

# News You Can Use



September 2007

ACT provides this monthly newsletter to inform students and their parents about college and career planning. ACT is a not-for-profit organization that serves millions of people in schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses and government agencies with programs and services that help people achieve their education and career goals. **Visit [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) for more information and services.**



## College Planning

### Get ready for college

Sweating over your upcoming ACT test? Worried that your long list of extracurricular activities isn't impressive enough? None of that will matter if you're not taking challenging classes in high school. Your high school coursework is the best preparation for college.

The number one reason to take the right courses is to prepare yourself to do college work. It's true that colleges look at your high school coursework when they decide if they will admit you. But the best reason to take challenging courses in high school and work hard in them is to make sure you won't need remedial courses in college. It's a waste of time and money to take basic courses in college that you should have taken in high school.

And the worst case scenario is you could become discouraged and drop out. Sure you want to get into college, but you want to stay in, too. Dropping out happens more than you think. ACT research shows that around one-fourth of college students don't return for their second year of school, and only around half graduate from the same school within five years. Many students aren't completing their college degrees, and a big reason is that they aren't prepared to do the work.

The class of 2007 high school graduates had slightly higher ACT scores than classes from previous years, and there were more students prepared to do college coursework in math and science than in years past. But there are still many students who aren't prepared for college courses.

Using students' scores on the math and science tests, ACT found that only 28 percent earned a score that showed they were ready for college biology, while only 43 percent earned a score that showed they were ready for college algebra.

What can you do to get prepared? Take challenging courses in high school, particularly working on high-level skills in math and science. And work on your reading skills; you'll be doing a lot of reading in college.

There's always time to make changes and improve academically before college. Check your schedule and the courses you've taken and visit with your counselor.

## **What courses do you need for college?**

Your high school has requirements and colleges have requirements. You need to pay attention to both. Make sure you check the requirements for the colleges and programs you're interested in to see if they require additional classes.

ACT advises high school students to take a core curriculum to prepare for college, and it's increasingly important for careers as well. The recommendations are at least four years of English, three years each of math (Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II), social sciences (courses such as U.S. History, World History and American Government) and natural sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics). Taking advanced courses beyond the recommended core classes will give students the best chance to be ready to enter college without needing remedial classes.

Use your test scores to see how prepared you are for college. Research shows that students who earn a score of 24 or higher on the ACT Science Test are more likely than others to be ready for college biology. Students earning a score of 22 or higher on the ACT Math Test are more likely than others to be ready for college algebra. Students earning an 18 or higher on the ACT English Test are likely to have the skills necessary to be ready for college English composition classes. And students earning a score of 21 or higher on the ACT Reading Test are likely to succeed in college-level social science courses.

## **Look beyond the "brand name"**

When it comes to certain things, like an MP3 player or a game system, the brand name might be important to you. You may have even purchased something based solely on what your friends were saying about it. Some students think of college the same way. But if you approach your college choice that way, you'll be missing out on some great colleges (more than 3,000 four-year and two-year schools) that might be great places for you.

There's certainly nothing wrong with attending a school that everyone knows about and talks about in a positive way—if it really is a good fit for you. As you investigate colleges, check out all the details and decide where to attend based on who you are, what you're interested in and where you think you want to go in life.

Once you look at the details of a college, you'll see there's a lot more than the name to consider. Here are some things to think about when looking at a college:

- Location — distance from home
- Environment — type of school (two-year or four-year); urban or rural; co-ed, male or female student body; religious affiliation; public or private school
- Size — enrollment and campus size
- Admission requirements — deadlines; tests required; average test scores, GPA and rank of the freshman class

- Academics — majors offered; student-faculty ratio; typical class size; special requirements
- Financial aid — deadlines; required forms; percentage of student population receiving aid; scholarships; part-time employment opportunities
- College expenses — tuition, room and board; estimated total budget; application fee and deposits
- Housing — residence hall requirements; availability; types and sizes; food plans
- Facilities — academic and recreational
- Activities — clubs, organizations; sororities/fraternities; athletics and intramurals



## Financial Aid

ACT<sup>®</sup>

### Free financial aid guide

It's never too early to learn about college financial aid programs, and one of the best sources is the U.S. Department of Education. To find out about federal financial aid programs and your rights and responsibilities under these programs, read "Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid" from the U.S. Department of Education at [http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student\\_guide/index.html](http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html). The guide is available in English and Spanish. You also can find a link there to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If you have questions or want additional information on student financial assistance, contact your high school counselor, the financial aid officer at the college you're interested in attending, or the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).

### Beware of solicitations

Planning for college is an exciting time for a student. But sadly, some people try to take advantage of students by offering bogus services and programs to help plan for college.

Before acting on any offer, write the information down. Research the offer and the company or person calling, and talk it over with your parents and counselor.

