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16 Steps to Help Your Child Prepare for Tests

To help children prepare adequately for tests (teacher-made or standardized), you can do several things to provide support and help create a positive test-taking experience.

1. Encourage your child to study over a period of time rather than “cram” the night before.
2. Encourage your child to listen carefully to all test-taking directions given by the teacher and to ask questions about those directions that are not clear.
3. See that your child gets his/her regular amount of sleep before the tests and is, in general, well rested.
4. Make sure that your child eats his/her usual breakfast on the day of the test. Hunger can detract from a good test performance.
5. Encourage your child to do his/her best.
6. Find out from his/her teacher what you can do to help your child feel better about taking tests, if your child is nervous at test time.
7. Make sure that your child is in school during the testing sessions. Do not plan any doctor or dental appointments on test dates.
8. Make sure that you are aware of your child’s performance and that you can help interpret the results to your child when test results become available from the teacher.
9. Remember to keep well informed about your child’s tests. Know how test results are used, and how they will affect your child’s placement in school.
10. If there are major differences between standardized test scores and school grades, find out why.
11. The PSAT is the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test. You may hear this test referred to as the practice SAT or a junior SAT. It is taken in the 10th and/or 11th grade. The PSAT will give an idea of how students are likely to perform on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). There is also a



12. PACT, or American College Testing Assessment.
12. PSAT also serves two other important functions. First, PSAT scores and grades are used to identify students to receive the National Negro Merit Scholarship and the National Hispanic Scholars Awards Program. Second, they are used, along with other criteria, to qualify for consideration for appointment to military academies.
13. The two major college admissions tests are the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) developed for the College Board by Educational Testing Service and the American College Testing Program Assessment (ACT). Students may want to take both examinations in order to increase their flexibility in applying to college. Some colleges will accept the score from either test; other colleges will require one or the other.
14. Students should take the SAT or ACT test at least once in the junior year.
15. Results of standardized tests such as the SAT can be obtained from the test developer. Answer sheets and booklets can be obtained. Reviewing them will help determine your child’s strengths and weaknesses.
16. The best way to prepare for tests is to study, know the work, and take the right courses.

The addresses of two of the major test developers are: College Board Admissions, Testing Program (SAT), C.N. 6200, Princeton, NJ 08541-6200; American College, Testing Program (ACT), P.O. Box 168, Iowa City, IA 52243

Source: seldeen.com/sat/index.html



COLLEGE ADMISSION GAME PLAN



JUNIORS

- Begin gathering information from the colleges in which you are interested.
- Attend college nights and fairs.
- Make a formal campus visit during the coming spring months.
- Talk with graduating seniors about the college they will be attending. Ask why they chose that college, what the application process was like for them, and what other colleges they considered.

Registration begins in April for summer sessions at local colleges and universities. High school students need permission from their schools to attend summer sessions and should obtain off-campus request forms from their counselor or career center.

- Register for the June 4 SAT I or II.
- Register for the June 11 ACT if appropriate.
- Take the AP examinations this month. (May)
- Begin a tentative list of college choices by consulting material you have received in the mail, scanning college catalogs and computer programs in the Career Center or library, or writing to schools for information.
- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Do I want a large university or a small college?
 - How far from home do I want to go?
 - Do I prefer a city campus (urban), suburban location, or a small town?
 - What program of study do I wish to pursue or am I going to go undeclared?
 - Are there activities such as sports or clubs in which I could participate in college?
- Learn about the costs per year for each college you are considering. Be sure to include housing and transportation.
- Begin identifying teachers, administrators, counselors, and other adults from whom you could request for a letter of recommendation.
- Finalize summer plans to enhance college applications and to give yourself valuable experience. Include college visits and interviews in summer travel plans, especially in late August when many schools are back in session.



