

## **Post-Secondary Planning Guide**

Central Islip

Union Free School District

Central Islip, New York 11722

[www.centralislip.k12.ny.us](http://www.centralislip.k12.ny.us)

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# Central Islip High School

## School Counseling Department

Dear Students & Parents/ Guardians,

We are pleased to provide you with comprehensive post-secondary planning as you begin your exciting journey toward graduation from Central Islip High School. Our counseling services are designed with your future goals in mind, whether that path leads to college, the military, or a career. We are committed to sharing the most accurate and up-to-date information to support your exploration and decision-making process.

One of the most important steps in preparing for life after high school is meeting regularly with your School Counselor. Your Counselor will be a key resource, offering valuable information, guidance, and ideas as you consider your next steps. In addition, Central Islip High School hosts a Fall College Fair and welcomes admissions representatives from colleges and universities throughout the year, giving you opportunities to explore options firsthand.

While planning for the future can sometimes feel challenging, it is also an inspiring process filled with opportunities. Staying organized, communicating regularly, and asking questions will help you make the most of this journey. Remember: you are not alone. Central Islip has a dedicated network of counselors and staff ready to guide and support you every step of the way.

We look forward to working with you and helping you create the future you envision.

Sincerely,

**Brian Deaner, Director of Guidance and The Central Islip High School Counselors**

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Graduation Requirements

REGENTS DIPLOMA		ADV. REGENTS DIPLOMA	
English	4	English	4
Social Studies	4	Social Studies	4
Math	3	Math	3
Science	3	Science	3
Foreign Language (L.O.T.E)	1	Foreign Language (L.O.T.E)	3
Music/ Visual Arts	1	Music/ Visual Arts	1
Health	.5	Health	.5
Physical Education	2	Physical Education	2
Electives	3.5	Electives	1.5
Credit Total:	22	Credit Total:	22

REGENTS EXAMS		REGENTS EXAMS	
English Regents		English Regents	
Math Regents		Integrated Algebra Regents	
Global History Regents		Geometry Regents	
U.S. History Regents		Algebra 2/ Trigonometry Regents	
Science Regents		Global History Regents	
		U.S. History Regents	
		Life Science Regents	
		Physical Science Regents	
		(Checkpoint B or Equivalent)	
Total Exams Required:	5	Total Exams Required:	9

## Work Experience Credits

If you are currently working at an afterschool job, you may earn an additional **.5 elective credit for every 150 hours** you work during the school year. You can earn up to **1 credit per year**, with a maximum of **2 credits during your time at Central Islip**. Work Experience is an innovative way to support students in completing high school while gaining enthusiasm and preparation for the workforce. This program recognizes the value of the skills you are building on the job and allows them to count toward your academic success. Students who participate often find that their workplace experiences help them develop time management, responsibility, and problem-solving skills.

- 150 hours of documented work = .5 credit
- 300 hours of documented work = 1 credit

### General Guidelines

- Any paid work position where academic and career-related skills are being developed.
- Work Experience is graded pass/fail; a letter grade is not offered.
- Students must provide documentation of hours worked, verified by an employer.
- Credits earned through Work Experience can support graduation requirements and provide flexibility in course scheduling.
- This is an excellent opportunity to connect what you are learning in school with real-world experiences that prepare you for life after graduation.

## Career Research

### CareerZone

CareerZone is a website to explore careers related to your strengths, skills and talents. You can receive resume and cover letter tips and tricks, as well as build a portfolio. You can access CareerZone at: <https://www.careerzone.ny.gov/views/careerzone/account/login.jsf>

### Occupational Outlook Handbook

The Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) is a tool for students created by the United States Bureau of Labor. It is a comprehensive guide to possible careers as well as hundreds of occupations. You can browse resources, average pay, growth rate as well as multiple other characteristics for occupations listed. Access the OOH online at:

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm>

### Department of Labor

You may also want to explore your options by visiting either the national or local Department of Labor websites. You can visit the U.S. Department of Labor at:

<http://www.dol.gov>. You can also access your local New York Department of Labor at <http://labor.ny.gov/>.

