



## College Prep

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### Why College?

At Eagle Ridge Academy, we believe in a rigorous education, academic achievement, and life-long learning. College is the natural continuation of the strong intellectual preparation that students receive at Eagle Ridge. College is an opportunity for students to pursue their education with a focus on the subjects that interest them most and with an eye toward a fulfilling career.

### Resources to Help Plan for College:

Planning for college starts with understanding yourself, your interests, strengths, and dreams for the future. The next step is understanding the college options and using available resources to help you prepare, apply, and pay for college.

- [Fair Opportunity Project Webpage](#) – a free college application and financial aid guide for families (available in multiple languages).
- [Junior College Meeting PowerPoint](#)
- [Table: Merit and Need-based Aid at Various Colleges](#) (PDF)

## Forms

- [Online Course Registration Form](#)
- [PSEO Guidelines & Information](#)
- [PSEO Registration Requirements](#)
- [2023-2024 PSEO Notice of Student Registration Form](#)
- [Transcript Request Online Form](#)

## Personal Assessments and Career Research

The most successful people know themselves well and capitalize on their strengths in the work that they do. This is a lifelong process of discovery best started early! Take assessments, learn about career options, and try some career related activities!

### Personal Assessments

Take personal assessments to learn more about how your personal qualities, values, and strengths pair with careers.

- **Careerwise** is an extensive tool from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) with personal assessments tied to career information that is specific to Minnesota.
- **GPS Life Plan** is another tool from MNSCU with many links to assessments and career information.
- **Myers Briggs Personality Type Indicator** is a great tool to better understand yourself and your preferences. The 16 Personalities website does a great job of tying the types to career options.
- **My Next Move** is an assessment connected with O\*Net, a tool from the US Department of Labor. It asks you to rate how much you'd like to perform different tasks.
- **My Plan** has a values assessment that is different than the other tools because it helps you consider what's important to you and what you believe about work.
- **My Majors** has assessments that help you create a profile based on your academic aptitude and interests. You are matched with majors and careers that fit you!

### Career Resources

Once you have some ideas about possible careers, learn more about them. What kind of education does the career require? What is the average wage? How quickly is the field expected to grow?

Many of the tools above are linked to career information. Below are three of the best sources of career information:

- The **Occupational Outlook Handbook** contains data from the US Department of Labor and has extensive profiles of hundreds of careers.
- **O\*Net** is also a US Department of Labor tool that allows you to sort careers by skills and career clusters.
- **LinkedIn** has an alumni tool that students can use if you create a LinkedIn profile. The tool allows you to search by college and career area and look at the profiles of people who have careers that interest you. Where did they go to school? What did they study? What was their career path?

### Enrichment and Career Exploration

As a high school student, you can try out careers that interest you. Partake in an informational interview or job shadow, attend a camp, volunteer, or take a class. All these activities will help you know if the potential career is really a fit for you.

- **Explore academic interests by taking an online class.** Many of the top universities in the country offer Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). These courses are usually free or if you want a certificate of completion, you can pay a small fee. Two great options are [www.coursera.org](http://www.coursera.org) and [www.edx.org](http://www.edx.org).
- **Try a career focused camp or pre-college program.** [Teen Life](http://www.teenlife.org) is a website with thousands of summer and school year enrichment programs that can be sorted by interest or location.
- **Volunteering** is a great way to explore your interests and learn more about possible careers. [Volunteer Match](http://www.volunteermatch.com) is a great way to learn about opportunities in your local area that match your interests.
- **Do Something** is a website to help young people start their own project to support a cause.

Some great local career exploration programs include:

- **Minnesota Business Venture**, a week-long business camp for high school students.
- **Scrubs Camp** is a week-long camp for students considering health care careers.
- **Doing informational interviews and job shadowing** are also great ways to explore careers. Talk to your parents, your parents' friends, and the parents of your friends to find these opportunities. This is a website with virtual job shadowing interviews to get you started: [www.jobshadow.com](http://www.jobshadow.com).

# Research College Options

A great college list starts with YOU! Ask yourself these questions:

- How do you learn best?
- What are your reasons for going to college?
- How independent are you? How far away from home do you want to go?
- What are your academic work habits like? What level of challenge do you want?
- What are your favorite activities?
- What subjects do you like to study?

## Start with visits to local colleges

Sophomores and juniors should take advantage of school breaks to visit local colleges. Before you get serious about making a college list, first go and do a few tours right here in the Twin Cities. It really isn't important if these are colleges you think you'll want to attend. The idea is to learn about different kinds of colleges and what they look like.

**Schedule a visit online** – almost all colleges have an online calendar (google “name of college” and “visit”) so you can easily schedule a visit.

