

Testing

There are many tests that are useful for college and other post-secondary pursuits. The two most widely used college admissions tests are the ACT and SAT. Most colleges accept either one, but some institutions may require one or the other. It is important that you check the admissions requirements at the schools of your choice.

The student is responsible for registering for these tests and for requesting that the scores be reported by the testing organization directly to the institutions to which you are applying.

HIGH SCHOOL TESTING CODES

Berkner High School
445841

Lake Highlands
High School
441758

Pearce High School
445839

Richardson High School
445840

PSAT/NMSQT

The PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test), given each fall (juniors and sophomores can take it), is an important factor in your future college success. It measures what you've learned in high school and what you will need to succeed in college. Students with top scores on this test may be awarded scholarship money. The best way to prepare for this test is to take challenging courses, do your homework, ask and answer lots of questions in and outside of class. You can check out the kinds of questions asked on the PSAT by visiting www.collegereadiness.collegeboard.org.

SAT

The SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) is a 3 hour test (with an optional 50 minute Essay). The test components include evidence based reading and writing, math, and the optional essay. The focus is on knowledge, skills, and understanding that is important to college and career readiness success, and places emphasis on the meaning of words in context and how they shape meaning. Scoring for the test ranges from 400 to 1600 (correct answers only – no penalty for guessing!) – 200-800 for Reading/Writing and 200-800 for Math. Essay results are reported separately. There are seven testing dates during the year under normal circumstances. It is suggested that students begin taking this test in the spring of the junior year.

2022-23 SAT Administration Dates and Registration Deadlines

SAT Date	Registration Deadline
August 27, 2022	July 29, 2022
October 1, 2022	September 2, 2022
November 5, 2022	October 7, 2022
December 3, 2022	November 22, 2022
March 11, 2023	February 10, 2023
May 7, 2023	April 7, 2023
June 3, 2023	May 4, 2023

ACT

The ACT (American College Testing Program) is a standardized college entrance test that measures student skills in English (45 minutes), reading (35 minutes), math (60 minutes), science (35 minutes), and writing (optional – 40 minutes). Students in grades 11 and 12 can take the test and have their scores submitted to their colleges of choice as part of their college application process.

2022-23 ACT Administration Dates and Registration Deadlines

ACT Date	Registration Deadline
September 10, 2022	August 5, 2022
October 22, 2022	September 16, 2022
December 10, 2022	November 4, 2022
February 11, 2023	January 6, 2023
April 15, 2023	March 10, 2023
June 10, 2023	May 5, 2023
July 15, 2023	June, 16, 2023

AP

AP (Advanced Placement) tests are three-hour examinations given in May to students who have completed any AP course offered at the Richardson ISD high schools. College credit may be awarded in college depending on the school and your AP exam score. Check with your colleges of choice to review their AP policies. There is a fee for taking these exams.

TSIA

TSIA (Texas Success Initiative Assessment) tests students in the areas of reading, mathematics, and writing skills and provides that information to the public colleges and universities of the student’s choice. The TSIA has been approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordination Board for use by Texas institutions of higher education. All students applying for admission to a Texas state college must complete the TSIA or an approved Texas Success Initiative assessment. Because there are some exemptions to this test, it is important to check with the testing office or advising office at the college or university you plan to attend.

ASVAB

The ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) is an aptitude test developed by the Department of Defense and measures the student’s strengths related to military training and potential for success. There are two versions of the test – the enlistment version used for recruiting purposes only, and the ASVAB Career Exploration Program used for career exploration and given in high schools, community colleges, etc.

Selecting the Path that is Right for You

Deciding on a plan or path to take following high school graduation can be confusing and sometimes frustrating. You can learn about your options by talking with your School Counselor, but below is a list of options most often chosen. You can learn more about how to pursue these options on the pages following this list.

College

Colleges are institutions that offer educational instruction beyond the high school level in a two-year or four-year program. Colleges may:

- Offer on-campus housing
- Offer associates, bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees
- Have more rigorous admission standards

University

Universities award undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of fields, and offer a wide range of academic choices. Universities:

- Have on-campus housing
- Have a variety of admissions standards (some more rigorous, some less – be sure to check the university’s website for full information on admission requirements)
- Offer associates, bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees

Liberal Arts College

Liberal arts colleges are four-year institutions focusing on undergraduate degrees. Liberal Arts Colleges:

- Offer more personal attention - based on smaller admission than universities, classes tend to be smaller
- Emphasize courses in humanities, social sciences, and sciences
- Often have specific area(s) of study that is their college “major”

