



The Path to College

A guide for eager AC students like you | Aug 27, 2020

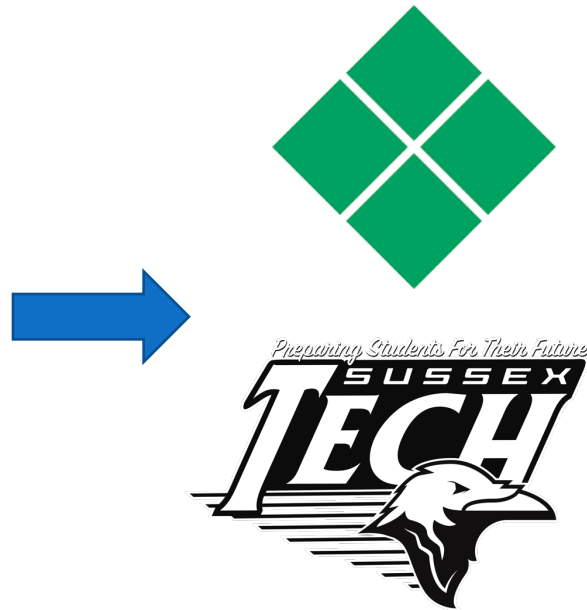
With Zack Varrato, ACP 2016

A Bit About Me

Zack Varrato
Georgetown, DE



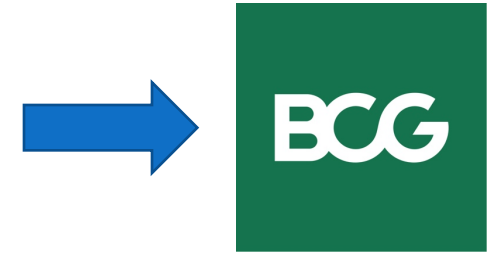
GMS
Class of 2012



AC, Sussex Tech
Class of 2016



UPenn/Wharton
Class of 2020



Boston
Consulting
Group

Agenda

- 1 Getting started
- 2 Performing well in high school
- 3 Preparing for exams
- 4 Researching colleges
- 5 Finding funding

First things first...

YOU CAN DO IT.

You will get into a great college.

You will find a way to make it affordable.

You just have to put in some time to think about what you want, and how you're going to get there.

And there are lots of people who can help you.

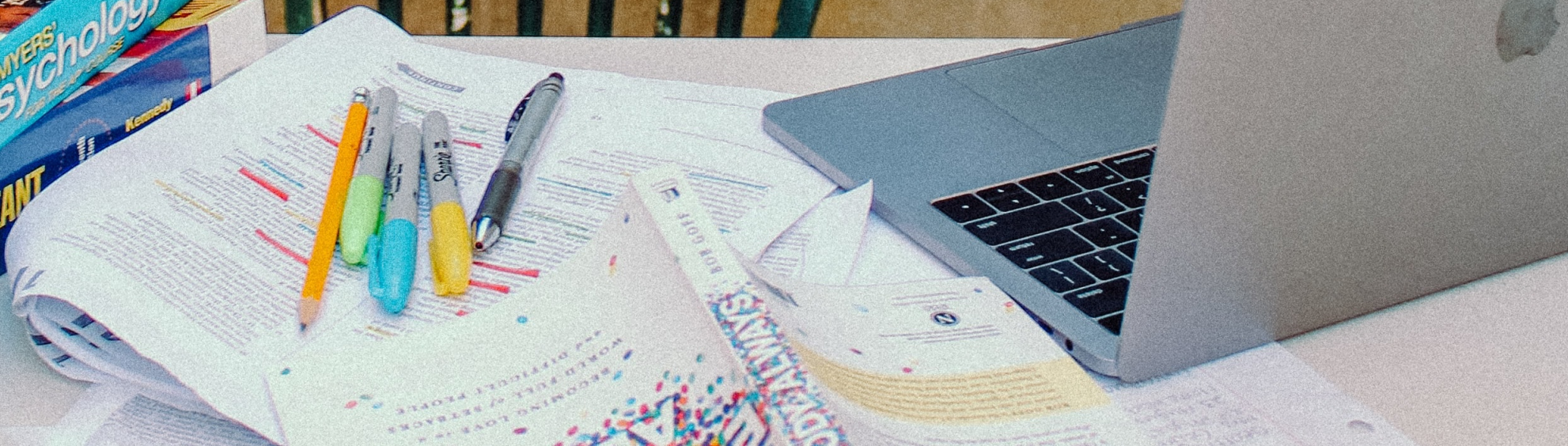
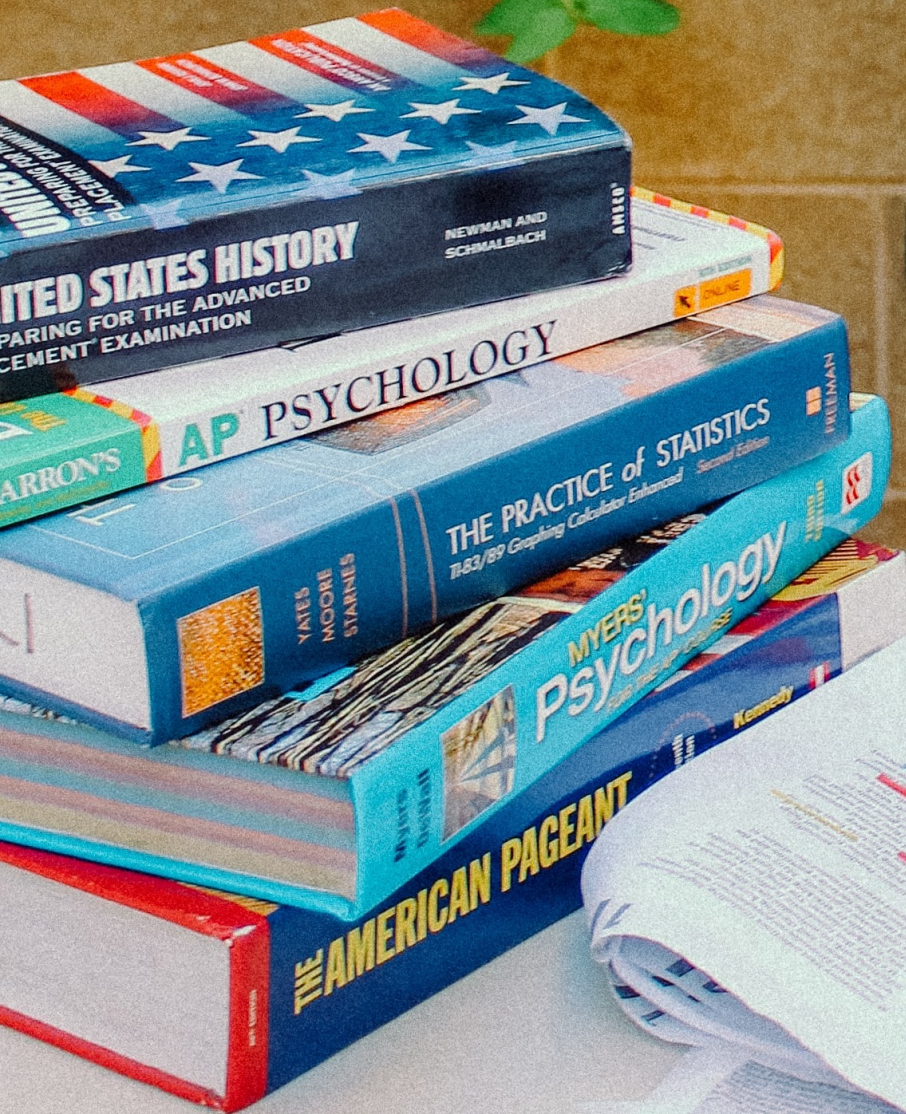
Second things second...