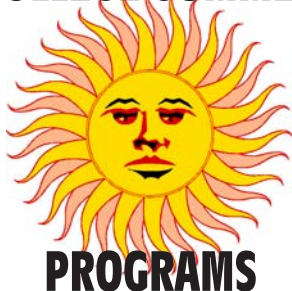
Spring Testing Benefits

There are several benefits for juniors testing in the spring:

- You will have time to take a prep class.
- It will ensure having a test score when you are ready to apply for college in the fall. The scores may help you decide to take an additional class in your senior year in an area in which you scored low.
- You can decide whether you want to take a test again, and you will have time to do so in the fall of your senior year.
- Many colleges will have an early indication of your interest in attending college and will send you information about admission, advance placement, scholarships, and special programs just because you took the test.
- Plan a summer of work, travel, college classes, or other broadening experiences. Investigate summer programs held at local college campuses.
- Consider taking an SAT prep class.
- If needed, register late for the May SAT.

COLLEGE ADMISSION GAME PLAN

COLLEGE SUMMER



PROGRAMS

SANTA ANA COLLEGE AND SANTIAGO CANYON COLLEGE

Class schedules will be available mid-April. For information, go to www.sac.edu or call Santa Ana College at (714) 564-6015 and Santiago Canyon College at (714) 564-4901.

UC IRVINE

The first session runs June-August. The second session is August-September. For more information, go to www.uci.edu or you can call (949) 451-5100.

ORANGE COAST COLLEGE

Summer registration can be done on line at www.orangecoastcollege.com. The first session begins in June. For information, call (714) 432-0202 or call admissions directly at (714) 432-5072.

IRVINE VALLEY COLLEGE

Scheduling on the Internet began in mid-March. However, registration is still possible. The first summer session starts May 21st; the second session begins in July. For admissions, call (949) 451-5461.

SADDLEBACK COLLEGE

Applications will be received beginning in April. Registration can be done online at www.saddleback.edu. Information is available at (949) 582-4531 ext. 4320, or call (949) 582-4555.

Senior Orientation & Placement Tests in Local Community Colleges

April is an important month for your community college registration and testing.

- Orange Coast College (714) 432-5072
- Irvine Valley College (949) 451-5100
- Santa Ana College (714) 564-6015
- Santiago Canyon College (714) 564-4901
- Saddleback College (949) 582-4555



FRESHMEN/SOPHOMORES

Following are ways to prepare for college:

1. **Take more than the required courses.** Colleges want to see how well you respond to a challenge. Take all the science, foreign language, honors and AP courses for which you are eligible. A record of consistently high performance is best, but improvement counts too.
2. **Take all the math you can.** Math opens doors. Some ideas can only be conveyed through math. If you avoid math, you may cut off career possibilities. If you are weak in math, ask for suggestions as to how to improve.
3. **Build your skills in the 3 R's - Reading, 'Rriting, and Research.** Read materials that introduce you to new words and concepts. Work on your writing skills. Learn how to synthesize information and prepare an outline. Learn to study. Build yourself a study team. Students who learn to study in groups learn more, learn more efficiently, and get better grades.
4. **Learn to take notes.**
5. **Learn computer and calculator skills.** Practice your typing skills.
6. **Get involved in activities.** Most colleges look for signs of maturity, leadership, and special talents. Choose activities that you enjoy and that reflect you as a person.
7. **Hold down a job if you must.** Remember that your most important job in high school is learning. Do not work so many hours that your schoolwork suffers.
8. **Manage your time.** This skill will help reduce stress in college. There will be no one monitoring you to make sure you keep up with your work.

Source: The College Board, *College Times*, 1997/98

COLLEGE FRESHMAN FINANCES

The freedom felt when going off to college could be exhilarating, but often students are not prepared for the responsibilities of money management.

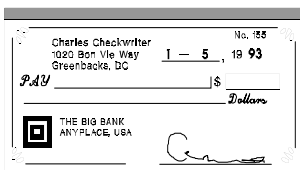
The number one downfall is usually that there is no specific plan for income and outgo. Income should take into account all sources - scholarships, income from a job, and money from parents. For expenses, students "need to learn the difference between needs, wants, and wishes," says Paul Richard, Director of Education for the National Center for Financial Education in San Diego. "It is a good idea to keep a budget and plan on spending only ninety percent of your funds, keeping ten percent as a security blanket."



