of colleges and begin to consider "safe," "reach," and "realistic" schools. Make sure you have the application and financial aid information for each school. Find out if you qualify for any scholarships at these schools.



## Create a checklist and calendar to chart:

- Standardized test dates, registration deadlines, and fees
- College application due dates
- Financial aid application forms and deadlines
- Other materials you'll need for college applications (recommendations, transcripts, essays, etc.)
- Your high school's application processing deadlines

Some schools require the CSS/Financial Aid Profile. Ask the colleges to which you are applying for their deadlines. You can register as early as September. See your guidance counselor about fee waivers.

## October

- Some colleges will have deadlines as early as this month. These would include rolling admission, priority, early decision, and early-action deadlines.
- If you cannot afford the application fees that many colleges charge, ask your counselor to help you request a fee waiver.
- Finalize your college essay. Many schools will require that you submit at least one essay with your application.
- Request personal recommendations from teachers, school counselors, or employers. Follow the process required by your high school or provide a stamped, addressed envelope, the appropriate college forms, and an outline of your academic record and extracurricular activities to each person writing you a recommendation.
- Research possibilities of scholarships. Ask your counselor, your colleges, and your religious and civic groups about scholarship opportunities. You should *never* pay for scholarship information.

## November

- Finalize and send any early decision or early action applications due this month. Have a parent, teacher, counselor, or other adult review the application before it is submitted.
- Every college will require a copy of your transcript from your high school. Follow your school's procedure for sending transcripts.
- Make sure testing companies have sent your scores directly to the colleges to which you are applying.
- The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) will be available this month, but cannot be completed before January 1. This is the form you will complete to find out what financial aid you are eligible to receive from the government. Ask your guidance office for a copy or visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). This form should be filed online if at all possible.

## December

- Begin to organize regular decision applications and financial aid forms, which will be due in January and/or February.
- Register for the January SAT (if needed). It is the last one colleges will be able to consider for a senior.

## January

- Many popular and selective colleges will have application deadlines as early as January 1. Others have deadlines later in January and February. Keep track of and observe deadlines for sending in all required fees and paperwork.
- If necessary, register for the February ACT (some colleges will be able to consider it).
- Ask your guidance office in January to send first semester transcripts to schools where you applied. At the end of the school year, they will need to send final transcripts to the college you will attend.
- It is time to file the FAFSA (no later than Feb 1). The sooner you complete it, the sooner you will have an idea of your financial aid options. Watch the mail for your Student Aid Report (SAR)—it should arrive four weeks after the FAFSA is filed.

## Feb/March/April

- While most of your applications will be complete and you are waiting to receive admission decisions, don't slack in the classroom. The college that you do attend will want to see your second semester transcript. No Senioritis!
- Acceptance letters and financial aid offers will start to arrive. Review your acceptances, compare financial aid packages, and visit your final choices, especially if you haven't already.

## May

- May 1 is the date when the college you plan to attend requires a commitment and deposit. When you've made your college decision, notify your counselor and the colleges. Send in your deposit by the postmark date of May 1. If you've been offered financial aid, accept the offer and follow the instructions given. Also notify schools you will not attend of your decision.
- Make sure that you have requested that your final transcript be sent to the school you will be attending.
- If you are "wait listed" by a college you really want to attend, visit, call and write the admission office to make your interest clear. Ask how you can strengthen your application.

## Back to: Guidance for Seniors

# HOW do you find the right college?

By junior year of high school, your child should develop a list of schools he or she might want to attend. This can seem like an overwhelming task. How can you help your child with this?

Focus on finding the best fit - a place where your child will feel comfortable and supported. If possible, visit all the campuses on the list and help your child decide which school seems the best.

You should consider:

- + Urban or rural area
- + Large or small school
- + Two- or four-year degree program
- + Majors offered
- + Distance from home
- + Admissions selectivity
- + Public or private institution
- + Cost

Questions you should ask colleges:

- + What majors do you offer?
- + What activities are available?
- + Do most graduates get a job in their field?
- + What is the faculty-to-student ratio?
- + What is the average class size?
- + What academic and social support is available?
- + What programs are available for parents?
- + What percentage of students graduate?
- + What types of payment options and financial aid do you offer?



[Home \(/\)](#) / [Learn \(/\)](#) / [Search \(/\)](#) / Large or Small College?