## What Are the Options?

There are many options available to a student as a Central Islip High School graduate; it is important to choose the path that is the best fit. Many students go on to colleges or universities in pursuit of undergraduate degrees, but there are far more options. Some of these alternative paths include pursuing a trade, entering the military, traveling, studying abroad, or volunteering through AmeriCorps. Regardless of whether you choose a college or a different path, School Counselors can offer resources for every student.

### Options for the Post-Secondary Graduate

- Employment/ Apprenticeship
- Technical School/ Vocational School
- Armed Forces/ Military Academy
- Two-Year/ Community College
- Four-Year College

## Employment/ Apprenticeship

### Employment Opportunities

Local businesses, Chamber of Commerce, and regional career fairs can offer students the opportunity to seek employment. Job Corps is a resource for a free education and training program that helps young people learn job skills and secure a job: <http://www.jobcorps.gov/home.aspx>.

### Apprenticeship Training Programs

These programs tend to be run by trade unions or private companies/industries. On-the-job training is combined with instruction in order to give a student the qualifications and experiences to pursue a specific career. You can apply through the New York State Department of Labor: (<https://labor.ny.gov/pressreleases/apprenticeshiparchive.shtm>), there are over a hundred recognized apprenticeship trades including Machinist, Carpenter, Electrician, etc.

### Internships

Students looking for further experience and the development of their career skills may consider seeking internships. Internships are a good option for the student who is not yet fully qualified but looking to build their experience and resume. Although some internships may offer pay, most internships are not remunerative in nature but can still be of great value in exploring a career field or securing a future job. Contact local businesses and/or civic organizations to seek out prospective options for internship opportunities. Getting an internship is often similar to getting a new job, requiring an application and interview. Please read below for more information on completing an application and preparing for an interview.

## The Job Search Process

### Job Applications

Why do employers use job applications? Many employers use applications as a way of standardizing the information they obtain from all job-seekers, including some things that you would not normally put on your resume. Your goal is to complete the application as completely and honestly as you can- all the while remembering that the application is a key marketing tool for you in the job-hunting process. Remember that some employers will use your application as a basis for deciding whether to call you for an interview. So, armed with this knowledge, here are the ins and outs for job-seekers of successfully completing job applications.

### **Tips for Completing a Job Application Successfully**

1. **Arrive fully prepared.** Bring all essential documents with you, including your résumé, Social Security card, driver's license, and any other forms of identification. Employers may also request addresses and phone numbers of past employers, along with starting and ending salaries. Being over-prepared is far better than scrambling for missing details.

2. **Read and follow instructions carefully.** Take time to review the entire application before writing anything. Each application may ask for information in a slightly different way, and employers expect you to follow their format. Consider the application your first test in attention to detail.
3. **Prioritize neatness and accuracy.** Your application represents you. Whether typed or handwritten, it should be clean, legible, and professional. If completing it by hand, use blue or black ink only, avoid erasures or cross-outs, and keep the paper unbent and unmarked. Small details in presentation can make a strong impression.
4. **Tailor your responses to the job.** Highlight skills and accomplishments that directly relate to the position you're seeking. Provide examples from prior jobs, school activities, clubs, and volunteer experiences. Emphasize contributions and results, not just duties, to demonstrate why you are a stronger candidate than others.
5. **Avoid leaving blanks.** Employers expect consistent information from every applicant. If a question does not apply, write "N/A" (not applicable). Do not write "see résumé" in place of an answer, though you should always attach your résumé for additional context.
6. **Stay positive.** Applications should never include negative details, such as conflicts with supervisors or reasons for termination. The purpose of the application is to secure an interview, where more nuanced explanations can be shared if necessary. Always frame your responses in a constructive light.
7. **Be truthful—but strategic.** Dishonesty is one of the fastest ways to be disqualified from consideration. If asked why you left a previous job, avoid negative phrasing. Instead of saying "fired" or "laid off," consider writing "position ended" and be prepared to discuss details positively during the interview.
8. **Avoid stating salary requirements.** Applications that ask for salary expectations are often using it as a screening tool. Providing a number too early may hurt your chances. Instead, write "open" or "negotiable" to keep the conversation flexible until later in the hiring process.
9. **Provide thoughtful references.** Select references who can speak to your character, work ethic, and skills. These may include former supervisors, teachers, counselors, or community leaders. Always ask for permission before listing someone as a reference, and ensure they are willing to provide a positive, professional endorsement of you.