YOU STILL HAVE TIME.

If you're in 8th, 9th, or 10th grade, you have plenty of time.

But there are lots of things you can do to set yourself up for success, and inform yourself about your future.

Getting started...



High School Timeline

What I did over the summers:

- Volunteer at Nanticoke Hospital (9, 10)
- Work as busboy at restaurant (10, 11, 12)
- HOBY Leadership Conference (11)

9th grade

Get engaged with school life, do well in class, explore interest areas, connect with teachers.

Start keeping a record of your activities from the beginning.

Summers

Do something!

Whether at a summer job, or volunteering, or traveling, or all of the above, have a story to tell.

10th grade

Fall: Prepare for and take the **PSAT** (for practice)

Continue doing well in school, and getting more involved in school and community life.



High School Timeline

What I did over the summers:

- Volunteer at Nanticoke Hospital (9, 10)
- Work as busboy at restaurant (10, 11, 12)
- HOBY Leadership Conference (11)

9th grade

Get engaged with school life, do well in class, explore interest areas, connect with teachers.

Start keeping a record of your activities from the beginning.

Summers

Do something!

Whether at a summer job, or volunteering, or traveling, or all of the above, have a story to tell.

11th grade

Fall: Take the **PSAT** (for National Merit)

Research and visit schools. Explore scholarships available to non-seniors.

Take the **SAT or ACT** twice.

Military academy apps

10th grade

Fall: Prepare for and take the **PSAT** (for practice)

Continue doing well in school, and getting more involved in school and community life.

11th grade summer

Begin preparing **essays and applications**.

High School Timeline

What I did over the summers:

- Volunteer at Nanticoke Hospital (9, 10)
- Work as busboy at restaurant (10, 11, 12)
- HOBY Leadership Conference (11)

9th grade

Get engaged with school life, do well in class, explore interest areas, connect with teachers.

Start keeping a record of your activities from the beginning.

Summers

Do something!

Whether at a summer job, or volunteering, or traveling, or all of the above, have a story to tell.

11th grade

Fall: Take the **PSAT** (for National Merit)

Research and visit schools. Explore scholarships available to non-seniors.

Take the **SAT or ACT** twice.

Military academy apps

12th grade fall

Submit applications to colleges (early decisions due mid October, regular decisions due by end of December).

10th grade

Fall: Prepare for and take the **PSAT** (for practice)

Continue doing well in school, and getting more involved in school and community life.

