

A Step-by-Step Guide to College

Important Dates/Deadlines:

Oct. 1st: FAFSA opens up! Complete by March 15th.

Oct. 14th: Seniors take the SAT!

Nov 1.-Dec 15th; varies: MANY colleges' Early Action deadlines fall between these dates. Make sure you know when the colleges you are interested in have their Early Action deadlines! **(Read below to find out what Early Action is and what it means)**

Step 1. Apply to college!

-See the chart I posted on Google Classroom called "College Covid Response Chart" which lists ALL Michigan colleges and universities with their application deadlines, scholarship information, tour information, and much more.

Think about applying to each of these three different kinds of colleges:

1. **A "Reach" College:** a college where the grades/scores of the students who are TYPICALLY accepted there are **HIGHER than what you have**. This school will be challenging to get into, but that doesn't mean you wouldn't do well there. This is a "Reach" college.
2. **A "Match" College:** a college where the grades/scores of the students who are TYPICALLY accepted there are the **SAME as your grades/scores**. You would likely get into this school and receive some assistance from them.
3. **A "Safety" College:** a college where the grades/scores of the students who are TYPICALLY accepted there are **LOWER than your grades/scores**.

Is it bad to go to a school where the grades/scores are lower than what you have?

No! You are VERY likely to get in, so it's a good backup if your other schools don't work out. There's also a good chance that a safety school would give you a lot of money for scholarships! Plus, you can always start there and transfer later if you decide to.

Note: You can find out the grades/scores of students who are accepted to certain colleges by Googling: "Average SAT scores and GPA to get into X College"

Remember: if you are interested in a school, no matter the price, APPLY! Especially in October when the fees are waived. You never know what kind of scholarships they will give you.

Note: Aim to finish your applications by HALLOWEEN to have the highest chance of receiving the maximum amount of **scholarships** from those schools. This will likely mean you are applying **Early Action**.

Note: What is Early Action vs. Early Decision?

Early Action means you will be considered for the largest pool of scholarships, and you also have a higher chance of being admitted than regular decision (though you can still get in at the regular decision deadline).

Early Decision is binding. It means you are telling the school that if you get accepted, you **WILL** attend that school and withdraw applications from all others. I highly recommend that you do **NOT** apply **Early Decision**, as this narrows your college options and scholarship options at other colleges. If you are considering Early Decision, please talk with me or your high school counselor first!

NOTE: What do I need for college applications?

1. **2-3 Letters of recommendations.** One (or both) from a teacher, or one from a boss/coach. Ask them to send you the letter of recommendation, as the schools will likely have you upload it yourself. If not, ask the recommender to send it to the school you are applying to (look at the application--it will specify what email they want it sent to. If it doesn't, it will want you to upload the document).
2. **Essay.** Not every college will want an essay, but this is a GREAT way to show them who you are and let you stand out. It's also a chance to explain any years in high school where your GPA dropped AND to explain any financial struggles you have faced that aren't shown on your FAFSA. Don't say no to the essay just because you don't like writing!
3. **FAFSA.** The sooner you complete this, the sooner you will receive your scholarship package from a school! They use this to determine any need-based scholarships. **See Step three for more information!**

NOTE: This year many colleges are offering applications that are **TEST-OPTIONAL** (you can see which ones are offering this in the College Covid Response Chart mentioned above).

-What is "test-optional"?

Due to COVID, the class of 2021 missed their chance to take the SAT Spring test date, so colleges are making it optional for them to submit their scores on their application. That means when you apply, it is no longer required for you to submit your scores if you do not wish to.

-Should I submit my SAT scores?

If you choose NOT to submit your scores, colleges will likely look at your GPA and high school courses to determine your admission decision.

Before you decide not to submit your score, make SURE that the college you are applying to does not require test scores to consider you for merit-based scholarships. (See the College Covid Response Chart or the individual college websites to determine if SAT is required for merit-based scholarships)

If you DO submit your SAT scores, you have a good chance at being considered for more scholarships (Especially if you do well!).

Step 2. Take the SAT!

Take a deep breath, give it your best shot, and work on college applications while you wait for your scores (:

Remember: The SAT does not reflect you as a student, and many colleges know this and are starting to look at other things on your application that they find more important (how you did in high school, did you take AP courses, did you do extracurriculars). It's important to try your best on it for scholarships, but if it doesn't go well there are plenty of other scholarships!

Step 3. Complete the FAFSA.

1. Create an FSA ID (your parents need to do this as well). Go here to complete it: <https://fsaid.ed.gov/npas/index.htm>
*this will be your E-signature throughout college--it allows you and your parents to sign your FAFSA and any agree to any scholarships, grants, or loans that you receive
2. See **"The Free Application for Federal Student Aid"** pdf for FULL details about how to fill this out!! (I posted this! Email me if you need it: ajones@saugatuckps.com)

Step 4. Search for national and local scholarships! Here are some helpful places to look:

-<https://www.scholarships.com/scholarship-search>

-<https://opportunity.collegeboard.org/> (this one has a chance to win \$40,000!)

-<https://www.goingmerry.com/>

Step 5. Check out the websites of the colleges you applied to for any extra scholarships they have!

Remember: If you have ANY questions or just need help processing things, feel free to reach out.

ajones@saugatuckps.com