High School Preparations

Required/Recommended Courses

Courses taken in high school can advance you toward your career goal. Each course, including electives, is taken as part of a total curriculum plan. Start at the beginning of secondary school by thinking about your academic plan and what colleges or vocational training may interest you.

Consider applying to more than one college, including your dream colleges. Many colleges desire a diverse student body and will pursue students coming from outside the country. Sometimes, overseas students have advantages, especially in foreign languages, which students in the United States (US) may not have.

Requirements vary from college to college and state to state; therefore, check the admission requirements of the colleges of your choice. Most colleges recommend taking the following courses:

- 4 units of English
- 3-4 units of mathematics (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II)
- 2-3 units of the same foreign language
- 3-4 units of laboratory science—one of which must be a life science (Biology)
- 2-3 units of history, geography, government—one of which must be US history if you plan to attend college in the US

Strongly suggested electives:

- Advanced English, Composition, English Literature, World Literature, World Drama. Additional sciences, including advanced Biology, Chemistry, Physics
- Advanced mathematics—Algebra III, Trigonometry, Analysis, Precalculus, Calculus, Computer courses/Technology
- Economics, Statistics, Psychology, Communications, etc.
- Physical Education
- Visual & Performing Arts

Taking Advanced Placement (AP) classes is recommended; however, test scores may be credited differently depending on the university. (See also the section about CLEP tests. For more information, check this link: Thrive in High School – BigFuture | College Board

NOTE: Students completing A-levels will usually have the needed high school credits for entering a US college. They may also receive college credit toward a US degree.)

High School Planning Calendar **(Adjusted for living overseas)**

(for those interested in attending college in the US) *by Lyn Shingledecker-Wheeler*

Freshman Year (Grade 9):

- Talk to your principal/director, teachers, or guidance counselor about the credits you will need to graduate and extracurricular activities that can be beneficial for college applications or job interviews in the future.
- Keeping up your grades is important for the college admissions process.

Sophomore Year (Grade 10):

- Take the practice PSAT (preliminary test to the SAT). Check with your school to see where the tests are offered. If your school does not offer them, contact another school in the area or the US embassy to find out if they do.
- Talk to the school/guidance counselor or principal about college options and specific college entrance requirements. You can check specific college websites to get a sampling of requirements.
- If your high school offers AP (Advanced Placement) classes, consider taking them. You can get college credit if you make a qualifying grade on the final test.
- Talk to older TCKs about their university experience when they come to visit.

Junior Year (Grade 11):

- Check to see if the college(s) you plan to attend currently require the SAT or ACT. (This link may help: ACT/SAT Optional List - (Fairtest.) If so, plan to take the PSAT, SAT/SAT Subject Tests, and ACT during this year.
- Consider which colleges you would like those test scores sent to, and check college websites to familiarize yourself with the colleges.
- Research colleges of interest online, as well as scholarship and financial aid information.
- If you want to improve your SAT or ACT scores, you can retake them. Online prep tests can help, too.
- Check out college applications online at the end of the year so you can apply by the beginning of your senior year. If you know where you want to go, apply early since some colleges will wave application fees before a given date.

Senior Year (Grade 12):

- Fill out the FAFSA - Free Application for Federal Student Aid (if applicable) and apply for scholarships and grants.
- If the college you plan to attend requires the SAT or ACT, and you have not taken the SAT/SAT Subject Tests or ACT, do it in the beginning of your senior year.
- Fill out your applications and submit them during the first semester or trimester.
- Once you have received responses from the colleges you have applied to, decide where you will go and advise the college so they can send you additional information. Notify the other colleges of your decision.

Parents:

- Visit college campuses during home leave, even if you think it is a little early in your child's secondary school career.
- Encourage your child to participate in extracurricular activities and/or to get a part-time job.
- If possible, have your child spend a summer in the country where he or she plans to attend college
- In order to work, help your teen get a driver's license, open a bank account, etc., as well as start the acculturation process.
- Do a practice run on the FAFSA during your child's junior year to get familiar with questions and information you need to complete the form. You can fill out and submit the FAFSA form in the first half of your child's senior year.
- Pursue resources available at the school or online to help your student with the decision process.

NOTE: Grades refer to the US school system.

Achievement Tests (PSAT/PSAT 10, SAT, and ACT)

Information about the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholar Qualifying Test), the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), and the SAT Subject Tests can be found by accessing the College Board. There is also a PSAT 8/9, which eighth and ninth graders can take to familiarize themselves with the exam and what topics they may need to study to improve future scores. Here is an overview of the assessments in a PDF: sat-suite-of-assessments-overview-brochure.pdf

The ACT (American College Testing Program) can be accessed at http://www.act.org.