11th grade summer

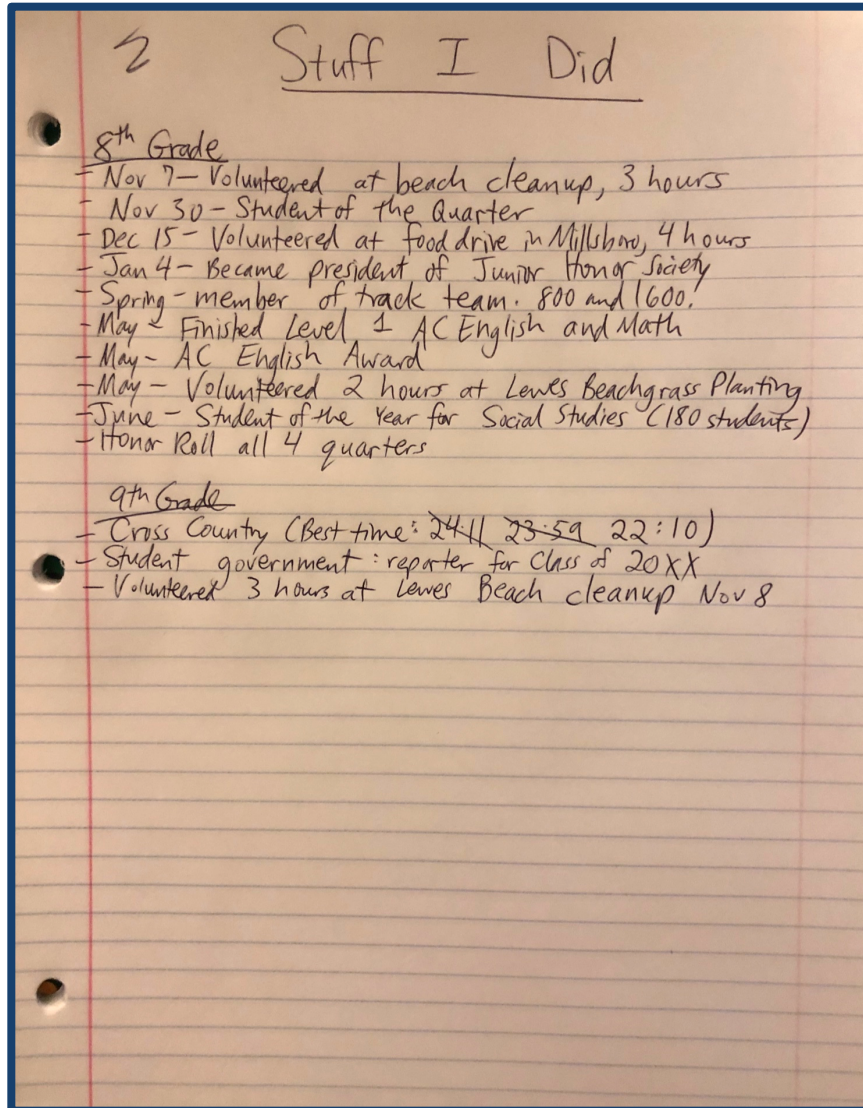
Begin preparing **essays and applications**.

12th grade spring

Apply for independent scholarships

Make your final enrollment decision!

Get organized



Keep a record

of every club position, job, and community service activity you ever do – all in one place. It'll help you make your resumes and fill out applications later.

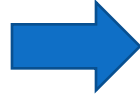
Get a folder

Make a folder on your computer, or in Google Drive, or a literal folder to keep all your college stuff in one place: any applications, scholarships, information you accumulate.

What you're building toward: the résumé

One page.

Format: It will eventually look like this
(Yes, copy this exactly. It's standard.)



Sections:

- Education
- Extracurriculars/Leadership Experience
- Volunteer Experience
- Work Experience
- Skills and Interests

You can **reorder/lengthen sections** depending on where your strengths are.

JANE DOE 104 Main Street, St. Louis, MO 63105 • (301) 123-5678 janedoe@gmail.com	
EDUCATION	
Georgetown High School GPA: 89.6/100 Awards and Achievements: AP Scholar with Honor; District Champion and Missouri State Qualifier; NSDA Degree of Special Distinction	Georgetown, DE 2017-2021
WORK EXPERIENCE	
Georgetown Produce Stand Cashier • Set up and closed shop each day • Talked to customers and made recommendations • Stocked, cleaned, and worked with management	Georgetown, DE Summers 2017-2021
Tropical Smoothie Cafe Barista and Server • Made smoothies and wraps to order; operated the register • Opened and closed store during peak tourist season • Recognized by managers for hard work and great attitude	Rehoboth Beach, DE Summer 2019
LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE	
Georgetown High School Soccer Team Captain • Led team of 20 people in practices and games • Planned workouts • Organized fundraisers and banquets	Georgetown, DE 2019-Present
National Honor Society Secretary • Organized volunteer events at 300 locations and helped serve 4000 collective hours • Organized meetings and took notes; worked closely with advisors and students	Georgetown, DE 2017-2019
Georgetown Youth Group • Did religious things in churches • Organized a soup kitchen every Sunday	Georgetown, DE 2017-2019
VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE	
Georgetown High School Soccer Team Volunteer, 300 hours • Led team of 20 people in practices and games • Planned workouts	Georgetown, DE 2019-Present
Nanticoke Memorial Hospital Food service volunteer • Volunteered over 100 hours over 2 summers • Spoke to patients and families to improve hospital experiences	Seaford, DE 2018-2019
SKILLS AND INTERESTS	
• Proficiencies: Spanish language (fluent); Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint • Volunteerism: St. Louis soccer training camps for children with special needs; hosted Arts Fairs • Interests: Cooking, running, biking	



Performing well in high school



Performing well in high school

1

Academics are important

Take honors classes, AP classes, and stay in AC.
Challenge yourself, and do the best you can.

