# Table of Contents

Information and Contacts ........................................................................................................... 2
Welcome! ........................................................................................................................................ 3
Getting Started ............................................................................................................................... 3
Timelines .......................................................................................................................................... 4
  Checklist for Junior Year .............................................................................................................. 4
  Checklist for Senior Year ............................................................................................................. 5
Naviance .......................................................................................................................................... 6
Standardized Testing ...................................................................................................................... 6
  PSAT/NMSQT .................................................................................................................................... 6
  SAT Reasoning Test ........................................................................................................................ 7
  SAT Subject Tests .......................................................................................................................... 7
  ACT .................................................................................................................................................. 7
  AP Exams ....................................................................................................................................... 7
  TOEFL iBT ........................................................................................................................................ 7
  Score Choice .................................................................................................................................... 8
  Additional Testing Information ....................................................................................................... 8
  Testing Day Tips ............................................................................................................................. 8
  Comparison of SAT and ACT Exams ............................................................................................ 9
  Comparison of SAT and ACT Scores ............................................................................................ 10
Researching Colleges ....................................................................................................................... 10
Campus Visits and Interviews ........................................................................................................ 11
  Campus Visits ............................................................................................................................... 11
  What if You Can’t Visit? ................................................................................................................. 11
  Interviews ....................................................................................................................................... 11
Applying to Colleges ....................................................................................................................... 13
  General Information ...................................................................................................................... 13
  The Common Application ............................................................................................................. 13
  Transcripts ...................................................................................................................................... 14
  Letters of Recommendation ......................................................................................................... 14
  Sending Test Scores ..................................................................................................................... 15
  The College Essay/Personal Statement ....................................................................................... 15
Collegiate Athletics ......................................................................................................................... 16
Visual and Performing Arts ............................................................................................................ 17
Service Academies .......................................................................................................................... 17
Learning Differences and Disabilities ............................................................................................ 18
Military ............................................................................................................................................. 21
Career Research .............................................................................................................................. 21
Financial Aid and Scholarships ..................................................................................................... 21
  Types of Financial Aid .................................................................................................................. 21
  How to Apply for Financial Aid .................................................................................................... 22
  Early Decision and Financial Aid ................................................................................................ 22
Resources ........................................................................................................................................ 23
A Note to Parents ............................................................................................................................. 26
Glossary .......................................................................................................................................... 27
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Welcome!

Let us be the first to congratulate you on all of your hard work and getting to this final stage of your high school career. The college planning process—research, applications, and preparation—can be a very exciting time. This is your chance to assess your goals, interests, needs and preferences to find opportunities beyond high school to complement those ideas.

As your school counselors, we are here to help you along the way. This booklet is designed to simplify the college planning process. Hopefully, by using this book as a tool, you will feel better organized, prepared, and informed as you begin this exciting journey to the next chapter of your life.

We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors!

Getting Started

While your grades, courses and activities in ninth and tenth grade are your foundation, the college search process for most students begins in eleventh grade. This is the year to determine your strengths and interests, visit colleges and take your college entrance exams. These activities will help you to determine which colleges, universities or technical schools may be the best match for you. Please use the following resources to help guide you in your search.
Checklist for Junior Year

September and October

___ Attend College Visits in the Career Center

___ Take the PSAT

The PSAT is offered free of charge in October at Downingtown East and West. It is not required, but offers the student a chance to take a practice form of the SATs and to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Competition. Students who take the PSAT’s receive a report that shows their scores, a comparison to other college bound peers, a breakdown of their scores within each subject and a detailed summary of correct vs. incorrect answers.

December and January

___ Register for the SAT or ACT

___ Consider SAT Prep Classes

Prep classes are offered through Downingtown East and West in the winter (January/February). The sessions best prepare juniors for the March SAT.

February-June

___ Schedule Visits to College Campuses

___ Attend your Junior Visit with your Counselor

This is an opportunity for students to meet with their counselors to discuss college plans and courses for your senior year. Students should take a course load that includes solid academic courses with as much challenge as is appropriate and to consider elective choices in their individual areas of interest whenever possible.

___ Take the SAT and/or the ACT

Plan to take either test at least twice. Most students will find their scores higher the second time in at least one area.

___ Determine if you will need letters of recommendation

___ Provide teachers/counselor with an activities resume

Summer

___ Volunteer, travel, work or consider summer programs at colleges in subject areas that interest you. Summer experiences can help you to learn about possible career paths, potential areas of study for college majors, or simply more about yourself. Information about summer opportunities are posted on the Counseling Office website and in the College and Career Center.
Checklist for Senior Year

Summer

____ Begin work on college applications. If needed, create Common App or Coalition accounts

____ Attend Application Boot Camp @ Downingtown East or West - typically the 1st week of August

September/October/November

____ Attend the Senior Presentation in the Auditorium

____ Schedule a visit with your School Counselor

  Bring with you a balanced college list of 3-6 schools that you have researched and
  that represent a range of selectivity appropriate for you

____ Determine if you will need letters of recommendation if you have not done so

____ Provide teachers/counselor with an activities resume

____ Provide teachers with Letter of Recommendation form with all information completed

____ Complete Applications - basic information and essay/short answer questions (if required)

____ Pay application fee

____ Request Transcripts in the Counseling Office - complete both the Transcript Request form and
  Transcript Release Authorization

____ Fill out the FAFSA for financial aid (OCTOBER 1st, 2018): www.fafsa.ed.gov

____ Retake SAT’s or ACT’s if needed

____ Send SAT/ACT scores directly to colleges

____ Attend College Visits in the Career Center

____ Prospective college athletes complete registration with NCAA and send transcripts

January/February

____ Request Mid-year Transcripts for any schools requiring grade updates - mandatory for Common App

April/May

____ Commit to a college

June

____ Request a Final Transcript to be sent to your college
**Naviance**

*Family Connection* from *Naviance* is a Web-based service designed for students, parents and counselors. It is a comprehensive website that you can use to help make decisions about courses, colleges, and careers. Family Connection provides up-to-date information that’s specific to our students at Downingtown East and West. It allows us to share information with you about upcoming meetings, news, and events, as well as other Web resources for college and career information.

