



# COLLEGE COUNSELING HANDBOOK



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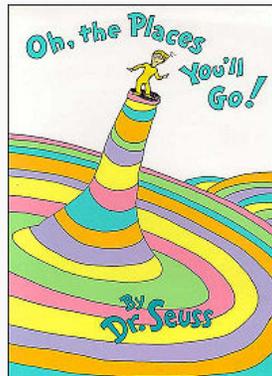
OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

This handbook is designed to give our students and parents an introduction to the college process. Many families have been through this process while others will experience it for the first time. However, the world of college admissions is an ever-changing one. Therefore, we encourage you to read through the handbook and begin to familiarize yourselves with the variety of college and university systems across the country. The guidance department at Minuteman is also here to assist you directly with the college planning process.

Choosing a college can be challenging and stressful at times but rest assured, if you are well informed about your college picks and ask the right questions, you too will come to find your “perfect fit.” We look forward to working with you through the college process and especially seeing all the places you’ll go!

*Oh, the Places You'll Go!*



# SENDING APPLICATIONS

**It is the responsibility of the student to make an appointment with their counselor and complete these college-related assignments.**

## **PREPARING THE APPLICATION**

Preparing a quality application can result in positive decisions. Many College Admission Officers report that the surprising high volume of applications that arrive obviously having been completed “the night before the deadline.” Remember that neatness, clarity, and creativity are important. Please proofread beforehand!

### ***What will the Guidance Office send?***

- Official High School Transcript
- School Profile
- Counselor Recommendation (If requested)
- Secondary School Report from the Common Application (must be given to the counselor to fill out)

### ***What will your Teacher Recommender send?***

- Your letter of recommendation directly to the school

### ***What do you need to do?***

- Fill out and send in your applications as well as supplements before the deadlines
- Contact College Board or ACT to send your scores to each school you’ve applied to and TOEFL scores if necessary
- Ask teachers for recommendations; let them know what schools you’ve applied to and the deadlines
- Fill out a Transcript Request Form for Guidance listing each school you are applying to at least 15 school days before the deadline

## **MAILING REQUIREMENTS:**

Colleges request that the high school transcripts are sent **officially** by the school. For this reason, students are NOT given these documents to be mailed from home. These letters should remain confidential from the teacher/counselor to the admission committee.

**A word about “lost” documents:** First, don’t panic. Colleges receive mail in bulk during the application season. Many times, they may write to students or contact them via email reporting that documents are missing. OFTENTIMES, it is that the documents are in their office, but they have not yet been opened, logged into the computer, filed, etc. Rather than panicking, you should **contact the school directly** and ask them to double check their files.

The deadlines below correspond to the three-week processing time that is needed by the counseling office. Late applications will **not** be given priority, even if the deadline is approaching.

**Below are the Minuteman Deadlines as they correspond to the college / university deadlines:**

### **College Application Deadline**

November 1st / November 15<sup>th</sup>  
December 1st / December 15<sup>th</sup>  
January 1<sup>st</sup> / January 15<sup>th</sup>  
February 1<sup>st</sup> / February 15<sup>th</sup>  
January 25<sup>th</sup>

### **Have Transcript Request into Guidance By**

October 10 *All Early Decision/Early Action deadlines due.*  
November 7  
December 5  
January 9  
ALL remaining university applications due to the guidance office

# COLLEGE PLANNING CALENDAR

## Spring of Junior Year

Utilize collegeboard.org to help you in your college search  
Visit Colleges (ideal times are February and April vacations)  
Take Spring SAT (March or May) and/or Spring ACT (April or June)  
Speak with one-to-two teachers before summer vacation about writing recommendations for college

## Summer into Senior Year

Visit colleges and schedule appropriate interviews  
Complete the Common Application  
Rough draft essay ideas  
Complete Counselor Recommendation Form

## September

Make sure that you are scheduled to complete all graduation requirements  
Set up a college planning meeting with your guidance counselor  
Finalize a list of schools  
Register and prepare for the October SAT if necessary

