

# ACT COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE

A Presentation for  
Students and Parents

- Suggested Activities and Planning Resources
- Six Steps to Simplify College Planning
- ACT Test Preparation Information
- College Selection Strategies
- Financial Aid Facts



## HOW TO USE THE ACT COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE

Counselors who have used the ACT College Planning Guide as a supplement to their counseling program say that it provides **visibility**, serves as an excellent **parent/student relations tool**, and stimulates **early and better college planning**. The guide has also served as a primary resource for many college admission professionals who present general college planning information to student and parent groups.

The College Planning Guide consists of:

- guidelines for making your meeting a success
- suggested points of emphasis for planning your presentation
- handouts to be duplicated from this booklet and used with the PowerPoint presentation at [www.act.org/ppt/collegeprep/](http://www.act.org/ppt/collegeprep/).

The materials in this booklet support a **40–50 minute** general college planning presentation. It is most effective when delivered to **high school juniors (and their parents) in the spring**. It can also be used in the fall with seniors or with sophomores and their parents who desire an overview of the college planning process. The presentation and handouts have been utilized successfully:

- in the **classroom**—college prep English, history, government, etc.
- at **special meetings** for college-bound students and/or parents
- at **college day/night programs**
- at **PTA and other school-related meetings**
- at **youth group and civic organization meetings**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p>Options After High School . . . . . 2</p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Know Yourself and Your Reasons for Attending College . . . . . 3</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">High School Courses ACT Recommends for All Students . . . . . 4</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">ACT National High School Graduating Class Report . . . . . 5</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">ACT Test Preparation . . . . . 6</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"> Ten Tips for Taking a Standardized Exam . . . . . 7</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Consider College Characteristics . . . . . 8</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> List, Compare, and Visit Colleges . . . . . 9</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"> College Comparison Worksheet . . . . . 10</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Checklist for a Campus Visit . . . . . 11</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"> Contacting Colleges/Checklist for a Campus Visit . . . . . 12</p>	<p><b>Step 4:</b> Apply for Admission and Observe Deadlines . . . . . 13</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"> College Admission and Financial Aid Logs . . . . . 14</p> <p><b>Step 5:</b> Develop a Plan to Finance Your Education . . . . . 15</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">What Does Postsecondary Education Cost . . . . . 16</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"> Applying for Financial Aid . . . . . 17</p> <p><b>Step 6:</b> Review and Finalize Your Plans . . . . . 18</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">College Success Factors . . . . . 19</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"> Checklist for College Planning . . . . . 20</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;"> Glossary of Terms for College-Bound Students and Parents . . . . . 21</p> <p>Suggested Points of Emphasis . . . . . 23–24</p> <p> <b>Pages that may be copied and distributed to students and parents.</b></p>
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### The **ACT**<sup>®</sup> NATIONAL TEST DATES

#### 2007–2008

- September 15, 2007\*
- October 27, 2007
- December 8, 2007
- February 9, 2008\*\*
- April 12, 2008
- June 14, 2008

#### 2008–2009

- September 13, 2008\*
- October 25, 2008
- December 13, 2008
- February 7, 2009\*\*
- April 4, 2009
- June 13, 2009

\*The September 15, 2007, and September 13, 2008, test dates are available ONLY in AZ, CA, FL, GA, IL, IN, MD, MI, MO, NV, NY, NC, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, WA, and WV.

\*\*This test date is not available in NY.

# Options After High School

- Work
- Military
- Trades
- Apprentice Program
- Proprietary Schools
- College

Let's Focus  
on College!



Remember decision making is a **PROCESS**, not an event.

# Know Yourself and Your Reasons for Attending College

- Recognize your strengths and weaknesses
- Analyze your interests and values
- Achieve a personal goal
- Increase your earning power
- Prepare for a career and expand learning
- Participate in extracurricular activities and social life
- Consider the influence of family and friends



## Step 1

Take responsibility for your future.