Naviance provides many uses for families throughout the college search process. It can serve as a direct link for students to college websites/applications and houses information personal to the student such as GPA and test scores. This allows the student to compare their data with that of past Downingtown graduates who have applied to the same colleges and universities.

To access a Naviance student account, please use the following information:

- **Login:** Student ID
- **Password:** Birthday (mm/dd/yyyy) – no zeroes needed in front of single digits. You must include the slashes between each number.

Parents may register for an account through Naviance.

**Standardized Testing**

Standardized test scores help to provide colleges with a means of comparing student abilities nationally and are required by most schools. It is a student’s responsibility to sign up for testing and to send their scores directly to colleges through the testing agency. PSAT, SAT, ACT and AP scores do not appear on our transcripts. This allows the student freedom to choose which scores they would like to send.

**PSAT/NMSQT**

The PSAT is offered annually in October. It is not required, but offers the student a chance to take a practice form of the SATs and to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship Competition when taken in their junior year. Students who take the PSAT receive a report that shows their detailed score, a comparison to other college bound peers, a breakdown of their scores within each subject and a detailed summary of correct vs. incorrect answers. The PSAT contains multiple choice sections in Reading/Writing and Language, and Math (with and without calculators). Each section is scored from 160 – 760 points and total score will be between 320 and 1520. PSAT scores are not seen or considered by colleges.
SAT Reasoning Test

The SAT is offered seven times per year (August, October, November, December, March, May and June). Students typically take their first SAT in March and again in May or June of their Junior Year. Some students may wish to take a third exam in August, October or November of their Senior Year. The SAT contains four multiple choice portions that vary between Reading/Writing and Math as well as an optional Essay. Each section (Reading/Writing and Math) is scored on a scale of 200-800 points for a total score of 400-1600. As with the ACT, the Essay score is not factored into the total overall score. We recommend that students take the Essay section unless they are positive that it is not required by any school that they may apply to.

SAT Subject Tests

SAT Subject tests are only required by the most competitive colleges. Subject testing requirements for colleges can vary between schools and majors. The SAT Subject Tests are offered six times per year (August, October, November, December, May and June). SAT Subject Tests with Language are only offered once per year (November). A student can elect to take one, two or three exams on any exam date. Each test is one-hour in length. Like the SAT Reasoning Test, each Subject Test is scored on a 200-800 point basis. Some schools requiring Subject Tests consider the ACT an alternative to both the SAT and SAT Subject tests. It is very important to check admissions sites directly in order to find if any of your schools require or recommend these tests and, if so, which ones.

ACT

The ACT is offered seven times per year (September, October, December, February, April, June, and July). Students typically take their first ACT in February or April and again in June or July of their Junior Year. Some students may wish to take a third exam in September or October of their senior year. The ACT contains three multiple choice sections in Critical Reading, Math, and Science as well as an optional Writing section. We recommend that students take the Writing section unless they are positive that it is not required by any school that they may apply to. Each section is scored on a scale of 1-36 points in each subject. The Composite score is an average of the four sections.

AP Exams

AP Exams are offered during the first two weeks of May. Students taking an AP course should sign up for the corresponding exam. Each exam is scored from 1-5. A strong score on an exam can enhance your college application and potentially earn you college credit depending on the policies of the college you attend. For more information, please visit: http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/apcreditpolicy/index.jsp

TOEFL iBT

The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is an internet based test and is for students whose native language is not English (regardless of citizenship or language of instruction).
Students should plan to take this test during the summer before their senior year and again in the fall of their senior year if necessary.

**Score Choice**

Score choice gives you the option of sending SAT Reasoning (the traditional SAT) scores by test date or SAT Subject Tests by individual tests. This score reporting option is accessible to students after their scores have been made available and then by logging in to your College Board account or calling SAT Customer Service. Students taking advantage of score choice will not incur any additional cost above the current score reporting fees. Any student wishing to utilize the four free score reports associated with the test will be unable to utilize Score Choice for those reports. Students who do not elect to use score choice will have all testing records sent to their colleges. For more information on Score Choice, please visit www.collegeboard.com.

**Additional Testing Information**

**Extended Time and Accommodations:** Students with a documented disability may qualify for accommodations as determined by the testing company. To determine if you qualify for any of these services and to apply, see your Learning Support teacher or counselor early in your junior year.

**Cancelling Scores:** If you do not feel that you performed well on an exam, you may be able to cancel a score on the test day or within a few days of the test. Please contact the testing agency directly for information or to cancel.

**Fee Waivers:** Students on the Free or Reduced Lunch Program may qualify for fee waivers for testing. Students using these waivers may also qualify for college application waivers in their senior year. Please see your school counselor for complete fee waiver information.

