

Springfield Township High School

**Post-Secondary
Planning Guide
2023 -2024**

Student: _____



School District of Springfield Township

Springfield Township High School 1801 East Paper Mill Road Erdenheim, Pennsylvania 19038 215.233.6030

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Dear Class of 2025,

Over the next year we will work closely with you as you plan for life after high school. Whether you are looking to go on to college, the military, and/or vocational training, our goal is to provide you with as much information as possible to assist you as you make this important decision about your future. We encourage you to explore different possibilities and consider all of the options available to you.

We have prepared this guide to help you plan for college. The materials provided to you are Springfield High School's Counseling Department's guidelines and recommendations. Since each student has different goals and needs, we encourage you to meet with your counselor individually. We recommend that you use this resource throughout your junior year, over the summer, and into your senior year. Answers to many of your questions will be found in this guide.

Starting in January, please schedule a meeting with your counselor and parents to discuss your post-secondary plans and to go over the application process.

We understand this process can seem overwhelming but we are here to assist you along the way.

Sincerely,

Ms. Elizabeth Barbone

Mrs. Beth McDonnell

Mr. Bill Shearer

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The College Application Process at STHS

1. Required Forms

- All Forms can be found on the High School Guidance Website under “Required Forms”.
- **Permission to Release Records Form:** Complete this once and submit to guidance
- **High School Activities Sheet:** Complete this once and submit to guidance
- **Transcript Request Form** (specific to you counselor). A google form that must be completed every time you submit a college application. **Turn these in 2 weeks prior to your deadline** to ensure everything is processed by your college on time.
- **Counselor Brag Sheet:** Many colleges require a counselor letter of recommendation, speak to your counselor about getting a letter and complete the brag sheet.

2. Important steps to ensure your applications are complete.

- Log in to Naviance and add the colleges you have applied to (if they are not on the Common Application)
- If you are using the Common Application, you **MUST** link your Common Application with your Naviance account. To do this you must first sign the FERPA waiver on your Common Application. (Go to “My Colleges” in the Common Application, click on “Recommenders and FERPA”. The FERPA instructions and waiver will appear if you have not signed it). Then, log into Naviance and go to “Colleges I’m Applying to” and “Match Accounts” and follow the instructions to match your Naviance and Common Application accounts.
- **Teacher Recommendations:** Log-in to Naviance to request your teacher recommendations using the link on the bottom of the page in “Colleges I’m Applying to” Please make sure teachers are aware of your deadlines.
- **Test Scores:** Visit collegeboard.org or act.org to have scores submitted directly to the colleges (for a fee). **SAT/ACT scores are not reported on the transcript.** Some colleges accept self-reported SAT/ACT scores from the application, check with your college, this will save you \$\$

3. Tips

- Stay Organized, keep track of requirements and deadlines
- Apply early, don’t wait until the last minute
- **DO NOT wait for the transcript or letters of recommendations**, submit your part of the application first, then complete the transcript request form and those will be sent.
- Check your email frequently, your counselor and colleges will contact you for missing information. It is important to stay on top of your applications and to follow up.
- For students who qualify for free/reduced lunch, please see your counselor as you are eligible for college application fee waivers at many colleges.

Getting Organized: A General Timeline

NOVEMBER THROUGH JUNE (JUNIOR YEAR)

- Begin researching colleges, visiting schools, and obtaining information
- Establish a “Colleges I’m Thinking About” list in Naviance
- Meet with your counselor for a post high school planning conference with parents
- Begin taking standardized tests (SAT/ACT)
- Fill out Counselor Brag Sheet, **provide to your counselor before the summer**
- Ask teachers to write recommendation letters, preferably before the summer
- Attend a Spring College Fair visit: www.nationalcollegefairs.org
- Look into applying for a summer enrichment program or internship

SUMMER (BEFORE SENIOR YEAR)

- Continue visiting, gathering information
- Continue to volunteer and stay involved, perhaps attend a summer program or internship
- Narrow down your “Colleges I’m thinking about” (5-7 schools)
- Move “Colleges I’m thinking about” to “Colleges I’m applying to” in Naviance
- Register for account with the Common Application, www.commonapp.org - after 8/1
- Request two teacher letters of recommendation electronically through Naviance after 8/1

FALL/WINTER (SENIOR YEAR)

- Complete Student Activity Sheet & Records Release form, turn into guidance
- Complete Transcript Request Forms-1 for each college
- Register for another SAT/ACT if needed
- Release scores directly from www.collegeboard.org and www.actstudent.org
- Proofread and refine all college essays
- Investigate scholarships, submit applications for any scholarship you can
- Continue to visit colleges and meet with college representatives scheduled at STHS
- Attend Financial Aid Night Presentation
- Find out if your college requires the CSS profile and make sure to meet deadlines
- Maintain your grades, 1st quarter and mid-year grades are often requested from colleges

WINTER/SPRING (SENIOR YEAR)

- Continue to research scholarships and apply
- Complete the FAFSA (typically opens 10/1, change for 2023 only to 1/1)
- ED candidates who get accepted should withdraw their applications from other schools
- Review your acceptances and revisit campuses if necessary
- Talk to your parents, counselor, teachers about making your final decision
- Review financial aid packages thoroughly before deciding
- Notify the college you plan to attend and send a deposit
- Accept the financial aid award letter by following the instructions given by the college

What is Naviance?

