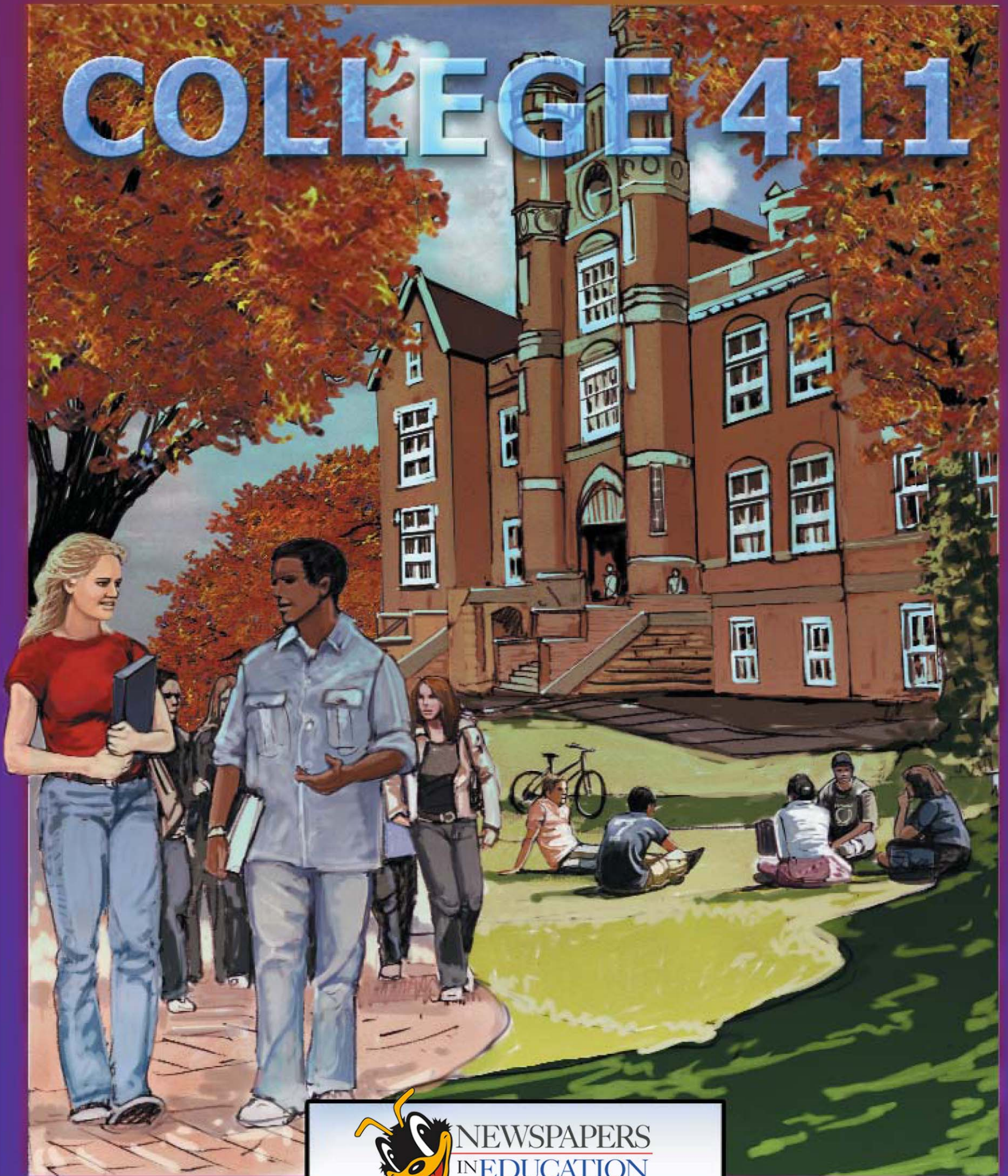
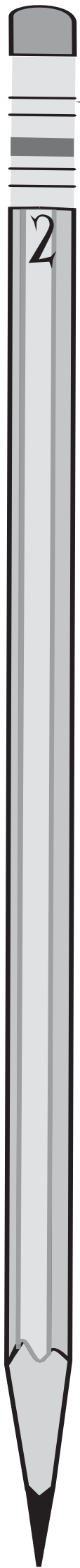


COLLEGE 411



NEWSPAPERS
IN EDUCATION



Why Go to College?

We go to college to further our education and get a degree so we can get a good job. But that's not the only reason to go to college. Colleges and universities offer grrr-eat experience to young people that they can't get anywhere else. A herd of us here at our university decided to get together to tell you what we know about the road to college.

College allows young students to get a taste of responsibility and independence. For many, college is the first time they are on their own. It's the first time some people cook their own meals, do their laundry, spend their own money, choose their classes, and live away from home. These are important experiences to have before entering the real world. It may seem scary to go far away from home and be on your own, but imagine the sense of accomplishment (and the tons of fun you will have) after your four years of school, five if you're lucky.

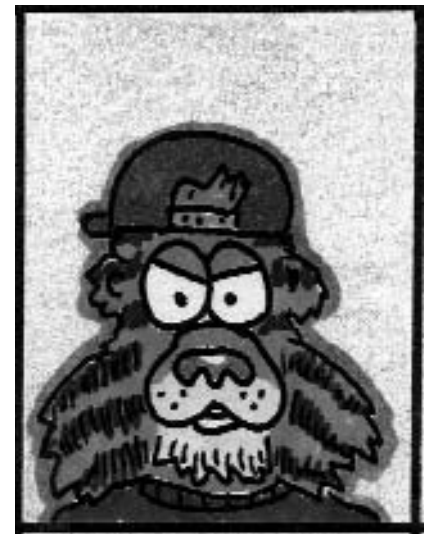
College is also a great way to meet new and interesting people. If you go away to school, you'll probably learn to adjust to living with a roommate, which is harder than you may think.

Not all high school seniors know exactly what they want to do with their lives when they "grow up." College gives all those undecided students time to explore options for professions. By taking some of the wide variety of college courses, you can discover something you are interested in pursuing. Colleges offer opportunities to get involved in clubs and volunteer programs, too. Because there are so many options at colleges and universities, it is almost impossible not to find something that you would find enjoyable. Some schools offer fabulous study-abroad programs in which you take courses that interest you while you live in a foreign country.

Now, let me contradict myself for a moment. Although I think college can be a wonderful experience, it is not for everyone. Some folks are ready to be on their own and get a job right out of high school. And many people are not financially ready to head off to college after their senior year of high school. Making the choice to go to college is a personal one. But a four-year college away from home is not the only choice, so let me tell you about some other options.

There are lots of two-year schools, and community college is an excellent low-cost alternative to going away to school. Community college provides the low-cost opportunity to continue your education after high school, without having to go away to school just yet. A lot of students take a year or two of classes in a community college to get used to the workload before applying to a four-year school away from home. There are also vocational schools for those of you out there looking to specialize in a trade.

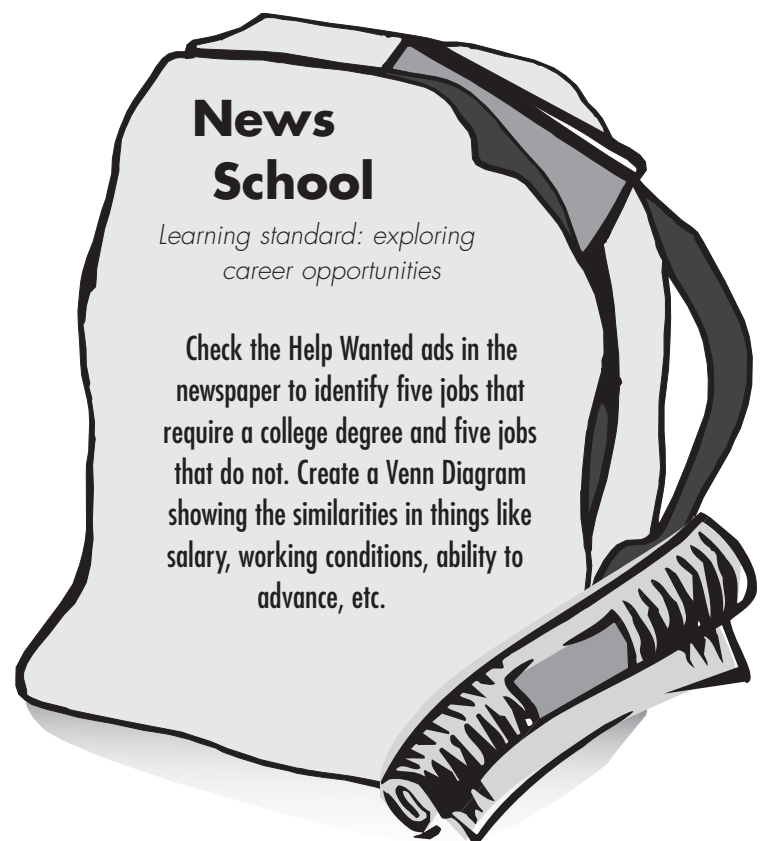
ADVICE



FROM CONOR

I think it's most important to choose the path that makes you happy and comfortable – whether or not you think college is the choice for you. It's an important decision, so first, weigh the options carefully. Remember, although lots of young people go to college right after high school, you are not limited to that choice. Going to college is a huge decision and it is understandable that a young person would need time to prepare for such a wonderful journey. And remember this, too: If you choose a school and it turns out not to be a good place for you, you aren't stuck there. You can transfer to another school.