**Testing Day Tips**

- Bring plenty of pencils
- Bring your ID
- Bring food and a drink for your break
- Bring a good graphing calculator with new batteries
- Wear a watch
- Arrive at least 15 minutes early – 7:45 AM for most test centers
- Be careful filling in the bubbles and erase completely
- If you have a reasonable guess, go for it. No penalties for guessing on the SAT or ACT
- Write in your test book to work through problems (just be sure to mark answers on your answer sheet)
- If possible, go back and check your work
- Don’t waste too much time on one problem (one minute limit)
- Do not beat yourself up over a question, just move on
# Comparison of SAT and ACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>SAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>3 hours, 35 min. (w/ Writing Test)</td>
<td>3 hours, 50 min. (w/ Essay Test)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 hours, 55 min. (w/o Writing Test)</td>
<td>3 hours (w/o Essay Test)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ 30-40 min. for administrative tasks/breaks for either test</td>
<td>+ 30-40 min. for administrative tasks/breaks for either test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>4 Sections + optional section</td>
<td>4 sections + optional section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• English - 45 min.</td>
<td>• Reading - 65 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Math - 60 min.</td>
<td>• Writing/Language - 35 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading - 35 min.</td>
<td>• Math: No Calculator - 25 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Science - 35 min.</td>
<td>• Math: Calculator - 55 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Optional Writing - 40 min.</td>
<td>• Optional Essay - 50 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
<td>Composite of 1-36 based on average scores from the 4 test sections</td>
<td>Total score range of 800-1600 based on adding scores from Reading/Writing and Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 scores of 1-36 for each test</td>
<td>2 scores of 200-800 for each subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optional Writing Test score of 0-12 (not included in the overall score)</td>
<td>Optional Essay score of 6-24 (not included in the overall score)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wrong Answer Penalty</strong></td>
<td>No penalty</td>
<td>No penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td>• Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>• Reading Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Grammar</td>
<td>• Passage Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Algebra I and II</td>
<td>• Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Geometry</td>
<td>• Adv. Algebra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Trigonometry</td>
<td>• Data Interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td>• Arithmetic</td>
<td>• Some Arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Algebra I and II</td>
<td>• Some Geometry</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Geometry</td>
<td>• Some Trigonometry</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td>• Analysis</td>
<td>• None</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Interpretation</td>
<td>• None</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Evaluation</td>
<td>• None</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Basic Content</td>
<td>• None</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Problem Solving</td>
<td>• None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td>• Optional Final Section</td>
<td>• Optional Final Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 40 Minutes</td>
<td>• 50 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not included in Composite Score</td>
<td>• Not included in Overall Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contemporary issue w/ three different opinions</td>
<td>• Short passage analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.actstudent.org">www.actstudent.org</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From applerouth.com*  
*Some schools may require you to send all scores*
Beginning the college search can be intimidating. There are currently over 4,500 colleges and universities within the United States. This presents a great opportunity to find a school that truly fits your needs, strengths and goals. Naviance and collegeboard.com contain excellent college search options. First, you will need to consider what major or majors may interest you. If you are unsure, try to find a school that offers majors within all areas that you may like to study. Next, it is important to consider what qualities you would like in a campus. Be sure to consider size, location, public vs. private, religious affiliation and other qualities that you find important in your search (these sites will guide you through those choices). Finally you will need to compare your academic profile (GPA and test scores) with the admissions profile for those schools. What is most important is to keep an open mind. There is no perfect campus for everyone, but be sure to find the best one for you.
Campus Visits and Interviews

Campus Visits

The best way to know if a college is for you is to visit. Brochures and websites are sales material designed to show the campus at its best. Visiting and spending time on campus allows you to experience how the campus makes you feel. Your visit may also be a way that some colleges determine that you have a genuine interest in them.

While it is never too early to look, most students will begin visits during their junior year. In-service days and other holidays present a great opportunity to visit while the schools are in session. Summer visits will not give you a true picture of how the school looks when it is fully in session. Students should utilize admissions websites to schedule their visits. If you have a specific question or request, you can typically reach the admissions office through email or phone.

What if You Can’t Visit?

There are a number of local college fairs that attract colleges from around the country. Visit at least one large college fair in your junior year or in the fall of your senior year. Also, be sure to check college visits in the College and Career Center.

Interviews

Interviews are important for both students and admissions officials to determine fit and demonstrate interest in an institution. Requirements and procedures for interviews can vary from school to school. Typically, they are required by the most selective of schools or for students that are on the borderline for acceptance. A college interview is the chance to let a college admissions officer see personal strengths that are not obvious on paper. The format of a personal interview may vary, but most often involves a conversation between an interviewer and the student. The interviewer may be an upper class student, an alumni or an admissions representative and they may be done individually or within a group. Often, the interviewer will take notes that become a part of the applicant’s admission file. It is important to prepare for the interview with information and questions about the school.

Questions you may be asked:

- What would you consider to be your major strength/weakness?
- What has been an important event of your life?
- How do you spend your leisure time/summers?
- What books, magazines, etc. have you read in the past year?
- What are some adjectives you may use to describe yourself?
- Do you know the career for which you wish to prepare?
- What do you feel your contribution can be to our college?
- How do you explain this low grade?
- How much time do you devote to studying?
- What individual most influenced your life?
- What would you consider to be the major problems facing college students today?
- Do you think that your high school grades are an accurate reflection of your aptitude?
- If you were conducting this interview, what questions would you ask?
- Why should we select you?

Potential questions to ask:

- Do many students come from Pennsylvania?
- Are there many international students enrolled here?
- What is the biggest complaint of students?
- What do students value most in the school?
- Do many students go home on the weekends?
- What were the social highlights last year?
- Is it easy for students to get involved?
- What intramural sports are offered?
- What opportunities are there for internships?
- Do many students study abroad?
- How safe is the surrounding neighborhood?
- How easy is it to get the classes that you would like?
- Is it difficult to change majors or double major?
- What percentage of students return for their sophomore year?
- Are merit-based scholarships offered?
- Is the college financial need blind? Need aware? Need sensitive?
- What other colleges did your freshmen consider?
- What makes your school stand out from these schools?
- Anything else you may want to know.

