

USEFP News

THE UNITED STATES EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION IN PAKISTAN

JULY 15TH 2009

College Application FAQ's

Get the Inside Scoop on Applying to College (Article from: www.collegeboard.com)

We asked two experienced college counselors to help answer students' frequently asked questions about the college application process.

Do I have a better chance of getting in if I apply early?

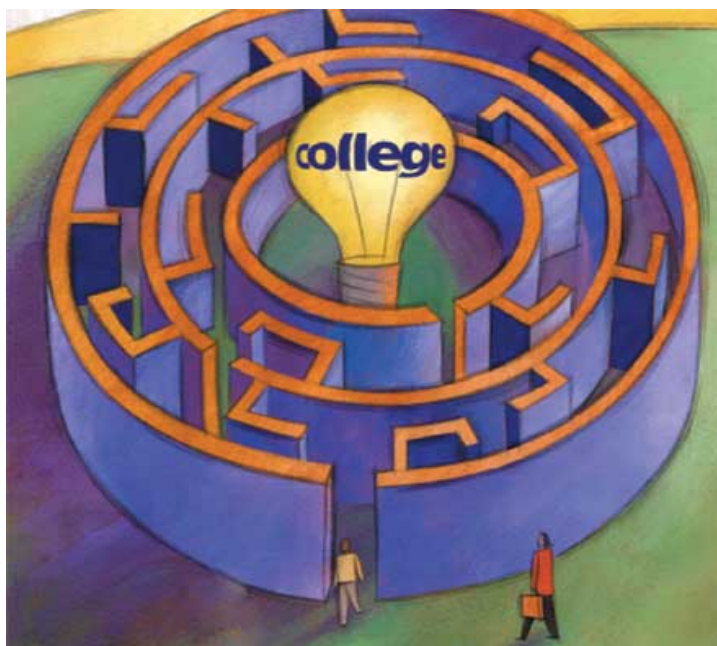
Nadine K. Maxwell: Many students apply early decision because they believe that there is an advantage to applying early and that their chances of being admitted are greater. Actually, this can vary from school to school and year to year, and may depend upon the applicant pool at the school where you are applying. Do your homework first and check to see what percentage of the students in the previous graduating classes at your high school were admitted early decision to a specific college or university. Are you qualified to apply as early decision? If you are, and this is a school you really wish to attend, then apply early decision.

How much time should I give my teachers to write letters of recommendation for me?

Mary Lee Hoganson: Teachers should always receive a minimum of two months notice, prior to the postmark date. Be sure to ask in a way that allows a teacher to decline comfortably if he/she does not have time to do an adequate job. For example: "Do you feel you know me well enough, and do you have enough time to write a supportive letter of recommendation for me to . . ." Give the teacher a stamped envelope addressed to the college, along with any recommendation form provided by the college.

What is the Common Application? Should I use it?

Mary Lee Hoganson: The Common Application has been developed by a group of colleges and universities that belong to the Common Application group. They accept this application in place of their own without any penalty. You fill it out once (on the computer is the easiest way) and then mail copies of the same application to any school that participates. Some of the participating colleges accept the application online and some have a supplement that must be submitted in addition. The Com-



mon Application and all information pertaining to it is available at www.commonapp.org. This is a great time saver—but remember to do a good job and proofread no matter what application format you use.

How many times should I take the SAT® tests?

Nadine K. Maxwell: How well did you do on the SAT the first time you took it? Some students are satisfied with their SAT scores the first time they take it. Students who have taken the PSAT/NMSQT® more than once and feel prepared to take the SAT often only take the SAT twice. Sometimes students will take it three times, but most students will take it in the spring of the junior year and the fall of the senior year.

My SAT scores are very low and my grades are very high. Will this affect my chances of admission?

Nadine K. Maxwell: While SAT scores are an indicator of success in college, admissions staff members look at many different factors when making a decision about whether to admit a student or not. One of the main things they are looking for is to see if your high school academic profile indicates that you have the potential for academic success on their campus. What kind of courses have you

taken? Have you taken rigorous courses such as AP® courses? Have you taken AP Exams so that there are scores to indicate how you may perform in a college-level course?

My parents don't make a lot of money—will colleges hold this against me?

Mary Lee Hoganson: Colleges should tell you whether or not they have a "need-blind" admissions policy. Those that do never consider ability to pay as an admissions criterion. Other schools, which are "need-conscious," may consider ability to pay, but only for a very small proportion of the admitted group. My advice always is: don't worry about this.

I want to send additional material that I think will support my application? Is this okay?

Nadine K. Maxwell: It depends on what you want to send. Most colleges and universities read hundreds or maybe thousands of applications, and they expect to find the information that they need to make an admission decision about you in their specific application form. It is okay to send an additional letter of information to explain something that cannot be ex-

plained on the application forms, but other items that students sometimes send are not helpful and may be viewed as trying to distract the admissions staff members from the actual application. Talk to your school counselor about any additional items that you are thinking about sending. Their knowledge and experience will be helpful to you in making this decision.