Getting yourself prepared for college early is the best way to make the stressful situation as painless as possible. This special newspaper section will help you think about the choices you have to make, starting in ninth grade, to prepare yourself for choosing schools and applying to them. And along the way, you can see some of the funny situations we got into once we got to school.





BETSY EX

PLAINS IT ALL

9th Graders Read This!

Going from junior high to high school can be tough. I was there once, and they had to drag me kicking and screaming from eighth grade into the dreaded big "baaad" (I am a sheep, you know) high school. But don't worry if you feel this way in 9th grade (or in 10th grade, if that's the year your high school starts). After what may seem like the longest two months of your life, the transition from junior high or middle school to high school ends and you'll be fine. Then you can focus on what you need to do.

So, what are you doing today, right now even, to get yourself prepared for college? Feel like you're going to scream? Calm yourself for a minute so I can explain. Even though you are only in your first year of high school, it is extremely important for you to start thinking about these things. As a freshman in high school, you have a clean slate to begin preparing yourself to be the best candidate for college. I have heard too many sad stories about high school seniors realizing they couldn't go to the college of their dreams because they played around when they were

freshmen. Don't become one of those sad stories. Choose a college-preparation set of classes now.

Every year is crucial in building your high school transcript. I wish there was a better way to say this, but you have to be serious about your grades! It sounds like a cliché, but it's true. A lot of kids mess around in ninth grade without realizing what they are getting themselves into. If your grades start out low, it's very important to try to get them up as soon as possible. The better you do at the beginning of high school, the easier it will be to keep up your grade point average.

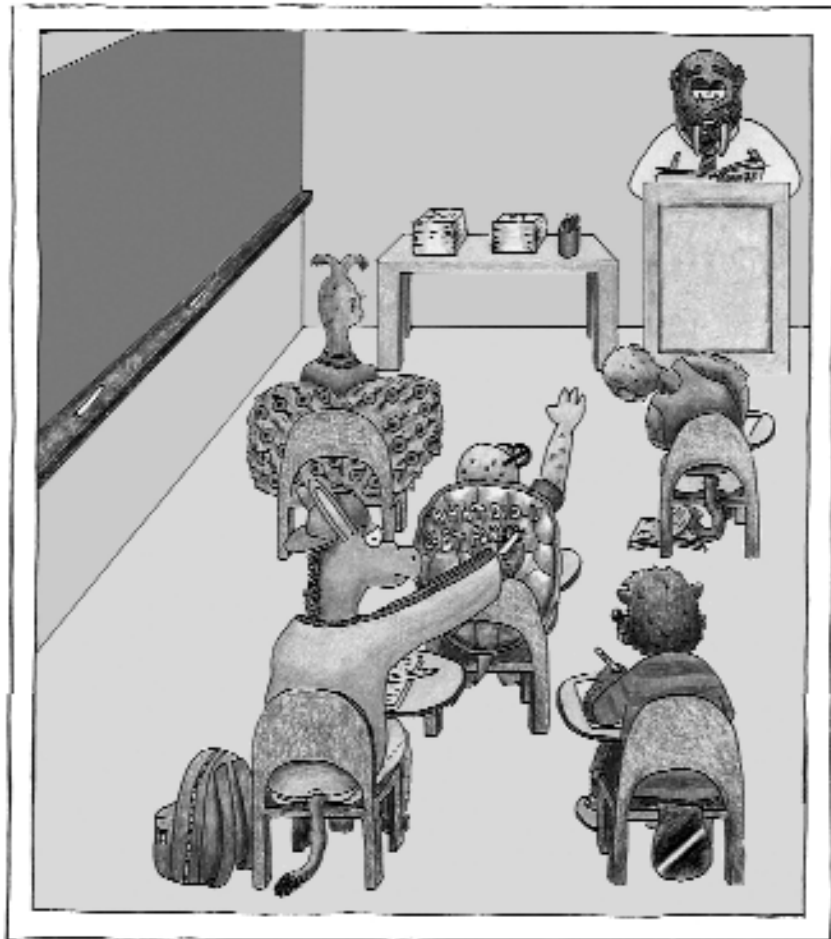
Grades are one of the most important factors for getting into college, but they are not the only factor. You probably know all about the test scores – the SATs and the ACTs (more about those on pages 6 and 7) – but there's something else to think about: your extra-curricular activities. Get involved in something that interests you – the earlier, the better. Get a herd of your friends to join with you.

Think about this: Colleges want their student population to be filled with students who excel academically and will also be involved participants in the school. They want to see that you are a well-rounded student. Sure, maybe you had straight A's, which is fabulous, but did you ever leave the house during high school? Whether you like sports, yearbook, marching band, or volunteer clubs, if you get involved early you will have a better chance of getting positions of leadership. And that leadership looks great on your transcript because it shows that you are dedicated and responsible and that teachers and your fellow students trust you to be in charge.

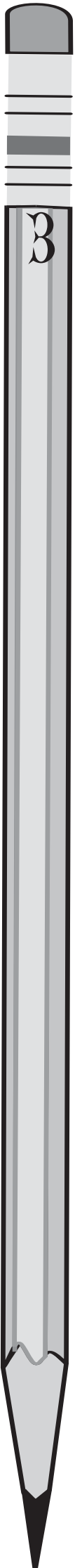
What if there isn't a club you're interested in? Do what I did. Start your own! I created a knitting club. (After all, I already had the wool!) Starting your own club will also show your dedication and leadership skills, and you'll have more fun if you create a club dedicated to something you really care about.

SO REMEMBER, 9th grade matters.

Go out and have a good time, but please don't forget to keep up those grades and check out those clubs. Although you do have four years to put together that terrific high school transcript, don't start off with something you might wish you could erase four years from now. And keep this in mind: There is a college for everyone, no matter what your grades and scores turn out to be.



"Which animal is thought to be the most intelligent?"



