

You Should Say... **YES 2 COLLEGE!**

8<sup>th</sup> Annual Workshop: May 21, 2016

The college application process can be a tough journey, but one with fruitful results. Luckily, it can be made less difficult with focus, organization and a little help from resources easily available to you. Here are a couple of easy steps to follow (the information is relevant to everyone, but are split up into grades to make it easier):

**1. Freshmen:**

- a. Protect your GPA – Work to your potential! Your GPA is a large part of your admission’s decision.
- b. Find activities that you would like to be involved in for all four years and can be passionate about.
- c. Start thinking about what AP tests you want to take and which ones your school offers. AP tests allow you to get college credit (allowing you to skip to higher level classes or finish prerequisites in college). Decide when you want to take these AP tests (in your freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior years). It is best if you try to spread out your AP tests over your four years and remain balanced.

**2. Sophomores:**

- a. Take SAT Subject Tests as you go along (e.g. take SAT II Chemistry right after you take a Chemistry Class).
  - i. SAT Subject Tests are the only national admission tests that measure students' knowledge and skills in particular subject areas, and their ability to apply that knowledge. They are closely linked to the high school curriculum and have a proven track record of providing colleges with a highly **reliable, objective assessment of student readiness for college-level work**. The SAT Subject Tests give students an additional opportunity to distinguish themselves and showcase their skills in a particular subject area.
  - ii. TAKE AS MANY AS YOU CAN. Ideally, and taking into account your workload, this should be at the very least two, and there are a couple of schools that require three. This is your best way to show your talent in specific subject areas:

- |                           |                                     |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Literature             | 12. German with Listening           |
| 2. Chinese with Listening | 13. Japanese with Listening         |
| 3. French                 | 14. Korean with Listening           |
| 4. German                 | 15. Spanish with Listening          |
| 5. Modern Hebrew          | 16. Mathematics Level 1             |
| 6. Italian                | 17. Mathematics Level 2 ← TAKE THIS |
| 7. Latin                  | ONE.                                |
| 8. Spanish                | 18. Biology E/M                     |
| 9. United States History  | 19. Chemistry                       |
| 10. World History         | 20. Physics                         |
| 11. French with Listening |                                     |

- b. Start looking at what colleges you want to apply to. Check them out. Visit them. There are over 3000 colleges and universities, so you should be able to find a “right fit”. But also, make sure that when you apply, you will be able to show the college that you are truly interested in them.

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### 3. Juniors:

- a. PSAT and SAT/ACT (expanded upon later)
  - i. **PSAT:** Do not just treat it as the “Practice SAT.” It is an opportunity to earn a scholarship as well as an important factor in college applications.
  - ii. **SAT registration and information:** [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)
  - iii. **ACT registration and information:** [www.ACT.org](http://www.ACT.org)
    - a. Good books to get from the library in that case: *The Official SAT Study Guide* (Publisher: College Board), *Kaplan*, *Princeton Review* and *Barrons Study Guides*
  - iv. **SAT:** Tests skill levels in math, vocabulary, and reading comprehension of people planning to attend college.
  - v. **ACT:** Tests skill levels in English, math, reading, and science of those planning to attend college. An optional Writing test is also available.
- b. End of the year: Start thinking about which teachers would be the best to write your recommendations.

### 4. The Summer Between Junior Year and Senior Year

- a. Create your Common Application account: <http://www.commonapp.org> - JULY 1
- b. Write up your list of colleges and keep a limit for yourself.
- c. Find out the testing requirements for each college and make sure you meet them or make plans to meet them.
  - i. Check out **College Confidential** - [www.collegeconfidential.com](http://www.collegeconfidential.com): Excellent chat room to learn about ALL aspects of college from other parents and students. You can even use it after you have applied to college to get a ballpark estimate of when you should be hearing back from colleges as well as finding out what types of students are getting into what types of schools.

### 5. Seniors

- a. *Recommendations:* Ask early and be appreciative. The teachers are doing YOU a favor and they are doing it on their own time. It’s best if you can ask a junior year teacher because they would have known you for a whole year or a senior year teacher who you have had in earlier years.
- b. *Last Minute Testing:* Finish your testing in October or November at the latest, because your main priority should be college applications.
- c. *APPLICATIONS:* Do not procrastinate, and ask your friends, family and counselors to possibly edit your essays. You should have multiple drafts.
  - i. **PRIVATE COLLEGES:** A lot of private colleges are on the Common Application
  - ii. **UC SYSTEM:** Make sure to submit early because the server generally crashes the day applications are due, causing many problems for applicants.

### ATHLETES:

The site for you is [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org).

