



# Navigating the College Application Process

The background features several clusters of interlocking puzzle pieces in shades of olive green, terracotta, and dusty rose, arranged in the corners and along the sides of the slide. In the center, there is a large, stylized quotation mark in a matching olive green color with a white outline.

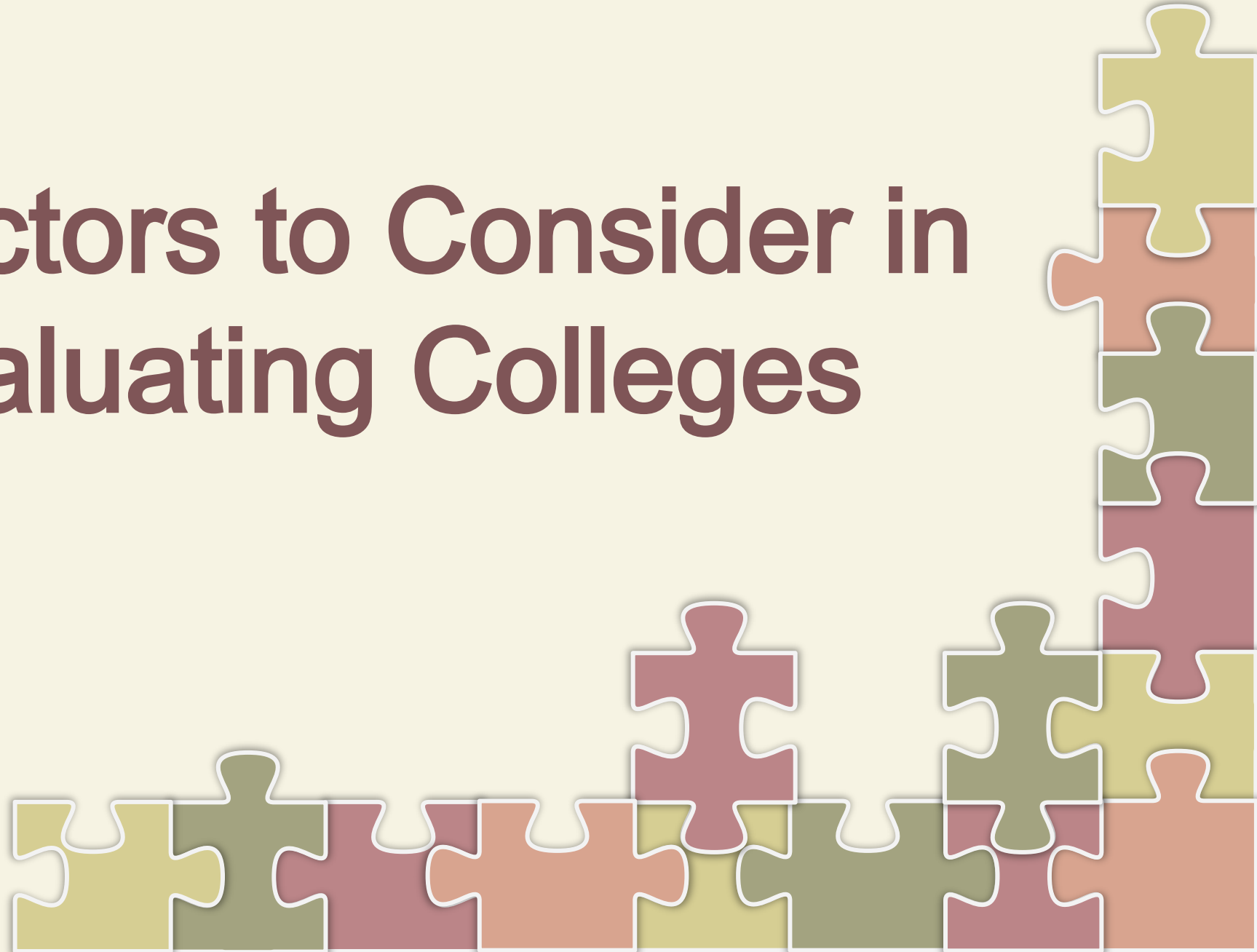
“

**There are no extra pieces in the universe. Everyone is here because he or she has a place to fill, and every piece must fit itself into the big jigsaw puzzle.**

— Deepak Chopra

01

# Factors to Consider in Evaluating Colleges



# Academic Factors

**Type of College:** public, private; religious affiliation; 2 -year, 4 -year; university, liberal arts college, specialized college (e.g. art, music, military, architecture, engineering, vocational.)

**Admissions Selectivity:** percentage of applicants offered admission both in regular admission and through early decision; range of GPAs and standardized test scores.

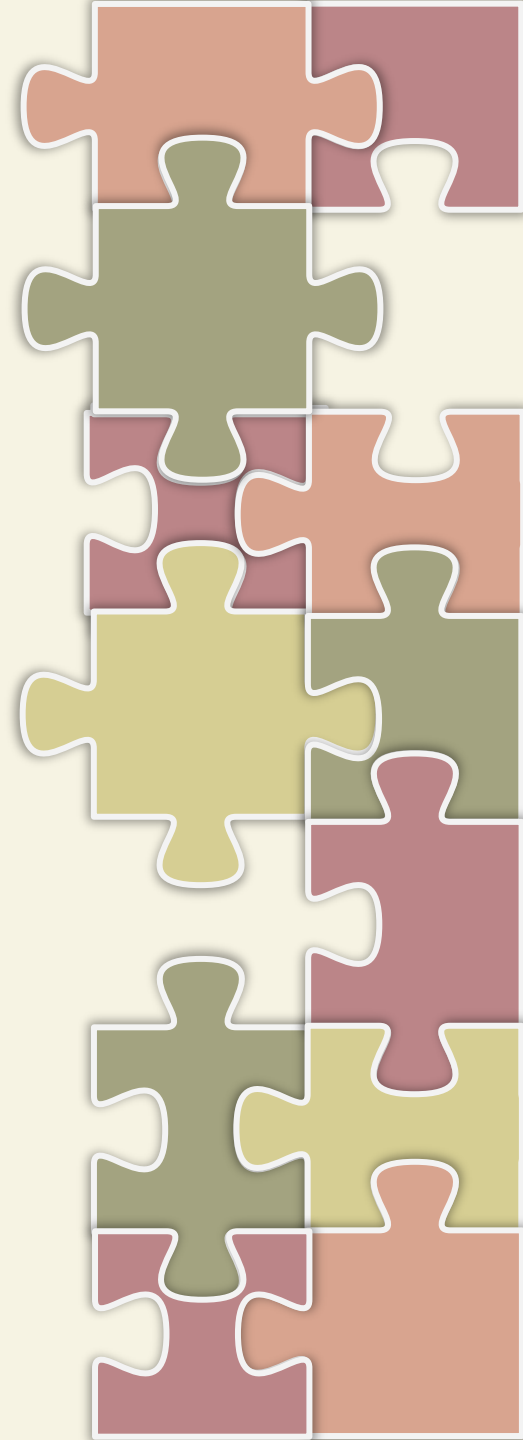
**Curriculum :** majors; advisement on selection of major; AICE/AP equivalency; strong departments; pre -professional training; course requirements for admissions; courses required for graduation.