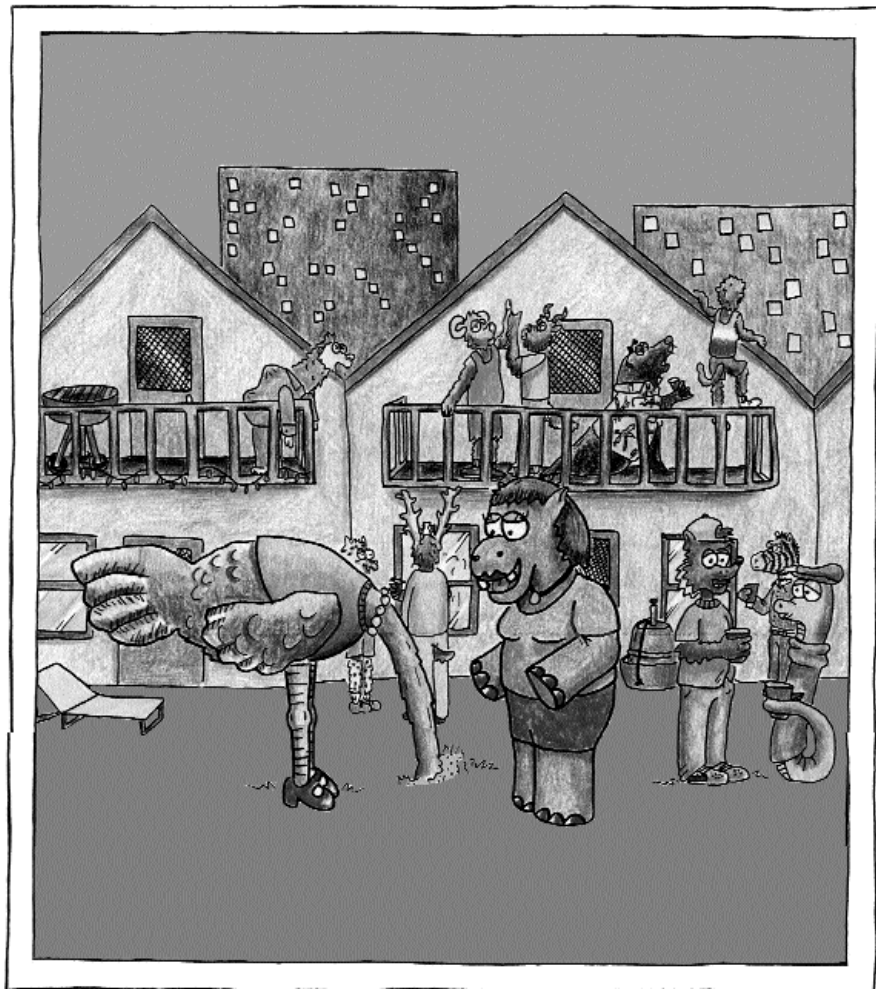
How to Choose a College

4

All right, you've decided that college is the path for you. You're probably thinking to yourself, "How in the world am I supposed to know what college is right for me?" And you would be right to wonder. There are thousands of colleges, so how do you pick?

You need to think about what things are important to you. I started by deciding what size school I wanted to go to. Colleges can be as small as a few hundred students or as large as 50,000. Think about your comfort level and the type of learner you are. Will you feel comfortable sitting in classes where you are one of 400 students, or are you more the type of person who needs classes of 20 students so you know everyone's name and shoe size? Think about the social scene for a minute. Do you like to see the same people all the time, or are you interested in going out and meeting new people every day?

Of course, you will still meet new people in a small school, but having only a few hundred other students at your school doesn't provide as many options to see new faces. If you can't decide between a huge school and a little school, think about



"Who cares if you have a zit? Go talk to him!"

THOUGHTS



FROM THEO

the experience at a medium-sized school. (Bears, as you may recall from the Goldilocks story, prefer situations that are just right.) A medium-sized school has some of the benefits of both big and small schools. How can you decide which size school is best for you? Ask yourself a few questions. Do you like to raise your hand in class so you can be involved in classroom discussions? If the answer is yes, being in a big school with hundreds of students in lecture classes is probably not ideal. Do you like being anonymous and not running into people you know everywhere you go? If so, being at a school of just a few hundred is probably not your best bet.

News School

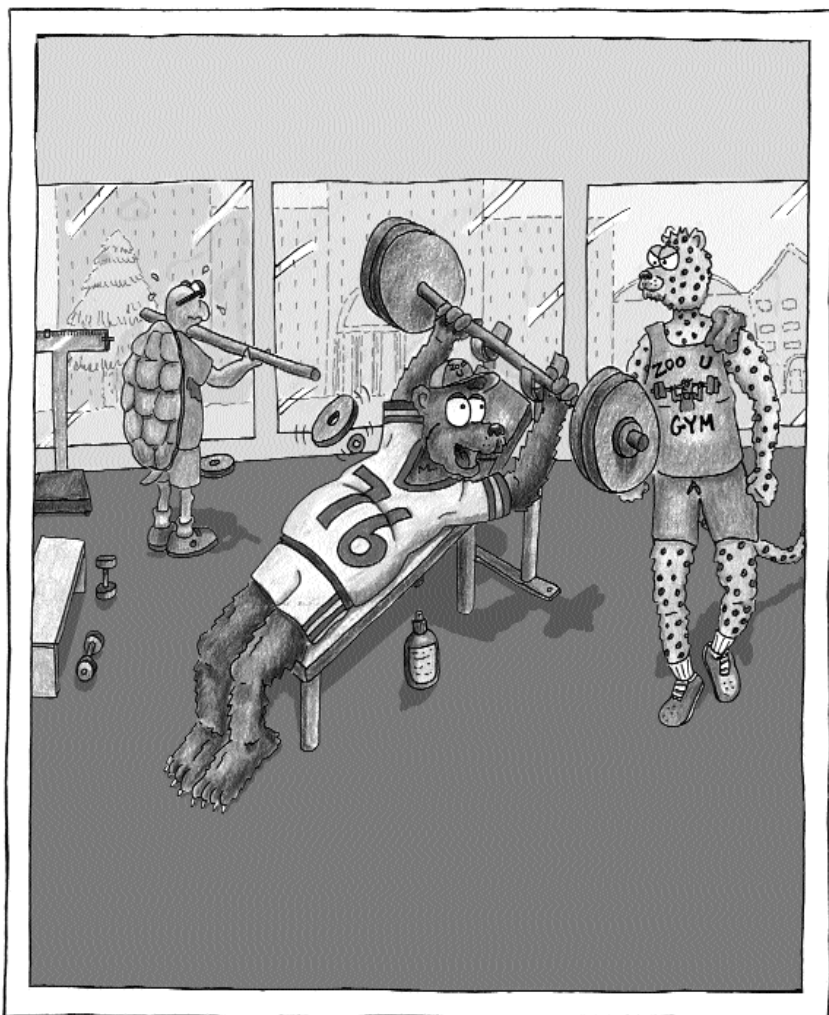
*Learning standards:
portraying positive images,
designing ads*

1. During your college experience, you will meet many interesting people. Look through today's newspaper and pick out some interesting people you would like to meet. Make a list of them and write why you would like to get to know each one.
2. Are you thinking about getting involved in some school activities? Why not use the newspaper as your inspiration? What would be a good idea for a club or extracurricular activity? Make a list of your suggestions. Then design a newspaper ad telling about these activities.

Going, Going... Where?

Once you have decided the size school at which you would feel comfortable, think about the **THREE L'S - LOCATION, LOCATION, AND LOCATION!**

That's not just for real estate anymore! How far away from home do you want to go? Is going to school across the country even an option for you? Think about vacations and holidays. How will you get home? Is it cost-efficient for you to go to school far away? Will you have a car? How comfortable will you feel going far away from home? Some people love the freedom of being hours away from home, while others find comfort knowing they are only a short car ride away. What is important to you?



"Hey, can I get a spot?"

What about the weather? **DO YOU LOVE THE GOLD?** Hate the frizzy fur problems of living near the beach? Need to live in a city? These are important things to think about. You do not want to get stuck living in the middle of nowhere if you consider yourself to be a city kid. But if you're more of a country cub, you might be happy in the middle of nowhere. This is the place where you'll be living for the next four years, so you want to make sure it's the right place for you.

The Internet is a great place to begin to look. There's a Website for just about every college out there. Check out a few that interest you. Look at the majors they offer. It would be a huge bummer to find your dream school without looking at the majors they offer, then show up on your first day only to find out you cannot actually major in domestic pet film as you had wanted to.

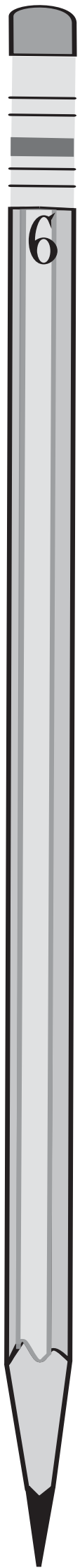
Do your research first. Find out what kinds of programs each school offers and what each program entails. Find out what else is offered at each school you are interested in. Do those schools have the clubs that interest you? What kinds of facilities do they have? Do they have a gym? Think about things you just cannot live without. Are you a shopaholic? Find out where the stores are in relation to campus. Think about what you value in your everyday life and make sure the school you choose offers that.

Once you have narrowed your choices based on size, location, programs, and facilities, it is time for some on-site visits. Give yourself plenty of time to spread them out. You don't want to get sick of college before you have even applied. Start looking during your junior year just to give yourself time. Don't drive yourself crazy, but be sure to pace yourself. You have a whole year and a half to do everything, so don't try to squeeze it all into one weekend. Chances are, if you visit 20 schools in two days, no matter how great they are, you'll hate all of them, and you don't want to get yourself in that sort of situation.

