

# HWRHS

## Post-Secondary Planning Guide

For the Class of 2023



Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School

School Counseling Department

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## **Post-Secondary Planning**

This Guide is designed to help you explore your post high school options. The process will be different for each of you. Whether you are looking to attend a college, a technical school, the military, take a year off, or seek employment, it is our hope that the following information will make the transition easier. We encourage you to speak with your parents, counselor, teachers, and friends about your future plans.

The information included in this material has been gleaned from a variety of sources and condensed into one packet to simplify the process of applying for admission into post-secondary institutions. By following the suggested procedures outlined here, you can be confident that you will have the best chance of being accepted at the school or program for which you qualify. Share this information with your parents and continue to talk with your counselor about transition planning. Keep this manual handy as a guide, but remember to use your guidance/school counselor as a resource person who is well informed and able to assist you in the transition process. Good luck!

You and your parents are encouraged to meet with your counselor who will help you with your transition planning. In addition to offering individual meetings with students and parents, the Guidance Department sponsors a series of presentations for parents and their college-bound students. A panel of college admissions representatives will share its insight into the college search, visitation and application processes in the winter of junior year. Counselors will also present an informational evening for seniors and their parents in the fall of senior year. A Financial aid evening will be hosted by the Department in cooperation with the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority in the winter of the senior year.

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# Post-Secondary Options

## Preparatory Schools

Some students may want to consider an additional year of secondary school prior to attending college. Students typically look for a PG year to improve study skills or improve their academic record. Oftentimes college coaches suggest a PG year for 54athletes. Some students apply to both colleges as well as a PG year at a preparatory school. Decisions and deposits are typically not required until May 1<sup>st</sup>. Additional information with respect to prep schools can be found at <https://www.boardingschoolreview.com/blog/understanding-the-post-graduate-pg-year>

## An Alternative Year

Some students may choose not to go directly to college after high school. Some will seek alternatives for a year such as travel or an internship experience. Students may request to defer their admissions to a college for one semester or one year, to explore other avenues. See more information on page 5 (Gap Year).

## Business, Trade or Technical Programs

The training provided by schools that offer specific programs, prepares students for employment in those fields. The length of a program varies from several weeks to several years. Costs also vary depending on the type and length of the program.

## Apprenticeship Training

An apprenticeship is a formal way of learning a trade or a skill by working with someone who works at that particular job. Programs typically include class work in addition to full time work. Apprenticeships usually cover periods of time specified by the labor union or government. Programs vary in length from a couple years and up to six years. An advantage to an apprenticeship is that rather than paying for the training, a student is being paid while learning a skill. The number of openings is limited and not all qualified applicants can enter such programs. Exams and interviews are often required.

## Military Training

Branches of the military offer training in almost 1500 different occupations. The training varies in length of time and may include classroom study, on-the-job training, or both. Enlistees are paid while in training. For more information go to [www.myfuture.com](http://www.myfuture.com).

## Correspondence Study

This is a way of continuing education if a student cannot or does not wish to attend formal classes. Many courses help an individual learn a specialized skill. The student is required to pass tests before receiving credit. Students can work full time while studying in their spare time. Jobs are as diverse as accountant, radio/TV repair, locksmith, gem identification, appliance repair and legal assistant.

## Working Full Time

The MassHire North Shore Career One Stop offices ([www.nscareers.org](http://www.nscareers.org)) in Salem, Lynn and Gloucester offer a wide range of no-cost services to meet the employment needs of job seekers.

Additional websites: [www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com), <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/> (Occupational Outlook Handbook)

# Gap Year

It is common for a student to take a break after high school instead of going directly off to college. Some students do volunteer work, while others take time to learn a new skill or learn about another culture. As college admissions have become increasingly competitive, a number of students opt to defer admission and explore other avenues for a year before attending college. If you are considering taking a break, we recommend you go through the college application process in your senior year. At the same time you pay a deposit to a college, you may request that the college delay your entry for up to one year. Many colleges support this idea. The following list of programs highlights a few of the options available, including two services that match students with appropriate options.

The website <https://www.gapyearassociation.org/about.php> also provides Gap year information and resources available to students and families.

## Examples of Interim Programs

AFS (American Field Service) Intercultural Programs, Inc.

Provides intercultural learning opportunities abroad with the aim of promoting a more just and peaceful world. Students aged 18 and over work in over 50 countries in community service organizations or businesses in countries abroad while learning new skills, the language, and culture.

\* Telephone: 800-876-2377 \* Website: [www.afs.org](http://www.afs.org)

Americorps Corporation for National Service

A national initiative involving people of all ages in community services through full and part time programs. In exchange for service, participants receive education awards. The typical commitment is 10 months.

\* Telephone: 800-94-ACORPS \*

Website: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps>

City Year

Putting idealism to work – City Year, an AmeriCorps program, is a national service organization which unites young adults ages 17-24 from diverse racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds for a demanding year of full-time community service, leadership development, and civic engagement.

\* Telephone: 617-927-2600 \* Website: [www.cityyear.org](http://www.cityyear.org)

CIEE

The Council on International Educational Exchange provides quality programs and services for students. \* Website: [www.ciee.org](http://www.ciee.org)

Dynamy Internship Year

A semester or year of education in the form of nine week, full time internships in Worcester businesses and organizations. The program fees include local housing and a three week Outward Bound experience at the start of the Program.

\* Telephone: 508-755-2571 \* Website: [www.dynamy.org](http://www.dynamy.org)

### Earthwatch Institute

Founded in 1972, this non-profit organization matches paying volunteers with scientific and conservation projects around the world. The cost range is \$500 to \$3000 depending on distance and length of stay. The average length of stay is a few weeks to a month. \* Telephone: 978-461-0081 \* Website: [www.earthwatch.org](http://www.earthwatch.org)

### Habitat for Humanity

Volunteers build housing for low income families. Typically volunteers work for a few days a week on construction projects at hundreds of sites around the country. They take volunteers for up to one year. There are also international projects in which people work for two weeks.

\* Telephone: 800-HABITAT \* Website: [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)

### Outward Bound

Outward Bound is a non-profit educational organization offering challenging outdoor programs for nearly 60 years. Programs range from three weeks to a semester. \*

Telephone: 800-779-7935 \* Website: [www.outwardbound.org](http://www.outwardbound.org)

### National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS)

NOLS is a wilderness education school offering expedition courses in eight countries from ten days to a full semester in length. Students learn leadership skills, wilderness first aid, and outdoor skills while learning about responsible outdoor recreation.

\* Telephone: 307-332-5300 \* Website: <https://www.nols.edu/en/>

### Rustic Pathways

Rustic Pathways provides quality travel and service programs for students and families in some of the world's most welcoming countries.

\* Telephone: 800-321-4353 \* Website: [www.rusticpathways.com/gap](http://www.rusticpathways.com/gap)

### School for Field Studies, Environmental Field Studies Abroad

Students will conduct hands-on, community-focused environmental fieldwork on programs in Australia, Canada, Kenya, Costa Rica, Mexico and the British West Indies. \* Telephone: 800-989-4418 \* Website: [www.fieldstudies.org](http://www.fieldstudies.org)

### The Experiment in International Living

This international nonprofit organization promotes intercultural learning through home stays, educational group travel, study abroad, language training, au pair, and other cultural immersion programs in over 25 countries.

\* Telephone: 800-345-2929 \* Website: [www.experiment.org](http://www.experiment.org)

### The Center for Interim Programs (charges a fee)

Founded in 1980, with offices in Massachusetts and New Jersey, Interim is a service that enables people to pursue structured alternatives to formal education or work by matching clients' interests with over 2,500 internships, volunteer positions and cultural study programs worldwide.

\* Telephone: 413-585-0980 \* Website: [www.interimprograms.com](http://www.interimprograms.com)



## **COLLEGE APPLICATION TIMELINE/CHECKLIST**

### **JUNIOR YEAR**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Take the PSAT in October and the SAT/ACT later in the school year
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create a College Board account to access PSAT scores, practice and register for the SAT
- \_\_\_\_\_ Research colleges
- \_\_\_\_\_ Go on campus visits during vacations, days off, weekends, or during the three excused days you are allowed after filling out a College Visit Form
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend college visits in the Guidance Office - Sign up in Naviance at least the day before
- \_\_\_\_\_ Start drafting a resume - Include your co-curricular activities, athletics, awards, employment, volunteer/community service, and personal interests
- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with your counselor - discuss college or other post-secondary options and plan course selection for senior year - If you have specific colleges/majors in mind, check academic requirements to be sure you're on track
- \_\_\_\_\_ Decide which teachers to request letters from and ask them in person prior to summer break

### **SUMMER BETWEEN JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEAR**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Both the SAT and ACT offer summer testing dates for those who are interested
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fill out the Naviance form - *Information for Counselor Letter of Recommendation*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask your parents to fill out the Naviance form - *Parent Perspective Questionnaire*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Start drafting/write your college essay
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create a Common App account

### **SENIOR YEAR**

- \_\_\_\_\_ August through December SAT and ACT testing dates are available if you need them or if a subject test is required for a prospective college or intended major
- \_\_\_\_\_ Go on campus visits during vacations, days off, weekends, or during the three excused days you are allowed after filling out a College Visit Form
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attend college visits in the Guidance Office - Sign up in Naviance at least the day before
- \_\_\_\_\_ Update your resume
- \_\_\_\_\_ Decide which colleges you want to apply to, how you want to apply (Common App or other), type of application (RD, EA, ED, etc.) and enter all of the information in Naviance - Schools entered in your Common App account will automatically transfer into your Naviance account - Schools removed from your Common App account will NOT automatically be removed from Naviance - you will need to take them out
- \_\_\_\_\_ At least ten days prior to your earliest college deadline, meet with your counselor to sign the Transcript Release Form and go over your plan
- \_\_\_\_\_ Follow up with teachers who are writing for you and make sure they are aware of your earliest deadline - Write them a thank you note!
- \_\_\_\_\_ Complete and send your applications and all supplements by their deadlines
- \_\_\_\_\_ Order SAT/ACT score reports to be sent to all colleges that require them
- \_\_\_\_\_ In January – prior to the release of mid-year grades - enter any admission results in Naviance that you have received and remove any schools you decided not to apply to - mid-year grades will be automatically sent to all colleges that you applied to unless you indicate that admission was denied
- \_\_\_\_\_ Once released - check your mid-year grades for accuracy
- \_\_\_\_\_ Remember to communicate with your counselor if you make any changes to your plan \_\_\_\_\_ May 1<sup>st</sup>

Update all admission decisions in Naviance and indicate where you have chosen to attend – Final transcripts will be sent to that school – If you plan on participating in collegiate athletics and have made an NCAA account, a final transcript will be sent to them as well

## Co-curricular Activities Resume

Potential employers and colleges like to know about a student's activities. The first step in preparing an activities record or resume is listing the things you have done. Any productive use of time applies. The following categories will help you organize your list. **Hint: Take advantage of the resume builder on Naviance. The information you enter can be printed and also accessed by your counselor to support the processing of your secondary school report.**

### Academic Honors

Department awards: what and when

NHS

Other: title, description, year

### Athletics

Sports: position, leadership, year

Honors and Awards: title, description, year

### Co-curricular activities in school

List in order of significance either in terms of time commitment or achievement Position, activity, time (hrs/wk), year

Special Honors and Awards

### Co-curricular Activities outside of school

Volunteer or community service: activity, year

Number of hours: brief description

### Work Experience

Job title (most recent first): duration, position, responsibilities, year

### Non-work summer experiences

Summer school, camp, etc

Experience, description, duration, year

### Travel

Location, duration, brief description

### Interest and hobbies

Skills acquired, duration, level of involvement, year

**A NOTE OF CAUTION:** All students should be aware of the implications of the image that they portray on the internet. It is extremely important to project a professional impression through voice mail messages, e-mail account titles, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other social networking sites.