After the interview:

- Write a thank you note or email to the person who interviewed you. Capitalize, punctuate and spell check your correspondence before sending.
- Take notes regarding the important items of information you gained and your impressions of the college.
Applying to Colleges

General Information

- Online applications are quicker and more reliable than paper applications. Online applications will be downloaded directly into a student’s file, whereas paper applications must travel through several different mail systems before they are sorted and filed.
- Typically the application consists of demographic information, essay or short answer questions (depending on the college) and payment.
- The student must complete the transcript request form in the Counseling Office and select each college in Naviance. To use Naviance:
  - First sign into your Naviance Account - can be accessed from the Counseling Department webpage.
  - Go to Colleges
  - Select ‘Colleges I am Applying to’
  - Select ‘Add to List’
    - If you are applying through the Common Application, you will need to indicate this where asked
- Letters of recommendation (if required) can be uploaded electronically through Naviance or sent in student provided envelopes directly to the school. Please discuss how letters will be sent with your recommender.
- Students are responsible for sending their SAT or ACT scores directly to the school.

The Common Application

The Common Application is a single application that is accepted by over 700 colleges and universities. The Common Application is available at www.commonapp.org or on individual school websites. There are several parts to the Common Application:

- The General Application: You will need to complete information including demographics, academic history, activities, discipline history and future plans. Additionally, there are short answer questions and an essay.
- Supplements: Many colleges that use the Common Application require the completion of a school supplemental application. These often include a short essay or other questions. The additional supplements typically allow you an opportunity to express your interest in a specific school.
- School Forms: Most colleges that use the Common Application require 1-2 teacher recommendations and an additional counselor recommendation.
- Please note that The Common Application typically updates their system during the summer months. To avoid having to complete the application multiple times or have your account deleted, it is best practice to wait until mid-August to create an account.
Transcripts

A high school transcript is a document detailing academic achievement in grades nine through twelve. All colleges, many scholarship programs, and the NCAA (for athletes) will request an “official” transcript.

The Downingtown High School transcript includes:

- Downingtown High School Courses, final grades, and credits for each grade completed
- Current course schedule
- GPA by year and cumulative
- Keystone scores (Final transcript only)

To request a transcript, fill out an Authorization for Release of Transcript & Recommendation Letters Form as well as a Transcript Request Form listing all colleges or organizations (available on our website, in the Counseling Office, or starting on page 31 of this guide) and bring it to the Counseling Office with a one-time fee of $2.00 (cash or check payable to DASD) along with your Activity Resume. We have the ability to send documents electronically using Naviance. This allows your transcript to be processed by colleges MUCH quicker than through the mail.

To allow electronic processing:

- First sign into your Naviance Account
- Go to Colleges
- Select ‘Colleges I am Applying to’
- Look up the school by name
- Select the ‘Add to List’

When you are ready to have transcripts sent:

- Go into the ‘Colleges I am Applying to’ option under Colleges
- Select ‘Request Transcripts’
- You will see a list of your colleges. Select which you would like transcripts sent
- At the bottom of the page select ‘Request Transcripts’

Schools may request updates or midyear reports. If they do, please fill out a form each time you need to send records. Common App requires midyear reports. All students will be required to submit a final transcript request to prove graduation to their college of choice.

Letters of Recommendation

Some colleges ask for one or two academic teachers and one counselor to provide a recommendation. Unless you are applying to a special program (art, music, drama, etc…) you should ask a major subject teacher (English, Social Studies, Math, Science or Language) for a recommendation. Students are encouraged to ask for recommendations in the spring of their junior year. This allows plenty of time for the letter to be written. Whenever you do request a letter, be sure to allow plenty of time (AT LEAST two weeks) for the person to write the letter. When you ask, you should do so in person and provide an activity resume (Resume Builder is available in Naviance under the About Me tab). Most letters of recommendation will be
submitted electronically through Naviance. If they must be sent through the mail, you will need to provide your recommender with a stamped addressed envelope. Please remember to follow up with a thank you to anyone who completes a recommendation letter for you.

To request letters through Naviance:
- Select the College tab
- Select Letters of Recommendation
- Select your recommender from the drop down box
  - Select All Current and Future Colleges I Apply to
  - Select Update Requests
- Provide teachers with a Letter of Recommendation Request Form listing the colleges you would like your letters sent
- You can track the progress of your recommendations by checking ‘View detailed status’ under “Colleges I am Applying to”

Remember:
- Teachers are not required to provide you with recommendations. Be sure to say thank you!
- Submitting a request through Naviance is not sufficient to obtain a recommendation. You must FIRST ask directly and provide them with an accurate list of colleges on your Letter of Recommendation form

**Sending Test Scores**

Students are responsible for having test scores sent directly from the testing organizations to their colleges. This information is not provided on the transcript. The first four score reports have no cost at the time of registration. Reports sent after registration or additional score reports can be sent at any time through collegeboard.org or actstudent.org for a fee.

**College Essay/Personal Statement**

Your essay is an opportunity for you to present to the college information about yourself that they may not be able to see with your application. This is a great opportunity to explain difficult, challenging, or important events in your life.

Some helpful hints:

- Make sure you answer the essay question and follow all instructions
- Make sure you have a strong opening paragraph
- Use correct grammar and punctuation
- Spell check frequently
- Check your facts
- Pay attention to the length
- Make sure it is neatly typed
- Be original
- If there is something specific about the college that makes the college a good fit for you, i.e., design your own major, opportunities for research, you can make reference to such
- Conclusions are critical. If your essay is short, you do not need to summarize. Avoid stock phrases like - in summary, in conclusion, to conclude. Consider linking your conclusion to your introduction to round it out.

Suggested prompts:
- Do you have hobbies or outside pursuits that engage your heart and mind?
- Is there a social cause that is important to you?
- Has an event had a profound influence on you?
- Is there an academic subject that you find fascinating?
- Consider your favorite books, movies, works of art, etc. Have any of these had a profound influence on you?
- How have you overcome obstacles or responded to failure?
- What distinguishes you from everyone else?
- Who were your role models?