**Intellectual Atmosphere:** flexibility/structure for study; interest in political, social, or world issues; percentage of students who graduate in four years/in more than four years.

**Faculty:** student/faculty ratio; accessibility of teachers to students.

**Academic assistance and support services:** type of academic advising; remedial support; tutoring (peer and/or professional); LD programs; learning resource centers for all students.

**Career preparation:** pre -professional programs and advisement; percentage who enter grad school and jobs; companies and firms recruiting on campus.



# Geographic Location and Environment

**Distance from Home:** ease and cost of commute by car, train, bus, plane.

**Rural, suburban, large city:** proximity to nearest city; accessibility of community resources; cultural and recreational opportunities.

**Climate:** high/low temperatures and how long they last!

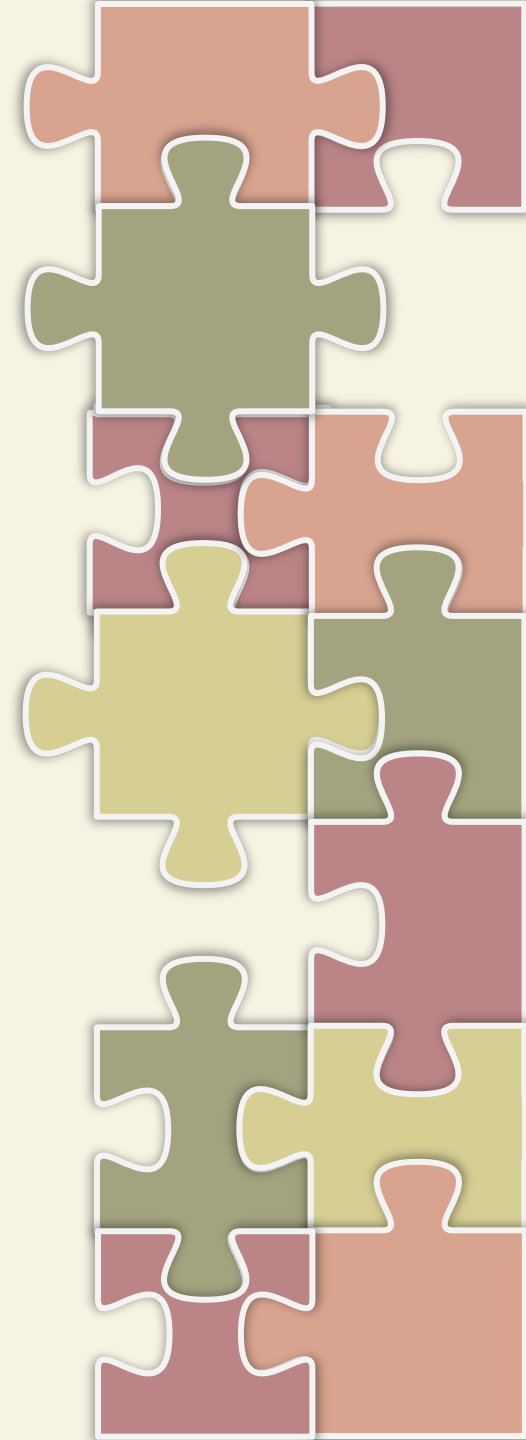
## Size of College/University

**Small** (under 3,000)    **Medium** (3,000 – 7,000)    **Large** (over 7,000)  
(UCF = 68,000 FAU = 30,000 New College = 733)

## Sports

**Availability of teams in what sports:** male, female, coed.

**Division I, II, III, intramural:** percentage of students involved; required practice hours; ease of playing club sports; availability and condition of athletic facilities.

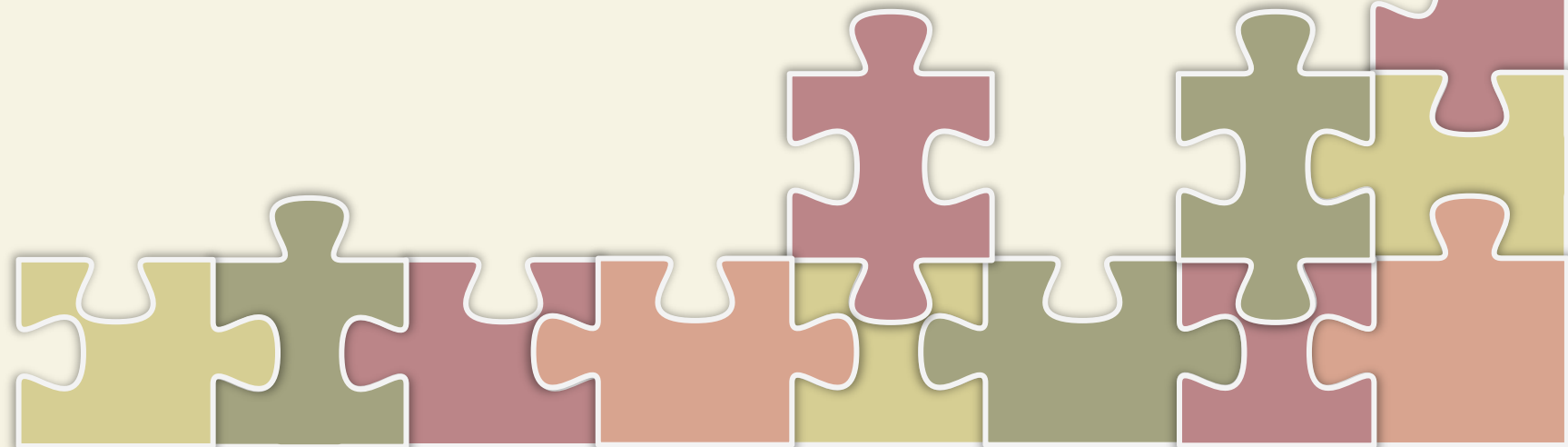


# Campus and Student Life

**Student body:** size; diversity and acceptance of differences; geographic, cultural, ethnic, racial, religious, academic, socioeconomic background of students.

**Facilities:** dorms; alternative residence options; dining facilities; eating plan options; campus appearance; maintenance; library; computer facilities; health services; counseling services; student center; bookstore; laboratories; art/music studios.

**Campus activities:** availability of and level of participation in activities; social, cultural, athletic, recreational, religious, musical, dramatic; sorority/fraternity life; clubs and organizations; weekday and weekend activities; volunteer and service programs.