# Sample Resume

Ima B. Student  
Class of 2020  
Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School  
South Hamilton, MA 01982

**Home Address Date of Birth** 1 Main Street January 1, 2002 S. Hamilton, MA  
01982

**Student Activities Grade** Class Secretary 11-12 Reporter for School  
Newspaper 11 CARE member 10-12 Yearbook Staff 09-12

## **Athletics**

Varsity Track 10-11 Varsity Soccer 11-12 Varsity Basketball 10-12

## **Employment**

Childcare for two summers 9-10 Lifeguard at Town Pool 11-12

## **Awards**

CAL conference basketball 11-12 Boston Globe Scholastic Art Award  
11 NHS 11-12

## **Other**

Mentor for freshmen 11-12 Tutor math at HWRHS 11-12

## **Personal**

Play Piano 5-12 Hobbies: biking, reading, ultimate frisbee

## **Factors about Yourself to Consider When Choosing a College**

Examine your interests, abilities, goals, and expectations. It is crucial that you conduct a self assessment.

The process really begins and ends with you. An honest appraisal of your interests and personality will help you choose colleges which fulfill your needs.

### **Your Goals and Values**

- What do you value? What do you care most about? What concerns occupy your time, effort, and energy?
- What do you want to accomplish in the years ahead?
- What kind of person would you like to become? Of your unique gifts and strengths, which would you most like to develop?

### **Your Education**

- What are your academic interests? Which courses have you enjoyed the most? Which courses have been the most difficult for you?
- What do you choose to learn when you can learn on your own? Consider any interests which you have pursued beyond the classroom. What topics have you chosen for a research project? Which lab reports, independent projects, outside reading, or school activities have you chosen? What jobs or volunteer work have you done? What do your choices show about your interests and the way you like to learn?
- How do you learn best? What methods of teaching and style of teaching engage your interest and effort the most?
- What has been your most stimulating learning opportunity? How much do you genuinely like to read, discuss issues, and exchange ideas?

### **Your Activities and Interests**

- What activities do you enjoy outside the daily routine of school and other responsibilities? Which activities have meant the most to you?
- After a long, hard day, what do you most enjoy doing? What do you do for fun; for relaxation?

### **The World around You**

- Have you ever encountered people who thought and acted differently than you did? What viewpoints have challenged you the most? How did you respond? What did you learn about yourself and others?
- What distresses you most about the world around you? Assuming the obligation and the opportunity to change the world, where would you start?

## **Your Personality and Relationship to Others**

- Which relationships are most important to you and why?
- Generally, how do you respond to people who think and act differently from you? • How do you respond to pressure, competition or challenge? How do you react to failure, disappointment or criticism?
- How do you feel about choices and making decisions for yourself? How much do you rely on direction, advice or guidance from others?

## **Resources**

### **Naviance Student** <https://student.naviance.com/hwrhs>

Naviance Student is a comprehensive college and career readiness solution that helps districts and schools align student strengths and interests to postsecondary goals, improving student outcomes and connecting learning to life. Naviance Student is optimized for students and families to access from any device including smartphones, tablets, Chromebooks, and desktops.

#### **Naviance helps HWRHS students:**

- understand their unique strengths
- connect their interests to careers
- explore careers
- scan important messages and upcoming deadlines
- set goals
- create and export resumes in a printer-friendly format
- develop self-knowledge and personal motivation
- understand college possibilities and research colleges
- explore Hamilton-Wenham specific college admissions stats
- match to best-fit colleges
- identify ideal college majors
- identify and save list of colleges you might apply to
- check your standardized test scores and GPA
- during senior year – list and track colleges you are applying to
- search local scholarship opportunities

#### **Naviance connects students to x2Vol, a program that will help students:**

- find service opportunities
- sign up for service opportunities
- receive reminders
- track progress against goals
- add reflections to their experience
- print an official service transcript

You may access Naviance as frequently as you wish. Use the tabs to navigate through the various features. Log in links and navigation guides are located on the Guidance website: <http://hamilton.ccsc.com/page.cfm?p=2022>

If you need any assistance accessing Naviance, please contact Mrs. Williams in the School Counseling Office: phone - 978-468-0480, e-mail – [s.williams@hwschools.net](mailto:s.williams@hwschools.net).

For community service questions, please contact Ms. Lauren Wilkins: [l.wilkins@hwschools.net](mailto:l.wilkins@hwschools.net)

## Reference Handbooks and Guides

Reference guides present factual information about schools and colleges. These guides will be an excellent source in which to begin your information search. Guides are also available in the Guidance Office, libraries, and most popular bookstores.

### Frequently Utilized Resources Include:

Barron's Profile of American Colleges  
Barron's Index to Major Areas of Study  
Barron's Guide to Two-Year Colleges  
Fiske's Guide to Colleges  
Lovejoy's College Guide  
Lovejoy's Career and Vocational Guide  
College Board's Index of Majors  
College Board's College Handbook  
Peterson's Annual Guide to Undergraduate Study  
Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges  
Peterson's Guide to Two-Year Colleges  
Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges  
Steven Antonoff's The College Finder

## College Catalogs and Websites

The primary source of information about a college is its catalog or website. They will offer the student the basic information provided in any college reference guide but in much greater detail. Everything you will want to know about a college will be included in its catalog and website except for facts about the character and atmosphere of the school. They are particularly useful in comparing the breadth and depth of major fields of concentration in describing the specific educational programs offered by the school. Most colleges make their catalogues available online. Most colleges distribute to the prospective student a view book which presents the basic information of the school in much more detail than the college reference guides, but in less detail than the catalogue. The colleges will also provide to the prospective student pamphlet materials describing individual programs and services offered by the school.

## Studying Abroad

Many colleges and universities have options for and even encourage a semester abroad. You can also apply directly to attend full time at universities overseas. Some things to consider if you are interested in this option are: Understand that you will need to do a lot of research about the schools and their programs and understand that the application process will be very different; You may not find the major you are looking for or it may not be taught in English; You will most likely need a student visa; In addition to transitioning to college life, you would have to adjust to living in a foreign country so assess your level of independence and adaptability.

**A NOTE OF CAUTION:** All students should be aware of the implications of the image that they portray on the internet. It is extremely important to project a professional impression through voice mail messages, e-mail account titles, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other social networking sites.

## Other On-Line College Searches

### **The College Board Online** <http://www.collegeboard.com>

The College Board is a national membership association of schools and colleges devoted to guiding the transition from secondary to higher education. It offers programs, services, and information regarding scholastic assessment, guidance, admission, placement, financial aid, curricula, and research.

### **Petersons** [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)

College search, financial aid, test preparation and related links

### **Princeton Review** [www.princetonreview.com](http://www.princetonreview.com)

College Search, financial aid, SAT preparation and related activities.

### **CollegeData** <https://www.collegedata.com/>

College search, predict admission chances, calculate financial aid, calculate EFC, etc.

### **College Navigator** <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

Search colleges and build a list for side-by-side comparisons, export results

### **College Insight** <http://college-insight.org/>

Some college search sites let you save a list of your favorites, but College Insight takes things a step further. With College Insight, you build your tables with any combination of variables to compare colleges. You can pick out the most relevant data and compare schools in the way that makes sense for you.

### **College NET** [www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com)

College Search, financial aid, scholarships, and links to related sites.

### **College View** [www.collegeview.com](http://www.collegeview.com)

College search, virtual tours, career center and financial aid information

### **Niche** <https://www.niche.com/colleges/search/best-colleges/>

Niche is another great resource for learning about colleges across the country. After narrowing down your list, you'll see that each college comes with a "report card" and overall grade. Niche gives grades for professors, athletics, dorms, and safety, among other concerns. Plus, it creates its ranking based on data from the U.S. Department of Education so that you can browse the best colleges by state or major.

### **Go College** [www.gocollege.com](http://www.gocollege.com)

College search, financial aid, test prep, free practice SAT & ACT, articles and related information.

### **The New England Board of Higher Education's Regional Student Program** [www.nebhe.org](http://www.nebhe.org)

Provides New England residents with a tuition break when they study certain majors – not available at public colleges in their home state – at public colleges and universities in other New England States.

### **Canada** [www.studyincanada.com](http://www.studyincanada.com) Information and links to colleges and universities in

Canada. **Study Abroad** <https://www.studyabroad.com/full-degree-worldwide>

## **College Representative Visits**

Throughout the fall months, college representatives come to the high school to meet with students. This is a great way to learn more about these schools and the specific programs they offer. In addition to listening to a general presentation by the admission officer, students will have the opportunity to ask questions, discuss programs, and receive pamphlet material. A schedule of planned conferences is published and posted in and around the Guidance Office as well as in Naviance. To attend a conference, the student must sign up through their Naviance account at least one day in advance of the conference in order that we may plan adequate space; then stop by the Guidance Office to obtain a college visit pass. The pass must be signed by the appropriate block teacher in order for the student to be released from class to attend the conference. Students are reminded to check Naviance for the complete list which is frequently updated.

## **College Fairs and College Nights**

College Fairs and Nights afford the student another opportunity to speak directly with college and school recruiters and to obtain the various forms of information about the school and the programs they offer. These events are very well attended by students. Ideally, the student needs to prepare in advance to ask specific questions of the recruiters representing the colleges in which the student is interested. College Fairs and Nights will allow a one-stop shopping approach if the student comes prepared. These occasions also present the less well-prepared student with an opportunity to collect information and leave their name with college admissions representatives. Walking into a field house filled with hundreds of colleges, and not having any idea how to proceed can be an overwhelming experience. Prepare...find out which colleges will be at the fair and target the ones you want to hit. They are usually placed in alphabetical order. Prepare a list of questions that are important to you (cars on campus, a radio station, meal plan, internship opportunities). Bring an empty backpack. You will acquire a bunch of catalogs, view books, or other handouts. Bring a notebook to jot down impressions and the name of the representative you met. Bring your parents but you don't have to hang out with them the whole time. Make a good impression...you can send a thank you for their time. Further information can be obtained at [www.nacacnet.org](http://www.nacacnet.org) and [www.neacac.org](http://www.neacac.org).

Information about these events is posted on our bulletin boards when available.