The tests can be taken in many US embassies and consulates, plus at many international schools. The redesigned PSAT is a 2-hour, 14-minute test broken up into

two basic areas. They are Reading & Writing and Math. Taking the PSAT can be good practice for taking the SAT.

The PSAT is taken your junior year to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Program. (Even if you take the PSAT your sophomore year [grade 10], you must retake it in grade 11.) If you score well enough, this program can help with scholarships. To participate in the Merit Program, a student must be planning to go to college no later than the fall following completion of high school. You must also be a US citizen, a permanent US resident (or applying to become one), or be in the process of becoming a US citizen.

In the spring of 2024, the SAT is completely digital and designed to take two hours. There are two components that each contain two modules – Reading and Writing and Math. Most questions are multiple choice, although there are some math questions where the student enters the answer. There is no penalty for guessing; however, if the student is unsure of the answer, it is better to guess than leave it blank.

The ACT takes almost three hours and consists of four multiple-choice question tests—one each in English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. The ACT Writing Test is a 30-minute exam. Students are only required to take the ACT Writing Test if they need it for the college they plan to attend. Only computer-based testing is available internationally. Contact prospective colleges for further details.

The PreACT test is directed at sophomores. Much like the PSAT 8/9 or PSAT 10, the PreACT allows students to see what it will be like to take the ACT test before they actually have to take it.

When registering for the SAT or ACT, you should request that the scores be sent to the colleges of your choice. Otherwise, the scores will not be sent to any. Usually, the first four colleges are included in the registration fee, with additional charges for each additional college.

For more on how scoring will work in the digital format, check this link: Digital SAT Scores: Everything You Need to Know

College Prep Tests Online

Prior to taking a test, it can help to review or take some sample assessments to prepare for the actual tests. Below are some online prep programs:

Preparing for the PSAT/NMSQT – SAT Suite | College Board
Maximize your score with free Official Digital SAT ® Prep

Downloadable Full-Length SAT Practice Tests
Preparing for the ACT with Practice Test

Helps for Students with Disabilities

In the US, the College Board offers help in taking the PSAT, SAT, and AP tests for students with disabilities. Information can be found at College Board Accommodations. The SSD Online Disabilities Accommodation Management System was created for students to submit and track their accommodation requests for exams. This can also include temporary conditions like a broken arm. Follow the link above.

Some of the disabilities are listed below:

- Blindness/Vision problems
- Learning disabilities
- Deafness/Hard of hearing
- Certain medical conditions
- AD/HD (formerly known as ADD/ADHD)
- Physical challenges

Learning Disabilities Resources

Kravets, Marybeth and Wax, Amy, ***K & W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities***, 16th Edition, Princeton Review, 2023.

Hamblet, Elizabeth, ***Seven Steps to College Success: A Pathway for Students with Disabilities,*** Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2024.

LaRoque, Perry, ***Taking Flight: The Guide to College for Diverse Learners and Non-Traditional Students,*** Morgan James Publishing, 2020.

Simpson, Cynthia and Spencer, Vicky, ***College Success for Students with Learning Disabilities: Strategies and Tips for Making the Most of Your College Experience,*** Prufrock Press, 2020.

Study Skills

Learning new skills related to studying, note taking, and test taking can be very helpful for students of any age. Here are some helpful web resources that encompass topics like time management, improving listening, reading, and note-taking skills, plus helpful hints about how to reduce test anxiety or writing basics.

Study Skills - includes study prep ideas, improving skills in listening, reading, and note-taking

Homework Center: Study Skills - includes information on taking notes, reading textbooks, and taking tests

VARK Learning - Includes a brief survey to help determine learning styles matched with study skills

Resources for Homeschooling Students

With the increasing number of homeschoolers both in North America and around the world, there has been a growing awareness at the university level as more and more homeschooling students are applying for both scholarships and advanced education. Below are some resources that may be helpful as homeschooling families prepare for college and beyond.

Newsletters:

Homeschool.com
Homeschooling Today
Practical Homeschooling

Books:

Binz, Lee, ***Essential Electives for Homeschooling High School: How to Craft Courses That Exceed College Expectations***, Independent Publishing Platform, 2019.

Boiko, Denise, ***Homeschooled & Headed for College: Your Road Map for a Successful Journey,*** Independent Publishing, 2019.

*DeRosa, Jennifer Cook, ***Homeschooling for College Credit: A Parent's Guide to Resourceful High School Planning***. CreateSpace, 2018.

