

ACRONYMS/DEFINITIONS FOR NAVIGATING THE COLLEGE PROCESS¹

- Accreditation** This term refers to a status granted to colleges, universities or other institutions of higher learning that indicates that the schools has been found to meet or exceed standards from a regional or national association (e.g. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools). In essence, it is “quality assurance” for higher education. *Antonym: Diploma Mills*
- ACT** the letters do not stand for anything anymore; the ACT was formerly known as the American College Testing program; this test has four components (English, math, reading and science) and an optional writing test. The score range is from 1 to 36, with 36 being the top score.
- Affiliation** any religious order with which the school is affiliated
- AI** academic index; this is a formula used by some colleges to rank test scores, class rank (and size of school); see Rachel Toor’s [A is for Admission](#) for specific tables
- AIME** American Invitational Mathematics Exam (some colleges may ask for scores on this exam); the next exam after AIME is USAMO; see: <http://www.unl.edu/amc/>
- All-American** a high school sports award reflecting an athlete who is one of the top players in the country
- AMC 10/12** some colleges ask for AMC 10/12 scores (American Mathematics Competitions); the next exam after AMC 10/12 is the AIME; see: <http://www.unl.edu/amc/>
- AP** Advanced Placement tests offered by *CollegeBoard*; students do not have to take the courses in order to register for the tests; see <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/about.html>
- Tests are scored 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score. Some colleges accept all AP scores for credit while other may accept none. Always check what your potential colleges will accept.
- AP Awards:** There are various categories of the AP awards given by *CollegeBoard*:
- AP Scholar**
Granted to students who receive grades of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams.
- AP Scholar with Honor**
Granted to students who receive an average grade of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken, and grades of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams.
- AP Scholar with Distinction**
Granted to students who receive an average grade of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, and grades of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams.
- State AP Scholar**
Granted to the one male and one female student in each U.S. state and the District of Columbia with grades of 3 or higher on the greatest number of AP Exams, and then the highest average grade (at least 3.5) on all AP Exams taken.
- National AP Scholar**
Granted to students in the United States who receive an average grade of at least 4 on all AP Exams taken, and grades of 4 or higher on eight or more of these exams.

- ARML** American Regions Mathematics League. Some selective tech schools may ask on application supplements if the applicant was a participant for his or her respective state. Participation is usually by invitation only.
- Articulation** Articulation agreements refer to agreements that are in place between colleges so that students may begin at one school and then easily transfer to another. An example of this might be an agreement between a community college and a college/university that allows the student to transfer and all credits are automatically accepted by the college/university from the community college.
- Associate Degree** generally a degree that indicates the completion of a two-year program, typically at a community college
- Bachelor's Degree** a diploma earned after the completion of a required course of study in college; this degree generally takes four years to complete, colleges usually award either a B.A. or B.S. (B.A. = Bachelor of Arts, B.S. = Bachelor of Science)
- Brag Sheet** This is a summary of all of your activities, awards and accomplishments in high school. This is kept by the individual to assist in the college application process. These are also called "resumes" by some college counselors.
- Byrd Scholarship** This is a scholarship program for top students. States run the program differently. Typically, guidance counselors coordinate the nominations for the high schools.
- Candidate's Reply Date Agreement** May 1 (you must inform all colleges whether or not you intend to enroll); this date is observed by most colleges in order to bring closure to the college admissions process; most acceptances and financial aid packages are sent in April (except for early action/decision), so candidates may consider offers until the deadline; always let colleges know whether or not you are attending
- CEEB** College Entrance Examination Board (code numbers are used when registering for SAT/ACT tests); codes are used to insure that records are sent to the correct high school See: "Test Dates > Code Search" on CollegeBoard's website or ACT's website under "Registration > High School Codes"; it is a six-digit number
- Class Rank** a student's place in class when compared with others; some schools may have several people who tie for #1, while others may not rank at all; most schools still use traditional systems that rank and sort
- CLEP** College-Level Examination Program; a series of exams offered by CollegeBoard that may count for credit at some colleges
- CollegeBoard** this is the not-for-profit association whose mission is to "connect students to college success and opportunity"; CollegeBoard manages the PSAT, SAT, SAT Subject Tests, AP, CLEP, and CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE programs
- Common Application** a generic application that can be used for over 300 colleges and universities around the country; it may be found at this web site:
<https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/default.aspx>

