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Chapter 3 Terms You Need to Know

The following list of definitions and explanations should serve as a handy reference of the many terms and often-used abbreviations in the college admission process.

1. Tests and Testing

Colleges vary in their emphasis on standardized tests, but surveys regularly reveal that admission officers consider your test scores among the top three most important pieces of information you submit. Your grades in upper-level classes and strength of curriculum are most important, and your overall GPA usually ranks fourth. Many colleges also use your test scores to determine what courses you should be placed in if you're admitted. A few colleges sponsor their own admission tests or allow students to leave test scores out of their application packet. The majority of colleges, however, want you to take either the SAT or ACT.

Remember that testing requirements vary among colleges.

The College Board: A nonprofit organization governed by college and secondary school members. The College Board is the oversight agency for many tests and services connected with the college admission process, including the SAT.

Educational Testing Service (ETS): A nonprofit agency employed by the College Board to produce its tests.

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT): A practice test, designed to prepare juniors for the SAT. It is also used by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) in the selection of top scholars. The test is divided into two categories: evidence-based reading/writing and math. The evidence-based reading/writing section includes both a reading test and a writing and language test. The math section focuses on three areas: problem solving and data analysis, algebra, and advanced math. The minimum score to receive national recognition varies from year to year. PSAT scores aren't typically used by colleges as admission criteria.

SAT: Originally, SAT was an acronym for the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Now known simply as the SAT, this test is usually taken by juniors and seniors and is a required test for admission to many colleges. A multiple-choice examination designed to test a student's college readiness, the SAT is divided into three sections: evidence-based reading and writing, math, and essay (optional). Learn more about the test at sat.collegeboard.org. Study materials from the College Board are generally available in high school guidance offices.

SAT Subject Tests: Often taken at the end of the junior year and possibly at the mid-point of the senior year, SAT Subject Tests are administered in a variety of subjects and are designed to test a student's level of knowledge in a particular academic discipline. Some colleges use the Subject Tests for placement in various levels of freshman courses; others use them as additional supporting information in the admission process.

Advanced Placement (AP) Exams: Designed for students who have completed college-level work in high school, AP exams are given in specific subject areas and are used in determining whether a student may gain advanced standing in college. If you think that you may be interested in AP coursework and testing, see your school counselor.

College Level Examination Program (CLEP): The CLEP is designed primarily for college applicants who have not been in school for some time, but who may have acquired considerable knowledge through a job or life experience. The CLEP follows a format similar to SAT Subject Tests and AP exams.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): A test designed for students for whom English is not a native language and whose scores on other standardized tests would be affected by the language difference. Generally, students take the TOEFL in addition to other admission tests, such as the SAT or the ACT.



ELPT (English Language Proficiency Test): The ELPT's intended testing group includes students whose best language is not English. Test-takers:

- attend US high schools or have studied in an international school where courses are taught in English.
- have completed two to four years of English language instruction in an English as a second language program or in English enrichment courses.
- speak a language other than English at home or work.

ACT, Inc.: A nonprofit organization that designs and administers tests for college admission and course placement. It also provides career exploration tools, financial aid resources, and college search programs.

EXPLORE: A program from ACT, Inc. that includes four multiple-choice tests that measure academic achievement. It can help eighth- and ninth-graders plan their high school courses, prepare for the ACT, or choose a career direction.

PreACT: A multiple-choice assessment that provides 10th graders with practice for the ACT test. The PreACT provides a predicted ACT score and offers insight into a student's academic and career-planning needs.

ACT: The ACT, originally an abbreviation of American College Testing, includes four curriculum-based tests. ACT scores are used throughout the country by college and university admission offices. The multiple-choice tests measure skills in English, mathematics, reading, and science. Each test is scored on a 36-point scale; the four tests are averaged to provide a composite score. The ACT also has an optional writing component. Most colleges and universities allow you to submit results from either the ACT or SAT to meet admission requirements. You should check with the school first, though, as some prefer one test over the other. Some colleges ask you to submit either ACT scores or scores from a combination of the SAT and two or three SAT subject tests. Visit the ACT website, *act.org*, to see sample questions and answers, order test-preparation materials, and register to take the test.

International Baccalaureate's (IB) Diploma Programme (DP):

An academically challenging course of study that culminates in final examinations to prepare students, aged 16 to 19, for college. The program is a comprehensive two-year international curriculum, available in English, French, and Spanish, that generally allows students to fulfill the requirements of their national or state education systems. Internationally mobile students are able to transfer from one IB school to another. The program focuses on six subject groups (studies in language and literature, language acquisition, individuals and societies, science, math, and the arts). Students take written examinations at the end of the program. Scores for each course range from 1 to 7. Diplomas are awarded to students who earn at least 24 points.

2. Admission Terms and Processes

Highly Selective College Admission Calendar: Many college admission timetables call for applications to be filed during the fall or early winter of a student's senior year. Supporting materials—including standardized test scores, high school records and recommendations—are sent to colleges at the student's request. Members of the admission office or admission committee retreat from late-February to late-March to read applications and make decisions. Students are informed of their status from early- to mid-April. Accepted applicants are required to notify the college whether they accept the offer to attend no later than May 1, referred to as the CRD or Candidate's Reply Date.