Sproger, Betsy, ***Homeschooling High School with College in Mind: 2nd Edition***, Independent Publishing, 2019.

Websites:

Home School Legal Defense Association: HSLDA

Colleges That Admit Homeschoolers:

Homeschool Friendly Colleges - Directory by State
Colleges That Admit Homeschoolers FAQ (Learn in Freedom)

GED (General Educational Development)

The GED test can be used as a diploma equivalent for secondary school. The 2014 GED is the latest version of the test, contains four sections, and is seven and a half hours long. The four sections are Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science, and Social Studies. A student must pass all tests in order to receive a secondary school diploma. The tests can be taken one at a time. The cost varies depending on online or in-person. There are 3,400 testing centers worldwide. It is also available in Spanish and Braille. Contact information: GED, e-mail: help@GEDtestingservice.com, phone: 1-877-392-6433.

Advanced Placement Courses and Tests / AP International Diploma

College credits can be earned by taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high schools where they are offered and by passing the tests given at accredited testing sites. Currently, the AP program offers 42 courses. More than 90 percent of US colleges and universities grant credit for incoming students who have qualifying AP exam grades. For more information, see AP College Board. The AP cost is $99 per test. Public high schools in the US will sometimes waive their rebate. Outside of the US, the cost starts at $129.

AP International Diploma for Overseas Study (APID)

AP International Diploma

“The AP International Diploma for Overseas Study (APID) certifies the achievement of successful AP candidates and is designed for students whose higher education plans include the prospect of enrolling in a university outside the US or Canada. Approximately 300 universities

internationally accept AP grades in their admissions process. AP courses are offered in a variety of schools in 80 countries.

“To qualify for the APID, you must earn AP grades of 3 or higher on AP exams for five or more full-year courses (or the equivalent number of half-year courses) during your high-school career, encompassing three of the five academic areas below. You must

take a total of two exams in two different languages from Area I*, one exam from Area II or Area III, and one or more exams from any other area not already selected.

As of May 2006, five AP exam grades of 3 or higher are required for the diploma. Also, the APID candidates must include among their five courses and exams one of the AP Global Perspective exams: AP World History, AP Human Geography, or AP Government and Politics: Comparative.

The following are the four new Areas (reduced from five) and the number of exams:

Area I: Languages (select two exams from different languages including English and/or world languages)—English Language & Composition, English Literature & Composition, French Language & Culture, French Literature, German Language & Culture, Spanish Language & Culture, Spanish Literature & Culture, Italian Language & Culture, Chinese Language & Culture, Japa- nese Language & Culture.

Area II: Global Perspectives (select one from this category) — Comparative Government and Politics, Human Geography, World History, Art History, Environmental Science, Macroeconomics.

Area III: Sciences or Mathematics (select one exam from this category)—Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Statistics, Computer Science A, Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Physics 1, Physics 2, Physics C: Mechanics, Physics C: Electricity & Magnetism.

Area IV: History, Social Sciences, and Arts (one or two additional exams from any content area except English and world languages)—Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, US History, Euro- pean History, US Government & Politics, Psychology, Comparative Government and Politics, Human Geography, Art History, Latin, Latin Literature, Latin: Vergil, Music Theory, Studio Art– Drawing, Studio Art: 2-D Design, Studio Art: 3-D Design, Math & Computer Sciences (see list above), Sciences (see list above). In 2015, AP Seminar was added, and AP Research was added in 2016. (For more information, see AP Capstone below.)

If you successfully qualify for the APID and are living outside the US, you will automatically receive your diploma shortly after your exam grades have been processed. If you are living within the US and qualify for the diploma, you will automatically receive your certificate if you request that your AP grades be submitted to a university outside the US. However, if you send your AP grades to universities outside the US before being identified as an APID award recipient, you will be responsible for notifying those universities about your diploma.

*If you are fluent in a language that is not among those offered by the AP Program, you may still qualify for an AP International Diploma. In such a case, your school should fax a letter to AP Services (1-609-530-0482) certifying your college-level mastery of the other language. You must then take one exam from Area I, one exam from Area II or III, and two or more exams from any other area—one of which must be from an area not already selected." ~ College Board Questions can be emailed to international@collegeboard.org.

Note: The APID Honors Option is no longer available.

