

News

You Can Use



November 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



Key Dates

November

- The deadline to register for the December 10 ACT[®] test date is November 4. After that you may register, with a late fee, until November 18.
- Make sure you're aware of important application deadlines for any colleges you're considering.

December

- The ACT student poster contest starts December 5. The winning entries will be rewarded with thousands of dollars in scholarship money. To learn more go to actstudent.org/postercontest.
- The ACT[®] is administered on December 10.
- Prepare for Federal Student Aid. It will be available January 1. Visit www.fafsa.ed.gov to get a head start on the process.

January 2011

- The FAFSA becomes available online January 1. File the FAFSA as soon as possible.
- The registration deadline for the February ACT test date is January 10. (No test centers are scheduled in New York for the February test date.)

Developing key homework strategies

Homework is an extremely valuable part of learning. Though you probably think it's a pain, it really does help you develop many key life skills while cementing lessons taught in class. Here are a few helpful tips.

- Assume that you will have homework every night. Even if you've completed your assignments, take time to review them. It's easier to catch errors the second time around.

Also, don't forget long-term assignments like research papers or science projects and start planning ahead. Finally, utilize the time given to you at school to work on homework. This will help you develop solid studying habits through time management and by disciplining yourself to focus.

- Don't be intimidated by homework. It's part of your learning process. If you're having problems with an assignment, check with your teacher or look for free homework help that might be available in your area. Many public libraries offer either a live or online homework service. Tutors are another option.
- Make it a routine. Find a place and set a consistent time for doing homework. It's often said that it takes three weeks to develop a habit. Practice your homework routine and it should become second nature before long.

Completing homework is one aspect of your study skills. While homework focuses on a specific assignment, studying goes beyond that to enhance understanding of the concepts and topics taught in class.

Homework tips for parents

Parents can help students establish good homework skills. Tell your guardian about the homework motivation ideas provided for parents at act.org/path/parent/motivate/homework.html.

Improving study skills

Developing good skills and habits in high school will not only help a lot now, but also in college and later in life. The workload can get much more difficult in college, so going the extra mile now will definitely pay off later on.

Some good study skills to develop:

- Schedule it. Don't let studying become just another item on the to-do list that remains undone. Schedule a regular time and place. Keep distractions to a minimum.
- Ask Questions. If a concept doesn't make sense to you, ask someone to explain it. Talk with a teacher or even a classmate who gets it. Ask questions until you feel you have a grasp on the topic.
- Make studying a regular habit. And don't just focus on getting homework done. Really put effort into learning, understanding and applying what you've learned in class to your life.
- Go beyond the assignment. Writing helps many people retain information, so take advantage of that and write down key points from reading assignments, make flash cards or create your own practice tests.

Studying is really about developing a set of habits and skills that work best for you. Like any habit, it can be difficult to get into a routine, but stick with it and you'll find it gets easier.

College Application Words of Wisdom

Filling out college applications can definitely get overwhelming, but paying close attention to every detail is vitally important. Here are some ideas to keep in mind:

Misspellings and grammatical errors – This is a big pet peeve of admissions people. If you misspell on something as important as the application, it shows that either you don't care or you aren't good at spelling. But don't stop with a spell check. Proofread for grammatical errors, too.

Extracurricular activities– Those that make the list include sports, the arts, formal organizations and volunteer work. Talking on the phone and hanging out with friends don't make the cut. Make sure your activity information is accurate. Colleges may check with your high school.

Applying online, but the application isn't submitted – If you apply online, you should receive confirmation that the college or university received it. Confirmation could be an e-mail message, a web page response or a credit card receipt. Follow through and make sure that your application has been submitted.

Forgotten signatures – If you're applying on paper, make sure you sign and date the form. Often students overlook it if it's on the back of the form. With all applications, check that all spaces are completed.

As you decide which schools you wish to apply to, make sure to use your ACT scores. Ask your high school guidance counselor to show you how the information can match students with colleges that might fit them well academically.

Writing your college essay

Like your ACT score, the essay is just one component of your college application. An essay can say a lot—or a little—about who you are. The point of the essay is to paint your own picture or tell your own story to a complete stranger. Admissions officers want get to know you and why you belong at their school.

Tips for writing sound essays can be found online from many sources. Here are some quick pointers to help create a memorable essay.

1. **Plan.** Review application deadlines and plan ahead. If it helps, create an outline first, and then write your rough draft. The most important thing is to consider what you want to say and what order you're going to say it in. Proofread your essay several times and also have someone else read it over. Next you can make revisions accordingly. Remember, spell check doesn't catch everything!
2. **Stand out.** Admissions officials review hundreds of applications, and the ones that grab their interest are unique. It's important to use life experiences to support your main points.
3. **Be real.** Don't write to what you think others want to hear and be honest about everything you write. Show personality and individuality.
4. **Stay on topic.** Review each application's essay question, develop a few ideas and settle on one. Follow that theme throughout the essay. As you write, be clear and concise. That is, don't use more words than necessary. Your essay isn't meant to be an autobiography and it isn't the time to show off your big vocabulary for college admissions officers.

College planning tips for high school students

Planning for college and a career doesn't happen overnight. It's a process, filled with research and exploration. ACT encourages high school students to do some planning work each year. You can find a college planning checklist for each year of high school at actstudent.org/college/checklist.

Many high school freshmen and sophomores do not know what careers interest them, let alone where they want to go to college or what courses they want to study. Use the scores from your *ACT's News You Can Use*

November 2011

EXPLORE® and PLAN® tests to help in these areas. Talk with your counselor about what those scores mean and visit the World-of-Work Map (act.org/wwm) to match your interests with potential career fields. You can find out more about careers and their requirements at actstudent.org/wwm/.

Juniors can do more career exploration by talking to someone in the field. See if you can spend a day with a professional to see what the job really entails. Also, you should be looking at dates to register for the ACT in the spring. The ACT tests you on what you learn in school, and spring of junior year is the recommended time to first take the exam. Also, free practice tests are available at actstudent.org/sampletest/index. You can use your scores to find out your strong areas as well as areas for improvement.

Seniors who haven't settled on a particular career have probably narrowed to an occupational area of focus. As you complete college applications, be sure the schools meet your needs. And remember that you won't be able to slack off after your last application has been submitted. College admissions officers are increasingly putting more weight on a student's performance during his or her last semester to evaluate student ability to perform consistently.

ACT's student bloggers are in the college application process right now. Read what they have to say about applications and their senior year at actstudent.org/blog.



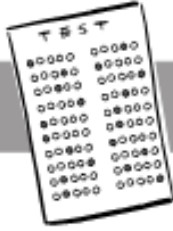
ACT high school poster contest kicks off

ACT kicks off its annual high school student poster design contest starting Monday, December 5. Winning entries will 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 U.S. high school students who plan to apply for 2012 or 2013 admission to a U.S. two-year or four-year institution.

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 between December 5, 2011, and January 28, 2012. Winners will be announced in March 2012. Contest details will become available at the end of the month at actstudent.org/postercontest.



Testing

ACT[®]

Test date reminder

The next national ACT test date is December 10, 2011. The registration deadline is November 4. Late registration, with an additional fee of \$21, is available through November 18. Register online today at actstudent.org.

Other test dates during the 2011-12 school year are: February 11, April 14, and June 9. Registration deadlines for these tests are about five weeks before the test date.

Test-day tips, a list of what to bring and approved calculators for use on the Math Test are listed on the website, too. An optional Writing Test is available in addition to the multiple-choice achievement test. Go to actstudent.org/writing to learn more about the Writing Test, including the colleges that require it. For all your questions about the ACT test, visit actstudent.org.