

# FEBRUARY EDITION NEWSLETTER

## THE NOVA UNIVERSE



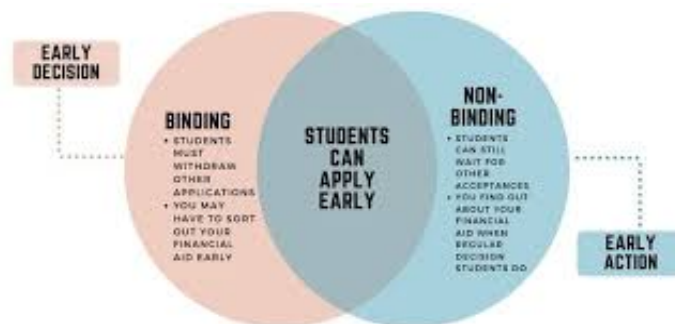
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In this edition:

- Understanding university terminology
- How to craft an effective CV & resume
- How to choose extracurricular activities and how to showcase them when applying to university
- Why the university search starts with knowing yourself - the importance of personality and career assessments

### UNDERSTANDING UNIVERSITY TERMINOLOGY - LEARN THE LINGO!

When you start researching universities, you may encounter a number of terms you may not be familiar with; the higher education landscape has its own college jargon in terms of admissions plans, application outcomes, financial aid and scholarships, required documents, standardized testing and country-specific university lingo. Here's a list of the most common terms:



## Types of application plans at US universities

**EARLY ACTION (EA)** - An option to submit an application to your first-choice college before the regular deadline. When you apply early action, you get an admission decision earlier than usual. Typically, the EA deadline is November 1st and decisions are released by mid December. This is a non-binding plan where you can apply to other colleges with early or regular decision plans and decide where to attend by May 1st.

**RESTRICTIVE EARLY ACTION (REA)**- Like EA, Restrictive Early Action (REA) is non-binding. However, students may only apply to one private school with REA. They also can't apply Early Decision to other schools. They can usually apply EA to public schools, though.

**EARLY DECISION** - An option to submit an application to your first-choice college before the regular deadline (typically in the fall of senior year). When you apply early decision, you get an admission decision earlier than usual. Early decision plans are binding. You agree to enroll in the college immediately if admitted and offered a financial aid package that meets your needs. Some colleges have an early decision option called ED II, which has a later application deadline than their regular ED plan. If accepted to your ED school, you must withdraw all other applications. The acceptance rate in ED is higher, but it favors academically stronger applicants with higher ability to pay. If needing substantial financial aid, applying ED is risky.

**ROLLING ADMISSION** - An admission policy of considering each application as soon as all required information (such as high school records and test scores) has been received, rather than setting an application deadline and reviewing applications in a batch. Colleges that use a rolling admission policy usually notify applicants of admission decisions quickly.

**OPEN ADMISSION** - Probably the most laidback option, open admissions means practically any student who applies and meets the requirements will get in. It is more commonly offered by community colleges or online schools, where their enrollment numbers don't tend to create overcrowding issues.

**DEFERRED ADMISSION** - Permission from a college that has accepted you to postpone enrolling in the college. The postponement is usually for up to one year. Often, a college requires a good-faith deposit to hold your place for the deferment period. Additionally, your college may ask you to account for your experiences during deferment.

**REGULAR ADMISSION** - The most common kind of college admission is regular admission. Schools set a specific deadline for all of the applications, typically at some point between November and January, then review them all after the closing date. Many schools set their

regular admission deadlines in early January. This means every application is compared to the others before any acceptance or rejection letters are sent out. Decisions are released from mid-March to 1 April. This allows students more time to work on their applications and compare financial aid packages, but admission is more competitive, as more applicants vie for fewer spots.

## Financial matters terminology



- **COST OF ATTENDANCE-** The college estimate of each year's total college costs includes tuition and fees, room and meals, books and supplies, personal expenses, and transportation
- **EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC) or STUDENT AID INDEX (SAI) -** The total amount students and their families are expected to pay toward college costs from their income and assets for one academic year is the Expected Family Contribution. This amount is calculated on an individual basis using information reported on the financial aid applications. This information includes the size of your family, number attending college, income and assets, and other personal circumstances.
- **DEMONSTRATED NEED-** This is the Cost of Attendance for the college minus your Expected Family Contribution (EFC).
- **FINANCIAL AID -** Money given, loaned, or made available to help cover college costs. Financial aid can come in the form of gifts (scholarships and grants) and self-help (loan and work).
- **MERIT-BASED FINANCIAL AID -** Money offered to students who show exceptional accomplishment, leadership, commitment to service, and intellectual ability.
- **NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID -** Money offered to students whose families need

assistance with the full cost of paying for college. Colleges offer need-based scholarships, loans, and work to meet your needs.

