

Increase Your Chances of Admission

How to Stand Out to Admission Officers

Highlight On Your Application

Grades and test scores

Obvious? Yes. But these are the first things colleges consider. Make sure you do what you can to get these as high as possible.

Rigorous course schedule

Schools want to see challenging courses that will help you grow academically. Talk to your counselor about opportunities for advanced courses, such as honors and Advanced Placement (AP) levels.

Extracurricular activities

Have you taken a leadership role in your activities? What have you accomplished? Did you have a job or partake in community service?

Think: quality over quantity.

Strengthen Your Application Essay

Show, do not tell

Do not just list your attributes. Be specific! For example, saying that you are helpful is not as powerful as writing about your experiences volunteering.

Creativity counts

Avoid standard essay topics, if given the option to choose your own topic. Try an original idea, something an admissions officer has not read a million times before. The essay is your opportunity to show what makes you, you.

Check for spelling errors

Make sure to proofread your writing; then ask a parent or teacher to look it over for spelling or grammar errors.

Prepare for Your Interview

Not all colleges require an interview for admission. For those that do, a successful interview can help you (and your application) stand out from the applicant pool.

Know the logistics

Find directions to where the interview will be held ahead of time so you do not arrive late. Call the college admissions office and ask what the appropriate dress code is for interviews.

Be natural

Admissions officers want to know you as a person, so highlight your accomplishments in a meaningful way. If you sound like you are reading off of a cue card, it will not leave them with a strong memory of you. Remember that the interview should be a conversation. Be confident and optimistic about your future college career.

Ask questions

The interview enables an admissions officer to get to know you. Come prepared with questions or impressions you have about the college to demonstrate your interest in the school. Emphasize what you want to learn and accomplish as a college student. Make sure to follow up your interview with a thank-you note.

Application Do's and Don'ts

DO's

DO follow the rules

If an application asks you to choose one essay, do not answer them all. Read the application directions completely before answering any questions.

DO include everything

Verify that all forms have been signed and that you have included all essays and recommendations. Double check that you have not left out anything important. Make copies of everything for your records.

DO pay attention to deadlines

Submit your application with plenty of time to spare. You may want to send your application via certified mail or request an email receipt if you applied online for added assurance that it arrived on time.

DONT'S

DON'T procrastinate

Letting things wait until the last minute might mean leaving something out or making mistakes on the application. You want to take as much time as possible on your application.

DON'T leave anything out

Be careful not to treat an online application like an instant message (IM) or e-mail. An admissions officer does not want to see smiley faces or IM slang. Treat an online application with the same seriousness as you would a paper one.

DON'T forget to update your email address

Your email address should be professional. An admissions officer should not see cutegirl@abc.com. arrived on time.

Scholarship Scams Tip Sheet

How do I recognize a scholarship scammer?

A scammer:

- Indicates you've won an award for which you didn't apply
- Does not supply valid contact information
- Guarantees you will win an award
- Requires personal financial information (such as, credit card numbers or checking account numbers to verify or hold a scholarship)

How do I recognize a legitimate scholarship service?

A legitimate service:

- Sends information about awards when you request it
- Makes contact information available upon request
- Does not guarantee you will win an award
- Should not direct you to a fee-based provider because they know that financial aid information is readily available for free

What if you suspect a scam?

- Save all of the forms you receive from the company
- Keep copies of written details about the offer and any correspondence, emails or other paperwork
- Make sure all materials are dated
- Take notes during seminars and phone conversations (record the date, time, phone number and the person's name with whom you spoke)
- Include a detailed account of your conversation
- Take a copy of all literature and correspondence concerning the scholarship to your school's counseling office. They can verify the foundation is legitimate.

Report suspected scams to the following organizations:

National Fraud Information Center (NFIC)

Ph: 800-876-7060 Web: www.fraud.org

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

Ph: 877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357)

Web: www.ftc.gov

State Attorney General's Office

Visit your state's Web site to obtain state attorney general's contact information. Ask them about filing a complaint with the Bureau of Consumer Protection in your state.