Performing well in high school

1

Academics are important

Take honors classes, AP classes, and stay in AC.
Challenge yourself, and do the best you can.

2

Get involved in extracurriculars

Colleges care more about depth of involvement than number of clubs, so aim for leadership positions or opportunities to get really involved in things you love.

Performing well in high school

1

Academics are important

Take honors classes, AP classes, and stay in AC. Challenge yourself, and do the best you can.

2

Get involved in extracurriculars

Colleges care more about depth of involvement than number of clubs, so aim for leadership positions or opportunities to get really involved in things you love.

My snapshot:

Student Gov: *Class Pres soph/jr/sr, Reporter freshman*

Band: *President jr/sr years, Treasurer soph*

Drumline: *Captain jr/sr*

Swim Team: *Captain sr*

Honor Society: *VP sr*

Spanish Honor Society: *President sr*

Track

Performing well in high school

1

Academics are important

Take honors classes, AP classes, and stay in AC. Challenge yourself, and do the best you can.

2

Get involved in extracurriculars

Colleges care more about depth of involvement than number of clubs, so aim for leadership positions or opportunities to get really involved in things you love.

3

Take note of your likes and dislikes

What subjects do you like? What types of clubs would you love to continue in college? What could you see yourself doing? This will help choose a college.

My snapshot:

Student Gov: Class Pres soph/jr/sr, Reporter freshman

Band: *President jr/sr years, Treasurer soph*

Drumline: *Captain jr/sr*

Swim Team: *Captain sr*

Honor Society: VP sr

Spanish Honor Society: *Pres sr*

Track

Performing well in high school

1

Academics are important

Take honors classes, AP classes, and stay in AC. Challenge yourself, and do the best you can.

2

Get involved in extracurriculars

Colleges care more about depth of involvement than number of clubs, so aim for leadership positions or opportunities to get really involved in things you love.

3

Take note of your likes and dislikes

What subjects do you like? What types of clubs would you love to continue in college? What could you see yourself doing? This will help choose a college.

4

Be a good person

Colleges will ask you for recommendation letters from teachers, so keep in the back of your mind that people will be vouching for what kind of person you are.

My snapshot:

Student Gov: Class Pres soph/jr/sr, Reporter freshman

Band: *President jr/sr years, Treasurer soph*

Drumline: *Captain jr/sr*

Swim Team: *Captain sr*

Honor Society: VP sr

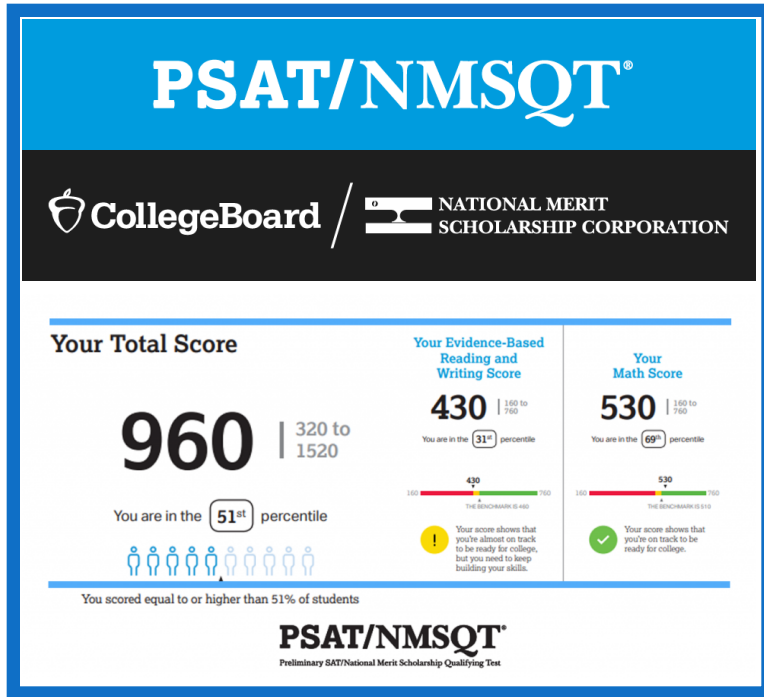
Spanish Honor Society: *Pres sr*

Track



Preparing for exams

Prepare early for the PSAT.



Fall of 10th grade: first time. Just practice.

Fall of 11th grade: you have to opt to take it. This one counts for the National Merit Scholarship (DO THIS)

