

THE COLLEGE CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS

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7 THINGS YOU MUST DO IN HIGH SCHOOL TO BE COMPETITIVE FOR UC ADMISSION

Askmssun.com

Getting excited or anxious about how well you are preparing for the UCs? Here is a list of must do's to help you gain the competitive edge?

1. Make sure the honors courses you are taking are UC-approved or they won't be weighted (you can check by looking at your high school's UC A-G Course List). Sometimes you may need to take honors courses that are not UC-approved in order to qualify for AP courses; check with your counselor to make sure!
2. Balance your extracurricular activities with your honors/AP courses during the school year so you maintain excellent grades and devote adequate time to your extracurricular activities to gain meaningful experiences and develop important skills (such as leadership and collaboration).
3. Ask your family and friends to put the word out that you are looking for opportunities, such as job shadowing, internship, or research. UCs like to see active exploration of or involvement in the discipline you intend to declare as your major.

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YOU GOT ACCEPTED - NOW WHAT?

bigfuture.collegeboard.org

If you've received acceptance letters from multiple colleges, congratulations! You should be excited that your hard work has paid off. The next step will be deciding which college is best for you.

First of all, don't worry about choosing that one perfect college—there's no such thing. College is what you make of it: What you do while you're there matters more than the college name on your diploma. Here's how to make your decision.

- **Get More Information About Each College After Receiving Acceptance Letters** - You probably already gathered a lot of information about each of your college choices during the admissions process, but digging even deeper can help you make the best choice.
- **Ask the Right Questions** - When making the ultimate college decision, it's important to ask the right investigative questions about each of your choices to see which college fits you best. Questions you can ask include:
 - How many first-year students return? How many students graduate?

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WHAT DO TEST OPTIONAL AND TEST BLIND/FREE MEAN?

Collegeessayguy.com

If you're exploring different colleges to apply to, you may have heard the terms "test optional" or "test blind." By understanding more about what these terms mean, you can build a better college list and improve your chances of finding a school that is perfect for you. Unfortunately, many college applicants don't know what these terms mean, or may be (understandably) skeptical, and unsure how to proceed.

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SCHOLARSHIPS

QUESTBRIDGE SCHOLARSHIP

The National College Match is a college admission and scholarship process through which high-achieving, low-income students can be admitted early with full four-year scholarships



THE NATIONAL CCAA COLLEGE FIRST YEAR SCHOLARSHIP

For seniors who have been admitted to a Catholic College Admission Association university. Deadline to apply is April 1st.



RISE SCHOLARSHIP

Rise is a program that finds brilliant people who need opportunity and supports them for life as they work to serve others.



10 WORDS OR LESS SCHOLARSHIP

Sponsored by studentscholarships.org. Answer in 10 words why you deserve a scholarship. Apply by April 15th.



ASHRAE ENGINEERING SCHOLARSHIP

\$3,000 scholarship for students pursuing engineering degrees. Apply by May 1









STOKES EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Interested in a career in computer science and national security? This \$30,000 a year scholarship plus guarantees you a job after college at Fort Meade, MD.



SENIOR CHECKLIST

-  • Keep your grades up
-  • Check college portals
-  • Watch that inbox
-  • Research Scholarships
-  • Schedule Admitted Student Day Tours
-  • Practice Self Care

AROUND THE CORNER FROM COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP



Open to current high school students planning to attend college. \$1,000 scholarship. Deadline is June 30th



HORATIO ALGER ASSOCIATION

Manages 70 of the largest need based scholarship opportunities in the country for high school juniors who have faced or overcome obstacles. Scholarships by state and by career.



FUN FACT:

Most people get rejected from their top college choice.

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(or exploration of different disciplines if you are unsure/undeclared) and heavily favor students with research experience.

4. Take community college courses (any UC-transferable courses that are at least 3 semester or 4 quarter units will work) during the summer.
5. If you receive a D or F grade, be sure to repeat the course BEFORE senior year to replace the bad grade in the GPA calculation and to meet the subject requirement (although you MUST report both the non-passing grade AND the repeated grade on the UC Application when you apply).
6. Get your parents involved with your college planning. Ask them to contact your counselor and teachers and show concern for your college plans.
7. Be a teacher's pet. Communicate with your teachers outside of class and show some interest in them and the subjects they teach. The better your teachers know you, the more likely they are willing to help you.

Things You Should NOT Worry About

1. UCs do look at courses you take in freshman year and the rigor/grades in context of your overall schedule/grade trend, but freshman grades are NOT included in the GPA calculation used for admission evaluation.
2. UCs do look at courses you take in senior year and take the rigor into consideration when evaluating you for admission; but as long as you maintain satisfactory grades (typically an unweighted B average, with no non-passing grades, is sufficient), your performance in your senior year courses will not affect your admission.
3. Only the grades recorded on your high school transcript will count.
4. Despite what your teachers/counselor/principal may say, the stuff on your "permanent record" is not submitted to nor reviewed by the UCs;

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In the latest development of the war between the **College Board and Florida** governor Ron DeSantis, DeSantis is threatening to end all Advanced Placement instruction in the state,

The **American Bar Association** voted Monday to reject a proposal to let law schools become test optional.