Springfield Township High School uses a college and career planning program called Naviance Family Connection. Naviance compiles student data such as GPA, test scores, assessments, and extracurricular activities in one place where it can be accessed by teachers, students, and families in order to make informed decisions as you plan for your future. The use of Naviance is important throughout high school and becomes an integral part of the college process junior year.

Accessing Naviance Family Connection:

- **Website:** <https://www.connection.naviance.com/sdst> or visit the High School Website www.sdst.org and click on the “Naviance” link on the left hand side of the main page
- **User ID and Password:** Username will be your school or personal email and a password that you created. If you need help accessing your Naviance account, contact your counselor to reset your username or password.

Through Naviance at Springfield you will have access to:

- **Official Items:** Weighted GPA, standardized test scores
- **Scholarships & Enrichment Summer Programs:** links to access hundreds of scholarships and opportunities for summer enrichment.
- **College Visit Schedule:** An up-to-date calendar of the college representatives coming to SDST is available on Naviance.
- **Surveys:** Resume writing tool, Student Activity Sheet, and other college & career related surveys that guidance will have students complete throughout high school.
- **Careers:** Starting in 9th grade students complete career surveys in Naviance. If you are struggling to figure out your future goals, meet with your counselor and we can reset some of these surveys for you to try again
- **College Research:** There are various Internet links available to assist in your research as well as College Search links such as:
 - **College search:** Set criteria to conduct your own extensive searches and save your college list.
 - **Super Match:** Find the best fit school for you and add to your college list.
 - **College Look Up:** Provides a basic profile of the college, including a link to its website
 - **College Compare:** Pick two or more colleges and Naviance will produce a table of data based on past SDST applicants to the college you selected.
 - **Scattergrams:** A visual on how SDST students have fared. It plots the average SAT or ACT/GPA of accepted students and compares you.
 - **Much More!** Visit Naviance to begin.

College Admission Testing

Most colleges in the United States require/accept college admission testing. High School grades are the most important measure of your readiness for college level work but college admission test scores, in combination with your high school records, are also an indicator of probable college achievement.

ACT: <http://www.actstudent.org>

The ACT test contains four curriculum-based tests that measure academic achievement in the areas of English, mathematics, reading, and science; as well as an optional Writing Test. There are 215 multiple choice questions and the test takes 2 hours and 55 minutes. All 4-year colleges accept the ACT.

SAT Reasoning Test: <http://www.collegeboard.org>

The SAT Reasoning test was redesigned beginning March 2016. The new test is 3 hours with an optional 50 minute writing portion. The test measures evidence-based reading and writing with a reading test and writing and language test, a math test, and an optional essay. Calculators are permitted for the first math section; the second section does not permit the use of calculators. The new SAT no longer deducts points for wrong answers. The test puts an emphasis on reasoning, the meaning of words in extended contexts, and on how word choice shapes meaning, tone, and impact.

TOEFL: <http://www.ets.org/toefl>

The Test of English as a Foreign Language is used to evaluate the English proficiency of those whose native language is not English. The test consists of four sections: Listening, Structure, Reading, and Writing. Testing is recommended for students at the 11th grade level or above.

Fairtest: <http://www.fairtest.org> -TEST -OPTIONAL

A comprehensive listing of colleges and universities that are test-optional and DO NOT require the SAT's or ACT's for acceptance.

Important Information about testing

- Springfield Township High School CEEB Code: 393515 (list this when registering so that we receive your scores)
- DO NOT change your personal information on the registration from one test to the next or your records could be lost or delayed. DO NOT use nicknames, you must use the same name you use to apply to colleges, the name that appears on your official transcript. See your counselor if you have questions.
- Students with disabilities must have accommodations approved by the testing organization, see your counselor.

ACT/SAT Comparison Chart

	ACT	SAT
Length	3 hours 25 minutes (with writing)	3 hours
Sections	4: English, Math, Reading, Science plus Optional Writing	4: Reading, Writing and Language, Math (2 subsections- with and without calculator)
Scoring	Composite of 36 based on average scores from the first 4 sections. One score 1-36 for each section. Optional writing test score of 0-12.	Total Score range 400-1600. Scale ranging from 200 to 800 for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing; 200 to 800 for Math.
Guessing	No penalty for incorrect answers.	No penalty for incorrect answers.
Score Choice	https://www.act.org/	http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-score-choice
Content	<p>English: 75 questions, 45 minutes. Measures understanding of conventions, standard written English (punctuation, grammar & usage, and sentence structure) as well as rhetorical skills (strategy, organization, style). Spelling vocabulary and rote recall of rules of grammar are NOT tested.</p> <p>Math: 60 questions, 60 minutes designed to assess math skills students typically have acquired in courses taken up to 12th grade. Includes pre-algebra, algebra, coordinate geometry, plane geometry/trigonometry.</p> <p>Reading: 40 questions, 35 minutes. Measures reading comprehension including assessment of skills in areas of reference, reasoning, interpretation or detail, understanding sequence of events, determination of meaning of context-dependent words, phrases & statements, making generalizations, analysis of narrator's voice and method.</p> <p>Science: 40 questions, 35 minutes. Measures interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem solving skills in natural science.</p> <p>Writing (optional): 30 minute essay test that measures writing skills emphasized in English classes & college level composition. Respond to 1 prompt that identifies an issue and two positions.</p>	<p>Reading: 65 minutes, 52 questions. A Reading Test focused on the assessment of students' comprehension and reasoning skills in relation to appropriately challenging prose passages (sometimes paired, or associated with one or more informational graphics) across a range of content areas.</p> <p>Writing & Language: 35 minutes, 44 questions. Focused on the assessment of students' revising and editing skills in the context of extended prose passages (sometimes associated with one or more informational graphics) across a range of content areas.</p> <p>Math: 80 minutes, 55 questions. Problem Solving and Data Analysis, Algebra, and passport to Advanced Math. Problem Solving and Data Analysis is about being. It includes using ratios, percentages, and proportional reasoning to solve problems in science, social science, and career contexts, mastery of linear equations and systems, and familiarity with more complex equations and the manipulation they require. A calculator will be allowed on one of two sections.</p>
Reg. Fee	\$63 without writing, \$88 with writing	\$55
Fee Waiver	http://www.actstudent.org/faq/feewaiver/html	http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-fee-waivers
SSD	http://www.actstudent.org/regist/disab/	http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/for-students-with-disabilities

