

What if I want to pursue art in college?

Generally, there are two options. A *university or college based art program* will allow you to pursue a BA or a BFA within a traditional curriculum.

You also may look into *art institutes*. These schools, usually smaller and located in cities, are more focused and rarely have majors in fields that are not art related. They are exciting and unique environments, full of very able and committed young people who are very confident about their aspirations. There may be more opportunity for in-depth study and studio space at an art institute, but there will be less opportunity to break from the arts centered curriculum.

Do I have control over which SAT and ACT scores are sent to the colleges?

SAT – When a grade report is sent from ETS to a college/university, students can use SCORECHOICE to send individual test dates or all past SAT.

ACT – reports scores from a particular administration only. Past scores do not appear on a current grade report, unless requested. So, if you want a particular score reported, after sitting for an ACT, you will have to indicate the date taken on an ‘additional score report.’

This question is somewhat irrelevant because colleges/universities will look at the best scores as an indication of a student’s academic capacity. This is true even if a verbal score from one SAT date must be combined with a math score from another date.

How do my test scores reach my schools?

There are a few ways to do this:

- 1) On both the SAT and ACT registration forms, there are areas to indicate a college/university code, free of charge. There are also additional areas that carry an extra charge.
- 2) If you decide to have schools notified after you have already taken an SAT or ACT, you must use the phone and internet options provided by the SAT and the ACT.

Regardless of which option you use, we advise you to begin the reporting process toward the end of your testing pattern, when you have identified the schools that will receive your application

I have taken some very challenging courses, often at the expense of my GPA. Will admissions take that into consideration?

Yes. Private and selective schools are impressed with a student who is willing to take an academic risk, one more prepared to challenge himself/herself rather than cushion the GPA. Larger public institutions will not be as attentive to subtle differences in course titles, but tend to weight AP and Honors courses in their assessment of the transcript.

Is it better to have a C in an AP or Honors course, or a B in a regular college prep course?

If highly selective admissions is the primary concern, the only neat answer to this difficult question is “Don’t get a C.” Beyond this, there is no standard answer to your question. Admission officers like to see applicants who have pushed themselves within *their particular ability* to succeed.

Will adding more applications mean more acceptances and therefore more options in the spring?

No. It could mean just the opposite. When an excessive number of applications are completed, it increases the likelihood of careless mistakes. Occasionally these mistakes or oversights can be construed as a lack of sincere interest in that particular college/university. Also, a large number of applications suggests a lack of thorough research and investigation. You may not be able to

complete a compelling application if you are not sufficiently familiar with a school. Without the proper care and research, more applications can mean more deny letters in the springtime.

What about the Common Application? What schools accept it?

The Common App contains a list of all the schools that accept it. The best use of the Common App can be made with the downloadable and online version found at: www.commonapp.org

What if all my activities don't fit in the space provided on the application?

Some schools will invite the applicant to attach an activities résumé. Some students will try to cram as much as possible into the space provided. We advise that you list only those activities that are most meaningful to you. And best characterize your high school years. Listing those activities in which you have held leadership positions is also advisable. Quantity of involvement is not as impressive as quality. In fact, excessive activity listing could serve to dilute the impact of those activities that reveal you best.

Will applying for financial aid hurt my chances of admission?

Very rarely. If an institution is truly '100% need blind,' they will *completely ignore* a family's ability to pay tuition. Admission decisions will be made entirely on the quality of the applicant. There are many private institutions whose policy is 'need sensitive.' This usually means that admissions decisions will not consider financial need while admitting most of the class (sometimes as much as 90% of the class). However, when the final decisions are being made, and two or more applicants are equally qualified, an admissions office may choose to admit one applicant, with the ability to pay tuition, over another, who will require resources that the college does not have. This is very rare indeed, *and should not be a reason to avoid a financial aid request.* We strongly advise all families to request aid, if needed.

The tuition costs of private colleges are overwhelming. My child will have to go to a public institution

Many public colleges/universities are among the finest schools in the nation. Considering what they offer and the cost of tuition, they are an outstanding value as well. However, we would encourage all families, regardless of income, to apply to any school that is appropriate and attractive, without regard to the tuition 'sticker price.' Many of these institutions can be very generous with regard to financial aid and merit aid. Once the financial aid offer is made, a family may still choose the public over the private. But often, the amount of aid offered, combined with the excellence of the academic program and the student's desire to attend, may make the private college/university more appealing. Please also remember that if a student passionately desires to attend a pricey private institution, it is not unreasonable or exceptional for that student to incur some financial debt as a result of a student loan. Many very able and successful students have graduated from college, grad school, and law school, with the understanding that they will have to repay a loan in exchange for the excellence of their education. There is no reason for a parent to disproportionately curtail their quality of life or endanger their retirement goals for their children's higher education.

What is merit aid? What schools or what type of schools offer merit aid?

Merit aid, sometimes referred to as scholarship money, is given to an applicant without regard for the family's financial need. The academic merit of the applicant has motivated the college to offer a reduction in the price of tuition. There is really no one type of school that offers merit aid, although private colleges are recognized for this sort of aid. Generally speaking, a school for which a student is especially well-qualified will be more likely to offer merit aid. This school suspects that the very strong applicant might be tempted to attend another, more selective, institution. Aid is offered to maintain interest and eventual matriculation. Many of the most selective schools in the nation DO NOT offer merit aid. They will be clear about this if you ask. They reason that their accepted students all have so much merit that they would have to offer each aid. However, there are a great many prestigious and excellent schools in the country that do offer merit aid.

I've read that financial aid packages are negotiable. Should we attempt to negotiate a more generous offer from a school's financial aid office?

It depends. A financial aid offer is almost always the best offer possible. However, if your financial circumstances have changed since the financial aid forms were filed or if there are personal circumstances that are not revealed in the financial aid form, you should feel free to relay that information to the financial aid office. Adjustments of financial packages occur occasionally, due to extenuating circumstances.

When completing my application, what should I place for 'field of study' or 'major?'

If you have an intended major, THAT is what you should indicate on the application. It is true that many universities ask applicants to indicate a division in which they plan to study – engineering, liberal arts, business, to name a few.

What about SAT/ACT prep courses?

The research regarding the success and effectiveness of prep courses is mixed. Clearly, it can be a great help to many students. Considering that these tests contain math skills that an advanced math student may not have used for awhile, a review could be very helpful. **Know this:** If your schoolwork is sacrificed at the altar of 'test prep,' you may have done no good service to your candidacy.

Know this also: Although standardized test scores are not as important as the transcript, this does not mean that they are unimportant. A higher SAT or ACT score CAN make a difference, (assuming your grades are strong enough) especially when you may have your heart set on a number of REACH schools. Often, students will sit for additional SAT /ACT exams without much preparation or will prepare passively through reliance on tutors and prep courses. Rarely will scores, in such cases, improve significantly. Studies have shown that scores improve most significantly when the student is personally motivated to do the work necessary to increase scores.

We are interested in coming up with a "strategy" for the best way to "package" the application.

Not only are strategies and packaging unimportant. They can occasionally backfire by producing the wrong impression. Though seemingly complex and often frustrating, the admissions process is largely straightforward. Admission officers are reasonable and ethical people who seek to fairly admit the best applicants possible. Tactics designed to exaggerate or manipulate are often noticed and unappreciated by those who review hundreds of applications a year.