

News

You Can Use



January 2011

ACT provides this monthly newsletter to inform students and their parents about college and career planning. ACT is a not-for-profit organization that serves millions of people in schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses and government agencies with programs and services that help people achieve their education and career goals. Visit www.actstudent.org for more information and services.



College Planning

The ACT logo, consisting of the letters "ACT" in a bold, white, serif font inside a black rectangular box.

Key dates

January 2012

- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is now available. File the FAFSA as soon as possible at fafsa.ed.gov.
- The registration deadline for the February ACT[®] test date is January 13. After that you may register, with a late fee, until January 20. (No test centers are scheduled in New York for the February test date.)

February 2012

- The ACT will be administered on February 11.

March 2012

- Register for the April 14 ACT test by March 9 to avoid paying a late fee. You can register for this test date until March 23 and pay the late fee.

Gathering FAFSA documents

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is now posted online. It's important to complete the form and submit it as soon as possible, as some financial aid is provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Here are some of the items you will need:

- Your Social Security number and your parents' Social Security numbers if you are a dependent.
- Your driver's license number, if you have one.
- 2011 federal tax information for you and your parents if you are providing parent information. If you have not filed your taxes, you can still submit your FAFSA by estimating family income.

- Records of untaxed income, such as Social Security benefits, welfare benefits, and veteran's benefits for you and your parents.
- You can find a full list of the needed items at <http://www.fafsaonline.com/fafsa-form/prepare-your-fafsa-1.php>. To get started, visit www.fafsa.ed.gov. Don't miss out!

Juniors — Jump-start your college planning

It's time to spring into action for those of you in the last half of your junior year. Any senior can tell you the next few months will go by very quickly, and it's important to be prepared for what's to come.

Here are some things you can do:

- Start or continue to take challenging classes. When registering for senior year, don't just sign up for easy courses. Challenging classes improve your chances for college admission and better prepare you for college-level courses.
- Begin to make a preliminary list of colleges you would like to investigate further. The Internet is an excellent tool to start your search. You can also check with your school's counseling office.
- Fill out a college comparison list at <http://www.actstudent.org/college/pdf/comparison.pdf> to help you decide which school might be the best fit.
- Make plans to visit colleges this spring when classes are in session. There are a lot of important factors to consider during your visit. ACT has a list of them at www.actstudent.org/college/visit.html
- Create an academic resume that includes your academic history, extracurricular involvement, and unique accomplishments.
- Register for the ACT. It's best to take it during the spring of this year. If not, plan to take it in the summer or fall.
- Investigate scholarship opportunities by asking your high school counselor or calling the financial aid office at colleges you're interested in attending. Financial aid sources vary—the federal government, the college or university itself, even a parent's employer—may all offer some form of financial assistance. Explore all the possibilities; you might be pleasantly surprised.

Finish strong, seniors

Once you have a college offer in hand, you may get the urge to coast through the rest of the school year. However, it's important to finish strong.

Colleges, especially selective universities, have been known to withdraw offers of admission to students who drop college prep classes or begin earning uncharacteristically low grades. If you've slumped, but not too far, colleges might send you a warning letter and add certain stipulations to your admission, such as requiring a certain grade point average during the first year of college.

Taking an extended breather during your senior year can also make your freshman year in college more difficult because you aren't conditioned for the level of workload. So have fun in these coming months, but don't give up on your college preparation.

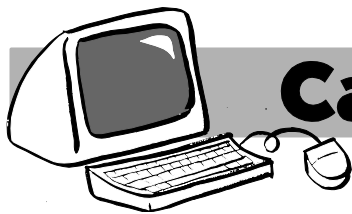
A note to guidance counselors— academic readiness is only one factor

The ACT exam measures a student’s academic skills and knowledge learned in school, and provides a gauge of potential success in college. While academic readiness is exceptionally important when considering college and career readiness, there are other valuable factors.

Behavioral Readiness—Do students exhibit the right behaviors and attitude toward education to increase their chances for success? ACT research suggests the combination of academic readiness and academic behaviors (as measured by the ENGAGE™ program) provides a stronger prediction of college and career performance and success than does academic readiness alone.

Educational and Career Planning—Are students planning for and following a path to success in their education and career? ACT research shows that students who take challenging courses are much more likely than those who don’t to be ready for college and career. Proactive career assessment, exploration, and planning activities encourage students to consider career options so they can plan their coursework accordingly.

“Assessing what students have learned so far is a vital element in helping them to improve, but college and career readiness is very complex,” said Jon Erickson, president of ACT’s Education Division. “With more and more students across the country participating in testing, it’s important that test results are not overemphasized as a single answer to the readiness problem. We are committed to identifying the various factors that ensure success. The ACT is used for multiple goals and purposes beyond admissions and predicting college outcomes, such as course placement, counseling, and accountability.”