SAT/ACT General Information and Test Dates

1. Many colleges require that you send your official SAT/ACT/SAT Subject test scores **DIRECTLY** to each college you apply. Go to www.collegeboard.org or www.actstudent.org to send your scores. Many colleges however, are moving toward “self-reported” test scores, see each college’s individual policy regarding test scores since there is a fee associated with sending scores.
2. Students can send your SAT and ACT scores for NO charge to four schools at the time of registration and up to the date of the test. School can receive scores for an additional fee after that date (see respective sites for fees)

2023/2024 SAT Test Dates and Deadlines

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Deadline (late fee)	Given at STHS
November 4, 2023	Oct 5, 2023	Oct 24, 2023	No
December 2, 2023	Nov 2, 2023	Nov 21, 2023	No
March 9, 2024	Feb 23, 2024	Feb 27, 2024	No *
May 4, 2024	April 19, 2024	April 23, 2024	No *
June 1, 2024	May 16, 2024	May 21, 2024	No*

*we are looking into offering the new digital SAT at STHS during a school day in Spring 2024

Additional dates TBD: August and October 2024

2023/2024 ACT Test Dates and Deadlines

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Deadline (late fee)	Given at STHS
October 28, 2023	September 22, 2023	October 6, 2023	YES
December 9, 2023	November 3, 2023	November 17, 2023	No
February 10, 2024	January 5, 2024	January 19, 2024	YES
April 13, 2024	March 10, 2024	March 22, 2024	No
June 8, 2024	May 3, 2024	May 17, 2024	No
July 13, 2024	June 7, 2024	June 21, 2024	No

Additional dates TBD: September 2024

Visit www.collegeboard.org or www.actstudent.org for registration fees, late registration, sending scores, and other general information and fees.

For students who qualify for free/reduced lunch, please see your counselor to inquire about fee waivers, these are also linked to college application fee waivers.

Visit for a comprehensive up to date list of colleges that allow self-reporting of SAT or ACT Scores: <https://www.compassprep.com/self-reporting-test-scores/> (this list is subject to change, always check with the college to confirm accuracy).

Where To Begin

There are over 5,300 colleges and universities in the United States. They are private and public, large and small, urban and rural. Some have religious affiliations, some are specialized and offer technical training.

It is important not to narrow your sights on only one college but rather look at a variety of options and you will find that each one has its own advantages. Think about the following questions before you make a commitment to a college or university. The following questions might help you identify some basic considerations when thinking about colleges:

1. Why are you going to college? What are the alternatives for you?
2. What is your primary concern in choosing a college?
3. What is your prospective major in college? Does the college have this major? How strong is the program?
4. How do you want to spend those four years? (Think about academics, activities, social life, internships, part-time jobs, co-ops, etc.)
5. How far from home do you want to live? Consider the cost of going home- Flying? Train? Bus? This may affect how often you can go home.
6. What kind of people do you want to meet in college? Are you interested in an environment where everyone pursues the same interest or one where they engage in many different studies?
7. Are you interested in living in a suburban, rural, or city setting?
8. What size college are you seeking? Very large? Very small? Somewhere in between?
9. How important will your college social life be to you?
10. How challenging an academic environment are you seeking?

The College Search

1. Use Naviance and/or College Board to search for colleges. Both sites offer colleges search tools to help you search for colleges based on factors that are most important to you

2. Develop a college list, consider some of these factors:

- Location: close to home, specific state, urban, rural, suburban, etc.
- Size: very large, large, medium, small
- Type: public, private, religiously affiliated, HBCU, vocational, 2 yr/4 yr
- Majors offered: do you have a specific career goal or major in mind?
- Special Programs: for learning disabled students, tutoring options, etc.
- Extracurricular activities: ROTC, Theater, Athletics, Music, Community Service, Greek life etc.
- Financial considerations: Will cost influence your decision? Will parents apply for financial aid? Will merit-based scholarships be critical?
- Admission criteria: Your GPA and SAT/ACT scores, do you meet the criteria? Test-optional? Interviews?