### Interviewing Skills

Spending days, weeks, or possibly months of looking for the right job has finally paid off and you've been asked to come in for an interview. Then comes the biggest question of all, now what? You will only have 15 to 20 minutes to sell your experiences, attitude, and skills to the employer- most likely without knowing what the employer wants to hear from you. There are articles upon articles of advice on interviewing, from how to answer certain questions to how to dress- right down to the color of your socks! It can seem overwhelming, but remembering a few key points can help make your interview successful.

### Interviewing

#### **1. Research**

Before your interview, take time to thoroughly research the company. If it is open to the public, visit the location in person to observe its culture and environment. Explore the company's website to learn about its mission, products, or services, and, if possible, speak with current or former employees. Learn what type of people work there, what the typical hours are, and what the daily responsibilities might include. As you research, make notes of questions you would like to ask the employer at the end of the interview.

Doing so shows genuine preparation and interest, and employers notice when a candidate is well informed.

## **2. Practice**

Interviews can feel intimidating, but practice helps reduce nerves and improve confidence. Rehearse common interview questions and create a list of the key strengths and experiences you want the employer to remember about you. Answer questions out loud while looking at yourself in a mirror or recording yourself to review. Practicing in this way allows you to refine your responses, avoid rambling, and speak clearly and concisely. This preparation highlights why you are the strongest candidate for the job.

## **3. Dress to Make a Strong First Impression**

Your appearance sets the tone for the interview. If you are interviewing for an office position, it is best to wear a conservative, professional suit in a dark color. For more casual environments, such as a factory or construction site, business casual attire is usually appropriate. For men, this may include slacks and a button-down shirt with a tie. For women, a neat blouse with slacks or a skirt is generally suitable. Avoid excessive jewelry, heavy perfumes, and flashy clothing. Good personal hygiene and neat grooming are also essential.

## **4. Demonstrate Good Interview Etiquette**

First impressions are shaped not only by appearance but also by behavior. Arrive on time for the interview, as punctuality demonstrates responsibility and reliability. Use confident body language, including a firm handshake, good posture, and consistent eye contact. Speak clearly, politely, and professionally, avoiding slang or inappropriate language. It is natural to feel nervous, but do your best to remain calm and collected. Maintain a positive tone throughout the interview and avoid criticizing former employers or complaining about past responsibilities. Employers look for candidates who are enthusiastic, respectful, and capable of meeting challenges.

## **5. Be Prepared to Ask the Interviewer Questions**

Employers expect candidates to show genuine interest in both the position and the company. Prepare a few thoughtful questions in advance based on your research. Appropriate questions may address workplace expectations, opportunities for growth, or the qualities the employer values most in a successful candidate. Do not overwhelm the interviewer or make the conversation feel like an interrogation, but demonstrate curiosity and engagement. Asking well-prepared questions conveys professionalism and reinforces your interest in the opportunity.

## **6. Follow Up with a Thank-You Note**

After the interview, always follow up with a thank-you note to express appreciation for the opportunity. A brief, polite message sent soon after the interview leaves a lasting impression. In the note, thank the interviewer for their time, restate your enthusiasm for the position, and reaffirm one or two of your key strengths. A thank-you note demonstrates professionalism, reinforces your interest, and can distinguish you from other applicants

## **New College Management System (Naviance)**

Central Islip High School is introducing a **new College Management System** through Naviance to help students organize and manage their post-secondary planning. This platform allows students to complete career assessments and personality tests, create a resume, set goals, explore & research colleges, track applications, and submit letters of recommendation electronically.