Overhauling the federal financial system and simplifying the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** is a significant undertaking for the Education Department. Although the agency is making progress on the project, officials said this week the application might not be ready by Oct. 1.

Amid mounting demand for **DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) experts** in everything from education to finance, the number of colleges with undergraduate and graduate DEI programs has been growing.

New Mexico State University, a public institution, fired a men's basketball coach following allegations from an athlete that three of his teammates hazed him for months.

Colleges that have taken steps to end legacy preferences include **Caltech, Johns Hopkins University, MIT, Purdue, and Amherst College**. In addition, **Colorado public colleges** are barred from using legacy as a factor in admissions.

Beginning with the 2023-24 application season, **Common App** will add "X" or "another legal sex" as an option in addition to "female" and "male."

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A whopping 81 percent of students also said that it's important or very important for institutions to incorporate company-led projects to mimic real-world work. Yet only 30 percent of institutions currently offer such projects, according to the report.

MLK in LA is an exhibit at the **USC Fisher Museum of Art** that was curated and designed by current USC students.

Oregon State University archaeologists have uncovered projectile points in Idaho that are thousands of years older than any previously found. Dating back 15,700 years, 3,000 years older than the Clovis points found throughout N. America.

UC Santa Cruz's Division of the Arts will soon begin construction of a world-class production and post-production facility in support of its Social Documentation (SocDoc) MFA program.

The **University of San Diego Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice's Violence, Inequality, and Power Lab (VIP Lab)** will launch a new fellowship program intended to expand the breadth of work focusing on the relationships between power inequalities and violence.

Portland State University's Undergraduate Business program ranked in the top 13% nationwide at 24 out of 214 programs by US News and World Report.

JUNIOR CHECKLIST



ACT - Next test date is April 15th. You must register by March 10th. It takes 30 minutes to complete registration and you will need a photo.



SAT - Next test date is May 6th. You must register by April 7th.



Attend Virtual College Visits



Plan campus visits for Spring Break

PLUMBERSSTOCK SCHOLARSHIP

A unique scholarship opportunity for those studying at colleges and trade schools to become plumbers, HVAC technicians or sprinkler and irrigation specialists (or other related fields, like construction management). Apply by March 31st

SCHOLARSHIP FOR DREAMERS

\$4,500 per year for four years for undocumented students with goals to attend college.



COCA COLA SCHOLARS PROGRAM SCHOLARSHIP

\$20,000 achievement-based scholarship awarded to graduating high school seniors. Students are recognized for their capacity to lead and serve, as well as their commitment to making a significant impact on their schools and communities. Application is open



HSF SCHOLARSHIPS

More than 150 scholarships for Latino students with or without US citizenship.



NEXT LEVEL STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

The \$1,000 NextLevel Student Scholarship is available to students each semester who are pursuing a career in law, compliance, or public policy.



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- Does the college offer the majors I'm interested in?
- What can I do for fun?
- What kinds of students feel at home at this college?

- **Visit—or Revisit—the Campuses** - If possible, check out a college's campus to get more information. If you can't visit the campus, you might be able to find a virtual tour on the college's website that will provide insight. Another online option is to explore student videos on College Search to hear about student experiences on select campuses.
- **Think Things Over** - You've done the research and asked questions. Now it's time to check your own thoughts and feelings. Ask yourself questions like these:
 - How did I feel when I was on campus at each college I visited?
 - Which colleges best match my list of must-haves?
 - At which colleges can I imagine myself as successful and happy?
- **Compare the Colleges** - Use your new information to sort the colleges by what they offer and what you want. Make a list of the pros and cons of each college.
- **Compare Financial Aid Awards** - This is an important step for many students. Once you've been accepted to the colleges of your choice, talk to your family about which ones work best for you financially. Together, you should make decisions about financial aid, such as whether you should take a student loan or a work-study job. As you compare financial aid awards, you might discover that a private college is just as affordable as a public college based on the amount you'll receive.
- **Make Your Acceptance Decision** - You don't have to decide overnight. Many colleges don't expect to hear your final decision until May 1 (unless you applied as an early decision applicant), so you have some time to make up your mind. But remember that colleges are serious about reply deadlines. If you don't send your deposit in time, you risk losing your place.
- **Respond to the Colleges That Admitted You** - Once you've decided which college you want to attend, inform all the colleges that accepted you about your decision.
- **Respond to the college you've decided to attend** - Make sure to send in the following items, via the online student portal or through email, by the deadline:
 - Your acceptance letter
 - A deposit
 - A separate acceptance letter for financial aid if required
 - Any other items as required by your specific college
- **Respond to the colleges whose offers you're declining** - It's important that you also send a brief email to the other colleges to thank them and turn down their offers. This frees up spots for other students.