## Go with your parents or with friends!

**Visit a big school (University of Minnesota?) and a few small colleges** that are in or around the Twin Cities.

**Attend a College Fair** (<http://www.mn-acac.org/students>) to talk with representatives from colleges that may interest you. The schedule is updated on the MACAC website each year.

**The National College Fair** takes place in October at the Convention Center in Minneapolis and includes as many as 400 colleges from around the country.

**Minnesota Education Fairs** take place in the fall and spring at local high schools and community colleges. These events are open to the public and usually include more than 100 colleges.

## After a few college visits, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you like the resources of a large school or the close-knit community of a smaller school?
- Do you want to go to college in a city or small town?
- Which activities on the campuses sound most interesting?
- What academic programs sound really exciting?
- Are you interested in study abroad?
- What kind of athletic program do you want the school to have?

## Consider Graduation Rates

In the search tools below, look for information about graduation rates. The best colleges have 6-year (the standard measurement for the Dept of Ed) graduation rates of 70% or higher.

## College Search Tools

Use these tools and what you know about yourself and your preferences to build a list of schools to explore further:

- [College Navigator](#) from the Department of Education is the most reliable resource. It has extensive information about cost and financial aid, admissions, programs offered, graduation rates, and athletics.
- [College Scorecard](#) from the Department of Ed is easy to navigate with great information.
- [College Board's Big Future](#) has filters and great graphics. The tool "College Search Step-by-Step" is great for students who don't know how to begin the search process. It asks questions about what you are looking for in a school and give you a "snapshot" of your preferences to help you decide where to apply.
- [Affordable Colleges Online](#) provides community resources and tools related to higher education with an eye on affordability and accreditation.
- [Discover Business Degrees](#)
- [Criminal Justice Degrees](#)
- [Social Work Degrees](#)
- [School Nurse Degrees](#)
- [Psychology Degrees](#)

## College Search Tools with Student Reviews

\*Beware of disgruntled students – use these sites **along with other tools**.

- Cappex – [www.cappex.com](http://www.cappex.com)
- College Confidential – [www.collegeconfidential.com](http://www.collegeconfidential.com)
- Niche – <https://colleges.niche.com/>
- Unigo – [www.unigo.com](http://www.unigo.com)
- College Raptor – [www.collegeraptor.com](http://www.collegeraptor.com)
- Magoosh – <https://magoosh.com/hs>

## About Rankings

Rankings are often where families start when looking for college options. This can lead students to create a list of schools that isn't based on their personal needs and interests. Here are some other great resources for colleges that move beyond the rankings:

- [Colleges that Change Lives](#) 44 colleges recognized for making a difference.
- [Grad Reports](#) best colleges for earning potential.
- [Beyond College Rankings](#) has value added information about colleges.
- [College Lists Wiki](#) is a treasure trove of specialized college lists for students with interests and needs.

## College Visit Resources

Once you have a preliminary list, it's a great idea to visit as many of the colleges on your list as you can. Some great resources for college visits:

- [Questions to Ask](#)
- [Campus Visit Guide](#)
- [Virtual Visits](#)
- [Online College Fairs](#)

# Testing

The most important indicators of college success are your grades in high school and your curriculum. However, colleges have long used admissions tests like the ACT and SAT as a way to compare academic records across high schools.

Most students who do well in high school classes will find similar success in the standardized tests. Some preparation can be helpful and there are many options that range from free to more expensive. [The Compass Group Guide](#) is a very thorough overview of these standardized tests.

## Admissions Tests

There are two options for admissions tests in the US – the ACT and the SAT. Some things to know:

- Every college will take either the ACT or the SAT.
- Admissions tests are usually taken in the spring of the junior year because students have completed the necessary curriculum to be successful.
- The tests can be taken more than once, although a strategy of repeating the test many times is generally not advisable.
- For most colleges, you can choose which score to send. A few very selective schools and the University of California schools require you to send all your scores.
- A few selective colleges recommend or require **SAT Subject Tests**. Scroll down for more information.
- **AP tests** can be used to get college credit and can also be helpful in admissions. Scroll down for detailed information about AP tests at Eagle Ridge.

To Register for the ACT, go to [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org).

To Register for the SAT, go to <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register>.

## ACT

The ACT tests reading, grammar and usage, science reasoning, and math (Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra 1 and 2, and limited Trigonometry). It also has an optional writing section.

[ACT Test Dates](#)

[Register for the ACT](#)

## SAT

The SAT tests reading, vocabulary, grammar and usage, writing (including an essay) and math (Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra 1 and 2)

[SAT Test Dates](#)

[Register for SAT](#)

## SAT SUBJECT TESTS

SAT II Subject Tests are offered to assess a student's mastery of a particular subject area. They are used as additional criteria by particularly selective colleges or to gain admittance into majors that require a specific background or skill set.