### **Getting Started:**

1. **Create your Naviance account** as soon as you receive your invitation. Check your Central Islip email for instructions.
2. **Invite two teachers** to submit letters of recommendation through Naviance. Be sure to ask teachers in advance and provide any necessary forms or information they may need. The letters of recommendation link is under Colleges on Naviance and teachers are invited to write for specific schools.
3. **Match your Common Application account** with your Naviance account on the platform. This ensures that transcripts and other materials are sent correctly and efficiently.

### **Managing Schools and Applications:**

- For colleges that **do not use the Common Application**, add them manually to Naviance.
- Conduct **college research** within Naviance, using resources and profiles to explore programs, requirements, and deadlines.
- Complete **interest inventories** in Naviance to better understand your strengths, preferences, and potential career paths.

### **Submitting Materials:**

- Submit a **Records Release Form** (found in the Counseling Center) to your counselor **up to 14 school days before your application deadline**. This allows your counselor sufficient time to prepare and submit all materials electronically.
- If you would like **first-quarter grades** sent to colleges, notify your counselor in advance.

By using Naviance, students have a centralized platform for managing applications, letters of recommendation, and college research. Regularly checking and updating your Naviance account ensures that all materials are complete and submitted on time, helping to make the college application process smoother and more organized.

### Technical/ Vocational Education

These schools offer programs for specific certificates or trades/ vocations. A Vocational/ Technical school may offer programs such as Automotive Technology, Culinary Arts, HVAC or Electrical, Cosmetology, Barbering, Nursing Assistant and many more. There are even programs to prepare a student to enter the medical field as a technician for radiology or sonography. These programs would prepare a student to enter into a specific trade, specific job, or earn a license through an apprenticeship program. There may be options to earn a certificate in one or two years.

Below is a listing of possible Technical/ Vocational Education programs located here on Long Island that may help you begin your search. This is only a partial list. There are other options/programs available. Please speak with your school counselor to discuss your specific interests and goals.

Island Drafting & Technical Institute: [www.idti.edu](http://www.idti.edu)

Eastern Suffolk BOCES: <http://www.esboces.org/Domain/35>

STAR Career Academy: [www.starcareer.edu](http://www.starcareer.edu)

Long Island Business Institute: [www.libi.edu](http://www.libi.edu)

Lincoln Technical Institute: [www.lincolntech-usa.com](http://www.lincolntech-usa.com)

Sanford-Brown: [www.sanfordbrown.edu](http://www.sanfordbrown.edu)

Wilson Tech: [www.wilsontech.org](http://www.wilsontech.org)

## **Armed Forces / Military Academy Opportunities**

Students in grades 10 through 12 may choose to take the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). Central Islip High School administers the ASVAB annually, and students are not required to enlist in the military to participate. The ASVAB evaluates strengths, aptitudes, and interests, offering insight into both military career paths and civilian opportunities. It also provides valuable feedback to support academic and career planning.

Each branch of the military offers educational benefits for those interested in serving while pursuing further education, including tuition assistance, ROTC scholarships, and GI Bill benefits.

### **Enlisting and Local Recruiting Resources**

Military enlistment offers job training, leadership development, technical skills, and significant educational support. Recruiters from various branches regularly visit Central Islip High School, particularly during the semi-annual college fair. The Guidance Office can provide up-to-date contact information.

Here are current local recruiting centers near Central Islip:

- **U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations**  
Central Islip, NY (Call for the specific base)  
Phone: (631) 715-3164
- **U.S. Navy Career Center**  
Bay Shore, NY  
Phone: (631) 665-3706
- **U.S. Army Recruiting Center (Active Duty & Army Reserves)**  
Smithtown, NY  
Phone: (631) 724-4917

These offices serve local high school students and families seeking more information or guidance on service options.