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Like, when they say “optional,” do they really mean ... optional? Really? (Answer: Yes. But you still might need to submit scores for other things—more on that below.)

So what do the terms “test optional” and “test blind” mean? How might they change your testing and application approach? And which schools are actually test optional or test blind? Keep reading to discover the answers!

WHAT DOES “TEST OPTIONAL” MEAN? - The term “test optional” refers to schools where students do not have to submit SAT or ACT test scores as part of the application for admission. Students themselves can choose whether or not to submit scores, and deciding not to submit a score does not negatively reflect on the student’s application.

SHOULD I SUBMIT SAT OR ACT SCORES TO TEST OPTIONAL SCHOOLS?

If you apply to a test optional school, whether or not you submit SAT or ACT test scores is entirely up to you—again, they really mean it when they say “optional.” So how do you decide? It depends on a few different factors like did you test, how did you do, and how does your score compare to others applying to that specific school.

WHO GENERALLY DECIDES TO SUBMIT THEIR SCORES TO TEST OPTIONAL SCHOOLS?

The answer here goes back to that Common Data Set, and why it’s so useful—students who scored well often choose to submit, especially when their standardized test scores are more impressive than their GPA.

On a related note, certain homeschooled students may choose to submit test scores because their homeschooling program was unaccredited.

For what it’s worth, the vast majority of applicants (around 80% of them) to test optional colleges still submit their scores. This may help you answer that most Shakespearean of questions: “to submit or not to submit.”

WHAT DOES “TEST BLIND” OR “TEST FREE” MEAN?

When a school is test blind (sometimes called test free), it

means the schools will not consider student test scores under any circumstance. Students are still free to submit the scores, but the scores will not be considered as part of their application.

Sometimes, students are surprised to discover that test free colleges exist. It’s one thing for test optional schools to make scores just one of the optional things that they might review. But why would a school refuse to even consider test scores when a student submits them?

The short answer is that these schools believe other parts of your application provide more valuable information than your test scores. Or they may think that tests are biased or problematic in some way (for example, test scores tend to correlate strongly with family income).

In this way, such schools (like the UC system) echo the sentiment that many students have expressed over the years: that students are more than just their test scores, and that test scores should not be a limiting factor when it comes to someone’s chance at getting a college education.

Top schools* in the country that do not require you to submit test scores!

- Stanford University
- Harvard University
- Yale University
- Princeton University
- Rice University
- Columbia University
- Duke University
- Brown University
- Dartmouth College
- University of Pennsylvania



At test blind/test free schools, your essays—both your main personal statement and your supplemental essays, or your PIQs for the UCs—will be especially important in helping your admission readers understand what sets you apart from other applicants.

Oh, and to clarify the “test blind” vs “test free” thing—many people feel that referring to something as “blind” is problematic, since in everyday life people often use “blind” to mean things like “unaware” or “ignorant” (though in this case, not considering test scores might be viewed as a positive thing) and thus that “test free” is a more inclusive term.

WHAT SCHOOLS ARE “TEST BLIND” OR “TEST FREE”?

Generally speaking, there are fewer test blind colleges than test optional colleges, but you still have plenty of options to choose from. As always, it’s important to contact the admissions

department of the colleges you are interested in.

SO SHOULD I STILL TAKE THE SAT OR ACT?

Between test optional and test free schools, you now have plenty of places where you can apply for higher education without submitting test scores. And that brings us to the big question: if you are considering applying to these schools, should you bother prepping for the SAT or ACT and taking the test?

In general, we recommend that prospective students go ahead and take the SAT or ACT. The primary reason for this is that it gives you more options for both college admission and financial aid. If you are absolutely, positively certain you’re only applying to test blind/free schools, then you’re good. Otherwise ...

For example, once you have test scores in hand, you can apply to schools whether or not they require test scores. This is especially important in states such as Florida, where all 12 public universities require first-year students to submit ACT or SAT scores as part of their application.

Even if you apply only to test-optional schools, you can wait to see what your test scores are and decide whether or not the scores make your application stronger or not. Since applying to colleges can be so stressful, giving yourself additional options can provide you with some peace of mind.

Finally (and this is a big last note), many scholarships are awarded based on SAT or ACT scores. So even if you end up going to a test optional or test blind school, you may want to (or have to) take a standardized test in order to qualify for as many scholarships as possible.

TEST BLIND OR FREE SCHOOLS

- Loyola University New Orleans
- University of California Berkeley
- Washington State University
- California Institute of Technology
- Northern Illinois University
- City College of New York
- Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- University of San Diego
- San Francisco State University
- Northern Michigan University