- Contact coaches early if you hope to be recruited by colleges.
- Prepare a résumé to send to them when you email them.
- Request that your test scores be sent to the NCAA – 9999 code after filling out the NCAA Clearinghouse Eligibility Student Release Form

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### FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

There are many opportunities to help pay for college even in our local community. Ask your school counselors for a printout of scholarships and check [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com). Once you put in your information, it will generate a list of scholarships appropriate to you.

There are also many colleges who offer full rides. To see the scholarships offered by schools, visit **MeritAid.com**.

With scholarships, the best thing to do is to start early. Kay Lewis, director of financial aid and scholarships at the University of Washington says, “For that first year [of college], do the research ahead of time and be ready.” You can ease the process by putting together a portfolio of materials that you can use later on. This portfolio should include letters of recommendation, transcripts-in-progress, and a personal statement about four-year goals for college. Do not be afraid to use parts of essays that you have previously written or if you are applying for scholarships after college applications, you can use some of the material from those essays.

In terms of financial aid, fill out the FAFSA form (look under resources for the two websites). You must also create your CSS Profile. Colleges do not want cost to be an issue for you to attend, so they will give you the best possible financial aid package. If you find it is not sufficient after you are given admission and your financial aid package, you can appeal by writing to the school.

#### Resources:

1. <http://www.ed.gov/students/prep/college/edpicks.jhtml?src=ln>: Government resource for education
2. [http://www.college.gov/wps/portal/college?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/college/college/parents/parents](http://www.college.gov/wps/portal/college?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/college/college/parents/parents): Excellent resource for all college related by the government. It is also available in Spanish
3. <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/home>: Information about AP testing
4. [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) : SAT site and one of the best sites for all kind of college related information
5. [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) : ACT test site
6. <https://www.khanacademy.org>: KhanAcademy is partnering with CollegeBoard to bring SAT information to the public (NEW SAT help will be found here)
7. [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com): Information on scholarships matching your profile
8. <http://www.scholarships.com>: Allows students to create a profile online and matches them to scholarships, but is also aiming to combine these services with opportunities for colleges to recruit students based on the information they provide
9. <https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/default.aspx> : Many colleges use this common application process for whole or part of their admission process.
10. <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>: Financial Aid FAFSA – Most important site for financial aid info
11. <http://www.finaid.org/>: More information on finances with advice articles, cost calculators, and other tools
12. <http://www.scholarshipamerica.org>: Organization that collects and distributes awards for scholarships across US
13. <http://www.scholarshipjunkies.com>: Social-venture business that provides insider perspective on recent scholarship recipients
14. <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/undergraduate.html>: UC system undergrad admission Information
15. <http://www.stanford.edu/admission/>: Stanford is all online application process. So become familiar with their site and all the friendly information.

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16. <http://www.cccco.edu/>: Information on California community colleges
17. <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/essay-skills/108.html>: Many colleges will require that you write original essays as part of their application process – This page gives you a general overview
18. <http://www.sparknotes.com/testprep/sat2/>: Spark notes gives you information on preparing for SAT subject tests which are required by some institutions.
19. [http://www.csumentor.edu/planning/high\\_school/gpa\\_calculator.asp](http://www.csumentor.edu/planning/high_school/gpa_calculator.asp): GPA calculator and this is a site maintained by California State University system which also provides other useful information about applying for college
20. <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/high-school/113.html>: Colleges care about extracurricular activities
21. <http://www.collegesportsscholarships.com/>: For sports related information

### Useful College Guides:

1. *College Handbook* (Published by: The College Board)
2. *The Fiske Guide to Colleges* (Author: Edward Fiske Published by: Times Books)
3. *The Insider's Guide to the Colleges* (Published by: The Yale Daily News [Yale's Daily Newspaper])
4. *Index of Majors and Graduate Degrees* (Published by: The College Board)
5. *Don't Miss Out: The Ambitious Student's Guide to Financial Aid* (Author: Leider Published by: Octameron)
6. *Guide to College Visits* (Published by: Princeton Review)
7. *Sports Scholarships & College Athletic Programs* (Published by: Peterson's)
8. *The Official SAT Study Guide* (Published by: College Board)

## MORE ABOUT THE SAT AND ACT:

### SAT

College Board's SAT Preparation Center (now partnering with Khan Academy) offers practice questions and a test to reinforce your test-taking skills and help you be more comfortable when you take the SAT. This practice test will give you a good idea of what to expect on the actual test. On their site you can:

- Download and print an official SAT practice test.
- Receive a score and skills reports.
- Review explanations of answers to test questions.
- Review student-written essays with score explanations

Colleges use the SAT\* to measure verbal and mathematical reasoning abilities and to assess an applicant's readiness for college. It is a three-hour (50 minutes extra for the essay section) exam divided into three sections: Math, Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, and Essay (optional). Check with whatever colleges you're applying to check if you need to take the

### ACT

Preparing for Exams

Practice Test: Visit [ACTstudent.org](http://ACTstudent.org) to access sample tests. While taking the sample test, click on your answers to find out if you are correct. Explanations are given for each question.