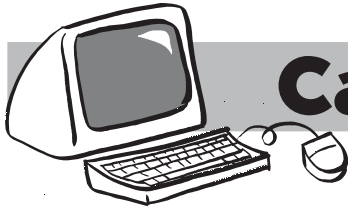
If you are a victim of a scam, take the following steps:

- Immediately contact your bank, explain the situation, and request that the bank either monitor or close the compromised account.
- Report the fraud to the Dept. of Education Office of Inspector General hotline at 1-800-MIS-USED (1-800-647-8733) or e-mail [oig.hotline@ed.gov](mailto:oig.hotline@ed.gov). Special agents in the Office of Inspector General investigate fraud involving federal education dollars.
- Report the fraud to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The FTC has an online complaint form at [www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams](http://www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams) and a hotline at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357; teletype for the hearing impaired: 1-866-653-4261). The FTC will investigate if the fraud seems widespread. It's important that every student contacted by those in question lodge a complaint so the FTC has an accurate idea of how many incidents have occurred.

- Notify the police about the incident. Impersonating a federal officer, telemarketing fraud schemes and identity theft are crimes.

For information about identity theft prevention, visit [www.ed.gov/misused](http://www.ed.gov/misused).

For information about preventing financial aid scams, visit [www.studentaid.ed.gov/lisa](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/lisa).



## Careers

ACT<sup>®</sup>

### Don't wait until college to try career counseling

Are you skipping the counseling office's career planning programs? Apparently a number of students across the country aren't taking advantage of all that their high school counseling offices provide.

A National Center for Education Statistics survey of public high school counselors found that half or less of juniors and seniors took part in available career planning opportunities at their schools, depending on the program offered. The largest participation was in career tests, as in ACT's DISCOVER<sup>®</sup> program, with 93 percent of public high schools offering a test but only 56 percent of juniors and seniors participating. Career days and career speakers were the next most popular activities, followed by internships, job site visits and job shadowing.

You might think it's OK to put off career planning until later in your college years, but you'll benefit from any career exploration you can do in high school. You won't have as much time later on as you might think, and you can start learning about careers now through classes and experiences.

Use your Interest Inventory results from the ACT (or EXPLORE or PLAN) and look into suggested career areas. You can also use ACT's DISCOVER computer program for career suggestions. Your counselor can help you find the programs and show you how to use the results to explore careers.



## Check It Out

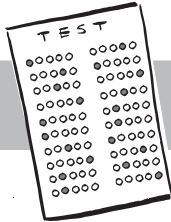
ACT<sup>®</sup>

### Student athletes – fall is time to register with NCAA

If you are a senior who is planning to participate in Division I or II sports as a college freshman, fall is the time to register to be certified by the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse. You must do this in order to qualify for college athletics. You can register beginning in October.

The NCAA also has new eligibility rules relating to the required high school core courses for student-athletes. You can register and check out the rules at the student information page at

[www.ncaaclearinghouse.net/NCAA/student/index\\_student.html](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net/NCAA/student/index_student.html). You also can read "The Guide for College-Bound Student-Athletes" at the website, or you can order a paper copy of the guide by calling 1-800-638-3731. The guide provides a summary of the rules and regulations in an easy-to-read form. Guidelines relate to recruiting, eligibility, financial aid and college freshman eligibility requirements for Divisions I and II.



# Testing

ACT<sup>®</sup>

## Test date reminder

The next national ACT test date is Oct. 27, 2007. The regular registration deadline is Sept. 21 and the late registration deadline is Oct. 5. The ACT also will be offered in 19 states on Sept. 15, but registration deadlines are past for this test date. Online registration and test date information is available at [www.actstudent.org/account](http://www.actstudent.org/account). If you choose to register online, register early to avoid heavy Web traffic and delays.

ACT offers an optional Writing Test in addition to the multiple-choice achievement test. Go to [www.actstudent.org/writing/index.html](http://www.actstudent.org/writing/index.html) to find out about the Writing Test, including what the colleges you're interested in have decided about requiring it.

While you're at the website, don't forget to take advantage of test prep aids, including free sample test questions at [www.actstudent.org/testprep/](http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/).

ACT Online Prep™, [www.actstudent.org/onlineprep/index.html](http://www.actstudent.org/onlineprep/index.html), the only test prep program developed exclusively by ACT test development professionals, is also available for \$19.95 for a year's use. You also can find test day tips, a list of items to bring to the test, and details on what type of calculator you can use on the Math Test.

*Preparing for the ACT*, a booklet with a complete practice test, scoring key, writing prompt and sample essays, is available to download on the Test Prep section at [actstudent.org](http://actstudent.org). Your ACT registration packet, available from the counseling office, also includes the booklet. Try taking the sample test and timing yourself to prepare for test day.

For all your questions about the ACT test, visit [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).