**Collegiate Athletics**

College athletics can provide great opportunities for student athletes. If you are considering a sport in college, ask your coach for an honest assessment of your abilities and levels related to college sports. Once you have identified schools that match your abilities and search criteria, check their websites for prospective student athlete questionnaires and fill these out in your junior year. This will supply the recruiting coaches with your information. Please remember this does not mean that you will be recruited. Thousands of students express interest every year.

You must be proactive in the process and market yourself. Contact coaches from schools that you are interested in and ask about summer camp opportunities. Be sure to notify them of any contests or showcases that you will participate in. Email is the best way of communicating prior to your senior year, since many coaches are unable to speak with you in person or on the phone prior to July 1st following your junior year.

In your senior year, you may receive communication from coaches. Remember, they are recruiting a large number of students and this is not a guarantee for a spot on the team or admission to the school. Feel free to ask where you are ranked in their recruiting and if an admissions official has seen your credentials and believes you will likely be admitted. The recruiting process is not over until you have committed AND received an admissions letter from the school.
Before an athlete can play a sport or receive an athletic scholarship at a Division I or II college, he or she must meet specific academic criteria set forth by the NCAA. Each Division I or II college has certain criteria that need to be met in order to be eligible to play sports. These requirements are related to approved core classes, GPA, and SAT scores. It is important to check the specific requirements at the NCAA Clearinghouse.

Athletes should take the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT beginning in spring of junior year and have the scores sent to the Clearinghouse. During senior year, athletes need to complete an NCAA Clearinghouse Student Release Form to initiate the eligibility process.

**Visual and Performing Arts**

Students thinking about attending art school or a conservatory in one of the performing arts have many additional details to pay attention to in the application process. Students should speak with their instructors for help assembling portfolios and for a realistic assessment of their ability in relation to post-secondary options.

Carefully research and visit the schools that you are interested in. Programs can vary greatly. Consider a liberal arts school with a strong program in your field if you want a well-rounded education. If you want to study only in your art, consider an art school or conservatory. Before making this decision, consider attending an intensive summer program so you can get a good understanding of what your educational experience will be like.

**Service Academies**

The Service Academies offer a great experience, a full tuition scholarship, and many other opportunities. Unlike a normal university, upon graduation, students not only graduate with a degree, but also with a commission as an officer. When considering an academy, it is important not only to consider the four years of study, but also the following commitment to serve in the armed forces. The expectations within the Service Academies is more time intensive and structured than what a typical college student would experience.

Applying to a Service Academy is a more demanding process than applying to a traditional college. Students should begin the application process in the winter or spring of their junior year. At that time, they should complete a Pre-Candidate Questionnaire. Students must next work to obtain the required nomination (with the exception of the Coast Guard Academy). Although it is only necessary to receive one nomination, all candidates may apply, and are encouraged to apply for, all four: his or her own US Representative, two US Senators, and the Vice President. While most applications for nominations are similar, all are unique. Many will require transcripts, SAT scores, letters of recommendation, or other materials. Be sure to request transcripts in a timely manner and thank any official for their nomination.

For students interested in pursuing a service academy, the Summer Seminar program is a great way to determine if an academy is the right choice. The academies offer a weeklong program.
between junior and senior year that highlight what to expect. The application for the summer program is available December through February.

Learning Differences and Disabilities


As a student with a disability, you need to be well informed about your rights and responsibilities as well as the responsibilities postsecondary schools have toward you. Being well-informed will help ensure that you have a full opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the postsecondary education experience without confusion or delay.

The information in this section, provided by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U. S. Department of Education, explains the rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities who are preparing to attend postsecondary schools. This helps to explain the obligations of a postsecondary school to provide academic adjustments.

OCR enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II), which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Practically every school district and postsecondary school in the United States is subject to one or both of these laws, which have similar requirements. You may be familiar with another federal law that applies to the education of students with disabilities—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). That law is administered by the Office of Special Education Programs in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the U.S. Department of Education. The IDEA and its individualized education program (IEP) provisions do not apply to postsecondary schools.

Although Section 504 and Title II apply to both school districts and postsecondary schools, the responsibilities of postsecondary schools differ significantly from those of school districts. Moreover, you will have responsibilities as a postsecondary student that you do not have as a high school student. OCR strongly encourages you to know your responsibilities and those of postsecondary schools under Section 504 and Title II. Doing so will improve your opportunity to succeed as you enter postsecondary education.

The following questions and answers provide more specific information to help you succeed.

As a student with a disability leaving high school and entering postsecondary education, will I see differences in my rights and how they are addressed?

Unlike your high school, your postsecondary school is not required to provide Free and Appropriate Public Education. Rather, your postsecondary school is required to provide appropriate academic adjustments as necessary to ensure that it does not discriminate on the basis of disability. In addition, if your postsecondary school provides housing to nondisabled students, it must provide comparable, convenient, and accessible housing to students with disabilities at the same cost.
May a postsecondary school deny my admission because I have a disability?
No. If you meet the essential requirements for admission, a postsecondary school may not deny your admission simply because you have a disability.

Do I have to inform a postsecondary school that I have a disability?
No. But if you want the school to provide an academic adjustment, you must identify yourself as having a disability. Likewise, you should let the school know about your disability if you want to ensure that you are assigned to accessible facilities. In any event, your disclosure of a disability is always voluntary.

What academic adjustments must a postsecondary school provide?
The appropriate academic adjustment must be determined based on your disability and individual needs. Academic adjustments may include auxiliary aids and services, as well as modifications to academic requirements as necessary to ensure equal educational opportunity. Examples of adjustments are: arranging for priority registration; reducing a course load; substituting one course for another; providing note takers, recording devices, sign language interpreters, extended time for testing, and, if telephones are provided in dorm rooms, a TTY in your dorm room; and equipping school computers with screen-reading, voice recognition, or other adaptive software or hardware.