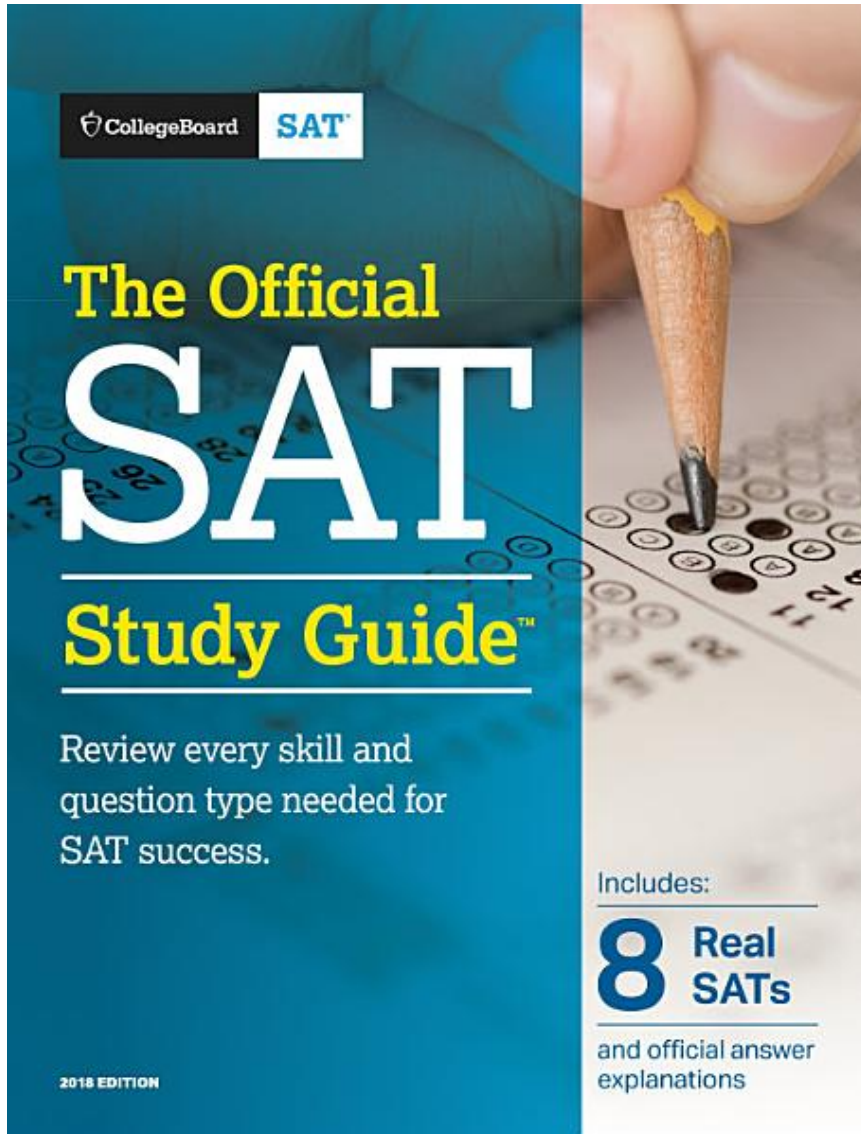
Read up on the exam format.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/inside-the-test>

Try the sample questions on CollegeBoard.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/practice>

Prepare early for the SAT.



Aim to take the SAT twice junior year.

Read up on the exam format.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/inside-the-test>

Try the sample questions on CollegeBoard.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sample-questions>

Khan Academy's free, personalized practice.

https://www.khanacademy.org/sat?utm_source=sat-hp&utm_medium=cb418-link&utm_campaign=practice

Take full-length SAT practice exams in the book.

<https://www.amazon.com/Official-SAT-Study-Guide-2020/dp/1457312190>

Take the exam, and maybe again.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register>

SAT Subject Tests

Mathematics

Learn about the math tests, offered at two levels—and answer practice questions.

- Math Level 1
- Math Level 2

Science

Learn about tests in biology, chemistry, physics—and answer practice questions.

- Biology E/M
- Chemistry
- Physics

English

Learn about the literature test—and answer practice questions.

History

Learn about tests in U.S. and world history—and answer practice questions.

- U.S. History
- World History

Languages

Learn about tests in nine languages—and answer practice questions.

- Spanish
- Spanish with Listening
- French
- French with Listening
- Chinese with Listening
- Italian
- German
- German with Listening
- Modern Hebrew
- Latin
- Japanese with Listening
- Korean with Listening

If applying to certain top schools, aim to take 2 SAT Subject Tests in May/June of junior year.

Read up on which subject tests are right for you:

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat-subject-tests/subjects>

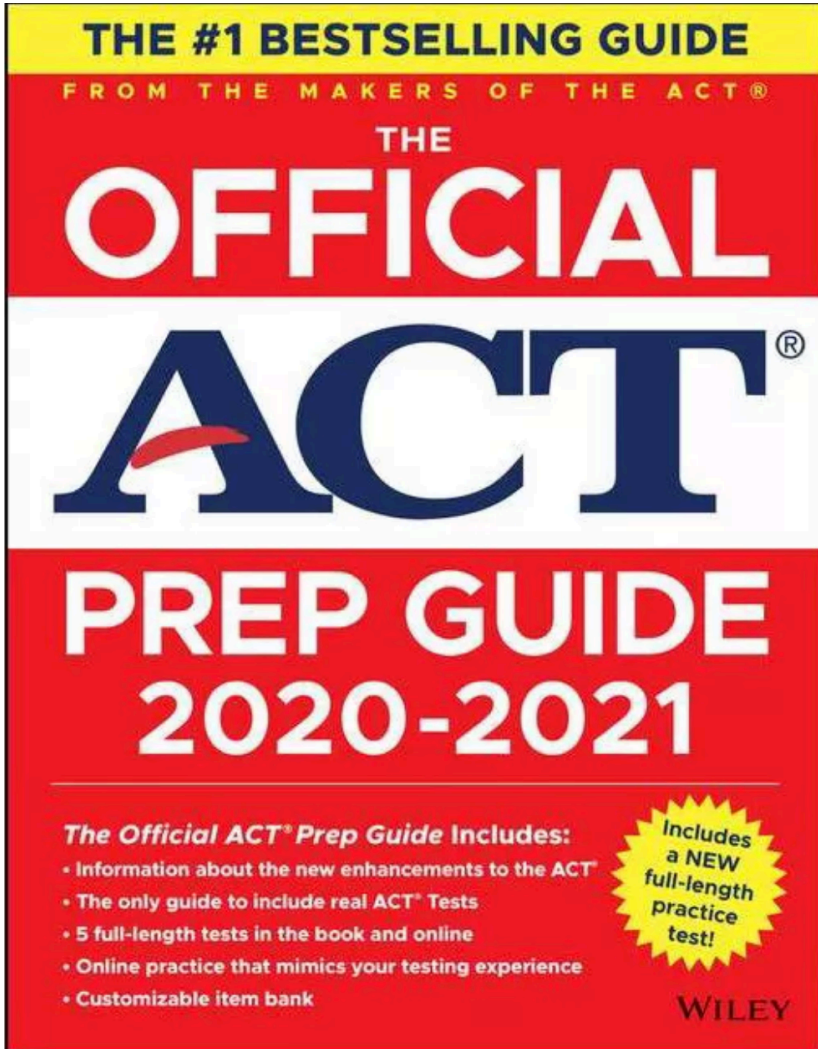
Try the sample questions on CollegeBoard.

