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October 2014

10th and 11th grade students—
Review test materials & take
PSAT either 10/15 or 10/18

**11th — SAT Reasoning
and Subject Tests**

**25th — ACT and ACT plus
Writing** (register by 9/19 — late
registration 10/3)

Attend area college fairs and
meetings

Meet with college reps visiting
high schools

Seniors - Continue work on
college applications; complete
Early Decision/Early Action
applications

Complete CSS Profile if
required by colleges

Submit “rolling” admissions
applications ASAP

November 2014

**8th—SAT Reasoning and
Subject Exams**
(register by 10/9 - late registration
10/28)

Seniors – File Early Decision/
Early Action applications

Work on remaining college
applications

Register for a PIN at
<https://fafsa.ed.gov> if you'll be
applying for financial aid

Getting the Best Recommendations

Many colleges ask students for letters of recommendation during the application process. The two types of recommendations colleges may request are:

Teacher recommendations. Letters of recommendation from your teachers help colleges learn about you as a student. Teacher recommendations should be written by a teacher who has taught you in 11th or 12th grade in one of these subjects: English, math, science, social science, or a foreign language. Pick teachers who can speak about your academic strengths and your potential to succeed in your future college classes.

School counselor recommendation. A letter of recommendation from your school counselor can help colleges learn about you as a member of your high school community. Don't worry if you don't know your school counselor well; colleges understand that many school counselors don't have time to get to know students personally and will not hold it against you if your counselor cannot write a detailed letter about you.

Colleges may also ask some students for *specialized* letters of recommendations. For instance, a student who is applying for an art or music program may need to ask for a recommendation from an art or music teacher. Athletes may be asked to provide a letter of recommendation from their coach. Students applying for some scholarships may be asked for letters of recommendation from someone familiar with a student's community service activities.

If sending one or two teacher recommendations is good, then sending three, four, or ten must be better, right? *Wrong!* Although some colleges will accept extra letters of recommendation, sending many more teacher recommendations than the

college asks for is neither necessary nor helpful to admissions.

Teachers and school counselors are busy people and don't get paid for writing letters of recommendation for students. Your recommendation writers will try to do the best job possible for you, but you can make their job easier by following these tips:

Know the rules. Most high schools have specific deadlines and procedures for students to follow when requesting letters of recommendation. Individual teachers and counselors may also have their own rules for students asking for recommendations. Colleges can also have specific requirements for letters of recommendation. So, before you ask a teacher or school counselor to write you a recommendation, know what is required by your high school, the teacher and each of your colleges.

Choose teachers wisely. Pick teachers who can write a *positive, personal* recommendation based on their experiences having you as a student in their classroom. If all you've done in a class is sit quietly in the back of the room, the teacher may not have much to say about you, even if you earned an A in the class.

Beat the crowd. Ask your teachers and school counselor to write letters of recommendation for you early in senior year – the end of junior year is even better! Don't wait until later in the fall; by then, teachers and your counselor will be deluged with recommendation requests and may not have enough time to write a strong letter for you.

Allow at least a month. It takes time to write a thoughtful, strong letter of recommendation. Request recommendations *at least a month* in advance of your first application deadline.

(continued p. 3)

Careers in Psychology

Additional Career Paths for Psychology Majors

Sales representative
Advertising agent
Career counselor
Probation & parole officer
Writer
Market research analyst
Social service specialist
Teacher
Attorney
Physician
Dentist
Consultant
Human resources manager
Professor
Principal
Admissions officer
Financial aid officer
Customer service supervisor
Employee relations worker
Retail manager
Substance abuse counselor
Volunteer broker
Law enforcement officer
Hotel manager
Public relations manager
Social worker
Insurance sales agent

Are you fascinated by people? Do you often wonder why people behave as they do? To be a successful psychologist you'll need to be compassionate and empathetic, have a genuine interest in others and be a strong student with good analytical skills. Psychologists are engaged in an ongoing study of the human mind and human behavior. Through their work, psychologists help people deal with life's ups and downs. Some psychologists may also be engaged in research, teaching or in diagnosis and treatment of mental illness.

Psychologists work in a variety of settings, usually determined by their area of specialization. There are so many specialties within this field that psychologists can tailor their careers to their individual interests. *School psychologists* work at schools directly with students and are often engaged in testing and diagnosis of learning problems. The related field of *educational psychology* puts its focus on the learning process. Educational psychologists generally work in a private setting, diagnosing and treating learning disabilities. With the guidance of an educational psychologist, students learn to cope with their learning disabilities and to maximize their academic potential.

Clinical psychologists treat people with emotional, mental, or behavioral problems. Some are engaged in helping their clients adjust to life's difficulties such as illness or loss. *Industrial or organizational psychologists* utilize psychological principles to enhance productivity in the workplace and to help employees gain satisfaction from their jobs. They may be employed by large companies or work as independent consultants.

Developmental psychologists study human development throughout the life cycle. Often, developmental psycholo-

gists specialize in a particular phase of life, focusing on behavioral issues that occur in childhood, in adolescence or in the elderly. *Neuropsychologists* often diagnose and treat individuals with brain injuries while *rehabilitation psychologists* help those affected by illness or accidents. There's even a specialty in *sports psychology* in which practitioners help athletes deal with stress and focus on maximizing performance.

Students interested in many of these fields should plan on majoring in psychology, seeking out a college with a broad selection of courses in that Department. Look for a variety of offerings in the various subspecialties. You'll need a minimum of a bachelor's degree to work in the field of psychology, but a master's degree is preferable and opens more career options, especially in school and organizational psychology. A doctoral degree (Ph.D or Psy.D) is necessary for work in clinical psychology. Internships are sometimes required for licensure.