# High School Courses ACT Recommends for All Students

## Basic Core Courses

English .....4 Years

Mathematics  
(Algebra 1 and above) .....3 Years

Social Science .....3 Years

Science .....3 Years

Foreign Language  
(of the same language) .....2 Years

*Many colleges may also require additional courses in:*

Mathematics

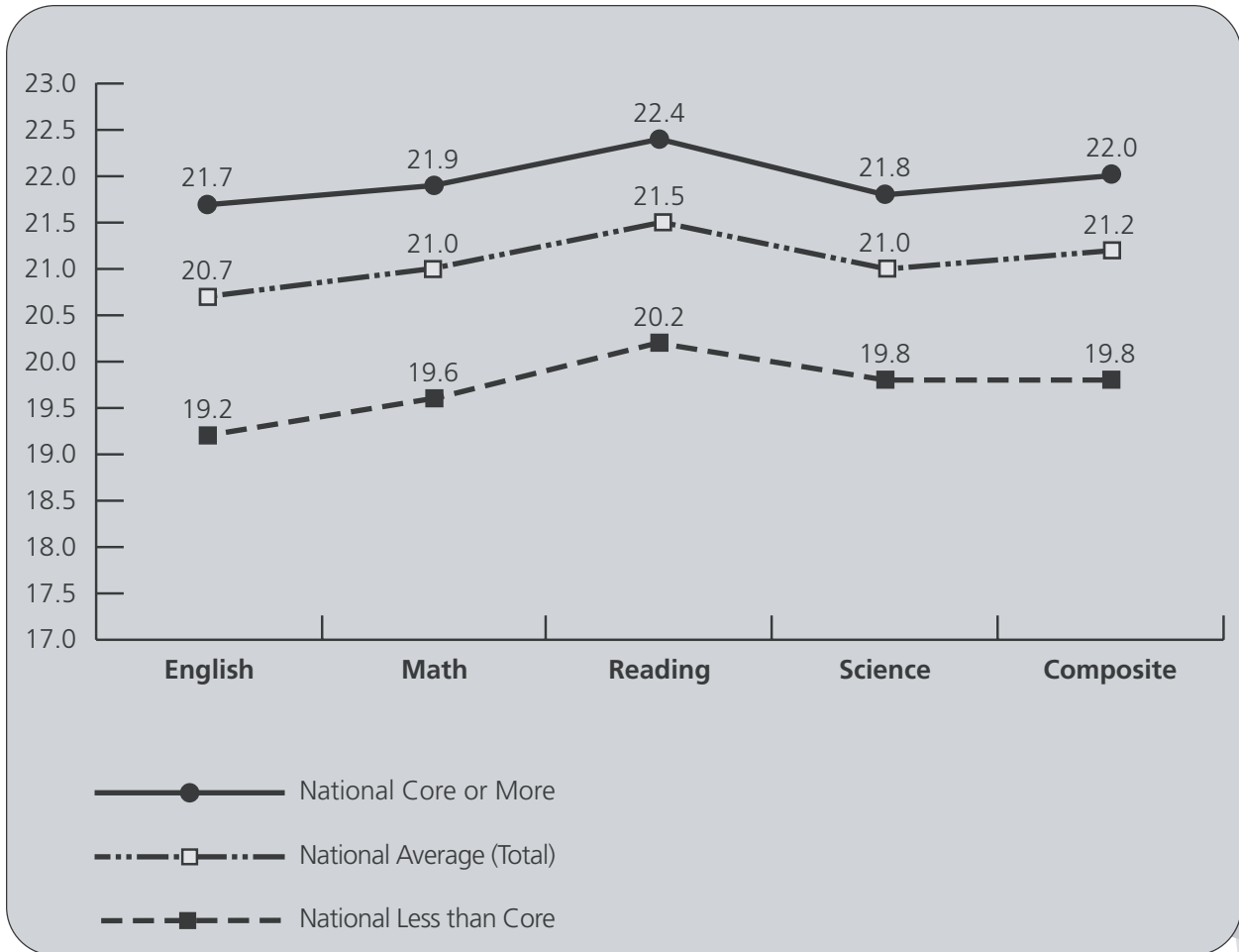
Fine and Performing Arts

Computer Science



# 2007 ACT National High School Graduating Class Report

The table below compares average ACT scores for students who reported they completed or planned to complete the recommended core curriculum (college preparatory) with those students who had not.



# ACT Test Preparation

The best preparation is a solid high school curriculum

- Become familiar with the test content and format:

The ACT® includes four curriculum-based tests—English, Math, Reading, Science—and an *optional* Writing Test

- Review your PLAN® results to identify academic weaknesses

- Learn appropriate test-taking strategies

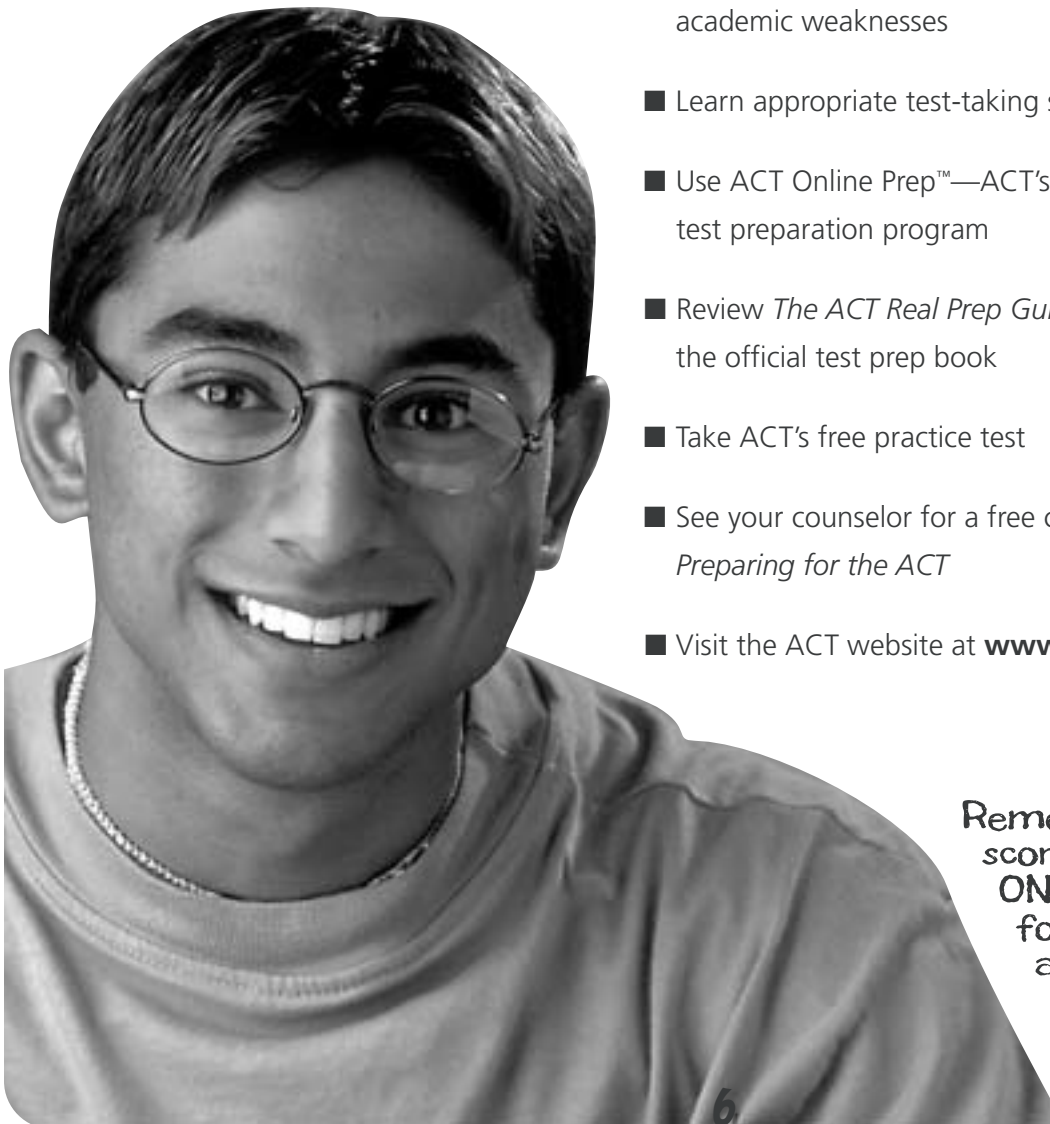
- Use ACT Online Prep™—ACT's online test preparation program

