



# Names & Numbers

The following names and numbers are frequently requested on college applications.

## Santa Catalina School Information

Head of School: Sister Claire Barone

Head of Upper School: Dr. John Murphy

School address: 1500 Mark Thomas Drive, Monterey, CA 93940

School telephone: 831.655.9300

School fax: 831.649.3056

School web site: [santacatalina.org](http://santacatalina.org)

Santa Catalina CEEB/school code: 052045

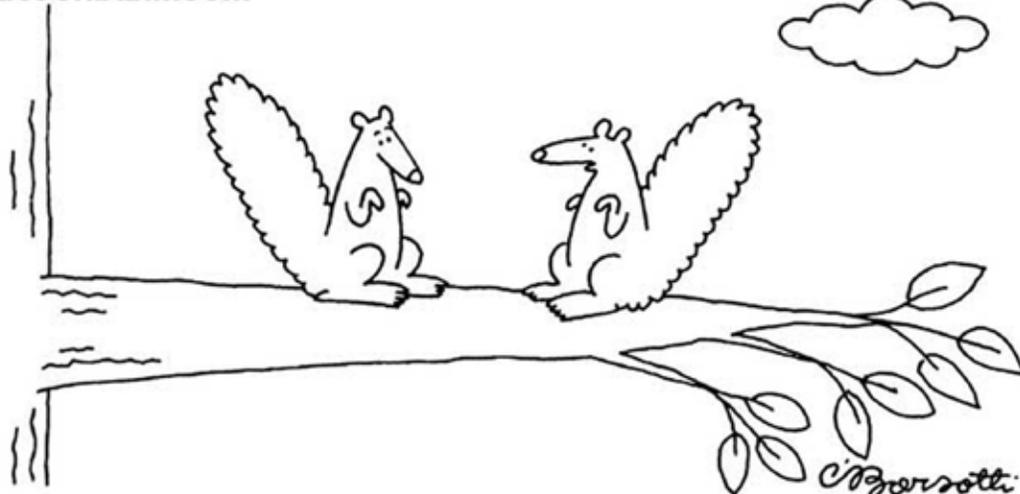
## College Counseling Office Information

Director of College Counseling: Colleen Murray

College Counseling telephone: 831.655.9368

College Counseling e-mail: [colleen.murray@santacatalina.org](mailto:colleen.murray@santacatalina.org)

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*"How will you ever know whether you're a flying squirrel if you don't give it a shot?"*

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# Early College Planning

On the one hand, the be all and end all of a secondary school education is not college admission. The most important goal of sophomore year is to be a good sophomore; the most important concern of juniors should be to be good juniors. On the other hand, the early planning that can be accomplished will make a less anxiety-inducing and more productive process during the senior year.

There are many factors involved in getting into position to be a good candidate at the competitive college level, and many of these benefit from - and indeed cry out for - early planning. A strong senior academic record, for example, is built on the foundation of good course selection and academic achievement in ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. "Late bloomer" is a term which appears often in college recommendations, but the reality at the highest levels of college competition is that there are too many "early bloomers" around to leave much room for the tardy.

Since admission to a competitive college is not simply a matter of grades but also of personal attributes, building a strong extracurricular record should begin early as well, based more on the quality of contribution to activities than on mere quantity.

And since independent colleges, as well as many publics, are getting more and more expensive, starting early to build a strong financial foundation in order to help pay for it all is also a good idea, including savings plans, keeping eyes open for various scholarship opportunities, attending a financial aid information program, etc.

Means by which to get early information on colleges include:

- Attend presentations by any of the dozens of college representatives who visit the school or the Central Coast area each year. A good early bird project might be to sit in on the presentation of a small college and one by a large university to get a sense of the differences. Or go to a regional college fair or a college night at a local high school to ask questions and pick-up materials.
- Take advantage of family trips to other regions of the state or to other parts of the country to take a quick spin through a college campus or two to see what they're all about.
- Check "yes" on the PSATs to the question about giving them permission to refer your name and address to "colleges interested in students like you." This will start anything from a trickle to a flood of often informative mail.
- Surf the Web, which is overflowing with college information sites.

# Calendar of Events

## Sophomore Year

October	Take PSATs for practice.
April	Take PLAN for practice.
May - June	Consider taking SAT Subject Test in any area not likely to be taken again (e.g. Chemistry). Take advantage of any opportunities to begin familiarizing yourself with what's out there in terms of colleges, careers, etc.

## Junior Year

October	Take PSAT/NMSQT for real.
Fall	Attend selected college presentations during free periods.
December	Register for January SAT.
February	Register for March SAT.
March	Register for May SAT or SAT Subject Tests. For the latter, think carefully about which subject tests to take, especially any courses taken only in or up to junior year.
May	Register for June SAT or SAT Subject Tests if desired.
January - April	Attend topical group planning meetings with college counselor. Make individual appointments with college counselor to prepare preliminary college lists. Think about teachers to write recommendations.
Spring/Summer	Write/phone/e-mail colleges to request information. Visit colleges, and schedule interviews where available.

## Senior Year

- Individual meetings with college counselor to refine college lists and get help with any related matters.
- Weekly class meetings with college counselor.
- Attend appropriate college representative presentations.
- Register for and take SAT/Subject Tests/ACT/TOEFL as needed.
- Acquire additional application materials.
- Select teachers to write recommendations and give them the required materials well in advance of deadlines.
- Fill out and give to college counselor all Secondary School Report or Transcript Request forms well in advance of deadlines.
- Complete and submit Early Decision / Early Action application by the deadline.
- Complete and submit University of California / Cal State applications during November.
- Complete and submit regular applications prior to the deadlines.
- Fill out and submit all financial aid forms by the deadlines.
- May 1: Select a college to attend.

"The problem with the future is that it keeps turning into the present."

-Hobbes, *Calvin & Hobbes*

## Glossary of Terms

<b>College</b>	A two or four year institution granting undergraduate degrees in one main area, e.g. a liberal arts or a business college; a division of a university, as in a college of agriculture or of arts and sciences, or as in the undergraduate division of a university (e.g. Harvard College of Harvard University); a generic term meaning institution of higher education.
<b>University</b>	Usually an institution composed of several divisions (often called colleges or schools) granting degrees at several levels: BA, MA, Ph.D. There are institutions that don't fit these exact models, e.g. Boston College is more like a university, Denison University is more like a college.
<b>SAT</b>	The Scholastic Assessment Test, as in SAT (critical reading, math, and writing) and SAT Subject Tests available in many subject areas. SATs are administered by ETS (Educational Testing Service) of the College Board (CEEB).
<b>PSAT</b>	The Preliminary or Practice SATs. The entry for juniors into National Merit competition through the NMSQT (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test).
<b>ACT</b>	A variation of standardized testing, in a certain sense combining SAT and Subject Tests. Accepted by all colleges in place of the SAT and by many in place of Subject Tests as well.
<b>AP</b>	Advanced Placement. Describes a level of course offered as well as the tests themselves by which students receiving a score above a specified level may get credit from the college which they enter.
<b>TOEFL</b>	Test of English as a Foreign Language. The most commonly accepted test of English for students whose first language is not English.
<b>Early Admission</b>	Admission to college after three years of high school.
<b>Early Decision (ED)</b>	Program under which a student commits to attend a college if accepted, in return for early notice.
<b>Early Action (EA)</b>	Similar to ED except that the student is not committed to attend.
<b>Single Choice Early Action (SCEA)</b>	A system used by a handful of colleges wherein students are allowed to apply to only one institution EA. Normally one may apply EA to more than one place.

\*Some colleges will only accept ED/EA candidates or defer them to the regular review process. Other colleges will accept, defer or deny. Any early commitment by the student assumes that sufficient financial aid is awarded.