## LARGE OR SMALL COLLEGE?

Close your eyes. When you think about college, do you picture a compact campus where you run into friends between classes? Or do you envision big Saturday afternoon football games, with thousands of fans cheering on your college's team? Are you participating in small-group discussions or listening carefully to your professor lecture in a large room?



There are no right answers to these questions, only what feels right to you. A college's size affects many aspects of the college experience, from your classes and extracurricular activities to your social life.

### Class Size

A college's size often affects the size of its classes. In general, larger schools tend to have larger classes, especially at the freshman level. You may find yourself taking notes along with a hundred other students in your introduction to psychology class. If you prefer being somewhat anonymous in class, large lecture courses are the way to go.

At smaller colleges, you may find fewer lecture courses and more courses that emphasize class participation. These types of classes facilitate closer contact with faculty and other students, which is attractive to some students, but not all.

Of course, smaller colleges may still have some large classes, and large universities may offer a variety of small classes (especially in upper-level courses). But if you have a definite preference for a particular style of learning, look more closely at the colleges that offer more classes in that style.

### Interactions with Faculty

Who teaches your classes can also depend on the college's size. Large universities often have many professors who are considered senior-level in their field of research. Undergraduates may not have much contact with these professors; instead, teaching assistants (graduate students) may do the bulk of the teaching and grading, while the professors only lecture.

At smaller colleges, particularly those with no graduate programs, you may not run into as many big-

name research professors, but you will likely have far more interaction with the faculty. Many small colleges pride themselves on fostering mentoring-type relationships between professors and students.

### **Extracurricular Activities**

Size can have a big impact on extracurricular activities. In general, the larger the college, the more variety of activities offered. If you're interested in a relatively obscure activity, you're more likely to find it offered at larger colleges. On the other hand, it can be more difficult to break in to popular activities on a larger campus. After all, the more students there are, the greater your competition.

At smaller colleges, students may find it easier to get involved and stand out in extracurricular activities. But small colleges usually can't offer the variety of activities that a large college can.

### **Social Life**

Larger schools have a greater variety of social options, and small colleges may have fewer options but wider student participation in any one event.

You may find that smaller colleges seem friendlier, if only because you're likely to run into the same people more often. On the other hand, once you make a few friends, even the largest campus begins to feel like home.

### **Finding the Right Fit**

The best way to figure out what size of college appeals to you is to visit a variety of colleges.

College is what you make of it no matter what campus you choose. Keep in mind that your personality, interests, and choices will make your college experience different from anyone else's. This is your journey, you decide the way.

### **The College Visit ▶**

Good campus visit takes two to four hours — enough time to get a sense of the surrounding town or area

where to go ...

# CAMPUS VISIT CHECKLIST

... what to ask

## CAMPUS QUAD

- ☐ How friendly and welcoming is the campus?
- ☐ How easy is it to get around campus?
- ☐ How easy is it to get from campus to the nearest town or city?
- ☐ What is the relationship between the school and neighboring community like?
- ☐ Where do students do their shopping (groceries, dorm essentials, clothing, etc.)?

## DORMS

- ☐ What is the campus crime rate like?
- ☐ Is there any sort of late-night shuttle service?
- ☐ How many dorms are there, and how do they differ?
- ☐ What is the dorm's security protocol like?
- ☐ What are the off-campus living options, and what do they typically cost?

## LIBRARY

- ☐ What's the academic vibe like on campus?
- ☐ What are midterms and finals like?
- ☐ How many computer labs are available to students, and is there IT assistance?
- ☐ How many quiet spaces are there for studying?
- ☐ Does the school have access to any additional library collections (local or other school libraries)?

## STUDENT UNION

- ☐ What's the social vibe like on campus?
- ☐ What's the campus like on weekends?
- ☐ How involved are students in extracurriculars?
- ☐ Which activities are most popular?
- ☐ Are any art or music practice spaces available to non-majors?
- ☐ What's Greek life like, and how do students feel about it?
- ☐ What do students do for fun on campus and off?

## GYM

- ☐ How popular is the gym, and how late is it open?
- ☐ Do non-varsity players have access to all athletic facilities?
- ☐ How active is the student body in terms of sports?
- ☐ How engaged are student fans in campus sporting events?

## DINING HALL

- ☐ How's the food? (Pro tip: eat it!)
- ☐ Are meal plans required?
- ☐ What other dining options are there on and around campus?
- ☐ Do they cater to food allergies or other special dietary needs?