- CO-OP Program** This is a structured program that some colleges offer where students combine on-campus study with periods of actual work experience; generally these programs require that students spend additional time in order to graduate, although the work opportunities do enhance job prospects (e.g., Purdue's Co-op Engineering Program)
- CR** Class Rank
- CR (SAT)** Critical Reading (part of the SAT test, as well as Math and Writing)
- Credit** The number of credits earned in a course. Colleges and universities are either on a semester system (two semesters and perhaps a summer session) or a quarter system (three sessions during the regular year in addition to a summer session).
- Credit by Examination** The awarding of college credit based on exams offered either at the college on-site or via AP or CLEP programs.
- Credit Flexibility** This is a new initiative in Ohio for the purpose of providing more flexibility when awarding credit to students. See Ohio Dept. of Education > Credit Flexibility
- Cross Registration** some colleges and universities offer programs where they will allow students to take courses within a group of colleges (or consortium) and allow credit at the home institution; an example of this is cross-registration at Harvard and MIT
- CSS/PROFILE** The College Scholarship Service PROFILE is a financial aid application that is typically required by selective schools in addition to the FAFSA.
- Cum Record** a complete record of all courses completed with grades; transcript
- Decile** A division used in breaking down class rank into tenths. *Top decile* refers to the top 10 percent of the class.
- Deferral** This is similar to being wait-listed but it applies to early decisions/actions; a student may not be accepted or rejected at the time, but the application will be considered again during the regular admission's cycle; rejection or admission is still possible
- Deferred Admission** this type of deferral allows a student to postpone admission for a year
- Dual-Degree Program** these are programs where a student might actually be working on two degrees at the same time; for example a student might complete both a B.A. and a M.A. within four/five years
- Early Action** An admission program offered by many schools that allows a student to apply by an earlier deadline (some as early as mid-October but typically in early November) and hear from the college as early as December or January. The program is *not binding*, if you are admitted, you are not obligated to attend that college. Some colleges restrict students and require "single choice" for early action applications (i.e., the student may only apply to one school under an early action choice, but may apply to other schools regular action).
- Early Admission** admission to a college without completing high school; typically for juniors

Early Decision	An admission program offered by many schools that allows a student to apply by an earlier deadline and hear from the college as early as December or January. The program is <i>binding</i> , if you are admitted, you are obligated to attend that college, depending on the financial aid.
ECAs	Extracurricular activities
EFC	Expected family contribution for paying for college (based on the FAFSA). This is the amount of money the government believes that a family should be able to pay for college ☺
Electives	a course that may be taken for graduation credit, but the student has some options in terms of which courses will satisfy the requirements
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid. All families need to complete the FAFSA which includes information about family income, assets and other financial information.
Federal School Code	A code for colleges needed for applications such as the FAFSA See: http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/index.htm "Federal School Code Search"
Fee Waiver	a form available to students of families with a low income (free/reduced lunch); eligible students should work with their guidance counselors to assist with the paperwork
GE Reqs	General Education requirements; courses that are required by the college or university; these are generally completed the first two years of college
GPA	Grade Point Average (also involves weighted and unweighted grades); Weighted grades include additional weight to courses such as AP or Honors classes (5.0 or 4.5, etc.). Unweighted grades mean typically using a 4.0 scale (converting all courses to an unweighted scale).
Graduate	a college student who already has a Bachelor's degree who is now taking additional coursework towards a Master's or other advanced degree program
Grant Aid	money that the school provides that does not have to be repaid
Greek Life	this refers to sororities or fraternities at colleges; some schools have a strong presence of Greek Life while others may not
High School Code	all high schools have a six-digit code which is used for college applications, ACT/SAT testing; the numbers are available at guidance departments or through searches on the testing sites (see <i>CEEB code</i>)
HYP	Harvard-Yale-Princeton; there are variations on these letters which may include Stanford and MIT. Some publications may refer to HYP colleges; HYP may also refer to the "Big Three" of the Ivy League (Harvard, Yale & Princeton)
IB	International Baccalaureate; college-level exams and full-diploma program offered by many high schools across the country
Intel STS	Intel Science Talent Search; a prestigious science research competition for seniors.