In providing an academic adjustment, your postsecondary school is not required to lower or substantially modify essential requirements. For example, although your school may be required to provide extended testing time, it is not required to change the substantive content of the test. In addition, your postsecondary school does not have to make adjustments that would fundamentally alter the nature of a service, program, or activity, or that would result in an undue financial or administrative burden. Finally, your postsecondary school does not have to provide personal attendants, individually prescribed devices, readers for personal use or study, or other devices or services of a personal nature, such as tutoring and typing.

If I want an academic adjustment, what must I do?
You must inform the school that you have a disability and need an academic adjustment. Unlike your school district, your postsecondary school is not required to identify you as having a disability or to assess your needs.

Your postsecondary school may require you to follow reasonable procedures to request an academic adjustment. You are responsible for knowing and following those procedures. In their publications providing general information, postsecondary schools usually include information on the procedures and contacts for requesting an academic adjustment. Such publications include recruitment materials, catalogs, and student handbooks, and are often available on school websites. Many schools also have staff whose purpose is to assist students with disabilities. If you are unable to locate the procedures, ask a school official, such as an admissions officer or counselor.

When should I request an academic adjustment?
Although you may request an academic adjustment from your postsecondary school at any time, you should request it as early as possible. Some academic adjustments may take more time to
provide than others. You should follow your school’s procedures to ensure that the school has enough time to review your request and provide an appropriate academic adjustment.

**Do I have to prove that I have a disability to obtain an academic adjustment?**
Generally, yes. Your school will probably require you to provide documentation showing that you have a current disability and need an academic adjustment.

**What documentation should I provide?**
Schools may set reasonable standards for documentation. Some schools require more documentation than others. They may require you to provide documentation prepared by an appropriate professional, such as a medical doctor, psychologist, or other qualified diagnostician. The required documentation may include one or more of the following: a diagnosis of your current disability, as well as supporting information, such as the date of the diagnosis, how that diagnosis was reached, and the credentials of the diagnosing professional; information on how your disability affects a major life activity; and information on how the disability affects your academic performance. The documentation should provide enough information for you and your school to decide what is an appropriate academic adjustment.

An individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan, if you have one, may help identify services that have been effective for you. This is generally not sufficient documentation, however, because of the differences between postsecondary education and high school education. What you need to meet the new demands of postsecondary education may be different from what worked for you in high school. Also, in some cases, the nature of a disability may change.

If the documentation that you have does not meet the postsecondary school’s requirements, a school official should tell you in a timely manner what additional documentation you need to provide. You may need a new evaluation in order to provide the required documentation.

**Who has to pay for a new evaluation?**
Neither your high school nor your postsecondary school is required to conduct or pay for a new evaluation to document your disability and need for an academic adjustment. You may, therefore, have to pay or find funding to pay an appropriate professional for an evaluation. If you are eligible for services through your state vocational rehabilitation agency, you may qualify for an evaluation at no cost to you. You may locate your state vocational rehabilitation agency at http://rsa.ed.gov by clicking on “Info about RSA,” then “People and Offices,” and then “State Agencies/Contacts.”

**Once the school has received the necessary documentation from me, what should I expect?**
To determine an appropriate academic adjustment, the school will review your request in light of the essential requirements for the relevant program. It is important to remember that the school is not required to lower or waive essential requirements. If you have requested a specific academic adjustment, the school may offer that academic adjustment, or it may offer an effective alternative. The school may also conduct its own evaluation of your disability and needs at its own expense.
You should expect your school to work with you in an interactive process to identify an appropriate academic adjustment. Unlike the experience you may have had in high school, however, do not expect your postsecondary school to invite your parents to participate in the process or to develop an IEP for you.

**Military**

The Military can provide many great opportunities for both college-bound and career-bound students. Students should speak with recruiters to see which branch would be the best fit for them and in what capacity. There are many ways that you can participate in the military, whether it’s a full career, the Reserves, ROTC or a Service Academy (see page 17). Recruiters can also help you to learn what financial incentives (including college tuition) may be available to you.

Students interested in a military option should register for the ASVAB (Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery) during their junior and/or senior year. Typically, Downingtown offers the ASVAB once a year or you can register to take the exam through a military recruiter. The test is scored in four areas -- Arithmetic Reasoning, Word Knowledge, Paragraph Comprehension and Mathematics Knowledge and count towards your Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT) score. The AFQT score determines whether you're qualified to enlist in the U.S. military and what occupations within the military you are eligible for.

**Career Research**

Students interested in going directly into the work force should utilize Naviance (see page 6) to research potential careers. Naviance features career searches, interest inventories and a resume builder to help you focus in on strengths and prepare for the job application process. These tools are available under the “Careers” and “About Me” link in your Naviance account.

**Financial Aid and Scholarships**

**Types of Financial Aid**

- **Grants:** Both the government and individual colleges award various forms of need-based grants. Grants are a form of “gift aid” for which no repayment is needed.
- **Federal and State Work-Study:** Work-Study programs provide jobs for financially needy students. Students generally work from 10-15 hours per week during the academic school year at on-campus and off-campus jobs. College financial aid administrators try to arrange for jobs that correspond to students’ academic and career interests.
- **Loans:** A loan refers to borrowed money that must be repaid by the student or the students’ parents. High need families may qualify for the Federal Perkins Loan Program. The most common loans are the Federal Stafford Loan for students and the Federal Plus Loan for parents. Loans can be awarded on either a need or a non-need basis. There are
subsidized and unsubsidized loans. Subsidized means that the repayment and interest accrual do not begin until six months after the student has graduated or discontinued. Unsubsidized mean that the borrower is responsible to pay on the loan during his or her time in college.

- **Scholarships:** Most scholarships are merit-based meaning that the scholarship is awarded based on academic, athletic, or special abilities, religious affiliation, ethnic or racial heritage, or special interests. Scholarships may come from specific colleges or private sources. Most college scholarships are awarded within the college you will attend. You should contact the Financial Aid Office and the office of your majors to see what scholarships you may qualify for. Websites are available to search and apply for other scholarships. These websites are [www.fastweb.org](http://www.fastweb.org) and [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org).