## ACADEMIC CENTER

- ☐ Do teaching assistants ever teach classes?
- ☐ How accessible are professors typically?
- ☐ What student-faculty research opportunities exist for undergraduates?
- ☐ What kinds of mentoring and advising relationships do students and faculty have?
- ☐ What tutoring services are available to students?
- ☐ How do class sizes compare between freshman/introductory courses and upper-level classes?

## CAREER CENTER

- ☐ Where have students interned?
- ☐ How long does it typically take recent grads to find a full-time job in their career field?
- ☐ Are there any formal internship arrangements with companies in the area?
- ☐ What kind of career advisement is offered?
- ☐ Do students have access to these services after they graduate?
- ☐ What networking or career fairs are held each year?
- ☐ How involved are alumni?
- ☐ What kinds of on-campus or local part-time jobs are available?

## WELLNESS CENTER

- ☐ What services does the health center offer?
- ☐ How do students typically pay for wellness center services and treatment?
- ☐ What kinds of counseling and/or mental health services are available on campus?
- ☐ Are any stress-relief initiatives offered during midterms and finals?

# College Visit Checklist

To help you find the right college, fill out one of these forms each time you visit a school.

College Name

City

State

Size

Tuition

Room & Board

Financial Aid Options

## Admissions Contact

Name

Email

Phone

## To-Do Checklist

☐ Talk to professors

☐ Visit the library

☐ Tour campus

☐ Sit in on a class

☐ Eat at a cafeteria

☐ Talk to admissions office

☐ Read the college newspaper

☐ Check out computer labs

☐ Talk to students

☐ Visit student housing

☐ Read bulletin boards

☐ Check out recreational facilities

☐ Check out student activities

☐ Tour the city around campus

☐ Eat at an off-campus student hang-out

☐ Picture yourself living here

## Rate It

On a scale of 1-5, five being the best, rate the following:

People

Social life

Classrooms

Residence Halls

Town

Campus

Food

## Ask a Student

What is the best part about this college?

What is the worst part?

What is a typical day like?

What do the students do on the weekends?

How are classes structured?

Why did you choose this college?

## The best part about my visit

## The worst part about my visit

Plan your college road trip with the Cappex Campus Visit Planner™. It's free and easy! Start at [www.cappex.com/campusvisits](http://www.cappex.com/campusvisits)

# The Essential Campus Visit Question List

By CampusCompare.com

Ask the nitty gritty questions that will help you get a feel for the atmosphere, the students, and life on campus.

The campus visit is a key part of the admission process, but it can be a total waste if you don't know what questions to ask. The key is to avoid questions that can easily be answered by a brochure on the college's website. Instead ask the nitty gritty questions that will help you get a feel for the atmosphere, the students, and life on campus.

Here are some questions to get you started:

## Questions for the admission office

1. What services are offered by the campus health center?
2. Does the student health center refer students to the local hospital? Is it nearby? How large is it?
3. How safe is the campus?
4. Is there any kind of shuttle service between classroom areas, the library, the student union, and the dorms? How late does it run?
5. How large is the campus security police force? Does it patrol the campus regularly?
6. Are the dorms spread through the campus or clustered in one area?
7. Is there any security system to bar outsiders from entering dorms?

## Questions for students

1. How many of your courses are taught by the real professor and how many by a teaching assistant?
2. Is the teaching innovative, discussion- and project-oriented, or is it mostly lecture-oriented?
3. How many students are in freshman classes?
4. What are the strong majors and what are the weak majors?
5. How hard do you have to work to get good grades?
6. What reputation does the department of \_\_\_\_\_ have?
7. How adequate is the campus computer network?
8. Do fraternities and sororities dominate the social life?
9. What do students do on weekends? Do they all go home or hang around on campus?
10. How much help outside of the classroom do you get from profs?
11. Do people participate in the activities, groups, and clubs on campus? Or are they dominated by a few groups?

12. Do the rooms have access to Internet?
13. What kind of sports equipment does the campus have? Is it well-kept?
14. How is the quality of food in the cafeteria or dining hall? How are the sizes of the portions? Is it healthy or fast food? Are there meal plans?