### **Military Academies**

Students interested in combining higher education with military training may consider applying to one of the premier service academies. These schools offer rigorous academics, leadership development, and physical training. Admission is competitive and typically requires strong academic performance, physical fitness, letters of recommendation, and often a congressional nomination.

Key academies include:

- United States Naval Academy
- United States Military Academy at West Point
- United States Coast Guard Academy
- United States Merchant Marine Academy

# Higher Education

## **Higher Education Pathways**

There are numerous options for students who wish to pursue higher education, ranging from two-year colleges to four-year universities, each offering programs in a wide variety of disciplines. Students considering this path should begin preparing early by enrolling in rigorous, college-preparatory coursework in high school and striving to achieve their highest academic potential. College admissions offices evaluate applicants based on a wide range of criteria, including academic performance, standardized test scores (if required), extracurricular involvement, essays, and letters of recommendation.

## **Types of Degrees and Certificates**

### **Certificates**

Certificate programs are designed for students seeking specialized training in a shorter timeframe than traditional degree programs. These programs prepare students for immediate entry into the workforce in a specific field. Certificates are offered in areas such as Veterinary Technology, Web Design, Paralegal Studies, and many skilled trades. They can often be completed at community colleges, vocational schools, or technical institutes.

### **Associate Degree**

An Associate Degree is an undergraduate credential typically earned in two years of full-time study. Students may pursue an Associate of Arts (A.A.), Associate of Science (A.S.), or Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.), depending on their career or transfer goals. Many students use an Associate Degree as a stepping stone, transferring to a four-year institution to complete a Bachelor's Degree, while others enter the workforce directly in fields such as healthcare, business, or technology.

### **Bachelor's Degree (B.A. or B.S.)**

The Bachelor's Degree is the most common undergraduate degree, generally requiring four years of full-time study. Students may pursue a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.S.), depending on their chosen discipline. Bachelor's programs are available at both public and private colleges and universities and provide the foundation for many professional careers. Completion of a Bachelor's Degree often opens pathways to graduate-level education.

### **Master's Degree**

A Master's Degree represents advanced study in a specific discipline and is pursued after the completion of a Bachelor's Degree. Programs typically take one to three years of full-time study, though some may take longer depending on the field. Students develop a deeper understanding of their subject area and often gain specialized expertise that enhances career advancement. Some Master's programs are designed as terminal degrees, while others serve as preparation for doctoral-level study.

### **Doctoral Degree**

The Doctoral Degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D., J.D., and others) is the highest academic credential awarded in higher education. Requirements vary by discipline, but doctoral study generally includes advanced coursework, original research, comprehensive examinations, and the completion of a dissertation.

# Types of Schools

## **Community Colleges and Junior Colleges**

Community colleges and junior colleges provide students with the opportunity to pursue an Associate's degree, earn professional certificates, or receive technical and vocational training. These institutions can also serve as a strong foundation for students planning to transfer to a four-year college or university. For students who are undecided about their academic path, wish to explore a variety of degree options, or seek to strengthen their academic record before entering a four-year institution, community colleges offer both an affordable and academically supportive starting point.

## **Business Schools**

Business schools focus on preparing students for office-related careers by offering practical training in administrative, clerical, and business-related skills. Programs are typically short in duration, and certificates can often be completed within 9 to 12 months, allowing students to quickly transition into the workforce.

## **Vocational Schools**

Vocational schools are designed to provide students with specialized training in skilled trades and technical careers. These programs emphasize hands-on learning and prepare students to enter the workforce with the specific expertise required for professions such as automotive technology, health sciences, culinary arts, or construction trades.

## **Fine Arts Colleges and Conservatories**

For students pursuing careers in the arts, fine arts colleges and conservatories offer highly specialized programs in areas such as music, theater, visual arts, and dance. Admission often requires the submission of a portfolio or a live audition. These schools are dedicated to cultivating artistic talent while providing rigorous academic preparation in the chosen field.