3. Meet with your counselor in the spring of junior year for your post-secondary planning meeting. We encourage parents to be a part of this meeting since they are a big part of the planning process.

4. Refine your list to meet your criteria, have at least 1 of the following. See “Glossary of College Admissions Terms” for definitions of each/

- Reach School
- Match School
- Safety School

5. Visit colleges, the best way to know if you’ll like a school is to visit. If you are unable to visit in person, take a virtual tour. It is strongly recommended to visit before you make a final decision. Amtrak offers travel discounts for college visits.

6. Talk to admissions representatives when they visit Springfield

7. Check out college websites and social media accounts

8. Attend College Fairs [2023 Philadelphia National College Fair | College Fair Guide](#)

Campus Visits

No publication or website can give you a complete picture of a college or university. A campus visit is the best way to see for yourself what college is like. Advanced planning with the college admissions office is important to help you make the most of your visit. Most colleges encourage campus visits and provide open houses and tours. Make an appointment by calling the Admissions Office or checking their website.

While on Campus:

- a. Take a tour; check out dorms, the library, student union, or dining hall
- b. Talk to students, but remember they are giving you their own personal views
- c. Some questions to ask students/admissions counselors/tour guides:
 - How large are all of your classes?
 - Who teaches you in these courses? (Graduate assistants or professors?)
 - Does this school have a core curriculum? How restrictive is it?
 - When do you have to declare your major? What are the popular majors?
 - Tell me about housing. Are some dorms much better than others? Do many live off campus? If so, why?
 - Can you tell me anything first-hand about the _____ department?
 - What percentage of students study abroad at some time?
 - What are weekends like? Are there alternatives to the party scene?
 - What do you like best about your experience and education here?
 - Where do students come from? Is this a diverse community?
 - Why did you choose this school? What others did you apply to?
 - What kinds of kids do you think are happiest here? Which ones are least happy?
- d. Visit a class, talk with a faculty member if possible
- e. Read the campus newspaper, check student bulletin boards
- f. Spend the night in the dorm and sit in on several classes.
- g. Meet a coach if you are interested in a sport.
- h. Meet with a Department Chairperson or any faculty member.
- i. Go to the financial aid office and ask questions.
- j. Find out about the quality of the Career Placement Services office.

Can't get on campus? Take a virtual tour on their website or <https://campustours.com/>

Helpful Websites

General Information/College Search

College Board
collegeboard.org

Peterson's Education Planner [Peterson's](#)

PHEAA Education Planner
[EducationPlanner.org](#)

Virtual Campus Tours
www.campustours.com

National Association for College Admission
Counseling: [National Association for College
Admission Counseling \(NACAC\)](#)

College Navigator
<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

Know How 2 Go
<http://www.knowhow2go.org/>

College Data Online College Advisor
<http://collegedata.com/>

College Applications

Common Application
<http://www.commonapp.org>

Coalition Application
[Coalition for College Access](#)

PA State System of Higher Education Schools
passhe.edu

Military

www.myfuture.com

[Today's Military](#)

Testing

SAT & SAT Subject Tests
<https://www.collegeboard.org/>

ACT
ACT.org

Test Optional Colleges
www.fairtest.org

TOEFL
www.toefl.org

Career

Occupational Outlook Handbook
www.bls.gov/ooh

Mapping your future
<http://mappingyourfuture.org>

Financial Aid/Scholarships

Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
Agency (PHEAA): www.pheaa.org

Free Application for Financial Student
Assistance (FAFSA): www.fafsa.gov

US Dept. of Education:
[Department of Education](#)

Fastweb Scholarships:
<http://www.fastweb.com/>

CSS Profile:
<http://www.collegeboard.com>

Others:
www.MySmartBorrowing.org
www.YouCanDealwithIt.com
www.studentloans.gov
www.collegecost.ed.gov/scorecard

Student-Athletes

NCAA: <https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>

NAIA: www.naia.org

Students with Disabilities

National Center for LD
www.nclld.org

Learning Disabilities Online
www.ldonline.org

Assoc for Higher Ed & Disability
www.ahead.org

International Dyslexia Association
www.interdys.org

Wrights Law- LD Rights
www.wrightslaw.com

National Center for College Students with
Disabilities:
<http://www.nccsdonline.org/>

Glossary of Admission Terms

EARLY ACTION

Non-binding plan where you apply to college early (usually around November 1st) and hear back around December 15th. You are NOT obligated to attend and you MAY apply to more than one school under Early Action plans. You can either accept the offer or wait until May 1st to decide. (Some schools have restrictions, check each school's website for details)

RESTRICTIVE EARLY ACTION

A non-binding early application option allows candidates to apply to only one Early Action institution and NO institutions under Early Decision. Admitted students usually have until May 1st to decide, which allows them to compare financial aid awards across institutions.

EARLY DECISION (frequently referred to as ED)

For students who are sure of the college they want to attend. It is understood that when a student applies Early Decision, they are committed to attending that college. The deadline is usually around November of the senior year. This is a binding agreement, therefore if you are accepted under an Early Decision plan, you must withdraw all other applications and enroll at the institution. You can only apply to ONE school under early decision. Some schools have multiple early decision deadlines ED I and ED II.

OPEN ADMISSION

The college admissions policy in which the only criterion for entrance is a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

REGULAR DECISION

Students apply to a college by a specific date and are reviewed after that date. Notification letters are mailed in mid-spring.