# Cost

**Availability of merit -based scholarships:** is aid based on need, merit or both; what are the application procedures for both merit -based and need -based aid?

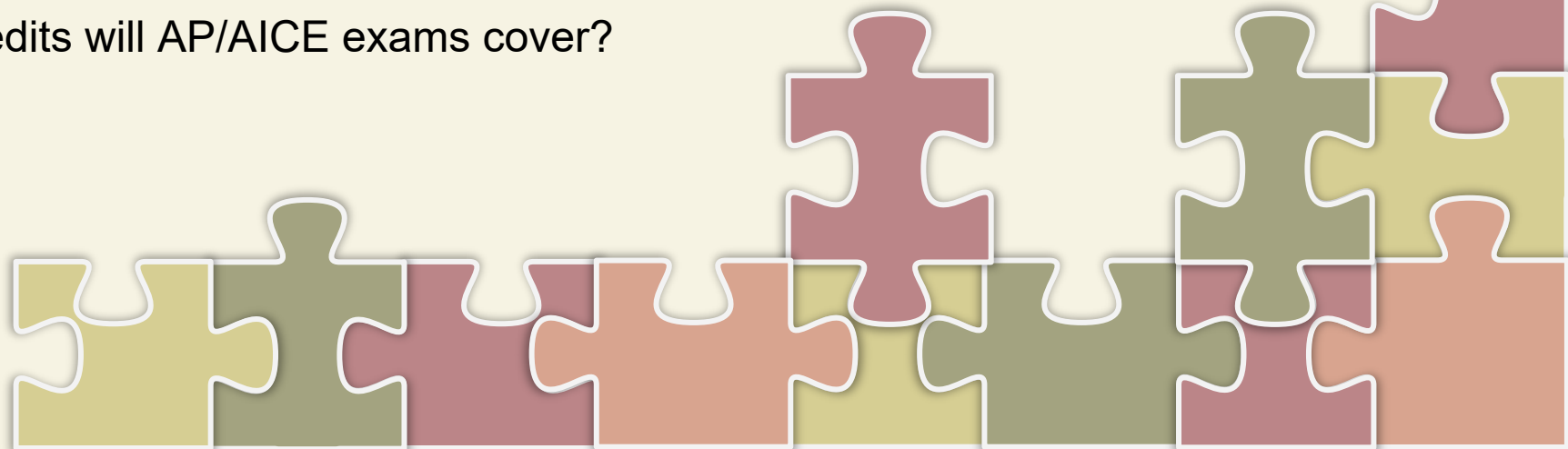
**Costs per year** including tuition and fees, room and board, personal expenses, travel costs; importance to you and your family.

**How aid is packaged:** percentage of the financial aid package that is grant, loan and/or work study; your willingness to borrow money or work on campus to offset the costs.

**Bright Futures/Florida Prepaid:** application to private and out of state schools.

**AP/AICE equivalency:** what credits will AP/AICE exams cover?

[Click Here for AICE Equivalencies](#)  
[Click Here for AP Equivalencies](#)



# Application Options

## Rolling Admissions

Completed applications are reviewed in the order in which they are received. Decisions are returned as soon as available or at specific times throughout the admission cycle. Many state universities use this plan, but some private schools do so as well. It is advantageous to apply early as early as possible in the fall of your senior year. Apply no later than October 15th to public universities to optimize your chances of admission.

## Early Action (Non -Binding Decision) Plan

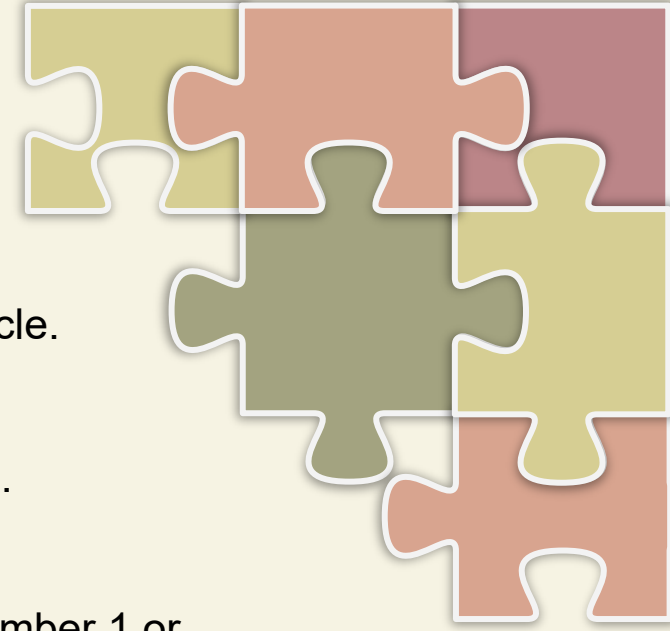
Application to your first choice or top choice early in senior year; deadlines are usually November 1 or November 15. Even though you are notified of the decision early, you are not required to attend and have until May 1 to notify the college of your intention.

## Early Decision

Application to your first choice college, usually by November 1 or November 15. If accepted, you are **contractually obligated to attend** and must withdraw other pending applications. Dates and plans vary among schools. Your application may be accepted, denied or deferred (have your application held for reconsideration in the regular applicant pool) If deferred and then accepted, you are no longer obligated to attend.

## Early Decision II

A second round of Early Decision for those students who either were not ready to commit in time to apply during the first Early Decision period or who were denied admission at their first choice school. Just as noted above, if admitted, you must attend that institution.





# Application Options cont.

## Early Notification or Priority Plans

Operates in the same way as a non-binding early action plan. Priority deadlines are usually for scholarship consideration.

## January Admission

An option offered by some colleges to matriculate in the second semester of freshman year.

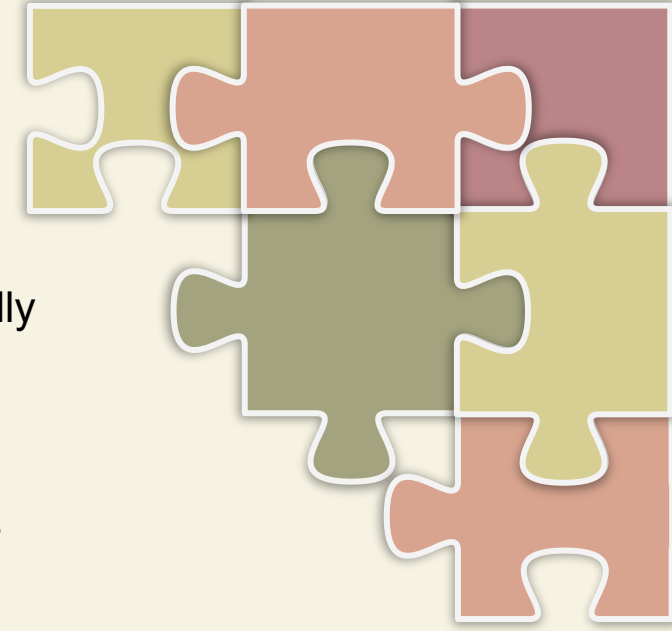
## Summer Admission

Requires students who do not initially meet a college's admission criteria to attend a summer session in order to prove their ability to succeed before matriculating in the fall. Students usually must maintain a specified grade point average in order to continue in the fall semester.