## **Colleges and Universities**

Traditional colleges and universities grant Bachelor's degrees and provide opportunities for advanced study leading to Master's or Doctoral degrees. They also offer a wide range of academic programs, research opportunities, and extracurricular experiences that prepare students for professional and graduate-level pursuits.

## **Public vs. Private Institutions**

Public colleges and universities are primarily funded by state governments, which typically results in lower tuition costs for in-state students. They are often larger, offering a broad range of academic programs but also larger class sizes. Private colleges and universities, by contrast, usually have smaller student bodies and can provide a more individualized academic experience. Although tuition at private institutions is generally higher, many offset the cost through substantial financial aid packages supported by endowments and private funding.

## College Entrance Tests

### Standardized Testing

PSAT -Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test- Offered in October out of 1520 total

The PSAT is the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test for 11<sup>th</sup> Graders (including underrepresented groups)

SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

ACT (American College Test) [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

### **Post-Secondary Testing Information**

*Central Islip High School Counseling Department*

As part of your post-secondary planning, it is important to understand the major standardized tests that may play a role in the college admissions process. Below is a summary of the **PSAT, the redesigned Digital SAT, and the ACT (paper and digital formats)**. **Most schools DO NOT REQUIRED STANDARDIZED TESTING IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS (SATs or ACTS)**

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Digital PSAT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)

- The PSAT is now **fully digital, and registration is in school**.
  - Testing time: **just over 2 hours** (much shorter than the old paper version).
  - Sections: **Reading & Writing** and **Math**.
  - Provides excellent practice for the Digital SAT and can qualify juniors for the National Merit Scholarship Program.
  - No essay or writing section.
  - Students should check with their counselor for the specific PSAT testing dates at Central Islip High School.
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Digital SAT

The **redesigned Digital SAT** consists of two tests: **Evidence-Based Reading & Writing (EBRW)** and **Mathematics**. The exam is approximately **2 hours and 14 minutes** (shorter than the previous paper version) and yields a maximum score of **1600 points** (800 per section).

#### **1. Evidence-Based Reading & Writing (200–800 points)**

- Adaptive test made up of two verbal modules.

- **Reading Test:** Questions focus on comprehension and reasoning skills applied to challenging passages across different subjects.
- **Writing & Language Test:** Questions focus on grammar, revision, and editing in the context of extended prose passages.

## 2. Mathematics (200–800 points)

- Covers: Heart of Algebra, Problem Solving & Data Analysis, Passport to Advanced Math, and Additional Topics in Math.
- Includes multiple-choice questions, grid-in responses, and extended-thinking problems.
- Sections are adaptive, making the test more personalized.

## 3. Optional Essay

- No longer a standard part of the SAT. Offered only in limited circumstances.
- The overwhelming majority of students **do not take the essay**.

### ACT (Paper and Digital Formats)

The ACT is accepted by all U.S. colleges and universities as an alternative to the SAT. It consists of three required sections and one optional science section. The science score is not considered in the composite. A separate STEM score is calculated, averaging Math and Science.

1. **English** – 35 minutes, 50 questions. Focuses on grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.
2. **Mathematics** – 50 minutes, 45 questions. Covers algebra, geometry, and trigonometry.
3. **Reading** – 40 minutes, 36 questions. Measures reading comprehension across different passages.
4. **Science (Unique to the ACT)** – 40 minutes, 40 questions. Tests interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem-solving in natural sciences.
5. **Writing (Optional)** – 40 minutes, one essay. Assesses writing skills through a persuasive essay.