Better Business Bureau (BBB)

Visit www.bbb.org for information on your local office.

US Postal Inspection Service (USPIS)

Ph: 800-654-8896

Web: www.usps.gov/postalinspectors/fraud

Popular (But False!) Claims

"For a small fee, we'll give you a list of scholarships."

- Never spend money on a fee-based matching service. The biggest and best award databases are available for free on the Internet.

"We'll help you complete complicated forms."

- Information about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other forms is available for free from your guidance counselor, your library and the Department of Education. You still have to fill out the same basic information for a fee-based service that you would for the FAFSA; how else would they get your information?
- For general financial aid or FAFSA related questions call 800-4-FED-AID (800-433-3243) or visit www.finaid.org

"You are guaranteed a minimum of \$1000 in awards."

- A service can't guarantee any scholarships because they have no control over the scholarship judge's decisions.

"We have a 96% success rate."

- These false success rates indicate the percentage of students they've successfully matched with the database, NOT the number of students who actually receive money.

"We'll need a bank account/credit card number to verify your information."

- Your bank account and credit card information is confidential. A legitimate scholarship provider won't ask for this information.

"We will do all the work for you."

- To win a legitimate scholarship, you must submit your own applications, write your own essays and solicit your own letters of recommendation

2009-2010 Planning Calendar

September

- 9/9: SAT Registration Deadline for 10/10 Test
- 9/12: ACT Test Day (Selected States)
- 9/18: ACT Registration Deadline for 10/24 Test
- 9/23: SAT Late Registration Deadline for 10/10 Test Request letters of recommendation from faculty

October

- 10/1: SAT Registration Deadline for 11/7 Test
- 10/2: ACT Late Registration Deadline for 10/24 Test
- 10/10: SAT and Subject Tests Test Day
- 10/14: PSAT/NMQST Test Day
- 10/15: SAT Late Registration Deadline for 11/7 Test
- 10/17: PSAT/NMQST Test Day
- 10/24: ACT Test Day
- 10/30: SAT Registration Deadline for 12/5 Test

November - National Scholarship Month

- 11/6: ACT Registration Deadline for 12/12 Test
- 11/7: SAT and Subject Tests Test Day
- 11/12: SAT Late Registration Deadline for 12/5 Test
- 11/20: ACT Late Registration Deadline for 12/12 Test

December

- 12/5: SAT and Subject Tests Test Day
- 12/12: ACT Test Day
- 12/15: SAT Registration Deadline for 1/23 Test
- 12/30: SAT Late Registration Deadline for 1/23 Test

January

- 1/1: First Day to Submit FAFSA
- (Early completion maximizes chances for aid)
- 1/5: ACT Registration Deadline for 2/6 Test
- 1/15: ACT Late Registration Deadline for 2/6 Test
- 1/23: SAT and Subject Tests Test Day

February

- 2/4: SAT Registration Deadline for 3/13 Test
- 2/6: ACT Test Day (except in NY)
- 2/18: SAT Late Registration Deadline for 3/13 Test

March

- 3/5: ACT Registration Deadline for 4/10 Test
- 3/13: SAT and Subject Tests Test Day
- 3/19: ACT Late Registration Deadline for 4/10 Test
- 3/25: SAT Registration Deadline for 5/1 Test

April

- 4/8: SAT Late Registration deadline for 5/1 Test
- 4/10: ACT Test Day
- 4/15: Deadline to File your 2009 Federal Income Tax Return
- 4/29: SAT Registration Deadline for 6/5 Test

May

- 5/1: SAT and Subject Tests Test Day
- 5/3-5/7: AP Testing Week 1
- 5/7: ACT Registration Deadline for 6/12 Test
- 5/10-5/14: AP Testing Week 2
- 5/13: SAT Late Registration Deadline for 6/5 Test
- 5/21: ACT Late Registration Deadline for 6/12 Test

June

- 5/1: SAT and Subject Tests Test Day
- 5/3-5/7: AP Testing Week 1
- 5/7: ACT Registration Deadline for 6/12 Test
- 5/10-5/14: AP Testing Week 2
- 5/13: SAT Late Registration Deadline for 6/5 Test
- 5/21: ACT Late Registration Deadline for 6/12 Test

July

- 7/1: AP scores available by phone

Acronym Look-up

SAT - Originally an abbreviation for the Scholastic Aptitude Test, SAT is the nation's most widely used admissions test among colleges and universities.