ROLLING ADMISSION

An admissions procedure by which the college considers each student's application as soon as all of the required credentials, such as school record and test scores, have been received.

Other Terms

CSS PROFILE

The CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE (often written as CSS PROFILE), short for the College Scholarship Service Profile, is an application distributed by the College Board in the United States allowing college students to apply for financial aid. It is primarily designed to give private member institutions of the College Board a closer look into the finances of a student and family. It is much more detailed than the FAFSA.

FAFSA

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (known as the FAFSA) is a form that can be prepared annually by current and prospective college students (undergraduate and graduate) to determine their eligibility for student financial aid (including the Pell Grant, Federal student loans and Federal Work-Study). Can be completed after October 1st each year.

HONORS PROGRAM

A special program at certain colleges that offers the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acceleration, or any combination of these. The application criteria are more stringent. Some colleges automatically consider you for an honors program, others require an additional/separate application process.

MATCH SCHOOL

Schools where your credentials for admission are similar to those admitted in previous years.

REACH SCHOOL

Colleges where the percentage of admitted students is small. These are often Ivy League Schools and highly selective colleges. A reach also refers to schools where your credentials are not as strong as those students who have been admitted in past years. Your SAT scores/GPA might be lower than the average student accepted in the past.

SAFETY SCHOOL

Schools where your credentials are stronger than most and where you're fairly confident you will be admitted. Keep in mind, it is not a "safety school" if you cannot afford to attend or if you don't want to attend.

STATE AFFILIATED COLLEGES

Universities in Pennsylvania which are statutorily established as an instrumentality of the commonwealth and receive an annual appropriation. There are 4 in Pennsylvania:

Pennsylvania State University, Temple University, Lincoln University & University of Pittsburgh

STATE SCHOOLS

The system comprises 14 state-owned schools called The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). They are the only colleges and universities in Pennsylvania that are publicly owned and governed.

Bloomsburg University, California University, Cheyney University, Clarion University, East Stroudsburg University, Edinboro University, Indiana University, Kutztown University, Lock Haven University, Mansfield University, Millersville University, Shippensburg University, Slippery Rock University, West Chester University.

Factors Involved in the College Admission Process

1. Academic Record/High School Transcript

Your grades, starting in 9th grade, are the best indicator of your ability to complete academic work. Colleges will consider rigor of coursework selected and will look for an upward trend in grades. Colleges evaluate students on the difficulty of their course selection in comparison to the most rigorous curriculum offered and how the student compared with their classmates.

2. Standardized Tests

Most schools require scores from a college admission test, the SAT or ACT. Usually they are not looking for a specific score, but scores that fall in a certain range. Many schools are now test-optional. Reference college admissions policies for standardized testing requirements.

3. Personal Statement/Essay

Most applications request an essay or personal statement. This shows your ability to express yourself and communicate something other than what is found on your application or résumé.

4. High School Standing

The official GPA and class rank is calculated at the end of the junior year based upon final grades in grades 9-11. Extra weight is given to Honors and Advanced Placement courses. Colleges and universities receive this information when transcripts are submitted in the fall of senior year. Mid-year grades and first quarter grades are often requested.

5. Recommendation Letters

Written evaluations by your teachers and counselor are an important part of the evaluation process. They can mention special qualities or circumstances that are not listed anywhere else.

6. Extracurricular Activities & Community Service

Colleges are looking for meaningful extracurricular involvement and leadership development opportunities that compliment your academic profile. Community service, internships, athletics, clubs, research and work experience are all examples of extracurricular activities. .

7. Interview/Audition/Portfolio (if applicable)

Some colleges require an interview, sometimes these are optional. If the interview is optional, strongly consider if this is a strength of yours. Auditions and portfolios might be required for certain majors, check each college's requirements for your major.

8. Number of Applications

Many competitive colleges fill a large percentage of their enrolling class through early admission programs. It is beneficial to apply early to institutions that have a rolling or priority admissions policy.

The Common Application [*Apply to college with Common App | Your future starts here*](#)

The Common Application is the preferred application for almost 900 colleges and universities. Students must create an account for the Common Application and can apply to multiple colleges using the same applications. All member institutions give equal consideration to the Common Application and the college's own application, if they have both. Some member colleges and universities require a supplemental application form in addition to the Common Application.

2023-2024 Common Application Essay Prompts *

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 obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success

The Coalition provides a single platform of online tools to assist in the experience of applying to college. With the Coalition platform, you can find out more about Coalition schools, share your locker with counselors, teachers, and mentors, and submit applications. .

Some Coalition members will exclusively use the Coalition App, while many other Coalition members will accept applications from a number of sources. Admissions offices do not provide preferential treatment to applicants based on which of their approved technological platforms they decide to use to create and submit their application.