- Review *The ACT Real Prep Guide*—the official test prep book

- Take ACT's free practice test

- See your counselor for a free copy of *Preparing for the ACT*

- Visit the ACT website at [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)



Remember, test scores are only **ONE** factor used for college admission and scholarship decisions.



# Ten Tips for Taking a Standardized Exam

1. Get plenty of sleep the night before the test.
2. If you feel nervous before beginning, try to relax by taking a few deep breaths.
3. Maintain confidence in your abilities and plan to do your best. Your attitude can affect your performance.
4. Listen carefully to all instructions and ask questions if you hear something you don't understand.
5. Focus your attention entirely on your work.
6. Position your answer sheet next to your test booklet so you can mark answers quickly and accurately.
7. Before answering each question, read it completely, as well as all the possible responses.
8. When you are unsure of an answer, choose the one you think is best and go on to the next question. Be sure to answer every question. There is no penalty for guessing.
9. Pace yourself throughout the test by occasionally checking the time.
10. If you complete the test before your time is up, reread the questions and check your answers.

# Consider College Characteristics

- Majors and educational programs
- Type of school and degrees offered
- Admission policy
- Location and size
- Costs and financial aid
- College affiliation and accreditation
- Campus activities
- Support services



## Step 2

Every campus has a personality.

# List, Compare, and Visit Colleges

Compile information from  
several resources

## ■ Internet/Websites

College catalogs, viewbooks, videos, and  
computer-based services (DISCOVER®)

College representatives and college fairs

Counselors and teachers

Parents, students, and alumni

Directories and ACT score report

## ■ Prepare a college comparison checklist

## ■ Weigh advantages and disadvantages

## ■ Contact the office of admission

## ■ Schedule appointments for your campus visits



# College Comparison Worksheet

<b>College Name</b>			
<b>LOCATION</b> ■ distance from home ■ enrollment ■ physical size of campus			
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b> ■ type of school (2-yr. or 4-yr.) ■ school setting (urban, rural) ■ location and size of nearest city ■ co-ed, male, female ■ religious affiliation			
<b>ADMISSION</b> ■ deadline ■ tests required, including Writing Test ■ average test scores, GPA, rank ■ notification			
<b>ACADEMICS</b> ■ your major offered ■ special requirements ■ accreditation ■ student-faculty ratio ■ typical class size			
<b>COLLEGE EXPENSES</b> ■ tuition, room and board ■ estimated total budget ■ application fee, deposits			
<b>FINANCIAL AID</b> ■ deadline ■ required forms ■ % receiving aid ■ scholarships			
<b>HOUSING</b> ■ residence hall requirements ■ food plan			
<b>FACILITIES</b> ■ academic ■ recreational ■ other			
<b>ACTIVITIES</b> ■ clubs, organizations ■ Greek life ■ athletics, intramurals ■ other			
<b>CAMPUS VISITS</b> ■ when ■ special opportunities			

# Checklist for a Campus Visit

- Meet with an admission counselor
- Verify admission requirements
- Determine actual college costs
- Ask about financial aid opportunities
- Take a campus tour
- Investigate your academic program(s)
- Attend a class
- Talk with students and faculty



Discuss your chances for success:  
admission . . . graduation . . . placement.

## CONTACTING COLLEGES

Check out college websites:

- Obtain general information
- Investigate sources of financial aid
- Access online application forms
- Schedule campus visits

Many colleges encourage telephone and e-mail inquiries and requests. Be sure to establish a permanent, and professional, e-mail address to use during the college search process.

## CHECKLIST FOR A CAMPUS VISIT

A campus visit is highly recommended. Before you visit the campus, consider some of the options below. It is also important to develop a list of questions and plan specific activities in order to accomplish your goals.