After the first few months, alter your budget. To get information on unforeseen expenses you might want to contact a student who has been at the school to see what kind of expenses came up about which he was unaware. Often, too, freshman orientation will give you information about the kinds of expenses that might occur.

It is not a good idea to give your student a large sum of cash; therefore, a checking account is essential. Banks often have special accounts for college students, often with no monthly fees and no minimum balance. Joining your credit union or one connected with the college may be a viable alternative to banks and may charge lower fees.

Many experts say college students and credit cards do not mix. Others suggest having a credit card for safety purposes such as a car emergency. If you want a credit card for your student, keep in mind that how he spends becomes part of his financial record. With a credit card, it is important to pay on time. Look for a card with the lowest interest rate and check out other fees. Credit cards that bear the name of the school may seem attractive, but usually the money from these cards that should benefit the school is very minimal.



Students who are relying on loans to pay for at least part of their college expenses are more and more the norm. The Higher Education Act has made unsubsidized federal loans available

to all students regardless of need. If you take out a loan, you need to know the total amount you plan to borrow, how much will be paid back each month, total interest, how many payments will be required, and when they begin.

If your student must work when in college, it is better that he works during the summer. If there is no time in the schedule to make school fun, then pressures may pile up and lead to great frustration and scholastic failure. Working 12-15 hours

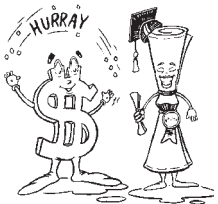
a week does not usually impinge on studies, but know your student's capabilities.

For college students, the best ways to manage money are to be cautious, to get the best value for your dollar, to try to pay as you go, to have a spending plan, and to plan ahead.

Source: *The EFG Connection*, Summer 1996.

Tips for Getting Scholarships

There is no magic formula for applying and receiving a scholarship. However, here are some tips that will get you started on the right foot.



Be organized. Stay on top of deadlines, gather all pertinent documents, and make copies of everything you submit. It is a good idea to send your applications via certified mail to ensure receipt.

Be honest. Don't exaggerate your grades, memberships, or qualifications. It is better to spend your time on the scholarships for which you might be eligible.

Follow instructions carefully. Some scholarships require you to write an essay; others may want letters of recommendation. Send in what is requested and **proofread everything**. Typos and mistakes can cost you your scholarship.

For more tips on applying for scholarships and for information on how to organize your search, visit College Answer, Sallie Mae's planning for college Web site: www.salliemae.com.

Top Ways to Avoid Scholarship Scams:

1. Don't believe a promise of guaranteed funds you'll never have to repay. No one can guarantee that you will win a scholarship or grant. Remember: if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
2. Beware of scholarship services that charge fees or claims for information that you cannot get elsewhere. There are many free lists of scholarships available. Free money shouldn't cost a thing.
3. Ignore the myth of unclaimed funds and the companies that advertise huge amounts of unclaimed money. Disregard any news that you're a finalist in any contest that requires you to pay a fee.
4. Don't be fooled by official sounding names and logos. Make sure the foundation, organization, or program is legitimate.
5. Check the terms closely if there's a refund or a money back guarantee. Refund guarantees often have conditions or strings attached. Get refund policies in writing—BEFORE you pay.
6. Resist high-pressure tactics like, "We'll do all the work for you." Don't be fooled. There's no way around it; you must apply for scholarships or grants yourself.
7. Don't give out your credit card, bank, or checking account numbers to any solicitors who claim they need it for you to be eligible for access to "exclusive" scholarship information. Get information in writing first.