- **NET PRICE** - The amount that the family pays for one year of college. This is calculated by subtracting the total amount of grants and scholarships from the Cost of Attendance.
- **NEED-BLIND ADMISSION** - A college that has need-blind admissions separates an applicant's academic standings, scores, and essays from their family's financial situation when evaluating whether or not to take the student. In fact, many of these institutions don't even calculate aid until they've accepted a student already.
- **NEED-AWARE ADMISSION** - When a college takes into account you or your family's earning capacity in relation to their tuition, housing, and dining costs when deciding whether or not to admit you as an applicant.
- **GAPPING** - Financial aid "gapping" occurs when a university's offer does not cover the full demonstrated financial need of a student, leaving a gap between the cost of attendance and the awarded aid (grants, loans, work-study).

## Types of US application outcomes



### ACCEPTED

### REJECTED/DENIED

**WAITLISTED** - the student has been deemed qualified for admission, but no spots are available at that time, can opt in or out of the waiting list

\***DEFERRED from EA to RD** ( when the application has been moved to the regular admission pool for a second reading)

## Types of offers from UK and other non-US universities



- **CONDITIONAL OFFER** - the most common type, meaning a place is secured provided specific, future requirements are met—usually exam results, like certain overall and subject-specific IB score
- **UNCONDITIONAL OFFER** - The place is yours, as all entry requirements have already been met (if you have already obtained your final results, not a scenario for IB students)
- **UNSUCCESSFUL/WITHDRAWN** - no offer made

## Standardized admissions tests



Also known as college entrance exams, these are tests designed to measure students' skills and help colleges evaluate how ready students are for college-level work. The ACT and the College Board's SAT are two standardized admission tests. The word "standardized" means that the test measures the same thing in the same way for everyone who takes it.

Many universities administer entrance exams or admissions assessments measuring aptitude in a specific subject.

**Universities can follow different admissions testing policies:**



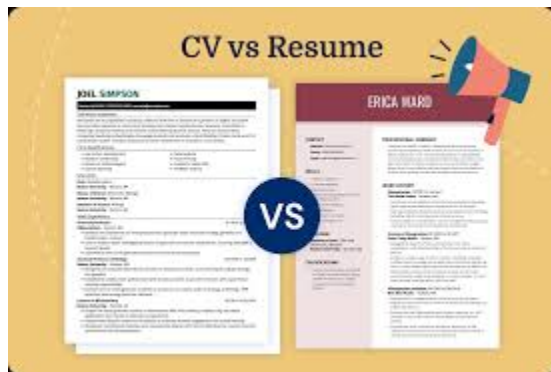
**TEST OPTIONAL** - submitting scores is an option, not a requirement; if submitted, they will be evaluated

**TEST FLEXIBLE** - multiple options to choose from - SAT or IB predicted grades or university admissions test

**TEST BLIND or TEST FREE** - standardized tests not considered at all

**TEST REQUIRED** - standardized tests are a mandatory part of the evaluation process

## HOW TO CRAFT AN EFFECTIVE CV & RESUME



Your CV is your first opportunity to communicate your skills and experiences to an admissions officer when applying for university, summer program, internship or job. It is a snapshot of who you are, your skills, your educational background, work experiences and other achievements.

1. **Present your experience clearly and concisely** - Highlight examples of your skills and experiences matching the programs you are applying for.
2. **Tailor your CV** - Make sure you update the 'About Me' section to highlight your strengths, interests and relevant points. Do not include a full detailed history. You should customize your CV for different programs/universities/internships/work positions

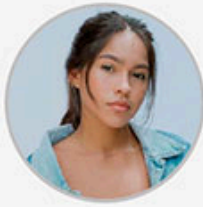
3. **Make it readable** - Make sure your CV is easy to read. Use clear and simple language. Use strong verbs (e.g. 'managed', 'developed', 'increased'). Keep it under 2 pages.
4. **Use reverse chronological order** - Always list the most recent experience on the top followed by previous ones.
5. **Proofread and fine-tune** - Check for spelling and grammar mistakes, provide a professional e-mail address, and add a professional photograph of yourself.

Europass is the most widely used CV format in Europe.