## October

Submit applications for Early Decision and Early Action to the Guidance Office  
Submit transcript requests as they correspond to application deadlines, at least **15** school days prior to deadlines  
Ask for teacher recommendations early and use the forms available in guidance  
October SAT is administered  
Register and prepare for the November SAT if necessary  
Plan to attend area college fairs (Minuteman's College Fair is in October)

## November

November SAT is administered /Register for the December SAT if necessary  
Attend Financial Aid Night

## December

Review progress with your guidance counselor  
Tech Prep students using an articulation agreement complete the Tech Prep package  
December SAT is administered  
Register and prepare for the January SAT if necessary

## January

Plan to have all college applications completed and submitted to colleges  
Review all scholarships and awards available  
Make sure you have received credit for all graduation requirements  
Complete FAFSA as early as possible  
January SAT is administered

## February

Check to see that your transcript packages have been received and record dates  
Finalize plans for community college, technical schools, military, or post grad programs  
If you have not made post high school plans, set up a meeting with your counselor  
Listen for Scholarship announcements

## March

Inform your guidance counselor about your admission decisions  
Complete Minuteman's Scholarship application  
Check local/hometown community scholarships that you may be eligible for and apply

## April

Make final decisions regarding choosing a college or career  
Follow up on college applications and or scholarships where needed  
Take the Accuplacer exam for College Placement

## May

Finalize contact with the college you choose to attend, including housing

# STANDARDIZED TESTING

**EVERY** 11th grade student should take the SAT or the ACT. Time and time again students change their minds about where they want to go to college. It is better to have the scores ready rather than to be scrambling at the last minute. The best thing to do is take the tests early so that you have time during the senior year to retake any tests if needed.

Refer to collegeboard.org and act.org for the closest testing center to your home. Registration for each test takes place typically online. You will need to set up an online account. Students may also get a paper registration form in guidance. Please pay attention to deadlines to sign up for the test.

All students for whom English is their second language should plan on taking the TOEFL test *even if they have studied English since birth*. Many colleges require this test for non-native speakers of English. (The exception to this is usually when the student is taking AP English ([www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org))).

**Test Day Information YOU MUST BRING A PHOTO ID IN ORDER TO BE ADMITTED.**

Students should report to the test center by 7:45 a.m. and bring the following:

- Admission ticket
- Photo identification
- Two No. 2 pencils
- Four-function, scientific or graphing calculator

It is suggested that Stand-by, unregistered students arrive early. Extra tests will be distributed on a first come-first served basis. **Testing typically ends around 1:00 pm.**

**2021-2022 SAT ADMINISTRATION**

<i>2020-2021 SAT Dates &amp; Anticipated Registration Deadlines</i>	
<i>TEST DATES</i>	<i>REGISTER BY:</i>
<b>August 28, 2021</b>	July 30, 2021
<b>October 2, 2021</b>	September 3, 2021
<b>November 6, 2021</b>	October 6, 2021
<b>December 4, 2021</b>	November 4, 2021
<b>March 12, 2022</b>	February 11, 2022
<b>May 7, 2022</b>	April 7, 2022
<b>June 4, 2022</b>	May 5, 2022

**2021-2022 ACT TEST ADMINISTRATION**

<i>2021-2022 ACT Dates &amp; Deadlines</i>	
<i>TEST DATES</i>	<i>REGISTER BY:</i>
<b>September 11, 2021</b>	Aug 6, 2021
<b>October 23, 2021</b>	September 17, 2021
<b>December 11, 2021</b>	November 5, 2021
<b>February 12, 2022</b>	January 7, 2022
<b>April 2, 2022</b>	February 25, 2022
<b>June 11, 2022</b>	May 6, 2022
<b>July 16, 2022</b>	June 17, 2022

# LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

## **Counselor Recommendations:**

Your counselor will write a comprehensive letter of recommendation for you. This descriptive letter is sent with your transcript to all schools to which you apply. This recommendation is developed through personal contact with you, information gathered from your Student Data Sheet, your school record and teacher input. It is imperative that you thoughtfully complete your Student Data Portfolio Sheet and turn it in to your Counselor as soon as possible.