<b>Rolling Admission</b>	Wherein an institution processes applications and sends decision letters as applications are received and become complete—can sometimes be “first come, first served.”
<b>Application Deadline</b>	Date by which an application must be postmarked or received, depending on policy, and <b>after</b> which application review begins.
<b>Open Admission</b>	Admissions policy granting acceptance to all high school graduates without regard to grades or scores.
<b>Qualification/Eligibility</b>	Admission review process based on specific requirements in which all applicants meeting the minimums are accepted.
<b>Competition</b>	Admission review process under which qualified candidates compete for spaces, the intensity of the competition based on number of applicants and number of spaces.
<b>CEEB/ACT/School Code</b>	An identifying number for all secondary schools, frequently requested during the college application process. For Santa Catalina, the number is <b>052045</b>
<b>Common Application</b>	A standardized application form accepted by over 500 colleges and universities around the country wherein the student fills out one application and submits a copy to each college applied to, rather than the same number of individual applications.
<b>FAFSA</b>	Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Federal financial aid form used in applying for Pell Grants, student loans and federal college-based aid—cannot be filled out before January of the year for which one is applying.
<b>Profile/CSS Profile</b>	Financial aid form administered by College Scholarship Service of College Board and required by many, but by no means all colleges.
<b>NCAA Clearinghouse</b>	Nationwide process by which the eligibility of Division I and II athletes is determined; based on scores and GPA.

“Cauliflower: Nothing but cabbage with a college education.”

–Mark Twain

## Overview of the Process

As juniors you begin the serious phase of planning for college. This is a lengthy and sometimes tedious, but ultimately rewarding task. With careful thought, the whole process should go smoothly. From the start, GET YOURSELF ORGANIZED. There will be many details and deadlines to keep in mind. Throughout the remainder of this year and the first term of next we will meet from time to time in groups to discuss various topics. In addition, you will have many opportunities for individual conferences.

Your “college record” really began with your first grades at Santa Catalina or wherever you were in 9th grade; for some of you it started before that. In addition to the grades that are already a part of your record, you have taken the PSAT and perhaps one or more SATs. You have participated in athletics and extracurricular activities and had experiences in and out of school which are also important for your “record.”

### Self-Evaluation

At this point, if you haven't done so earlier, you should BEGIN TO ANALYZE YOUR REASONS FOR WANTING TO GO TO COLLEGE. Ask yourself what you expect of a college education. What do you think you would contribute to a college community? Is your chief interest intellectual? Athletic? Social? Prestige? Are you going to college simply because it is expected of you or because you see it as an important part of your life? If, up to now, you have assumed you would go to college as a matter of course, you might find it a useful exercise to formulate and jot down your own reasons. If nothing else, it will get you thinking about the subject, might help you make informed decisions later on, and it will give you a head start in case you are asked these questions in college interviews or on application essays.

### Picking Colleges

Some of you may already think you know where you want to go to college, perhaps through parents or friends. This can be a good starting point. There are about 4,000 accredited colleges and universities in this country, and there are wide distinctions among them. In making an intelligent list of colleges you should consider such factors as:

Size	Small, medium or large;
Type	Public, private; single-sex, coed; church-affiliated, secular;
Location	In the country, in a suburb or near a city, in a city;
Part of the US	East Coast, Northeast, South, Midwest, Mountain West, West Coast, nowhere but California, anywhere but California;
Programs	Liberal arts, engineering, business, fine arts, etc.

You might also think about such things as whether it is a university or a college, cost factors and the availability of financial aid, distance from home, etc.

### Where Can You Find the Answers to These and Other Related Questions?

Going online is the easiest. There are many general search sites, as well as each college's own site.

You can always buy one or two **college guides**, such as Barron's, Cass and Birnbaum, College Handbook, Peterson's, Fiske, etc. These will answer many of your basic questions about each college as well as giving some indication of how competitive the college is. Many of these are available for your use in the **College Resource Room**.

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More specific questions can be answered by looking at the **college catalogs**, many of which are available in the College Resource Room for short-term loan or on a college's Web site.

Probably the most important way to get information is by **seeing the college for yourself**. You should, therefore, plan to visit as many colleges, or at least types of colleges, as possible. The guides and viewbooks should help you draw up a list of those colleges you wish to visit. If possible, you should plan to make your preliminary visits over the summer. Where appropriate and possible, you should also **schedule interviews with these visits**. A very small number of colleges will conduct interviews at Santa Catalina, but most do not. They plan on group meetings only. There is little time during the school year for visits or interviews - therefore, you should plan to take care of this over the summer. While it is possible to visit colleges over spring vacation, most highly competitive colleges will not be able to grant individual interviews to juniors at that time. In drawing up a list of colleges to visit, make sure that you **INCLUDE A RANGE OF CHOICES** and not all the same type or level of competitiveness.

For interview appointments, be sure to call well in advance – as much as four weeks prior during busy summer months. Before you show up for your interview, **DO YOUR HOMEWORK**. Make sure that you are informed about the college (such as by reading the viewbook if you have one). Be prepared to answer and to ask. Avoid trite questions which are easily looked up. While answering your questions, an interviewer will also try to get a sense of what you are all about. At some colleges, an interview is not used to evaluate a candidate; others do consider it when reading the folder, but rarely is it a huge factor unless you do or say something grotesque. You will find that no two interviews are alike. Even in the same office, they can vary greatly. You may get a staff member, someone from the faculty or a student. All should count the same, if at all, but there is no set pattern of questions, so be flexible.

“When you get to a fork in the road, take it”

-Yogi Berra

## Getting Started

During the spring or summer of junior year, start communicating with colleges via email, online or by phone to ask them to send you information and to get on their mailing lists for applications. The material should be useful as you begin planning college visits and interviews. It will also help you focus your interests as you enter your senior year and make it possible for you to use your time more productively in the fall.

## Naviance *Family Connection*

*Family Connection* is Santa Catalina School's online college counseling website. *Family Connection* is a valuable resource for parents and students as they navigate the college application process.

To log in, please visit <http://connection.naviance.com/santacs>.

A personal password is required to access *Family Connection*. Seniors, juniors, and their parents have received their passwords. You may also login as a guest. The guest password is: Cougar. If you are unable to locate your password, please contact Colleen Murray at [colleen.murray@santacatalina.org](mailto:colleen.murray@santacatalina.org).

## Some Useful WWW Addresses

### Organizations

<a href="http://www.aaicu.org">www.aaicu.org</a>	American universities abroad
<a href="http://www.actstudent.org">www.actstudent.org</a>	ACT
<a href="http://www.aicad.org">www.aicad.org</a>	Association of Independent Colleges of Art & Design
<a href="http://www.ajcunet.edu">www.ajcunet.edu</a>	Association of Jesuit Colleges & Universities
<a href="http://www.athletes.com">www.athletes.com</a>	Athletic scholarships
<a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a>	College Board
<a href="http://www.fairtest.org">www.fairtest.org</a>	List of “Standardized Test Optional” colleges
<a href="http://www.heic.org">www.heic.org</a>	Higher Education Info Center
<a href="http://www.nacacnet.org">www.nacacnet.org</a>	National Association for College Admission Counseling
<a href="http://www.commonapp.org">www.commonapp.org</a>	Common Application
<a href="http://www.ncaa.org">www.ncaa.org</a>	National Collegiate Athletic Association
<a href="http://www.toefl.org">www.toefl.org</a>	TOEFL

### College Information

<a href="http://cappex.com">cappex.com</a>	<a href="http://heic.org">heic.org</a>
<a href="http://collegequest.com">collegequest.com</a>	<a href="http://collegeplan.org">collegeplan.org</a>
<a href="http://makingitcount.com">makingitcount.com</a>	<a href="http://campustours.com">campustours.com</a>
<a href="http://embark.com">embark.com</a>	<a href="http://collegexpress.com">collegexpress.com</a>
<a href="http://collegenet.com">collegenet.com</a>	<a href="http://xap.com">xap.com</a>
<a href="http://collegeview.com">collegeview.com</a>	<a href="http://collegelink.com">collegelink.com</a>
<a href="http://gocollege.com">gocollege.com</a>	<a href="http://myroad.com">myroad.com</a>
<a href="http://kaplan.com">kaplan.com</a>	<a href="http://schoolsintheUSA.com">schoolsintheUSA.com</a>
<a href="http://petersons.com">petersons.com</a>	<a href="http://studentsreview.com">studentsreview.com</a>
<a href="http://review.com">review.com</a>	<a href="http://finduru.com">finduru.com</a>
<a href="http://collegeprowler.com">collegeprowler.com</a>	<a href="http://ucan-network.org">ucan-network.org</a>