- Meet with an admission counselor.
- Verify admission requirements (tests and high school preparation).
- Discuss your chances for success in certain programs.
- Find out how to apply.
- Request a viewbook and other publications.
- Determine college costs.
- Ask about financial aid opportunities, as well as deadlines, forms required, etc.
- Meet with faculty in the department of your intended major.
- Ask questions about academic requirements/offerings.
- Attend a class to get an idea of typical size, teaching style, and academic atmosphere.
- Ask about the placement record for graduates in the field you might study.
- Identify career planning services for undergraduates.
- Tour the campus (be sure to check out the residence halls, library, etc.).
- Talk to students about the general academic environment and the amount and kind of studying necessary for success.
- Find out what student activities (clubs, organizations, intramurals, etc.) are available and about campus life in terms of dating and social activities.
- Investigate transportation options.

**Haven't selected a major? It's okay to be undecided about a major. Most colleges provide services to help students select a major during the first and/or second year.**

# Apply for Admission and Observe Deadlines

- Narrow your choices
- Review college admission test requirements (including the optional Writing Test)
- Know application fees and deadlines
- Submit application materials (paper/electronic)
  - Application for admission
  - High school transcript
  - Recommendations
  - Admission test results
- Know scholarship requirements



**Step 4**

Keep accurate records!

# COLLEGE ADMISSION AND FINANCIAL AID LOGS

COLLEGE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

<b>College Admission Log</b>	<b>Financial Aid Log</b>
<p><b>Application Deadline and Fees</b> Date _____ \$ _____</p> <p><b>Application Form</b> Requested from college <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____ Submitted to college <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____</p> <p><b>Other Steps Required</b> Tests required or recommended _____  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test registration completed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test taken <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results forwarded to college <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      Necessary high school courses completed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      High school transcript submitted <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____                      References submitted <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____                      Interview completed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____</p> <p><b>College Reply</b> Expected reply date _____ College decision _____ Contact person _____</p> <p><b>Follow-up Required</b>                      1 _____ Date _____                      2 _____ Date _____                      3 _____ Date _____                      4 _____ Date _____                      5 _____ Date _____</p> <p><b>Admissions Office Notified of Your Decision</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____</p> <p><b>Special Notes</b></p>	<p><b>Application Deadline</b> Date _____</p> <p><b>Application Form</b> Requested from college <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____ Submitted to college <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____</p> <p><b>Financial Aid Forms</b> Which one(s) _____ Forms completed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____ Results forwarded to college <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____</p> <p><b>College Reply</b> Expected reply date _____ College decision _____ Contact person _____</p> <p><b>Follow-up Required</b>                      1 _____ Date _____                      2 _____ Date _____                      3 _____ Date _____                      4 _____ Date _____                      5 _____ Date _____</p> <p><b>Admissions Office Notified of Your Decision</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Date _____</p> <p><b>Special Notes</b></p>



# Develop a Plan to Finance Your Education

■ Determine college costs

■ Investigate **all** possible resources

Parents

Savings

Summer earnings

Financial aid

Scholarships

Grants

Loans

Work study

Other sources



■ Secure necessary forms and note deadlines

■ Apply for financial aid as early as possible

## Step 5

Don't eliminate any college because of costs before receiving financial assistance information!

## ESTIMATED EXPENSES FOR ONE YEAR OF COLLEGE

Budget item	Average annual range
Tuition and fees	\$2,300 – 19,000*
Room and board	\$3,000 – 7,000*
Books and supplies	\$600 – 1,500*
Transportation	\$300 – 1,200*
Miscellaneous (clothing, laundry, entertainment, and recreation)	\$1,000 – 2,500*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,200 – 31,200*</b>

*\*These figures represent average tuition and fee costs for Midwestern states. Some schools will be lower in costs, while other schools will have higher costs. These figures should be used as a guide only. Students should check with the institution(s) in which they are interested to determine more specific costs.*

## COSTS AT YOUR COLLEGE CHOICES

Budget item	(1st choice)	(2nd choice)	(3rd choice)	(4th choice)
<b>Direct costs</b>				
Tuition and fees	_____	_____	_____	_____
Room and board	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Indirect costs</b>				
Books and supplies	_____	_____	_____	_____
Transportation (including car expenses)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Miscellaneous	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>TOTALS</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____

**Remember . . . check with college officials for accurate costs.**

## STEPS FOR APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID

- 1. Apply for admission as well as financial aid**—Before a student's chances for aid can be determined, many colleges require an application both for admission and for financial aid. Since application deadlines vary from institution to institution, you may want to develop a calendar of important dates. In any case, it's wise to apply as early as you can.
- 2. Submit required financial aid forms**—File all required forms for financial aid consideration at the college(s) you are contemplating. This includes the correct year's **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** and obtaining a PIN number from the U.S. Department of Education at [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov).

Note: Students should file only one FAFSA regardless of how many colleges they are considering. The FAFSA includes a section for students to list the colleges to which they want their information sent.

Contact your counselor to obtain a FAFSA form or go to [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) to fill out the form online. The website includes deadlines, instructions for completing the form, and follow-up procedures to check on the status of your form. If you have questions about completing the application, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center (1-800/433-3243). **During your senior year, complete the FAFSA as soon after January 1 as possible.**

The FAFSA collects demographic and financial information from students and parents to be used to determine an Expected Family Contribution (EFC)—the figure used to determine a student's eligibility for Federal Pell Grants, other federal financial aid programs, and many state programs. The EFC is determined according to formulas set periodically by the U.S. Congress.