## **Teacher Recommendations:**

If a college requires letters of recommendations from teachers they will include forms in your application packet or as a part of the online application. It is strongly recommended that these letters be written by your junior or senior teachers, as colleges prefer to hear about your most recent academic performance. You should first inquire whether a teacher is willing to write a recommendation for you. Make a request to the teachers early in case they have many to write so you don't miss deadlines. If the college does not accept online recommendations, provide each teacher the college form, along with a stamped envelope addressed to each college.

Since most colleges request similar information, teachers generally write one letter of recommendation, which they will duplicate and send to every college you indicate. While many colleges request only one letter of recommendation, some will require two. In that case you should ask a teacher in another department and follow the same procedure.

## **Other Letters of Recommendation:**

Sending too many letters of recommendation can work against you. As a rule of thumb, do not have people send letters unless they know you well enough to provide direct observations of your performance in an area not already documented. Your guidance counselor will be able to advise you about the appropriateness of extra letters. It is appropriate to include one additional letter of recommendation if necessary, not more.

# COMMON APPLICATION

The Common Application is a standard form where the student completes once and submits it either online or in the mail to subscriber colleges along with supplements. The Common Application is used for undergraduate admissions by over 500 colleges and universities. Only schools that evaluate applications holistically are allowed to use the common application; that is, the admissions staff must take into consideration things like letters of recommendation and the application essay. If a college bases admission solely on GPA and test scores, they cannot be members of the Common Application. Nearly all top colleges and top universities use the Common Application.

The Common Application covers several areas: personal data, educational data, standardized test information, family information, academic honors, extracurricular activities, work experience, a personal essay, and criminal history. Financial aid information needs to be handled on the FAFSA.

Many schools will ask for a supplemental essay to in addition to your college essay based on one of the five personal essay options provided on the Common Application. Many colleges will also ask for a short answer essay on one of your extracurricular or work experiences. These supplements will be submitted through the Common Application website.

[www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

# FINANCIAL AID CHECKLIST

## September:

- Now is also a good time to start thinking about your financial aid needs. [Calculate your EFC](#) (Expected Family Contribution) and consider whether you'll need additional aid from a [Loan](#) or grant.
- Start applying for [Scholarships](#) and grants. You can apply for these throughout the year, but it's wise to get an early start on it.

## October - January:

- File your [FAFSA](#) as soon as possible. Pay attention to the deadline since some colleges require you to submit the FAFSA by mid-February or early March. Keep a photocopy for your records.
- If your school has a separate application for financial aid or requires you to submit the [CSS Financial Aid PROFILE](#), be sure to submit it by the deadline.

## February:

- Four to six weeks after you file the FAFSA (two to four weeks if you filed electronically), you should receive a copy of your Student Aid Report (SAR). The SAR summarizes the information you submitted on the FAFSA and presents the all-important Expected Family Contribution (EFC) which tells you the amount your family is expected to contribute towards your education. If you do not receive the SAR within a reasonable amount of time, call the federal processor at 1-319-337-5665. Review the SAR carefully for errors. If necessary, make any corrections on Part 2 of the SAR and return it promptly to the address listed on the SAR. You will then receive a new SAR.

## March/April:

- Admissions letters should start arriving, followed by financial aid award letters. The award letter describes the types and amounts of financial aid for which you qualify, the cost of attendance and your expected family contribution. Wait until you have heard from all the schools before making a decision.
- If your family's financial circumstances have changed significantly since you submitted the FAFSA, send a letter to the financial aid administrator at the school, requesting a professional judgment review of your case. Describe the change in circumstances, and include documentation if possible.
- If your financial aid application is selected for verification, the school will require you to submit additional documentation, such as signed copies of your tax returns, W-2 and 1099 forms. The federal government selects 30% of the FAFSAs for verification. Some schools, to be fair, require all students to complete verification.
- Compare the financial aid packages from each school. Do not look just at the total amount of aid, but conduct a bottom-line analysis of the net out-of-pocket cost of attending each school. Different schools, for example, may have different costs for room and board.