### Questions to ask yourself

1. How did the staff members interact with students? Were they friendly or authoritarian?
2. Do most of the students seem like you, or are they completely different?
3. How would you feel about being in a classroom with these students? Sharing a dorm with them?
4. Do the students try to make you feel at home? Were they helpful in answering your questions? How did they interact with one another?
5. Does the campus seem like a good size for you?
6. Are the dorms single-sex or co-ed? How do you feel about that?
7. Are the dorms too quiet? Too noisy? Too crowded? Not enough action?
8. How large are the rooms? Is there space to study? Have time to yourself?
9. Does it look like there is much to do outside of campus?
10. How easy is to get to places off campus? Are there places within walking distance?
11. Do you feel comfortable and safe?
12. Are there places to get extra furniture, like bookcases, for your dorm room?
13. Is there a supermarket nearby to stock up on snacks and soda?
14. If you move out of a dorm after freshman year, what are the options in apartment complexes or buildings?

Remember you are visiting the college to find out if it's a good match for you. The students who are already there may like it, but you have to decide if you will too. So try to envision whether you can actually study there. Decide what's important to you, whether its class size, healthy food, activities, or attentive profs, and make sure those elements are in place.

# COLLEGE VISIT PROS & CONS WORKSHEET

Name of College or University: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Things to Think About	Pros	Cons	Level of Importance
<b>Distance from Home</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long was the travel time?</li> <li>• How much did it cost?</li> <li>• How often will you travel between school and home?</li> </ul>			
<b>School Setting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you like the geographical location?</li> <li>• Does it have the social, recreational, and employment opportunities you desire?</li> <li>• Can you get around off campus if you need to?</li> <li>• Do you like the climate?</li> </ul>			
<b>Campus and Facilities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you like the size and setting of the campus?</li> <li>• How is the condition of buildings?</li> <li>• Would you feel comfortable and safe?</li> <li>• Does it have the modern conveniences and necessities you're looking for?</li> <li>• How is the quality of the facilities related to your area of study?</li> </ul>			
<b>Students</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you like the tour guide and other students you encounter during your visit?</li> <li>• Outside of class, did students flock together in friendly groups or were they more serious and independent?</li> </ul>			

Things to Think About	Pros	Cons	Level of Importance
<b>Faculty and Academics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the current course catalog offer what you need and want?</li> <li>If you observed any classes, how did the class size feel? Did you like the professor?</li> </ul>			
<b>Dormitories</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you like the size and condition?</li> <li>How was the bathroom access?</li> <li>Are you able to choose where you live and your roommates?</li> </ul>			
<b>Dining Hall and Food Options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you like the look and feel of the dining hall?</li> <li>Did the food and menu appeal to you?</li> <li>Are there other convenient meal options available?</li> </ul>			
<b>Sports/Extracurricular Facilities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you play a sport or have a certain club or extracurricular activity in mind, such as rowing or theater, did the school have the facilities you were hoping for?</li> </ul>			
<b>Student Life, Social Scene, and Greek Life</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do students do for fun?</li> <li>Are there fraternities and sororities, and do you think you would like to be a part of Greek life?</li> </ul>			
<b>Other Pros and Cons</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are some other things you loved or hated?</li> <li>Did you learn anything new about the school or were you surprised by anything you liked or didn't like?</li> </ul>			



# How to Choose Colleges With Virtual Tours

A guide to some of the tour sites that aim to help students feel as if they are walking around campuses without leaving home.

By Donna De La Cruz

April 30, 2020

With college campuses closed because of the coronavirus pandemic, free virtual tours have grown in popularity. High school juniors hoping to begin college in the fall of 2021 are not able to visit campuses in person, but they and their families have many ways to explore their options while staying safe at home.

Here is a guide to some of the tour sites that aim to help students feel as if they are walking around campuses. They can visit as many colleges as they like, without the cost of a road trip or the aching feet.

If you are just getting started on the college admissions process:

The National Association for College Admission Counseling provides information from more than 1,000 colleges and universities on changes to admissions processes resulting from the pandemic. The tool lets students get an overview of resources available at each institution, including links to virtual tours offered, said the association's president, Jayne Caflin Fonash. "If someone only wants to know about schools in a certain state, or is only interested in finding out about standardized testing policies for the fall, they can drill down to get that information," Dr. Fonash said.

CORONAVIRUS SCHOOLS BRIEFING: It's back to school — or is it?