You should also check with each college to determine if there are additional forms the college requires you to file. Be sure to file all forms in time to meet the colleges' financial aid application deadlines. Note: Admissions and financial aid deadlines are often different; be sure to meet each requirement.

- 3. Apply for scholarships and grants**—Besides aid offered directly by a college and aid for which your FAFSA form is an automatic application (for example, a Federal Pell Grant), be sure to inquire about state scholarship, grant, and loan programs. Ask about institutional, community, foundation, and corporation programs as well.
- 4. Keep track of progress**—Monitor all the information you receive from individual college business offices regarding fees, payment schedules, etc. Include this information in your college planning.

## TYPES OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Scholarships**—Nonrepayable awards based on merit or merit plus need

**Grants**—Nonrepayable awards based on need

**Loans**—Educational loans are available through private lending institutions, colleges, and the federal government. Most educational loans have low interest rates with payments deferred while the student is enrolled in school. Loan programs are also available to eligible parents to help with college expenses for their qualifying children. Loans must be repaid.

**Work study programs**—Jobs that allow students to earn money toward their expenses while they are enrolled in school. (Students can sometimes get jobs related to their program of study.)

Sources of financial assistance include the federal government, state agencies, professional and service organizations, private foundations, and individual postsecondary schools. Your school counselor can help you determine the programs you may be eligible for and how to apply.

# Review and Finalize Your Plans

- Show initiative and be assertive
- Talk with your parents and counselor
- Select a college that meets your needs and preferences
- Follow up with colleges to which you have applied



**Step 6**

**Important!**  
Keep your communications lines open.

# College Success Factors

Test scores and high school grades are important. However, they measure only part of your potential.

- ACT Test Scores

- High School Grades

## Additional Success Factors

- Study Habits

- Motivation

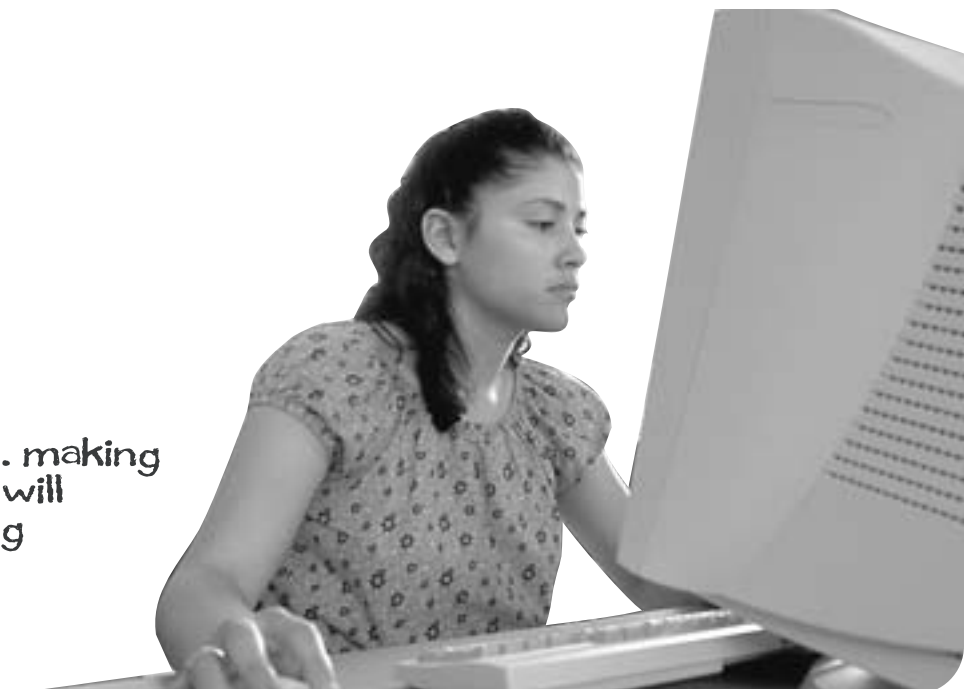
- Course Selection

- Placement

- Interests

- Commitment

**Keep in mind . . . making sound decisions will lead to satisfying and successful experiences.**



# Checklist for College Planning

WHEN to BEGIN	WHAT TO DO	HOW TO DO IT
Freshman and sophomore years	<b>Learn about college requirements and continue exploring careers.</b> Which high school courses satisfy college requirements? Have you taken ACT's tenth-grade test, PLAN? Are you involved in extracurricular activities?	Create a four-year high school curriculum. Review your PLAN test results. Try job shadowing. Get involved at school and in your community.
September–March of junior year	<b>Think about your reasons for going to college.</b> What are your goals? What learning opportunities are most important? Do your college plans include career plans?	Talk with your parents, counselors, teachers, and friends. Investigate possible career options and degree levels required.
January–March of junior year	<b>Identify important factors in choosing a college.</b> Two-year or four-year? Location? Cost? Kind of atmosphere? Variety of study programs available? Entrance test requirement?	Focus on your goals and career interests. Consult college guidebooks. Explore colleges on the Internet. Prepare and register for the ACT.
March–August of junior year	<b>List colleges you are considering and collect information.</b> Have you included all possible choices? What information do you need? How can you get it?	Attend college fairs and college night programs. Prepare for and visit colleges. Take the ACT.
August–December of senior year	<b>Compare the colleges on your list.</b> Have you weighed pros and cons carefully? Which colleges will meet your needs?	Continue visiting colleges. Organize information into detailed, useful comparisons.
September–December of senior year	<b>Apply to your “choice” colleges.</b> Do you have all the necessary forms? Are you sure of the application deadlines?	Obtain application forms. Observe deadlines. Submit transcript and test scores (retest if necessary).
January–February of senior year	<b>Apply for financial aid.</b> Have you investigated all possible sources of aid? When should you apply?	Consult financial aid office. Secure forms and note deadlines. Complete the FAFSA after January 1.
November–May of senior year	<b>Make some final decisions.</b> What additional preparation might be helpful? Should you consider summer school? Do you feel comfortable with your final choice?	Confer with parents and counselors. Confirm your decision, and decline other admission offers. Show initiative.