### Financial Aid/Scholarships

<a href="http://www.ed.gov/studentaid">www.ed.gov/studentaid</a>	<a href="http://nelliemae.org">nelliemae.org</a>
<a href="http://www.fafsa.ed.gov">www.fafsa.ed.gov</a> (Federal Government FAFSA Student Services)	<a href="http://salliemae.com">salliemae.com</a>
<a href="http://www.fastweb.com">www.fastweb.com</a>	<a href="http://campusdoor.com">campusdoor.com</a>
<a href="http://findaid.org">findaid.org</a>	<a href="http://teri.org">teri.org</a>
<a href="http://collegesmart.com">collegesmart.com</a>	<a href="http://scholarships101.com">scholarships101.com</a>
<a href="http://educaid.com">educaid.com</a>	<a href="http://edfund.com">edfund.com</a>
<a href="http://fastap.org">fastap.org</a>	<a href="http://waggledancer.com">waggledancer.com</a>
	<a href="http://scholarships.com">scholarships.com</a>

### California

<a href="http://www.ucop.edu">www.ucop.edu</a>	University of California
<a href="http://www.csumentor.edu">www.csumentor.edu</a>	California State Universities
<a href="http://www.csac.ca.gov">www.csac.ca.gov</a>	California Student Aid Commission

“...the greatest thing since they reinvented unsliced bread.”

-William Keegan

# Campus Visit and Interview Tips

A campus visit can be a very important part of college selection. You wouldn't buy an expensive car without a test drive. A campus visit should be as close to a test drive as you can make it. Depending on your time and travel resources, you should try to visit as many of your college choices as possible, or, at a minimum, at least several different types (small/large, urban/rural, etc.) so that you can get a sense of what suits you best.

During a visit you should, if possible:

- Take a tour to get a feel for the campus atmosphere. Is it compact or spread out? Is it contiguous or divided by sections of the town/city?
- Talk to students (if any are around besides the tour guide). Visit the student center. Check bulletin boards to see what's going on.
- Ask for a copy of the college newspaper or "Activities This Week" flyer.
- If classes are in session, see if you can sit in on one.
- If you're a serious athlete, ask if you can meet with a coach. The same is true for musicians and a music faculty member, biology with science, etc.
- Have a meal on campus if appropriate. What dining options are available?

## Interviews

If the college offers interviews and your schedule permits, you should make an appointment for an interview when you set up your visit. **An interview is only part (usually a small part) of the evaluation process.** In most cases, a visit to the campus is more important (for your understanding of the place) than an interview. If they can't schedule one, then visit anyway, but, especially at smaller colleges, make sure admissions knows you came (they will usually have a visit card for you to fill out).

There is no typical interview. They can vary greatly even within the same staff as personal styles vary. There are interviews by staff, students, faculty, alums and others (all of which should count equally in the admissions process). There are evaluative interviews and informative interviews, although most are both. Most interviews have a dual purpose: for the college to learn about the student and for the student to learn about the college.

## Miscellaneous Tips

**Make the appointment by phone** so your interview time can be coordinated with campus tour schedules, etc. You will almost always be talking to a secretary or receptionist, so don't be afraid to ask about getting to or from other colleges, especially if you're planning to visit more than one in a day. There is nothing wrong (or new), for example, in asking Colby College to help coordinate your appointment there with one you already have at Bates. Ask for directions if you need them. Cancel if you can't make it. **Don't be a no-show.**

**Get there in a timely manner** so you have a chance to unwind from your trip, use the restroom, etc. When possible, call if you're going to be late.

Learn as much as possible about the college before you go so you can ask useful, intelligent questions. "How many books are in the library?" and "What percentage of the faculty have PhDs?" are **not** examples of useful, intelligent questions. These can be looked up in the catalog.

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Dress comfortably but appropriately. Summer tends to be less formal than fall. Some places are stuffier than others. Wear good walking shoes for the tour.

**Be prepared to answer as well as ask questions.** Know your scores, latest grades, senior year courses, etc. in case they come up. Don't exaggerate but don't make things sound worse than they are. Be yourself.

**Be flexible.** You never know what an interviewer may ask. One might start out with "Tell me about yourself." Another might ask, "If you were a vegetable, what would you be?" Yet another might begin with "What have you learned about this college so far?"

**Listen to answers.** Prepare some questions in advance if you wish, but don't get so preoccupied with the brilliance of your next question that you lose the flexibility to react if the interviewer takes the conversation in a different direction.

Don't enthuse about (or badmouth) other colleges you have visited. Don't go into a verbal data dump mode. Don't gush, but don't be catatonic. Avoid nervous habits like hair-twisting, leg bouncing, whatever. Smile. Look your interviewer in the eyes.

Don't feel the need to reveal your innermost college secrets. Dartmouth doesn't need to know that you're thinking about applying ED to Brown; Pomona won't be thrilled to learn that Stanford is your life's dream.

**Show interest** even if it's a practice interview. Signs of indifference or boredom will be noted in the interview report.

Don't use the interview as an occasion to gripe about teachers you don't like, courses you hated, this school, other schools, other students or (heaven forbid) your college counselor. It's unbecoming.

Remember that, in almost all cases, one purpose of an interview is to leave you with a nice warm glow about the college. **It is important not to confuse a good interview with an actual offer of admission.**

**Sending a follow-up thank you note** to the interviewer is not necessary but can be a nice touch.

## College Visitors to Santa Catalina

Each year, representatives from many colleges and universities visit Santa Catalina, primarily in the fall. In most cases, they are here to give a presentation and answer questions for any interested students. Most do not have time to do interviews, since they are usually visiting five or more schools each day.

Seniors or juniors who are free that period (or seniors who have permission from the teacher to miss a class) are welcome to go to the session. If a college that is high on your list visits, it would be a good idea for you to go, since you will have the opportunity to meet the representative, who will frequently end up being the first reader of your application. If you can't make it, then let the college counselor know so she can put in a good word for you, as in "She really wanted to come, but she had a biology test."

Some colleges that have visited Santa Catalina in recent years:

American University of Paris, Babson, Bard, Barnard, Bates, Bennington, Boston College, Boston University, Bowdoin, Brown, Bucknell, Cal Lutheran, Chapman, Claremont McKenna, Colby, Colgate, College of the Holy Cross, Colorado College, Columbia, Connecticut College, Cornell, Dartmouth, Davidson, Denver, Dickinson, Dominican, Drew, Duke, Emerson, Fordham, Franklin (Switzerland), George Washington University, Gonzaga, Goucher, Grinnell, Hamilton, Harvard, Haverford, Hobart/William Smith, Holy Cross, Johns Hopkins, Lafayette, Lehigh, Lewis & Clark, Linfield, Loyola-Chicago, Loyola-New Orleans, Macalester, Middlebury, Mills, Mount Holyoke, New York University, Northeastern, Notre Dame, Oberlin, Occidental, Pepperdine, Pitzer, Pomona, Portland, Princeton, Puget Sound, Redlands, Reed, Regis, Rice, Rochester, University of San Diego, Santa Clara, Sarah Lawrence, Scripps, Seattle University, Skidmore, Smith, USC, SMU, Stanford, St. Andrew's (Scotland), St. Mary's, Trinity (CT), Trinity (TX), Union, University of Arizona, University of Chicago, University of Colorado, University of Oregon, University of the Pacific, University of Pennsylvania, University of San Francisco, Vanderbilt, Vassar, Villanova, Washington University in St. Louis, Wellesley, Westmont, Wheaton, Whitman, Whittier, Willamette, and Yale.

"Be sure your safety net isn't a trampoline."

-Anonymous

## Can I Get In?

Now, the all-important question of admission: Can I get in? This is a hard one to answer. At the most popular colleges, applications outnumber places 9 or 10 to 1. Hence, as a practical necessity you must **think not only of where you would like to go to college, but also of where you are likely to get in.**

What counts most in admissions? Rarely is it simply a matter of grades; consideration is given to many other factors, although colleges differ widely in how much weight they attach to each. Academically, colleges want to be certain that candidates, on the basis of past achievement and native ability, will be able to be successful (to "thrive") at their particular college. But over and above this, they are looking for dynamic personalities, people with initiative and leadership, people who are involved in their school and/or community, people who will "add something" to a student body.