## **Campus Visits**

Once the student has identified colleges or schools which are of interest, it is essential to visit the campus. Glossy pictures in a school publication become replaced by realistic, personalized experiences. The visit allows you to experience the character and atmosphere of the school and identify those schools which are the right fit. The guidance staff highly encourages you to take advantage of visitations during April vacation, summer vacation and during the early fall weekends which are set up specifically to respond to the needs of prospective students. When you plan a campus visit, the following suggestions may prove helpful:

- ✓ Check with your counselor regarding the procedures for making college and school visits during the school day. A College Visit Form must be filled out and completed with all necessary signatures including your parents, and returned to the Guidance Office prior to your admissions visit. Three days during junior year and three during senior year is the maximum number of excused absences allowed for college visits. The form can be picked up in the Guidance Office or downloaded from our website in the Forms and Publication section.
- ✓ When you've decided to visit a college, check their website for a campus tour schedule or call the admission office. Some colleges also can arrange for you to meet a professor who teaches a subject you enjoy, or a coach of a sport you play.

- ✓ If you are very interested in a school, you may want to request an appointment or interview with an admissions counselor and go prepared with an unofficial copy of your transcript, a copy of your SAT Reasoning test and/or SAT Subject tests and scores, and a student resume.
- ✓ Use your counselor as a sounding board before and after your visit.
- ✓ Try to visit the campus when school is in session.
- ✓ Use or identify the public transportation opportunities for visiting the campus.
- ✓ Be part of an organized campus tour and be sure to speak with the students as you travel throughout the campus.
- ✓ Eat in the dining hall or campus center.
- ✓ Visit those facilities of most concern to you, in areas of your intended major and sports facilities.
- ✓ Write a note of thanks to any students and or admissions staff that assist you personally during your visit.
- ✓ Make sure to take down some notes concerning your visit shortly after your time on campus. If the school is at a distance, take pictures to record your impressions.
- ✓ People's views about a 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. You already may have thought of many questions. Here are some you might want to add to your list.

## **During your visit:**

### **When You Talk to Students, Ask...**

1. Are faculty members interested in students and accessible outside of class?
2. What do students do on the weekends?
3. Is the food good?
4. What is the library like as a place to study?...to do research?
5. Is it easy to access academic assistance/tutoring?
6. What do you like most about this college?...least?
7. How easy is it to get the classes you want at registration?
8. If you had it to do again, would you still choose this college?

### **If You Attend A Class, Ask Yourself...**

1. Am I intellectually challenged by what is taking place in the class?
2. Is there good rapport between professors and students?
3. Would I feel comfortable as a student in this setting?

## As You Tour The Campus, Ask Yourself...

1. Are classrooms and labs up-to-date?
2. Are dorms, common rooms, and bath areas updated/clean/comfortable?
3. Where are the laundry facilities?
4. What is the cafeteria like? What are the food options?
5. Where would I go if I needed medical attention?
6. Are the buildings and grounds well-kept? Will I feel safe here?
7. What is the surrounding town or city like? Would I feel comfortable here?

## When Your Visit is Over...

Try to write down your impressions of the college while they're still fresh in your mind. These questions may help you assess your visit.

1. What were your first impressions? campus/buildings/classrooms/students, etc.
2. Did students there seem like the type of people you would like to get to know?
3. Did you get a sense of what the quality of instruction and/or academic demands were?
4. How would you spend your downtime there? – clubs/athletics/activities/social atmosphere? Are the things you are interested in available?
5. Did you walk away thinking “I would like to spend more time here”?
6. Is getting around campus easy? Will travelling to and from home be easy?

## If You Cannot Visit...

Sometimes it's impossible for you to visit a campus. You can still get the feel of a college by talking to recent graduates or current students who are from your area.

Check to see if colleges you are interested in will be visiting the Guidance Office.

Many college representatives travel to interview students in their homes, schools, or at public places nearby. Call the admission office to find out when a representative will be in your area and to make an appointment to see him or her.

Many colleges and universities have virtual tours on their websites. There are two computers in the guidance office available to students for college research.

**School Counseling Department website:** <http://hwrhs.hwschools.net/page.cfm?p=1994>

Visit our website to explore information relating to Naviance, the college search and application process, standardized testing, financial aid, NCAA and student athletes, summer opportunities, and more.



# Admission Test Information

## College Entrance Exams

While many colleges have gone test optional, most colleges still require standardized testing as part of the admissions process. Students should carefully review the admissions requirements of each college to which they plan to apply.

Many of you have already taken the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test.) Other tests you are likely to take are the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) and the SAT Subject Tests. All of these tests are published by the College Board in Princeton, NJ.

The ACT is another standardized test used for college admissions in the U.S. Introduced as a competitor to the Scholastic Aptitude Test, it was said to focus not on aptitude, but instead on academic achievement and mastery of the skills and knowledge taught in schools. It is currently administered by ACT, a nonprofit organization of the same name. Developed as American College Testing they no longer use that name, just ACT.

An article published by US News and World Report states that:

*WHEN IT COMES TO THE ACT vs. the SAT, both exams are universally accepted by U.S. [colleges](#), which often prompts students to ask: Which test should I take?*

*The answer to that question lies in understanding the differences between the two tests.*

*Both college admissions exams are wildly popular. In the class of 2018, a reported 2.1 million test-takers completed the SAT and 1.9 million students took the ACT. It is unclear how many students took both, but experts say it is common practice for a test-taker to tackle both exams.*

*"More and more students in the last five to 10 years are taking both," says Joe Korfmacher, a former counselor at a New York high school and current director of college counseling at a New York office of Collegewise, an admissions consulting company.*

*The idea behind both exams is similar: to demonstrate college readiness. But despite similar aims, the tests vary in structure and timing as well as the content matter and scoring.*

*By [Josh Moody](#), Reporter Feb. 25, 2019, at 10:04 a.m.*

Here is a link to the full article:

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/act-vs-sat-how-to-decide-which-test-to-take>

Registering to take the SAT or SAT Subject test is done through the College Board website. If you have not already done so, you will need to create a free online account that will also be used to access score reporting and order reports sent to colleges at <https://www.collegeboard.org/> Similarly, to take the ACT you will need to create a free online account at <http://www.act.org/>

*Fee waivers permit eligible students to submit college applications or test registration forms without the fee. A limited number are available through guidance counselors and educational agencies for students who qualify.*

## Fair Test [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org)

Fair Test is the National Center for Fair and Open Testing. Fair Test's College Admissions Test Score Optional List now includes over 850 schools.

**Due to COVID, many schools' testing policy is in flux. Please look at each individual college requirement.**

## **The SAT**

Listed below are some of the key changes the College Board has made to the SAT in recent years to make it more focused, clear, and useful.

- It better reflects what you learn in class. The best way to practice for the SAT is to take challenging courses in high school and work hard in those courses.
- SAT vocabulary words are gone.
- There's no penalty for guessing. You'll receive points for the questions you get right, but won't be penalized for choosing the wrong answer.
- It focuses more on the math that matters most for college and a wide variety of careers. • Free practice for all students. College Board has partnered with Khan Academy to provide free SAT practice materials that can be personalized for you.

### **Timing:** 3 hours

- 1 Evidences-Based Reading and Writing Test – 65 minute Reading section, 35 minute Language and Writing section
- I Math test – 55 minute section with calculator, 25 minute section without calculator

### **Scoring:**

- No wrong-answer penalty
- Score is based out of 1600; 800 for Math, 800 for Evidences-Based Reading and Writing
- Sub-scores and insight scores are available

### **Reading & Writing**

- Reading and Writing are combined into "Evidence-Based Reading and Writing" • Reading section does not contain sentence completion
- The section tests understanding from US and World Literature, History/Social Studies, and Sciences
- Writing and Language section tests "Expression of Ideas" and "Standard English Conventions" through passages relating to Careers, History/Social Studies, Humanities, and Science.

### **Math**

- Concentrated focus on problem-solving and data analysis, "the heart of Algebra", "Passport to Advanced Math"
- Real-world problem solving accompanied by informational graphics
- Calculator permitted for 37 questions, not permitted for 20 questions
- Multiple choice and grid-in questions, 1 enhanced grid-in question

## **The ACT**

Another testing program which is frequently used for college admissions is offered by ACT. The ACT is a battery of tests consisting of four exams in the academic areas of English Usage, Mathematics Usage, Social Studies Reasoning, and Natural Sciences Reading. Four separate scores, plus a composite score average of the tests, are given. The ACT offers an optional Writing Test that should be taken if a student intends to apply to a college/university that requires it. Students should visit [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) to determine if any of the colleges that they are considering require a writing test. Dates for administration do not conflict with the College Board SAT exams. Most colleges will accept either ACT or SAT scores; others will specify which test is required. Students, again, should check the specific requirements of each college. Students may obtain information about the ACT in the Guidance Office, or online at: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).

# SAT & ACT Test Dates for 2021-2022

<u>SAT Test Dates</u>	<u>Registration Deadline</u>	<u>ACT Test Dates</u>	<u>Registration Deadline</u>
August 28, 2021	July 30, 2021	September 11, 2021	August 6, 2021
October 2, 2021	September 3, 2021	October 23, 2021	September 17, 2021
November 6, 2021	October 8, 2021	December 11, 2021	November 5, 2021
December 4, 2021	November 4, 2021	February 12, 2022	January 7, 2022
March 12, 2022	February 11, 2022	April 2, 2022	February 25, 2022
May 7, 2022	April 8, 2022	June 11, 2022	May 6, 2022
June 4, 2022	May 5, 2022	July 16, 2022	June 17, 2022

## Other Types of Tests

### **AP (Advance Placement) Tests**

AP tests are designed to measure, in depth, a student's proficiency in given subject areas. Each exam is approximately three hours in length. Students who demonstrate a sufficiently high level of achievement on the tests may be granted college credit for work they have completed in high school, or they may be excused from a freshman course requirement in a specific subject.

### **TOEFL**

Students whose native language is not English should consider taking the Test of English as a Foreign Language. THE TOEFL measures ability to understand spoken English, ability to recognize language that is appropriate for standard written English, and ability to understand non-technical reading matter. Students can refer to [www.ets.org/toefl](http://www.ets.org/toefl) or speak with a counselor for more information.

## Test Reminders

- Check each college for specific requirements about the SAT or ACT. Make sure that you familiarize yourself with the requirements of your schools-of-choice regarding the SAT Subject Test. Plan to take those tests as soon as possible after you have finished that area of study.
- Remember that it may take a couple weeks from the test date before you receive your test results. Make sure that your schools-of-choice receive your test results on time. • You must request that the College Board or ACT forward your test scores directly to your schools of choice. You may indicate up to four colleges or institutions to send scores to free of charge. Beyond that, you will need to pay a fee.
- As a junior, do not feel compelled to send your scores to colleges as your college search may just now be starting.
- Students who believe they are eligible for testing accommodations, should speak to their counselor well before testing dates.
- For a fee, students may request rush reporting of their scores to colleges. The student must provide the College Board with the following information:
  1. The most recent date on which the student took the test
  2. The registration number on their admission ticket
  3. The code numbers and names of the colleges

*See your counselor if you require assistance.*

- The Score Choice policy will give students the option to choose to send SAT scores by sitting (test date) and SAT subject Test scores by individual test, at no additional cost. Score Choice is optional, and if students choose not to use it, all scores will be sent automatically.
- Remember, the score reports given to students and counselors will contain current test scores and all previous SAT and SAT Subject test scores. Score Choice will only affect scores submitted to colleges and universities.
- Students may request the Question and Answer Service of The College Board for a fee. See your student bulletin for further details.
- **You cannot take both the SAT and SAT Subject Test on the same day.** • SAT Subject Tests are not offered on all testing dates. Please be sure to register for appropriate dates.
- Important College Board numbers for Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School students to know are:

HWRHS Test Center Number 22408

HWRHS Code Number 222010

- Students may cancel test scores on the day of the test by filing a cancellation form at the test center, or after the test by writing or telephoning the College Board and asking for a score cancellation. This can also be done electronically at the College Board website, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). The request must be received in writing by Wednesday of the week following the testing date.
- Allow at least two testing dates for the SAT: one in the spring of your junior year and one in the fall of your senior year. Liberal Arts candidates need to review the requirements of their colleges-of-choice for the Foreign Language SAT Subject test
- It is recommended that the SAT Subject tests be taken as soon as possible following your completion of study. Subject tests should be taken in the May or June of the year that you completed the course.