## “Guaranteed” Transfer

A college may offer you transfer admission after satisfactorily completing one or two years at another institution.

[Click Here for Information on Florida University Application Options](#)



02

# The College Search





# Internet Resources

One of the primary sources for college information and applications is, of course, the Internet! Colleges have home pages which provide in -depth details about their programs, academic majors, financial aid, student life, activities, school calendar, applications, campus tours and maps, and often provide virtual tours. Hundreds of other web resources exist in addition to college web pages, we will look at a few of them here.



# BigFuture by College Board

Big Future by College Board is a free college exploration tool that allows students to search for colleges and careers, create a college list, and much more! This is the best one-stop shop for all of your college planning, financial aid and scholarships, test prep and career exploration.

[BigFuture by The College Board](#)

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# State University System of Florida

Here you will find the most up-to-date and in-depth info about the schools in the State University System of Florida. The interactive MyFloridaFuture tool allows users to explore data at the System-level and by individual institution, including information on salary, graduate employment, student debt, and additional educational opportunities.

[State University System of Florida](#)



# Virtual College Fairs

College fairs, including virtual college fairs, are like speed -dating for your college career! College fairs provide an opportunity to gather information from live representatives of the college or university. They typically have a wide variety of institutions in attendance and are sometimes geared toward specific areas of study or student populations. You can seek out colleges in which you are already interested or explore a variety to narrow down your list.

[NACAC Virtual College Fairs](#)

[SACAC Virtual College Fairs](#)

[Big Future Days College Fairs](#)



# Virtual Campus Tours

Virtual campus tours allow students to explore the academic and recreational facilities of a campus, and learn from a virtual tour guide — usually a current student — about what makes each of the components unique. This is a great way to get a feel for a campus you may not be able to visit in person, or to help you narrow down the list of schools you will plan to visit.

[YouVisit Virtual College Tours](#)  
[Florida Shines Virtual Campus Tours](#)



# Park Vista School Counseling Department Web Page

The College Information section of the Park Vista School Counseling web page is perhaps the best internet resource for Park Vista families, because we made it just for you! Here you will find all the information you need about college admissions, applications, and research, and it is the ONLY place you will find information that is specific to Park Vista, such as on -site college admissions, college planning workshops, and college rep visits to our campus.

[Park Vista College Information Page](#)



# 03

## Campus Visits and Other Contacts





# Campus Visits

Campus visits are fun and informative and offer the best way to investigate a college and the only way to get a “feel” of the school. The college search process comes alive in the college visit. Seeing different types and sizes of colleges and universities will help educate you about what schools have to offer and what factors appear to be most important to you. **REMEMBER** - campus visits are for the **STUDENT** to get a feel for the campus. Allow your child to take the lead.



# Planning a Visit

- Find out when tours and/or information sessions are given by calling the admissions office or going online. Some college tours and information sessions require a reservation.
- If possible, try to visit when classes are in session. Recognize that college campuses are quiet on Saturday mornings because most students are sleeping.
- Decide if you are going to spend the night (some colleges will provide an overnight campus experience).
- Inform the admissions office if you would like to sit in on a class or meet with a professor or coach. If you will require academic support services, you may want to arrange to meet with a staff member who can advise you on accommodations in college.
- You may want to inquire about the possibility of an interview, especially if the school is far away and you may not be able to visit again.



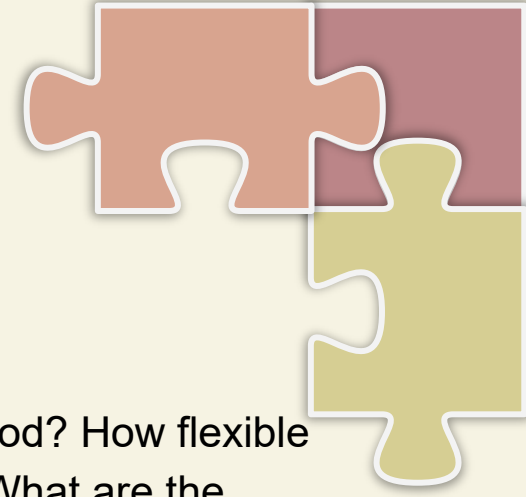
# Before You Visit

- Educate yourself about the college as much as possible (online, catalogues, brochures, etc.).
- Prepare questions that you cannot find the answers to online.
- Get directions and, if you are driving, find out where to park.

# When You're There

- Be sure to sign in with the admissions office so the college has a record of your visit. Many colleges track your contact with them.
- Take a tour – ask to see any particular areas of interest.
- Ask your tour guide and other current students about specific experiences with the college (have they been able to get the courses they need? Quality of advising? Social life on campus?).

# Things to Look For



## Facilities

Libraries? Laboratories?  
Classrooms? Student Center?  
Book Store? Religious services?  
Do facilities look new or  
outdated/in need of repair?

## Dorms

Comfortable? Noisy? Condition?  
Freshman housing? Is there enough  
housing? Is there enough privacy?  
Quiet enough for studying?

## Meals

How is the food? How flexible  
is the plan? What are the  
cafeteria and other eating  
areas like? Can they meet your  
dietary needs?

## Athletics

Who plays? How are the  
facilities? Are athletics an  
important part of social life?

## Student Services

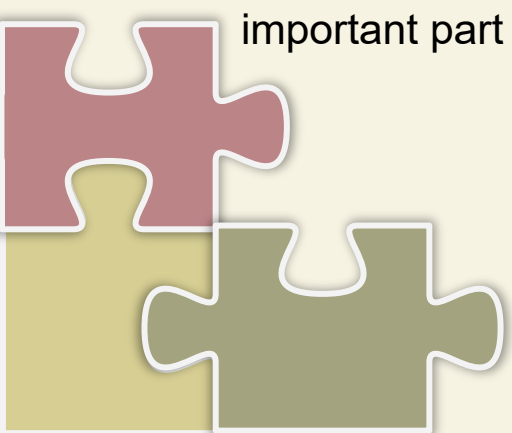
Academic counseling? Mental  
health counseling? Career  
counseling? Campus safety?

## Bulletin Boards/Kiosks

What's going on on campus?  
Can you see yourself at these  
events? What are the issues  
being discussed around  
campus and in the student  
paper?

**Assess the overall atmosphere**

– is it a good fit for you?