Among the chief factors that seem most critical to admission officers are:

### **1. Academic Achievement for the Four High School Years**

(If you do not at least come close on this one for a given college, you are unlikely to pull much weight with the others.) Academic achievement includes courses taken and grades received. Colleges look not only at your GPA and class standing but also at your academic program. Have you taken advantage of opportunities for advanced courses? Have you demonstrated "stretch" by going beyond minimum course requirements? In what direction do your grades seem to be headed? Did you get off to a slow start but have been getting better each year? Or did you save your sophomore slump for your junior or senior year (a bad idea)?

### **2. Standardized Tests**

Most colleges require the SAT or ACT. Many require SAT Subject Tests. If you take a test more than once, colleges will usually take your highest individual scores or (like UCs) your highest combined from one test. The impact of scores on the admission decision varies by college. (There are many that have made standardized testing "optional.")

### **3. Recommendations**

These come from individual teachers and from the college counselor. In both cases, the colleges are interested in how those who know you regard you as a student and as a person. Teacher recs in particular can play an important role in the admission process.

### **4. Extracurricular Activities**

Here the emphasis is upon quality over quantity, upon genuine contributions to an activity. A top leader, athlete or artist should make out very well if she is academically competitive. Too much is sometimes made of being "well-rounded." As a general rule, colleges are looking for a "well-rounded" freshman class, but everyone in that class is not expected to be a microcosm of the whole; it is better to be a real contributor in a couple of areas than unremarkable in many.

## 5. Miscellaneous Factors

At most colleges, children of alums are given special consideration. Nationality, ethnicity, geography, first generation college family, etc. can also be factored into an admissions decision.

## 6. Personal Interview (where offered)

This varies in importance.

## 7. The Application

How seriously did you take the application itself, including the essay?

## 8. Your Professional Background and Aptitude

If you are applying to a career program such as business, education, architecture, nursing, communications, physical therapy, etc. the college will want to know how well-suited for and serious about the field you are.

At this point in your planning it is difficult to predict precisely specific colleges to which you could definitely gain admission. You can, however, begin drawing up a list which contains a range of colleges suitable for you.

**There are two primary means by which colleges determine admissibility: *qualification* and *competition*.** UCs are a good example of both in that you “qualify” for the system by meeting certain, very specific GPA/score parameters, after which you can “compete” for a place at your top choice campuses.

With “qualification” it is easier to determine your chances, since specific minimum requirements are listed, and you can see for yourself if you meet them or are within striking distance, in case you are counting on a “late bloomer” senior surge.

With “competition” it is much harder to guess, since your chances depend on many unknowns, not the least of which is how many others will be applying to that college at the same time you are and how they compare to you. But you can make some educated guesses based on recent experience. You want to find colleges that match your qualifications and which vary in competitiveness.

**There are three basic groupings.**

1. Reach college: perhaps a long shot. A college for which you may be shooting high.
2. Target: a college at which you are very much in the running with a 50-50 chance or better of gaining admission.
3. Likely: a college where your chances of admission are excellent.

It is crucial that **as much attention be given to the colleges in the reasonable and safe categories as to the top choices.** And this attention should come from the beginning in your planning. The longer you put it off, the greater a problem it will become. When you are making plans for college visits, make sure that you have included institutions in each of the above categories.

# Applying

Seniors have regular meetings in the fall to go over specific procedures for filling out applications (including the UC and Cal State forms), essays, teacher recommendations, secondary school report forms, etc. You should begin going online, calling or e-mailing for information this spring or over the summer. This will usually get you on the mailing list.

Except for Early Decision or Early Action candidates, most applications are not due until January or February. (UC applications must be submitted in November.) Early Decision plans, offered by many colleges, are for students who are sure of their first choice college and who agree to accept an offer of admission (financial aid permitting). Early Action works much the same way, except that there is usually no commitment to attend. ED/EA applications are normally due around November 1 or 15, though there are some that are due later. As a general rule, students who feel that their records will improve substantially senior year should not apply early. There are also many institutions which use a rolling admission (or “first come, first served”) procedure.

**The Common Application** can make applying to a number of colleges easier in that you fill out one form, write one essay, and then send each institution a copy. **It is accepted by many but not all** colleges and universities around the country. Admission offices sign a pledge to treat the Common Application equally with their own and not to make any assumptions about your level of interest in the college. To protect yourself, however, you should make sure that the Common Application is not your only contact with a college. (A “contact” is any time a college hears from you - contacting them online, e-mailing, writing, calling, visiting, etc.)

A couple of tips:

- **Make copies of everything.** Accidents happen and things can get lost in transit.
- **Be aware of approaching deadlines.** Don't wait until the last minute on anything.
- **See the College Counselor** for an application or test fee waiver if you receive financial assistance at Santa Catalina.

“No! Try not! Do, or do not! There is no try.”

–Yoda, Star Wars: *The Empire Strikes Back*

# Important Things to Remember When Registering for SATs

If you register online, the address is [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

If you register by mail, forms are available in the Resource Room.

Be sure that you give your name, address, social security number (if you use it), birth date, etc. in exactly the same manner when you register for each test so that the ETS computer knows you're the same person.

It's important to include the Santa Catalina School code - **052045** - otherwise the school will not receive your scores.

Most of you will be taking the tests at Seaside High School. The test center code is **05798**.

If you register with the paper form, Section 12 (SDQ) is completely optional but don't forget the statement and signature on the inside pages.

Juniors do not need to worry about sending score reports to colleges. You get to send them to four colleges for free, so use them if you wish, but don't spend money now to send them to others. Seniors need to start sending them. Use your four freebies each time you take a test in the fall, but don't spend money to send additional scores until your last test date or December, whichever comes first. All of the scores from past tests will go with the final report.

You will need to have a picture identification card - Santa Catalina ID or driver's license or passport.

Please be sure to register by the deadlines otherwise you will have to pay a penalty fee. Early registration will also ensure a better chance of getting your first choice test center.

Registration for non-standard testing is coordinated through the Upper School Office and must be completed well prior to the deadline date.

Once you have your admission ticket check it immediately. Make sure that all the information is accurate and that you've been assigned to the correct test center. If you have any problems with registration or admission tickets please see me. We can usually resolve them quickly with a phone call.

**For the ACT**, the online registration address is [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). Paper registration forms are also available in the Resource Room. The local ACT test site is usually Watsonville High School, test center code 053722.

# SAT Subject Tests

## What are SAT subject tests?

They are college admissions tests, one hour long, in specific subjects. These used to be called Achievement Tests, then SAT 2s, now SAT Subject Tests.

## Do all colleges require SAT subject tests?

No, but many require them (usually two) for admission or for placement when you enroll. Competitive colleges give particular significance to these tests. Some places do not require but “recommend” them. In these cases, you should look upon them as required. Others will “consider them if presented.”

## Which tests should I take?

This is a topic of conversation we discuss in our individual meetings, since it varies from student to student, depending on college application plans, completed course levels, etc. As a general rule, if you are finishing a subject junior year, such as US History or Biology or a language that you don’t intend to continue, and you plan to take the test, it is advisable to do it in the spring, rather than waiting until senior year. If you aren’t sure about the suitability of a test for you, feel free to ask an appropriate teacher or advisor. Also be sure to read the sample questions given in the information booklets available in the Resource Room or online.

You may repeat the tests in your senior year or add another test at that time.

Taking some or all of the tests junior year gives you a second shot at any or all of them senior year. You will know which ones you like and which you don’t and you can plan accordingly. If you take the same test more than once, the higher score wins.

Be aware that some tests are offered only on certain test dates, e.g. Latin, World History. In November, language tests are offered only in the “listening” version. (Check out the chart on the back of the registration booklet or online.)

When you register, you are asked which Subject Tests you plan to take, and your fee is figured accordingly. If, however, you change your mind at any point, even in the middle of the test session, go ahead and take what you want. College Board will bill you later if you owe more. (A November language listening test must be registered for in advance, since it involves a CD.)

Students who have a documented learning disability should check with the registrar in the Upper School Office well before the deadline date to ascertain the proper procedures for registering for a non-standard test administration.