Sign Up

StriveScan is offering the Strive Virtual College Exploration program through May 8 to take the place of in-person college fairs. Students get advice on how to write a college essay, apply for financial aid, and the chance to ask questions to officials from more than 450 colleges from 45 states and 13 countries — Canada, Britain, Ireland, Italy, France, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, Belgium, Australia and Mexico. All sessions are taped, allowing students to download them. StriveScan's president, Dan Saavedra, said more presentations will be held in the coming weeks, including one focusing on STEM schools and another on small, private liberal arts schools.

If you are ready to start touring:

There are several websites that allow students to tour and compare schools. These sites offer interactive maps, photos, videos and testimonials.

CampusTours offers tours of more than 1,800 schools in the United States as well as tours of schools in the United Kingdom, Canada, China and France. Its advanced search feature allows students to fine-tune details they are searching for, such as how much tuition they want to pay. About 100 schools offer insights from enrolled students during parts of the tour on campus life, the company's president, Christopher Carson, said. CampusTours is also working on a feature to allow students to ask questions while they are on the tour that are sent to college officials, he added.

YouVisit offers tours of more than 600 U.S. schools. The tours offer prompts that pop up asking students for input that is sent to college officials to respond, an attempt to replicate the questions and answers that come up during in-person tours. YouVisit also offers students to tour using "virtual reality" tools. "There is nothing that replaces that in-person experience that makes a student fall in love with a campus, but the goal of a virtual tour is to do as much as it can to replace those moments," said Emily Bauer, vice president for agency services for EAB, the education research and technology company that owns YouVisit.

If you want to attend a Historically Black College or University:

The Chicago HBCU Alumni Alliance is offering virtual fairs in which nearly 50 H.B.C.U.s give students information on admissions, programs and scholarships. Videotapes of the events will be available on the alliance's website in the coming weeks. The alliance's president, Danielle James, said more virtual fairs are planned for the summer.

StriveScan also featured presentations from several H.B.C.U.s.

### Other virtual tour sites include:

**YoUniversity:** Students can click on tabs such as "safest campuses," "most diverse campuses" and "top academic colleges," as well as "best campus food" and "coolest dorms."

**CampusReel:** Students enrolled at colleges can upload their videos to this site for sharing, after being vetted. Students or parents must register to join.

Schools During Coronavirus

#### Class Disrupted

Updated Jan. 15, 2021

The latest on how the pandemic is reshaping education.

- What does a more contagious coronavirus variant mean for education?
- Wealthy private schools have received money from coronavirus relief programs designed to save small businesses.
- Singapore's three major universities have reported zero coronavirus cases. Their secret: technology, tough penalties and students willing to comply.
- Class of 2025: It's been a year like never before. How did you write about it?

### If you want to take a gap year:

The Gap Year Association offers videos on what it means to take a gap year and is building a new student membership platform — a nominal fee will be required to join — that will give students access to weekly calls to learn about gap year opportunities, said the association's executive director, Ethan Knight. The website also offers information on accredited gap year programs and counselors.

### If you want to play sports in college:

Virtual tours, like the ones at YouVisit, can put students in the stands or on the playing field to get a simulated experience of being an athlete there. CampusTours has a feature that lets students find sports offered at various schools.

### After you've narrowed down your list:

This is the time to start making personal outreach to schools, Mr. Carson of CampusTours said. "You can't rely on virtual tours to tell you everything about the institution, you need to reach out to the schools themselves." Traditionally, students have been told that some colleges rank in-person visits as a show of "demonstrated interest." This year that could take different forms, like emailing professors and admissions officers or attending Zoom meetings. "Demonstrated interest is very valuable," Mr. Carson said. "Make personalized phone calls and write emails."

## STUDENT LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION QUESTIONNAIRE

If you need a letter of recommendation for your college application or scholarship program please complete this form and return it back to me as soon as possible. The information you share with me in this document will help me illustrate your most outstanding characteristics and attributes.

Full Name:

List three adjectives to describe yourself:

List the occupations you are considering & explain what it is about the occupation that interests you & why you might be successful in that career:

What do you hope to achieve by going to college?

What things do you like to do when you aren't doing your school work?

What is one thing you are most proud of about yourself and why?

What event or activity (positive or negative) has had the most impact on your life? How has it shaped you as a person?