Community College

Community colleges are two-year institutions of higher learning that can:

- Offer the first two years of a liberal arts education
- Provide career and vocational training
- Offer associate degrees as well as certificates
- Sometimes offer on-campus housing

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)

HBCUs were established specifically with the goal of increasing African American students’ access to a college education at a time when they were systematically denied access to most other colleges and universities. Students attending these schools can and should feel empowered by the fact that they’re actively defending and taking advantage of their rights, while experiencing:

- A supportive atmosphere
- Classes and extracurricular activities tailored to African Americans
- Faculty mentors who encourage student success

Military Academies

The five U.S. military academies (U.S. Military Academy-West Point, NY (Army); U.S. Air Force Academy-Colorado Springs, CO; U.S. Naval Academy-Annapolis, MD; U.S. Coast Guard Academy-New London, CT; and U.S. Merchant Marine Academy-Kings Point, NY) are federal academies for the undergraduate education and training of commissioned officers for the United States Armed Forces. Military academies:

- Require a nomination by a US Senator or US Representative (U.S. Coast Guard Academy does not require a Congressional nomination)
- Help build qualities of character and leadership
- Provide a structured environment with firm boundaries and daily routines

Trade, Technical, and Professional Schools

These institutions emphasize preparation for specific careers and enroll students who have made clear decisions about what they plan to study. These schools:

- Offer programs and certificates in many areas without requiring associates or bachelor's degrees
- Often do not have a core curriculum – students have classes related to the career choice only
- Often have quality programs with high success rates –check school accreditation to ensure you are choosing a quality school

U.S. Military Service

Enlistment in U.S. Military service can offer an unparalleled sense of patriotism, duty, honor, and selfless service. Talk to a recruiter for specific information on each branch of the U.S.

Military. Some of the benefits to enlistment include:

- Guaranteed paycheck
- Educational benefits (you can earn college credit while in the U.S. Military)
- Option for full-time or part-time service
- Travel

Workforce

Attending college directly out of high school isn't for everyone. Some students may want a break before they return to full-time education, and for some high school graduates, working instead of attending college is a monetary decision. Whatever the reason, it is important to remember that it may be difficult to go back to school after you've been out for a while, so be sure to consider this option carefully. There are some benefits to taking a break:

- Taking a year off can help you learn to appreciate school, especially if the job is tedious
- Gain life experience
- Have time to put more thought into your future career

If College is Your Choice

If you are like most high school students, you want to attend the best school for you. Finding colleges that fit you may mean setting aside things like which school is most popular, or which school your friends are attending, or even which school your parents went to. Try to get a feel for the college's personality and environment. Get an idea of how the college meshes with what you want.

So, what makes a college *right for you*?

First, let's be clear, there is likely more than one "right" college for you, so when you're searching, try to keep in mind that a college that is right for you should be:

- a place where you can be yourself, but where you are also challenged to do better
- a place where you have opportunity to learn about things that fascinate you, work at internships that will help you further your career plans, play the sports you love, join the clubs that help fuel your passion for connection and commitment
- a place where you learn how to think critically, solve problems, and communicate well
- a place where you can see yourself spending the next four years of your life (you enjoy the atmosphere and environment – ex: in a rural area, small and close-knit community; or large inner-city campus; etc.

However, it is important to keep in mind that your future success is mainly determined by you, and not the college you attend.

Dallas County Promise

Dallas County Promise (DCP) is a last-dollar scholarship that covers tuition at partner colleges. Dallas County Promise helps dedicated students prepare for success in college and your career not only through tuition assistance, but also with success coaching and advising. "Our promise is to support you in earning your credentials whether in the form of a career certification, associate's or bachelor's degree." – DCP

Learn more about DCP at: <https://www.dallascountypromise.org/>

Starting your college search

The best time to start your college search is day 1 of your freshman year of high school. However, if you are a junior or senior, don't worry if you haven't completed everything yet. Simply turn back to the beginning of this handbook and start checking off boxes on the class timelines! Whenever you start your search, there are many ways to get information to help you decide on the colleges of your choice.

Attend the RISD College Fair

By attending the RISD College Fair you have the opportunity to meet approximately 100 representatives from around the country and the world. You can sign up to receive more information from the schools that interest you most. You will want to ask specific questions like:

- What programs are your college noted for?
- Does your college offer special programs like independent study or study abroad?

- How do students choose classes?
- What is the surrounding area like?
- Does your university have [name of club/organization/activity]?
- What is on-campus housing like?
- Do many students live off campus?
- What is there to do during free time on and around the campus?
- What is the average financial aid package that is offered to students?