The ACT is a standardized college entrance examination that measures knowledge and skills through multiple-choice questions covering the following:

- English
- Mathematics
- Reading
- Science reasoning

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- Writing (optional) – Opt for writing

You receive 12 separate scores:

- One composite
- Four subject scores
- Seven sub-scores

The composite, or scaled, score is the most important. Its range is 1–36. Nearly half of test takers receive scores between 17 and 23.

The ACT reports three additional scores to students who take the ACT Writing Test:

- Writing Test score (2–12)
- English/Writing score (1–36)
- Comments about your writing

### Test Day Tips

Be prepared: The night before the test, gather everything you'll need:

- Admission ticket
- Valid form of photo identification
- Several No. 2 pencils
- Calculator with fresh batteries
- Watch that does not beep
- High-energy snack

Don't cram: The best thing to do the evening before the test is to get a good night's sleep. Get into test mode: calm, rested, confident, and ready.

Dress in layers: Be prepared for extreme temperatures. You must be comfortable to perform at your best.

Don't spend too much time on one question: Each question is worth the same score. If a question is confusing or too time-consuming, move to the next question. You can always come back to harder questions, if time permits.

Guess aggressively: If you don't know an answer, eliminate the choices you know are wrong then make an educated guess from the remaining options.

**COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAY TIPS: A college application essay will not make your application, but it can be the deciding factor of they are debating whether or not to offer you admission to their university.**

There are three steps:

#### BRAINSTORM (Outline)

- Ask yourself, "What's MY story?" Make sure to address the question of "Why?"
- Choose something interesting but write your essay like a mirror – allow it to reflect your true self
- Reveal experiences related to your intended field or major
- Do not try to make yourself sound like someone you are not. There is only ONE of you in the world and show that you are incredible just the way you are.
- Write about a time when you experienced CHANGE and reflect on it

#### WRITE

- Make it a pleasure to read: short sentences without fluff
- Your opening is very important. OPEN CLEARLY. They will read thousands of applications, so make your essay stand out.

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- Make it informal and conversational, as if you are talking to them, but include descriptive language
- Someone always told me, “Do not tell me. SHOW me.”

### EDIT

-This is pretty self-explanatory. You should have drafts and drafts of your essays. You’ll be amazed how much of a difference editing can make.

Sample essay questions:

UC System: (These are from the admission for entrance in Fall 2011 application)

*#1 Describe the world you come from – for example, your family, community or school – and how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.*

*#2 Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution or experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?*

### **College Interview Tips:**

Some of the questions to ask yourself are:

1. Will the interviewer be a member of the admission’s committee, an alumni representative, a professor or an enrolled student?
2. Is there a definite format, or is it an informal interview? (How should you dress for it? If you are not sure, go with a business casual)
3. Is the interview an evaluative one or an informational interview? If it is evaluative, how will you be rated, and what criteria are used?
  - a. *Informational:* Use this experience to gain information beyond what is presented online and in catalogs. Ask clarifying points to understand the college’s special qualities.
  - b. *Evaluative:* If the interview is just recommended, still take the opportunity! It is a great opportunity for the college to see another, more personal side of you. These interviews are usually written up in a report and assigned a rating. They want to gauge your personal maturity and intellectual curiosity. They want to add a personal living dimension to the student’s application file.

During the actual interview:

1. Arrive 15 minutes early. You do not want to keep your interviewer waiting.
2. Make sure you are able to answer the question “Why are you applying to this college?”! It is extremely important and will always be asked.
3. Follow-up with the interviewer after the interview to say thank you for their time.

GOOD LUCK!

Sincerely,  
Manu Prakasam

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### **Questionnaire (things to keep in mind when selecting what colleges you want to apply to):**

#### Self-Assessment

1. Do you learn best in large or small classes?
2. Who are your friends? Do you want your relationships in college to be similar or different?
3. Do you prefer to be at the top of the class, or do you need to be with students who excel in order to be challenged?
4. Would you do anything differently if you could relive your high school years?
5. If you were to write your own recommendation, what would you like the colleges to know? What are your strengths?
6. Describe your “dream” schools (college).
7. What do your parents and friends expect of you? How have these expectations influenced you?
8. What are you expecting from college? (From independence, to academics, monetary opportunities, etc.)

#### College Criteria

1. Geographical location (how far are you willing to travel)
2. What kind of geographical factors (beach, cold weather, warm weather, urban, etc.)
3. Size
4. Type (public, private, religious, etc.)
5. Mission (liberal arts, technical institutes)
6. Campus Life
7. Extracurriculars (Dance troupe, acapella clubs, etc.)
8. What is your intended major (if you know)