## By the End of May:

- Decide which school you want to attend and accept its offer. Also, accept the financial aid award package by signing it and sending it in with a copy of your SAR. Keep a photocopy for your records. The school may also require a nonrefundable deposit to confirm that you will attend.
- Apply for education loans ([Student Loans](#) and [Parent Loans](#)). If you don't receive enough aid from the school's aid package and government loans, investigate [Private Loans](#).

**June/July/August:**

- You will probably receive your first bill for tuition, fees, room and board during the summer. Ask the school about interest-free or low-cost tuition payment plans that let you pay your tuition in monthly installments, instead of a lump sum up front.

**Start of School:**

- If you applied for education loans, the financial aid office will provide you with information about the disbursement of the loan proceeds.
- You may be required to visit the financial aid office to complete entrance counseling and to cosign the disbursement check.
- If you were awarded a work-study job, visit the student employment office to find an on-campus job.

# CAMPUS VISITS

No publication, no matter how thorough, can give you a complete picture of a college or university. A campus visit is the best way to see what the college is like. Remember that even though college students may leave for summer vacation, college admission offices are working at full speed. Summer is a great time to explore campuses because the admission office is focused on the arrival of 11th graders and their parents. While you cannot see the school in “full swing,” you CAN see the buildings, walk the campus, and hear about all the academic and extracurricular programs. In addition, many campuses have a summer school session so that you might get a sense of what the school is like with students. Others will hire student tour guides so that you can speak with an actual student while you are visiting.

Most college admission offices are open Monday through Friday (sometimes a Saturday morning) and will offer a tour once or twice a day. Advance planning with the college’s admission office is important to help you make the most of your visit. You should visit the school website for more information on how to schedule your visit. In addition to a tour, some schools will offer a group information session or a personal interview—it depends on the school. Students should take care of ALL offerings. Minuteman hosts a number of college admission representatives in the fall. These counselors travel on behalf of their college or university to meet with students who are interested in learning more about their school. Please note that students need to get permission from their teachers to attend information sessions.

People’s view about college or university can vary widely, so try to talk to as many people as possible. Whether your visit lasts an hour or a day, you should get all your questions answered. Here are some questions to include on your list:

## **When you talk to students, ask...**

- How many hours a week do you study? Is that typical of students here?
- Are campus jobs readily available?
- Are faculty members interested in students & accessible outside of class?
- Do many students go home on weekends?
- Is the food good?
- Is it possible to study in your dorm room?
- What’s the library like as a place to study? To do research?
- What do you like most about this college? Least?
- How easy is it to get the classes you want at registration?
- If you had it to do again, would you still choose this college?

## **If you attend a class, ask yourself...**

- Are students interested in the material?
- Is there time for questions and discussion? Do students participate?
- Are students prepared for the class?
- Am I intellectually challenged by what is taking place in the class?
- Do I feel that the students are learning—either new facts or new ways of thinking about a subject?
- Is there a good rapport between professors and students?
- Would I feel comfortable as a student in this setting?

## **As you tour the campus, ask yourself...**

- Are the older buildings in good repair? / Are there new buildings as well as older ones?
- Is lab equipment up-to-date and plentiful?
- Are rooms in residence halls pleasant? ...quiet enough to study in?
- Are common areas in the residence hall attractive? Are there laundry and kitchen facilities?
- What is the cafeteria like? / Are the grounds well-kept?
- What is the surrounding town or city like?
- Could I see myself attending this college? Do I feel comfortable here?

# GAP YEARS

It is becoming more and more common for students to take a year off between high school and college. This does not mean a year with nothing to do; in fact, the exact opposite is often true. There are a multitude of exciting opportunities for students to pursue in which they will grow personally and intellectually without being at a college or university. These may include working, interning, traveling, volunteering, exploring, etc.