## **How do I know which college admission test to take?**

Students should take either the SAT or the ACT at least twice. Many colleges will accept scores from either test and you may attain an acceptable score on one test and not on the other. To find out which test a college would prefer, refer to one of the several college resource books, the specific college catalog, or contact the college admissions office. Most Hamilton-Wenham students who will be applying to 4-year colleges take the SAT at least two times.

## **How do I prepare for the tests?**

Actually, you have been preparing throughout your entire life. Students who have done an extensive amount of reading for pleasure and who have taken challenging courses, especially while in high school, are usually well prepared. **A free SAT prep course is available through Khan Academy.** Additionally, if students took the PSAT they have access to My College Quickstart through The College Board. Students are encouraged to visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) and [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) for preparation resources. Additional resources are listed on the Guidance website's "SAT & ACT Prep Courses" page: <http://hamilton.ccsct.com/page.cfm?p=2038>

## **What about taking admission test preparation courses?**

In general, preparation courses will review skills in math and language arts topics. The course may also help you to identify or improve test-taking skills and become familiar with the format of the test. Short-term "cram courses" are not likely to improve abilities. Your abilities are relative to the effort and time you spend on the subject matter. Long-term courses that develop abilities in a particular area may have a greater effect on test results. There are also computer programs and test preparation books that some individuals find helpful.

## **When should I take the tests?**

Take the SAT's for the first time in the spring of your junior year in high school. If you are not able to take the tests at these times, plan on taking them during the summer between junior and senior year, and/or the fall of your senior year. Students may choose to take the SAT Subject Test after completing a yearlong course. For example, some sophomores may want to take the SAT Chemistry Subject Test in June. Students and their parents are encouraged to speak with their guidance counselor.

## **May I take the tests more than once?**

Yes, you may take them as often as you wish. In fact, most colleges will accept your best composite score on the ACT or your best critical reading, math and writing score on the SAT, even though the scores may be from different test dates.

## **How do colleges receive my scores?**

When completing the registration form you may identify the colleges where you want your scores sent. If you would prefer to have your scores sent at a later date, contact your guidance counselor for an additional score report form, or access your account at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). There will be an additional expense if the scores are forwarded at a later date. Most colleges have access to scores through a computerized database.

## **How are the tests given?**

The tests are given nationally on specific dates available online. Registration deadlines are well in advance of the test dates. The registration deadlines are available at their respective websites.

## SAT & ACT Score Comparison

<b>SAT Score CR + M</b>	<b>ACT Composite Score</b>
1600	36
1540-1590	35
1490-1530	34
1440-1480	33
1400-1430	32
1360-1390	31
1330-1350	30
1290-1320	29
1250-1280	28
1210-1240	27
1170-1200	26
1130-1160	25
1090-1120	24
1050-1080	23
1020-1040	22
980-1010	21
940-970	20
900-930	19
860-890	18
820-850	17
770-810	16
720-760	15
670-710	14
620-660	13
560-610	12
510-550	11

## Test Snapshot

Features	SAT	ACT
<b>Widely accepted</b>	All U.S. colleges	All U.S. colleges
<b>Measures</b>	What students learn in high school What they need to succeed in college	What students learn in high school
<b>Everyday math formulas provided</b>	Yes	No
<b>Tests the vocabulary you'll use</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Essay is optional</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Penalty for guessing</b>	No	No
<b>Free Practice</b>		
Resources	SAT	ACT
<b>Free daily practice questions</b>	Yes, through the free Daily Practice for the SAT mobile app.	Yes
<b>Free personalized test practice</b>	Yes, through Khan Academy <sup>®</sup> , with over 4,000 questions and video lessons.	No
<b>Multiple free practice tests</b>	Yes, 8 downloadable practice tests with instant scoring.	No, only 1 practice test
<b>Mobile app that instantly scores paper tests</b>	Yes, Daily Practice for the SAT.	No

## Flexibility

Schedule	SAT	ACT
<b>Future test administration dates</b>	<a href="#">3 years</a>	2 years
<b>Regular registration deadline</b>	About 4 weeks before test day. You pay a late fee for registering later.	About 5 weeks before test day. You pay a late fee for registering later.
<b>Late registration closes</b>	About 11 days before test day	20+ days before test day
<b>Test days</b>	7 times a year	7 times a year

## Fee Waivers

Benefits and Rules	SAT	ACT
<b>Test fees waived for eligible students</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Automatically unlocks all fee waiver benefits after one-time use</b>	Yes	No
<b>Waivers cover late fees</b>	Yes	No
<b>Score reports</b>	Unlimited	20 score reports
<b>Waived application fees at participating colleges</b>	Yes	No
<b>Score services</b>	Yes, either Question-and-Answer Service (QAS) or Student Answer Service (SAS) for SAT administrations	Yes, Test Information Release for 3 administrations
<b>A fee reduction for multiple-choice score verification or essay score</b>	Yes	No



verification		
Free applications to apply for financial aid from participating schools	Yes, students can use CSS Profile to apply for financial aid	No
Expiration date	No	Expire end of August each year

## Test Format

Structure and Timing	SAT	ACT
Testing time	3 hours + 50-minute essay (optional)	2 hours 55 minutes + 40-minute essay (optional)
Structure	3 tests + optional essay	4 tests + optional writing test
Number of questions	154	215
Time per question	1 minute, 10 seconds	49 seconds
Score range	Composite 400–1600 (SAT Essay: reported in 3 dimensions, each 2–8)	Composite 1–36 (writing domain scores: 2–12)
Test components	<p><b>Reading Test</b> 65 minutes 52 questions</p> <p><b>Writing and Language Test</b> 35 minutes 44 questions</p> <p><b>Math Test</b> 80 minutes 58 questions</p>	<p><b>Reading Test</b> 35 minutes 40 questions</p> <p><b>English Test</b> 45 minutes 75 questions</p> <p><b>Math Test</b> 60 minutes 60 questions</p> <p><b>Science Test</b> 35 minutes 40 questions</p>

\*Based on publicly released ACT information as of September 26, 2018.

## Information for Students with Disabilities

Students with identified physical or learning disabilities may want to investigate the programs and services which are specifically designed to meet their post-secondary educational needs. Students may want to make use of preparatory programs which help them to identify individual learning styles and develop organizational and study skills that maximize their strengths. Within a four-year college there are often special programs for students with learning disabilities which provide academic advising, tutorial support, and help in coordinating special services necessary for the student to function in regular classes. There is often a separate admission process to enter an LD program. Even in colleges which provide no special programs for students with learning disabilities, individuals with learning disabilities may take advantage of tutorial or other support services which are available to all students and they may request appropriate modifications such as extended time or taping of lectures.

As students explore post-secondary options, they should raise questions in each college setting about the availability of support services, the presence of trained LD specialists, and the provision for classroom modification, if necessary. In most instances, students should indicate in the application process the nature of accommodations that will be necessary in college, if any. If the school has a special learning support program, the student should also be in contact with the director of that program during the admissions process. Colleges which have a program for students with learning disabilities frequently require professional assessments which document and identify the specific learning disability of the student.

Students should seek help from their guidance/school counselor or academic support teacher about specific programs and application procedures. <http://www.ldonline.org/indepth/college>

### **Guidelines for Special Administration of PSAT, SAT, AP, and ACT for Students with Disabilities**

Students may be eligible for untimed and extended time on standardized tests based on documented special learning needs. Typically, these needs would be described in an IEP. They may also be found on signed documents from any of the following: physician, psychologist, or learning-disability specialist. The documents must adhere to the guidelines established by The College Board Program or the ACT Testing Program as described in their brochures. **Students must receive the same accommodations in school as they are requesting of The College Board or ACT.** There are opportunities for both extended time and untimed tests.

If you have a documented disability, you may take the test with accommodations appropriate to your disability which is called non-standard administration. To receive testing accommodations you must meet eligibility criteria established by the College Board. More detailed information is available on the College Board website: [www.collegeboard.com/ssd/student/index.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/ssd/student/index.html).

## Information for Student Athletes

Athletics is an area of special talent that can make a difference in the college's admissions and financial aid process. At most colleges, athletics are regulated by the rules established by the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) which divides all college sports programs into three divisions known as Division I, Division II, and Division III. Institutions are members of one

or another division according to the size and scope of their athletic programs and whether they provide athletic scholarships. The recruitment and enrollment of college athletes are governed firmly by the NCAA's rules for each division. To be eligible to participate at the Division I or II level, where full athletic scholarships are awarded, students must be certified as eligible by the NCAA Eligibility Center. The Center ensures consistent application of NCAA initial eligibility requirements for all prospective student athletes at all member institutions.

To register, prospective student-athletes should access the registration materials by visiting the Center's Web site at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org). Additionally, send all standardized test scores (SAT or ACT) directly to the NCAA Eligibility Center by indicating its code (9999) on your SAT/ACT registration form.

The NCAA is not the only game in town. Many colleges are members of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics [www.naia.org](http://www.naia.org).

## **Suggestions for the Student Athlete**

Inform your high school coach that you are interested in playing a sport in college. Ask the coach if he or she is available to college coaches.

Prepare and mail a short letter of introduction and athletic resume to college coaches.

Be familiar with the NCAA rules regarding the recruitment of athletes.

## **Information for Students Pursuing the Arts**

Students interested in studio art, music, architecture, dance, ceramics, photography or drama, have a number of options open to them. Students may choose to pursue their studies within the framework of a liberal arts education or they may wish to enter a specific school or program in their area of interest. Students who intend to major in art will often be required to submit a portfolio of their work to the college admission office or art school. Students contemplating this are encouraged to begin their portfolio in the spring of junior year and take the Portfolio course offered by the Art Department. Those music and drama students applying to pre-professional programs may need to plan an on-campus audition and should contact the school directly to determine when audition dates occur. If you are applying to a liberal arts program, it is unlikely that a portfolio or audition will be required. [www.aicad.org](http://www.aicad.org) displays information about Art and Design Schools.

## **Service Academies**

Unlike applications to other colleges or universities applications to Service Academies need to be initiated during the junior year in high school. Any junior student who is considering a Service Academy must complete the following steps prior to their second semester in order to ensure full consideration.