## RESOURCES TO HELP YOU EXPLORE AND PREPARE

**College Search and Application**—Log on to [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). The College Planning, Career Planning, and Financial Aid buttons will lead you to a wealth of information. You will find data on virtually **every postsecondary institution** in the country, a free financial aid estimator, and electronic admissions applications for over 500 colleges and universities.

**ACT Test Preparation**—Do your best on the ACT by preparing early! Consider using ACT Online Prep, the “official” online ACT test preparation program. You can order ACT Online Prep through the ACT website ([www.actstudent.org/onlineprep/](http://www.actstudent.org/onlineprep/)) or by calling ACT Customer Services at 319-337-1429, or you can request it when you register for the ACT.

# Glossary

## TERMS USED IN THE COLLEGE PLANNING PROCESS

**Accreditation:** Recognition of a college or university by any of the regional or national accrediting bodies, indicating that the institution as a whole has been judged to be meeting its objectives.

**The ACT:** A group of tests administered by ACT and required or recommended by most colleges as part of the admission process. The tests measure educational development in English, mathematics, reading, science, and writing and are given at specified test centers throughout the year. ACT scores range from 1–36. Taking the ACT Plus Writing provides students with two additional scores. They receive a Writing Test subscore and a combined English/Writing score.

**ACT Online Prep:** The only online test preparation program designed by ACT test development professionals. ACT Online Prep offers practice test questions, a practice essay with real-time scoring, a diagnostic test, and personalized Study Paths to help students improve. Students can access ACT Online Prep via the Internet anywhere and at any time.

**Advanced placement:** Granting of credit and/or assignment to an advanced course on the basis of evidence that the student has mastered the equivalent of an introductory course.

**Aid package:** A combination of aid (possibly including a scholarship, grant, loan, and work) determined by a college financial aid office.

**ASSET®:** A group of tests developed by ACT and required at many two-year colleges as part of the course placement and advising process.

**Candidates reply date:** A policy among subscribing institutions that permits students to wait until May 1 to choose, without penalty, among offers of admission/financial aid.

**College calendar:** Common systems of instruction time:

Traditional semester—two approximately.

Quarter—three equal terms of about 12 weeks each.

Trimester—calendar year divided into three equal semesters, the third semester replaces summer school.

4-1-4—two equal terms of about 16 weeks each, with a 4-week interim term.

**COMPASS™:** A comprehensive computer-adaptive testing system from ACT that helps place students into appropriate college courses and maximizes information needed to ensure student success.

**Credit hour:** A unit of academic credit that often represents one hour of class time per week for a period of study (semester, quarter, etc.).

**Deferred admission:** The practice of some colleges of allowing an accepted student to postpone enrollment for one year.

**Early action:** The application process in which students make application to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date.

Students who are admitted under Early Action are not obligated to accept the institution's offer of admission or to submit a deposit until the regular reply date (not prior to May 1).

**Early admission:** Admitting students of superior ability into college courses and programs before they have completed the standard high school program.

**Early decision:** The application process in which students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted, they definitely will enroll. Should a student who applies for financial aid not be offered an award that makes attendance possible, the student may decline the offer of admission and be released from the Early Decision commitment.

**EXPLORE®:** An eighth- and ninth-grade assessment program from ACT designed to stimulate career exploration and help students develop plans for their high school years and beyond.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid**

**(FAFSA):** The application required for students to be considered for federal student financial aid. Obtain a FAFSA form or electronic filing information from a high school or college for the appropriate year (usually available in November). The FAFSA is processed free of charge, and it is used by most state agencies and colleges.

## Glossary (continued)

**Grade point average:** An indicator of the student's overall scholastic performance. The GPA is computed by multiplying the number of grade points earned in each course (generally, A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0) times the number of course hours/credit hours, then dividing the sum by the total number of course hours/credit hours carried.

**Grants:** Awards based on financial need that do not require repayment. Grants are available through the federal government, state agencies, and educational institutions.

**Honors program:** Any program offering opportunity for superior students to enrich their educational experience through independent, advanced, or accelerated study.

**Major:** The subject of study in which the student chooses to specialize; a series of related courses, taken primarily in the junior and senior years.

**Open admissions:** The policy of some colleges of admitting virtually all high school graduates, regardless of academic qualifications such as high school grades and admission test scores.

**PLAN:** A tenth-grade assessment program designed to help students improve their postsecondary planning and preparation. PLAN contains academic tests, an interest inventory, and student information section, and it is complementary in content and format to the ACT. PLAN scores range from 1–32.

**PIN (U.S. Department of Education):** A personal identification number that can be used by students and parents to electronically "sign" the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and access federal aid information.

**Regular decision:** The application process in which a student submits an application to an institution by a specified date and receives a decision within a reasonable and clearly stated period of time, but not later than April 15.

**Rolling admission:** The application process in which an institution reviews applications as they are completed and renders admission decisions to students throughout the admission cycle.