Students who are interested in Gap year programs should actively research and apply to programs *just as they would apply to college*. There are dates and deadlines for gap year programs that are important in this process. In addition, students should **also apply to college** with the idea that they would **defer their admission for ONE year**. This is a possible option at many colleges (talk to the admission office for more details).

Students who take a gap year will then know that they have a *plan* for the following fall. If during the gap year students would like to reapply to colleges in an attempt to gain admission at a different university, they can. The rule is that you cannot deposit (hold a spot) at more than one university at the same time. You can, however, withdraw your spot from one school once you gain admission to another.

Below are some leads to popular gap year programs, however, there are many more sites on the Internet which also explore the possibilities.

Gap Year: [www.gapyear.com](http://www.gapyear.com)  
Semester at Sea: [www.semesteratsea.com](http://www.semesteratsea.com)  
Job Corp: [www.hbi.org/jobcorps](http://www.hbi.org/jobcorps)  
Internships: [www.internships.wetfeet.com](http://www.internships.wetfeet.com)  
Amigos de las Americas (AMIGOS) [www.amigoslink.org](http://www.amigoslink.org)  
City Year [www.cityyear.org](http://www.cityyear.org)  
Disney World College Program: [www.wdwcollegeprogram.com](http://www.wdwcollegeprogram.com)  
Dynamy: [www.dynamy.org](http://www.dynamy.org)  
The Experiment in International Living: [www.experiment.org](http://www.experiment.org)  
Global Routes: [www.globalroutes.org](http://www.globalroutes.org)  
The Center for Interim Programs: [www.interimprograms.com](http://www.interimprograms.com)  
Leap Now: Lifetime Education Alternatives: [www.leapnow.com](http://www.leapnow.com)  
The National Outdoor Leadership School: [www.nols.edu](http://www.nols.edu)  
Outward Bound: [www.outwardbound.com](http://www.outwardbound.com)  
Peace Corps: [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)  
Spain Exchange: [www.spainexchange.com](http://www.spainexchange.com)  
Hobson's: [www.sites.hobsons.com/studyeurope](http://www.sites.hobsons.com/studyeurope)  
Taking Off: [www.takingoff.net](http://www.takingoff.net)  
Taking Time Off: [www.takingtimeoff.com](http://www.takingtimeoff.com)  
United World College: [www.uwc.org](http://www.uwc.org)  
Working abroad: [www.workingabroad.com](http://www.workingabroad.com)  
Where are you headed: [www.timeoutassociates.com](http://www.timeoutassociates.com)

# GLOSSARY

Once you delve into the world of college admissions, you will soon find that there are terms and abbreviations that you need to learn in order to fully understand the process. For example, In order to get your B.A. or B.S. in the U.S., you need a good GPA, definitely the SAT or an ACT, in addition you might need to fill out the FAFSA to know your EFC and be given your CWS, then decide if you are E.D., EA, Rolling, or Regular. Did you get that? If not, read on to familiarize yourself with college admission lingo.

## Commonly used abbreviations and terms:

**Accuplacer** The Accuplacer is the college placement test used by all the Massachusetts states schools (two and four year) to determine if you are ready for college-level courses.

**Articulation Agreement** Agreements made between high schools and colleges to accept high school courses for college credit. Most colleges require a grade of B or better to earn credit.

**ACT** American College Test. This is the SAT's only true competitor. The format and structure of the tests differ; a college counselor can recommend whether to take the ACT instead of, or along with, the SAT. Please note that the writing section of the ACT test is not given at overseas testing centers; for this reason, AOSR no longer offers the ACT test.

**AP** Advanced Placement. These are college-level courses offered by AOSR and many high schools in the U.S. After an AP course is completed, students generally take AP exams, which are scored on a 1-5 scale. Colleges may offer either credit, or advanced standing, to a student who has an AP exam score of 3 or higher in a subject.

**Candidate's Reply Date May 1:** This is the date by which most colleges require an admitted student to commit to attend that institution. Commitment is signified by submission of the enrollment deposit by this date. Students may place a deposit at only one school.