<https://europass.europa.eu/en/create-europass-cv>

A US style resume has a different layout. Here are some key tips:

- Keep it to one page
- Name, Phone, Professional Email, LinkedIn (optional).
- The first section should be the Education section - include name of your school, expected graduation date, GPA and relevant coursework
- Transform activities into experiences - extracurricular activities, volunteer work, academic projects, internships, jobs
- Awards and recognitions, if any
- Skills - for example, Software (Google Workspace, Canva), Languages (Bilingual?), and personal traits (Punctual, Fast Learner).



## Brandy Rivers

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American

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+1 212 000 0000

**Email address:**  
brandy.rivers@mail.com

**LinkedIn:**  
brandy.rivers/linkedin

**Address:**  
NY, USA



### ABOUT ME:

Web designer with 5 years of experience. Passionate and enthusiastic about my career, a quality demonstrated in the more than 80 web pages made for clients of the most diverse sectors. I strive to deliver the highest quality of work under any circumstances.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2021 - PRESENT - NY, USA

● **Graphic Design**  
NYU

2018 - 2020 - NY, USA

● **Multimedia**  
NYU

### WORK EXPERIENCE

01/01/2022 - PRESENT - NY, USA

● **Web Designer**

Prototype Agency

- Creating and designing website content.
- Communication and corporate design.
- Product photography.

15/06/2019 - 31/12/2021 - NY, USA

● **Web Designer**

DigitalDay

- Design and development of content for mass mailings.
- Design and content for web pages.
- Internal design (logos, advertising, banners, flyers).

### LANGUAGE SKILLS

**MOTHER TONGUE(S):** ENGLISH

**OTHER LANGUAGE(S):** SPANISH

Reading C2

Speaking C2

Writing C2

### DIGITAL SKILLS

Microsoft Office / WordPress / Photoshop /

Email Marketing / Google Docs / Google Drive / Outlook

### HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

Classic guitar / Dance / Book club

# HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT RESUME

Youremail@gmail.com

Phone

City, State

LinkedIn URL, Website

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Motivated student (3.6/4.0) who demonstrates strong work ethic and creative ability. Seeking to apply my graphic design skills and artistic drive as a summer intern at your company. Will leverage proven experience as a competent designer to contribute to company goals and needs.

## EDUCATION

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### Santa Monica High School, Santa Monica, CA

Senior

- **GPA:** 3.6 / 4.0
- **Relevant Coursework:** Intro to Graphic Design, AP Art, Yearbook, Computer Applications
- **Honors:** Member of the National Honors Society and National Art Education Association
- **Clubs:** Yearbook Club, Santa Monica Newspaper, Spanish club

## MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

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### Yearbook Club

*Yearbook Design Team Lead**2015 - Present*

- Created a Yearbook logo designed to incorporate school mascot and colors; opted to use coated paper in 2016, which improved photo quality and increased profits by 5%
- Arrange all club photos and pages to correspond to yearbook theme
- Trained and supervised 2 sophomore students in graphic design

### Santa Monica Newspaper

*Graphic Designer**2015 - Present*

- Procured advertising for school paper, saving organization 25% in costs
- Edited and curated photos used for school paper; increasing readership by 15%
- Custom design page layouts to fit articles, photos, and advertisements into strict format
- Contributed to school's online publication by designing page layouts to accommodate mobile screens

## ADDITIONAL SKILLS

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- Proficient in Photoshop and Adobe Creative Suite
- Basic knowledge of HTML
- Basic knowledge of Adobe Dreamweaver
- Great photographer
- Keen eye for aesthetics with good understanding of image gradients
- Intermediate speaking level in Spanish

## AWARDS, HONORS, AND HONORARY MENTIONS

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- Nominated for Macmillan Prize for Illustration in 2016
- Submitted artwork to Ocean Awareness Student Art Contest 2016
- Came in 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Applied Arts 2016 Student Awards for submitting graphic design work under the category of Advertising

## How to choose extracurricular activities and how to showcase them when applying to university



“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make”

*Jane Goodall*

Admissions officers want to understand how a student used their time beyond the classroom walls – in short, the activities on a university application. This helps to predict how successful applicants will continue to shape their own lives and their communities at university.

“Which activities should I do to get into university?”

“Should I do competitions or volunteer? Research or lead a club? Write for the school newspaper or apply for a summer school? Or all of the above?”

“Will this look good on my application?”

