**Undergraduate**

A college student who is working toward an associate or a bachelor's degree.

**Part 1: Assessments**

**Admission 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 used in the United States. The word "standardized" means that the test measures the same thing in the same way for everyone who takes it.

**ACT**

A standardized college admission test. It features four main sections: English, math, reading and science — and an optional essay section.

**Placement Tests**

Tests that measure the academic skills needed for college-level work. They cover reading, writing, math and sometimes other subjects. Placement test results help determine what courses you are ready for and whether you would benefit from remedial classes.

**SAT**

The College Board’s standardized college admission test. It features three main sections: math, reading and writing, which includes a written essay.

**SAT Subject Tests**

Hour-long, content-based college admission tests that allow you to showcase achievement in specific subject areas: English, history, math, science and languages. Some colleges use Subject Tests to place students into the appropriate courses as well as in admission decisions. Based on your performance on the test(s), you could potentially fulfill basic requirements or earn credit for introductory-level courses.

**Part 2: What Do You Need to Apply to College?**

**Test Scores (see above)**

**College Application Essay**

An essay that a college requires students to write and submit as part of their application. Some colleges offer applicants specific questions to answer, while others simply ask applicants to write about themselves. Colleges may refer to this as a “personal statement.”

**Common Application**

A standard application form accepted by all colleges that are members of the Common Application association. You can fill out this application once and submit it to any one — or several — of the 475-plus colleges that accept it.

**Transcript**

The official record of your course work at a school or college. Your high school transcript is usually required for college admission and for some financial aid packages.

**Grade Point Average (GPA)**

A number that shows overall academic performance. It’s computed by assigning a point value to each grade you earn. See also Weighted Grade Point Average.

**Weighted Grade Point Average (GPA)**

A grade point average that’s calculated using a system that assigns a higher point value to grades in more-difficult classes. For example, some high schools assign the value of 5.0 (instead of the standard 4.0) for an A earned in an AP class.

**Class Rank**

A measurement of how your academic achievement compares with that of other students in your grade. This number is usually determined by using a weighted GPA that takes into account both your grades and the difficulty of the courses you’ve taken.

**Part 3: Different Ways to Apply**

**Early Action (EA)**

An option to submit your applications before the regular deadlines. When you apply early action, you get admission decisions from colleges earlier than usual. Early action plans are not binding, which means that you do not have to enroll in a college if you are accepted early action. Some colleges have an early action option called EA II, which has a later application deadline than their regular EA plan.

**Early Decision (ED)**

An option to submit an application to your first- choice college before the regular deadline. 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.

**Priority Date or Deadline**

The date by which your application — whether it’s for college admission, student housing or financial aid — must be received to be given the strongest consideration.

**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.

**Waiting List**

The list of applicants who may be admitted to a college if space becomes available. Colleges wait to hear if all the students they accepted decide to attend. If students don’t enroll and there are empty spots, a college may fill them with students who are on the waiting list.

**Part 4: Financial Aid**

**Financial Aid**

Money given or loaned to you to help pay for college. Financial aid can come from federal and state governments, colleges, and private organizations.

**Need-Blind Admission**

A policy of making admission decisions without considering the financial circumstances of applicants. Colleges that use this policy may not offer enough financial aid to meet a student’s full need.

**Financial Aid Glossary**

**Direct Costs:** the amount you owe the school in order to register and stay enrolled

**Cost of Attendance (COA):** the amount it will cost to attend a college in a year. The total cost includes both direct and indirect costs.

**Expected Family Contributions (EFC):** The amount of money the federal government determines that you or your family can pay based on the information you submit in the FAFSA. You can find this number on you Student Aid Report (SAR)

**Gap**: The part of total cost of attendance that is not covered by your family’s EFC or by financial aid.

**Grants/Scholarships**: Money Awarded that does not need to be paid back.

**Indirect Costs**: The amount you will have to spend on your own to make it through college. These costs include books, school supplies, transportation, snacks, entertainment, and housing and food if you are living at home or on your own.

**Loans**: Money awarded that does have to be paid back, most often with interest.

**Need**: Your official financial need at each school is the total cost of attendance minus your EFC.

**Work-Study**: Federal money awarded to you that you can earn toward your education. Work- study is not guaranteed money, and it is not available up front to pay college bursar bills. It is best considered as potential spending money for personal expenses along the course of the school year.

**Part 5: College Credits**

**Articulation Agreement**

An agreement between two-year and four-year colleges that makes it easier to transfer credits between them. It spells out which courses count for degree credit and the grades you need to earn to get credit.

**College Credit**

What you get when you successfully complete a college-level course. You need a certain number of credits to graduate with a degree. Colleges may also grant credit for scores on exams, such as those offered by College Board’s AP Program® and CLEP.