**Explain an opportunity you had to act as a leader? What did you learn from this experience?**

**Write a personal statement that helps me understand what is important to you, how you spend your time & understand personal circumstances that have positively or negatively impacted your grades.**

**Is there anything else that a college may want to know about you that I should include in your letter?**

**If you have an activity resume, please attach.**

**If not, please list the sports, clubs, paid work, volunteer/community service, activities out of school, and honors/leadership positions you have been involved in each year during high school.**

**Freshman:**

**Sophomore:**

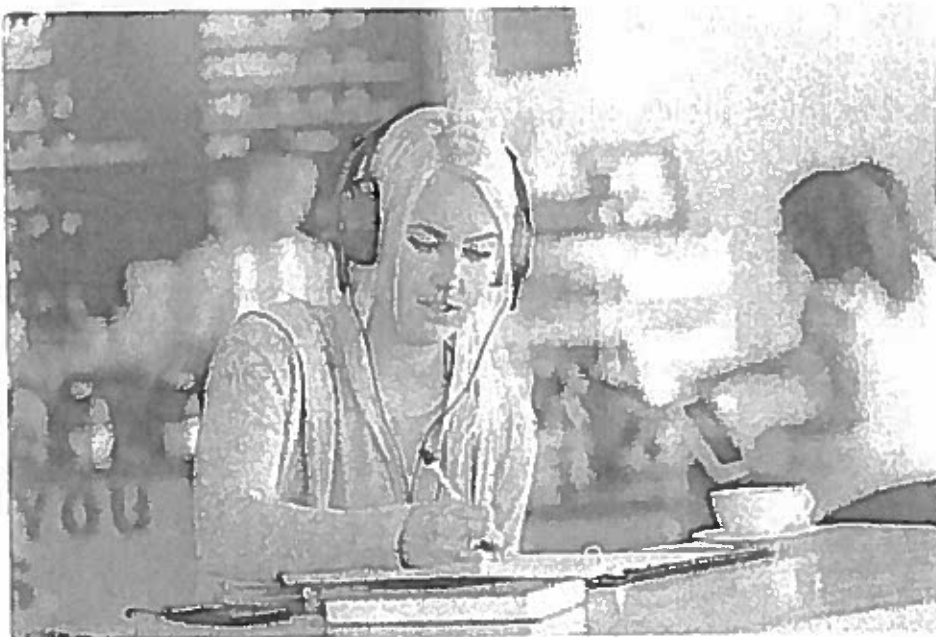
**Junior:**

**Senior:**

[Home \(/\)](#) / [Learn \(/\)](#) / [Apply \(/\)](#) / Top 10 Tips for Writing a College Essay

## TOP 10 TIPS FOR WRITING A COLLEGE ESSAY

**1: Start early.** More time = less stress. You'll have plenty of time to give the essay your best effort.



**2: Be yourself.** One of the biggest mistakes students make is writing what they think others want to hear, rather than about an issue, event, or person they care about. An essay like that is not just boring to write. It's boring to read. What interests you? What do you love to talk about? Write about that. Think of your essay as a creative way to help college officials get to know you as a person.

**3: Be honest.** College admission officers have read hundreds, even thousands of essays. They are masters at discovering any form of plagiarism. Don't risk your college career by buying an essay off the internet or getting someone else to write your essay.

**4: Stay focused.** Read the essay question carefully. Jot down a few ideas, then choose the one that looks like the most fun to write about. Stick to that main theme throughout the essay. Essays can help you make your case to admission officials, but don't go overboard. There will be opportunities elsewhere in the application to list all your achievements.

**5: Put your best foot forward.** Applying online may feel like you're sending email, but you're not. Incorrect capitalization or abbreviations like B4 or "thanx" are not appropriate for a formal document. Make sure your essay represents the best of you.

**6: Write and rewrite.** Don't try to knock out a masterpiece on your first try. For your first draft, write anything that comes to mind about your topic. Let it "rest" for a few hours or a few days. When you come back to the draft, look for ways to make it more focused and better written. Are there details that don't really relate to the topic? Cut them. Do you need another example? Put it in.

**7: Get a second opinion.** When you've rewritten the essay to your satisfaction, find someone who can give you advice on how to make it even better. Choose a person you respect and who knows something about writing. Ask them to tell you what they like best about your essay, and what you can do to improve it.

**8: Keep an open mind.** Criticism can be tough to hear, but try to listen with an open mind. You don't have to make every change suggested. After all, it's your essay and no one else's. But you should seriously consider each suggestion.