The **first step** in securing an appointment to one of the academies is to write and request a pre candidate questionnaire. This places the student at the start of a lengthy process which requires attention to detail and strict adherence to all deadlines. The addresses of the academies are as follows:

United State Military Academy United States Air Force Academy  
Admissions Office Admissions Office  
West Point, NY 10996 USAF Academy, CO 80840  
<http://www.usma.edu> <http://www.usafa.af.mil/>

United States Naval Academy United States Merchant Marine Academy Office of  
Admissions Admissions Office  
Annapolis, MD 21402 Kings Point, NY 10024  
<http://www.usna.edu//homepage.php> <http://www.usmma.edu/>

Admissions Office  
U.S. Coast Guard Academy  
31 Mohegan Avenue  
New London, CT 06320  
<http://www.cga.edu/>

The **second step** is to write to each of your senators and congressmen to ask that they consider you as one of their nominees. In these letters, you should indicate your choice or choices of academies. You should also include the following personal information:

- Name/Address/Telephone Number
- Date of Birth
- Social Security Number
- Name of High School
- Year of Graduation
- Name of Parents

The Coast Guard Academy has an admission procedure similar to other highly competitive colleges. There is no pre-candidate questionnaire to be completed, nor is there a nomination process. Contact the Coast Guard Academy directly for an application.

## The ROTC Program

This is a program which allows students to attend a four year college and combine college courses in military science with summer training in order to develop candidates for positions of responsibility as officers in the U.S. Armed Forces. Students who qualify academically and physically for ROTC, Reserve Officers Training Corps programs receive benefits that include tuition, the cost of textbooks and a monthly allowance. A ROTC scholarship is not based on need and can be worth thousands of dollars. The ROTC program is offered by the Army, Navy and Air Force and is taken as a college elective. ROTC scholarships provide money to college students as they train to be officers in exchange for students' commitment to serve in the armed forces. Students who have an interest in applying for a ROTC Scholarship should begin the process in the spring of their junior year.

The ROTC selection process is competitive. Four-year scholarships are awarded to seniors in high school based on a national competition. The selection process is based on a number of factors including grades, college entrance examination scores, recommendations, extra curricular activities, athletics, and community work.

If you are intelligent and industrious and think ROTC makes sense for you, consider applying to colleges where these programs are offered. Some ROTC programs require you to major in a specific area such as engineering or nursing. The ROTC program will help develop confidence, self-discipline, and leadership skills for success in college and beyond.

Each service also has two and three year scholarships for students already in college. If you receive a two or three year scholarship your active duty obligation is for four years. It is also possible to serve in the Guard or Reserves.

You may also join a ROTC unit after you get to college even if you are not a scholarship recipient.

For more information about **Air Force ROTC** programs call 1-800-423-8723 For more information about **Army ROTC** programs call 1-800-USA-ROTC  
For information about **Navy ROTC** call 1-800-327-NAVY.

Students should also take note that individual ROTC programs must be listed as a test score recipient from the College Board. Codes for the individual programs are as follows:

- 0454 ARMY ROTC
- 0656 NAVY/MARINES ROTC
- 0548 AIR FORCE ROTC

## College Admission Criteria

Students often ask which criteria are most important to college admission committees. According to a NACAC publication, *2018 STATE OF COLLEGE ADMISSION*, the following is listed as "Factors in Admission Decisions":

The factors that admission officers use to evaluate applications from first-time freshmen have remained largely consistent over the past 20 years. Students' academic achievements—which include grades, strength of curriculum, and admission test scores—constitute the most important factors in the admission decision. Admission decision factors for first-time international students are similar to those for domestic students, but the transfer admission decision process differs in significant ways. • Admission Offices Identify Grades, High School Curriculum, and Test Scores as Top Factors for First-Time Freshmen: The top factors in the admission decision were: overall high school GPA, grades in college preparatory courses, admission test scores, and strength of curriculum. Among the next most important factors were the essay, a student's demonstrated interest, counselor and teacher recommendations, class rank, and extracurricular activities.

Link to publication:

[https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2018\\_soca/soca18.pdf](https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2018_soca/soca18.pdf)

The emphasis placed on each factor will vary among colleges. Students should remember that the final selection process is based upon the goals of a specific college community. Some colleges, particularly the very selective schools, are trying to "build" a balanced entering class that will allow them to have a range of athletic teams, organizations, and student backgrounds. Information about the importance of various criteria can be found in college view books. Some schools have very specific admission requirements set by state public accrediting boards.

## Massachusetts State College and Universities Minimum Admission Requirements

The admissions standards for the state universities and UMASS emphasize a strong academic high school background so that students enter college ready to learn. These standards represent minimum requirements; meeting them does not guarantee admission, since campus officials consider a wide range of factors in admissions decisions. Students shall have fulfilled all requirements for the high school diploma or its equivalent upon enrollment. It is important to note that admissions standards for the state's community colleges differ. Community colleges

may admit any high school graduate or GED recipient.

## Freshman Applicants

The admissions standards for freshmen applicants have two main parts:

1. 17 required academic courses.
2. A minimum required grade point average earned in college preparatory courses completed at the time of application.

Applicants must also submit an SAT or ACT score.

### **Academic Course Requirements**

Sixteen college preparatory courses distributed as follows are required. (A course is equivalent to one full school year of study. Courses count toward the distribution only if passed.)

◆ English 4 courses

◆ Mathematics 4 courses (Algebra I & II and Geometry or Trigonometry or comparable coursework) (a full math course beyond Algebra II is required during senior year)

◆ Sciences 3 courses (including 2 courses with Laboratory work)◆ Social Sciences 2 courses (including 1 course in U.S. History) ◆ Foreign Languages 2 courses (in a single language)

◆ Electives 2 courses (from the above subjects or from the Arts & Humanities or Computer Sciences)

Minimum Required Grade Point Average (GPA) must be achieved based on all college preparatory courses completed at the time of application and should be weighted for accelerated (Honors or Advanced Placement) courses. The required minimum weighted high school GPA is 3.0 for the four-year public campuses.

### **SAT Scores**

Applicants who meet the GPA requirement do not have to use the sliding scale for admission, but still must submit SAT or ACT test scores for consideration if they are applying to a state university or UMASS within three years of high school graduation.

Sliding Scale (used when GPA is lower than the minimum required GPA)

If an applicant's GPA falls below the required minimum, a sliding scale will apply. This scale should be used only when an applicant's GPA falls below the required 3.0 minimum for admission to the state universities or UMass.

Scores on the writing section of the SAT will not affect the sliding scale for freshman applicants to the Massachusetts state universities and to the University of Massachusetts at this time. The sliding scale, used in making admissions decisions for students with high school grade point averages falling below the required minimum, will continue to be based upon the combined

### **Sliding Scale for Freshman Applicants to UMASS**

#### **High School GPA Combined SAT CR&M Must Equal or Exceed** (ACT Equivalent in parentheses)

2.51-2.99	950 (20)
2.41-2.50	990 (21)
2.31-2.40	1030 (22)
2.21-2.30	1070 (23)
2.11-2.20	1110 (24)
2.00-2.10	1150 (25)

No Applicant with a High School GPA below 2.00 may be admitted to a State University or University of Massachusetts Campus.

### **Sliding Scale for Freshman Applicants to a State University**

#### **High School GPA Combined SAT CR & M Must Equal or Exceed** (ACT Equivalent in parentheses)

2.51-2.99	920 (19)
2.41-2.50	960 (20)
2.31-2.40	1000 (21)
2.21-2.30	1040 (22)
2.11-2.20	1080 (23)
2.00-2.10	1120 (24)

More information can be found at the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education website, [www.mass.edu](http://www.mass.edu).

Most very selective colleges recommend a more rigorous course selection, which usually includes courses taken at the highest end of a discipline's sequence, such as:

- **English** – 4 courses
- **Mathematics** – 4 courses (Including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II & Precalculus)
- **Sciences** – 4 courses (including 2 courses with laboratory work)
- **Social Sciences** – 4 courses (including 1 course in U.S. History)
- **Foreign Languages** – 4 courses (in a single language)

# **Statement of Students' Rights and Responsibilities in the College Admissions Process**

## *When you apply to colleges and universities you have rights*

### **Before You Apply**

- You have the right to receive factual and comprehensive information from colleges and universities about their admission, financial costs, aid opportunities, practices and packaging policies, and housing policies.
- If you consider applying under an early admission or early action decision plan, you have a right to complete information from the college about its processes and policies.

### **When You Are Offered Admission**

- You have the right to wait to respond to offers of admission and/or financial aid until May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Colleges that request commitments to offers of admission and/or financial assistance prior to May 1<sup>st</sup>, must clearly offer you the opportunity to request (in writing) an extension until May 1<sup>st</sup>. They must grant you this extension and your request may not jeopardize your status for admission and/or financial aid. (This right does not apply to candidates admitted under an early decision program)

### **If You Are Placed On A Waiting List or Alternative List**

- The letter that notifies you of that placement should provide a history that describes the number of students on the wait list, the number offered admission, and the availability of financial aid and housing.
- Colleges may require neither a deposit nor a written commitment as a condition of remaining on a wait list.
- Colleges are expected to notify you of the resolution of your wait list status by August 1<sup>st</sup> at the latest.

## *When you apply to colleges and universities you have responsibilities*

### **Before You Apply**

- You have a responsibility to research and understand the policies and procedures of each college or university regarding application fees, financial aid, scholarships, and housing. You should also be sure that you understand the policies of each college/university regarding deposits that you may be required to make before you enroll.

### **As You Apply**

- You must complete all material that is required for application, and submit your application on or before the published deadlines. You should be the sole author of your applications.
- You should seek the assistance of your high school counselor early and throughout the application period. Follow the process recommended by your high school for filing college applications.



- It is your responsibility to arrange, if appropriate, for visits to and/or interviews at colleges of your choice.

### **After You Receive Your Admission Decisions**

- You must notify each college or university which accepts you whether you are accepting or rejecting its offer. You should make these notifications as soon as you have made a final decision as to the college that you wish to attend, but no later than May 1<sup>st</sup>. It is understood that May 1<sup>st</sup> will be a postmark date.
- You may confirm your intention to enroll and, if required, submit a deposit to only one college or university. The exception to this arises if you are put on a wait list by a college or university and are later admitted to that institution. You may accept the offer and send a deposit. However, you must immediately notify a college or university at which you previously indicated your intention to enroll.
- If you are accepted under an early decision plan, you must promptly withdraw the applications submitted to other colleges and universities and make no additional applications. If you are an early decision candidate and are seeking financial aid, you need not withdraw other applications until you have received notification about financial aid.

If you think that your rights have been denied, you should contact the college or university immediately to request additional information or the extension of a reply date. In addition, you should ask your counselor to notify the president of the state or regional affiliate of the National Association for College Admission Counseling. If you need further assistance, send a copy of any correspondence you have had with the college or university and a copy of your letter of admission to: **NACAC, 1631 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2818**

This policy is endorsed by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

The following is a link to "NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices" document.