For more information & prompts visit: <http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org>

*** These are the previous year's questions and are subject to change from year to year.**

Personal Statement/Essay Writing Tips

1. The best essays are the ones that help Admissions Officers understand your character better, or what factors have influenced your life.
2. Don't write the "safe" essay. Pick a topic that only you can write about. It could be something that others also experienced but make sure to have your own personal take on how it affected you.
3. Think of the essay as a "slice-of-life" rather than a chance to tell your whole life story. Focus on one incident that shows what you are really like.
4. The most effective essays take a small, seemingly insignificant incident and elaborate on it and make it come alive. Avoid the generic and get specific. Don't write that you're well-rounded or that many people have impacted you. Tell the reader what you've done, how you've been influenced and by whom.
5. Keep it positive. You can write about a negative experience, but be careful just make sure you show how you handled it or became a stronger person. Don't complain. If you have endured difficult circumstances, it is appropriate to share your story. But don't point fingers, whine, or sound like you've given up. It's important to demonstrate perseverance and resilience. The better essay will talk about how you have dealt with and hopefully overcome the obstacles presented.
6. The essay is a creative way to express your unique qualities, something that is not already in your application. There is no need to share your participation level (hours per week and weeks per year) because colleges ask for that information on your activity list. Use every opportunity to provide insight into who they are and impress the admissions office. This doesn't mean you can't talk about your extracurricular activities in your essay, but talk about *how* and *why* you're involved in these activities, rather than listing them all.
7. The essay should give insight into your personality and individuality. If you don't get across some aspect of your personality, you haven't written a successful essay.
8. Rather than describing what you're like ("I'm a leader, I'm a great guy"), let it come across in your essay ("show" don't "tell").
9. Find your "voice." This means use a natural conversational style in your writing. The language should sound like you. "Voice" conveys the personality behind your words. As a rule, you might want to steer clear of anything you would feel uncomfortable saying aloud in a class discussion or in a friendly conversation.
10. Directly address the prompt and stick to the subject at hand. Consider the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when* and *why* of the prompt, and once you've written a full draft, make sure you have addressed each one of the parts.

11. Unique essays stand out from the crowd. If the reader wants to drop everything and meet you in person, you've written an excellent essay.
12. Proofread! If you're using the same essay for multiple colleges, avoid using the name of the wrong school. Have someone else proofread before you submit- however, there is nothing more discouraging than an over-edited essay. Most experienced readers can pick out essays where adults have edited and added more sophisticated words that don't sound like you.
13. Don't talk about rankings. Many students love focusing on the numbers when they are writing their "why this college" essay. They believe they are flattering the college by telling them that the reason they want to attend is because the college is highly ranked in *U.S. News & World Report*. Schools are aware of their rankings but they want to know why *you* want to attend.
14. Remember: the essay is only ONE piece of the review process that determines your admission. There are many other factors that are equally, if not, more important.
15. Read the question very carefully. These prompts are not as simple as they appear. Many have layers and sub-questions. Make sure you fully understand the question before answering it.

For more resources on writing your college essay visit:

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/essays>

Preparing for The Interview

When you have your interview:

- o Be on-time, err on the side of being early
- o Dress appropriately (no jeans, t-shirts, sneakers)
- o Be prepared, do research on the school prior to your visit
- o Answer questions to the best of your knowledge, do not be afraid to admit you don't know something
- o Be ready to provide information about SAT/ACT scores, rank, GPA, courses etc.
- o Be yourself and RELAX!
- o Come prepared to ask questions
- o After the interview write a thank you note to your interviewer

Potential Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself
2. Why are you interested in our college?
3. What can I tell you about our college?
4. Who in your life has most influenced you?
5. Why do you want to major in _____?
6. What do you do in your free time?
7. Tell me about a challenge you overcame?
8. What do you see yourself doing in 10 years from now?
9. Does your high school record accurately reflect your effort and ability?
10. If you could do 1 thing differently in high school, what would it be?
11. Can you recommend a good book?
12. How do you plan to get involved on campus, outside of the classroom?
13. What 3 adjectives best describe you?
14. Tell me about your community service.
15. Do you have any questions for us?

Check with the Admissions Offices to find out their interview policies.

Student Athletes

1. Send a letter/email of interest your junior year to coaches at the colleges indicating your interest in their program. Your letter should include:

1. Your interest in the athletic program and your particular sport.
2. That you will be forwarding your application to the admissions office.
3. Your experience in the sport, position, any stats.
4. A list of honors or awards in the sport.
5. List the contact information for anyone who can be contacted regarding your credentials.

Advise them if they will be writing you a recommendation or contacting them in the future on your behalf.

6. Mention your availability for a visit/interview.
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2. Keep detailed records of every meeting with recruiters/coaches.
 3. Prepare an athletic resume.
 4. Check with your high school coach or athletic director on the level of play you should consider and have them make contact on your behalf.
 5. Prepare a highlight video to forward to the coach showcasing athletic skills in a competitive situation. Accompany it with a statistics summary.
 6. At the completion of your junior year, file the NCAA Eligibility form online (for Division I and Division II) at [NCAA Eligibility Center](https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/). At this time, an official transcript of grades 9-11 should be sent to the Eligibility Center from the High School Guidance office. Complete a "Transcript Request Form" before the summer and bring it to your counselor or Mrs. Kane. Remember to also send your **official** SAT or ACT scores to the NCAA by entering the code #9999 as a reporting selection when you register for the exam. Visit <https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/> for all eligibility rules and requirements.