**9: Proofread, proofread, proofread.** Little errors creep in throughout the writing and editing process. Before you submit your essay, make sure to proofread. Try reading your essay aloud or having someone else read it to you. Another strategy is to read the essay backward, from the last sentence to the first. Errors your eye may have previously skipped over will jump out at you.

**10: Don't expect too much from an essay.** The application essay is important. But admission officers look at the whole package — your academics, extracurricular activities, standardized tests, and other factors. Make your essay as well-written as you can, but don't put so much pressure on yourself that the rest of the application fades in importance.

### **College Costs: Knowledge is Power for Applicants** ▶

Getting an early start—especially when it comes to decoding financial aid options—can help you in your college search.

### **Creative Questions: To help stimulate your thinking process**

1. Describe an experience where you were unsuccessful in achieving your goal. What lessons did you learn from this experience?
2. Think back to a situation in your life where you had to decide between taking a risk and playing it safe. Which choice did you make? What was the outcome of your choice? Would you have made the same decision looking back on the experience or would you have made a different decision?
3. What movie, poem, musical composition, or novel has most influenced your life and the way that you view the world? Why?
4. Describe an experience that forever changed your life and your outlook on life.
5. Why have you chosen to spend the next four years of your life in college?
6. As of right now, what do you see as your long-term goals in life?
7. If you were given the ability to change one moment in your life, would you do so? Why or why not? If so, what moment would you change and why?
8. What would you describe to be your most unique or special skill that differentiates you from everyone else?
9. Describe some tasks that you have accomplished over the past two years that have no connection to academic studies.
10. If you had the chance to have a 30-minute conversation with any person in human history (either living or deceased), who would be the person you choose? Why? What topics would you discuss with this person?
11. If you could be any animal in recorded history, what animal would you choose? Why?
12. If you were given the capability to travel back in time to any period in history, where would you head to and why?
13. What do you consider to be the best advice you ever received? Who gave you that advice and did you follow that advice or not?
14. What do you consider to be the most important political or social movement of the 20th century? Why?
15. What advice would you offer to a student just beginning his/her high school career?
16. Devise a question that is not on this college admission form and provide a complete, thoughtful answer to it.
17. Choose one quotation that defines who you are and explain why that quotation describes you so well.
18. How has the neighborhood you've grown up in molded you into the person you are today?
19. Imagine that you have written a 400-page autobiography of your life to this point. What would page 150 of that autobiography say?

## TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR PERSONAL ESSAY FOR COLLEGE

When you write a personal essay for your college applications:

**DO** start early. Leave plenty of time to revise, record, and rewrite. You can improve on your presentation.

**DO** read the directions carefully. You will want to answer the questions as directly as possible, and you'll want to follow word limits exactly. Express yourself as briefly and as clearly as you can.

**DO** tell the truth about yourself. The admission committee is anonymous to you; you are completely unknown to it. Even if you run into a committee member in the future, he/she will have no way of connecting your essay (out of the thousands they read) to you.

**DO** focus on an aspect of yourself that will show your best side. You might have overcome some adversity, worked through a difficult project, or profited from a specific incident. A narrow focus is more interesting than broad-based generalizations.

**DO** feel comfortable in expressing anxieties. Everybody has them, and it's good to know that an applicant can see and face them.

**DO** tie yourself to the college. Be specific about what this particular school can do for you. Your essay can have different slants for different colleges.

**DO** speak **POSITIVELY**. Negatives tend to turn people off.

**DO** write about your greatest assets and achievements. You should be proud of them!

**But** .....

**DON'T** repeat information given elsewhere on your application. The committee has already seen it – and it looks as though you have nothing better to say.

**DON'T** write on general, impersonal topics – like the nuclear arms race or the importance of good management in business. The college wants to know about you.

**DON'T** use the personal statement to excuse your shortcomings. It would give them additional attention.

**DON'T** use clichés.

**DON'T** go to extremes: too witty, too opinionated, or too "intellectual."

### **REMEMBER:**

The personal statement is yours. If it looks like Madison Avenue, the admission committee will probably assume that it is your mother's or your father's or their secretaries'.

A "gimmick" essay rarely goes anywhere. The committee is amused, but unimpressed with your candidacy.

Write a serious essay, from the bottom of your heart, in the most mature manner possible.