“I got thrown out of college for cheating on the metaphysics exam. I looked into the soul of the person seated next to me.”

–Woody Allen

# Standardized Testing Preparation

The question of whether or not to use an “SAT Prep” or “ACT Prep” service is a personal one, and the College Counseling Office endorses no particular organizations or individuals, nor the concept itself. Since many students inquire about it, however, here for your convenience is a list of phone numbers or Web sites of a few of the individuals and organizations that have sent material and/or that some of our students have used in the past:

Ivy West	800.IVYWEST	<a href="http://www.ivywest.com">www.ivywest.com</a>
Princeton Review	800.2REVIEW	<a href="http://www.princetonreview.com">www.princetonreview.com</a>
Revolution Prep	877.REVPREP	<a href="http://www.revolutionprep.com">www.revolutionprep.com</a>
Stanley Kaplan	800.KAPTEST	<a href="http://www.kaptest.com">www.kaptest.com</a>
Dr. Eden Rue	831.566.0193	<a href="mailto:edenrue@earthlink.net">edenrue@earthlink.net</a>

And one free Web site worth checking out: [www.number2.com](http://www.number2.com)

Some of these have held and/or will hold “classes,” “sessions,” or individual counseling at local schools or colleges, including Santa Catalina. Calling one or more of the numbers or checking the Web sites listed above should provide you with the necessary information regarding schedules, costs, and availability. Many other such test prep services may be found online.

- EduPath is a new application for the iPad and iPhone and the cost is relatively low.
- College Board and ACT offer test prep for free up to a point and for cost beyond that point on their websites.
- Neeya test prep is offered online ([neeya.com](http://neeya.com)).

More and more colleges are deciding to become “test optional” and a list of those colleges appears on their Fair Test website ([fairtest.org](http://fairtest.org)). Often the student must send other information in the place of testing.

## ACT/SAT Conversion Table

ACT .....	Equivalent SAT Score
36 .....	2400
35 .....	2340
34 .....	2280
33 .....	2220
32 .....	2160
31 .....	2100
30 .....	2040
29 .....	1980
28 .....	1920
27 .....	1860
26 .....	1800
25 .....	1740
24 .....	1680
23 .....	1620
22 .....	1560
21 .....	1500
20 .....	1440
19 .....	1380
18 .....	1320
17 .....	1260
16 .....	1200
15 .....	1140
14 .....	1080
13 .....	1020
12 .....	960
11 .....	900

# About Sending Test Scores

SAT website:

[www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

ACT website:

[www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)

It is the student's responsibility to send her official test scores to each of the colleges she will apply to. Students do not need to send official AP scores as part of the application process.

## Sending SAT and Subject Test Scores

- Log into your student account at [collegeboard.org](http://collegeboard.org).
- Signing up for Registration Score Reports when you register for the SAT sends up to four colleges your results once that sitting of the test is scored, for no additional fee.
- To send results after you've completed your testing, select Send Available Scores Now. This will send a report of all of your completed SAT results (including Subject Tests) for \$11 per college.
- We do not recommend that you use the SAT Score Choice option.
- For UCs, you need only send a score report to a single UC campus; they will share your scores with the other UCs you applied to.
- For CSUs, you need only send a score report to the CSUMentor code 3594. Your scores will be distributed to all the CSU campuses you applied to.

You can list CSUMentor as an SAT score recipient. The SAT institution code for CSUMentor is 3594. CSUMentor will then store your scores for ALL CSU campuses to utilize. If you have not yet sent your scores to either a CSU campus or CSUMentor, you can request this at [www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/reg.html).

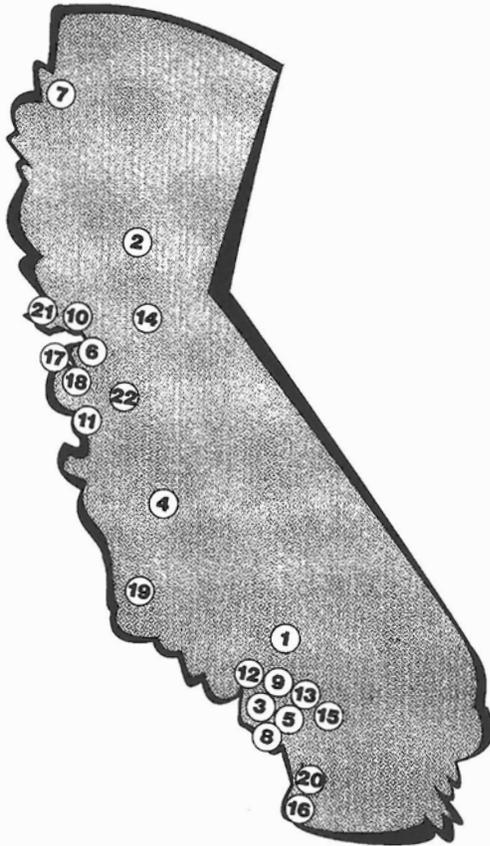
## Sending ACT Scores

- Log into your student account at [actstudent.org](http://actstudent.org).
- As with SAT, you may select up to four colleges to receive a score report at the time you register, for no additional fee.
- Click on Send Your Scores under the test date you wish to report. Unlike SAT, an ACT score report contains only a single test date. Each report costs \$12.00 per test date per report. You will receive an email confirmation.

If you have listed a CSU campus as an ACT score report recipient, you can use the [ACT Scores Manager](#) to release your score to additional campuses. Before you can use the ACT Scores Manager, you must first have arranged for your scores to be sent to at least one CSU campus.

If you have not yet arranged for your ACT scores to be sent to a CSU campus, you can learn how to request this at [www.actstudent.org/scores/send/index.html](http://www.actstudent.org/scores/send/index.html).

## California State University Campuses & Impacted Programs



- 1 California State University, Bakersfield  
9001 Stockdale Highway, Bakersfield, CA 93311-1099  
(661) 664-3036 • [www.csusbak.edu](http://www.csusbak.edu)
- 2 California State University, Chico  
1st and Normal Streets, Chico, CA 95929-0722  
(530) 898-6321 • [www.csuchico.edu](http://www.csuchico.edu)
- 3 California State University, Dominguez Hills  
1000 East Victoria Street, Carson, CA 90747  
(310) 243-3696 • [www.csudh.edu](http://www.csudh.edu)
- 4 California State University, Fresno  
5150 North Maple Avenue, Fresno, CA 93740-0057  
(559) 278-2261 • [www.csufresno.edu](http://www.csufresno.edu)
- 5 California State University, Fullerton  
P.O. Box 6900, Fullerton, CA 92834-6900  
(714) 278-2300 • [www.fullerton.edu](http://www.fullerton.edu)
- 6 California State University, Hayward  
25800 Carlos Bee Blvd., Hayward, CA 94542-3035  
(510) 885-2624 • [www.csuhayward.edu](http://www.csuhayward.edu)

CSU Undergraduate  
Impacted Programs  
see  
[www.calstate.edu/AR/impactioninfo.shtml](http://www.calstate.edu/AR/impactioninfo.shtml)