To get more information about careers in psychology, contact the American Psychological Association at www.apa.org and the National Association of School Psychologists at www.nasponline.org.

A recent study indicates that only about 25% of psychology majors go on to earn an advanced degree in psychology. The 75% who do not often work in a related or seemingly unrelated field that values their understanding of human behavior. It is



important to remember that psychology degrees are applicable to a wide variety of careers. For some ideas, see the list at the far left of this page.

Financial Matters: Net Price Calculators



Much like the price of cars, the sticker price of a college is often not the amount an individual student actually pays. Net price calculators are designed to provide a family with an estimate of what a year at a specific college will actually cost that family. Each college that receives federal funds is required to post a net price calculator for applicants on its website.

The net price of a college represents the amount a family will actually have to pay after scholarships and grants (from federal, state and school sources) are subtracted from the total cost of attendance. Since this calculation disregards loans, the net price is the true price the family pays.

To use the net price calculator, you'll need the parents' and student's latest tax returns and bank and investment statements. For schools offering merit awards, you'll also need to know the student's GPA and test scores. Most good calculators take about 10-15 minutes to complete but nearly half of all colleges use a minimal federal calculator that might not provide an accurate estimate. The more questions the calculator asks, the more accurate you

can expect the results to be. It's sometimes difficult to find the net price calculator on a college's website, but if you Google the college name and net price calculator you should reach the site directly. A new website, www.collegeabacus.org, gathers calculators for numerous colleges on one site. (See article below.)

The net price calculator can help families to discover colleges that will be affordable for them. You can also use the calculators to determine the effect on merit awards of raising SAT or ACT scores or achieving a higher GPA, or to see how family assets might affect your financial aid package. Keep in mind, however, that the net price estimates are not guarantees and actual financial aid awards may differ.

Best Recommendations (continued from p.1)

Be polite. Never demand that a teacher or counselor write a letter of recommendation for you. Always ask politely: *Do you think you could write a positive letter of recommendation for me?* If a teacher declines, don't get upset. Just say thank you and move on to the next teacher on your list of potential recommendation writers.

Ask your recommenders how they prefer to send their letters. Some recommendation writers prefer to submit their recommendations via the Internet whenever possible. Others like to send letters the old fashioned way, through postal mail. When you talk to your teachers or counselor about recommendations, remember to ask what their preferences are. If your school submits all documents electronically (such as through Naviance,) ask your school counselor how recommendations from school employees will be sent.

Provide everything needed. If your recommendations will go by mail, give

your recommenders a hard copy of the recommendation form and an addressed and stamped envelope for each college. If your high school asks students to fill out a questionnaire or "brag sheet" to help recommendation writers, be thorough in your answers and turn it in well before the deadline.

Follow up. Don't be a pest, but do check in with your recommendation writers a few weeks before your college application deadlines to make sure that your recommenders will have everything finished and submitted on time.

Say thank you. Remember, your recommendation writers are doing you a favor. When your recommendations are complete, write a card or letter – not an email – thanking the recommendation writers for their help and support. Finally, everyone likes to know how the story turns out, so keep your recommendation writers informed about your admissions decisions and your final college choice.

CollegeAbacus.org

Finding it difficult to find the net price calculators on the websites of the colleges that interest you? CollegeAbacus is a one-stop, secure search site that allows families to compare the net prices of nearly 4,000 colleges. Developed with a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, CollegeAbacus allows users to enter their financial and demographic data just once and then utilize the net price calculators from a variety of colleges. The process is similar to that of other cost-comparison sites such as Kayak or Expedia, and allows users to compare what the different colleges they are considering are likely to cost their family. You need to be aware, however, that the prices listed are not necessarily what you will actually pay at that college since some of the calculators are more accurate than others. Net price calculators are designed to provide a ball-park estimate of the cost of education at that college and this is valuable information in compiling an affordable college list.



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Conquering Essay Block

You boot up your computer, determined to write your college application essay or work on the supplemental questions asked by so many of the Common App colleges. Instead, you find yourself just staring at the blank screen, searching for inspiration and feeling stuck. When writer's block hits, try these tips for getting unstuck and you'll have those essays done in no time.

Don't aim for perfection. Trying to write the "perfect" essay can discourage you from even getting started. Your first draft is just that: a first draft. Don't worry about crafting a flawless, amazing essay right off the bat. Just get your initial ideas down as quickly as possible. You can polish your essay into perfection later.

Try free-writing. Set the alarm on your cell phone to ring in ten minutes (be sure to turn off text messages and incoming phone calls.) On the top of a computer document, write the topic of your essay. For ten minutes, write down whatever comes into your head about the topic. Don't worry about grammar, punctuation or spelling. Just do a mind-dump on the topic. Can't think of anything? Try writing "I can't think of anything to write" until you can.

After ten minutes, read what you've written and see what jumps out at you as a possible starting point for your essay. Put that at the top of another document and keep writing.

Move. Dance, shoot some hoops, go for a walk. Exercise relaxes the mind, and a relaxed mind helps rev up creative juices. Don't use this, however, as an excuse to procrastinate even more. Give yourself a firm time to get back to work and then stick to it.

Shake it up. If you normally write on your computer, try writing with a pen and paper. Always work in your bedroom? Sit down at the kitchen table or head to the library. Sometimes the best way to beat writer's block is to switch things up so your mind is jogged out of its comfort zone.

Write early in the morning. No one likes to get up early, but research shows that our brains and creativity levels are often freshest right after we wake up. Painful as it may be, try setting your alarm on a weekend morning for the time you normally get up for school and then tackle your essay immediately after you get up. You'll have plenty of time to sleep in once that essay is off your "to do" list.