How can I improve my chances of getting in off of the waiting list?

Mary Lee Hoganson: If a college is your first choice, let the college know that—although the college ethically may not ask for this information. Write a letter to the director of admission expressing your continuing strong interest and updating the admissions office with any new information that reflects well on your ability to contribute to the quality of the freshman class. In addition, you may wish to ask your counselor to make a call on your behalf. Many colleges keep track of these kinds of contacts and students who are enthusiastic and persistent will get looked at first. Colleges want to admit students off the waiting list who they believe will accept the offer of admission.

Do colleges really care about your senior year grades?

Mary Lee Hoganson: Absolutely! Many colleges will not make a decision until receiving first semester grades. They expect to see a performance that indicates you are ready for college-level work. The college at which you make your enrollment deposit will ask for a final transcript at the end of the senior year. (Admission letters often contain something like, "Your admission is contingent upon your continued successful performance.") It is not at all rare for a college to withdraw an offer of admission when grades drop significantly over the course of the senior year. (I have a folder full of copies of these letters.)

Mary Lee Hoganson is college consultant for Homewood-Flossmoor High School, Flossmoor, Illinois

Nadine K. Maxwell is coordinator, guidance services for Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax, Virginia

For the complete article and other resources please visit: www.collegeboard.com

Survivor Face Off

Career vs. Liberal Arts Majors (Article from: www.collegeboard.com)

If *Survivor* ever airs a college version, it could do worse than to cast a tribe of liberal arts students against a tribe of students majoring in career-oriented fields. Just picture the civil engineering major working alongside her pal from the school of architecture to erect a solid lean-to while the business major sits nearby tapping out a duty roster on his Palm Pilot.



But the outcome might not be as certain as you'd think. Some would say the English major, having read every-

thing from *Lord of the Flies* and *The Tempest* to *Robinson Crusoe*, would have learned a thing or two about human nature under duress. Of course, the poli. sci. student could promote justice and equality within the tribe—and maybe forge a few alliances on the sly. And don't forget the media studies major who wrote a term paper on the social dynamics of TV reality shows.

The truth is that each type of major has its selling points. Which tribe is right for you?

Career-Oriented Majors

Some careers require very specific training. Next time you're in the emergency room, you'll find it reassuring to know that the technicians, nurses, and doctors all took classes that taught them what to do in situations similar to, and sometimes exactly like, the one in which you find yourself.

Patients aren't the only ones reassured. If you sign up to study nursing, you'll be able to see well into your future. You'll know that once your schooling is complete, you'll take a

Liberal Arts vs. Career Oriented Majors—Who wins the battle?

licensing exam that will qualify you for a certain type of job.

There is so much specific knowledge that must be mastered for some careers that, in a way, students begin them in high school. For example, future engineers often load up on advanced courses in science and math and, as high school seniors, apply directly to a university's school of engineering.

Of course, some professionals don't pursue career-oriented training until after they've earned a bachelor's degree. If you want to become a doctor or a lawyer, for example, you can choose from a wide range of undergraduate majors, including those in the liberal arts. In fact, most future lawyers study the liberal arts as undergrads, majoring in such fields as political science or English.

Liberal Arts Majors

If you major in the liberal arts, you'll find that you have to create your own career path. If you feel that such opportunity and freedom is worth some uncertainty, you may

have what it takes.

Just because there's no clearly defined career path for the liberal arts major, doesn't mean that you won't pick up valuable career skills. Far from it. With a liberal arts education, you'll study a broad range of topics. You'll build a sophisticated vocabulary and develop intellectual skills, such as reasoning and judgment, as opposed to technical skills targeted to a specific profession.

With preparation like this, liberal arts graduates can adapt to an unending variety of careers. Like what? Here are a handful of popular liberal arts majors and some of the careers they can lead to:

- Anthropology: archeologists, museum curators
- Communication: newspaper reporters, advertising and marketing executives
- English: editors, teachers
- History: college professors, archivists
- Languages and Linguistics: foreign service officers, interpreters
- Political science: policy analysts, lawyers
- Sociology: market researchers, jury consultants

Where to Learn More

Read more about any college major in the [Major & Career Profiles](#). You can also search for colleges offering the majors that capture your interest in [College Search](#).

Three Steps to a Great College Essay

The college application essay is a chance to explain yourself, to open your personality, charm, talents, vision, and spirit to the admissions committee. It's a chance to show you can think about things and that you can write clearly about your thoughts. Don't let the chance disappear. Stand up straight and believe in yourself!

The Essay Writing Process

Okay, boot up your computer and let's get to it. To write a college essay, use the exact same three-step process you'd use to write an essay for class: first prewrite, then draft, and finally, edit. This process will help you identify a focus for your essay, and gather the details you'll need to support it.