- 7 Humboldt State University  
1 Harpst Street, Arcata, CA 95521-4957  
(707) 826-4402 • [www.humboldt.edu](http://www.humboldt.edu)
- 8 California State University, Long Beach  
1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840-0106  
(562) 985-5471 • [www.csulb.edu](http://www.csulb.edu)
- 9 California State University, Los Angeles  
5151 State University Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8530  
(323) 343-3901 • [www.calstateia.edu](http://www.calstateia.edu)
- 10 California Maritime Academy  
200 Maritime Academy Drive, P.O. Box 1392, Vallejo, CA 94590  
(800) 561-1945 • [www.csum.edu](http://www.csum.edu)
- 11 California State University, Monterey Bay  
100 Campus Center Drive, Seaside, CA 93955-8001  
(831) 582-3518 • [www.monterey.edu](http://www.monterey.edu)
- 12 California State University, Northridge  
18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330-8207  
(818) 677-3700 • [www.csun.edu](http://www.csun.edu)
- 13 California State Polytechnic University, Pomona  
3801 West Temple Ave., Pomona, CA 91768-4003  
(909) 869-2000 • [www.csupomona.edu](http://www.csupomona.edu)
- 14 California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95819-6048  
(916) 278-3901 • [www.csus.edu](http://www.csus.edu)
- 15 California State University, San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407-2397  
(909) 880-5200 • [www.csusb.edu](http://www.csusb.edu)
- 16 San Diego State University  
5500 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182-7455  
(619) 594-6871 • [www.sdsu.edu](http://www.sdsu.edu)
- 17 San Francisco State University  
1600 Holloway Ave., San Francisco, CA 94132-4002  
(415) 338-1113 • [www.sfsu.edu](http://www.sfsu.edu)
- 18 San Jose State University  
One Washington Square, San Jose, CA 95192-0009  
(408) 283-7500 • [www.sjsu.edu](http://www.sjsu.edu)
- 19 California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407  
(805) 756-2311 • [www.calpoly.edu](http://www.calpoly.edu)
- 20 California State University, San Marcos  
Office of Admissions, 333 S. Twin Oaks Valley Road  
San Marcos, CA 92096-0001  
(760) 750-4800 • [www.csusm.edu](http://www.csusm.edu)
- 21 Sonoma State University  
1801 East Cotati Ave., Rohnert Park, CA 94928  
(707) 664-2778 • [www.sonoma.edu](http://www.sonoma.edu)
- 22 California State University, Stanislaus  
801 West Monte Vista Ave., Turlock, CA 95382  
(209) 667-3151 • [www.csustan.edu](http://www.csustan.edu)
- 23 California State University, Channel Island  
One university Drive, Camarillo, CA 93012-8584  
805-437-8520 [www.csuci.edu](http://www.csuci.edu)

# University of California System



## “A-G” SUBJECT REQUIREMENTS

“a” HISTORY/SOCIAL SCIENCE — 2 years required.

Two years of history/social science, including one year of world history, cultures and geography; and one year of U.S. history or one-half year of U.S. history and one-half year of civics or American government.

“b” ENGLISH — 4 years required.

Four years of college preparatory English that include frequent and regular writing, and reading of classic and modern literature. Not more than two semesters of ninth-grade English can be used to meet this requirement.

“c” MATHEMATICS — 3 years required, 4 years recommended.

Three years of college preparatory mathematics that include the topics covered in elementary and advanced algebra and two- and three-dimensional geometry. Approved integrated math courses may be used to fulfill part or all of this requirement, as may math courses taken in the seventh and eighth grades that your high school accepts as equivalent to its own math courses.

“d” LABORATORY SCIENCE — 2 years required, 3 years recommended.

Two years of laboratory science providing fundamental knowledge in two of these three core disciplines: biology, chemistry and physics. The latter two years of an approved three-year integrated science program may be used to fulfill this requirement. Not more than one year of ninth-grade laboratory science can be used to meet this requirement.

“e” LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH — 2 years required, 3 years recommended.

Two years of the same language other than English. Courses should emphasize speaking and understanding, and include instruction in grammar, vocabulary, reading, composition and culture. Courses in language other than English taken in the seventh and eighth grades may be used to fulfill part of this requirement if your high school accepts them as equivalent to its own courses.

“f” VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS (VPA) — 1 year required.

One year of visual and performing arts chosen from the following: dance, drama/theater, music or visual art.

“g” COLLEGE PREPARATORY ELECTIVES — 1 year required.

One year (two semesters), in addition to those required in “a-f” above, chosen from the following areas: visual and performing arts (non-introductory level courses), history, social science, English, advanced mathematics, laboratory science and language other than English (a third year in the language used for the “e” requirement or two years of another language).

## Activities Record/Resume

As previously mentioned, competitive colleges and universities look well beyond the academic record in making admissions decisions. Having good grades and scores gets you up the front steps; what helps swing the door open is everything else about you that makes you distinctive. Again, whether your strengths lie in athletics, the arts, leadership, community activism, publications or whatever else, what counts is quality over quantity – the depth and importance of your contributions, not how many organizations you belong to. Competitive colleges are looking less for well-rounded students than they are for well-rounded classes made up of a mix of significant contributors.

Most college application forms provide space for you to list your activities. A handful will, in the instructions, ask you to list these activities on the form and not attach or enclose separate sheets of paper. Other than for these few, many students find it easier to prepare an activities sheet or resume, which can be tinkered with on a word processor, and to write “see attached” in the spaces on the form.

The exact format you choose (if any) is up to you. The key elements that most colleges look for are the following:

- What the activity is, in terms they can understand. For example, listing "Mosaic" doesn't help them unless you say what "Mosaic" is. Ditto for "STAR" or "Gold Cord." If there's any question, give them a generic description (such as "high honor roll" for Gold Cord).
- What years (10, 11-12, etc.) you participated.
- For many colleges, "The order of their importance to you."
- Positions or offices you have held, such as "captain" or "Assistant Features Editor."
- Awards you have won and what they were for (if there's a question).

As always, if you personalize your resume for each college, make sure the right ones go to the right places.

"If you wish in the world to advance,  
your merits you're bound to enhance.  
You must stir it, and stomp it and blow  
your own trumpet, or trust me you  
haven't a chance."

-W. S. Gilbert, Ruddigore

"I yam what I yam."

-Popeye

## SHIRLEY U. JEST

Westchester High School  
Los Angeles, CA  
Grade 9

Santa Catalina School  
Monterey, CA  
Grades 10 – 12

### ACTIVITY RECORD

#### ATHLETICS

V. Softball Team - Most Improved Player Award (10)	10 – 12
J.V. Soccer Team	10
V. Soccer Team	11, 12 (Captain)

#### PUBLICATIONS

<i>Lampighter</i> - School Newspaper	
Reporter	10, 11
Editor of Arts and Entertainment	12
<i>Mosaic</i> - Publication of the Arts	
Poems	10 – 12

#### ARTS

Chorus	9
Choir	10 – 12
Musicals	
Roles in: <i>Annie, Bye Bye Birdie</i>	10, 11
Shakespeare Festival	10 – 12

#### COMMUNITY SERVICE

National Charity League – hospital volunteer	9
Salvation Army Day Care – weekly volunteer	11, 12

#### STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Class Representative – Senate	11
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#### CLUBS

Current Events Club – President (12)	10 – 12
Amnesty International – Secretary	11, 12
STAR – Admission Tour Guide	10 – 12

#### AWARDS AND HONORS

Outstanding Student Award in Religion	10
Courtesy Award	11
Gold Cord (High Honor Roll)	10 – 12

#### SUMMER ACTIVITIES AND EMPLOYMENT

Costa Rica – 3 week home-stay and language study	10
Retail clothing store clerk – 30 hours per week	11

# The Application Essay

Here are a few tips on handling application essays. There are no absolute answers, no “right” essay for every college, and no magic formula for pleasing every admission officer. But these are some of the things I looked for in my application-reading days. Many fall under the heading of common sense, but reiteration never hurts.

- **Be positive toward yourself.** Make your essay positive and forward-looking. Don't use it to describe all the bad things that have happened to you. You are trying, however subtly, to sell yourself to a college on the basis of your achievements and future promise. You want them to like and admire you more than feel sorry for you. Go with your strengths, not your weaknesses. This is not the time for “I am the sad, forlorn product of an unhappy childhood” or “My grades would be better if all my teachers weren't so unfair to me.” Applications usually provide space for “factors which have impacted your record,” if you wish to use it, but it shouldn't be your main essay topic.
- **Be mindful of the image you create.** What you write forms an image of you in the reader's mind. For example, if you choose as your topic the anguish you felt going away to school and how scared and uncertain you were and how you called home every night and burst into tears at the drop of a hat, you've created an image. Or “the most significant experience” you've ever had was totaling your car after being dared by friends to drive down 101 with your eyes closed. Or you would contend that “the primary issue facing your generation as it enters the millennium” is in any way centered on the angst of young love. There must be contexts more beneficial than these in which to have your candidacy for college evaluated.
- **Get off to a good start.** Grab their interest right away with a good opening line. Leading off with “I was not an easy baby, colicky and wakeful” or “Let me tell you about my horse” are good examples of what **not** to do.
- **Be interesting.** Admission people read thousands of essays, year after year, so utter originality is hard to achieve, but try to make what you say interesting. If you are writing about your unforgettable grandfather, for example, it will inevitably be one of many grandfather essays, but do your best to make him come across as more unforgettable (and better written about) than the others.
- **Follow instructions.** If it says “Confine your essay to the space below”, don't write a four-pager. It will impress them less with your ability to write than with your inability to read. If there is a specific essay topic given, try to some extent to follow along, although you may certainly tailor an essay you write for one college to fit the topic of another. You don't need to start from scratch each time.
- **Be positive toward the college.** Even if the college is your safety school, put the same care and effort into their essay and application as you do with your first choice. Colleges are sensitive about being taken for granted, which is how it may appear if your essay reads like an afterthought and the application is a mess.
- **Use humor with care.** Humor in an application essay is a wonderful but risky tool. Unlike with face-to-face humor, you can't make a quick adjustment if your attempt is falling flat or offending. You're stuck with it.