[SAT SUBJECT Test Dates](#)

[Register for SAT Subject Tests](#)

## ACT vs. SAT

Most colleges will accept either the ACT or the SAT. They are different tests, and some students will do better on one or the other. Take a look at [this comparison chart](#) to learn the differences between the tests.

## TOEFL

The [TOEFL](#) tests the ability of nonnative speakers of English to understand and use North American English.

## Test-Optional Schools

Not all colleges require the ACT or SAT. An increasing number of colleges have become test optional, which means that they will review your application without a standardized test. [Here is the latest list of test optional schools.](#)

## Testing Strategy

1. Early in the junior year, take a practice test under test conditions (timed, etc.) to familiarize yourself with the structure, content, and timing of the test.
2. Consider taking a practice ACT as well as a practice SAT to determine which test suits you best.
3. Review strengths and weaknesses and decide how you want to prepare for the actual test.
4. Register for the ACT or SAT in spring of junior year. Be prepared to take it one or two more times if you are targeting very selective colleges for admission.

## Practice Tests for ACT and SAT

Live practice tests offered by test prep companies for free:

- [www.kaptest.com/act/enroll?zip=55408&tab=events](http://www.kaptest.com/act/enroll?zip=55408&tab=events)
- [www.princetonreview.com/college/free-act-practice-test#!practice](http://www.princetonreview.com/college/free-act-practice-test#!practice)
- <http://locations.sylvanlearning.com/us/burnsville-mn/promotions/get-a-free-sat-or-act-practice-exam>

## Online tests to be taken at home:

- [www.powerscore.com/sat/help/content\\_practice\\_tests.cfm](http://www.powerscore.com/sat/help/content_practice_tests.cfm)
- [www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/Preparing-for-the-ACT.pdf](http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/Preparing-for-the-ACT.pdf)
- [www.varsitytutors.com/act-practice-tests](http://www.varsitytutors.com/act-practice-tests)
- [www.khanacademy.org/sat](http://www.khanacademy.org/sat)

## Preparation Options for the ACT and SAT

There are FREE and low-priced options for ACT and SAT preparation. Some great options include:

- [www.khanacademy.org/sat](http://www.khanacademy.org/sat)
- [www.KnowHow2GoWisconsin.org](http://www.KnowHow2GoWisconsin.org)
- [www.number2.com](http://www.number2.com)
- [www.prepfactory.com](http://www.prepfactory.com)
- [The Ultimate Student's Starter Kit to the ACT](#)

There are many paid providers of ACT and SAT preparation. This list is a sample of some area options and not an endorsement of the providers:

- Breakaway Test Prep: <http://www.breakawaytestprep.com>
- Club Z Tutoring: [www.clubztutoring.com](http://www.clubztutoring.com)
- College Tutors: <http://www.collegetutors.com/edinamn>
- Huntington Learning Center: [www.huntingtonhelps.com](http://www.huntingtonhelps.com)
- Kaplan Test Prep: [www.kaptest.com/college](http://www.kaptest.com/college)
- Princeton Review: [www.PrincetonReview.com](http://www.PrincetonReview.com)

- Sylvan Learning Systems: [www.sylvanlearning.com](http://www.sylvanlearning.com)

### **SAT Subject Tests**

SAT Subject Tests are college admission exams on specific subjects. These tests are recommended or required by some highly selective institutions. Many very selective colleges will consider SAT Subject tests and they can be another way to show a college what you can do. [Here is some good information about the tests and which schools consider them.](#)

SAT Subject tests are offered by the College Board. [Their website](#) offers detailed information about the tests, when they are offered, how to register and how to prepare.

### **AP Exams**

Eagle Ridge Academy students, based on the classical curriculum are well positioned to take other AP tests if they are willing to commit to additional study.

## **Applying to College**

You can do this! As you get started, remember that most colleges accept most students –the average acceptance rate for US colleges is 65.8%. There is no perfect school but there are many places where you can be successful.

### **Finalizing Your College Application List**

You should apply to a set of no more than 9 schools that you really want to attend. Make sure the colleges are a fit for you.

**Know what's important to you** – is it a special major? A location? The size of the school? A particular activity? Narrow your list based on what colleges fit you best.

**Consider cost** – Many private schools cost less than their list price. Some out of state public schools offer reciprocity or special scholarships. Read the websites and ask your parents to use the colleges' Net Price Calculators to help get a realistic idea of what a college might cost you.

**Understand your likelihood of admission** – Parchment [www.parchment.com](http://www.parchment.com) has a tool that will use your grades and test scores to give you a red, yellow, or green indicator of your admissions chances.

**Include no more than 3 stretch schools** – go to Parchment for an idea of which schools are stretch schools for you (yellow or red). Limiting the number of stretch schools will ensure that you have plenty of good options in the spring.

### **Get Organized**

There is a lot to do, and you want to get it all done on time.

