



A Parent's Resource Guide to College

Madison High School

Where to Start:

Check out these websites as a way to start your preparation and planning for college.

College for Texans- <http://www.collegefortexans.com/>

(At the home page, click whether you want English or Spanish to "enter" the site.)

University Search:

College Opportunities Online Locator- <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool/index.aspx>

See and compare profiles of universities across the nation.

Princeton Review- <http://www.princetonreview.com/>

Offers invaluable resources covering topics such as:

- **Exploring Schools and Careers**
Counselor-O-Matic is an advanced search engine that combines your academic and extracurricular history with your preferences to help you find the right college.
- **Improving Scores and Skills**
SAT, SAT Subject Tests, PSAT, ACT, AP and Academic Tutoring
- **Scholarships and Aid**
Scholarship search and FAFSA strategies

U.S. News and World Report-

http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/tools/brief/majors_search_brief.php

Search for colleges by majors.

ACT®- <http://www.act.org/>

Providing educational and career planning for students and teachers at every level.

The College Board- <http://www.collegeboard.com/>

Offers resources for both parents and students

- **College Board Tests**
SAT®, PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test®, AP®, CLEP®
- **Plan for College**
Time management study tips, Writing a college paper, Questions to ask a high school counselor.
- **Find a College**
Campus life (rural, urban, suburban), Planning college visits, College search tool
- **Apply to College**
Application FAQ's, College application requirements
- **Pay for College**
Scholarship search, Financing options

knowhow2go.org- <http://www.knowhow2go.org/>

A website to help you navigate the road the college, helping you with time-lines and resources.

Application Form

Public universities and colleges in Texas accept the Texas Common Application.

<http://www.applytexas.org/>

Free Online Test Prep Websites

TAKS Study Guide-

<http://perspective.pearsonaccess.com/perspective/appmanager/tx/family/>

This site provides a wide range of TAKS study resources, both in English and Spanish.

TOPCAT- <http://testprep.collegefortexans.com/>

The Texas Online Preparation for College Admissions Test (TOPCAT) is available for all students in preparation for SAT/PSAT/ACT. You can find more information at:

<http://testprep.collegefortexans.com>

SAT/ACT

- <http://testprep.collegefortexans.com/> - SAT, ACT
- www.march2success.com - SAT, ACT
- <http://www.actstudent.org/pdf/preparing.pdf> - Practice test and scoring
- <http://www.actstudent.org/sampletest/index.html> - Sample ACT test
- <http://number2.com/> - SAT, ACT
- <http://www.petersons.com/testprep/tips.asp?id=400&sponsor=1&path=ug.pft.sat> - SAT
- http://www.petersons.com/testprep/practice_test.asp?id=354&sponsor=1&path=ug.pft.act&testname=actfreepractice&sitelicense_key=155&referer_type=SL - ACT

COMPASS

- <http://www.act.org/compass/sample/index.html>

THEA

- <http://www.thea.nesinc.com/practice.htm>

SAT/ACT OPTIONAL

Fair Test- <http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional>

National Center for Fair and Open Testing provides a list of colleges and universities that de-emphasize the use of SAT or ACT tests for admissions.

HIGH SCHOOL: 9th GRADE

- Take challenging classes in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, a foreign language, government, civics, economics, and the arts.
- Get to know your career counselor or guidance counselor as well as other college resources available in your school.
- Talk to adults in a variety of professions to determine what they like and dislike about their jobs and what kind of education is needed for each kind of job.
- Look into volunteer opportunities to explore interests.
- Keep your grades up. This is the first thing that colleges will be looking at to evaluate academic performance.
- Volunteer in the community. A great place to start is your family church. Join school clubs and other civic organizations. Leadership is a defining quality that will be important throughout your entire life.
- Begin to save for college.

HIGH SCHOOL: 10th GRADE

- Take challenging classes in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, a foreign language, government, civics, economics, and the arts.
- Talk to adults in a variety of professions to determine what they like and dislike about their jobs and what kind of education is needed for each kind of job.
- Again, keep those grades up they are the greatest link to your college admission.
- Become involved in school- or community-based extracurricular (before or after school) activities that interest you and/or enable you to explore career interests.
- Involve yourself in activities where you can be a leader and where you can volunteer for the benefit of your community.
- Meet with your career counselor or guidance counselor to discuss colleges and their requirements.
- Take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT). You must register early. If you have difficulty paying the registration fee, see your guidance counselor about getting a fee waiver.
- Take advantage of opportunities to visit colleges and talk to students.
- Continue to save for college.