News School

Learning standards: understanding maps, locating information

Where would you like to go to college? Can you narrow your choices to a few areas? Make your No. 1 choice and answer these questions about your selection by using a weather map from your newspaper. How many miles is your college from your home? What direction would you travel to get there? What city and state is your school in? What is the weather like on campus today? Check the Sports section to see whether any colleges you are interested in are mentioned.



SATS & ACTS

Okay, I know you want to hear this about as much as you want to be downwind of a pig after dinner, but the truth about your college entrance exams, the SATs and/or ACTs, is that they may very well be the most important tests you take in your high school career. Every college has a different system for narrowing down the number of applicants, so standardized tests are often what the admissions people look at first. If you want to find out how important these tests are to a particular college, go to its Website to find out. You can find a breakdown of the criteria they use for assessing applicants.

SAT stands for Scholastic Aptitude Test, and it is required by most four-year colleges or universities before you can even be considered for acceptance. It is designed to measure the thinking skills you will need in college and to see how well you analyze and solve problems. Each test has sections called Critical Reading, Math, and Writing, including an essay, as well as an "unscored" section (which doesn't count, but is simply used to test questions for future exams) that could be for any of the skills.

The ACT, the American College Test, on the other hand, tests you in English, Math, Reading, and Science Reasoning. On this test, you will have 2 hours and 55 minutes to finish a variety of multiple-choice questions divided into four sections — one for each tested subject area. Although more kids take the SAT exam, most colleges will consider either one. But before you decide which test to take, run a quick check of your target schools. A good comparison of both tests can be found online at www.princetonreview.com, so check that for more information.

You can take the entrance exams starting in the early spring of your junior year, and you can retake them as many times as you want until December of your senior year. But it's never too early to start preparing. The best preparation advice is to practice. The questions on the SATs/ACTs may be different from what you're used to. Starting as early as your freshman year, you can take the PSATs, the preliminary SAT, to give yourself an idea of how you might perform on the real thing and to get some practice with the format and procedures. The PSATs will help you gain a better understanding of how much preparation you need. The best place to go for SAT practice is the Internet, where you'll find an abundant source of free practice questions and tutorials. If you'd rather have more structured SAT preparation, find out whether your high school offers a course or you can pay for and take a course offered by a private institution. Another choice: You could hire a private tutor.

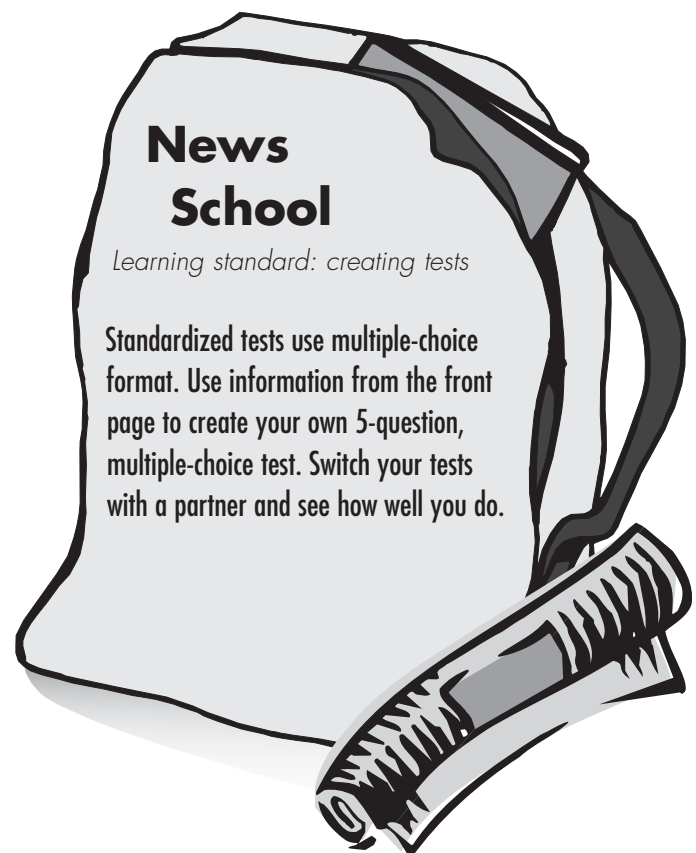
You can register for each test online at www.collegeboard.com, but make sure you check the registration deadlines so that you don't miss any. Don't panic. While they may not be the easiest assessments you'll ever take, it is more than possible to perform well on the SATs and ACTs, as long as you prepare yourself.



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HIS IDEAS



News School

Learning standard: creating tests

Standardized tests use multiple-choice format. Use information from the front page to create your own 5-question, multiple-choice test. Switch your tests with a partner and see how well you do.



"My stomach is in knots, Doc."

Come Out of Your Shell to Fill in the Blanks

I'd love to be able to give you all kinds of advice about how to do well on these tests, but I don't have enough space on this one page. So I'm going to choose just one section of the SAT — the sentence completions — and show you how to succeed. This will give you a heads-up about how these exams work. Then you can go online for all kinds of test preparation help for all the sections.

Sentence completions

In this section, the sentence has one or two blanks that show a missing word or short phrase. There are choices for answers and you need to find the best one. The key word there is best because the correct answer may not be the perfect word to fill in the blank, but it will be the best of the choices given.

Here's how it works:

Sentence:

The announcement blaring from the speaker was so _____ that the students couldn't hear what the teacher in the room was saying.

- | | |
|---------------|----------|
| a. loud | d. quiet |
| b. annoying | e. short |
| c. ridiculous | |

Reading the sentence carefully and knowing a few tricks can help you choose the correct answer. First, read the whole sentence to get the gist of the meaning. You'll see that the message of the sentence is about whether the students can hear the teacher. While the announcement may have been annoying, ridiculous, and short — and all of those make sense — none of those choices refers to the ability to hear the teacher. Those choices are what are known as distractors, put there to take your attention away from the correct answer, which is a. — loud.

Here's a two-blank version of the sentence completion question.

The announcement blaring from the speaker was so _____ that the students couldn't _____ what the teacher in the room was saying.

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| a. annoying ... stand | d. quiet ... recall |
| b. loud ... hear | e. fast ... discern |
| c. ridiculous ... understand | |

In this case, you'd note that the sentence tells you the announcement was "blaring" and you'd realize that the sentence was referring to the students' ability to hear so you'd pick choice b. — loud ... hear. You may be tempted by choice e. because the word "discern" seems like the kind of word that would go on a test like this one, but don't be fooled. Sometimes the simple answer is the right one.

And don't be concerned if you didn't get the correct answers on these practice questions. Free help is on the way. Go to www.collegeboard.com, where you can sign up to get a daily e-mail with a practice SAT question. That's a great way to take it slowly while getting prepared. Each day, you'll get a question and a hint to help you figure it out. And when you feel ready, you can download a practice SAT and take it at home to see how you do. When it comes time to take the real test, you can register for it online at that site.

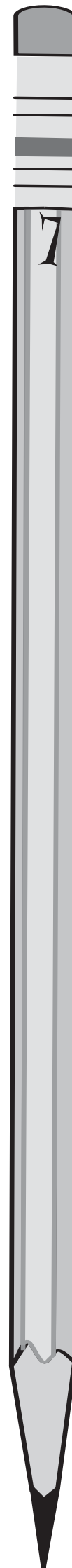
The SAT II Exams

Some selective colleges will require that you take subject exams called the SAT IIs. As you finish your courses in each subject, such as Biology, Chemistry, Foreign Language, etc., it's a good idea to take the corresponding SAT II exam. You can take them beginning in 10th grade.

News School

Learning standard: essay writing

Now that essays are part of the SAT, it will help if you practice writing short essays. Choose an interesting topic from the newspaper and write an essay telling what you think about it. Follow a good essay format using a topic sentence, supporting details, and a summary sentence.



WE INVITED OUR FRIENDS AT COLLEGES ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO GET SOME ADVICE FOR YOU. HERE ARE OUR QUESTIONS AND THEIR ANSWERS.

How did you choose your college?