Downingtown East and West work with the community to offer students an opportunity to apply for numerous local scholarships. Information is distributed to all seniors in the spring. Students must complete and return the applications within the timeline provided to be eligible for these scholarships.

**How to apply for Financial Aid**

1. Request information about financial aid and scholarships from the Financial Aid offices at the colleges to which you are applying. Be sure to know the deadlines for applying for financial aid at each school.
2. Obtain your most recent tax return.
4. Complete the FAFSA as early as possible during your senior year ([www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)). Applications become available beginning October 1st.
5. Many private colleges require you to fill out the College Scholarship Service (CSS) Profile in addition to the FAFSA. Consult the following site to see if this is required by any of your potential schools ([http://profileonline.collegeboard.com](http://profileonline.collegeboard.com))

**Early Decision and Financial Aid**

It is not recommended for students who are in need of financial aid to apply to a college under a binding Early Decision agreement. This limits your ability to compare financial aid awards between schools.
Resources

HELPFUL WEBSITES

ATHLETICS
www.ncaaclearinghouse.net -- National Collegiate Athletic Association

CAREER – Assessments and research
www.careerkey.org – Help finding a career, pathway, training program, or college major
www.ceeoxpress.com – Business news
www.coolworks.com -- Connects career-minded adventurers to seasonal and full-time jobs
www.educationplanner.org – College, career, financial, and standardized testing information
www.monster.com – Job search tool
www.mymajors.com -- Explore potential “best fit” majors
www.myfuture.com – Figure out what’s next
www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us – Free career advice and training opportunities
www.salary.com – Free salary information
www.tryengineering.org – Engineering overview, Q&A with engineers, engineering schools
www.virtualjobshadow.com -- Great site to explore jobs virtually

COLLEGE – The college process, testing, searches, directories
www.actstudent.org – ACT registration
www.cappex.com -- FREE website for matching your accomplishments and interests with colleges
www.collegeboard.org – College research, SAT, PSAT, AP information and registration
www.collegeplan.org – Information on college programs, scholarships, financial aid, and admission
www.collegeresults.org – Examines college graduation rates
https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/ - the government database of colleges and their costs
www.collegeview.com -- College and financial aid research
www.collegeweeklive.com – Virtual college booths, live chats, and more
www.commonapp.org – Used by more than 400 colleges and universities
www.compassprep.com/admissions_req_subjects.aspx -- Offers a list of schools that require SAT subject tests and their specific requirements or if they can be fulfilled by taking the ACT
www.CTCL.com -- Colleges That Change Lives
www.cur.org – Information on the value of undergraduate research
www.ed.gov -- United States Department of Education
www.fairtest.org -- Schools that do not require the SAT or ACT
www.gocollege.com – Finding money and getting the most out of college
www.mycollegeguide.org – Helping high school students find the right college
www.myfuture.com – Career and major information
www.patrac.org – Provides students with instructions and resources to transfer themselves and their credits to participating colleges and universities in PA
www.pbs.org/tenstepstocollege -- Essential college planning guide
www.princetonreview.com - College ranking and test prep information
www.schoolsintheusa.com – College search information
www.studentpaths.com – Advice on courses and activities
www.technicalschools.org – Learn about and search technical schools
www.Ulinks.com – Higher education and career program information
www.workcolleges.org – Work college consortium
https://www.zeemee.com/- Build an online portfolio for college admissions

**Gap Year Opportunities**
https://www.dynamy.org/ -- Dynamy Internship Year
www.thinkingbeyondborders.org -- Thinking Beyond Borders
www.aspirebyapi.com – Summer and study abroad
www.interimprograms.com -- Center for Interim Programs
www.cityyear.org -- City Year
www.elcasalbarcelona.com -- El Casal
www.GapYearSouthAfrica.com -- Gap Year South Africa
www.globalroutes.org -- Global Routes
www.leapnow.org -- LEAPNOW: Transforming Education
www.masaisrael.org -- MASA Israel Journey
www.oasp.ac.uk -- Oxford Advanced Studies
www.projects-abroad.org -- Projects Abroad
www.rusticpathways.com -- Rustic Pathways
www.seamester.com -- Sea Mester
www.travellersworldwide.com -- Travellers Worldwide
www.woolman.org/woolman.html -- Woolman Semester
www.youthinternational.org -- Youth International

**Military**
www.airforce.com -- United States Air Force
www.usafa.af.mil -- United States Air Force Academy
www.goarmy.com -- United States Army
http://www.usma.edu/ -- United States Military Academy
www.uscg.mil/ -- United States Coast Guard
http://www.cga.edu/ -- United States Coast Guard Academy
www.usmc.mil/ -- United States Marine Corps
https://www.usmma.edu/ -- United States Merchant Marine Academy
www.militarycareers.com – Explore opportunities in armed forces
www.navy.mil/ -- United States Navy
https://www.usna.edu -- United States Naval Academy

**SAT/ACT** – Information, registration, review
www.actstudent.org -- Register for the ACT
www.collegeboard.org -- Register for the SAT and SAT Subject tests
www.fairtest.org – Schools that do not require the SAT or ACT
https://www.khanacademy.org/ -- Free SAT/PSAT/AP prep, resumes, college search
**Books**

- The College Solution, Lynn O'Shaughnessy
- US News and World Reports Ultimate College Guide
- Barron’s Profile of American Colleges
- The College Handbook, The College Board
- Colleges That Change Lives, Loren Pope
- Looking Beyond the Ivy League, Loren Pope
- Funding Your Education, US Department of Education
- Peterson’s College Money Handbook, Peterson’s Guides
- Campus Opportunities for Students with Learning Differences, Judith M. Crooker
- Directory of Art and Music Colleges, Roberta Carr
- Letting Go: A Parents’ Guide to Understanding the College Years, Karen Levin Coburn
- Lonely Planet: The Gap Year Book, Joe Bindloss, Charlotte Hindle and Andrew Dean Nystrom
- The Gap-Year Advantage, Karl Haigler and Rae Nelson
A Note to Parents