*continued next page*

- **Remember your audience.** Don't be afraid to take a stand, but keep in mind that being highly opinionated about a controversial topic might make the issue, not you, the focus. Show that you can and do think but aren't close-minded.
- **Be honest.** Unless your essay is an obvious effort at creative writing, don't say or imply what you're not or what isn't backed up by the facts. A deeply moving essay about your desire to serve humanity, for example, will have a hollow, insincere ring if you've given minimal time to any volunteer effort. Also, do your own work. Getting help and advice from a teacher or counselor is great, but the essay is supposed to reflect you, not someone else. Admission people read essays in context: a super essay backed up by A's in English class, a rave rec from the English teacher, a 720 Writing score and lots of work for school publications will have a greater impact than the same essay with a less obvious frame of reference.
- **Be careful.** How you write, along with what you write, is important. Poor grammar, mechanics or phraseology make a bad impression that can undermine the impact of your message. There is no such thing as a typo; a typo is an uncorrected mistake, so proofread your application carefully. If you use a word processor to make your essays college-specific, don't forget to change the names everywhere they appear, or else you might end up telling Pomona how badly you want to go to Stanford. Watch spelling – misspelling the names of colleges or academic majors won't impress them. Remember that spell-check only tells you that a word is spelled *right*, not that it is the *write* word or the *rite* usage.
- **Supplementary writings.** A piece you have written for any purpose can be a nice addition to an application with two basic caveats: 1) The shorter it is, the more likely it will be read and 2) have someone whose opinion you respect tell you if it is good on a real world scale, as well as being dear to your own heart.
- **Take advantage of this exercise.** It is normal to look upon these essays as a pain, and to a certain extent they are. But selling yourself is something that, in one way or another, you will have to do the rest of your life, and this is as good an opportunity as any to practice. Your admission file will be full of what others say about you. The essay is one way to add your own voice to the chorus.

“Whence came the intrusive comma? It did not fall from the sky.”

–A. E. Housman

## Recommendations

Unless you are applying exclusively to UCs, Cal State or a few other large state universities which don't want them, recommendations are an integral part of the competitive college application process. The most common forms of recommendation are 1) teacher, 2) counselor and 3) additional.

One or two **teacher recommendations** are required by most colleges. The instructions with each application will specify what they want: only junior or senior year teachers, only "major subject" teachers, whatever. You should put some thought into your choice of recommender(s). The one who gave you the highest grade may not be the best choice. Another may know you better or be more enthusiastic about you. Also, if you have a specific college major in mind, getting an appropriate teacher might be a good idea, e.g. Biology or Chemistry for "pre-med," math for "computer science," etc.

You should do everything you can to **make it as easy as possible** for them to write your recommendation, since most teachers have many to do in a short period of time. This means getting any forms to them in a timely manner, together with a stamped, addressed envelope and a notation (post-it notes work well) giving the deadline for each college. You should, of course, have already "asked" the teacher if he or she would be willing to write a rec for you and received a positive reply. If possible, use the same teachers for all your recs. Exceptions might include having a teacher who is a graduate of one of your colleges write to that college or having a senior teacher write if you applied somewhere Early Decision with junior teacher recs, got deferred and now want something more current. If you change your mind about applying to a college for which you have requested a rec (or if you were accepted to one Early Action or Early Decision and are going), be sure to notify everybody.

The **counselor recommendation** is essentially a "summary appraisal," weaving together personal knowledge of each student, teacher comments and information from the brag sheet. Most colleges expect a counselor rec of some sort, especially from a school like Santa Catalina.

**Additional recommendations** are rarely required, but might be of value. Some colleges ask for a "peer" recommendation. Others include recs from employers, graduates of particular colleges, parents, persons of consequence, whatever. Their value to your candidacy depends primarily on how well the person writing knows you: the "I've never met her but her father is a great guy to do business with" genre of letter is of little use. How many, if any, extra letters you solicit is up to you, but if you get more than one, they shouldn't extol all the same virtues – one good letter noting your "conscientiousness and responsibility" is as useful as six.

"If you can't say something nice about somebody, come sit here next to me."

–embroidered pillow of Alice Roosevelt

# Financial Aid Overview

There are two basic forms/online applications used for applying for financial aid. The first is the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). The Cal Grant program for California residents attending college in California keys off the FAFSA.

The second is the PROFILE of the College Scholarship Service, which is not required by all colleges. This is usually available in September and is filed only for colleges that require it and by the appropriate deadline, normally in November for ED/EA, January or February for regular decision.

There are two basic systems under which financial aid is awarded: NEED and MERIT (or a mix of the two).

- NEED-BASED AID means it is derived from the amount you "need", a figure that the FAFSA, PROFILE and the college's own financial aid office come up with in a process called "need analysis." This is based on family income, assets, how many children in college at the same time and other variables. At colleges which meet "full need," that's what you get.
- MERIT-BASED AID goes beyond simple "need" and gives you scholarships (ranging from a token amount to a "full-ride") just for being wonderful. Exactly how wonderful you have to be to get a merit award depends on the college and where you stand in their applicant pool.

**Applying for financial aid at a time of rising college costs and shrinking college and government resources means that you have to take this into consideration when you select the colleges to which you plan to apply. It is not enough merely to be admissible; you also have to be competitive for financial aid.**

There are many sources of information on financial aid, scholarships related to individual colleges, outside scholarships (local and national), etc. Generally these sources are free (for example via the internet) or of minimal cost, such as a resource book.

Be very wary of any individuals, agencies or "services" which ask you to pay a lot of money up front on the promise of finding financial aid for you. Make sure the expense is really worth it.

"A bank is a place that will lend you money if you can prove that you don't need it."

-Bob Hope

## Cal Grant Program – Basic Info

1. You must be a California resident.
2. Cal Grants are valid only at colleges/universities in California. They are not portable out of state.
3. Cal Grants are competitive. There are three types of Cal Grants (A, B, and C) with varying GPA requirements and family income/asset ceilings. Cal Grants are aimed at “disadvantaged, low- and middle-income families.”
4. You are automatically considered for Cal Grants if you:
  - A. File a FAFSA by the deadline (usually March 2).
  - B. Indicate that you are a legal California resident.
  - C. List at least one California college/university in the FAFSA college choice section.
  - D. Give permission on your FAFSA for your information to be forwarded to the California Student Aid Commission.
5. You may apply for a Cal Grant during your final year of secondary school or after you are enrolled at an eligible college/university.
6. You must submit a GPA Verification form, signed by a school official, attesting to your GPA. **The form must be mailed by the deadline (usually March 2).** The forms are available from the College Counseling Office or the Upper School Office. All you need to do is fill out your name, social security number, birth date and CEEB code (052045) and sign the form. We will take care of the rest, including mailing it, **but it must be done by the deadline.**
7. Additional information is available from the College Counseling Office or from the California Student Aid Commission in Sacramento.

# What is the FAFSA?

## Why fill out a FAFSA?

The FAFSA (the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid*) is the first step in the financial aid process. You use it to apply for federal student financial aid, such as grants, loans and work-study. In addition, most states and schools use information from the FAFSA to award non-federal aid.

## Why all the questions?

We enter your responses to the FAFSA questions into a formula from the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. The result is your Expected Family Contribution, or EFC. The EFC measures your family's financial strength. It is used to determine your eligibility for federal student aid.