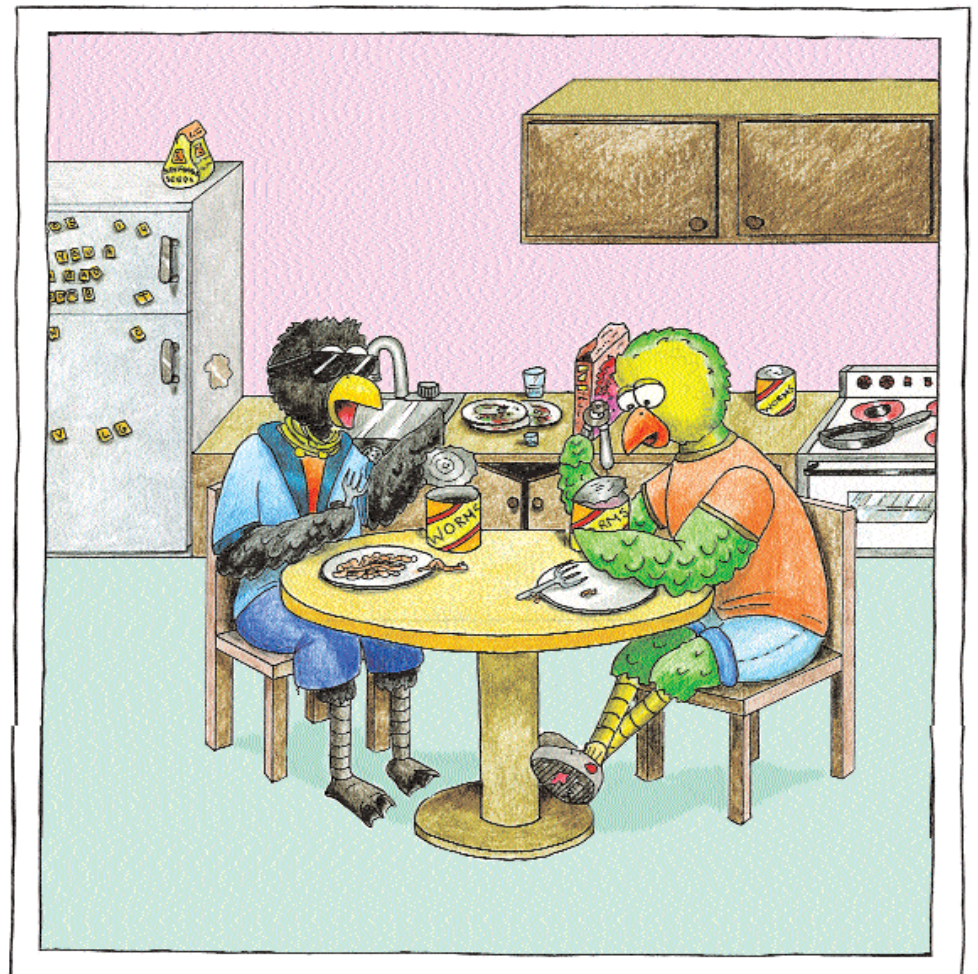
Andy— I wanted somewhere pretty with good academics and w/ a lot of cows.
 Meredith— I heard good things about it from my neighbor and then went to visit and it was a beautiful day and I fell in love with the campus. Plus, I was sick of visiting schools.
 Geoff— Location, the campus, and financial aid.
 David— My uncle played football here and talked to the coach for me.
 Stephanie— I chose it b/c it was one of the least expensive that I was accepted to.
 Natalie— I wanted a mid-size school that had a good teacher education program. I didn't want to be TOO close to home, but not TOO far away either. What affected my decision the most was playing lacrosse like where I could play, where I was offered a scholarship, etc.
 Drew— I heard they had a really good business program and there was no essay to write for the application. —
 John— My brother went here so I visited and I thought it was awesome. —

What do you wish someone told you before you went to school?

Howard— To get involved in activities early on, because it's harder to do that once you're settled; like you can't start writing for the paper when you are a senior.
 Meredith— Don't get a hamster for lack of room for a better pet b/c he will live for 3 years.
 Allyson— That walking in the snow stinks and one should really take into account the weather when picking a college — b/c it's much easier to go to class in warm weather.
 Rachel— Like freshman year I was involved with a stupid boy from home and I went home too much and I missed out on stuff. It's important to stay at school as much as you can on the weekends.
 Ryan— Be careful how hard you party in the first week or so.
 Dave— That the girls you meet up here aren't the girls that you knew from back home. And ... I wish that people hadn't told me that college was really hard, because if you apply yourself it really isn't.

What is the best advice anyone gave you about college?

Jocelyn— To not choose a school based on the campus (which I ignored) and am now realizing was good advice.
 Alexis— Don't get caught up in going to a "good school" cause u will be happy anywhere u go even if it is not necessarily "ivy league."
 Dean— It's not about where you go, it's what you make of it.
 Mike— They don't print your grades on your diploma, so if they're really bad you don't have to worry.
 Kate— You only go to college once. Make the most of it.
 Jordan— Manage your time well and if you party first semester, you may not come back second semester.
 Tamika— My sister told me to go to every class. My other sister told me to have fun ... and tho it's easy to get caught up in school and all, it's important to also have fun!
 Rachel— As long as you're trying your best it doesn't matter what grades you get.
 Not everyone gets straight A's and that's ok.



"Aw man, you just opened a whole new can of worms."

What advice would you give someone planning to go to college?

Leigh— To never let school get in the way of their education, well sorta – it's a quote I heard ... um, I would tell them to definitely take advantage of study abroad if their school offers it.

Steffany— Not to slack off 2 much their first year b/c it can make it real hard to get back on track and more importantly not to stress out too much about grades cause the truth is u r only here for 4 or however many years and u will never get a chance to relive the college experience.

James— Look at all that a school has or doesn't have to offer before you decide to go there.

Kate— Good things don't come easy.

What do you suggest every freshman have for school?

Andy— Shower sandals.

Geoff— Good social skills

Kristina— A George Foreman grill and a "to do list" note pad, an ALARM CLOCK and prob a computer.

Shira— An open mind.

Jenny— Easy mac, lots of microwaveable food.

Jackie— A comfortable blanket and pillow cause u will be taking PLENTY of naps! :-)

Abby— A cell phone/calling card, because you won't be able to maintain relationships without it, at school or at home.

Micah— Definitely a computer, everything's online, even some classes.

What should kids know about their first year of school? The best part? The worst part?

Andrew— The best part is definitely meeting a lot of new people. The worst part is learning how to manage all of the free time because you tend to waste it at first.

Miranda— The work is A LOT harder and grades are not going to be handed over to them (like they are in some high schools). Also they are going to have to make a lot more decisions on their own b/c they will have a lot of independence.

Savannah— Best part: freedom and fun ... worst part: waking up and walking to classes ... once u skip a class it is sooo easy to skip then all.

Jess— You have so much more responsibility than you do in high school, teachers don't care what grades you get – it's up to you to decide.

Katie— Best part: friendships and relationships, worst: remembering (or forgetting) that there are also academics.

Shane— The hardest part is the adjustment to being independent and knowing that you are responsible for getting your stuff done and going to class. Your teachers aren't like high school so they aren't going to care if you don't hand in your homework or come to class, they just fail you. Best part – definitely the weekends and meeting new people. Worst part – having a crummy roommate.

Natasha— The best part is getting to meet so many new people in your dorm. The worst part – for me at least – was being homesick. I missed my parents and home a lot.

Steve— Worst part is gaining 15 pounds.

If you could do it over what would you do differently?

Dan— I would have gone abroad.

Carolyn— I would have gone to a city school that had a dance program. Or a school that didn't value Greek life as much as this one does and is a bit more artsy.

Dave— I would try and stick it out with football ... other than that nothing.

Joanna— I would have more fun my freshman year and have gone out more often with new people b/c I didn't take advantage of all the new people and I stayed in a lot on weekends and now I realized that this is the time to have fun b/c after college I will be working and I wish I had realized that last year instead of just now.

Joey— I would've looked at a few more schools (more than 3) before I picked.

Randy— I would say get to know my professors more. By senior year I knew them and I felt comfortable talking to them. I feel as though I should have done that starting from the beginning, and been more awake for class and try to participate, because I would have done better.