Preparing for the RISD College Fair

2022-23 RISD College Fair – Tuesday, September 20 – 6:00 – 8:00

Richardson High School Gym

Before You Go

- Find out which colleges will be at the fair and write down the names of the ones you want to learn about.
- Make a list of any questions you have.
- Bring your list, a pen, paper and a bag to hold college brochures.
- Make sure the email address that you give out won't embarrass you — remember, college admission officers will see it.

While You're There

- Get a map of the fair and plan a route that will take you to the booths of all the colleges on your list. If there is no map available, do a quick survey of the room to locate your colleges.
- Visit booths and ask college representatives questions. For example, you can ask, "What kind of student are you looking for?" or "What makes your campus special?"
- Take a minute to jot down any information you think is important before moving on to the next booth.
- Check out some of the other booths when you're done with the colleges on your list. You may stumble onto a great college you hadn't considered.
- Attend an information session, if any are offered. Typical topics include applications and financial aid. These sessions are good opportunities to get expert advice.

When You Get Home

- Ask yourself which colleges stood out and why.
- Organize the college material and information you collected and review it that week while it's fresh in your mind.
- Go over any notes you took during the fair.
- Throw out the pamphlets of or notes about colleges you've ruled out so you can focus on the colleges you're interested in.

- Do more research on the colleges you're thinking about attending. Explore websites, contact the admission office or plan a campus visit. If you liked what you saw at the fair, it may be time to see the college in person.

Taken from: bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/

Checklist for college programs for students with learning difficulties

We suggest that you print this page and have it handy as you attend the RISD College Fair.

Write the name of each college at the top of the columns in the table below. Write “yes” or “no” as the answer for each question when speaking with the admissions/recruiting officer or college representative.

Be sure to check in with the campus Disability Services Office (some colleges have a different name for this office) as soon as possible.

Are the following items used to evaluate students for admission?

- Untimed SAT or ACT
- Autobiographical statement
- Psychoeducational report
- Personal interview

Is diagnostic testing available?

Is subject-area tutoring available?

Is basic skills remediation available?

Are academic advisors available to help the student plan their academic program?

Are special courses available?
(eg. remedial math)

Are the following auxiliary aids and services provided?

- Audio textbooks
- Audio recording devices
- Computers
- Alternative exam arrangements
- Notetakers
- Advocacy

Are the following counseling services available?

- Individual
- Small group
- Advising
- Career

Example University							
yes							
yes							
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Take advantage of times when college come to you!

College representatives from various campuses will visit your high school throughout the year. This is a great time to meet informally with them during lunches. Some will provide more formal sessions in the evening (on financial aid, college interview, essay writing, etc. You can ask some of the questions mentioned above, or form some of your own.

Make college visits

Campus visits are an important part of your college search. If you're not sure what you're looking for in a college campus, start by walking around one of our communities several nearby campuses – it can help you begin to formulate what you do (and don't) want in a college experience.

After you have narrowed your college list to a manageable number, make arrangements to visit your top choices in person – it is best to visit on a week day if possible. A visit can help you get a sense of what life is like on the campus and whether or not it matches what you want and need in a college experience.

Check with your high school counselor or College and Career Coordinator about college visits and school attendance requirements.

Check out individual college websites and their social media

Once you have a list of potential schools, check out their individual websites – many offer virtual tours. The website will provide you with basic information about academic majors, an overview (profile) of the student body, admission requirements, accreditation, financial aid, and more. College social media presence can help you get a feel for the environment and personality of the school. Spending time checking a college out online will often help you determine if the school matches your college search criteria.

People

People you know – School Counselor, College and Career Coordinator, alumni, older friends in college, your parents, etc. – can often give specific information that you may not ask the college representative. Take advantage of the specific kind of knowledge the people around you can offer!

College Selectivity – Entrance Exam Scores and GPA

The table below shows categories for access to college types based roughly on student GPA and SAT/ACT scores. This table provides general information and is not meant to be a firm indication of the type of college you should apply to.

To use this table, find your entrance exam score on the left, and move to the right to find your GPA. The intersection of those two pieces of data indicates the type of college you are likely to be eligible to attend.

Example: Jack earned 1070 on the SAT. His GPA is 3.2. He is likely eligible for admission to a Selective college or university.