Do these questions posed by anxious students feel familiar? The expectations for activities are decidedly and frustratingly less clear than the quantitative nature of grades, which are easy targets to aim for.

The following strategies, which students can use when choosing their activities, are ultimately quite simple.

### **Strategy 1: Don't let your academics slip**

Grades are always the number one measure admissions officers will look at. Stellar activities are great but will never take the place of achievements in a class setting when it comes to telling the story of a student's academic potential. No amount of volunteering will save you with a 2.0 GPA.

For zealous students, a reminder that the responsibilities conferred by classes always take priority over responsibilities conferred by their extracurricular roles may be helpful, because their primary role is high school student, first and foremost.

### **Strategy 2: Quality over quantity**

This strategy can be broken down into four smaller sub-strategies:

#### **a. Length shows commitment**

Universities are looking for signs of perseverance, and accomplishing something meaningful takes time. Both are reasons to stick to an activity for an extended period of time, not just a week or a month or a single semester.

### **b. Build on your existing activities**

Rather than taking on the next best activity, ask yourself how you can further your contribution in the roles you already have.

### **c. If shorter, reflect on its impact**

Shorter activities can be great as well (summer activities tend to be short by nature) but the most important thing is to reflect on how it has shaped you, personally and academically, over this short period.

### **d. What are the signs of substantial growth, learning or contribution?**

This question is always good to return to, to check that a student is engaging in activities intentionally, not thoughtlessly.

### **Strategy 3: Quantify your impact**

Quantitative markers are effective ways to paint a clear picture about one's engagement with the activity. Here are several examples, loosely grouped into possible categories (which are just guiding posts because these markers can easily apply across categories).

Leadership: Number of members (consistently maintained or increased), number of events organised, number of attendees

Public relations: Number of people reached, area covered

Entrepreneur/fundraising: Number of products sold, amount of funds raised, months engaged in

Competitions: Awards won, percentile in sample of test takers, number of contestants

### **Strategy 4: Find three to five action verbs**

Any single activity easily involves a host of responsibilities, and it is important to understand that. Use active verbs and data points to quantify your achievements. Look at [this article](#) as an

example. Then choose between three and five different verbs that capture the different elements of a role. Because this is a necessary skill for future resumé-building beyond school and university, it's a great skill to start practising now.

### **Strategy 5: Find themes in your activities**

As human beings, we have individual strengths and interests. From being an organised person to liking classical music to being a baker to having a passion for neuroscience to being really good at working with preschool kids to being a natural public speaker, we can identify themes that define us, if we take a birds' eye view on what we naturally gravitate to.

Activities can (and naturally will) cluster around these areas of interest. Also known as an “application spike”, this helps distinguish you from well-rounded candidates and helps the admissions officer to get to know you better.

### **Strategy 6: Think beyond school, if possible**

It is natural for students only to focus their efforts on school-based activities because these are accessible and this is their immediate community. However, students should aim to demonstrate their potential within and beyond the school walls, if possible. This can provide students with novel opportunities to discover themselves and to grow in unexpected ways, with the responsibilities required of them in new environments.

Ask yourselves: beyond the school community, what community are you a part of – for example, local neighborhood, city, region, country, globe – and how can you make an impact as a member of that community? Even if on a smaller scale, demonstrating engagement with the world beyond yourself and the school community, is important.

### **Strategy 7: Collect evidence and external validation**

If possible and relevant to the activity, collecting evidence of one's commitment to the activities may be helpful. Examples can be a website, blog, photos or portfolio but are definitely not limited to this.

If there is an opportunity on the application, one can show this to the university to further breathe life into the contributions the students made.

If there is an opportunity for an external member of the community or body to recognise the contribution to the activity, that can serve as another concrete piece of evidence to showcase the applicant's potential. Clear examples are regional, national and international awards conferred by competition organisers. But any acknowledgments on a school or civic level can also be easily highlighted in an application.

### **Strategy 8: What is the story in each activity?**

Meaningful activities don't start in a vacuum: there always is a reason why a student decided to engage in it. Subsequently, they probably overcame some challenges, and there was an outcome at the end (a meaningful contribution or growth).

There is a story (or stories) behind each activity. What is it? Understanding and weaving narratives can help a student reflect on and convey to others how they have grown as an individual.

If you are the literary type, you can refer to Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey as a metaphor. And if you like science, note how human beings love stories.

### **Conclusion: Be active. At the right level for you. Doing what you like**

This great quote is taken from *Inside the Admissions Office podcast: activities section*. This episode is superb, but the podcast series contains many nuggets of wisdom, and summarises succinctly the ethos of how one should undertake activities.

