

News You Can Use



September 2008

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 ACT

Key Dates

November: High school seniors should complete any early admission/decision college applications that are available; check with the schools on your list. The deadline to register for the December ACT test date is November 7.

December: Some early admission decisions are available, so check with any schools to which you submitted an application. The ACT is administered on December 13. Complete and mail applications with January 1 deadlines. Prepare for the FAFSA, because it will be available January 1.

January 2009: The FAFSA becomes available January 1 — file as soon as possible. Registration deadline for the February ACT test date is January 6.

Pass it on: lessons from the class of 2008

ACT test results are in for the graduating class of 2008. While the number of test takers increased by 9 percent and the average composite score held relatively stable, there is still work to do to ensure students are prepared to go to and succeed in college.

Nationally, less than 25 percent of students are ready for college. ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks indicate students who have a high probability (75 percent or greater) of earning a "C" or better and a 50 percent chance of earning a "B" or higher in corresponding first-year

college course work. Only 22 percent of the 2008 U.S. high school graduates met all four benchmark scores.

In English, 68 percent of the students achieved the benchmark of 18, which corresponds to first-year college composition. A math score of 22 corresponds to college-level algebra, attained by 43 percent of 2008 graduates. In reading, 53 percent achieved the benchmark score of 21 corresponding to work in first-year social science courses, which require a great deal of reading and comprehension skills. In science, a score of 24 translates to success in college-level biology for 28 percent of 2008 graduates.

Only six in 10 students take a rigorous curriculum to prepare for college. Sixty-one percent of 2008 graduates reported taking a college preparatory schedule in high school. Yet, ACT research showed that 77 percent of middle and early high school students planned to enter a four-year college or university.

Less preparation means more remediation. As more and more unprepared students go to college, up to 40 percent are forced to take at least one remedial class just to get up to speed on college-level work. Those courses cost money and slow progress to a degree. Students who are required to take remedial work are also more likely to drop out of college.

Prepare a roadmap to get to college and stick with it. When you need help or encounter a potential obstacle, seek a parent, teacher, counselor or mentor who can help you get back on the course to success.

Follow instructions to reduce application errors

Of the top mistakes most often made on college applications, many can be attributed to not following instructions or working too quickly. The college application — and financial aid process — will be filled with important paperwork, so it is vital to take time and plan ahead. Setting aside time to focus on each document can help eliminate errors such as misspellings and will allow each form to be checked for completion, ensuring that it is signed and dated properly.

No one wants to be under pressure to complete such an important document at the last minute. Look at college and scholarship application deadlines and then figure out the amount of time it will take to complete the application. Schedule your work on it and if mailing an application, be sure to allow time for it to arrive before the deadline.

Take time to carefully consider people who will serve as your references. The people you choose should be able to accurately paint a picture of your talents and abilities. Essays also require planning and time. And don't forget to find a trusted person to help proofread your writing.

Time, however, cannot overcome misinformation. Be truthful about your activities and the extent of your involvement. Personal activities, such as "shopping" and "hanging out with friends" don't belong on applications.

Make a professional impression. Consider setting up a separate e-mail account for your college and scholarship applications and related communication. Choose an address that is professional and avoid using nicknames or slang terms. Remember, just as you're looking for the right fit in a college, schools are looking for students who will represent them well.



Check It Out

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Student athletes must register with NCAA

Students looking to participate in a Division I or II collegiate sport must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center. During your junior year, you must register with the Eligibility Center. Students must request that their ACT scores be forwarded directly to the center by entering code “9999” as a reporting selection when registering for the test.

For more information on the NCAA’s core course requirements, GPA computation, contact information and to complete the amateurism questionnaire, visit <https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common/>.

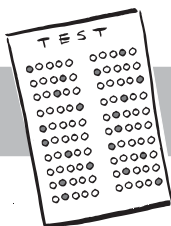
Meet the bloggers

Tag along as two students share their senior year and college prep experiences with all of us during the upcoming school year.

Emily attends high school in the Buffalo, NY, area. Both of her parents are educators and she has an older sister who is completing her bachelor’s degree. Emily took the ACT this past June and is planning to take it one more time.

Jedidiah will be blogging from the “Lone Star” state of Texas, where he lives with his parents. Jedidiah has taken the ACT twice and worked hard to improve his score on the second test.

Read along as they navigate through the college admissions process and their final year of high school. Follow their stories at www.actblog.org.



Testing

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Important information: fee waivers, special testing

Don’t let anything stand in the way of going to college! Fee waivers and special accommodations are available for students who qualify.

Students can receive ACT test fee waivers for the basic test fee for two test dates. Fee waivers are available for students who are in foster homes or are a ward of the state, whose family receives public assistance, who participate in a federally funded TRIO program such as Upward

Bound, or whose total family income is at or below the Low Standard Budget for 2008 as established by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. If you think you qualify, check with your counselor early as funds are limited each year and won't be available once depleted. Visiting with your counselor is the only way to obtain a fee waiver.

Special testing is available for students with documented disabilities. Information about required documentation and the process for requesting accommodations can be found at <http://www.act.org/aap/disab/index.html>. Visit with your counselor for assistance in completing paperwork.

Test date reminder

The next national ACT test date is October 25, 2008. The registration deadline is September 19 and late registration, with an additional fee, is September 20 through October 3. Register online today at actstudent.org.

Other test dates during the 2008-09 school year are: December 13, 2008; February 7, 2009; April 4, 2009; and June 13, 2009. Registration deadlines for these dates are normally about five weeks before the test date.

An optional Writing Test is available in addition to the multiple-choice achievement test. Go to www.actstudent.org/writing to learn more about the Writing Test, including the colleges that require it.

On the ACT student website, check out free test prep aids. Sample questions are available along with *Preparing for the ACT*, a booklet with a complete practice test, scoring key, writing prompt and sample essays. The ACT registration packet, available from the counseling office, also contains the booklet.

You also can sign up for ACT Online Prep™, the only test prep program developed exclusively by ACT test development professionals. At only \$19.95 for a year's use, it's a great tool. Test-day tips, a list of what to bring and approved calculators for use on the Math Test are listed on the site, too.

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