

TESTS FOR COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS

PSAT*(Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)

The PSAT/NMSQT, a short form of the SAT, measures critical reading, mathematical problem solving, and writing skills. It serves four purposes:

- allows students to compare their academic abilities with other college-bound students at their specific grade level;
- familiarizes students with the SAT;
- allows college-bound juniors to compete for National Merit Scholarships when taken as a junior; and
- identifies potential success in AP courses for sophomores and juniors through “AP Potential”.

The test is offered only in October and should be taken by juniors who wish to qualify for NMSQT.

To make the best possible use of PSAT/NMSQT results, review the “Report of Student Answers” to determine how you performed on each type of question. Noting the kinds of mistakes made can help you identify your areas of weakness and assist you in planning SAT preparation. Review your potential success in AP courses through AP Potential. www.collegeboard.org.

COLLEGE ADMISSION TESTS

Different colleges require different admission tests. To find out which tests are required, you should check the catalogs of any colleges to which you plan to apply. Most colleges require the scores of the SAT or ACT. Both of these should be taken in the spring of your junior year to determine which test best suits your testing style.

Register for the tests online at www.act.org or www.collegeboard.org. It is your responsibility to have your scores sent directly to the colleges of your choice from the testing agency.

SAT Reasoning Test

Many two and four-year colleges require SAT scores as part of their admissions requirement. The SAT Reasoning Test is a measure of the critical thinking skills you’ll need for academic success in college. The SAT assesses how well you analyze and solve problems—skills you learned in school that you’ll need in college. The SAT is typically taken by high school juniors and seniors. Each section of the SAT is scored on a scale of 200—800, with two writing subscores for multiple-choice and the essay.

The admission score varies among the colleges. If you plan to attend college, you are encouraged to take the test in the spring of the junior year. If you do not earn the score needed for the colleges you are considering, you may take the SAT again during your senior year. If you are applying to a military academy, you must take the SAT in your junior year. The SAT is given seven times a year and the ACT is given six times a year at a number of test centers in the area. The SAT Reasoning Test includes a Writing section. www.collegeboard.org.

ACT

Many two and four year colleges require ACT scores as part of their admissions requirement. The ACT assessment covers four subject areas: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning. The scores are reported for each subject area plus a composite score. The composite score ranges from 1-36 with 18 being average. Sub scoring range from 1-18. The admission score varies among the colleges. The ACT is offered six times a year. It is recommended that students take the test near the end of the junior year preferably in June right after having studied for your final exams. www.act.org.

TSIA (Texas Success Initiative Assessment)

Currently, TSIA is required for admission to any Texas public college or university.

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION TEST PREP INFORMATION

Online Test Prep:

Naviance Family Connection – Study for SAT/ACT using Method Test Prep – An online course that will help you build your math, reading, writing, and SAT/ACT test prep skills. Through your school’s Naviance Family Connection site, you will be able to complete the course and track all of the work you complete. Method Test Prep uses proven strategies that are clear and easy to understand for any type of learner and students have seen measurable progress using the course.

CCISD provides the Testing & Education Reference Center, an online program which will allow students to take practice tests for the TAKS, PSAT, SAT, ACT and AP exams. The program also provides information on scholarships, colleges, and careers. Students can learn valuable test-taking tips and discover their academic strengths and weaknesses. Go to www.ccisd.net. From Quick Links, choose Library@CCISD, then Testing & Education Reference Center on dropdown menu for Online Resources. Please talk to your school librarian for assistance or questions.

WAIVER OF FEES

FP (Local)

Upon receipt by the District of reliable proof that a student and his or her parent or guardian are unable to pay a fee or deposit required by the school, such fee or deposit shall be waived. Such student and his or her parent or guardian must present evidence of their inability to pay to the appropriate principal who shall determine eligibility for a fee waiver.

COLLEGE CREDIT AND PLACEMENT TESTS

SAT Subject Test

Many colleges require the scores of two or more College Board SAT Subject Tests as part of the admissions process. These tests are one-hour multiple choice tests that measure the student’s knowledge of a particular subject and his/her ability to apply that knowledge. The SAT Subject Tests are used by some colleges for placement. These tests are offered in several subject areas. You should take the appropriate test at the completion of the course. Any student considering taking the SAT Subject Tests should refer to a college catalog. www.collegeboard.org.