For more information visit:

<https://professionals.collegeboard.org/guidance/prepare/athletes/college>

NCAA Eligibility Requirements

Division I **16 Core-Course Rule**

Division II **16- Core Course Rule**

4 years of English	3 years of English
3 years of mathematics (Algebra I or higher)	2 years of mathematics (Algebra I or higher)
2 years of natural/physical science (including 1 year of lab, if offered)	2 years of natural/physical science (including 1 year of lab, if offered)
1 year of additional English, math OR natural/physical science	3 years of additional English, math OR natural/physical science
2 years of social science	2 years of social science
4 years of additional courses (any area listed above or foreign language or comparative religion/philosophy)	4 years of additional courses (any area listed above or foreign language or comparative religion/philosophy)
Earn a core-course GPA of at least 2.3 to be considered a full qualifier	Earn a core-course GPA of at least a 2.2 to be considered a full qualifier
Ten of the sixteen core courses must be completed before the seventh semester (senior year) of high school. Seven of the ten core courses must be in English, math, or natural/physical science.	
Earn an SAT combined score or ACT sum score matching the core-course GPA on the Division I full qualifier sliding scale.*	Earn an SAT combined score or ACT sum score matching the core-course GPA on the Division II full qualifier sliding scale.*

*For more information and to view sliding scales visit www.eligibilitycenter.org or www.2point3.org

Service Academies

The United States Military Academy (USMA) located in West Point, NY
www.usma.edu

The United States Naval Academy (USNA) located in Annapolis, MD www.usna.edu

The United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA) located in New London, CT
www.uscga.edu/

The United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) located in Kings Point, NY www.usmma.edu/

The United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) located in Colorado Springs, CO
www.usafa.edu

IMPORTANT: The process for applying to any of the service academics begins in the **spring of the junior year.**

1. Visit the academy's website for basic requirements
2. Apply for Nomination: Contact the offices of both U.S. Senators and District Congressmen for procedures on applying for a congressional nomination
3. Complete a Candidate Questionnaire online and start a file with the Academy
4. Take the SAT and/or ACT and send scores electronically (via Collegeboard or ACT)
5. Begin the Academy application process on their website

Requirements will include:

- Medical Exam
- CFA (Candidate Fitness Assessment)
- Teacher evaluations

Admission Criteria for USMMA and CGA are different from USMA, USAFA & USNA. Visit individual websites for admission information.

Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC): A college program offered at more than 1,000 colleges and universities across the United States. They prepare young adults to become officers in the United States Military. In exchange for a paid college education and a guaranteed post-college career, cadets commit to serve in the military after graduation. Interested students should refer to www.todaysmilitary.com and type in ROTC in the search box for additional information.

The deadline for applying for the high school four year scholarship is December 1st of the senior year. Students should contact the ROTC coordinator at the college.

Suggestions for Students with Learning Differences

If you are a student with a documented learning difference (i.e. a professional has evaluated your learning style with diagnostic tools and written a report indicating a learning difference and your school has developed an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 service plan), you have the right by law to accommodations in high school and access to services at the college level. Students must self-disclose learning differences to the Office of Disabilities at the college which **you will attend** in order to receive resources or accommodations.

Most colleges will require current testing within 3-5 years to be provided to their Office of Disabilities after you are accepted to develop a plan for college success. A copy of your current IEP or 504 can be helpful when you meet with the college since it lists certain strategies that have worked for you in the past. However, it is generally NOT sufficient documentation. It is recommended that you contact the Office of Disabilities prior to making a decision on which college you will attend. This should be part of your college research process, as you will need to find the program with the appropriate level of services for you. They vary from school to school.

This information was taken from the U.S. Department of Education's guide, "Students with Disabilities Preparing for Postsecondary Education: Know Your Rights and Responsibilities." You may view this guide at [Transition Guide](#)

A listing of additional web resources for students with disabilities can be found in this booklet under "Helpful Websites."

A selection of colleges with programs for students with learning differences and disabilities (this is not an exhaustive list):

American University (Learning Services Program), Washington D.C.

Beacon Colleges, Florida

Curry College- (PAL Program),
Massachusetts

DePaul University (PLUS Program), Illinois

Landmark University, Vermont

Northeastern University, Massachusetts
(Learning Disabilities Program)

Rochester Institute of Technology
(EMPOWER Program through Academic
Support Center)

University of Arizona- Tucson (SALT
program)

University of Connecticut (Beyond Access
Program now called BOLD)

UMass Dartmouth- Massachusetts (College
NOW/Start Program)

University of Denver- Colorado (Learning
Effectiveness Program)

University of Iowa (REACH program)

Widener University- Pennsylvania
(Academic Coaching)

Financial Aid

1. We encourage everyone to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For the class of 2024, it will open mid-December of 2023. **Note that this is a change from previous years.** The plan is to move back to October 1st for the class of 2025. Even if you do not demonstrate financial need, the FAFSA will establish your eligibility for most federal, state, & institutional aid. Regardless of income, students and parents are eligible for low- interest loans.

2. File financial aid forms early (January/February) since some schools deplete their funds early.

Sources of Financial Aid Available:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1. Federal Government | 2. State Government | 3. Institutional | 4. Private |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------|

Types of Financial Aid

There are two types of financial aid: *merit-based and need-based*. Merit-based aid is offered based on academic, athletic, artistic, or other criteria evaluated in the admission process. There are also many outside organizations that offer awards based on those same criteria as well as community service, character, and leadership qualities. The most common merit awards are college-sponsored scholarships, government-sponsored scholarships, and/or athletic scholarships for talented Division I & II athletes.