**Create a spreadsheet** with application deadlines and requirements. All of this can be found on the admissions website for each college. Note which application the college uses. If you have more than one college on your list that uses the Common App or Coalition App, that could save you time. Track the completion and submission of each item.

**Create a calendar** with targeted dates for completion of each application that are a week or two ahead of the college deadline, so you have time if something goes wrong.

**Essay list** – make a master list of all application essays you’ll need to write. Sometimes a single essay can be used multiple times and that’s easier to determine if you see the essay questions listed together. Not all schools require an essay.

**Activity and Awards list or Resume** – compile all your activities and awards from both in and out of school onto a single document. It will be very helpful as you complete applications.

**Athletes** – If you are considering Division I or Division II athletic scholarships, register with the NCAA <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/eligibility-center>.

### **Get Started!**

It’s ideal if students can finalize their list and get organized in mid-summer and begin the application process in August. Most college applications are available by August 1.

**Applications** – Once you’ve determined which applications each of your colleges use, create an account and start by completing the basic information portions of the application.

- Common Application – [www.commonapp.com](http://www.commonapp.com)
- Coalition Application – [www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org](http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org)
- College specific applications – found on the colleges’ admissions websites

**Essays** – Not every college requires an essay. Some require 3 or 4. This can be intimidating! Remember that colleges want to get to know you, the real you. More about essays below.

**Transcript Request Online Form** PLEASE NOTE: College transcripts take at least 3 (working) days to be processed and teacher recommendations take up to 3 weeks so please ask your teachers early.

**Letters of Recommendation** allow colleges to learn more about you from your teachers and counselor. If you need a letter, it can take up to three weeks, so plan ahead and complete the required information form.

### **Types of College Application Deadlines**

Each college offers a different set of deadlines. Always check admissions websites for the most accurate information and detailed requirements for the deadlines.

**Rolling Admission** schools review applications as they’re submitted and make decisions throughout the admission cycle (usually within four to six weeks of submission of the application).

**Early Action** means that you send your application by an early deadline (often November 1) and the college sends you its decision earlier, sometimes before the end of December. Some colleges do have additional restrictions on their early action programs, though, so make sure to read carefully the instructions from each college.

**Early Decision** deadlines require you to commit to attending the college if you are admitted. So, students who choose this option should be certain that the school is their first choice. It’s an appealing option because sometimes the admission rates are higher with Early Decision.



**Regular Decision** means that you turn in your application by the college's deadline, and they let you know by a specified date.

**Priority Deadline** is an option that some schools offer. It's often connected to scholarship or honors program opportunities. Colleges may offer another deadline option along with the priority deadline or they may not.

### **More about the essay**

The college essay is a source of a lot of stress for seniors. It's important to note that not all colleges require essays. Essays give the admissions officers more information about who you are as a person. Often colleges that practice holistic admissions will require one or more essays. Some essay tips:

**Be you!** The college admissions officers want to get to know you. You want to go to a college that fits for you. Relax and be you.

**Tell a real story** (it doesn't have to be exciting!) about you that conveys something about your core qualities, talents, values, or skills. The most ordinary stories can make the best essays!

**Break the rules!** This isn't the time for a perfect 5 paragraph essay or a rigid adherence to beginning, middle and end. Start in the middle! Admit you don't know how it ends! Break. The. Rules.

**Show them your strength and determination.** Life is challenging in big and small ways. College can be tough. Don't be afraid to talk about a time when things didn't go well, but you persevered. That makes for a great college essay.

**Read some good personal essays,** not necessarily just college essays. Don't copy their themes or ideas, but get a feeling for the genre. These essays sound a bit different than other things you may have read. Reading a few good ones can help you find your voice.

### **Some great college essay resources:**

- [www.essayhell.com](http://www.essayhell.com)
- [www.collegeessayguy.com](http://www.collegeessayguy.com)
- <https://apply.jhu.edu/apply/essays-that-worked/>
- <http://admissions.tufts.edu/apply/advice/past-essays/common-application-essays/>

## **Military Contacts**

### **Enlistment**

- Air Force: 952-882-4906
- Navy: 952-933-1777
- Army: 952-935-3000
- Army Reserve: 952-935-3000
- Marines: 952-881-6911
- Air National Guard: 612-713-1000
- Army National Guard: 952-832-6985 or 1-800-go-guard

## **ROTC**

- Army: 612-626-1584 or 612-624-7300
- Marines: 612-725-3198
- Air Force: 651-962-6330
- Navy: 612-725-0414 ext. 253 or 1-800-usa-navy

## **Academies**

### **Air Force Academy**

Colorado Springs, CO

1-800-443-9266

### **Naval Academy**

Annapolis, MD

Admissions Office: 410-293-4361

### **Coast Guard Academy**

New London, CT

Academy Hot Line: 1-800-883-8724

### **West Point**

West Point, NY

Admissions Office: 845-938-4011