Scholarships Online

Recently, when I went online to research scholarships, I found over 600,000 and I narrowed down my search by simply going to Scholarships.com. This site was a wealth of information, including scholarships for hockey players, Eagle Scouts, Girls Scouts, and based on religion, race, heritage, parent's career, and intended college major.

I discovered another fun scholarship site that may be useful. It is Free-4u.com. It lists the scholarships in categories, which makes the search easier. The categories include: women's scholarships, California scholarships, scholarships for minorities, scholarships by religion, and scholarships by major (from accounting to zoology). There are even scholarships for travel association and if you play badminton! Anything is possible.

Go to the category Scholarships for All. You will find a wide variety of scholarships that may apply to you. Awards vary from \$500 to several thousand. Some scholarships require high GPA and test scores; others do not.

Scholarship Tips

1. Be completely honest about your grades, experiences, memberships, qualifications, family finances, and other information.
2. Carefully follow instructions. If the application asks for a 500-word essay, make sure you don't exceed this limit.
3. Strictly observe deadlines, and even strive to submit your applications early.
4. Only apply when you meet the scholarship's minimum requirements. If you know you don't, don't apply. It's better to spend quality time on the scholarships for which you are qualified.
5. Proofread everything before you send — lookout for typos.



Jobs & Internships



A part-time or summer job is a great way to get money for school and to gain valuable experience. Not only

will you earn money to save or invest, but the right job will look great on your college application or resume.

Not all jobs are created equal.

While flipping burgers might put more change in your bank account, it might not be the best job to put on a college admissions form. Be sure to weigh your college and/or career goals against possible earnings before you accept a job. The job that pays well and builds skills that appeal to the admissions board or looks great to future employers is your best bet.

Working your way through college.

If a part-time, or a full-time job, or an internship are necessary for you to have while attending college, you may want to consider a co-op program that allows you to gain college credit hours for work time and experience. Many colleges offer these types of programs so check with your guidance counselor or school's career center before choosing.

You may have other options.

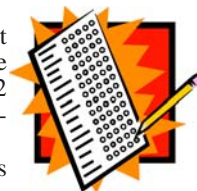
Depending on your goals, internships or paid volunteer work might be a better alternative. With an internship, a student "tries-out" work in a particular field before committing to a career. Some companies offer scholarships to interns to do your research.

Alternatively, paid volunteer work might offer the best of both worlds - tuition money and work experience. Some organizations, like AmeriCorps, offer money for college in exchange for a work commitment, usually a term lasting 10 months to one year. Full-time participants can be eligible for an educational award up to \$4,725.

Check with your school guidance counselor for more information on how part-time employment and internships can help you.

TEN TEST DAY TIPS

- Come prepared.** The night before the test, you should get together everything you are going to need on test day: the admission ticket, a valid photo identification, several #2 pencils, a calculator with fresh batteries, a watch, and a high-energy snack.
- Do not cram.** The best thing to do the night before the test is to get a good night's sleep.
- Dress in layers.** Be prepared for temperatures in the test center from hot to frigid and everything in between.
- Arrive early.** Check out the test location before the test day so getting there is the least of your worries.
- Do not look for unscored questions or sections.** The experimental section of the SAT and ACT are often not obvious. Answer every question to the best of your ability.
- Do not spend too much time on the first question.** Each question is worth the same number of points so do not waste your time on difficult ones. Come back to those if you have time at the end.
- Keep track of where you are in the section.** On the SAT, obvious answer early in a set may be correct. Obvious choices near the end of a set are often booby traps.
- Make educated guesses.** Eliminate the choices you know are wrong and make a guess from the choices that are left. If you can eliminate even one answer, then it pays to guess on the SAT. The SAT math grid-in questions and the entire ACT have no wrong-answer penalties, so always guess in these situations.
- Be careful filling in the answer grid.**
- Relax!** Be confident that you can do well.