### Scoring

- Composite ACT score ranges from **1–36**, based on the average of the four required sections.
- The optional **ACT Writing score** is reported separately. Most students **DO NOT** write the essay.
- For additional information about the **PSAT and SAT**, please visit the College Board website: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).
- For information about the **ACT**, including testing locations, please visit: [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

### Which test might be right for you?

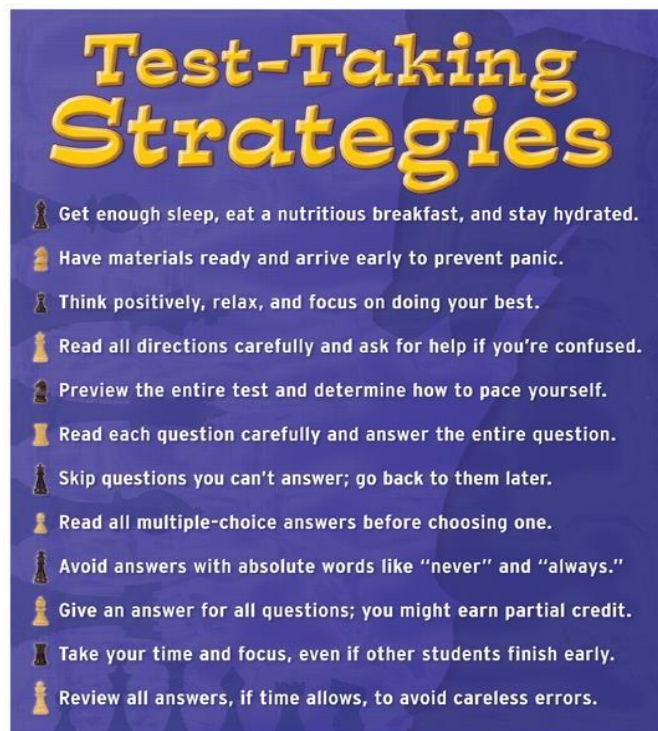
Students who are stronger classroom-based learners and who may struggle with higher-level mathematics or critical reasoning skills **should consider the ACT**. You may also take the ACT at testing sites other than Central Islip High School.

## TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

- The TOEFL exam is available to students whose native language is not English. Colleges have unique policies about whether they want TOEFL scores.
  - For students whose SAT or ACT scores may be impacted because English is not their first language, colleges often allow submission of TOEFL scores to provide additional context for applications.
  - For more information, visit: [www.ets.org/toefl](http://www.ets.org/toefl).
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## Registration Information

- **Central Islip High School Code:** 331290
- **Test Center Code:** 33310
- See your counselor if you qualify for a **fee waiver** (You must meet financial criteria; if you qualify for free-reduced lunch, please see your counselor about a waiver).



# What Colleges Consider

There is no single formula that colleges use to admit students. While grades and test scores are important, colleges consider a **combination of factors** to get the best picture of who a student is and how they will fit at the institution. The process is best deemed as holistic in nature.

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## Course Selection

- Be mindful of the courses required for graduation and for admission to the colleges of your choice. If you need help, don't hesitate to ask.
  - Take a balanced course load. Challenge yourself, but avoid overloading to the point that your grades may suffer.
  - Avoid taking only easy classes just to increase your GPA.
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## Grades

- Work hard, prioritize your time, and aim to do well throughout high school. Improvement over time and progression in course rigor builds a strong transcript.
  - Good grades can help you qualify for scholarships.
  - **Trends matter:** Upward trends strengthen your application, while downward trends may raise questions. If there are circumstances affecting your performance, a counselor recommendation or special letter can help explain these to colleges.
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## Standardized Tests (IF REQUIRED): SAT, ACT, TOEFL, AP Scores

- **The overwhelming majority of colleges in the U.S. are test-optional and do not require standardized testing.** Students should check each college's policy when applying.
- Most colleges that do require tests accept **either the SAT Reasoning Test or the ACT**; neither is preferred. Some schools allow alternate forms of evaluation (e.g., graded papers). A list of such colleges is available at [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org).
- Most students take the SAT and/or ACT in the **spring of junior year and fall of senior year**. Many take the tests twice or more to improve scores.