ACT	SAT	GPA				
		<2.0	2.0-2.4	2.5-2.9	3.0-3.4	3.5+
24+	1090+	Somewhat Selective	Somewhat Selective / Selective	Selective	Very Selective	Very Selective
21-23	980-1080	Somewhat Selective	Somewhat Selective	Selective	Selective	Very Selective
18-20	870-970	Non-Selective	Somewhat Selective	Somewhat Selective	Selective	Selective
16-17	790-860	Two-year College	Non-Selective	Somewhat Selective	Somewhat Selective	Selective
<16 or No ACT	<790 or No SAT	Two-Year College	Two-Year College	Non-Selective	Somewhat Selective	Somewhat Selective

General Random Sampling of Colleges and Selectivity Type

Two-Year	Non-Selective	Somewhat Selective	Selective	Very Selective
				
				
				
				
				
				
				
				

Military Academies – How to get in

There are five United States Military Service Academies that provide undergraduate education and train future commissioned officers for service in the United States Armed Forces. Applying to a Military Service Academy is a highly competitive and time-consuming process. Service academies rank among the top universities in the nation. Students pay no tuition and have free room and board while at the academy. Students are required to serve in the military upon graduation. The five United States Service Academies are:

The [United States Military Academy](#) (USMA) located in West Point, NY

The [United States Naval Academy](#) (USNA) located in Annapolis, MD

The [United States Coast Guard Academy](#) (USCGA) located in New London, CT

The [United States Merchant Marine Academy](#) (USMMA) located in Kings Point, NY

The [United States Air Force Academy](#) (USAFA) located in Colorado Springs, CO

Admissions requirements

- Be a United States Citizen
- Be unmarried with no dependents
- Be 17-23 years of age by July 1 of the year you enter
- Meet academy standards for
 - physical wellness/fitness
 - tattoo placement
 - to find the most up-to-date list of standards, visit the academy website listed above

How to apply

Application

It is best to begin the application process early in your junior year of high school. You must open a Candidate Profile through the respective academy's website in order to initiate the application process.

Nomination

Obtaining a congressional nomination from your congress woman or man, one of your two state senators, or the Vice President of the United States is the most critical step in the process. You can contact your local congressional representative as well as your state senators' offices to get information on the application process for nomination. While you only need one nomination, it is best to apply through all sources – you must have a nomination before a service academy will look at your candidate's application profile.

Additionally

Candidates are expected to be athletes, scholars, and leaders in their school or community. They must have letters of recommendation, strong SAT / ACT scores, and a robust GPA. If attending a service academy is your goal, be sure to take a leadership position at school. And – if you don't get accepted the first time, apply again. Many have been appointed to an academy having applied more than once.

Learn more at: <https://militarybenefits.info/how-to-apply-to-a-military-service-academy/#ixzz6SqtyGiaO>

Interested in joining a branch of the US Armed Forces?

Do some research

Enlisting in the military is a big decision; you should start by doing some research. You will have important choices to make when you sign up, so it's best to "know before you go".

The United States Military has five branches: Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. As an enlisted member of the military you will be trained for a job specialty. The contract for military enlistment is generally four years of active service and four years of inactive service.

If you know someone who is in or has been in the Military, spend some time with them talking about their experiences. You can also check the branch websites:

- <https://www.goarmy.com/>,
- <https://www.airforce.com/>,
- <https://www.navy.mil/>,
- <https://www.marines.com/>,
- <https://www.uscg.mil/>.

Requirements for Enlistment

- must be a US citizen or lawful permanent resident with a valid Green Card
- you can enlist at age 17 (with parental consent) or at age 18 or older (without parental consent)
- there are age limits for enlisting
 - Marines – 28
 - Coast Guard – 31
 - Army – 34
 - Air Force – 39
 - Navy – 39
- high school diploma (or GED, but your options may be more limited in some branches)
- take the ASVAB (see testing section on page 14)
- pass a physical exam and meet weight limits for your preferred branch

Steps for Enlisting

- *Contact a Recruiter*
Now that you've done your research, it's time to talk to a recruiter for each branch you're interested in to get answers to your questions. It is fine to bring a parent or friend with you for support. It is also a good idea to make a list of questions to take with you to the recruiter.
- *Report to MEPS*
The Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) is the place recruits go to finish the enlistment process. You should be prepared to spend the day there. You will take the ASVAB, have a

physical exam, meet with a career counselor; and if you're accepted, you'll take the oath of enlistment!

- *Orders for Basic Training*

You'll receive orders for basic training within a few weeks (or if you enrolled in the delayed entry program, within a year).

To learn more or to find a recruiter, go to www.usa.gov/join-military

Writing an essay they won't forget

Most selective colleges require an essay as part of your application process, and admissions officers have to read hundreds of them. This is your opportunity to set yourself apart from the other candidates. You are unique, with your own personality, background, experiences, and interests that uniquely yours – so tell your story. Be sure to be honest and genuine. Write about a subject you care about. Don't try too hard to sound smarter than the rest, sound like yourself.