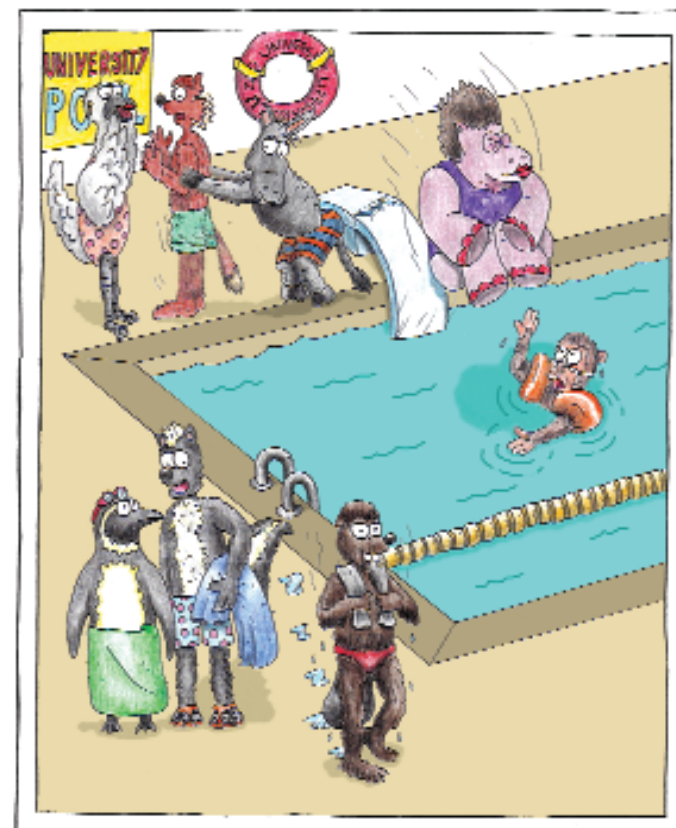
Su Lin— I would try not to worry about little things so much that they have a negative affect on the rest of my life.

Ben— Nothing ... I've learned from the mistakes I've made. In order to survive u gotta learn to live with regret.



A final thought . . .

Julia— It doesn't really matter which school u go to, it's what u make of it so there is no use stressing so much in high school b/c if u are a self starter (which u have to be b/c nobody is telling u what to do unless u have control parents) then u can really make or break your college experience.



"Now that kid's making a big splash at college."

Understanding Applications and Admissions

10

Once you've researched, visited, and narrowed down your choices, it will be time to submit applications. You should work with your parents and school guidance counselor on this step.

Begin with some research. A number of questions need to be answered before you apply. When do your colleges start accepting applications and when are the deadlines? What does each college ask for in addition to an application? Can you apply online or do you have to request a paper application? The answers to almost all of these questions can be found online at each college's Website.

In the course of your research, you are likely to come across a number of colleges that accept the **Common Application**, and you may be wondering exactly what that is. The Common App, as it is generally known, is just what its name suggests — a general application that you can fill out once, photocopy, and send to any number of colleges and universities. Applying to college is time-consuming, and let's face it, you have plenty of other things to worry about in your senior year. (You think finding a prom dress made for a hippo is easy?) The Common Application simplifies the process and can save you a ton of time, but it is not accepted everywhere, so it's essential to find out which schools take it before you fill it out. The Common Application can be completed electronically or in a downloadable, printable form. Both forms, as well as a complete list of the places that accept it can be obtained online at www.commonapp.org.

College Websites might use some unfamiliar terms to describe their particular admissions process. You may have trouble telling the difference between two or more of these terms because many of them sound almost alike. For example, are there differences among the terms "early admission," "early decision," and "early action"? And what exactly does "rolling admission" mean?

Early admission is just what the name says. It's the process of applying to college early in the senior year. It comes in two forms, early action and early decision. The main difference between the two is that **early decision** is binding, while early action is not. In other words, if you are accepted to college by early decision, you've made a commitment to attend that school. Early admission usually begins between the end of the August and the beginning of September, and the deadlines generally fall around the beginning of November. If you apply to a school for early admission, you're telling that school that it's your first choice, which may make the school more likely to accept you.

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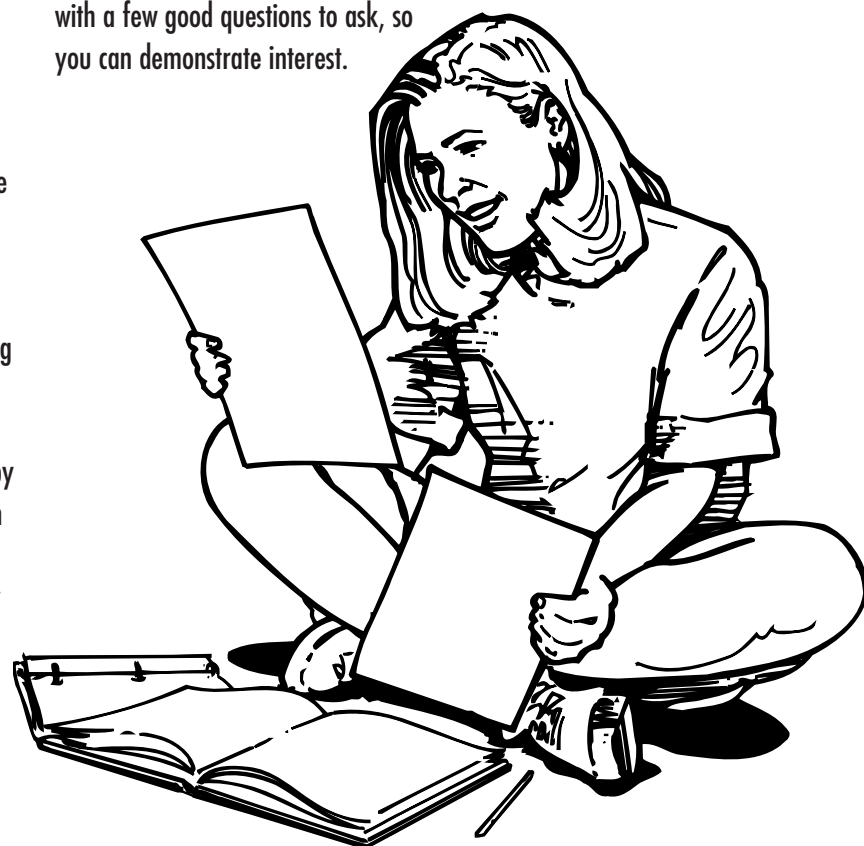
\$ TO HELP YOU**



Another type of application process is called **rolling admission**. The advantage of rolling admission is that if you tend to save things for the last minute, most schools with this type of admission will accept applications as late as April or even May. Rolling admission means that soon after you apply you can be notified whether you are accepted. Schools with rolling admission don't wait until April to notify everyone; rather, they notify students as their applications come in.

The first part of a college application is like any other form you might fill out, like a job application. It asks for the usual information, such as your name, address, Social Security number, etc. Nothing too complicated. As you move through the application, the questions become more complex and specific to you. It will ask you to list activities you've participated in, positions you may have held, or awards you've won. This is your first chance to show admissions boards what makes you, well, you!

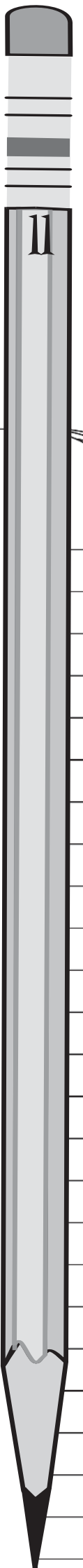
And, if the school to which you're applying offers an opportunity for an interview and you can get there, go for it. Be relaxed and poised and ready to talk about what you can offer the school and why you want to attend. It's also good to go with a few good questions to ask, so you can demonstrate interest.





WRITING THE ESSAY

THEM WITH WORDS



Chances are you've been bombarded with endless talk about the college entrance essay and how important it is. I hate to tell you this, but it's true. The admissions essay is one of the most important parts of the college application for those schools that require essays. I'm not trying to make you nervous, but a good essay can be the difference between an acceptance and a rejection. The essay is your opportunity to speak in your own voice and let the admissions board meet you. You know that you're unique and you want to make sure that your essay stands out from everyone else's. Therefore, the best advice I can give you is this: Be yourself! A college official will read thousands of essays every year, and you want yours to be the one that causes her to jump up and say to her colleagues, "You've got to read this!"

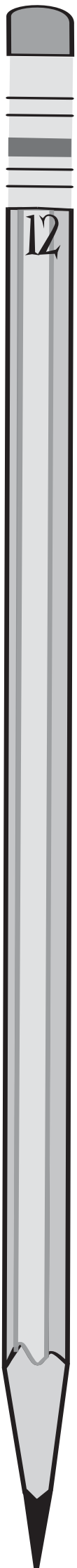
Not only are you trying to impress the reader of your essay, you are also trying to get him to know you and like you. That's why it's so important to write something that gives the reader a peek into who you are and what you are like, no matter what topic you choose or are assigned. Instead of writing about what a wonderful person your old Aunt Ida was, write about how she influenced who you became. Admissions officers want to learn how fantastic you are, not about Aunt Ida. It's really special that she was such a great person, but she's not applying to college, you are.