Need-based aid is the most common form of financial aid. All colleges and universities require a student to submit a FAFSA to be considered for need-based aid. Some colleges also require their own financial aid forms in addition to the FAFSA. Every family considering applying for need-based financial aid should start to research early in the junior year to determine what their approximate eligibility will be (Student Aid Index, which is replacing the Estimated Family Contribution from previous year). Every college has a net-price calculator on their website to help you understand your final costs.

Forms

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid): A form that is required for everyone seeking federal and state aid. By completing this form, you are applying for all types of Federal and State Aid. The FAFSA can be completed online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Eligibility will be determined within 72 hours. **FILE EARLY!** It is recommended that students and filing-parents create their two FSA IDs **prior** to beginning the FAFSA. Visit <http://fsaid.ed.gov> for more information.

CSS Profile: Offered by the College Scholarship Service (CSS) through the College Board and must be filed online at <http://student.collegeboard.org/profile>. You can also find a list of colleges

that require the profile on that page. The profile is used by scholarship programs to award private funds. **You may file the Profile starting October 1st.** Check the deadlines at your colleges and file no later than two weeks before your earliest deadline specified by your colleges or programs.

Important Telephone Numbers/Websites

Pennsylvania State Grant/Loan Division (PHEAA) (800)692-7392 or www.pheaa.org

Federal Student Programs (FAFSA) (800)422-3243 or www.fafsa.ed.gov

CSS Profile Information (305) 829-9793 or www.collegeboard.org

Financial Aid Resources

PHEAA.org: PHEAA'S main website for financial aid information, funding, higher education; students can create accounts, complete forms, check program status, and more. Like PHEAA on Facebook (facebook.com/pheaa.aid) to get additional student aid tips and financial aid information.

EducationPlanner.org: Premier college and career-planning website, national college search, college admission and decision guidance, financial aid information, calculators for EFC and loan repayment, free scholarship search, and much more.

MySmartBorrowing.org: See how choices related to career, college and level of borrowing can impact overall debt and monthly payments when it's time to repay educational loans.

YouCanDealWithIt.com: Learn how to manage money, student loans, budget, and credit cards.

MyFedLoan.org: PHEAA conducts its student loan servicing operations for federally-owned loans as FedLoan Servicing. Students with loans serviced by FedLoan Servicing can create an account, manage student loans, learn about repayment and deferment options, and get forms and student loan information.

aesSuccess.org: PHEAA conducts its student loan servicing operations commercially as American Education Services (AES). Students with loans serviced by AES can create an account, manage student loans, learn about repayment, deferments, etc., and get forms and student loan information.

Pasfaa.org: Professional financial aid administrator's website; information on financial aid, colleges, debt management, and many other resources.

Studentaid.ed.gov: U.S. Department of Education web portal for information on preparing and funding education beyond high school.

FAFSA.gov: Official site for completing the FAFSA online, checking status of FAFSA and making corrections.

StudentLoans.gov: Official site for applying for federal student and parent loans and completing required entrance and exit counseling.

Nslds.ed.gov: Site for students to access information about their student loans and other federal student aid programs.

FSaid.ed.gov: Official site for students and parents to obtain the necessary Personal Identification Number (FSA ID) used to sign FAFSA and loan documents online.

Sources of Aid

Federal Government: [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov)

- o The federal government offers a variety of grants, work-study, and loan programs.
- o Federal programs include both need-based and non-need based financial aid.
- o Many federal programs are administered through colleges, check with your financial aid officer of eligibility and application information.

State Government: www.pheaa.org

- o Many states offer a variety of financial aid programs.
- o Eligibility is usually restricted to state residents or students attending institutions in state.
- o Contact your financial aid officer of PHEAA reps for info on how to apply for state aid.

Colleges/Universities

- o Colleges and universities often offer their own scholarship, grant, and loan programs to supplement federal and state aid.
- o Higher cost private colleges are more likely to have additional aid available.
- o Financial aid officers can tell you what college based programs you are eligible for.

Private Sources

- o Many organizations offer scholarships or loans to members and their families only. These include financial organizations, banks, savings & loans associations, churches, community groups, professional associations, hobby groups, and any group to which you or your family belongs.
- o Many businesses offer loans or educational allowances to employees and their families. Check with your parent's employee benefits departments.

Scholarship Research

Scholarships are generally based on need, merit, service, citizenship, athletic ability, or a talent.

1. Scholarships are updated regularly on Naviance, students must log in to Naviance to see these
2. Visit college websites and search for available scholarships. Contact the Financial Aid offices at the universities you are applying to and inquire what types of scholarship are available.
3. Start searching for scholarships early, most are available between September and June of the senior year, but there are some available for Juniors.
4. The Common Application now has scholarship information.

Additional Scholarship Searches:

Bigfuture.collegeboard.org: Free Scholarship search

blackexcel.org: Free minority scholarship search

Finaid.org: Information about scholarship process, financial aid, scholarship scams and more

Fastweb.com: Free scholarship search

Going Merry <https://www.goingmerry.com/> Free scholarship search engine

Hsf.net: Hispanic Scholarship Fund

Scholly <https://myscholly.com/> App and scholarship search engine