# Additional Tips

- Get directions. Plan enough time between visits if you are visiting other colleges.
- Trust your feelings, not the opinions of others – does this school feel right?
- Bring a notebook with you to write down general impressions and reactions after the visit. This is important to do since details may blur together after you have seen several schools. Reviewing your first impressions, and those of other members of your family, may be helpful when deciding if a college is a good fit for you.
- Try not to let “outside” circumstances influence you, e.g., bad weather on your tour, personality of the tour guide, etc.
- Remember that the tour is for the student. The student should be the one to sign in and ask questions.

# College Rep Visits to Park Vista Campus



Each year, Park Vista guidance hosts dozens of representatives from colleges and universities all over the country, right here on our campus. Interested students must sign up in guidance at least two days in advance to meet with a representative. [Park Vista College Visit Schedule](#)

## Students Should

Come prepared with intelligent questions that cannot be easily answered by visiting the college website.

Keep in mind that the person visiting our campus is likely the same person who will be reading your application.

Come meet the rep even if you cannot stay for the visit.

Email the rep after the visit to thank him/ her for visiting and to express interest in the school.

## Students Should Not

Use college visits as an excuse to miss class.

Behave in a manner that reflects poorly on yourself or Park Vista.

Use as a substitute for a campus visit.

Interrupt the representative with questions or comments until invited to do so.

# EMailing Admissions

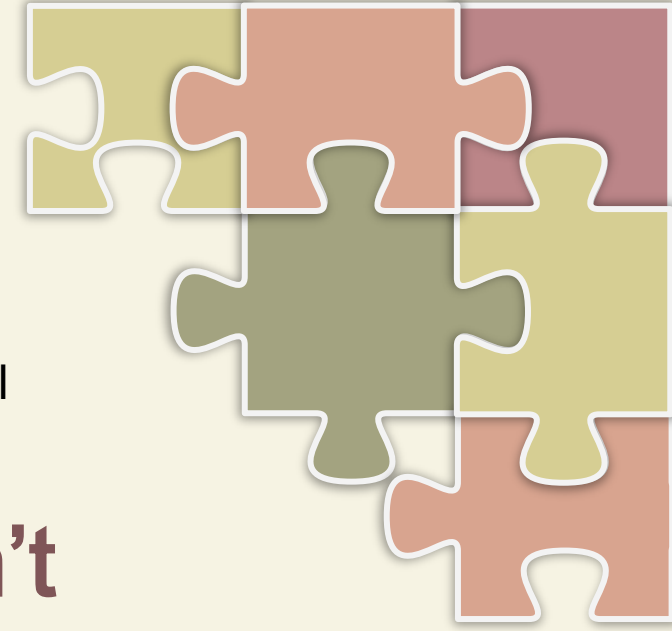
It is ok to email the admissions office or even the regional rep who reads applications for Park Vista to ask for specific information or to express interest in the school. The nature of e-mail is informal compared to standard business mail, but when is informal too informal? Here are a few “dos and don’ts” to help electronic communication.

## Do

- Remember that your e-mail messages may be added to your admissions file.
- Choose an appropriate email address. You may want to rethink addresses like partygirl@hotmail.com or hatetostudy@yahoo.com.
- Give your full name, phone number, and high school on each message.
- Spell check your email and use proper punctuation.
- Be polite and respectful.
- Check the school’s website if you have a lot of questions before sending an email.

## Don’t

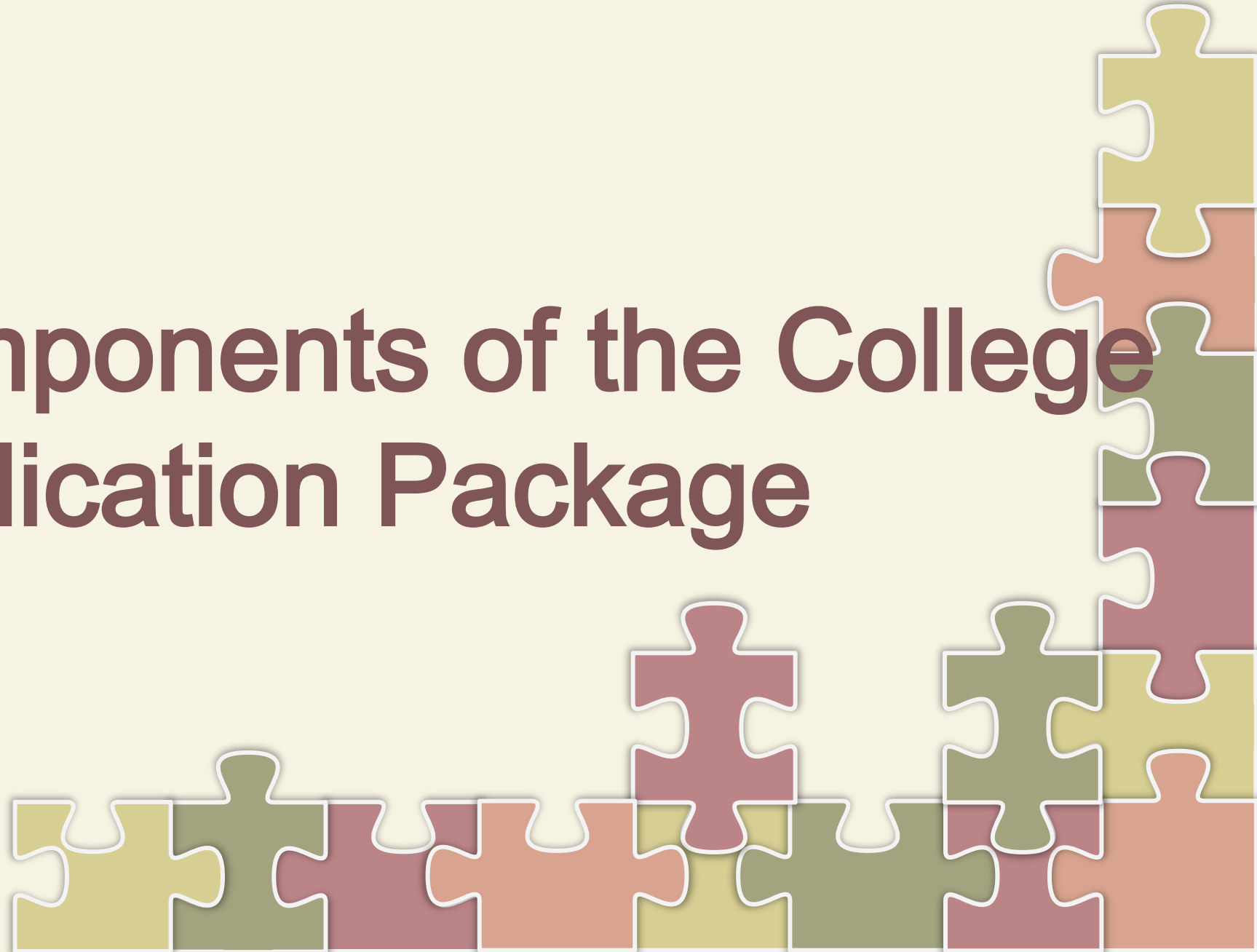
- Use all lower- or upper-case letters.
- Use “IMPORTANT INFORMATION!!!” or “Please read” as subjects for your email. These are commonly used for “junk email” or viruses.
- Use attachments. Schools are wary of attachments since they may carry viruses.
- Send anything confidential in an email.
- E-mail too often. Colleges like to hear from you to assess your interest, but not on a daily or weekly basis.