Tips for creating your college application essay

- Write about something that is important to you – for some it is tempting to write about something they think will be important to the admissions officers. It is much better to write about an experience, a film, a person, an activity etc. that had a significant impact on your life.
- Be careful about comedy. It is good if you can make an admissions officer chuckle; it is a memorable aspect of an essay. However, be careful when it comes to writing something funny, because it is easy to fall into the trap of sounding like a comedian. Remember that this is an essay, not a stand-up comedy script, so try to avoid one-liners, etc. Again, be your genuine self.
- Refer to the question being asked frequently as you write in order to stay on track.
- Don't just give facts, reflect. It is okay to write about how you hiked part of the Appalachian Trail last summer, but be sure that you focus on how that experience changed you – what you learned about yourself, your goals, or life in general.
- Start your essay early. Remember the rules you likely learned in elementary school – write, review, edit. Is the essay interesting? Is it written in your own voice? Does it share something about you? Do your ideas flow naturally and logically? Write, review, edit.
- Have someone or several people review your essay – a teacher or counselor is a good option. Finally, double or triple check for grammatical or spelling errors before sending it off.

Sample College Essays

Following are four sample essays that followed these tips and helped the authors get into the colleges of their choice. (Essay samples taken from Shemmassian Academic Consulting, <https://www.shemmassianconsulting.com/>)

Essay Sample #1

"I believe that humans will always have the ability to rise above any situation, because life is what you make of it. We don't know what life is or why we are in this world; all we know, all we feel, is that we must protect it anyway we can. Buddha said it clearly: "Life is

suffering." Life is meant to be challenging, and really living requires consistent work and review. By default, life is difficult because we must strive to earn happiness and success.

Yet I've realized that life is fickle than I had imagined; it can disappear or change at any time. Several of my family members left this world in one last beating symphony; heart attacks seem to be a trend in my family. They left like birds; laughing one minute and in a better place the next.

Steve Jobs inspired me, when in his commencement address to Stanford University in 2005, he said "Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma--which is living with the results of other people's thinking." I want to make mistakes, because that is how I learn; I want to follow the beat of my own drum even if it is "out of tune." The important thing is to live without regrets, so when my heart ceases to beat, it will make one last happy note and move on.

I want to live my life daily. Every day I want to live. Every morning when I wake up, I want to be excited by the gift of a new day. I know I am being idealistic and young, and that my philosophy on life is comparable to a calculus limit; I will never reach it. But I won't give up on it because, I can still get infinitely close and that is amazing.

Every day is an apology to my humanity; because I am not perfect, I get to try again and again to "get it right." I breathe the peace of eternity, knowing that this stage is temporary; real existence is continuous. The hourglass of life incessantly trickles on and we are powerless to stop it.

So, I will forgive and forget, love and inspire, experience and satire, laugh and cry, accomplish and fail, live and die. This is how I want to live my life, with this optimistic attitude that every day is a second chance. All the time, we have the opportunity to renew our perspective on life, to correct our mistakes, and to simply move on. Like the phoenix I will continue to rise from the ashes, experienced and renewed. I will not waste time for my life is already in flux.

*In all its splendor
The Phoenix rises*

*In a burst of orange and yellow
It soars in the baby blue sky
Heading to that Great Light
Baptized in the dance of time
Fearless, eternal, beautiful
It releases a breathtaking aurora
And I gasp at the enormity”*

Essay Sample #2

“When I was thirteen and visiting Liberia, I contracted what turned out to be yellow fever. I met with the local doctor, but he couldn’t make a diagnosis simply because he didn’t have access to blood tests and because symptoms such as “My skin feels like it’s on fire” matched many tropical diseases. Luckily, my family managed to drive me several hours away to an urban hospital, where I was treated. Yellow fever shouldn’t be fatal, but in Africa it often is. I couldn’t believe that such a solvable issue could be so severe at the time—so I began to explore.