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat-subject-tests/subjects>

Register for the subject tests:

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat-subject-tests/subjects>

And/or prepare early for the ACT.



Major difference: The ACT has a science portion and potentially more language arts content.

(If you're super unsure which to take, you could take both and submit your best)

Read up on the exam format.

<http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/Preparing-for-the-ACT.pdf>

Find free practice tests online.

<https://www.kaptest.com/act/free/act-practice>

Take full-length ACT practice exams in the book.

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation/the-official-guide.html>

Take the exam, and maybe again.

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration.html>

Random Tip

Don't pay for NSHSS membership when they advertise to you.

"National Society of High School Scholars" will be sending you spam mail at some point.

It's a scam. Colleges don't want it.

Colleges want good grades, challenging courses, good test scores, strong extracurriculars, and passion.

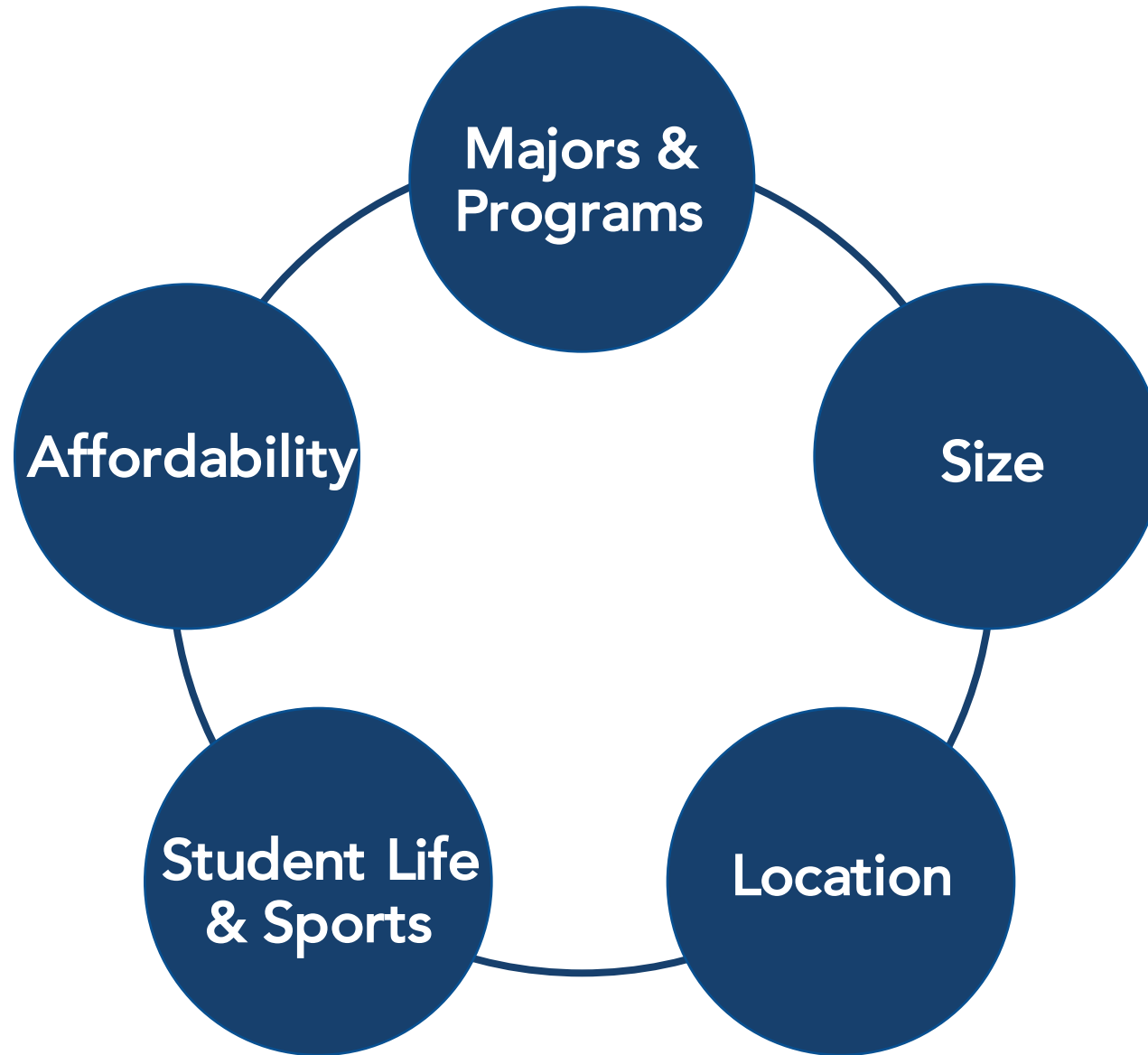
(In general, don't pay a company to tell you that you're a good student)