Ivy	Although college admissions may feel like handling poison ivy at times, the word “Ivy” is used in many ways by people (Hidden Ivies, Black Ivy League, Little Ivies, Public Ivies, Ivy-like, etc.). Many writers use the word “Ivy” in book titles to sell more books. (see <i>Ivy League</i>)
Ivy League	The Ivy League schools are officially Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Univ. of Pennsylvania, Princeton and Yale. The name may have originated from an old athletic conference, however the actual origin of the name “Ivy League” is still debated.
Kaplan	A company that offers test prep for college-related exams
Legacy	the son or daughter of a graduate of a particular school; if mom graduated from Yale and her son or daughter applied to Yale; the son or daughter would be considered a legacy applicant
Level of Recognition	This term is listed on applications so that the student may indicate whether or not s/he had received school, state/regional, national or international recognition for academics.
Liberal Arts	this refers to a curriculum that focuses on general knowledge as opposed to technical or professional tracks; some schools consider themselves to be Liberal Arts colleges (e.g. there are several in Ohio; Kenyon and Oberlin to name two)
Loans	money borrowed from a bank or college; many financial aid offices consider loans as financial aid
Major	the subject that a student focuses on for the purpose of earning a degree; students typically take general studies the first two years and then gradually specialize during their junior/senior years
Match	these are schools that are considered a good match for a student’s abilities as well his/her interests; admission to them is not guaranteed, but likely
Matriculation	to enroll in a college for the purpose of obtaining a degree; colleges and universities use this term differently (i.e., for some, it may mean to merely enroll while for others it may mean eligible to obtain a degree)
Merit Aid	financial aid or scholarships based on academic merit and not on financial need
Minor	the subject that a student may concentrate on for additional coursework; typically fewer classes than a major
Minority	in the context of admissions, minority groups are underrepresented populations from some ethnic/racial backgrounds: African-American, Asian-Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics; due to the changing nature of our population, the term “minority” may actually mean different things to different colleges and populations (for example, a student from North Dakota may be viewed as a minority at an urban school in California)

National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT)

Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT); the year that “counts” is 11th grade; sections include: critical reading, math and writing; scoring is in a range from 20 to 80, with 80 being the highest score; Selection Index for National Merit ranges from 60 to 240

There are various categories for students who perform at high levels on the PSAT test during their junior year:

National Merit Commended: these students did not qualify as semi-finalists, but performed at a high level on the PSAT; although the selection index varies annually, it is typically a combined total of around 200 or more on the three parts of the PSAT

National Merit Semifinalist: these students performed at the highest level on the PSAT and are then considered for Finalist status based on school recommendation, test scores, and academic record; the qualifying scores annually vary by state; students must complete an application for consideration for Finalist status and to be considered for Scholar awards

National Merit Finalist: these students are the ones who have advanced from semifinalist status to finalist status based on their applications

National Merit Scholar: top finalists are considered for either \$2500 awards, or college/corporate awards; some awards are only available through the employment place of the parents or the schools to which an applicant has applied

National Achievement: this is a program for outstanding Black students

See: <http://www.nationalmerit.org/> [Also see: **Selection Index**]

Need-blind the admissions process is often called “need-blind” in that one’s ability to pay is not supposed to be a factor in the admissions decision

Notification Date This date depends on whether the applicant applied early or for regular admission, most colleges are good about explaining their timelines for notification. Many schools will send the notification of their decisions along with the financial aid packages. Some schools will send the notification first and then follow up in a week or two with the financial aid package.

Open Admission virtually all students who apply are admitted

Pell Grant federally sponsored program that provides grants based on need

Perkins Loan a federal loan program for students who have financial need

Preferential Packaging this refers to a policy where highly desirable applicants are given preferential financial aid packages (e.g., the winner of the Intel Science Talent Search may be high on the list for named scholarships)