New: The AP | Cambridge Capstone Program and Credential – a new program has been developed separately from the APID to help students develop a stronger background in independent research, collaborative teamwork, and 21st-century knowledge and skills. For more information, follow this link: https://aphighered.collegeboard.org/exams/ap-capstone.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

International Baccalaureate (IB) is a non-profit educational foundation created in 1968 and is based in Geneva, Switzerland. It offers programs for primary (ages 3-12), middle years (ages 11- 16), and diploma (ages 16-19). These programs are currently offered in more than 5,000 schools in 150+ countries. IB schools include state, public, private, and international schools that have met certain requirements. It is designed for highly motivated and academic students who hope to attend university.

Six major areas are studied – cultures, history, artistic expression, plus political, economic, and belief systems of the world. Exams are given in each area. Scores range from 1 (low) to 7 (high) for those who are enrolled in the diploma program. Some universities give credit for scores of 4 and above. An IB diploma is recognized around the world and is usually sufficient for entrance into a variety of universities. For more information, check their website at http://www.ibo.org/.

CLEP

CLEP (College-Level Examination Program) tests cover material usually taught in freshman and sophomore-level college courses. These are much like AP tests, except that with these exams you can earn college credit without taking the actual course. The CLEP is sponsored by the College Board (CLEP); however, the College Board cannot award college credit for these tests. Individual colleges evaluate the exam score, assign

between 3-12 credit hours per exam, and then record those credits on your permanent transcript. Around 2,900 colleges give credit for the CLEP exams.

The tests are multiple choice and last for 90 minutes. (For language tests, there may be two parts—one written and one listening.) There are 2000+ testing sites located at junior/community colleges and public universities. Contact the closest college to learn testing times and to register, or check the following website: test centers. CLEP costs: $97, plus a possible registration fee depending on the testing site. Check here for a listing of different test subjects: https://clep.collegeboard.org/clep-exams. E-mail: CLEP@info.collegeboard.org or phone: 1-800-257-9558 (toll-free in the US), PO Box 6600, Princeton, NJ 08541-6600.

NOTE: Some colleges may give credit for other foreign languages for which there are no CLEP tests. Check with your college to find out if they are willing to make such accommodations. (back to original section)

Modern States

Modern States, the New York-based charitable organization behind the effort, has funded production of online courses taught by college professors. The courses prepare students for introductory College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams in Economics, Sociology, Algebra, and other areas. Also, Modern States is paying the CLEP exam fee and scheduling fee for students who enroll in the courses and take the exams. The benefit for participating institutions is that this creates a free on-ramp to college that facilitates learning and earning credits. Modern States

DANTE (DSST)

DSST (DANTES Subject Standardized Tests) also provides an opportunity for students to obtain college credit. Test subjects are included in the areas of Business, Physical Science, Humanities, Social Science, and Applied Technology. Tests in 30+ subjects may be taken at military installations and some colleges/universities. It takes about two hours to complete an exam. There are over 1,500 colleges and universities that recognize the DSST program. For more information, check the website DSST or e-mail: getcollegecredit@prometric.com or phone: 1-877-471-9860. Each test costs $100, and most testing centers charge an administrative fee as well. Military personnel can apply for reimbursement for the fee.

Career Guidance and Assessments

Taking a career assessment may be beneficial for students who are evaluating their interests, skills, and future career options. Consider contacting the guidance counselor at your school to see what information is available. It can be very helpful to go over the results of any assessment with a guidance counselor or someone trained in giving these types of assessments to see how you can use the results and what your next step should be in pursuing education or a career. There are also alternatives mentioned below that you can do yourself online or by ordering workbooks to do independently.

- ***Career Direct* Guidance System** (Larry Burkett): online assessment Career Direct
- **The Career Key:** Career Key (online assessment)
- ***Find Your Fit Discovery Workbook: Discover Your Unique Design*** (for teens) by Jane Kise & Kevin Johnson, Karen Eiler, Bethany House, 2018. (price may vary)
- **Flag Page:** Flag Page ($24.99 for an online assessment about personality, talents, and identifying what you like to do)
- **Highlands Program:** The Highlands Company (price varies depending on the provider of the exam)
- **John Holland's SDS (Self-Directed Search)**: Self-Directed Search (available online and uses Holland codes; a report is emailed back to you.)
- **Keirsey Character Sorter/Temperament Sorter:** Keirsey (It requires a login with an email address to take the assessment. It has other helpful information about different temperament styles.)
- ***Life Keys:*** *Discover Who You Are*, Jane Kise, David Stark, & Sandra Krebs Hirsh, Bethany House, 2005. (can be purchased on Amazon.com)
- **Personality Type:** TypeCoach (a short Myers-Briggs version)
- ***What Color is Your Parachute?*** (online): Job Hunters Bible (has many links) (book version updated periodically by Richard Bolles)