04

# Components of the College Application Package



- Much older (1975), more familiar to colleges
- Seven essay prompts, 650 words max
- Allows for ten activities, 150 characters

# The Application

- Fairly new (2016)
- More flexibility for multimedia and essay uploads
- Five essay prompts, 500 - 550 word guideline, colleges can set limit
- Allows for eight activities, up to 255 characters

## Common App

~900 Colleges

|      |        |
|------|--------|
| FAU  | UCF    |
| FGCU | UF     |
| FSU  | FLPOLY |
| NCF  | UNF    |
| USF  | UWF    |
| FIU  |        |

## Coalition App

~150 Colleges  
UF

## Common Black College App

66 HBCUs  
One Application and  
One Fee

## Institutional App

One College Per App

|      |        |
|------|--------|
| FAU  | UCF    |
| FGCU | FSU    |
| NCF  | FLPOLY |
| UNF  | USF    |
| UWF  | FAMU   |
| FIU  |        |

If a school offers more than one type of application, choose ONE! Your review will be delayed if you complete multiple applications.

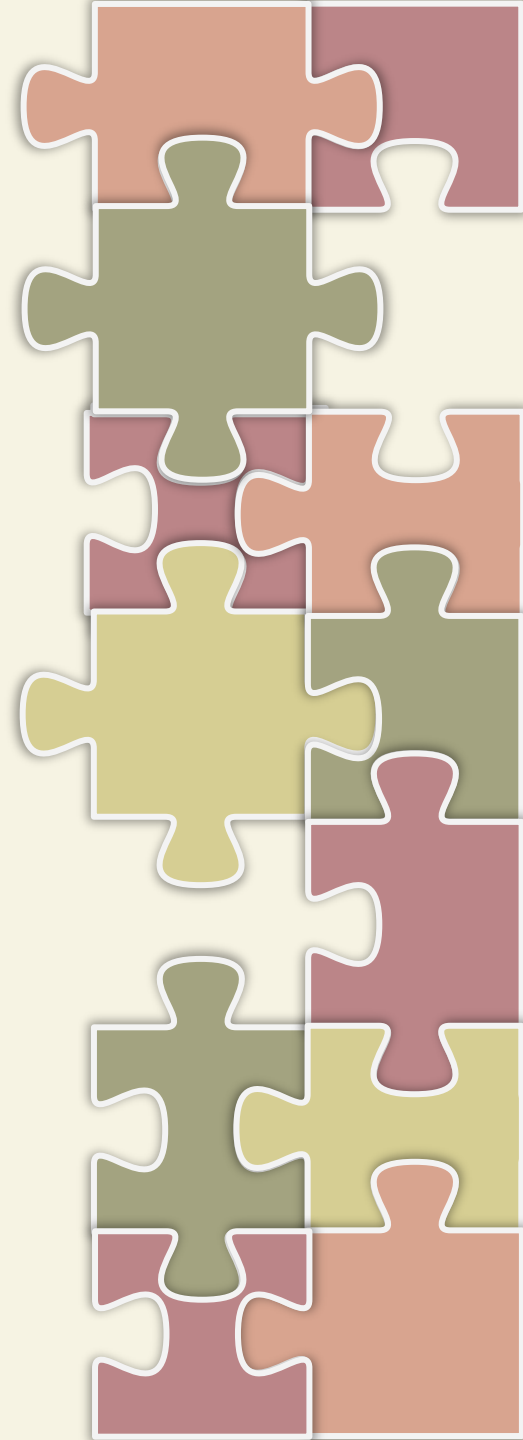
- Application is made available to 68 member institutions for one fee (\$20)
- No required essays, students are encouraged to contact each school to determine if essays or letters of recommendation are required separately.

# Transcripts

- Uploaded by counselor/self -reported by student/ordered through Parchment Or SSAR - Student Self -Reported Academic Record
- Shows specific courses taken and the final grades earned through junior year
- Strength of program and grades earned are the most important components of the application
- Lists senior year courses in progress
- Pattern of grades, or trend from ninth grade through senior year, is always considered
- Senior year grades are an accurate predictor of success in college and are evaluated closely in the admission process

# Test Scores

- Ordered from College Board/ACT or self -reported
- Are generally considered in relation to your overall performance
- Either validate an existing record or demonstrate greater potential for achievement



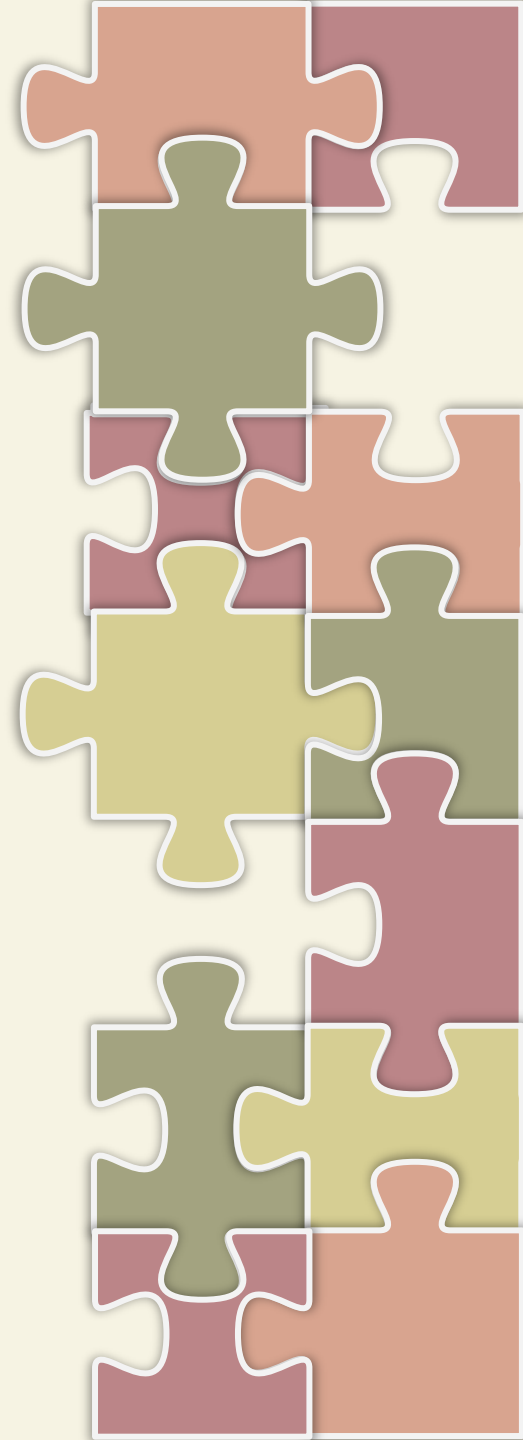
# Counselor Recommendation

- A comprehensive report based on insights into your personal and academic qualities gleaned from personal interaction and review of your records
- Your activities and interests
- Teacher reports on your classroom performance
- Highlights your most positive traits and explains any inconsistency in your transcript.
- May be required, recommended, optional\* or not used at all