## Why the university search starts with knowing yourself - the importance of personality and career assessments



Grade 10 is an ideal time at which to build self-awareness and to inform profile-building decisions (which major and which activities to choose) in the final two years of high school.

### Personality

Your personality is made up of the enduring characteristics and behaviours that make up your adjustment to life. What is unique about you? These tests can help you understand yourself in an expedited way and inform your decision about what kind of university environments, programs and careers you may be suited for.

#### 1. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

Beloved by laypeople and detested by psychologists, [the MBTI](#) gives a great starting insight into how individuals might be different from one another. It's popular in workplaces and on college counselling platforms – but be cautious of the binary categories that it puts people into.

## 2. Big 5

[This one](#) is the most scientifically validated and widely taught, however, it might not necessarily yield exciting results, as the MBTI does. Still, it might help you to understand why certain students avoid at all costs (scoring high in “agreeableness”) while others struggle to meet impending deadlines (scoring low in “conscientiousness”).

## 3. Enneagram

Beloved of fourth-century Christian mystics and Hollywood screenwriters, [Enneagram](#) dives deep into individuals’ basic fears and desires. Most likely too deep for college counselling conversations, it’s one of the oldest personality tests available. It’s also much more accurate than astrology.

## 4. Ultimate

[Clearerthinking](#) releases a host of research-based tests, and [the “ultimate” personality test](#) is one of its most recent ones, combining Myers-Briggs, Big 5 and Enneagram into one easy test with intuitive profiles and a somewhat overwhelming wealth of data.

## Career

There are a number of career tests out there. Some can output very specific jobs (such as “radiologist” or “English teacher”), but at this stage pigeonholing prescriptions are of limited use. The following tests offer more general guiding directions.

### 1. Holland Code

The [Holland Code career test](#) is a well-regarded assessment in the career counselling field. It spells out broad occupational themes that match interests, such as “realistic/building”, “investigative/thinking” and “social/helping”.

### 2. Princeton Review

Princeton Review released [a quick and easy career quiz](#) that results in an “interest” and a “style” in four different categories – expediting, communicating, planning, administering – and links to a huge list of possible careers. A quick one to start with if the Holland Code seems daunting.

### 3. Further Reading

[This excellent article](#) dives further into free career aptitude tests you can use.

4. **Career Explorer** - using advanced machine learning, psychometrics and career satisfaction data, the free [career explorer test](#) is a comprehensive model providing career matches based on interests, goals, history, work preferences and personality. Each part of the career test unlocks new discoveries, providing insights into what makes you unique and personalized recommendations for career paths you’ll find most fulfilling.

### Strengths

The following tests help identify soft skills that students already excel at, which can be helpful when reflecting on essays and choosing classes and extracurriculars.

#### 1. High5

[High5](#) is a free and friendly sibling of CliftonStrengths, which is great, but pricey. There is a paid version of the report, but the results of the free version (a list and a description of your top-five strengths) is intuitive and affirming for the students. Use it to reflect on past achievements (for example: “What strengths did you use for this leadership role?”) and to plan future activities and (“Which activities are in line with your strengths?”).

#### 3. Multiple Intelligences

The research on intelligence has come a long way, and [Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences](#) allows individuals to realise that, even if they’re not “book smart”, they can still be smart. Useful if you’d like to demonstrate that it’s possible to be intelligent musically, kinaesthetically, and even intrapersonally and existentially.

[The assessment](#) will give out one's aptitude, measured by percentages on all nine intelligences. If you're confused by the number, the original theory contained eight, but this one is based on the updated theory with nine types.

## Values

Finally, there are abstract values (such as hope, humour, forgiveness and curiosity) that ground and guide us. If you'd like to try identifying these, turn to the following two tests. These can be especially useful for tricky supplementary essays that ask 17-year-olds to define a fully formed life philosophy straddled by abstract values.

### 1. VIA CharacterStrengths

The platform lists [this test](#) as "character strengths", but the outcomes are more synonymous with "values" – as the acronym "VIA" (Values In Action) indicates. It will go into the detail of your top values and then list all 44 values in order of their salience and importance to you.

### 2. CollegeEssayGuy

Not really a test, but a [great activity](#) that helps students to actively reflect on and identify their guiding values. CollegeEssayGuy is a treasure trove of other resources for essay writing, as well.

You can use these tools to gain a deeper understanding of yourself as you start the university search.