Researching colleges

Weighing priorities



Searching by Affordability



Merit-based aid

Granted by a school based on your academic achievement, and disregards your financial need.

Top schools for merit-based aid:

<https://blog.collegevine.com/which-colleges-give-out-the-most-merit-aid-a-list-of-the-top-50/>



Need-based aid

Granted by a school based on your family's financial need, based on the FAFSA and other applications.

Top schools for need-based aid:

<https://studentloanhero.com/featured/us-colleges-generous-financial-aid-packages/>

Thinking about majors



How to pick a major:

- What interests you? What do you care about?

Thinking about majors



How to pick a major:

- What interests you? What do you care about?
- Start with job in mind. What major gets you there?
- Start with grad school in mind. What major helps?

Thinking about majors



How to pick a major:

- What interests you? What do you care about?
- Start with job in mind. What major gets you there?
- Start with grad school in mind. What major helps?
- Research a person you admire. What did they study? How did they get there?

Thinking about majors



How to pick a major:

- What interests you? What do you care about?
- Start with job in mind. What major gets you there?
- Start with grad school in mind. What major helps?
- Research a person you admire. What did they study? How did they get there?
- Don't worry: You can probably change it once you get in! You can also add minors to cover other interests.

Searching by Student Life & Sports

Search for lists on Niche.com, USNews.com, and BestColleges.com.

For example, there are lists for things like...

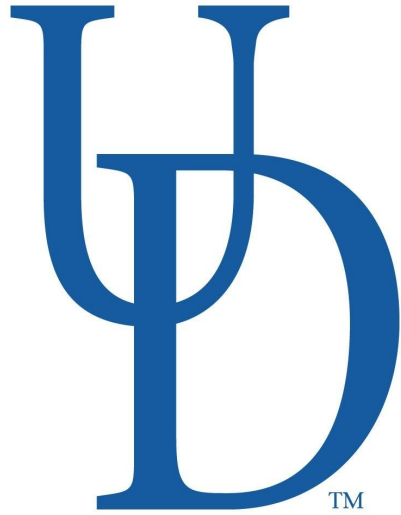
Best colleges for Hispanic students

Best HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges)

Best LGBT friendly colleges

Best college marching bands

Delaware Colleges



Pros:

- Several top programs
- Driving distance from home
- Qualify for in-state tuition
- AC credits
- Qualify for more Delaware scholarships

Ivy League



BROWN

Brown
Providence, RI



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Columbia
New York, NY



Cornell University®

Cornell
Ithaca, NY



Dartmouth

Dartmouth
Hanover, NH



HARVARD
UNIVERSITY

Harvard
Cambridge, MA



Penn

Penn
Philadelphia, PA



PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY

Princeton
Princeton, NJ

Yale

Yale
New Haven, CT

Pros:

- Top programs
- Access to top jobs, grad schools
- Generous financial aid

Top public schools



Univ of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI



UC Berkeley
Berkeley, CA



Univ of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA



Georgia Tech
Atlanta, GA



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

UNC Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC



Univ of Florida
Gainesville, FL



UCLA
Los Angeles, CA

Pros:

- Top programs (comparable to Ivies)
- Access to top jobs, grad schools
- Often good financial aid

Top private (non-Ivy) schools



MIT
Cambridge, MA



Stanford
Stanford, CA



Duke
Durham, NC



RICE

Rice
Houston, TX



Cal Tech
Pasadena, CA



Vanderbilt
Nashville, TN

Northwestern
University

Northwestern
Evanston, IL

Pros:

- Top programs (comparable to Ivies)
- Access to top jobs, grad schools
- Often good financial aid

Military Academies



West Point (Army)

West Point, NY



Naval Academy

Annapolis, MD



Air Force Academy

Colorado Springs, CO



Coast Guard Academy

New London, CT

Pros:

- Top academic programs
- Graduate as an officer
- Financially free (several year commitment to military)

APPLICATIONS START FALL OF JUNIOR YEAR

Appointments required for all except Coast Guard

Searching by Majors and Programs

Look up lists for best colleges for...

[Engineering](#)

[Business](#)

[Education](#)

[Biology](#)

More: niche.com/colleges

Admission Deadlines

Aim to apply to about 5-10 schools.

Early Admission: Around mid October, or November 1

For many private schools, you can only pick one private school to apply early to, and it's binding if you're accepted.

Regular Admission: Around mid to end of December

For all your other applications

Rolling Admission:

Apply ASAP.

APPLY EARLY

after your application window opens
(for financial aid, too)
(without sacrificing quality)

Admission Deadlines

Aim to apply to about 5-10 schools.