AP (Advanced Placement) Examinations

Advanced Placement Examinations are based upon college-level courses taught in high school. They may enable the student to receive college credit, advanced placement, or both. Scores are reported on a five-point scale, with five being the highest score. A score of three or better is acceptable for advanced placement and college credit by most colleges. By exempting several freshman-level courses in this way, a student may realize substantial savings in college costs. All students enrolled in AP courses are expected to take the AP exams. www.collegeboard.org. Registration is typically held in March and exams are taken in May.

CLEP (College Level Examination Program)

CLEP provides an opportunity for individuals who have acquired certain knowledge outside the traditional classroom to earn college credit by examination. The scores range from 200-800. Some colleges give credit for scores above 500, enabling students to skip certain courses. Before participating in the program, you should check the policy of the prospective college regarding the granting of CLEP credit and consult your high school counselor. www.collegeboard.org.

Dual Credit

See Dual Credit section beginning on page 81.

TESTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities should contact their campus diagnostician, special education department or campus 504 coordinator at least 12 weeks prior to registering for any higher education assessment to discuss possible accommodations which may be available based on documented ARD or 504 recommendations. School documentation may or may not meet required eligibility criteria and is determined by the appropriate testing organization.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS

Academic Achievement Record (AAR): An AAR (transcript) is a copy of a student's high school record. This document includes TAKS, SAT, ACT, and AP scores. Test scores will not be sent without written permission from student or parent. It must be mailed directly to the college admissions office from the high school. Students must make a request for the AAR to be mailed.

A final AAR is a copy of the student's record that identifies the student as having graduated. The student must inform the office if and where a final transcript is to be sent.

Admission Testing: The two major testing programs that are utilized for admission purposes are: (1) the SAT; and (2) the ACT. You should consult the individual college catalog to determine which test is required. It is your responsibility to have your scores sent directly from the testing agency to the college(s) of your choice.

Advanced Placement: College-level courses taught as a part of the high school curriculum are called Advanced Placement courses. Once you complete an Advanced Placement course, you may elect to take the AP exam. Depending on your score, you may be awarded college credit and/or assignment to an advanced course at the institution you choose to attend.

College Application: A college application is required by every college. It can be as simple as requiring only your name, address, telephone number, and the term you desire admittance, or as complex as one that requires detailed information such as references, letters of recommendation, essays and/or an autobiographical sketch.

While many colleges prefer that students apply online to their schools, applications may be typed or printed in dark ink and mailed. Many require a fee. You should consult your guidance counselor for the procedure for mailing transcripts with your applications.

Concurrent and Dual Credit: Students enrolled in grades 9-12 are eligible to be awarded credit toward high school graduation for completing college-level courses.

College Catalog: The college catalog is a vital source of information for you. It describes the college's physical plant, campus, admission policies, costs, programs of studies, and individual courses.

College Visitation: Most colleges and universities encourage applicants and their parents to visit the campus. These visitation days are normally scheduled on a weekend so that students will not have to miss school. Students desiring to visit a college or university should contact the office of admissions for details. Follow school policy if missing a day of school.

College Work-Study Program: This is a government-supported financial-aid program coordinated through financial-aid offices whereby an eligible student (based on need) may work part time while attending class at least half-time, generally in college related jobs.

Common Application: Many universities/colleges use this generic application. These forms are available in the counseling center and on-line. (Common Application: www.commonapp.org) Texas Common Application: www.applytexas.org).

Cooperative Work-Study Education: This is a program in which the student alternates between full-time college study and full-time paid employment related to the area of study. Under this plan, the Bachelor's degree often requires five years to complete.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid: The FAFSA is the form required in the federal financial aid process. This form should be completed in January of the senior year. This form is used to collect information about the student's total family income, assets, and expenses and to assess the family's potential contribution toward college expenses. The FAFSA arrives after Thanksgiving and is available online. (<http://www.fafsa.gov>).

Grade Point Average (GPA): A student's final GPA on the AAR (transcript) is the average of all grade points earned for courses taken during grades 9-12.

Grant: Grants are gift awards made on the basis of financial need, which do not require repayment. Grants are available from the federal government, state agencies, and educational institutions.

Housing Deposit: Housing deposits are paid to reserve a room in a college or university dormitory. This fee is usually paid after acceptance to a college or university. Deadlines for housing deposits are usually strict. Students should respond promptly to requests for housing deposits. Check university guidelines.

Loans: Money that must be repaid.

Open Door Admissions: An Open Door Admissions Policy means that the college or university does not have a specific entrance requirement other than graduation from high school or its equivalent.