# Teacher Recommendations

- Describe your strengths as a student and the growth you achieved throughout the course
- Reflect on projects undertaken, quality of written work, nature of your class participation
- Focus on your potential for academic growth and development
- Include observations on your personal qualities
- May be required, recommended, optional\* or not used at all

Recommendations should be requested in person, at the end of junior year or no later than September senior year.



# Essay(s) and Supplements

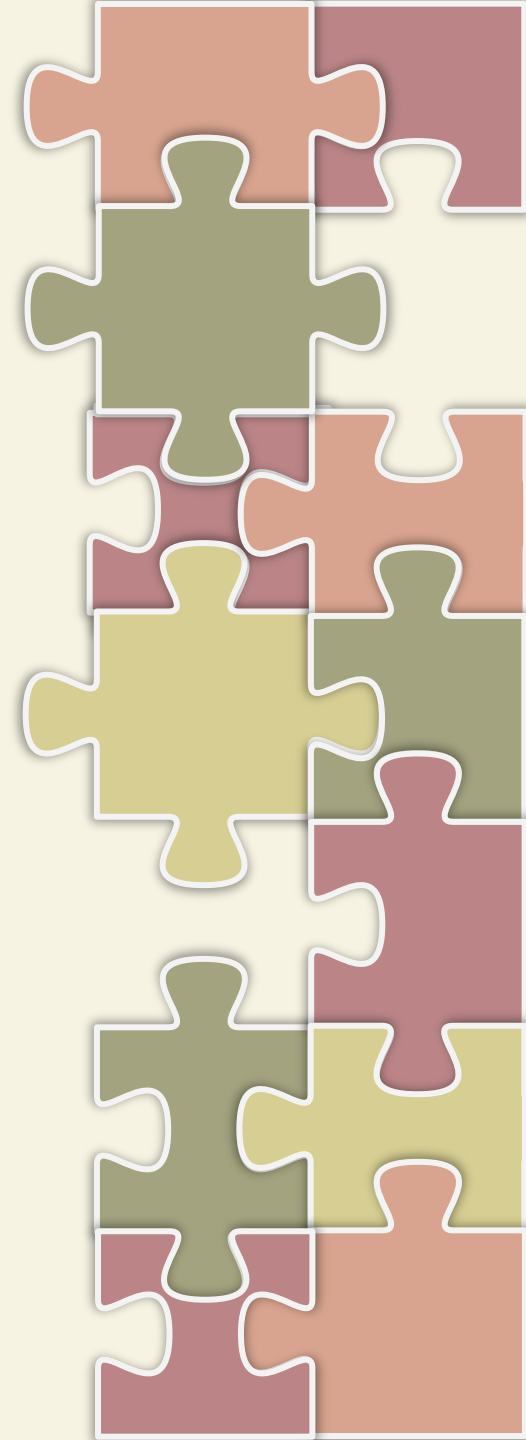
- Main essay provides important information about who you are as a person and also provides you with the opportunity to demonstrate your writing skills
- Supplements are shorter prompts, often used to gauge student interest in the school or to elaborate on interests and activities
- Question about how COVID has impacted the student has been added to Common App

## Activities/Resume

- Evidence of your participation and achievement outside the classroom
- Reflect what is important to you and how you choose to spend your time
- Greater involvement and achievement in a few significant activities are more impressive than superficial involvement in many.
- Resume upload may be optional\*, in addition to application activities section

## Interview

- Provides an opportunity to personalize your admission file and also provides the student with a chance to ask questions of specific concern (Evaluative vs Informative)
- Not all schools require or offer interviews



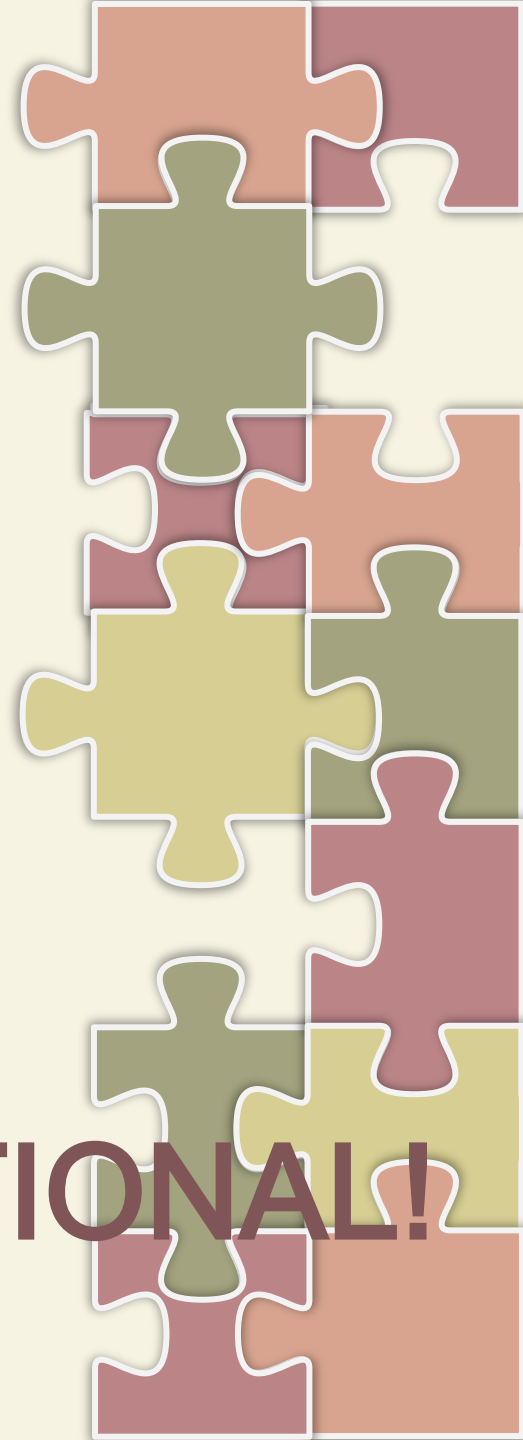
# Supplementary Materials

Some colleges welcome supplementary materials while others discourage this. Check with individual colleges as to their specific policies.

