

Anatomy of a College Application



What Are We Talking About Today

- Types of Admissions
- Types of Applications
- What's in an Application?
- SAT v ACT
- Your Personal Essay
- Important Dates
- After You Submit Your Application

Different Types of Admissions

Regular Admission

Deadlines in December – January
Admission decision in March – April
Not Binding

Early Decision

- Apply with an early deadline (Nov)
- Admission decision earlier (Dec)
- First choice college only
- Binding

Early Action

- Apply with an early deadline (Nov)
- Admission decision earlier (Dec)
- Not binding
- Regular decision timing (May)

Different Types of Applications

1. Common Application

- Used by 500+ schools – public and private
- Available August 1 (yesterday!)

Get it here: www.commonapp.org/

2. University of California Application

- One application used by all UC schools
- Available August 1 (yesterday!)

Get it here: <https://admissions.universityofcalifornia.edu>

3. Other colleges and universities

Parts of the Application

1. Application Fee

- Usually between \$35 to \$50 to apply to each college.
- Many colleges offer fee waivers
- PSP can help you with these – don't let the fees limit your options!

2. High School Transcript

- Your high school should send your transcript, along with a school profile, directly to the colleges you are applying to.
- Check the transcript for errors before it's sent.
- At the end of your senior year, your high school will send a final transcript to the college you've decided to attend.
 - **KEEP YOUR GRADES UP!**

Parts of the Application

3. Test Scores

- Most colleges require tests such as the SAT or ACT.
- Colleges accept scores only from the testing organizations themselves
- Recently, many competitive colleges are deciding NOT to use standardized test scores.
 - ✓ Find out which ones at: <http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional>

4. Letters of Recommendation:

- Letters about you from teachers or other adults who know you well (mentors!).
- Ask for letters well in advance of the deadlines to write you a recommendation.

More Parts of the Application

5. Essays

- Applications will have specific essay ‘prompts’
- Your essays are a chance for you to give admission officers a better idea of your character and strengths.

6. Extracurriculars

- List anything you’ve done outside of class: sports, student government, work, PSP!

7. Interviews

- Another chance to show admissions officers your unique personality and interests.
- Ask for one, even if it’s not required
- Google “What to Do Before and After Your College Interview” for a reminder about how to prepare.

Remember the 'Big Picture'

Colleges care first and foremost about your ability to be a successful student at their school.

Colleges consider your application as a whole, looking at all that information to figure out if you and the school will be a good fit for each other.

SAT

vs

ACT

- 3 sections: Critical Reading, Math, Writing
- Tests critical reasoning and thinking skills
- Math goes up to Algebra II
- 3 hours, 45 minutes
- 170 questions, 1 essay prompt
- Scores between 200 and 800/section. Final score is the sum.

- 4 sections: English, Math, Reading, Science Reasoning + optional writing section
- Tests curricular knowledge
- Math goes up to Trig.
- 3 hours, 25 minutes
- 215 multiple choice questions, 1 optional essay prompt
- Scores between 1 and 36. Final score is the average.

SAT Subject Tests

Why Take These??

What Are They?

Subjects: 20 SAT Subject Tests in five general subject areas: English, history, languages, mathematics and science.

1 hour long, multiple-choice (no fill-ins).

Match test dates to AP exams in May or finals in June, when content is fresh.

Take up to 3 tests on one test day. Register in advance but select the test on the day-of.

You can take either Subject Tests or the SAT on a given test date, but not both.

Common Application Essay Prompts (Choose One)

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?

More Common App Essay Prompts

1. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma-anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
1. Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

UC Essay Prompts (Do Both)

Prompt for all applicants

- Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?
 - ✓ Mention if your family has any military affiliation

Freshman applicant prompt

- Describe the world you come from — for example, your family, community or school — and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.

Important Dates

- August 1: UC and Common Application Available
- November 1 – 30: UC Applications Due
- Mar 2: CalGrants due.
Submit FAFSA for priority consideration.
- Use a checklist to keep track of all your other deadlines

After you apply

Check Again!

After you've checked that everything on your end has been submitted – application, test scores, recommendation letters, etc. – wait a week or two and then check your official application status with the college.

- If anything is missing, ask how you can submit it.

Final Thoughts...

Stay positive about the process.

You can get in. You can afford it. Really.

College admission isn't as competitive as you might think. Fewer than 100 colleges in the U.S. are highly selective, which means they accept less than 25 percent of applicants.

Base your choice on how well a college fits your needs. Don't worry about how it's ranked on a list or how famous it is. The effort you put in and the opportunities you take advantage of once you get there matter more than the college you go to