<https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/advocacy-and-ethics/statement-of-principles-of-good-practice/nacacs-code-of-ethics--professional-practices.pdf>

National Association for College Adm. Counseling  
1631 Prince St.  
Alexandria, VA. 22314-2818  
(800)-822-6285  
(703)-836-8015 FAX  
[www.nacac.com](http://www.nacac.com)

## The Application Process

The process of choosing a school or college is one of the most important that you will make over the next several months. Not a simple task, it will take time, effort, and careful planning for you and your family. It is a process that requires research, discussion, interviews, and the ability to compare and contrast what you know about yourself and what you discern about the polished marketing of a college or university.

Make use of all the resource materials in the School Counseling Office. Be sure to check the college's website to gather more information, take a virtual tour, check out academic departments, activities, admissions requirements, etc. Write, call or e-mail each college for more information when needed. By the beginning of your senior year, you should narrow your choices down to several colleges. Most students will have a mix of safety, target, and reach schools on their list.

### Types of Admissions Programs

**Non-Restrictive Application Plans:** These plans allow students to wait until May 1 to confirm enrollment.

- **Regular Decision** is 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. A student may apply to other institutions without restriction.
- **Rolling Admission** is the application process in which an institution reviews applications as they are completed and renders admission decisions to students throughout the admission cycle. A student may apply to other institutions without restriction.
- **Early Action (EA)** is the application process in which students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date. Students admitted under Early Action are not obligated to accept the institution's offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1. Under non-restrictive Early Action, a student may apply to other colleges.

**Restrictive Application Plans:** These plans allow institutions to limit students from applying to other early plans.

- **Early Decision (ED)** is the application process in which students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted, they definitely will enroll. While pursuing admission under an Early Decision plan, students may apply to other institutions, but may have only one Early Decision application pending at any time. Should a student who applied 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. The institution must notify the applicant of the decision within a reasonable and clearly stated period of time after the Early Decision deadline.

The Admissions Committee either accepts or denies admission to the candidate, or defers

the application to the regular admissions process. It is important to note that not all colleges will reconsider with the regular applicant group. If you are to be an Early Decision candidate, please notify your counselor of your intent as soon as possible. The following are some questions to consider when investigating Early Decision as an option for admissions:

- Am I prepared to make this commitment?
  - What type of Early Decision program does the college sponsor?
  - Am I obligated to accept admission if the financial aid package is insufficient to my needs?
  - Will my application be deferred to regular admissions if I am not accepted under the Early Decision Plan?
  - What type of financial aid forms must I file? When should these forms be processed, and to whom?
  - Are there other restrictions to this Early Decision program?
  - Does the admissions office recommend that I apply as an Early Decision candidate?
  - What are the deadlines for application and financial aid?
- **Restrictive Early Action (REA)** is the application process in which students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date. Institutions with Restrictive Early Action plans place restrictions on student applications to other early plans. Institutions will clearly articulate these restrictions in their Early Action policies and agreements with students. Students who are admitted under Restrictive Early Action are not obligated to accept the institution's offer of admission or to submit a deposit prior to May 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Open Admissions**

The college with this program admits all applicants.

## **Joint Admissions**

The Joint Admissions program is an exciting opportunity available to Massachusetts community college students who are enrolled in an approved academic program. Joint Admissions guarantees participating students admission to the University of Massachusetts and most Massachusetts State Colleges.

The Tuition Advantage Program (TAP) is an additional benefit for students enrolled in the Joint Admissions Program. This program awards qualified students a waiver for one-third off the in state tuition rate. See your counselor for more information.

## **Candidate's Reply Date**

May 1 is the common date by which accepted applicants must indicate their intention to enroll at the college they choose to attend. By use of a common reply date, students may evaluate all notices of admission and financial aid awards before deciding on any one college, allowing students to make informed decisions.

## Application Procedures

Once you have selected the schools in which you are interested, you should research their application procedures and deadlines.

It is extremely important that you read and follow all directions including exactly what materials you need to support your application. You are responsible for knowing specific details applicable to each school to which you are applying. You must check deadlines, admission requirements, tests to be taken, etc.

Give yourself time to complete the application procedures by starting as early as possible. Waiting until the last minute causes unnecessary stress and often leads to errors and omissions.

### The College Application

There are two parts to the application package; the student portion and the high school portion. The student should fill out his/her portion and submit it to the college. Students are also responsible for submitting their essay (if required), application fee\*, and any other supplemental information such as an art portfolio, CD's, DVD's, graded writing samples, or resume. The School Counseling Office is responsible for submitting the school portion, a.k.a. the transcript package.

\* Fee waivers permit eligible students to submit college applications or test registration forms without the fee. A limited number are available through school counselors and educational agencies for students who qualify. To find out more about fee waiver eligibility requirements: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/educators/higher-ed/college-enrollment/college-application-fee-waivers>

### Common Application

The Common Application greatly simplifies the college application process for students by allowing them to use one form to apply to many schools. The Common Application is accepted by hundreds of colleges. A student fills out the application once, then submits copies electronically to each of his/her colleges. It is available online at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org). Many colleges using the Common Application will require a *supplement* to be completed by the student. Students need to follow the directions for submitting the Common Application very carefully.

Use the following ***College Application Checklist*** to help you keep track of the process. Copies can be picked up in the School Counseling Office.

# College Application Checklist

Colleges	Applications					Letters of Recommendation						Test Scores		Interview		Aid	Follow Up			
	Early Deadline	Regular Deadline	Common App	Entered in Naviance	Application Sent	Counselor			Teacher #1		Teacher #2		Other		Test Scores Sent	Interview Required	Thank You Note	FAFSA submitted	Check that college has received all materials	Update Naviance
						Read Out information for Counselor letter	Met w/Counselor to sign Transcript Release Form	Paid \$5 Transcript Fee	Recommendation Requested	Thank You Note	Recommendation Requested	Thank You Note	Recommendation Requested	Thank You Note	Test Scores Sent	Interview Required	Thank You Note	FAFSA submitted	Check that college has received all materials	Update Naviance



**Colleges**

# Transcript Package Processing

## Procedure:

1. Fill out a "Transcript Release Authorization" form with your counselor **at least ten school days prior to your earliest application deadline.** (See sample on page 43.)
  2. Students are responsible for entering the colleges they are applying to in Naviance. Common Applications linked to Naviance will transfer colleges you're applying to, to your Naviance account. THIS IS A ONE WAY STREET – if you remove a college from your Common App list it does not automatically remove from your Naviance list. You MUST go to your Naviance list and remove it there as well. **Always make sure your Naviance list is up to date.**
  3. The School Counseling Department prepares the transcript package. The transcript package consists of the following:
    - a. Transcript of grades 9-11\*
    - b. Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School Profile
    - c. Secondary School Report (includes counselor's recommendation)
    - d. Letters of recommendation, if available
- \* First quarter senior grades & semester one senior grades are **automatically** forwarded to the colleges when available.
4. School counselors electronically submit or mail hard copies of the transcript package. Students can follow this process via their Naviance account.

## Students, please be reminded:

- If, after you enter your initial college list into Naviance, you make changes to it i.e. change a deadline, add/delete colleges, file through Common Application or not, file electronically or paper mail - you must notify your school counselor.
- Seniors who are applying EA or ED are reminded to list the names of all colleges/universities to which they plan to apply. Keep your counselor informed of your EA/ED status.
- Most colleges will require an official score report sent directly to them by The College Board or ACT. It is the student's responsibility to request this information be sent from the College Board or ACT.
- Notify your counselor of all college admission decisions, as well as your decision of which college you will be attending next fall. Students can enter their decision results in Naviance by clicking on the "Edit" pencil icon next to the "Results" column.
- In June, final transcripts will be sent, either electronically or in the mail, to the college you indicate in Naviance that you are planning to attend.
- Final transcripts will also be uploaded to the NCAA Eligibility Center for all students whose names appear as having created an NCAA account.

## Top Ten (+2) Things that Seniors and Their Parents Need to Know About the College Application Process:

1. Students are responsible for submitting the actual application, application fee, and any college specific requirements, i.e. art portfolio, etc. Carefully read the instructions as they vary from one institution to another.
2. Students are responsible for signing a Transcript Release Authorization Form with their school counselor at least 10 school days in advance of their earliest application deadline.
- 3 A \$5 flat fee for transcript processing covers all applications. This fee should be paid to the School Counseling Office before the student's earliest deadline and is considered a school obligation which must be paid prior to participating in senior week activities and graduation. (See Student Handbook section "GRADUATION/Senior Graduation Obligations")
4. Students must indicate in Naviance if they are using the Common Application.
5. If a student decides to apply in a different format i.e. paper vs. on-line, Common Application vs. non-Common Application or makes changes to their college list or deadlines, they **MUST** stop in to the School Counseling Office or email their counselor.
6. If students are submitting letters of recommendation from coaches or others outside of the HWRHS faculty, please email or give a hard copy of these letters to the guidance secretary. Keep copies for future reference such as scholarship applications.
7. Students must request teacher letters of recommendation in a timely manner and be sure that teachers are aware of your earliest deadline. This request must be done through personal contact, not an e-mail.
8. On the Common Application, students must fill out the Privacy Notice (FERPA) form, thus allowing us to forward your transcript package electronically.
9. Common App exclusive colleges must be listed in your Common App account to enable your counselor to send the Transcript Package electronically.
10. Parents and students are assigned their own distinct and unique Naviance accounts and should use their own accounts as permissions differ. Students must use a student account to see certain information in Naviance.
11. As the School Counseling Office frequently sends updates and reminders to students & parents, you should check your emails regularly.
12. Parents are reminded that the college application process needs to be a student driven experience.

### Note regarding the following two forms (1) Transcript Release Authorization; and (2) Recommendation Information Forms:

(1) The **Transcript Release Authorization Form** must be completed in the School Counseling Office with your counselor.

(2) Printed copies of the **Recommendation Information Form** are available in the School Counseling Office for students to pick up. Many teachers will ask for them after agreeing to write for you.

**Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School**  
**Transcript Release Authorization 2021-2022**

**(SAMPLE ONLY)**

**This Authorization must be signed in duplicate by both student and school counselor.**

In order for the School Counseling Office to send my transcript packages (which include my transcript and supporting documents) to the colleges I apply to, I acknowledge that I understand the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ It is my responsibility to speak to my school counselor about my college application intentions.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is my responsibility to enter the colleges I am applying to into the "colleges I'm applying to" section of my Naviance account.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is my responsibility to check the deadlines for my type of application (EA, ED, RD, etc.) of the colleges I enter in Naviance. If I later decide to change any deadlines or if I add or delete any colleges, I will notify my school counselor either by email or in person.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is my responsibility to indicate in Naviance (for each college) if I am using the Common Application.

\_\_\_\_\_ If I apply through the Common Application I must complete the FERPA waiver and match my Common App account to my Naviance account. In the "Applying via Common App" column in Naviance, click on any that are "Unknown" and change to yes or no. *(The colleges on your Common App list will automatically be entered in the "colleges I'm applying to" section of Naviance once you match your Common App to Naviance.*

\_\_\_\_\_ If I have more letters of recommendation than a college will accept, it is my responsibility to indicate which should be sent.

\_\_\_\_\_ In order for my school counselor to process my transcript packages in a timely manner I must have all colleges I am applying to entered into the "colleges I'm applying to" section of my Naviance account **AT LEAST TEN SCHOOL DAYS PRIOR TO EACH APPLICATION DEADLINE**. I further understand that failing to abide by the ten school day obligation may prevent my school counselor from being able to send my transcript package by the deadline.