The exploration led me to the African Disease Prevention Project (ADPP), a non-profit organization associated with several universities. I decided to create the first high school branch of the organization; I liked its unique way of approaching health and social issues. Rather than just raising money and channeling it through third parties, each branch “adopts” one village and travels there to provide for its basic needs. As branch president, I organize events from small stands at public gatherings to 60-person dinner fundraisers in order to raise both money and awareness. I’ve learned how to encourage my peers to meet deadlines, to work around 30 different schedules at once, and to give presentations convincing people why my organization is worth their donation. But overall, ADPP has taught me that small changes can have immense impacts. My branch has helped raise almost \$3,000 to build water sanitation plants, construct medical clinics, and develop health education programs in the small village of Zwedru. And the effect doesn’t stop there—by improving one area, our efforts permeate into neighboring villages as they mimic the lifestyle changes that they observe nearby—simple things, like making soap available—can have a big effect. The difference between ADPP and most other

organizations is its emphasis on the basics and making changes that last. Working towards those changes to solve real life problems is what excites me.

*I found that the same idea of change through simple solutions also rang true during my recent summer internship at Dr. Martin Warner’s lab at UCLA. Dr. Martin’s vision involves using already available digital technologies to improve the individualization of healthcare. By using a person’s genome to tailor a treatment for them or using someone’s personal smartphone as a mobile-monitor to remotely diagnose symptoms, everyday technology is harnessed to make significant strides forward. At the lab, I focused on parsing through medical databases and writing programs that analyze cancerous genomes to find relationships between certain cancers and drugs. My analysis resulted in a database of information that physicians can use to prescribe treatments for their patients’ unique cancerous mutations. Now, a pancreatic cancer patient does not need to be the “guinea-pig” for a prototype drug to have a shot at survival: a doctor can choose the best treatment by examining the patient individually instead of relying on population-wide trends. For the first time in my science career, my passion was going to have an immediate effect on other people, and to me, that was enthralling. Dr. Martin’s lab and his book, *Digital Healthcare: A New Age of Medicine*, have shown me that changing something as simple as how we treat a disease can have a huge impact. I have found that the search for the holy grail of a “cure for cancer” is problematic as nobody knows exactly what it is or where to look—but we can still move forward without it.*

Working with Project ADPP and participating in medical research have taught me to approach problems in a new way. Whether it’s a complex genetic disease or a tropical fever, I’ve found that taking small steps often is the best approach. Finding those steps and achieving them is what gets me excited and hungry to explore new solutions in the future.”

Essay Sample #3

“My fingers know instinctively, without a thought. They turn the dial, just as they have hundreds of times before, until a soft, metallic click echoes into my eardrum and triggers their unconscious stop. I exultantly thrust open my locker door, exposing its deepest bowels candidly to the wide halls of the high school. The bright lights shine back, brashly

revealing every crevice, nook, and cranny, gleaming across its scintillating, bare surfaces. On this first day of senior year, I set out upon my task. I procure an ordinary plastic grocery bag from my backpack. The contents inside collectively represent everything about me in high school – they tell a story, one all about me.

I reach in and let my fingers trail around the surfaces of each object. I select my first prey arbitrarily, and as I raise my hand up to eye level, I closely examine this chosen one. A miniature Flamenco dancer stares back at me from the confines of the 3-D rectangular magnet, half popping out as if willing herself to come to life. Instantly, my mind transports me back a few summers before, when I tapped my own heels to traditional music in Spain. I am reminded of my thirst to travel, to explore new cultures utterly different from my familiar home in Modesto, California. I have experienced study abroad in Spain, visited my father's hometown in China five times, and traveled to many other places such as Paris. As a result, I have developed a restlessness inside me, a need to move on from four years in the same high school, to take advantage of diverse opportunities whenever possible, and to meet interesting people.

I take out the next magnet from my plastic bag. This one shows a panoramic view of the city of Santa Barbara, California. Here, I recall spending six weeks in my glory, not only studying and learning, but actually pursuing new knowledge to add to the repertoire of mankind. I could have easily chosen to spend my summer lazing about; in fact, my parents tried to persuade me into taking a break. Instead, I chose to do advanced molecular biology research at Stanford University. I wanted to immerse myself in my passion for biology and dip into the infinitely rich possibilities of my mind. This challenge was so rewarding to me, while at the same time I had the most fun of my life, because I was able to live with people who shared the same kind of drive and passion as I did.

After sticking up my magnets on the locker door, I ran my fingers across the bottom of the bag, and I realized that one remained. It was a bold, black square, with white block letters proclaiming my motto, "Live the Life You Imagine." In my four years at Cornell University, I will certainly continue to live life as I imagine, adding my own flavor to the Cornell community, while taking away invaluable experiences of my own."

Essay Sample #4

(Note: This is a supplemental essay example)

“In most conventional classrooms, we are taught to memorize material. We study information to regurgitate it on a test and forget it the following day. I thought this was learning. But this past summer, I realized I was wrong.