Careers

ACT

Online activity can hurt you when applying to college or jobs

A recent article in *USA Today* says the number of college admissions officials using Facebook to learn more about an applicant has quadrupled in the past year. The story cites a survey where a number of college admission officials reported finding information posted by prospective students online that hurt the student’s chances of getting accepted.

It’s important to remember that the Internet is a public place and many times what you put online can be accessed by anyone. Every word and every picture posted is a reflection of you, so make sure it’s a positive one.



Check It Out

ACT

How scores are reported

When you take the ACT three reports are prepared: The student report, the high school report, and a report for colleges and scholarship agencies.

The student score report is mailed to the address you provided on your registration. Student score reports are also available online three to eight weeks after you take the test. If you took the Writing Test, your score reports will be released only after all your scores are available, usually within 5 to 8 weeks after the test date. Once you've received your report, check out the valuable personalized college and career planning information it contains.

If you authorize it when registering, your high school will also receive a report. High school counselors can use the information to help you plan appropriate coursework supporting your goals. Some schools include your test score on your official transcript. The high school report contains your scores and college and career planning information.

When you register for the ACT, you can choose four colleges or scholarship agencies to have your scores sent to for free. You can also select two more for an additional fee. This report includes the same information found on the student and high school reports, high school grades, and performance predictions for specific college programs and courses.

There is no way to speed up the scoring of your test or reporting of your scores. For more information about the ACT and score reporting, visit www.actstudent.org/scores.

ACT high school poster contest

ACT's annual high school student poster design contest is underway. You have until January 28 to enter for a chance to win thousands of dollars in scholarship money.

Students may design and submit posters using visual designs, artwork, and taglines that promote the value of college and the ACT test. Participants must be US high school students who plan to apply for 2012 or 2013 admission to a US two-year or four-year institution. Make sure you read the rules carefully to better your chances of winning.

The student with the winning design will receive a \$5,000 scholarship to the college of his or her choice. In addition, the winning design will be used on the poster printed to display ACT test dates during the 2012–2013 school year and distributed to high schools nationwide. Second- and third-place winners will receive \$2,500 and \$1,000 scholarships, respectively.

Winners will be selected based on creativity, visual appeal, and overall impact. The official entry form and poster must be postmarked by January 28, 2012. Winners will be announced in March 2012. Contest details are available at actstudent.org/postercontest.



Plan ahead to relieve test-taking stress

When you head off to take the ACT, don't let forgetfulness or inattention to detail affect your test-taking abilities. Here are some unfortunate, but true test day stories:

- A student bought a new calculator the night before the test and used it the first time while taking the test. Unfortunately, he found the calculator didn't work.
- Another student failed to look at the list of calculators that are allowed during the test and arrived with one that had been banned. She had to take the test without a calculator.
- One student didn't look at her admission ticket until the day before the test. She was surprised to learn that she had registered for a site one hour away, not her high school. At the last minute, she had to factor in driving time for her pre-test preparations.
- A student arrived at the test site without a photo ID. Fortunately, he was able to run home and get it before the test started. Without it, he would not have been able to take the test.

Plan ahead to make sure little things won't distract you from doing your best on test day. Double-check the location of your admission ticket and bring it with you to the test. Also, make sure your calculator is allowed, that it has fresh batteries, and that it works. And finally, don't forget to bring a photo ID.

Obviously, unexpected events do happen. Read your testing information from ACT well ahead of time and visit <http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/tips/testday.html> to get familiar with test-day procedures and what is allowed in the testing room.

Cheating hurts everyone—if you see it, report it

Students who don't do their own work put honest students at a disadvantage. Whether it's using a cheat sheet, copying someone else's work, or sending another person to take the test, we all feel cheated when someone tries to game the system.

You deserve a level playing field to show what you've learned, and ACT has designed its testing procedures to give you and other honest students an equal opportunity to demonstrate your own academic achievement.

If you suspect that someone is trying to game the system or encounter anything else out of the ordinary, please report it to ACT. You can make an anonymous report about test security concerns by calling the ACT hotline number (1-877-777-7296) or through our security website (<http://act.alertline.com/>).

Keep the ACT fair. Report cheating.

Test date reminder

The next national ACT test date is February 11. The regular registration deadline is January 13 and the late registration deadline is January 20. The ACT test will also be offered on April 14 and June 9. Online registration and test date information is available at actstudent.org. If you choose to register online, register early to avoid heavy Web traffic and delays.

ACT offers an optional Writing Test in addition to the multiple-choice achievement test. Go to actstudent.org/writing to find out about the Writing Test, including a list of the colleges that require or recommend it.

For all your questions about the ACT test, visit actstudent.org.