\_\_\_\_\_ Entering a college into the "colleges I'm applying to" section of my Naviance account constitutes the granting of permission for my school counselor to process a transcript package on my behalf to that college.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am obligated to pay a one-time five dollar (\$5.00) fee for transcript package processing on my behalf. (See Student Handbook section "STUDENT SERVICES/TRANSCRIPTS") This fee is considered a school obligation which must be paid prior to participating in senior week activities and graduation. (See Student Handbook section "GRADUATION/Senior Graduation Obligations")

\_\_\_\_\_ It is my responsibility to remove any college I decide not to apply to from my "colleges I'm applying to" list prior to their being processed by my school counselor in order to avoid being charged the fee as outlined above. I further understand that counselors may need to process packages several days prior to each deadline due to heavy volume or to avoid internet slowdowns, so it is my responsibility to remove those colleges as soon as possible.

\_\_\_\_\_ It is my responsibility to order official standardized test scores to be sent directly from the testing agencies to the colleges I am applying to.

\_\_\_\_\_ If I haven't already, I will fill out the Counselor Recommendation Form in Naviance as soon as possible. I have asked the following teachers for a letter of recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed and signed with school counselor on: \_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Student Name (please print neatly)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature School Counselor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Student



## Recommendation Information Form

\*Students please note: You will need to complete this sheet for each teacher from whom you are requesting a letter of recommendation. Teachers appreciate at least four weeks of lead time.

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your willingness to write a letter of recommendation for me. The information provided on this sheet is intended to assist you in writing the letter. Your input is valued and appreciated.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Earliest Application Deadline Date: \* \_\_\_\_\_

(\***NOTICE TO TEACHER:** Please upload your letter in Naviance at least one week prior to this date.)

I was in your \_\_\_\_\_

class(es) and my semester grades(s) were \_\_\_\_\_

### **ACADEMIC TRENDS / GROWTH:**

Please identify a circumstance or experience in the class(es) that impacted your way of thinking and/or your growth as a student. What do you feel you gained from taking this class?

Tell about an experience from the class/subject that you feel shows your potential as a lifelong learner.

Describe a time you struggled in the class(es) and what steps you took to overcome the difficulty

**ENGAGEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM:**

Describe an academic accomplishment (major paper, classroom dialogue, science experiment, and/or artistic project) from the class that you are most proud of and tell why you take pride in it.

What was a favorite memory from the class you were enrolled in?

List a few of your most distinguishing or admirable qualities (and how they relate to the class).

If you have any other information that may be helpful for your recommendation, or that you want emphasized, please share it here:

## The Admissions Interview

The trend at colleges and universities is moving away from the one time all important interviews toward a more relaxed, general information meeting. Yet, some colleges require an interview. If the college requires or recommends one, schedule it during your campus visit. Some schools will not be able to grant a personal interview; they rely on alumni interviews which are arranged after an application is on file.

As with any interview, be on time. If you know you'll be delayed, call ahead. Also, review the information and notes you have on the college and prepare a list of questions ahead of time. Take the list so you're sure to cover everything you want to find out.

In your interview, you'll probably be asked about your background, interests, hobbies, goals, and why you're applying to the college. It is natural to be a little nervous. Try to relax and enjoy the experience.

### **The following suggestions may help to make your interview as positive as possible:**

- Be prepared to answer questions and ASK questions.
- Discuss the interview with your school counselor; request a copy of your transcript to bring with you to the interview.
- Pay particular attention to your appearance, grooming, and conduct. • Arrive on time.
- KNOW YOUR COLLEGE. Your knowledge of the college is an indication of your interest. Read the catalog or review the college's website carefully.
- Be as natural as possible.
- Be honest, sincere, and interested.
- Be confident. Speak directly and distinctly. Make eye contact with the interviewer. • Be prepared to answer questions about your personal goals, high school & community, career plans, leisure time pursuits, reading habits, issues that concern you, academic preparation and achievement, people or events that have influenced your life, family background, and reasons for selecting the college. • In your interview, bring out what you as an individual can bring to the college. • Send a thank you note to the interviewer to show your appreciation of the time spent with you.

### **In Your Interview, You Could Ask...**

- What is distinctive about the college?
- Will I have access to special equipment (such as an electron microscope) as a freshman?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the college's advising system? • What kinds of campus jobs can I get if I qualify for work-study?
- Are there new programs or facilities that will be available in the next couple of years?
- What are the college's recent graduates doing now?
- How does my profile compare to the typical applicant pool?

## At Your Interview, An Admission Counselor Could Ask...

- How did you first hear about the college?
- What are both your long-term and short-term career goals?
- How did you become interested in majoring in the field of study that you have chosen?
- What kind of activities are you involved with outside of school?
- What accomplishments have you achieved or what activities have you participated in that have had an effect on you?
- What do you feel are your academic strengths and weaknesses?
- What are your priorities in selecting a school?
- If you could live your high school years over again, what changes, if any, would you make?
- Where do you see yourself in four years?
- Discuss your most stimulating intellectual experience.
- Name the last four books you have read. What magazines do you enjoy? •
- What is the most significant contribution that you have made to your school? •
- What fears, if any, do you have about attending college?
- What do you most look forward to about college?

## Sample Letter to Interviewer

Your street address  
City, State, Zip Code  
Date

Office of Admissions  
Name of College  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip Code

Dear (Name of interviewer):

I was very pleased to meet with you on (date of interview) and would like to thank you for the time and consideration you gave to me during my admissions interview at (name of college).

I particularly enjoyed (add points which impressed you).

Sincerely,  
(Signature)  
Your name

# Writing Your College Essay

If you are like most students, you see the college essay as another hurdle on the way to being accepted at the college of your choice, however the essay is an opportunity for you to "talk" directly to the college's admissions committee. It is your chance to share your thoughts, insights & opinions, to highlight your accomplishments, and to convey your maturity and outlook on life.

## Purpose of the Essay

The college essay is extremely important for two major reasons:

1. It enables the college admissions office to evaluate your ability to use standard written English that is correctly written, punctuated, and contains correct grammar, usage, and syntax. Through your essay they can assess the clarity and coherence of your thinking and your ability to convey your thoughts in written form.
2. It enables the admissions office to learn more about you as a person, beyond what grades and standardized test scores can convey. A well-written essay can speak worlds about your attitudes, feelings, personal qualities, imagination, and creativity. For the admissions staff, it adds another important piece to the puzzle because it distinguishes you as an individual, different from any other student who is applying. Whether you write about a hobby, a personal experience, someone you know, a belief, or an opinion, you reveal yourself in everything you say.

## Choosing a Topic

The choice of a topic is frequently not an issue. Many colleges and universities will either give you a topic to write about or present several topics from which you must choose. Other colleges may simply "suggest" broad general topics or give you total freedom to write about something that interests or concerns you. Regardless of whether you must respond to a prescribed topic or come up with one on your own, here are a few general hints about the most effective way to approach your topic:

1. Narrow your topic and try to be as specific and illustrative as possible. In most cases, the less abstract and vague your writing, the more interesting and revealing it will be.
2. The easiest topic to write about is you. No one knows more about you than you. Since one important purpose of the essay is self-revelation, it is no place to be shy or modest although you should not exaggerate. If you choose to write about yourself, remember that little incidents and facts are often the most revealing of character and outlook.
3. Do not be afraid to write about something you think is a little different. A unique topic or approach is often refreshing to a college admissions officer who has been reading applications all day. Further, an unusual or offbeat essay is an excellent way to show your creativity.

## **Preparing To Write**

Before actually sitting down to write a first draft of your essay, spend some time organizing your thoughts. Develop a framework for your essay so it will have a smooth and logical progression from one idea or incident to the next. Consider your purpose in writing, what you want to convey, and the tone that you think is most appropriate for the topic. Decide on a style that is comfortable for you, not one that you think the college admissions committee prefers. Leave room for flexibility and creativity as you actually begin writing.

## **Writing the Essay**

You do not have to get it right the first time! Instead, write the first draft of your essay with the main focus on content and communicating your thoughts. Then set it aside for a day or two, re-read it with a fresh perspective, and make any necessary changes. This is also the point at which you should consider matters of organization, style, grammar, spelling, and tone. Once you have rewritten your first draft, you may wish to try it out on your family, friends, English teacher, or school counselor. While the final product and final "voice" should be yours, they may be able to offer helpful suggestions for technical or other improvements.

## **Do's and Don'ts of the College Essay**

### **Do's**

- \*Do think "small" and write about something that you know about.
- \*Do reveal yourself in your writing.
- \*Do show rather than tell. By giving examples, you help bring it to life.
- \*Do write in your own "voice" and style.

### **Don'ts**

- \*Don't write what you think others want to read.
- \*Don't exaggerate or write to impress.
- \*Don't use a flowery, inflated, or pretentious style.
- \*Don't neglect the technical part of your essay (grammar, spelling, sentence structure).
- \*Don't ramble--say what you have to say and conclude.

Your college essay, along with your high school record, standardized test scores, co-curricular involvement, recommendations, and interview, will provide the basis upon which the college makes its admissions decision. A thoughtful, well-written essay can affect that final decision in a very positive way. Keep this in mind and take full advantage of the opportunity that the college essay affords you.

## How Admissions Decisions Are Made

***WE CANNOT STRESS ENOUGH*** that all students should be aware of the implications of the image that they portray on the internet. It is extremely important to project a professional impression through voice mail messages, e-mail account titles, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other social networking sites. Admissions officers can and do scope out social media as part of their decision making process.

When a student applies to a college, the college admission office collects a folder of information about the applicant to consider as it makes a decision. You should be aware of what goes in to this all-important folder.

### Application

The application includes simple biographical information such as birth date and family information. Frequently, students are asked to write essays which are intended to acquaint the admission committee with certain student experiences, strengths and weaknesses, and writing ability. This is where students have the power to present themselves in the best possible light.

The single most important step in completing the college application is also the

simplest: **READ THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY**

For the student, the application is like a final test. While it is true that the greatest emphasis will be placed on courses, grades, and in some cases, the test scores, colleges want to know about you as a person. The application, essay, and interview (if available) are opportunities to profile yourself.

Students should consult their high school counselor and college admission counselor if they have any questions about the competitiveness of their application.

### Academic Record

The most important factor in the applicant's folder is the academic record in high school. Many consider it to be the best indication of later college success.

The program of study, specific courses, and the grades the student received are aspects of the record that admission officers will consider in appraising the student's transcript. Colleges pay special attention to the challenging courses the student has successfully taken.

A student's academic performance in relation to his/her classmates is a means of showing admission officers the level of competition the student has encountered and how well he or she achieved relative to the competition.

### Admissions Test Scores

Colleges that still require standardized tests will use the scores in several different ways. First they may look at the scores as one way of predicting if a student will succeed in college. Secondly, colleges may use scores to compare students who come from similar backgrounds and schools. Finally, colleges may use test scores to help place students in appropriate courses.



## **Recommendations**

The recommendations prepared by teachers, the counselor, and others, represent a very important part of the admission folder. They tell about the student's classroom and life experiences in terms that are not represented by grades.