I attended the SPK Program, a five-week enrichment program with New Jersey’s best and brightest students. I lived on a college campus with 200 students and studied a topic. I selected Physical Science. On the first day of class, our teacher set a box on the table and poured water into the top, and nothing came out. Then, he poured more water in, and everything slowly came out. We were told to figure out what had happened with no phones or textbooks, just our brains. We worked together to discover in the box was a siphon, similar to what is used to pump gas. We spent the next weeks building solar ovens, studying the dynamic of paper planes, diving into the content of the speed of light and space vacuums, among other things. We did this with no textbooks, flashcards, or information to memorize.

During those five weeks, we were not taught impressive terminology or how to ace the AP Physics exam. We were taught how to think. More importantly, we were taught how to think together. Learning is not memorization or a competition. Learning is working together to solve the problems around us and better our community. To me, learning is the means to a better future, and that’s exciting.”

Resumes – not just for jobs

Resumes are not just for people applying for jobs; high school student resumes give colleges a quick snapshot of your achievements, hobbies, work history, and more. They can also be helpful to give to teachers to help them prepare for writing your letter of recommendation. Below are some tips to making resume writing a breeze.

Things to include in a College Admissions Resume

- Heading with your name, address, and email address
- Graduation date, GPA, and SAT/ACT scores
- Academic awards and other achievements
- Extracurricular activities
- Leadership positions (in school and in your community)
- Work and volunteer experience
- Special skills such as second (or more) language fluency, coding expertise, etc.
- Academics
- Athletics
- You can order your resume:
 - By activity (most important first)
 - Chronologically
- Format your resume so that it is easy to scan. Use clear headings to separate sections, bulleted lists, etc.
- Keep your resume concise
- Focus on depth and length of commitment when deciding which activities to include. It is better to share at greater depth about a couple of key experiences than list multiple activities that you were not involved in for very long.
- Try to keep your resume to 2 pages maximum
- Update your resume every semester so that it is ready to go at any time

Getting letters of recommendation

Many colleges and universities require letters of recommendation as part of the application process. As a student in RISD, it is easy to request your letter(s) through your Naviance account. Be sure to give the people you request a letter from at least 3 weeks prior notice to prepare your letter.

Steps to requesting your letter(s)

- Meet with your teacher(s) or counselor to ask if they would be willing to write a letter of recommendation on your behalf
- Log into your Naviance account and select the **Colleges** tab
- Under the Colleges tab, click on the link titled **Letters of Recommendation**
- On the recommendation request page, click on the blue **Add Request** button to submit a request – submit one teacher at a time from the drop-down list.
- Check one or more colleges from your **Colleges I’m Applying To** list to indicate where the teacher should be sending the letter of recommendation.
- Click the **SAVE** button at the bottom of the screen which will return you to the recommendation status page. You will see the status for all teacher recommendation requests here.

Transcripts

Unofficial Transcripts

Students may need to request unofficial transcripts for scholarships, summer camps, to have for their own records, or for employment. The counseling office at your school can process your request. Check with your counselor about the process to request an unofficial transcript.

Official Transcripts

Requesting a transcript through **Naviance**:

- Select the **Colleges I’m Applying To** tab
- Click **Request Transcripts** located above the list of colleges
- Check the box for the college or university you want the transcript sent to
- Select **Request Transcripts** at the bottom of the page
- Complete a Transcript Request Form in the counseling office and pay the appropriate fee

Requesting a transcript through **GreenLight**:

GreenLight Locker is an “electronic locker” that empowers students to upload records required for college – like vaccinations, FAFSA, and other documents – and then send those records, plus their official transcript, to more than 5,000 colleges. Each high school student will receive a FREE GreenLight Locker. In the past, transcripts have only been sent on days when the school is open. GreenLight now allows the high school student to send transcripts over weekends and on break days.

If a parent chooses to not utilize GreenLight, they can opt out using this form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdQLetUrhXobACHcFBym6XtnGeDE8ZRPcWzXuOVtlqkI3mYww/viewform>

For more information, visit: <https://web.risd.org/counselingservices/greenlight-transcripts/>

College Interviews – it’s a two-way street

The benefits of interviewing

Not all colleges require interviews, in fact, some may not offer them at all. If the college you’re applying to has mandatory or even optional interviews, take the opportunity to show that you’re more than test scores, grades, and accomplishments. This is a good opportunity to let the admissions officers know who you are and to find out more about the school. Interviews give you the chance to:

- Show that you are seriously interested in attending their school
- Convey what you can bring to their campus community
- Learn more about a college’s programs
- Explain variations in your record (for example, changes in your grades, etc.)