Early Admission: Around mid October, or November 1

For many private schools, you can only pick one private school to apply early to, and it's binding if you're accepted.

Regular Admission: Around mid to end of December

For all your other applications

Rolling Admission:

Apply ASAP.

APPLY EARLY

after your application window opens
(for financial aid, too)
(without sacrificing quality)

I applied to: (maybe don't do this many)

Early Action Period:

Harvard (Early Action)
Michigan, Ross School of Biz (Oct)

Regular Decision Period:

UPenn, Wharton School of Biz
UC Berkeley, Haas School of Biz
MIT, Sloan School of Biz
Yale
Swarthmore
Princeton
UCLA
Cornell
Brown
Dartmouth
Columbia
Stanford
Carnegie Mellon
UNC Chapel Hill
UD
UConn
Ohio State
Penn State
Pace

Dream/
Reach

Match/
Safety

Admission Deadlines

Aim to apply to about 5-10 schools.

Early Admission: Around mid October, or November 1

For many private schools, you can only pick one private school to apply early to, and it's binding if you're accepted.

Regular Admission: Around mid to end of December

For all your other applications

Rolling Admission:

Apply ASAP.

APPLY EARLY

after your application window opens
(for financial aid, too)
(without sacrificing quality)

I applied to: (maybe don't do this many)

Early Action Period:

Harvard (Early Action)

Michigan, Ross School of Biz (Oct)

Regular Decision Period:

UPenn, Wharton School of Biz

UC Berkeley, Haas School of Biz

MIT, Sloan School of Biz

Yale

Swarthmore

Princeton

UCLA

Cornell

Brown

Dartmouth

Columbia

Stanford

Carnegie Mellon

UNC Chapel Hill

UD

UConn

Ohio State

Penn State

Pace

Dream/
Reach

Match/
Safety

Who submits what

You submit:

Common App & Essay
College-specific essay(s)
Resume
Supplemental Materials
Financial aid apps, FAFSA
SAT scores

Your teachers/counselors submit:

Transcript, School Profile
Teacher Recommendations
Counselor Recommendation
Mid and End of Year Report

Finding funding



There's lots of money out there.

1

Find a school with great financial aid.

Private, out of state schools sometimes end up being cheaper than in-state schools.

There's lots of money out there.

- 1 Find a school with great financial aid.
Private, out of state schools sometimes end up being cheaper than in-state schools.
- 2 Apply to national scholarship programs.
Like QuestBridge, Coke Scholars, Gates Millennium Scholars

There's lots of money out there.

1

Find a school with great financial aid.

Private, out of state schools sometimes end up being cheaper than in-state schools.

2

Apply to national scholarship programs.

Like QuestBridge, Coke Scholars, Gates Millennium Scholars

3

Apply to Delaware and local scholarships and keep your eyes peeled for small scholarships advertised at your high school.

There's lots of money out there.

- 1 Find a school with great financial aid.
Private, out of state schools sometimes end up being cheaper than in-state schools.
- 2 Apply to national scholarship programs.
Like QuestBridge, Coke Scholars, Gates Millennium Scholars
- 3 Apply to Delaware and local scholarships
and keep your eyes peeled for small scholarships advertised at your high school.
- 4 Consider work study and other jobs in college.

There's lots of money out there.

- 1 Find a school with great financial aid.
Private, out of state schools sometimes end up being cheaper than in-state schools.
- 2 Apply to national scholarship programs.
Like QuestBridge, Coke Scholars, Gates Millennium Scholars
- 3 Apply to Delaware and local scholarships
and keep your eyes peeled for small scholarships advertised at your high school.
- 4 Consider work study and other jobs in college.

Don't let cost keep you from applying to great schools.
There are so many financial aid options!

Delaware and local scholarship programs

Many scholarships are open to underclassmen, too!

Delaware Scholarship Compendium

More tips for scholarship apps:

Google them.
There are a lot
out there.

Check and
keep track of
deadlines.

The earlier,
the better for
applying to
financial aid
programs.

Apply for a lot!
You won't get
them all, so
cast a wide
net.

National scholarship programs (apply fall of senior year)



QuestBridge

Typically for households making less than \$65k.

Preference for strong academics, first-generation and low income students.

Up to full cost of tuition.



Gates Millennium Scholars

For minority (black, Hispanic, Native) students with significant financial need.

Covers unmet need. (Significant \$\$\$)



Coca-Cola Scholars

Merit-based scholarship. On the smaller \$ side, but more attainable than most national scholarships. 1,400 awarded annually.



Burger King McLamore Foundation

Merit-based scholarship (GPA, work experience, extracurricular activities and community service). Potentially large \$ amount, and about 3,400 scholarships given annually.

Scholarships I received

DSEA (\$4000) (For students of DE teachers)

UNICO (\$1000) (Italian heritage organization in DE)

Malleable Minds Scholarship (\$1000) (Delaware Scholarship)

B'nai B'rith Diverse Minds Writing Challenge (\$1000) (Sophomore year!)

VFW Essay Contest, 3rd place (\$1000)

Trinity Foundation (\$1000) (Seaford, DE Scholarship)

Majority: financial aid from Penn

I applied to a lot more than these; these ones worked out.
You won't receive every one you apply to!

YOU'RE GOING TO BE AMAZING.

Contact me: zvarrato@gmail.com