Teachers may comment on the type of contributions the student made to the class - the written and oral work that has been presented.

The counselor can highlight strengths that may not be otherwise worked into the official application and comment on the student's potential for success at the college level.

The recommendation allows the writer to go beyond the information requested in the general application and describe the student's unique qualities and characteristics.

## **Student Activities and Employment**

The student's record of involvement in activities can be a significant supporting credential. Out-of-school activities such as work, scouting, church groups, and community volunteer work should not be overlooked.

Mere membership is not the important factor. Rather, it is the level of involvement and accomplishment that is important. It is better to be a significant contributor to one activity that you feel passionate about, than to be superficially involved in a number of organizations.

## **Responses from Schools**

When the college or university has reviewed the application, a number of possible responses can come back to the student. They are:

**Admit** - Full admission offered to the student.

**January Admit** - Full admission offered to the student beginning during the college's 2<sup>nd</sup> semester.

**Deny** - Application for admission has not been accepted.

**Deferral** - Early Decision/Early Action applicants are placed in the regular application pool for later consideration.

**Conditional Admit** - Student may need to demonstrate further evidence of skills and abilities through successful completion of specific course work prior to receiving admission.

**Wait list** - Student's application has received provisional acceptance with full admission pending space availability.

Once you notify a college that you are accepting an admission offer, you should also notify any other colleges that offered admission that you will not be attending. This allows the college to extend their offer to another student who may be on their waiting list. Under no circumstances should a student indicate an intention to enroll at more than one college.

## **Delayed Admission**

Most colleges allow an accepted candidate to postpone enrollment in a college, generally for one semester or one year. The accepted student must send a letter to the college of his/her choice requesting deferred enrollment and must send in a deposit by May 1, to hold his/her place.

# Financial Aid: Step by Step

## Step 1: Definition

Financial aid is a combination of funds (i.e., grants, loans, and work awards) from a variety of sources (such as federal, state, or institutional), which supplements the financial contribution that a student is able to make toward meeting the costs of a college education. The estimated family contribution (EFC) is generated according to a standard formula. The EFC is then subtracted from the total cost of the institution. The difference between the institution costs and the estimated family contribution determine the amount of financial aid award eligibility. Awards of need-based aid are based solely on financial criteria.

(Merit-based aid is awarded in the form of scholarships based on some type of competitive criteria, such as outstanding academic performance, noteworthy achievement in co-curricular or extracurricular activities, etc.)

## STEP 2: Application

Never be embarrassed to apply for financial aid. The information you provide is always kept strictly confidential. Need-analysis documents should be submitted by the application deadline. Virtually all colleges/universities require that you submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). Fortunately, this form need only be completed once; you can designate the schools that you wish to receive the information. The service processing the document will automatically send to each designated school an analysis of your estimated family contribution. The FAFSA becomes available in the fall. Deadlines for submission of the need-analysis document vary—make sure you know the deadlines for the schools to which you are applying.

- Complete the form(s) that establish your eligibility for state grant aid. Information for your specific state is available from your School Counseling Office. Most colleges require that you complete the appropriate application for state grants.
- Documentation: Your family financial records and income tax forms are the basic documentation that supports your case for financial aid. Many colleges require copies of your parents and your own Federal tax returns (IRS 1040) for their financial records. On occasion, additional supplemental data may also be requested, so be prepared. File your income tax early, and make extra copies of all pertinent documents for future use.

In addition, the CSS/Financial Aid Profile is a program of the College Scholarship Service (CSS), the financial aid division of the College Board. Many colleges, universities, graduate, pre-professional schools, and scholarship programs use the information collected on the CSS Profile to help them award non-federal student aid funds. CSS does not award scholarship money or any other financial aid. A list of colleges and universities that require the CSS Profile is available online. You need to register to receive your application packet and may do so on line [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). Click CSS Profile on the student homepage.

### STEP 3: Eligibility

Many students and parents assume that a high family income makes them ineligible for need-based aid. This is not necessarily true. Situations such as a large family, more than one child in college at one time, or parents nearing retirement will all affect estimated need.

Some schools offer no-obligation early estimation programs. An initial estimate of the family contribution is prepared from a simple form that requests basic family financial information about income, assets, and liabilities. Ask admissions or financial aid representative at the schools in which you are interested if they offer this service—the information can give a preliminary indication of your eligibility for financial aid and the approximate amount you might receive.

You can go to [FAFSA.ed.gov](https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa) and use their FAFSA4caster to estimate your eligibility for federal student aid. <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa>

You can go to [MEFA.org](http://www.mefa.org/using-net-price-calculators/) for an explanation of how to use the net price calculator found on most college websites: <http://www.mefa.org/using-net-price-calculators/>

### STEP 4: The Financial Aid Award

- Colleges and universities review the information provided by the need analysis service and the state grant agency and prepare a financial aid “package.”
- Different institutions may interpret the data from the need analysis service differently. The estimated family contribution may be higher or lower than that originally reported by the need analysis service. The financial aid office at each college has the final authority to create a financial aid package.
- A typical financial aid “package” includes a combination of nonrepayable federal and state grants (if applicable), loans, work-study, and non-repayable grants from the college or university. When you are admitted, you will be notified of the aid you are eligible to receive shortly after the admissions announcement.

*The School Counseling Department offers general financial aid information for the convenience of students and their families, but in no way should this information take the place of expert, comprehensive, individualized financial analysis.*

### How Can Outside Grants Affect Financial Aid Awards Given By Institutions?

#### **My institutional financial aid brochure refers to “self-help” and “financial aid package.” What do they mean?**

The financial aid package is the combination of aid being awarded through gifts (grants and scholarships that don’t have to be repaid), loans (money that must be repaid over time), and/or employment (earnings from work). The self-help part of the financial aid package refers to the non-gift items: loans and employment.

## **If I receive financial aid from the college I'm planning to attend and then am awarded a scholarship from a civic group or business organization, how do I know if the college will change its financial aid award?**

The only way to be sure if your financial aid award will be adjusted is to check the policy of the institution you plan to attend. The financial aid officer at the college or university is your best source of information. A quick review of the institution's financial aid materials might also provide the answers. Remember: policies differ greatly from one institution to another. What may be true for your classmate's college may not be true for yours.

## **What if I decide to avoid all this and don't report an outside scholarship to my college?**

That's a bad idea. Institutional policies and state and federal regulations require that, if you are a candidate for financial aid, you must report your outside scholarships to the financial aid office of the institution you're planning to attend. **Remember:** The information you and your parents provide about your financial situation and your outside scholarships must be complete and accurate. If it is not, you risk losing your entire financial aid package.

## **Financial Aid Preparation**

The College Scholarship Service (CSS) advises high school counselors and college financial aid administrators to be careful about firms offering to help parents prepare applications for financial aid.

"There's a cottage industry out there," explained Kathleen Brouder, former director of CSS information services and association affairs. "Some of the companies are legitimate, but some are not." Ms. Brouder explained that some of these companies are engaged in the practice of teaching families how to hide their income and assets--in essence look poorer than they are--to gain more financial aid.

"When you distort your ability to contribute in order to get more money back in financial aid," Ms. Brouder observed, "that money is coming out of the pockets of those who truly need it." Parents might be drawn into these schemes in good faith, according to Ms. Brouder, who said there is a fair amount of honest misunderstanding. But people should also understand that at least 30 percent of all applicants for financial aid have their records verified against tax returns; some colleges now verify all applications. The penalties for falsifying information include being denied financial aid or even having to refund aid already received.

## **CSS Guidelines**

Some companies charge a fee for supplying information that is readily available to parents at no charge.

Matching services use computer databases to find financial aid sources. "Although they don't teach parents to hide anything," Ms. Brouder said, "students and parents should establish the credibility of such operations."

The CSS Student Advisory Committee has issued a set of guidelines for those considering using a financial aid computer search company. The committee suggests finding the answers to these questions:

1. The company suggests that large amounts of aid currently are not being used, how does it document the statement?
2. How many financial aid sources exist in the company's computer file? Does the company maintain its own file of sources, or does it use the file of some other company or service?
3. Is there a minimum number of sources provided by the company? Are the listings in the form of scholarships, work, loans, or contests? Do they include federal and state programs for which the student will be considered through the regular financial aid application process?
4. How often does the company update its list of aid sources? Does the company check to confirm that the source still exists, and that data concerning application deadlines and eligibility criteria are current?
5. Can students apply directly to the aid sources provided by the company, or must they be recommended for consideration by some other person or group? Are there application fees for the sources provided?
6. How long will you have to wait for the information? Will the list of aid sources be received prior to application deadlines?
7. What characteristics are used to match students with aid sources?
8. How successful have previous participants been in obtaining funds from aid sources identified by the company?
9. Will the company refund the program fee if aid sources are incorrectly matched with your qualifications, if aid sources no longer exist or fail to reply, or if application deadlines for aid sources have already passed when the information is received?

In addition to consulting these guidelines, the CSS Student committee suggests that parents and students refer to publications that list sources of financial aid and consult high school guidance counselors, local libraries, college financial aid offices, or academic departments for other resources. The Boston Public Library has a data bank available for public use.

## **Financial Aid/Scholarship Information on the web**

**The Financial Aid Information Page (Fin Aid)** <http://www.FinAid.org/> This is a valuable resource for any aspect of higher education finances and financial aid.

**The Student Guide** <http://www.ed.gov> This is an essential and excellent guide to all forms of federal financial aid for higher education.

**Scholarship Foundation of America Home Page** [www.scholarshipamerica.org](http://www.scholarshipamerica.org) Specializes in providing information on scholarships and advising high school students on college choices and

applying for the relevant scholarships among those the Foundation monitors.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa>  
Interactive web version of the FAFSA Form.

**Expected Family Contribution** [www.mefa.org](http://www.mefa.org) Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority website that estimates expected family contribution.

**FastWeb** [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) A free, searchable scholarship service with college search information.

**Sallie Mae** [www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com) Sallie Mae provides information on student loans, scholarships and grants.

**Mapping Your Future** <https://www.mappingyourfuture.org/> Information on financial strategies, career options and college planning.

### **Local Scholarship Information**

Every year many scholarships are available to Hamilton-Wenham's youth. They include awards based on financial need as well as ones that are based on specific qualifications such as outstanding scholarship or contribution to the community. A list of these scholarships is available on the guidance webpage in mid to late February of the senior year. Applications and information will be posted in student's Naviance accounts. Students may apply for an unlimited number of scholarships provided they meet the criteria set forth. Sometime in February, all seniors are given hard copies of the scholarship listing as well as the high school's Common Scholarship Application.

We would like to extend our appreciation to the following individuals and organizations whose professional commitment to excellence in secondary education contributed to the publication of this Guide for students and their parents. Their collaboration is genuinely appreciated.

The Guidance and Counseling Staff at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High

School The National Association for College Admission Counseling

The New England Association of College Admissions Counseling

The Guidance & Counseling Staff at Methuen High School

The Guidance & Counseling Staff at Andover High School

The Guidance Department at Lexington High School

The College Board

ACT Educational Services

North Shore Guidance Directors Association

Massachusetts School Counselors Association