Types of interviews

Interviews vary depending on the college, student, and particular situation. Most “formal” interviews last between 30 and 60 minutes and can be held with:

- Admissions officer
- Student
- Alumnus

There are also less “formal” interviews. You may have the opportunity to participate in a group information session with admissions staff members and current students. Additionally, you have the opportunity to meet with admissions representatives at the RISD College Fair and campus college rep. visits.

Be sure to ask questions. Asking questions shows that you’re interested in the college and what the admissions officer has to say. You should try to ask questions that indicate you’ve done some research about the college and know why you consider it a good fit for you. Additionally, asking questions can help you discover characteristics that colleges can’t convey in a catalog or on a website.

If you intend to attend a music, drama, or dance institute, you should plan on performing an audition or submitting a portfolio in addition to taking part in any necessary interview.

Paying for college = financing your future

Many students will receive financial aid and loans from the government in order to attend college. To receive any financial aid, you must fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). FAFSA applications are available on October 1, so go to

<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa> to apply for financial aid as soon as possible after September 30. Remember to indicate your college(s) of choice on your application. Most colleges will take information from the FAFSA to offer additional school-based financial aid.

In order to plan for the future, you can estimate how much you will be expected to pay using the resources below.

FAFSA Forecaster

If you know you will be applying for financial aid, and you want to get an estimate of how much you will be paying, you can fill out the FAFSA forecaster. It will show you how much the government expects your family to pay for college. This will help plan for the future.

<https://www.aidcalc.com/calculators/efc/#>

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/expected-family-contribution-calculator>

Additionally, many colleges and universities have a “net price calculator” on their website. After you’ve gotten your median Expected Family Contribution (EFC), with a little information from you, the net price calculator will give you:

- The average grant and scholarship aid the school awards to students like you
- The school’s “net price” (the difference between the total cost of attendance and the average aid awarded by the school). This is the amount you will pay for your freshman year – you can meet this financial requirement through a combination of cash, student loans, grants, and scholarships

Dallas County Promise

Dallas County Promise (DCP) is a last-dollar scholarship that covers tuition at partner colleges. Dallas County Promise helps dedicated students prepare for success in college and your career not only through tuition assistance, but also with success coaching and advising. “Our promise is to support you in earning your credentials whether in the form of a career certification, associate’s or bachelor’s degree.” - DCP

Learn more about DCP at: <https://www.dallascountypromise.org/>

FAFSA / TASFA

You should fill out a FAFSA if:

- You are a US Citizen
- You are a Permanent US resident with Alien Registration Card (I-551)
- You are a Conditional Permanent US Resident with visa type I-551C
- You are an eligible noncitizen with an arrival/departure record showing one of the following: refugee, asylum granted, parolee (min one year), or Cuban-Haitian entrant

You should fill out the TASFA:

- If none of the above apply to you, but you are classified as a TX resident and therefore are eligible to pay the TX in-state tuition
- See your College and Career Coordinator for this paper application

What you need to fill out your FAFSA

- The first thing you will need to do is long onto <https://fsaid.ed.gov> to create a FSA ID (Federal Student Aid Identification). Students, parents, and borrowers are required to use the FSA ID made up of a username and password to access certain U. S. Department of Education websites (parents and students will need individual ID numbers). Your FSA ID is used to confirm your identity when accessing your financial aid information and electronically signing your federal student aid documents.
- Your Social Security Number
- Your Alien Registration Number (if you are not a U. S. Citizen)
- Most recent tax returns
- W-2 forms

Scholarships

Another way to get money for college is through scholarships. Debt.org tells us that almost \$50 billion is awarded in scholarships and grants each year. Scholarships are often based on your achievements in things like academics, athletics, extracurricular activities, etc. However, there are many that are based on a variety of special interests.

There are many sites that can help you find scholarships that are right for you. Some that may be helpful in your search are:

- <https://www.fastweb.com/>
- <https://www.salliemae.com/college-planning/tools/scholarship-search/>
- <https://finaid.org/scholarships/>
- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>
- <https://www.niche.com/colleges/scholarships/>

Tips when applying for scholarships:

- Check scholarship websites weekly
- Keep a notebook or file of scholarships you've applied for as well as deadlines for others you will be applying for
- Avoid companies claiming to guarantee scholarships for a fee – **it is a scam!**

... and finally ...

Remember that, whatever your plans are – college, enlisted military, military academy, work force, your School Counselor, College and Career Coordinator, teachers, administrators, and parents are here to help you meet your post-secondary goals.

**Dream big, and remember to always make your effort match
the dream!**

My Miscellaneous Notes