Your state, and the schools you list, may also use some of your responses. They will determine if you may be eligible for school or state aid, in addition to federal aid.

## How do I find out what my EFC is?

We will send you a report called a *Student Aid Report*, or SAR, through the mail or the Internet. The SAR lists the information you reported on your FAFSA, and will tell you your EFC.

It is important to review your SAR when you receive it. Make sure all of your information is correct. Make any necessary changes or provide additional information.

## How much aid do I get?

Your EFC, along with the rest of your FAFSA information, is made available to all the schools you list in Step Six of the FAFSA. The schools use your EFC to prepare a financial aid package to help you meet your financial need. Financial need is the difference between your EFC and your school's cost of attendance (which can include living expenses), as determined by the school.

If you or your family have special circumstances that should be taken into account, contact your school's financial aid office. Some examples of special circumstances are: unusual medical or dental expenses, or a large change in income from last year to this year.

## When do I get the aid?

Any financial aid you are eligible to receive will be paid to you through your school. Typically, your school will first use the aid to pay tuition, fees, and room and board (if provided by the school). Any remaining aid is paid to you for your other expenses.

If you are eligible for a Federal Pell Grant, you may receive it for only one school for the same period of enrollment.

## Where can I get more information on student aid?

The best place for information about student financial aid is the financial aid office at the school you plan to attend. The financial aid administrator can tell you about student aid available from your state, the school itself and other sources.

You can also check out these resources:

- [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)
- [www.students.gov](http://www.students.gov)
- The Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). TTY users may call 1-800-730-8913.
- Your high school counselor's office
- Your local library's reference section

There may be information available from foundations, religious organizations, community organizations and civic groups, as well as organizations related to your field of interest, such as the American Medical Association or American Bar Association. Check with your parents' employers or unions to see if they award scholarships or have tuition payment plans.



## Warning!

Be wary of organizations that charge a fee to submit your application, or to find you money for school. Some are legitimate and some are scams. Generally, any help you pay for you can get for free from your school or the U.S. Department of Education.



**FAFSA**  
FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID  
We Help Put America Through School

## International Students/TOEFL

Procedures for international applicants are to a large degree the same as for U.S. citizens and residents. There are some additional twists, however.

When you contact colleges for information you should always state up front that you are an international student so that any special requirements or forms can be sent to you. Conversely, **if you are a U.S. citizen or resident who lives abroad**, you should state your citizenship or residency status very clearly in your communication so you get the right forms.

The biggest challenge regards the availability of financial aid. **It is extremely limited and hard to get.** Many require a “statement of financial resources” before they will accept or enroll you or, in some cases, even mail you an admissions application form. There are also visa forms that they will send you once you have been accepted and have decided to enroll.

Most colleges require the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) if English is not your native tongue. It is internet-based and offered only on certain dates during the school year. If you can arrange to take it at home over the summer, I recommend that you do it. To schedule a test session, you need to make an appointment well in advance and then stick to it, since they won't refund the large test fee.

If you wait until the fall of your senior year to take the TOEFL, unless for some reason you prefer to handle everything yourself including transportation, you should do it through me. I'll coordinate with other students wanting to take the TOEFL around the same time period and make all the arrangements on your behalf. I have information on the test and sample discs with which you can practice.

With the TOEFL, remember that the school does not receive an official copy of the score. **You need to give a copy of your TOEFL score report to the college counselor and to the Upper School Office** so it can be included on your test data sheet. If you get a higher score later, we will replace the lower one.

If you are applying to a university in your home country, make sure that you (and we) know the requirements and calendar of events so we can help you meet any deadlines and provide the proper documents and recommendations.

## Athletic Recruitment

Athletic ability, like prowess in the arts or any other extracurricular area, can be a big boost to your chances of being admitted to a competitive college. Every college or university has its own procedures, but in general the following applies:

- **If you are applying to a Division III institution**, athletic scholarships will not be involved. Financial aid is based on need or other “merit,” but not specifically athletics. In most cases, applicants will have to take the initiative in contacting college coaches, due to more restrictive recruitment rules. Writing to a coach late in junior or early in senior year, introducing yourself and asking for information is a good start. If you know the name, write “Dear Coach Smith.” If you don’t, then a letter addressed to “Field Hockey Coach” with the salutation “Dear Coach” works fine (assuming you want field hockey, of course).
- **With Division I and II**, it’s a bit more formalized. If you are a real blue chip athlete, they will probably find you, although a pro-active role on your part, as with Division III works too for starters. But with Division I and II, there’s one additional element - **the NCAA Eligibility Center**, a central office which validates GPA and standardized test score reports for all athletes to determine their eligibility. You must fill out forms, which you can get from the Upper School Office, and send them in.

## Portfolios

Sometimes sending extra “show and tell” materials with your application can be a help, provided it’s of quality and relevant. Follow the instructions (if any) with each application to see how they want such materials handled. Be sure to put your name and social security number on whatever you send in case it gets separated from your application (or if you mail it separately). And, as a rule, if you want it back eventually, you’ll need to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

If you are applying to a specialty institution (such as Rhode Island School of Design, Lawrence University Conservatory of Music, Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, etc.), a portfolio or audition will be a required element of the process. But even if you are applying to a liberal arts college as a pre-med, having talent of any kind beyond the classroom is a good thing. Just because you send slides of some of your artwork or a recording of you singing your favorite Mozart aria doesn’t mean you’re necessarily going to be an arts major. So, let them see your talent – but first make sure from someone you trust that it’s good.

The Common Application has chosen Slide Room as their exclusive partner to handle arts supplements. This means that colleges hosting an undergraduate admissions process, which require a creative portfolio, can use SlideRoom and the Common Application together. This works perfectly for schools of music, art, architecture, theatre, film, and even non-art schools.

## The Role of Parents

- Educate yourself. Don't hesitate to ask questions of colleges (admissions, financial aid, coaches, whoever) and expect answers. You want to be sure that your information is up-to-date. Knowledge is power. Remember to take much of what you read and hear from colleges with a grain of salt.
- Be supportive. Be interested. Take an active (but not smothering) role in the process. Be a good sounding board.
- Avoid applying too much pressure. A general rule is that for every parental push there is an equal and opposite reaction from the student.
- Establish any broad limitations early in the process (e.g. no college east of the Mississippi, the Rockies, the California border; no college that costs more than \$XX; that has co-ed bathrooms; etc.)
- Maintain the subtle but real distinction between "her" and "our", as in "our" SAT scores, "our" grades, "our" acceptance/denial letters. This helps you keep a more detached perspective on the process, which makes you a better advisor.
- Avoid predictions and pronouncements, as in "Of course you'll get into IVU. Great Uncle Fred's best friend's neighbor was on the board of trustees." This may not turn out to be much help.
- Keep track of what's going on. Are forms being procured, filled out and submitted in a timely manner? Keep in touch with the college counselor.
- Insist that copies be made of everything: applications, financial aid forms, etc.
- Keep things in perspective. If not getting into her first choice college is the greatest disappointment of her life, then she is truly fortunate.
- And finally, when your new college student arrives on campus to begin her career, meet roommates, etc. - resist the temptation to make the bed.

"Soon we'll be out, amid the cold world's strife; soon we'll be sliding down the razor blade of life."  
-Tom Lehrer, *Bright College Days*

## Final Thoughts

Each student must be responsible for obtaining materials, registering for tests, meeting deadlines and in general taking charge of her own applications. The college counselor's role is to advise, inspire and provide as much help, information and support as possible, but ultimately it is the student who will be attending the college. So the more proactive and responsible a role you play in the process, the more you pay attention and keep your eyes and ears open to what is going on around you, and the more you take advantage of the many opportunities that become available, the more likely in the long run you will be satisfied with the outcome. Many dedicated and caring people are here to help you through this process, as well as to provide support for your candidacy, but in the final analysis it's up to you to play the lead in this production.



*"He appears to have eaten some homework."*

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## Notes

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## Santa Catalina School

1500 Mark Thomas Drive | Monterey, CA 93940  
831.655.9300 | [santacatalina.org](http://santacatalina.org)