**SAT:** A test of verbal, written, and mathematical abilities given by the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) at specified test centers throughout the year and required or recommended by many colleges as part of the admission process.

**Scholarships:** Nonrepayable awards to students based on merit or merit plus need.

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** The information you will receive approximately 2–4 weeks after your FAFSA has been processed. It will report the information from your application and, if there are no questions or problems with your application, your SAR will report your Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

**Transcript:** The official record of high school or college courses and grades, generally required as part of the college application.

**Wait list:** An admission decision option utilized by institutions to protect against shortfalls in enrollment. Wait lists are sometimes made necessary because of the uncertainty of the admission process, as students submit applications for admission to multiple institutions and may receive several offers of admission. By placing a student on the wait list, an institution does not initially offer or deny admission, but extends to a candidate the possibility of admission in the future, before the institution's admission cycle is concluded.

**WorkKeys®:** A national system designed to improve workplace skills and to help individuals equate learning with earning. WorkKeys measures workplace skills, relates those skills to specific jobs, and helps individuals acquire the levels of skills needed for the jobs they want.










## Suggested Points of Emphasis to Use in Your College Planning Presentation

In developing your presentation, review each page of the College Planning Guide and determine the most appropriate comments to be made with each graphic and handout. In addition to key ideas presented in this booklet and in the PowerPoint presentation at [www.act.org/path/secondary/resources/](http://www.act.org/path/secondary/resources/),

the following points of emphasis below may be helpful.

We recommend that you distribute “Get Set for College” which is available at [www.act.org/path/secondary/resources/](http://www.act.org/path/secondary/resources/). For additional resources, refer to the ACT website [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

Page	Points of Emphasis
Cover	<b>Planning for College</b> (program introduction). The ACT college planning model suggests six basic steps that students and parents should consider while planning for education beyond high school.
2	<b>Options After High School.</b> Know about life’s options after high school. There may be more than one appropriate option for you. Asking questions now may ease some difficult decisions you might face later. The option being discussed today is college planning.
3	<b>Step 1: Know Yourself and Your Reasons for Attending College.</b> College planning is an involved and continuing process. Consider your background, interests, ambitions, goals, and dreams. Explore and learn about career paths ( <a href="http://www.act.org/wwm">www.act.org/wwm</a> ). In addition to expanding job options, attending college results in many other benefits. You will benefit from the experience itself—the learning and the stimulus of interesting people and ideas. YOU are the most important component in this matching process.
4	<b>High School Courses ACT Recommends for All Students.</b> Specific high school course requirements vary from college to college. Be sure to consult with the Admission Representative or review the college catalog. Make the most of your senior year. Take competitive courses and prepare for collegiate success.
5	<b>2007 ACT National High School Graduating Class Report.</b> This table shows that students who completed the recommended core curriculum in high school tend to score higher on the ACT than those who completed less than core. They usually earn higher college GPAs as well.
6	<b>ACT Test Preparation.</b> The knowledge and skills gained through formal education and life’s experiences are considered to be the best preparation for test taking. Test anxiety is natural—becoming familiar with test content, format, and procedures prior to the test date can reduce it. ACT provides a free practice test, and test prep ideas in the booklet <i>Preparing for the ACT</i> and at <a href="http://www.actstudent.org/testprep">www.actstudent.org/testprep</a> . Students can review their PLAN results to identify academic strengths and weaknesses. A personal version of ACT’s Web-based Online Prep can be purchased by calling 319/337-1429. Many students take the ACT test more than once, and nearly all colleges accept and use the highest score.
7	 <b>Handout: Ten Tips for Taking a Standardized Exam.</b> Tips for general test-taking strategies and suggestions to prepare for the test date are provided.
8	<b>Step 2: Consider College Characteristics.</b> The significance of college choice factors varies with the individual. Although availability of your educational program (major) will be the most important factor, other college characteristics must be considered and related to your needs and preferences. Note: Inform students that it’s okay to be “undecided” when considering a major. Approximately ten percent of ACT-tested students are undecided, and most colleges provide services to help students select a major during their first and/or second year.
9	<b>Step 3: List, Compare, and Visit Colleges.</b> There are many resources (directories, websites, DISCOVER, etc.) available to help organize the search for the most suitable college. Encourage students to search the Internet and <a href="http://www.actstudent.org">www.actstudent.org</a> for up-to-date information, data about each college, the academic environment, student and campus life. Plan to visit several campuses. Weigh the pros and cons of each. Determine which colleges have the most desirable characteristics. Keep your information organized.