HIGH SCHOOL: 11th GRADE

- Take challenging classes in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, a foreign language, government, civics, economics and the arts.
- Meet with your career or guidance counselor to discuss colleges and their requirements.
- Continue involvement in school- or community-based extracurricular activities.
- Decide which colleges most interest you. Contact them to request information and an application for admission.
- Assemble all of your accomplishments and achievements into one folder so that they are easily accessible when applying for scholarships.
- Ask about special admissions requirements, financial aid and deadlines.
- Talk to college representatives at college fairs.
- Visit colleges and talk to students.
- Consider people to ask for recommendations – teachers, counselors, employers, etc.
- Investigate the availability of financial aid from federal, state, local, and private sources. Talk to your guidance counselor for more information.
- Investigate the availability of scholarships provided by organizations such as corporations, labor unions, professional associations, religious organizations, and credit unions.
- If applicable, go to the library and look for directories of scholarships for women, minorities, and disabled students.
- Register for and take the SAT I, the ACT, SAT II Subject Tests or any other exams required for admission to the colleges you might want to attend. If you have difficulty paying the registration fee, see your guidance counselor about getting a fee waiver.
- Continue to save for college.

HIGH SCHOOL: 12th GRADE

- Take challenging classes in English, mathematics, science, history, geography, a foreign language, government, civics, economics, the arts, and advanced technologies.
- Meet with your counselor early in the year to discuss your plans.
- Beginning on January 1, you can begin to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It is best to do so as soon as possible after January 1. Many schools award financial aid on a first come, first serve basis. You will need your family's financial records such as tax information, Social Security, veteran payments, current bank statements, investment information and business or farm records. The FAFSA is located at www.fafsa.ed.gov. You should receive a SAR (Student Aid Report) four to six weeks after submitting the FAFSA.
- Narrow down your list of schools. Begin inquiring about the application process for each school you are seriously considering.
- If you were not satisfied with your scores, retake the SAT and the ACT.
- Keep photocopies of all application material you submit to include in scholarship applications.
- Write colleges to request information and applications for admission. Ask about financial aid, admissions requirements, and deadlines.
- If possible, visit the colleges that most interest you.
- Register for and take the SAT I, ACT Assessment, SAT II Subject Tests or any other exams required for admission to the colleges to which you are applying. If you have difficulty paying the registration fee, see your guidance counselor about getting a fee waiver.
- Prepare your application carefully. Follow the instructions, and **PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO DEADLINES!** Be sure to ask your counselor and teachers at least two weeks before your application deadlines to submit the necessary documents to colleges (your transcript, letters of recommendation, etc.)
- Towards the end of your senior year decide which college you will be attending, send a letter to the colleges you were once considering to inform them you will not be attending.
- Begin arranging for housing by sending in the housing forms to the school you have chosen.
- In April, May or June of your senior year, have your final grade transcripts sent to your college.

How is College Different from High School?

Personal Freedom in High School	Personal Freedom in College
High School is <i>mandatory</i> and <i>free</i> (unless you choose other options).	College is <i>voluntary</i> and <i>expensive</i> .
Your time is usually structured by others.	You manage your own time.
You need permission to participate in extracurricular activities.	You must decide whether to participate in extracurricular activities. (Hint: Choose wisely in the first semester and add later.
You need money for special purchases or events.	You need money to meet basic necessities.
You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities.	You will be faced with a large number of moral and ethical decisions you have not had to face previously. <u>You must balance your responsibilities and set priorities.</u>
Guiding principle: You will usually be told what your responsibilities are and corrected if your behavior is out of line.	Guiding principle: You're old enough to take responsibility for what you do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of your actions.

High School Classes	College Classes
Each day you proceed from one class directly to another.	You often have hours between classes; class times vary throughout the day and evening.
You spend 6 hours each day – 30 hours a week – in class.	You spend 12 to 16 hours each week in class.
The school year is 36 weeks long; some classes extend over both semesters and some do not.	The academic year is divided into two separate 15-week semesters, plus a week after each semester for exams (not including summer school).
Most of your classes are arranged for you.	You arrange your own schedule in consultation with your academic adviser. Schedules tend to look lighter than they really are.
Teachers carefully monitor class attendance.	Professors may not formally take roll, but they are still likely to know whether or not you attend.
Classes generally have no more than 35 students.	Classes may number 100 students or more.
You are provided with textbooks at little or no expense.	You need to budget substantial funds for textbooks, which will usually cost more than \$200 each semester.
You are not responsible for knowing what it takes to graduate.	Graduation requirements are complex, and differ for different majors and sometimes different years. You are expected to know those that apply to you.

