

## ADMISSIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Many colleges and universities will ask for similar information, but please be aware of the specific requirements of the schools to which you are applying. Visiting or talking with the school in person can help clarify any confusion.

### APPLICATION PROCESS

- **What are the differences between Early Action (EA), Early Decision (ED) and Regular Decision processes?**  
Early Decision plans are binding — a student who is accepted as an ED applicant must attend the college. Early Action plans are nonbinding — students receive an early response to their application but do not have to commit to the college until the normal reply date of May 1. Applying Early can help students reduce stress about the process, gain more time when making a final decision, and signal to their schools that the student is committed and excited about that institution. Regular Decision students apply by the normal deadline.
- **What does Rolling Admissions mean?** This is a policy in which applicants are invited to submit their applications to the university within a large window of time. The school reviews and continues to admit students until they have met their class enrollment goals.

### TESTING/TRANSCRIPTS

- **What standardized tests are required for admission? Do schools prefer which one I take?**  
Many schools will require applicants to submit the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT with Writing. However, some schools have become “test-optional,” which means they look at the application holistically to come to a decision on admission. Ask whether SAT II Subject Tests are required or optional.  
Most schools will indicate if there is any preference, but schools also want you to do your best in whichever one you prefer. Try practice tests in both to see which one is best for you.
- **I scored better in Math when I took the SAT Reasoning in June than when I just took it this fall. Do you take the best score from each section regardless of test date?**  
This is called “superscoring,” where schools will take your best score from each test and disregard the others.
- **Do I need to request an official Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) Score Report? Does School XYZ accept AP or IB credit?**  
Some schools may require AP or IB scores for admission, or to give credit for the equivalent college coursework. You will want to check if AP/IB scores are accepted for credit.
- **What is the difference between weighted and unweighted high school coursework?**  
In a *weighted* grading system, AP and Honors classes are given extra points so that a student is rewarded for challenging coursework. In an *unweighted* grading system, all courses are measured equally, and only the grade received is factored into the Grade Point Average (GPA). Schools may look at one or the other, or recalculate to get their own GPA, based on academic classes or college-level coursework.
- **Do colleges like to see more AP and Honors classes or higher grades in lower level classes?**  
Ideally, schools want to see you succeeding in whatever coursework you are taking. However, schools will consider your grade trend (*how your grades progress from year to year*), look for increasing level of difficulty in classes into senior year, and your overall GPA when reviewing transcripts. We want to see you well prepared!

## ESSAYS/RECOMMENDATIONS

- ***What should I write about, and what do schools look for in an essay?***

The essay should tell the school about you as a person beyond your transcripts or activities. Think about what qualities or talents you have, and the story you are trying to tell about yourself to the admissions committee. Make sure the grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct.

- ***How strict are the word limits on the essays?*** Most schools will not be too strict about the essay length, but will expect you to abide by guidelines as closely as possible. If you go over by a *couple* words, it is usually not an issue.

- ***Who should I ask for a letter of recommendation? May I send additional recommendations?***

Check with the school about requirements for academic versus personal or professional recommendations. Consider asking the teacher who knows you best, and one that can give insight into who you are as a student. Schools look for the quality of the letters and how well the people know you, not the recommenders' titles. If you'd like to submit an additional recommendation, it can add dimension to your application but limit the number to the school's recommended limit.

## ACTIVITIES

- ***What are some of the types of activities that most students include in their applications?***

Some of the most popular activities include school clubs, sports, music, summer programs, youth groups, community service and hobbies or passions. You can include anything you deem relevant on the activities list if you think it will let the school get to know you better. Keep this in mind: *What makes you stand out?*

- ***I participated in WXYZ in seventh through ninth grades. How should I put this on my Extracurricular Activities list?***

Be sure to let schools know what any acronyms mean! You may arrange your activities chronologically, by activity type or any way that makes sense to you. Also, limit the activities you list to those in which you participated in high school.

- ***I wasn't able to participate in a lot of activities because I spend most of my time working after school. Does that go on my Extracurricular Activities list?***

Part- or full-time work and volunteering should be included, as well as working on a family farm or caring for siblings. We want to hear the details about your jobs, including when (the months and years) you worked.

- ***What kinds of awards should I put in my application?*** Please include any regional, state or national awards or commendations you have received. Published or acclaimed works are also important to mention.

# THE COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESS

## COMMON ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

**AA / AFA / AS / AAS / AGE:** Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Fine Arts (AFA), Associate of Science (AS), Associate of Applied Science (AAS), Associate in General Education (AGE) are two-year degrees granted by a community or two-year college.

**ACT:** The ACT is a college entrance exam covering English, math, reading and science reasoning.

**AP:** Advanced Placement courses are challenging high school courses that focus on a particular subject. Students may receive credit or receive a higher placement within college courses.

**BA / BS / BFA:** A bachelor's degree, also called a baccalaureate or undergraduate degree. The Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BS) & Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) differ in requirements.

**CEEB Code:** A standardized ID number that is assigned to a high school, college, or university. CEEB codes are issued by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). **CLEP:** College Level Examination Program offers college credit for independent study or life experience.

**COA:** The Total Cost of Attendance to attend an institution, including tuition, fees, room, board, books, & other expenses.

**EA:** Early Action Application Process – non-binding agreement, provides students flexibility to attend if admitted, and to find out sooner.

**ED:** Early Decision Application Process – binding agreement that student will attend that school if admitted.

**EFC:** Expected Family Contribution – Data provided on the FAFSA (see below) used to calculate a family's ability to pay for college expenses

**FAFSA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid – go to <https://fafsa.ed.gov/> to apply. Usually used by schools to provide a financial package of grants and loans.

**GED:** General Equivalency Diploma – A certificate students receive if they pass a high school equivalency test, which acts as an alternative to a high school diploma.

**GPA:** Grade Point Average - grades students earn in high school and college are assigned points (ex. A=4, B=3, etc.), and additional points may be given for advanced courses (weighted average). A student's GPA is the sum of all earned points divided by the number of courses taken.

**IB:** International Baccalaureate courses are challenging high school courses that focus on a holistic approach to a particular subject. Students may receive credit or receive a higher placement within college courses.

**NCAA:** National Collegiate Athletic Association – partially funds most athletic scholarships and schools participate in athletic conferences and divisions (or levels) between schools

**PSAT/NMSQT:** Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test – measures verbal reasoning, critical reading, writing and math skills. Familiarizes students to questions asked on the SAT – taken in sophomore or junior year.

**SAT:** The SAT Reasoning Test measures critical reading, mathematical, and writing skills that are considered vital to academic success in college and beyond.

**SAT Subject Tests:** SAT Subject Tests measure knowledge in specific subject areas.

**TOEFL:** Test of English as a Foreign Language – a proficiency exam used in international admissions.