ACT - Originally "ACT" stood for American College Testing, ACT is universally accepted for college admission in the US.

AP - The Advanced Placement program, offers college level courses at high schools across the United States and Canada.

PSAT/NMQST - The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMQST) is a standardized test that provides realistic practice for the SAT

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to access over \$4 billion
in scholarship money!**

Web Resources

Information about Financial Aid

Fastweb's College Gold.....www.collegegold.com
 Federal Student Aid for Students.....<http://studentaid.ed.gov>
 FinAid.....www.finaid.org
 Mapping Your Future.....<http://mapping-your-future.org>
 Project Scholarship Scam.....www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams
 Taxes for Students..... www.irs.gov/individuals/students

Sources of Aid

Scholarship Search.....www.fastweb.com
 *AmeriCorps.....www.americorps.org
 *City Year.....www.cityyear.org
 CSS/PROFILE.....<http://profileonline.collegeboard.com>
 Direct Loans.....www.ed.gov/directloan
 FAFSA (Free App. for Federal Student Aid).....www.fafsa.gov
 FAFSA PIN.....www.pin.ed.gov
 Resources by State.....<http://finaid.org/otheraid/state.phtml>
 *Award upon successful program completion

Prepare for Your Interview

Social Security Administration.....www.ssa.gov
 Selective Service.....www.sss.gov
 Student Gateway to U.S. Government.....www.students.gov
 Study Abroad.....www.studyabroad.com
 U.S. Department of Education.....www.ed.gov

College Admissions and Testing

ACT.....www.actstudent.org
 AP.....www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/about.html
 SAT.....www.sat.org
 PSAT.....www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html
 Admissions Information.....www.admissions.com

Choosing a Major and Career

Career Planning.....www.fastweb.com
 MonsterCollege.....<http://college.monster.com>
 America's Career Infonet.....www.acinet.org
 Bureau of Labor Statistics.....<http://stats.bls.gov>
 Occupational Outlook Handbook.....www.bls.gov/oco

Loan Information

Federal Perkins Loan

Awarded based on exceptional need. Interest is subsidized and fixed at 5%. Favorable benefits may be lost upon consolidation.
REPAYMENT begins 9 months after graduation or dropping below half-time enrollment status.

Federal Stafford Loan

Subsidized:
 Interest accrues starting 6 months after graduation
 Fixed interest rate is 5.6% if loan originated on/after July 1, 2009 for undergraduate students.

Unsubsidized:
 Interest accrues during school
 Fixed interest rate is 6.8% if loan originated on/after July 1, 2006.
 On loans first dispersed on or after July 1, 2009, annual limits have increased by \$2,000 for independent and dependent undergrads.
REPAYMENT begins 9 months after graduation or dropping below half-time enrollment status.

Federal PLUS Loan

If loan originated on/after July 1, 2006:
 Direct PLUS fixed interest rate is 7.9%
 FFEL PLUS fixed interest rate is 8.5%
REPAYMENT begins 60 days after full disbursement, or 6 months after student graduates or drops below half-time. Interest continues to accrue during deferment.

Federal Consolidation Loan

Combine federal loans to one payment.
 Fixed interest rate is the weighted average of the loans rounded up to the nearest 1/8 of a % and capped at 8.25%.
 Lower monthly payments through alternate payment plans; however, more interest payments.

Private/Alternative Loan

Eligibility, interest rate and fees based on better credit scores of borrower and cosigner; more expensive than Federal loans.

For more information on private/alternative loans, visit: www.finaid.org/loans/privateloan.phtml