Many applicants are led astray by the belief that big words make you sound more intelligent. The truth is, college officials want to hear from you, not from Merriam Webster, so put away your thesaurus and write your essay in your own words. Another common misconception is that drama and trauma make the most interesting essays. Admissions officials want to read about people and events that have contributed to the person you are and the kind of college student you will become.

You will have a much easier time writing about a topic that excites you and has some significance in your life. So choose a subject you care about, something personal and meaningful. You won't have to work as hard to write it and admissions officials won't have to work as hard to read it. Write an essay that only you could write because it has your personal insights in it.

Once again, you are lucky to be living in the age of technology because the Internet offers a lot of great Websites to give you helpful hints about writing your essay. The Website www.collegeboard.com contains a section with tips about writing your essay. For a step-by-step guide to writing your essay, check out <http://collegeapps.about.com/od/admissionessay/>. This Website takes you from brainstorming a topic to editing your work. And definitely have someone read over your writing before you seal it up and ship it off. Get another opinion because it will be easier for someone else to tell you if your message is clear.

Don't be afraid to make your essay all about you!



THE VISITS

The visits to the various s-s-s-schools you have chosen are really important. Take them s-s-s-seriously, but try to not drive yourself up a wall at the same time. This is a s-s-s-stressful time, but be sure to enjoy it. You are choosing the place you will spend the most fantastic four years of your life. It is important to keep an open mind and yet be critical at the same time.

My first piece of advice about visiting schools is to choose just a few. Do not visit every s-s-s-school on the East Coast. Pick five to start with. If you absolutely cannot stand any of them, then pick more. When you go into a s-s-s-store looking for jeans, you do not take 100 pairs into the dressing room with you. You take five you like and try them first. College visits are a lot like those jeans.

Be sure you find out how to take a tour. At many schools, you have to book the tours in advance. Find this out before you drive 10 hours. Avoid the frustration and plan ahead.



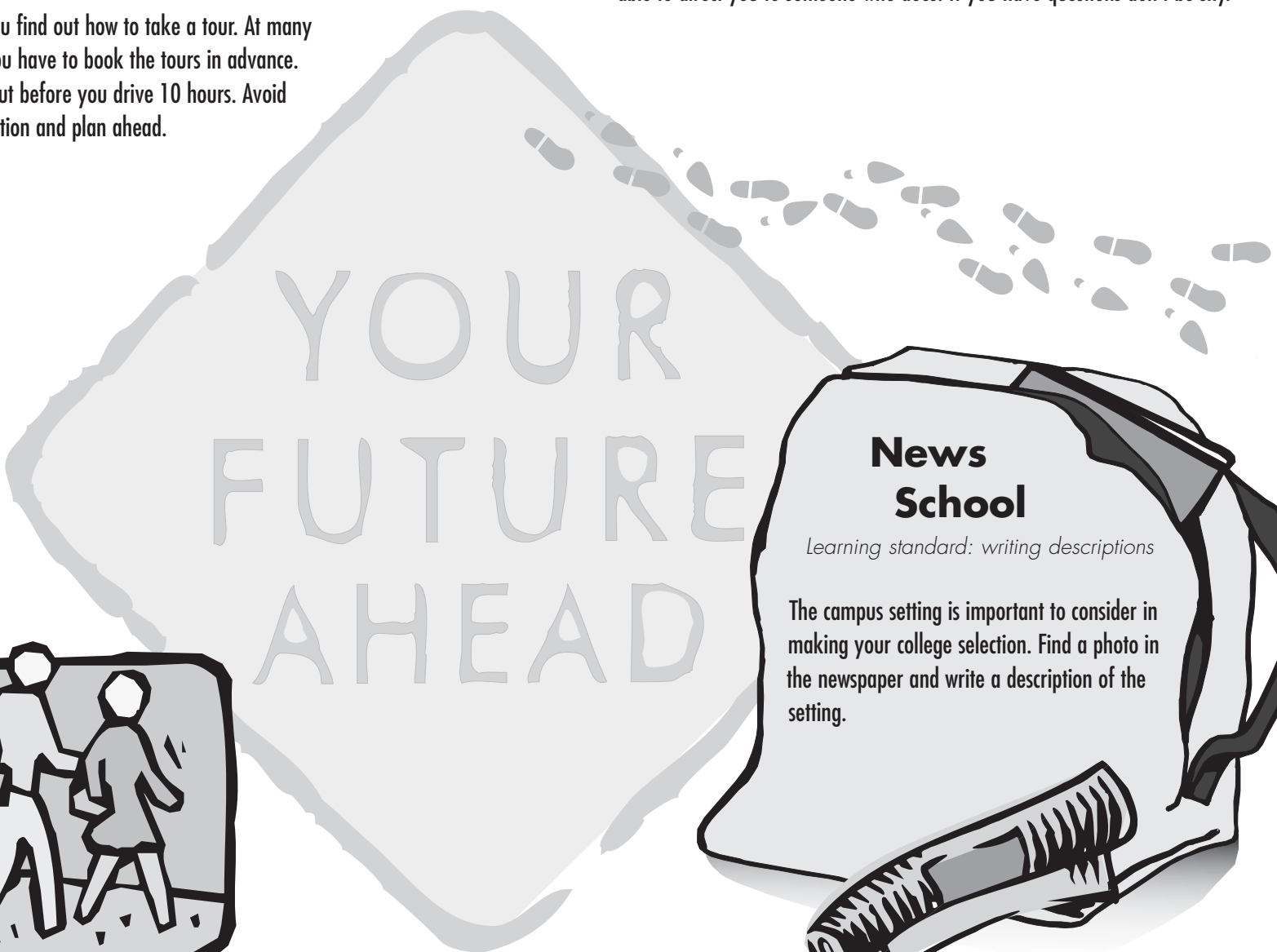
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S-S-S-SEE IT FIRST

Get yourself set up with a tour, but be sure to allow time to explore a little by yourself. The tour guide will offer a lot of information and take you to all the important places. The guide will also be able to answer your questions.

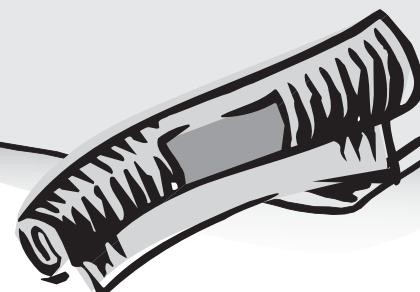
And go ahead, put the guide on the s-s-s-spot. Ask why he or she chose the school, about things to do for fun, about the best dorms, about the food. (Is it edible, or is it fit only for a pig, in which case you'd better stock up on Pepto Bismol.) Ask about the program you are interested in. Try to get information on how difficult it is to get into and what it involves. If your tour guide doesn't know, he or she might be able to direct you to someone who does. If you have questions don't be shy.



News School

Learning standard: writing descriptions

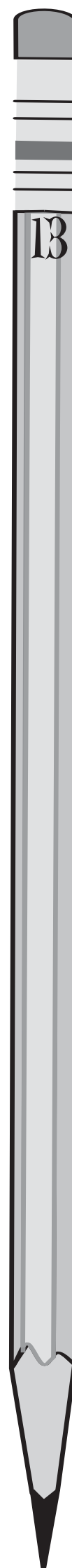
The campus setting is important to consider in making your college selection. Find a photo in the newspaper and write a description of the setting.



Be sure to keep your ears (since you have them, although I don't) and eyes open. Check out the other s-s-s-students s-s-s-slithering around. How important is diversity to you? Can you imagine yourself being a part of that campus? Do you feel safe there? I know it's tough to think about all these things, but it's too important not to. Just like jeans, you don't buy a pair you're never going to wear or that you think is ugly or that doesn't fit right. You buy the pair that makes you do that little dressing room dance because you get so excited at how good you look. So if you feel like you're doing that little dance, you know that college is one you like.