Non-Restrictive Application Plans: Students are not restricted from applying to other institutions and have until May 1 to consider their options and confirm enrollment.

Regular Decision: Students submit an application by a specified date and receive a decision in a clearly stated period of time.

Rolling Admission: Institutions review applications as they are submitted and render decisions throughout the admission cycle.

Early Action (EA): Students apply early and receive a decision well in advance of the institution's regular response date.

Early Decision (ED): Students make a commitment to a first-choice institution where, if admitted, they definitely will enroll. The application deadline and decision deadline occur early.

Restrictive Early Action (REA): Students apply to an institution of preference and receive a decision early. They may be restricted from applying ED, EA or REA to other institutions. If offered enrollment, they have until May 1 to confirm.



Familiarize yourself with each college’s requirements. Talk with your counselor and ask questions if you don’t understand the application process.

The Common Application: Allows a student to fill out one application form (the Common Application) and submit it to more than one college. Check with the admission office to see if a college will accept The Common Application and if any supplements are required. This application form is available at *commonapp.org*. Speak to your school counselor for more information.

The Coalition Application: Similar to the Common Application, the Coalition Application allows a student to fill out one application form and submit it to more than one college. The application platform is a service of the Coalition of Access, Affordability, and Success, which also offers a set of free online college planning tools that help students learn about and prepare for college.

Universal College Application: Similar to the Common Application, the Universal College Application allows a student to fill out one application form and submit it to more than one college. This application form is available at *universalcollegeapp.com*. Check with your school counselor for more information.

January (Spring Term) Admission: Some colleges admit freshmen to begin their studies in the middle of the academic year. January admission may be an option worthy of investigation for students who graduate a term or semester early from high school.

Deferred Admission: Many colleges offer an opportunity for a student who has been admitted to delay or defer enrollment for a year or a semester. Students who defer an offer of admission may choose to work, travel, or pursue special programs. A deposit is often required by the college to hold a place in the next class, and it is the college’s right to expect the student to account for the time spent between graduation from high school and matriculation at the college. A student who defers admission to a college cannot attend another college during the time off, unless the institution that extended deferred admission is notified in advance and agrees.

Open Admission: Some colleges do not practice selective admission and offer admission to virtually all students who apply. Such colleges usually have extensive programs designed to provide remedial or developmental help to students who enroll with academic deficiencies.

Tuition Deposit: Colleges typically require admitted students to verify their intention to enroll by submitting a deposit or fee. The money (also known as an admission deposit, commitment deposit, or commitment fee) is usually applied to a student's tuition charges for the upcoming academic year. Colleges that are members of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) allow accepted applicants the opportunity to learn the decisions of all colleges they have applied to before requiring deposits, provided that all decisions are made before May 1. The student, in turn, is obligated to submit a tuition deposit to only one college before the required deadline (typically May 1).

Colleges view dual or multiple deposits by students as serious violations of trust. They may revoke a previous offer of admission from any student who is found to have sent tuition deposits to more than one college.

Wait List: An admission decision option utilized by institutions to protect against shortfalls in enrollment. Wait lists are sometimes made necessary because of the uncertainty of the admission process. By placing a student on the wait list, an institution does not initially offer or deny admission, but extends to a candidate the possibility of admission in the future, prior to the conclusion of the institution's admission cycle.

You should pay particular attention to policies concerning application fees, tuition, and housing deposits before you complete a college application.

3. Higher Education Terms

College: An institution at which students study toward two- or four-year undergraduate degrees after completion of secondary school.

Concurrent Enrollment or Dual Enrollment: A plan that allows students to take courses at nearby colleges while completing high school.

Private College: An academic institution financed primarily by tuition and endowments.

Public College: An academic institution financed by tuition, endowments, and state or local taxes. Tuition for in-state students is reduced and programs and policies are state-regulated.



Transfer Program: A two-year program that results in an associate degree. It is designed for students who intend to continue their studies at a four-year college.

University: An institution that may be the same as a college, but that usually offers graduate degrees in addition to undergraduate degrees. (Though some colleges do this as well.) Universities are typically made up of different colleges or schools. (Though, again, there are exceptions to this rule, both on the college and university side.)

Undergraduate Degree: Two-year (associate) or four-year (bachelor's) degrees.

Associate Degree (AA, AS): A two-year degree that generally prepares the student for further study. Some associate degree programs are sufficient training for certain careers, but many students in two-year colleges intend to complete their studies at four-year colleges.

Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS, BFA): A four-year degree in a specified subject.

Graduate Degree: A degree completed by study after the bachelor's degree.

Master's Degree (MA, MS, MFA): One or two years of study in a specific subject after completion of the bachelor's degree.

Doctoral Degree (PhD, JD, MD): Three or four years of study in a very specific subject after completion of a bachelor's and/or master's degree.