The college application process can be both exciting and overwhelming for parents. It is natural to want to be a part, but it is important to support your child rather than direct the process. Here are some positive ways to help support your child in their educational planning:

- Respect your child’s choices
- Listen with an open mind to their ideas about majors and schools
- Provide helpful, encouraging and constructive feedback
- Encourage your child to communicate with the colleges directly. They are looking for mature individuals to come to their campus. This will look favorably in the admissions process.
- Do not assume that online blogs or websites are accurate
- Don’t let others form your opinion of a school and let your child form their own impression
- Help to coordinate college visits
- Help your child to buy materials that help them to organize their college materials
- Buy your child a few college guide books to help them research
- Talk to your child about questions to ask on the visit. Try to allow them to ask as many as possible
- Resist the urge to take over. It is easy to get excited, but this is an important rite of passage for your child. Allow them to find their best match
ACT: The ACT is an alternative exam to the SAT. The ACT exam includes sections in English, Reading, Mathematics, and Science. Colleges will accept either the SAT Reasoning Test or ACT exam. The student will receive four individual scores (1 is the lowest, 36 is the highest); each subject area as well as a composite score that is the rounded average of the four sub-scores.

AP Exams: Offered every May, these tests are available for any student that has completed a corresponding Advanced Placement course or feels that they have strong knowledge of the subject matter. Depending on the university, credit may be awarded to a student that does well enough on the AP exam. AP exams are scored on a 1 (low) to 5 (high) basis. Most colleges require a score of 3 or above before they will grant credit in a subject.

Class Rank: A numerical rating of a student based on a comparison with the academic performance of their classmates. Downingtown does NOT release class rank.

Common Application: The Common Application is accepted by many colleges and was originally designed so that students could apply to multiple schools with one original copy. Although the university may use the Common Application, there may also be supplemental forms required by the individual school. Be sure to check on the university’s website for requirements process.

Deferred: A student may be deferred after applying for Early Action or Early Decision when the college has not decided on their admission. The student is moved to the regular application pool and is no longer bound by any Early Decision agreements.

Dual Enrollment: Programs allow students to be enrolled in two separate, academically related institutions. Generally, it refers to high school students taking college or university courses and simultaneously receiving high school and college credit.

Early Action: Due to volume, some colleges are going to an “Early Action” process. This means that if a student applies by an established early deadline, early notification is promised to the student. The student is under no obligation to attend this university even if acceptance is granted.

Early Admission: In an exceptional case, some colleges will admit a very talented student prior to the completion of the senior year of high school.

Early Decision: The Early Decision process is designed for an exceptional student that is definite about his or her college choice. Early decision candidates must meet an early deadline determined by the college and must sign a binding agreement to withdraw all other applications if accepted and enroll at this college.
FAFSA: The Free Application for Federal Student Aid determines a family’s eligibility for various loans, grants and some scholarships.

GPA: Grade Point Average. This is a numerical average for all of your grades by year and throughout high school.

Naviance: A college research database that is subscribed to by Downingtown Area School District.

NCAA: National Collegiate Athletic Association is the governing body for many college athletic programs

NCAA Eligibility Center: The branch of the NCAA that ensures all prospective Division I and II college athletes meet certain criteria. Students must register at www.eligibilitycenter.org

PROFILE: A financial aid form used by some colleges

PSAT: The PSAT is given each October and is available to sophomores and juniors. This test is generally thought of as a preparation for the SAT Reasoning Test. This test may be an indicator of your future performance on the SAT Reasoning Test and may provide information on what areas need to be worked on before the next test date. Students that perform very well on this exam may later be invited to participate in the National Merit Scholarship Competition. With that, these scores are not shared with colleges for purposes of admission.

Regular Decision: The most common admission plan for students. Students apply before the latest date allowed by the college. This date can vary from November through March.

Rolling Admission: In a rolling admission situation, as soon as the file is completed, the university will review the application and send decisions. Applications will continue to be accepted as long as space remains available. An advantage to rolling admission schools is that the decision period is very short.

School Code: 391341-East

391033-West

Score Choice: A testing feature for SATs or ACTs where students only report certain test date scores to their colleges.

Secondary School Report: The Secondary School Report is a form that may be required for admission to a college. This requirement will be listed in the application process to that particular college. There may be a form specific to the college that needs to be filled out by your counselor. This form must be attached to your transcript request form in order to be filed. The form may also be listed on the college’s website as a Supplemental Form.
**SAT Reasoning Test:** The SAT Reasoning Test is typically taken during the junior or senior year and scores may be reported to colleges as a requirement for admission. This test is similar to the PSAT in that the test consists of two to three multiple-choice sections: Critical Reading, Mathematics and an optional Writing section. The Reading and Math sections are scored on a 200-800 point basis for a possible total score of 1600. To submit scores to colleges, follow the prompts within your Collegeboard account during registration or at any time after testing.

**SAT Subject Tests:** The SAT Subject Tests are one-hour subject specific tests chosen by the student. While most colleges do not require SAT Subject Tests, some may require as many as three. If you do choose to take these exams, choose an exam date that is most advantageous just after completing a course related to the test subject. Each Subject Test is scored on a 200-800 point basis.

**Wait List:** A list of regular decision applicants who, although qualified for admission, are placed “on hold”. Wait list candidates are usually given the opportunity to decide whether or not they wish to wait for a final decision, which usually occurs over several weeks. Wait lists are usually maintained for the shortest possible period.