- **TOEFL** is available to students whose first language is not English. Scores may supplement SAT/ACT results in college admissions.
  - **AP Tests:** While most colleges do not require AP scores, submitting strong scores can enhance your application and may provide college credit or placement. Official AP reports are needed for credit. You may self-report scores on most applications.
  - **Score Choice:** Students can choose which SAT scores to send by test date. Many schools do not require SAT/ACT scores.
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## Other Considerations

### Recommendations

- Read each application's instructions carefully. Most require **one recommendation**, but some more competitive schools may very well ask for 2. You can also get an outside letter of recommendation from a research advisor, religious leader, employer or coach.
- Waiving your right to view the recommendation often makes it appear more credible.

### Personal Statement / Essay

- Essays demonstrate writing ability and provide insight into your background and goals.
- This the story, typically anecdotal in nature, which captures a snapshot of who you are. **SHOW, DON'T TELL.** Give vivid descriptions that allow the reader into the story you are weaving.
- The additional information section allows you to write about obstacles or other events that you have not address in your application.

### Extracurricular Activities

- Focus on a few serious interests or passions, and get deeply involved. Leadership roles and impact are of most significance (as well as time commitment). Show a passion for one or more areas of study, which can be revealed through your co-curricular commitments. You can also certainly have lesser roles in some other commitments.
- Explore opportunities outside school: Volunteering, Internships, or Work Experiences.
- Colleges value long-term commitment and initiative on the part of the applicant.
- There are ten spots for activities on the Common Application. Start with the most important activities where your leadership shines.

### Supplements

- Many of the more selective schools required additional essays as part of the application process, including statements about how you would contribute to campus and why you want to attend a given school. This is a way to demonstrate your knowledge of the school and connect your background with the opportunities available at the college/university.
- The Common Application has supplements (even if they don't require essays) for each school

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## Researching Schools

With over 4,000 colleges in the U.S., research can seem daunting. Begin by prioritizing what's most important to you. Attend college fairs and speak with admissions representatives.

When researching:

- Identify academic programs that interest you; review course requirements.
- Check admissions requirements and deadlines.
- Review the college's **freshman profile**: average GPA and SAT/ACT scores.
- Note testing requirements (SAT, ACT, Subject Tests).
- Understand deadlines:
  - **Early Action**: non-binding early application.
  - **Restrictive Early Action**: non-binding early application, but you may only apply early to a limited set of colleges.
  - **Early Decision**: binding early application; required enrollment if accepted.
  - **Regular Decision**: notifications typically by March.
  - **Rolling Admissions**: applications accepted as received; apply early.
- Review application materials and type of application.
- Visit campuses to record impressions and note unique features.

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## Special Opportunities

QuestBridge

- QuestBridge is a national program that helps **high-achieving students from underrepresented or financially disadvantaged backgrounds** gain admission to top colleges.
- Participating students may qualify for **full scholarships valued up to \$400,000** over four years.
- Interested students should see their counselor and visit [www.questbridge.org](http://www.questbridge.org) for more information.

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## College Fairs & Admission Representatives

- Central Islip High School hosts a fall college fair with representatives from many schools.
  - Regional college fairs are also available with a broader selection of colleges.
  - Individual admissions representatives visit in small groups during fall and spring.
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# Campus Visits

Visiting a campus helps you understand the college environment. Schedule visits through the Admissions Office. Benefits include:

- Campus tours and information sessions
- Meeting admissions counselors
- Learning about financial aid
- Sitting in on classes
- Observing student life and reading student publications
- Talking with students and faculty

Some schools take into consideration demonstrated interest, so don't be afraid to e-mail your regional representative or apply to do a fly-in to the school. If you have any questions, please contact your counselor.

Even if you cannot visit in person, consider **virtual tours**. Many schools provide them on their websites. Additional resources:

- [www.campustours.com](http://www.campustours.com)
- [www.collegeweeklive.com](http://www.collegeweeklive.com)