Princeton Review a company that offers test prep for college-related exams

- Private Schools** these schools are not supported by the government (i.e., state taxes); all funds for these schools come from tuition, which is typically higher than public schools
- PSAT/NMSQT** Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test ; see **National Merit**
- PSEO** Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (some colleges grant credit while others do not)
- Public Schools** these institutions are supported by the government (i.e.,state and local taxes)
- Reach** Reach schools are categorized as school that will be difficult for a student to obtain admission. Reach, match and safety schools vary from student to student. Even though a student may have perfect test scores, great recommendations and an outstanding essay, some schools are still considered “reach” schools for any student.
- Recruited Athlete** a top athlete who is one of the college coach’s top choices for a sports program
- Regular Decision** There are many different admissions plans at colleges. The regular decision timeline has a fixed deadline that is later than early action or early decision timelines.
- Rolling Admissions** Under a rolling admission plan, colleges review an application once submitted and send out a decision as soon as it is reached rather than wait for a particular day.
- Room & Board** expenses for university-operated housing and dining services; some colleges do not offer dining services on the weekends or one night of the weekend
- ROTC** Reserve Officers’ Training Corps; military training program that is concurrent with college attendance; typically students receive compensation for this agreement and are offered an officer’s commission at graduation
- Safety** safety schools are schools that the student believes he or she will be virtually guaranteed of admission; the student would have test scores in at least the top 25% if not the top 10%, solid recommendations, and may have a good chance at merit aid
- SAT** SAT Reasoning Test (formerly known as Scholastic Aptitude Test and Scholastic Assessment Test); the test consists of math, critical reading and writing; it is scored 200-800 per section (top score is 2400)
- SAT II** SAT Subject Tests (formerly called SAT II’s); the subject tests are required by many top colleges; they are scored 200-800 per section, with 800 being the top score
- Selection Index** This refers to scores used by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) to determine students who are honored in their scholarship programs (e.g., National Merit Finalists, National Achievement Scholarship Program); cut-off’s for these programs vary *by state and by year*; NMSC does not publicize the cut-off’s, but many people are able to learn them by going to sites such as *College Confidential* (a college-bound community site).

- Selectivity** There are various levels of selectivity among colleges. Some colleges are characterized as “highly selective” or “most selective” which implies that it is difficult to gain admission to that college. A better gauge of a college’s selectivity is to examine the most recent acceptance rate. Generally, the lower the acceptance rate, the harder it is to gain acceptance to that college.
- Self-Selecting** A school’s applicant pool may be described as self-selecting since those who apply tend to be exceptional students; as a result, even though a surprisingly large number of applicants may be admitted, the school still has a high selectivity since the students who apply “self-select” themselves as a match for the rigorous institution.
- Stafford** A federal student loan that allows students to borrow money directly from banks or other lending institutions.
- Supplemental Application** Even though many colleges and universities use the common application, many require a supplemental application that is specific to their institution.
- TA** teaching assistant; schools will typically report what percentage of classes are taught by TAs (TAs may be upper level undergraduates or graduate students)
- Tech Schools** Some people refer to the math and science schools as tech schools because of the emphasis on technology (e.g., MIT, Caltech, Georgia Tech, RIT, Rensselaer, etc.)
- TOEFL** Test of English as a Foreign Language; this is an English exam that may be required for foreign students or students whose principal language is not English
- Transcript** A copy of courses taken and grades obtained; transcripts may include weighted and unweighted GPAs and/or test scores (ACT, SAT, PSAT, OGT); transcripts are typically requested through the guidance dept. and usually require a nominal fee per request
- Tuition** the fee that is paid for instruction at a college or university; this is separate from room and board (R & B); there may also be general fees that are separate from the tuition and R & B.
- Undergraduate** a college student who has not received a Bachelor’s degree
- Universal College Application** This is a newer college application which came out in 2007 as a competitor to the Common Application. Initially, this application was intended to reach a broader, more diverse applicant pool. Currently, around 80 colleges are participating, including a couple of the renowned selectives, Duke and Harvard. This application allows for multimedia downloads and does not require an essay. It does ask for a personal statement. The website:
<https://www.universalcollegeapp.com/>
- USAMO** United States of America Mathematical Olympiad (some applications may ask if the applicant was a USAMO qualifier)
- Wait List** this is a list of students who were not accepted outright to colleges but were either too strong to reject outright or the college simply did not have room for them at that given time; each college coordinates the size of its wait list; students are typically asked if they will accept a position on that wait list or if they have made other plans

Work Study a federally funded program that makes part-time jobs available to students with financial need; it is generally part of the financial aid package

Yield this refers to the number of accepted students who actually enroll in the school

1Note: the information contained in this list has been gathered from several sources (some primary, some secondary); all information is being shared for educational purposes only; list compiled by Karen Rohde, Coordinator for Gifted Services, Testing & ESL at the Berea City School District; Berea, Ohio.