2004-2005 TEST DATES

SAT I / SAT II EXAMS (New SAT Test)

| Test Date | Due | Late |
|-----------|---------|--------|
| June 4 | Apr. 29 | May 11 |

ACT ASSESSMENT EXAMS

| Test Date | Due | Late |
|-----------|-------|--------|
| June 11 | May 6 | May 20 |

2005-2006 SAT EXAMS

| Test Date | Due | Late |
|-----------|----------|---------|
| Oct. 8 | Sept. 14 | Sept. 7 |
| Nov. 5 | Sept. 30 | Oct. 12 |
| Dec. 3 | Oct. 28 | Nov. 9 |
| Jan. 28 | Dec. 22 | Jan. 4 |
| Apr. 1 | Feb. 24 | Mar. 8 |
| May 6 | Apr. 3 | Apr. 12 |
| Jun. 3 | Apr. 28 | May 10 |

2005-2006 ACT ASSESSMENT EXAMS

| Test Date | Due | Late |
|-----------|----------|----------|
| Sept. 24 | Aug. 19 | Sept. 2 |
| Oct. 22 | Sept. 16 | Sept. 30 |
| Dec. 10 | Nov. 4 | Nov. 17 |
| Feb. 11 | Jan. 6 | Jan. 20 |
| Apr. 8 | Mar. 3 | Mar. 17 |
| June 10 | May 5 | May 19 |

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

MAJORS AND CAREERS

There is a current debate about the link between college majors and future careers. It is a commonly held belief that a student must know what to major in and do for the rest of a lifetime by the time he/she enters college.

Q: In selecting a college major, am I choosing a career?

A: While it is true that certain majors such as engineering, computer science, and accounting prepare students for fairly specific career fields, a far greater number of majors do not have a direct correlation with given career areas. Liberal arts majors often find that they have a wide variety of career choices because their backgrounds are so broad.

Q: Should job market demand be the primary determinant of academic and career choices?

A: It can be dangerous to select a major and pursue a career just because it is "hot" in the job market. You may end up neither enjoying the course work nor the subsequent job. The careers that are in demand when you are a freshman or sophomore may not be in demand when you graduate from school. Job market demand moves in cycles: what is "hot" becomes "cold" as supply rushes to meet demand. New career fields and jobs emerge every year as a result of changes in technology, public policy, and economic trends. It is far better to choose a major or select a career goal that genuinely interests you.

Q: Are liberal arts majors unemployable?

A: Graduates in the liberal arts develop skills that are highly

valued by employers and that are applicable to a wide variety of professional jobs. Small companies who need adaptable, self-sufficient workers with highly transferable skills such as negotiation and conflict resolution will create many of tomorrow's jobs. Graduates in the liberal arts have a broader historical perspective; they develop good communication skills because of the amount of writing they are required to do. A liberal arts education is designed to increase skills in creativity, writing, thinking, and quantitative analysis; it can also inspire self-confidence.

Q: Must I have a specific undergraduate major in order to gain admission to postgraduate professional schools in such fields as business, law, or medicine?

A: While some post-graduate professional schools require or recommend the completion of certain academic prerequisites, most require no specific major.

Q: What other things beyond coursework in my major can I do to improve my chances of career success?

A: Important experience and additional skills can be gained through extra-curricular activities such as in student organizations, athletic teams, and social groups. Internships, summer and part-time jobs, and volunteer activities play an important part in developing greater self-awareness and knowledge of the world of work. Taking courses outside of your usual field of interest, becoming computer literate, and becoming acquainted with the career services offered at your school as early as your freshman year are also good strategies.

Source: University of California Career Planning and Placement Center; *Money Guide*, 1995; *Under 25*, Spring, 1993.

SENIOR TIMELINE

1. Call wait-listed college(s) and ask how to strengthen your application.
2. Decision time is here. Notify the college of your choice in early May of your acceptance of their offer of admission.
3. Take AP exams. See Counselor for schedule.
4. Last semester grades count! Do not let down now!
5. If you are planning on attending a community college, register now!
6. Are you counting days yet? Graduation is almost here!