**CEEB Code** College Entrance Examination Board code number. (Every high school has one.) Minuteman's CEEB Code is 221191.

**Class Rank** The rating of a student based on an academic comparison with all other students in a class.

**CSS** College Scholarship Service. This is the organization which processes information provided by financial aid applicants on the PROFILE form and distributes that information to colleges where a student is applying.

**Defer** This is an admissions decision which may be received if a student has applied under an Early Decision or Early Action plan. A "deferral" means that the student has not yet been admitted or denied; the application will be placed in the regular round for another review, and an admissions decision will be sent in March or April. Students who apply Early Decision and are deferred are no longer bound by the Early Decision agreement and may apply to other colleges.

**Division I, II, III** These are designations for college athletic programs. Division I and II programs are the most competitive athletically; these are the only programs that may award athletic scholarships, and potential recruits must be certified by the NCAA in order to be eligible to compete at the college level. Division III programs, most commonly found at the smaller schools, do not require NCAA certification. Potential athletic recruits should meet with their college counselor *early* in the process to be certain that all the appropriate requirements will be met before graduation, and to ensure that students understand the process of working with college coaches.

**Early Action (EA)** A plan whereby application is made and a decision received early in the 12th grade year. Usually, application is made by November 1, and decisions are sent by mid-December. Early Action is a *non-binding* plan: students will not receive a financial aid package until April, at the same time as regular decision applicants.

**Early Decision (ED)** A plan whereby application is made early in the senior year and, if accepted, the student agrees to enroll and withdraw all other applications. This is a *binding* agreement among the student, the college, and the parents.

For financial aid applicants, an estimated award is provided in December with the admission decision, and finalized once tax returns are completed.

**FAFSA** Free Application for Federal Student Aid - As the name implies, a no-cost form used by colleges to determine a student's and family's eligibility for federal financial aid funds. Some (but not most) colleges use this form alone to determine aid awards. See the website: [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

**Financial Aid** Need-based aid offered by the federal government and by colleges; awards generally include *grants* (which do not need to be repaid), *loans* (which must be repaid) and, often, *work-study* (funds earned through on-campus work during the school year). Need is determined through a combination of the **PROFILE** form, the **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), and the college's own form (if they have one). International students generally complete a different form and are not eligible for federal funds unless they are permanent resident aliens (i.e. have a "green" card).

**GPA** Grade Point Average. A number (such as 3.0), which indicates the average of all grades for courses earned in a term or a year.

**January Admit** Some colleges are offering students acceptance—but not until January (or the second semester). This is becoming a popular option for many colleges and students. Typically the school will offer the student a study option for the first semester, which could include a semester abroad program.

**NCAA National Collegiate Athletic Association.** The governing body for most college athletics. The NCAA must certify an athletic recruit who wishes to compete at the Division I or II level. The web site for the NCAA is: [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org).

**PROFILE** The financial aid form processed by College Scholarship Service and used by some colleges to further define a family's need for financial aid funds. This service carries a fee, so families should include this cost in their budget for college applications.

**PSAT** Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test administered to 10th and 11th grade students each October. The PSAT is the qualifying exam for all National Merit Scholarship programs.

**Regular Decision** The most common admissions plan. Most deadlines for regular decision applicants are in January or February. **Note that some school deadlines are earlier. For example, the University of California system schools have a regular decision deadline of November 30!**

**Rolling Admission** The practice at some colleges and universities is making decisions on applications *as they are received*. Since, under this plan, colleges are accepting students every day, the later one applies, the harder it may be to get in.

**SAT:** Formerly called the SAT I. The new SAT consists of three sections: critical reading, writing and math.

**TOEFL** Test of English as a Foreign Language. This test should be used by students whose native language is not English (regardless of citizenship). The TOEFL exam is offered many times a year at various test centers. Students should register as early as possible at [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org)

**Wait List** A list of applicants who, though qualified for admission, are placed "on hold." Wait list candidates are usually given the opportunity to decide whether or not they wish to wait for a final decision, which usually occurs over the next several weeks.