High School Teachers	College Professors
Teachers check your completed homework.	Professors may not always check completed homework, but they will assume you can perform the same tasks on tests.
Teachers remind you of your incomplete work.	Professors may not remind you of incomplete work.
Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance.	Professors are usually open and helpful, but most expect you to initiate contact if you need assistance.
Teachers are often available for conversation before, during, or after class.	Professors expect and want you to attend their scheduled office hours.
Teachers have been trained in teaching methods to assist in imparting knowledge to students.	Professors have been trained as experts in their particular areas of research.
Teachers provide you with information you missed when you were absent.	Professors expect you to get from classmates any notes from classes you missed.
Teachers present material to help you understand the material in the textbook.	Professors may not follow the textbook. Instead, to amplify the text, they may give illustrations, provide background information, or discuss research about the topic you are studying. Or they may expect you to relate the classes to the textbook readings.
Teachers often write information on the board to be copied in your notes.	Professors may lecture nonstop, expecting you to identify the important points in your notes. When professors write on the board, it may be to amplify the lecture, not to summarize it. Good notes are a must.
Teachers often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates.	Professors expect you to read, save, and consult the course syllabus (outline); the syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of you, when it is due, and how you will be graded.

Studying in High School	Studying in College
You may study outside of class as little as 0 to 2 hours a week, and this may be mostly last-minute test preparation.	You may need to study at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class for each hour in class.
You often need to read or hear presentations only once to learn all you need to learn about them.	You need to review class notes and text material regularly.
You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught in class.	You are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing, which may or may not be directly addressed in class.
Guiding principle: You will usually be told in class what you needed to learn from assigned readings.	Guiding principle: It's up to you to read and understand the assigned material; lectures and assignments proceed from the assumption that you've already done so.

Tests in High School	Tests in College
Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.	Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material. You, not the professor, need to organize the material to prepare for the test. A particular course may have only 2 or 3 tests in a semester.
Makeup tests are often available.	Makeup tests are seldom an option; if they are, you need to request them.
Teachers frequently rearrange tests to avoid conflict with school events.	Professors in different courses usually schedule tests without regard to the demands of other courses or outside activities.
Teachers frequently conduct review sessions, pointing out the most important concepts.	Professors rarely offer review sessions, and when they do, they expect you to be an active participant, one who comes prepared with questions.
Mastery is usually seen as the ability to reproduce what you were taught in the form in which it was presented to you, or to solve the kinds of problems you were shown to solve.	Mastery is often seen as the ability to apply what you've learned to new situations or to solve new kinds of problems.

Grades in High School	Grades in College
Grades are given for most assigned work.	Grades may not be provided for all assigned work.
Consistently good homework grades may help raise your overall grade when test grades are low.	Grades on tests and major papers usually provide most of the course grade.
Extra credit projects are often available to help you raise your grade.	Extra credit projects, generally speaking, be used to raise a grade in a college course.
Initial test grades, especially when they are low, may not have an adverse effect on your final grade.	Watch out for your first tests. They are usually wake-up calls to let you know what is expected—but they also may account for a substantial part of your course grade. You may be shocked when you get your grades. If you receive notice of low grades (Deficiency Report), see your academic adviser.
You may graduate as long as you have passed all required courses with a grade of D or higher.	You may graduate only if your average in classes meets the departmental standard—typically a 2.0 or C.
Guiding principle: <i>Effort counts</i> . Courses are usually structured to reward a good-faith effort.	Guiding principle: <i>Results count</i> . Though good-faith effort is important in regard to the professor's willingness to help you <i>achieve</i> good results, it will not <i>substitute</i> for results in the grading process.

Source: Old Dominion University with funding from the Virginia Department of Education
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and faculty from the Provost's Commission on
Teaching and Learning and the English Department's First-Year Writing Program.
Further adaptations made by the Office of Academic Support Programs, Baylor University.

General Resources:

www.collegeboard.com – A site dedicated to connecting students and parents to college opportunities and success.

www.collegeispossible.com – A site dedicated to assisting parents and students find and pay for the college that's right for them. (The Coalition of America's Colleges and Universities)

www.collegesavings.com – A site dedicated to helping determine how much you'll need to save for college as well as numerous alternative saving approaches. (College Savings Bank)

www.collegesense.com – This is a good resource for everyone concerned with financing the high cost of college. (New York Life and School Capital, LLC)

www.eduprep.com – All the issues surrounding college admission and finances are covered in this site. (EduPrep is an LLC)

www.familyeducation.com – This site offers a wide range of advice on financial situations as well as college planning and financing. In addition, parents can find advice on all the major issues surrounding children and the challenges they face. (Family Education Network, Inc.)

www.fastweb.com – This is an extensive site containing information on scholarships, college selection and financial aid advice.

www.finaid.org – This is another extensive source of financial aid information.

www.simpletuition.com/home - This site provides information for comparing student loans.

U.S. News and World Report- <http://www.usnews.com/sections/business/paying-for-college/index.html> - Consumer information about paying for college.

Financial Aid:

FAFSA (Federal Application For Free Student Aid) www.fafsa.ed.gov

Get your PIN for the FAFSA www.pin.ed.gov

Get estimates of your possible financial aid eligibility:

- <http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov/> (any university or college)
- <http://www.texascollegemoney.org/> (University of Texas)

FAFSA Forecaster: - using the FAFSA Forecaster, you and your family will receive an early estimate of eligibility for federal student aid.