Proofread or better, yet, have a knowledgeable person proofread for you.

Be sure your essay has complete sentences, natural and specific details, and style, correct grammar, and correct spelling.



# Where will the money come from?

Don't let the cost of college keep your child from applying. Financial aid programs are set up to help students who can't pay the full cost. Help your child to first concentrate on being admitted, and then on finding financial aid. Most students will qualify for some sort of financial aid.

Federal and state governments offer many loans, grants, and scholarships. Colleges have scholarships, other aid packages, and work-study programs. Community groups, churches, and enrichment programs also offer scholarships.

Start reading and asking questions about financial aid. Talk to your child's high school counselor and with the admissions offices of the colleges you are interested in as soon as your child begins applying for admission.

Here are some websites that can help you learn about paying for college.

[www.actstudent.org/finaid](http://www.actstudent.org/finaid)—Explains how financial aid works and offers links to other websites about financial aid.

[www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)—A list of federally funded scholarships, fellowships, grants, and internships geared to high school, undergraduate, and graduate students, created by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

[www.act.org/fane](http://www.act.org/fane)—A financial aid need estimator.

[www.ed.gov/funding/j.html](http://www.ed.gov/funding/j.html)—The U.S. Department of Education financial aid website.

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)—The Free Application for Federal Student Aid website. This is where you start when you are ready to apply for financial aid.

[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)—Features a free scholarship search function as well as information on loans, savings programs, and military aid.

[www.hsf.net](http://www.hsf.net)—A Hispanic Scholarship Fund website that features scholarships for Hispanic students and research reports on the education of Hispanic students.

[www.studentaidalliance.org](http://www.studentaidalliance.org)—Student success stories, descriptions of need-based financial aid programs, lobbying tools, and legislative updates.

**ACT**

# Financial aid TERMS TO KNOW

Grants and Scholarships: gift aid that does not have to be repaid

Loans: aid that must be repaid with interest usually starting 6 months after graduation

FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid- the online application that determines if a student can receive government financial aid

SAR: Student Aid Report- the final summary report that comes from filling out the FAFSA; this shows how much money the family needs for college

EFC: Expected Family Income, a term on the FAFSA and SAR which says how much a family is expected to pay for a student's college tuition based on information given on the FAFSA

Tuition: cost of college classes (not technology fees, room and board, meal plans, books, or other fees)

# financial aid

Free Application for Federal Student Aid ... FAFSA.GOV  
OPENS OCTOBER 1ST

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

SOME SCHOOLS ALSO ASK  
FOR THE CSS PROFILE IN  
ADDITION TO THE FAFSA FOR  
A BETTER PICTURE OF YOUR  
FAMILY'S FINANCIAL  
SITUATION

- FSA ID FOR STUDENT
- FSA ID PASSWORD FOR STUDENT
- FSA ID FOR PARENT
- FSA ID PASSWORD FOR PARENT
- SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER
- FEDERAL INCOME TAX RETURNS, W-2,  
OTHER RECORDS OF MONEY EARNED FOR YOURSELF  
AND YOUR PARENTS  
(THIS CAN GENERATE FROM LINKING THIS FAFSA  
ACCOUNT TO YOUR IRS ACCOUNT)
- RECORDS OF NON-TAXABLE INCOME IF APPLICABLE
- BANK STATEMENTS AND INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS
- RECORDS FOR UNIQUE FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES



# What can you do to support your child?

Your child will need lots of support. In fact, you can help make the difference between success or failure, depending on the amount of support you provide.

Don't forget — you are part of the team that will help your child get into college and graduate. Start by getting involved in your school's parent-teacher organization. Talk with high school counselors, teachers, and the principal. They can offer ideas about how you can support your child's college plans.

- ✦ Be sure he or she takes the classes in high school that are needed for success in college. The courses required to graduate from high school are usually not enough to prepare for college.
- ✦ Make sure your child has a quiet study area free from distractions.
- ✦ Find after-school or summer enrichment programs your child can attend.
- ✦ Ask counselors and college admissions officers about tutoring, counseling, mentoring, and other kinds of support your child may need.
- ✦ Help your child find a mentor — someone to take a personal interest in his or her success.
- ✦ Offer encouragement and support.
- ✦ Try not to make demands that interfere with your child's schoolwork.
- ✦ Help your child learn about colleges, how to apply, and how to get financial aid.

# my deadlines page

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