Prewriting

To begin, you must first collect and organize potential ideas for your essay's focus. Since all essay questions are attempts to learn about you, begin with yourself.

- ◆ **Brainstorm:** Set a timer for 15 minutes and make a list of your strengths and outstanding characteristics. Focus on strengths of personality, not things you've done. For example, you are responsible (not an "Eagle Scout") or committed (not "played basketball"). If you keep drifting toward events rather than characteristics, make a second list of the things you've done, places you've been, accomplishments you're proud of; use them for the activities section of your application.

- ◆ **Discover Your Strengths:** Do a little research about yourself: ask parents, friends, and teachers what your strengths are.

- ◆ **Create a Self-Outline:** Now, next to each trait, list five or six pieces of evidence from your life— things you've been or done— that prove your point.

- ◆ **Find Patterns and Connections:** Look for patterns in the material you've brainstormed. Group similar ideas and events together. For example, does your passion for numbers show up in your performance in the state math competition and your summer job at the computer store? Was basketball about sports or about friendships? When else have you stuck with the hard work to be with people who matter to you?

Drafting

Now it's time to get down to the actual writing. Write your essay in three basic parts: introduction, body, and conclusion.

- ◆ The introduction gives your reader an idea of your essay's content. It can shrink when you need to be concise. One vivid sentence might do: "The favorite science project was a complete failure."
- ◆ The body presents the evidence that supports your main idea. Use narration and incident to show rather than tell.

- ◆ The conclusion can be brief as well, a few sentences to nail down the meaning of the events and incidents you've described.

An application essay doesn't need to read like an essay about *The Bluest Eye* or the Congress of Vienna, but thinking in terms of these three traditional parts is a good way to organize your main points.

There are three basic essay styles you should consider:

- ◆ **Standard Essay:** Take two or three points from your self-outline, give a paragraph to each, and make sure you provide plenty of evidence. Choose things not apparent from the rest of your application or light up some of the activities and experiences listed there.
- ◆ **Less-Is-More Essay:** In this format, you focus on a single interesting point about yourself. It works well for brief essays of a paragraph or half a page.
- ◆ **Narrative Essay:** A narrative essay tells a short and vivid story. Omit the introduction, write one or two narrative paragraphs that grab and engage the reader's attention, then explain what this little tale reveals about you.

Editing

When you have a good draft, it's time to make final improvements to your draft, find and correct any errors, and get someone else to give you feedback. Remember, you are your best editor. No one can speak for you; your own words and ideas are your best bet.

- ◆ **Let It Cool:** Take a break from your work and come back to it in a few days. Does your main idea come across clearly? Do you prove your points with specific details? Is your essay easy to read aloud?
- ◆ **Feedback Time:** Have someone you like and trust (but someone likely to tell you the truth) read your essay. Ask them to tell you what they think you're trying to convey. Did they get it right?
- ◆ **Edit Down:** Your language should be simple, direct, and clear. This is a personal essay, not a term paper. Make every word count (e.g., if you wrote "in society today," consider changing that to "now").
- ◆ **Proofread Two More Times:** Careless spelling or grammatical errors, awkward language, or fuzzy logic will make your essay memorable—in a bad way.

This article is based on information found in *The College Application Essay*, by Sarah Myers McGinty.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT USEFP, JUNE 2009:

USEFP Islamabad:

- GRE and SAT prep classes will be taking place this month. Please contact our office for details and to enroll in a session.
- A Liberal Arts Education Seminar will take place on Friday, June 19th 2009.
- A Pre Departure Orientation Seminar is scheduled for Friday, June 26th 2009.

USEFP Lahore:

- A Pre Departure Orientation Seminar will take place on June 25th at the same venue as above.

USEFP Karachi:

- A Visa Seminar will take place every Wednesday in June.
- A Graduate Education Presentation will be held every Thursday of the month.
- An Undergraduate Education Presentation will be held every Friday this month.

Please contact your local office to register for upcoming events and receive additional information:

Islamabad: advising@usefpakistan.org; **Karachi:** advisingkarachi@usefpakistan.org; **Lahore:** advisinglahore@usefpakistan.org

Upcoming Test Dates for TOEFL, GRE, and SAT

SAT:

General and Subject Test

Test Dates:

June 6th, 2009

October 10th, 2009

November 07th, 2009

December 05th, 2009

January 23rd, 2010

May 01st, 2010

June 05th, 2010

International Registration:

Please check for early registration options for international candidates.

iBT TOEFL:

Test Dates:

October 10th, 2009

October 18th, 2009

October 24th, 2009

October 25th, 2009

October 31st, 2009

November 01st, 2009

November 08th, 2009

November 14th, 2009

November 21st, 2009

November 22nd, 2009

December 05th, 2009

December 12th, 2009

December 20th, 2009

GRE:

The GRE Test is offered four days a week, Monday through Thursday, throughout the year.

Please visit our website or call in order to register for a particular test day.



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