Pell Grant: A Pell Grant is financial aid awarded by the federal government on the basis of need, designed to provide the basis of an aid package for post-secondary education. The grant may be used toward tuition, room and board, books, or other educational costs, and requires no repayment.

Recommendations: Many colleges and universities require that students submit letters of recommendation with their application. These recommendations should include reference to the student's distinctive qualifications and academic ability. Students who request others to complete letters of recommendation for them should allow sufficient time (a minimum of three weeks) for the individuals to complete them. Recommendations are sent to the requesting agency.

Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC): Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine programs, available on certain college campuses, combine military education with Baccalaureate degree study. JROTC provides financial support for those students who commit themselves to future service in the Armed Forces.

Scholarships: These are gifts of financial assistance. Financial need or special ability is sometimes considered.

Texas Common Application: Texas Common Application must be used to apply to any Texas public university. This can be done on-line (<http://www.applytexas.org>) or by hard copy.

Transcript: See Academic Achievement record.

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS FAQs

How difficult is it to be accepted into a college or university?

Almost anyone who graduates from high school can meet the admission requirements of a number of two-year colleges or four-year colleges and universities. Some of these institutions have open-door admission policies.

How early should I apply for admission to the colleges and universities of my choice?

Applications must be submitted prior to the established deadline of each college. Many colleges have fall and winter application deadlines, but a few institutions will accept applications as late as mid-summer. It would be wise to consult the college website or admissions office about specific admissions policies of the institution in which you are interested.

Can I learn all I need to know about schools from respective websites?

College and university catalogs contain important and useful information concerning the schools. You can compare the specific course offerings listed by each college for your proposed major field of study. However, your decision to attend a particular school should be based on more than information obtained by reading a catalog. Campus visitation, including interviews with college officials, discussion with students on campus, and classroom visitations in your interest area, should play a part in reaching your final decision as to which institution to attend.

When I am being considered for admission, does the Admission Director look only at my ACT or SAT scores?

In considering admission applications, most admission directors are interested in reviewing high school courses taken, level of course (i.e., regular, PreAP, Adv Acad, or AP), grade point average (GPA), ACT or SAT scores, and counselor or teacher recommendations and extracurricular, work and leadership

accomplishments. Individual schools have varying criteria for admission. You should check with the college website for information on entrance requirements.

What should I do if I need financial help in order to attend the college of my choice?

Contact the Director of Financial Aid at the institution of your choice. This person can tell you what scholarships and other forms of assistance are available. Consult your high school counselor; your counselor has information on local, state, and national financial aid programs and scholarships. Most schools require that families complete a FAFSA and/or the Profile for Students to be considered for financial aid.

Are students in the top 10% of their graduating high school class automatically accepted at a Texas public college or university?

Yes, if they meet deadlines and college admission guidelines. They must also graduate on the Recommended High School Program, Distinguished Achievement Program, or the Distinguished Level of Achievement. The University of Texas may restrict their admissions to less than 10%.

Is it appropriate to apply to more than one college?

It would be an excellent idea to apply to all the institutions which you are seriously considering, in case you are not accepted by your first choice. Although you apply to a school and are accepted, you are not obligated to attend that school.

Do all colleges require an application fee?

Most colleges require a fee between \$25 and \$100. The fee must accompany an application for admission. In cases of financial need, this application fee is sometimes waived.

Are my high school grades important in being accepted into college?

High school grades are extremely important to most colleges. Your grades, more than any other single factor, best predict your probable success in college. Colleges, however, do not consider only your grades in their admission process. The SAT scores, the kind of courses taken, the level of the courses (regular, PreAP, Adv Acad, or AP), recommendations from your counselors, teachers, and principal, and your extracurricular record are all important factors in the college admission process.

What courses should I take before taking the SAT or ACT?

You should take Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II and on-grade level or above English (grammar and usage, composition, and literature). In addition, science and social studies courses are recommended because most of the reading comprehension questions deal with these subject areas.

When should I take the SAT or ACT?

You should take the SAT and ACT in the spring of your junior year. It is recommended that all testing including SAT Subject Tests be completed by December of the senior year.

What do I need to be eligible to participate in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I athletics at college?

Proposition 48 requires that a freshman student entering a NCAA Division I institution must complete a core curriculum with a minimum number of specific academic courses and receive a minimum established combined score on the SAT Critical Reading and Math sections or an established minimum sum of scores on the ACT in order to be eligible to participate in intercollegiate athletics during the first year of attendance. NCAA Clearinghouse forms are available online at www.ncaa.org. More information begins on page 194.