Make sure you have time to walk around the campus without the tour guide. Take time to look at things you are interested in. Sit at a campus restaurant and people-watch for a while. Walk into some of the buildings

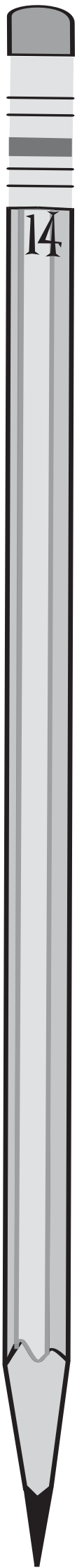
and check out how big the classrooms are. Can you imagine yourself sitting in those classrooms taking notes and listening to the lecture, or does the s-s-s-sight of the classroom intimidate you because it's the size of a s-s-s-stadium? Note how big the campus is and how far away the resident halls are from the class buildings. There may be only 1,000 students who attend the school, but the actual campus could be the size of a small country. When it starts s-s-s-snowing are you going to be able to get out of bed and walk the two miles to Philosophy class? Or are you someone who needs to roll out of bed two minutes before class and still have time to make it because class is right across the street? Let me remind you again, this is your home for the next couple of years, so you want to be as comfortable as a snake is in his own skin.



WRITE STUFF DOWN!

Even the most organized being (which I am) cannot remember every little thing in sight. So keep a list of what you have noticed during your visits. Write down things you like and don't like. Bring a little notebook to each visit and keep all the information in one spot. This way, when it comes time to make that final decision, you have your pros and cons right there in front of you. If you visit 30 schools over the course of a year and a half, how are you ever going to remember which one had the salad bar with those baby corns you love? So for your own sanity, jot things down. You'll be happy you did.

If you can't visit a campus, you can probably take a virtual tour online at the school's Website. You'll be s-s-s-surprised what you can learn. They don't call it virtual reality for nothing. It's the next best thing to being there.



Paying College For

JAMES SHOWS



YOU THE MONEY

It is often said that nothing in life is free. College is no exception to that rule. But there are lots of different ways to get the money. You don't have to be a bandit to get money for school. You just have to know how to get the best deal.

Start out by checking out tuition costs when you first look at schools. Private schools are usually more expensive than public schools, and going to a state school is almost always cheaper if you are a resident of that state. That's because it's a school supported by your state's system (and taxes), so because you are a resident of that state, you get a cheaper rate if you go there.

Here's where things get complicated, even for a smart cookie like you who got into college in the first place. There are a ton of financial aid options, so you have to do a little research to find out what will work for you. A wonderful Website is www.finaid.org, "The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid." This Website breaks down many of the financial options to help you decide which is your best bet.

Scholarships are one way to help pay for college. Throughout high school, there are opportunities to win scholarships by being active in certain clubs, winning essay contests, or belonging to volunteer organizations. The great thing about scholarships is that, unlike loans, scholarships are like a gift that do not have to be paid back. That same Website, www.finaid.org, even has a link to help you search a variety of scholarships to see whether you are eligible for any of them. This site can also help you avoid scholarship scams; unfortunately, there are unscrupulous people out there who will charge you money to sell you information about scholarships even though you can get all that information yourself online.

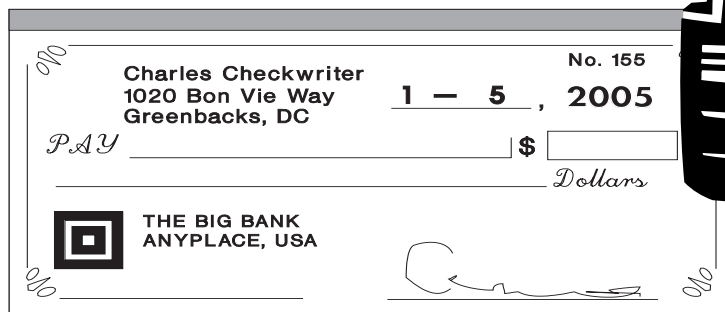
Loans are another way to help pay for college. With a loan, you are given money that eventually must be paid back with interest. You should learn about a few types of loans before taking one.

One type of loan is called a **Student Loan** or a **Stafford Loan**. This type of loan has a low interest rate and does not require any sort of collateral. And, the repayment is postponed until after you are out of school.

A second type of loan is a **Parent Loan**. No, a Parent Loan is not where you get on your hands and knees with a bouquet of flowers and beg your folks to give you some cash for school. A Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students, or PLUS, is actually a lot less embarrassing. PLUS loans are loans that parents of students can get to borrow money to pay for costs that are not already paid for with the rest of a student's financial aid deal. These types of loans are designed so the parent instead of the student is responsible for repaying it.

There are also **Private Loans**, which you can take out from private lenders such as banks or credit unions without the hassle of all the government forms that come with the other types of loans. Private Loans are often more expensive than other types.

Finally, there is the **Consolidation Loan**, which is just what it sounds like. This loan consolidates (or puts together) all of your loans in one lump sum from one lender. These loans can lower the monthly payments by giving you a longer time to pay them off.



Okay, that was a lot of information, and I didn't even get to tell you everything! If any of these types of loans seem like a good option for you and you want to learn more, definitely check out www.finaid.org. That site has done a really great job of breaking everything down and explaining all the options. Now, those folks aren't going to help you by actually giving you the money, but it will help you see what financial options are out there.

Ask your parents whether they ever started college savings for you. Some parents start saving up for college for their kids as soon as the umbilical cord is cut. If this is the case for you, check it out, you might have a nice little savings already set aside for you. The military is also an option. If you are interested in becoming a part of the military as a career, you may be eligible for getting money for school. The Website www.military.com will explain some of the financial options you are entitled to when joining the military.

On your application, you usually have to indicate whether you are applying for financial aid or not. If you apply before January 1, your financial aid application will not be accepted. Schools use your family's income and tax information from the whole year to decide whether they are going to give you the money

or not. This means that they need every day of the year to get the right information and will not accept your financial aid application until after January 1. So keep that in mind when sending out your applications.

FAFSA may sound like a farm animal disease, but it's the common name for the form you must fill out when applying for financial aid. FAFSA stands for "Free Application for Federal Student Aid." You can go to www.fafsa.ed.gov to get the application as well as all the information about FAFSA that you'll need to help you complete the application, meet deadlines, and find out whether you are eligible. And this can't be said enough: Do not miss any deadlines. For



most financial aid applications, the deadlines are firm. There have to be ways to weed people out, and the easiest one is to deny aid to anyone who isn't responsible enough to file on time.

Just remember: There are resources out there to help you pay for school, so do some research. It will be worth the time to find a financial plan that will work for you.

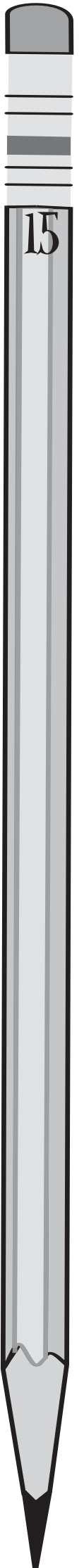


News School

Learning standards:
compiling data, graphing

Look through the newspaper for financial institutions that are offering to lend money. What are the advertised rates for borrowing? Make a graph to show the interest rates.

This Hot Topics supplement was:
Written by Tamra Carroll and Shira Carroll
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Designed by Jeanine Reilly
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The High School Summary

16

Here's an idea of what to do in 10th, 11th, and 12th grades to help you make sure that you are on the right course for college. Throughout your high school experience, you'll want to make sure you are taking the most challenging course load that you can handle. (Note: the most challenging load you can handle doesn't mean you should push yourself beyond your ability. Don't overload, either.)

Tenth Grade:

Check with your counselor to see whether you should be taking any SAT II exams and also to make sure you are taking the right courses for college. Begin to collect recommendations from teachers. Think about having an enriching experience in the summer. Start thinking about what kind of college you hope to attend. Get involved in extracurricular activities.

Eleventh Grade:

Study especially hard. Take Advanced Placement courses when possible. For some colleges, the grades from your junior year are the last ones they will consider. Write practice college application essays and give them to someone to read. Look for positions of leadership in your extracurricular activities. Take the PSAT exam in the fall and the SAT I and SAT II (for qualifying classes) in the spring. Start researching colleges and scholarships online and at college fairs. Write a list of schools you might like to attend and begin visiting when you can. Continue to collect recommendations from teachers.

Twelfth Grade:

Register for the fall SAT or ACT exam. Don't slack off on your work just because you are a senior. Write your final list of colleges. Request applications and check deadlines. Apply online if you can, or use the Common Application when possible. Request an interview at colleges where interviews are allowed, if you can get there.



So, that's it. No matter what university you choose, the goal is to find the place that's right for you. And, you will so don't worry!