Early Award Calculator - this early award calculator will give you a realistic estimate of your financial aid package at any University of Texas campus you are interested in attending.

Opportunities for Early College Credit

Advanced Placement (AP)

For complete information, visit <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/>.

The Advanced Placement Program® is a cooperative educational endeavor between secondary schools and colleges and universities. Since its inception in 1955, the Program has provided motivated high school students with the opportunity to take college-level courses in a high school setting. Students who participate in the Program not only gain college-level skills, but in many cases they also earn college credit while they are still in high school. AP courses are taught by high school teachers who follow course guidelines developed and published by the College Board.

The AP Program offers 34 courses in 19 subject areas. At the conclusion of an AP course, students have the opportunity to take the corresponding AP Exam. AP Exams are two- to three-hour exams, given in May, made up of multiple-choice and free-response (essay) questions. They are graded on a scale of 1 to 5, with 3 considered a "qualifying" score. There is an \$82 exam fee. If your child is in financial need, you or your child may want to contact your child's AP Coordinator about a fee reduction. Your child's AP teacher or AP Coordinator knows when in May the AP Exam will be offered at school and how to register for it.

How Does My Child Get into an AP Course?

First, your child should discuss their interest with the teacher of the AP course at school, their counselor, or with the AP coordinator. Your child and their counselor should decide together whether they could handle the work. You may also want to discuss the course with your child to help in making the decision.

International Baccalaureate (IB) Program

For complete information, visit <http://www.ibo.org/ibo/index.cfm>.

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), founded in 1968, is a recognized leader in the field of international education. It is a non-profit, mission-driven foundation that works with 1,597 schools (as of November 2005) to develop and offer three challenging programs in 122 countries to approximately 200,000 students.

It is a comprehensive curriculum that responds to the need for greater challenge for gifted high school students. Successful completion of the course work and examinations at the junior/senior level may earn students credit or advanced placement at colleges and universities around the world. The curriculum is designed to provide a broad liberal arts experience for the college bound student. Each student will become proficient in language and mathematics studies, the two most important tools of communication and analysis, and participate in an in-depth exploration of the study of human behavior and the process of educational inquiry. Please see your high school counselor to determine if your school participates in the IB program.

Concurrent Enrollment/Dual Credit

Concurrent enrollment refers to a student who is enrolled in high school and college at the same time (concurrently). Dual credit is defined as a student who is concurrently enrolled and receives both high school and college credit for the same class. The credit awarded for meeting high school graduation requirements is determined by each high school independently. Typically additional paperwork is required of the student, including school and parent approval to ensure proper credit.

Students interested should be performing at an A/B level in their recommended high school curriculum (college preparatory coursework), should possess advanced academic skills, and should demonstrate the maturity level needed to be successful in college-level coursework. Students must also meet the Texas Success Initiative requirements or provide proof of exemption. Concurrent enrollment is intended for students who desire to get a head start on their college curriculum.

Students may register for courses held at college campuses or take those courses offered at their individual high school site. For courses taught at the college, some sections are specifically designated as dual credit. These sections are usually limited to high school students and are typically not open for enrollment by other college students until late registration. All classes arranged at the high school site follow the college schedule. Classes run according to college guidelines and specifications.

The most common course offerings include English Composition and Rhetoric, United States History I and II, United States Government I and II, and Microeconomics. Students may participate in any course approved through their high school but are encouraged to take advantage of those sections specifically designated as dual credit.

Students who have registered are required to pay their tuition and fees by the deadline posted in the college Schedule of Classes. In addition to paying tuition and fees, students are responsible for purchasing the required course materials.

CLEP

The College-Level Examination Program® or CLEP provides students of any age with the opportunity to demonstrate college-level achievement through a program of exams in undergraduate college courses. There are 2,900 colleges that grant credit and/or advanced standing for CLEP exams.

CLEP examinations cover material taught in courses that most students take as requirements in the first two years of college. A college usually grants the same amount of credit to students earning satisfactory scores on the CLEP examination as it grants to students successfully completing that course.

Many examinations are designed to correspond to one-semester courses; some, however correspond to full-year or two-year courses. Unless stated otherwise in its description, an examination is intended to cover material in a one-semester course.

Each exam is 90 minutes long and consists primarily of multiple-choice questions, with the exception of the English composition essay exam. Some exams do have fill-ins. The cost of each exam is \$55 and is free to military service members.

For a full list of exams, visit <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/exams.html>.

To register for a CLEP and look for testing centers, visit:
<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/clep/reg.html>

To see if your potential college accepts CLEP credit, visit:
http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_clep/searchCLEPColleges.jsp