10	 <b>Handout: College Comparison Worksheet.</b> Students can systematize the comparison of colleges by recording data, impressions, and information in a common format for each college being considered.
11	<b>Checklist for a Campus Visit.</b> A visit to the college campus is probably the best way to learn about many of its qualities and to get a feel for what it would be like to study there. Develop a list of questions and things to accomplish when you get to the campus. Timing of the visit is crucial to get an accurate impression of the school.
12	 <b>Handout: Contacting Colleges and Checklist for a Campus Visit.</b> Provide students with suggested activities for a campus visit and tips for contacting a college. Reinforce the idea that many students enter college without declaring a major. Suggest that students choose a permanent and professional e-mail address for electronic communications with the campus.
13	<b>Step 4: Apply for Admission and Observe Deadlines.</b> The application process at each institution is unique. There are different levels of selectivity, different requirements, varying prerequisites, etc. It is advisable for students to consider applying to more than one college to ensure admission. Remember, the application form is often an admission committee's first contact, so prepare a neat and legible form.
14	 <b>Handout: College Admission and Financial Aid Logs.</b> This form can be used to record key dates, contact persons, important notes, and action taken during the admission process.
15	<b>Step 5: Develop a Plan to Finance Your Education.</b> Financial planning for college is an important process that involves parents, students, financial aid administrators, admission officers, and school counselors. Investigate financial aid. Do not assume that you are ineligible. Keep copies of all documents submitted.
16	<b>What Does Postsecondary Education Cost?</b> College is a major financial investment, so compare costs. It is important for students and parents to budget, plan, and save. College expenses are based on certain budget items. A <i>FREE</i> financial aid estimator is available on the Internet at <a href="http://www.act.org/fane">www.act.org/fane</a> . Financial aid is determined simply by the difference between specific college costs and the expected family contribution. (Suggestion: Secure <b>current costs</b> from several colleges—two-year public, four-year public, and four-year private—to complete your chart.)
17	 <b>Handout: Steps for Applying for Financial Aid.</b> Students and parents can follow these practical steps in applying for financial aid. Keep records on your Financial Aid Log, page 14.
18	<b>Step 6: Review and Finalize Your Plans.</b> Developing your college plan is a significant decision-making experience. Planning step-by-step will make it easier. Once you have made a final decision and have attendance plans confirmed by your college choice, be sure to notify the other colleges to which you have applied.
19	<b>College Success Factors.</b> For most students, a combination of high school grades and test scores provides the best estimate of readiness for college-level work. However, many other factors also influence college performance. Students who learn as much as they can about themselves and their college choices before entering higher education will maximize their chances for success and satisfaction.
20	 <b>Handout: Checklist for College Planning.</b> Students and parents can use this checklist to determine where they are in the planning process and identify additional questions and needs.
21–22	 <b>Handout: Glossary of Terms.</b> Definitions of commonly used terms are provided to help college-bound students and their parents clarify college-oriented terms.

High schools can order ACT registration packets and the test prep booklets *Preparing for the ACT* by phoning 319/337-1270, or by placing an order online at [www.act.org/aap/forms/counsel.html](http://www.act.org/aap/forms/counsel.html).

# HOW TO MAKE YOUR MEETING A SUCCESS

## Ten ways to improve your meeting

1. Start and finish on time.
2. Know what you want to say.
3. Have your materials ready.
4. Make your presentation simple and to the point.
5. Know your audience and share objectives with them.
6. Encourage participation and discussion.
7. Speak clearly; be confident and enthusiastic.
8. Listen to other opinions, but don't allow arguments.
9. Keep the session moving.
10. Close the meeting on a positive note.

## Checklist for organizing a group meeting

### Date for Completion

- \_\_\_\_\_ Establish a convenient, timely meeting date.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reserve a meeting room and request appropriate setup.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact special guests and speakers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Publicize the purpose, date, and location of the meeting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Order necessary audiovisual equipment (screen, projector, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Review all meeting materials, print handout pages, and have copies of *Get Set for College* ready to distribute.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine your points of emphasis and plan your remarks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Plan to close your meeting with a "call to action."
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluate and modify your presentation for future use.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Arrange for individual follow-up appointments.



# ACT Programs and Services to Support College Planning

**EXPLORE**—An assessment of academic progress of 8th and 9th graders that helps students explore a range of career options, and provides information for developing a high school coursework plan. EXPLORE is the first step in ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS™) and is linked to PLAN and the ACT.

**PLAN**—A comprehensive assessment program designed to help all 10th graders improve their postsecondary planning and preparation. PLAN contains academic tests, an interest inventory, and a student information section. It is complementary in content and format to the ACT and is a powerful predictor of success on the ACT.

**The ACT**—The ACT includes an interest inventory, biographical data, and four curriculum-based tests of educational development that are used by colleges for admission, advising, course placement, and scholarship selection. ACT added a 30-minute Writing Test as an optional component to the ACT in February 2005.

**Preparing for the ACT**—A free student test preparation booklet containing a practice test, test content descriptions, and test-taking strategies.

**ACT Online Prep**—The only online test preparation program designed by ACT test development professionals. ACT Online Prep offers practice test questions, a practice essay with real-time scoring, a diagnostic test, and personalized Study Paths to help students improve. Students can access ACT Online Prep via the Internet anywhere and at any time.

**The Real ACT Prep Guide**—The official guide to the ACT is the only commercial ACT test book that includes actual test questions. The book includes three retired tests (each with an optional Writing Test) with answer explanations, instructions on scoring and interpreting scores, information about the content of the exam, procedures to follow when taking the test, types of questions asked, suggestions on how to approach the questions, and general test-taking strategies.

**DISCOVER Career Planning Program**—The most comprehensive computer-based career guidance system available. DISCOVER features career assessments and detailed information that help people make important career and educational decisions. DISCOVER is now available on the Internet, and redesigned menus make navigating DISCOVER even easier. DISCOVER is now available for use by anyone from grade 5 through adulthood.

**Career Planning Survey™**—A comprehensive career guidance program that prepares students (grades 8–10) to make well-reasoned, thoughtful education and career decisions. The Career Planning Survey helps to ensure that students choose a high school program of study that prepares them for a positive transition to meaningful work or further education after high school.

For more information about these programs and resources, contact your ACT Regional Office, Customer Services at 800/498-6065, or visit our website at [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).