Supplementary information may include the following:

- A recorded performance from areas such as music, dance, athletics, drama, etc.
- An art portfolio (often required for art programs)
- Original creative writing
- Additional letters of recommendation (often from an employer, coach, peer or another teacher)

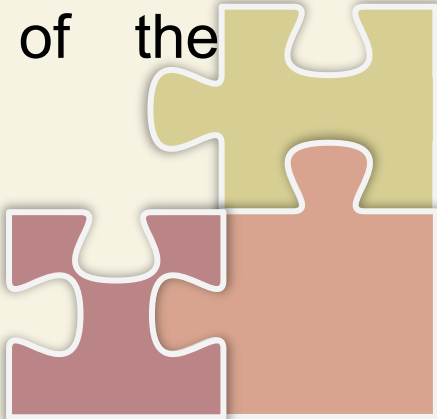
**REMEMBER: NOTHING IS OPTIONAL!**





# The College Essay

Almost all colleges require at least one essay and will use your writing for two different purposes . First of all, they want to see that you can write ; effective communication skills are valued in all career fields and are requisite for college success. Additionally, the essay provides you with an opportunity to personalize your application and to convey to the college what you want them to know about you apart from your grades, scores, and activities . The essay is the place where you can come alive and distinguish yourself as a unique individual, not just an accumulation of accomplishments . The essay is the only component of the application over which the student has complete control .



# The College Essay

Writing a  
strong college  
admissions essay

Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions  
Brown University



**Khan Academy**



# Tips for Students: Writing the Essay

## **Write your own essay.**

Others may help you edit, but your essay must be your own “voice.” You portray your best self when you are honest, sincere, and straightforward. Essays which are too “professional” may not sound authentic. Use good judgment and seek a second opinion, but the final decision is yours.

## **Be honest.**

Show your strengths as well as your challenges. Let the real you come through in your writing be yourself. Be sincere, genuine, and direct.

## **Use the essay to reinforce information found elsewhere in your application.**

Develop common themes in your activities which reflect your personality. Show your depth of interest and involvement. However, don't just repeat information which is noted elsewhere in your application.

## **Emphasize what is important to you.**

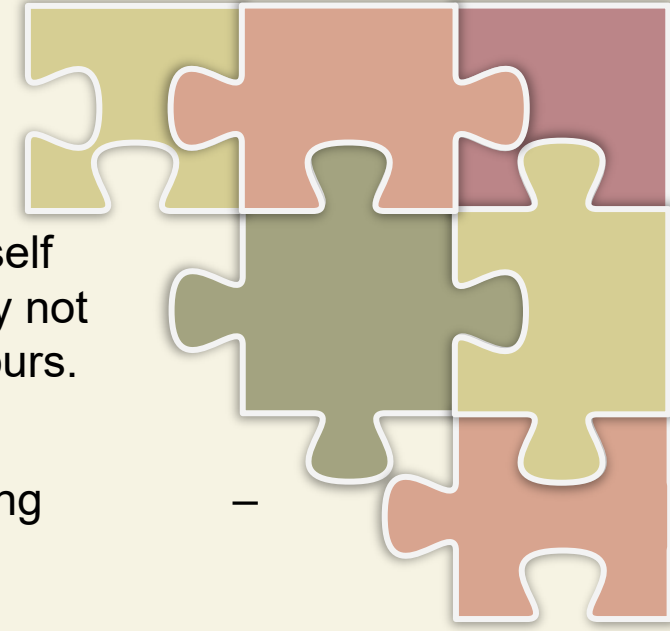
This may include your priorities, values, or personal challenges you have confronted.

## **Pay careful attention to directions.**

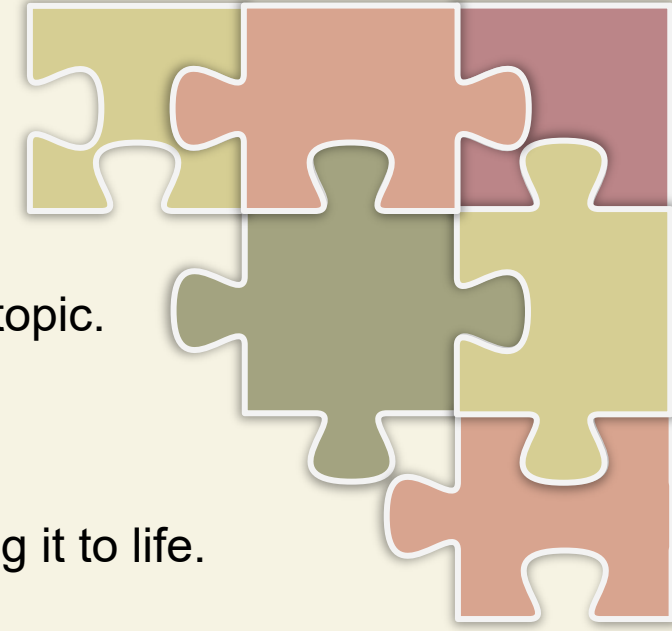
Answer the questions asked. Many questions end with, “...and discuss the impact on you.” This is the most important part of the essay, but is frequently ignored. More is not better. Use additional space to answer the questions only if you are allowed to do so.

## **Proofread carefully.**

Correct punctuation, grammar, syntax, spelling, and usage. Ask someone else, such as your English teacher or counselor, to read over your essay.



# Tips for Students: Writing the Essay



## Please do:

- Answer the question asked – sounds simple, yet sometimes essays are off -topic.
- Organize your thoughts before sitting down to write.
- Think small and write about something you know.
- Reveal yourself in your writing.
- Show rather than tell. By giving examples and illustrating your topic, you help bring it to life. Include sights, sounds, smells, and textures.
- Write in your own “voice” and style.
- Make it personal.

## Please don't:

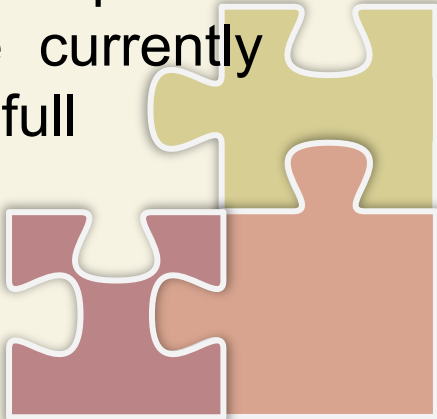
- List your activities or accomplishments that are noted in other parts of your application.
- Write what you think others want to read.
- Exaggerate or write to impress.
- Use a flowery, inflated, or pretentious style.
- Neglect the technical part of your essay (grammar, spelling, sentence structure).
- Ramble – say what you have to say and conclude.
- Throw in “big words” to impress; it doesn't work.



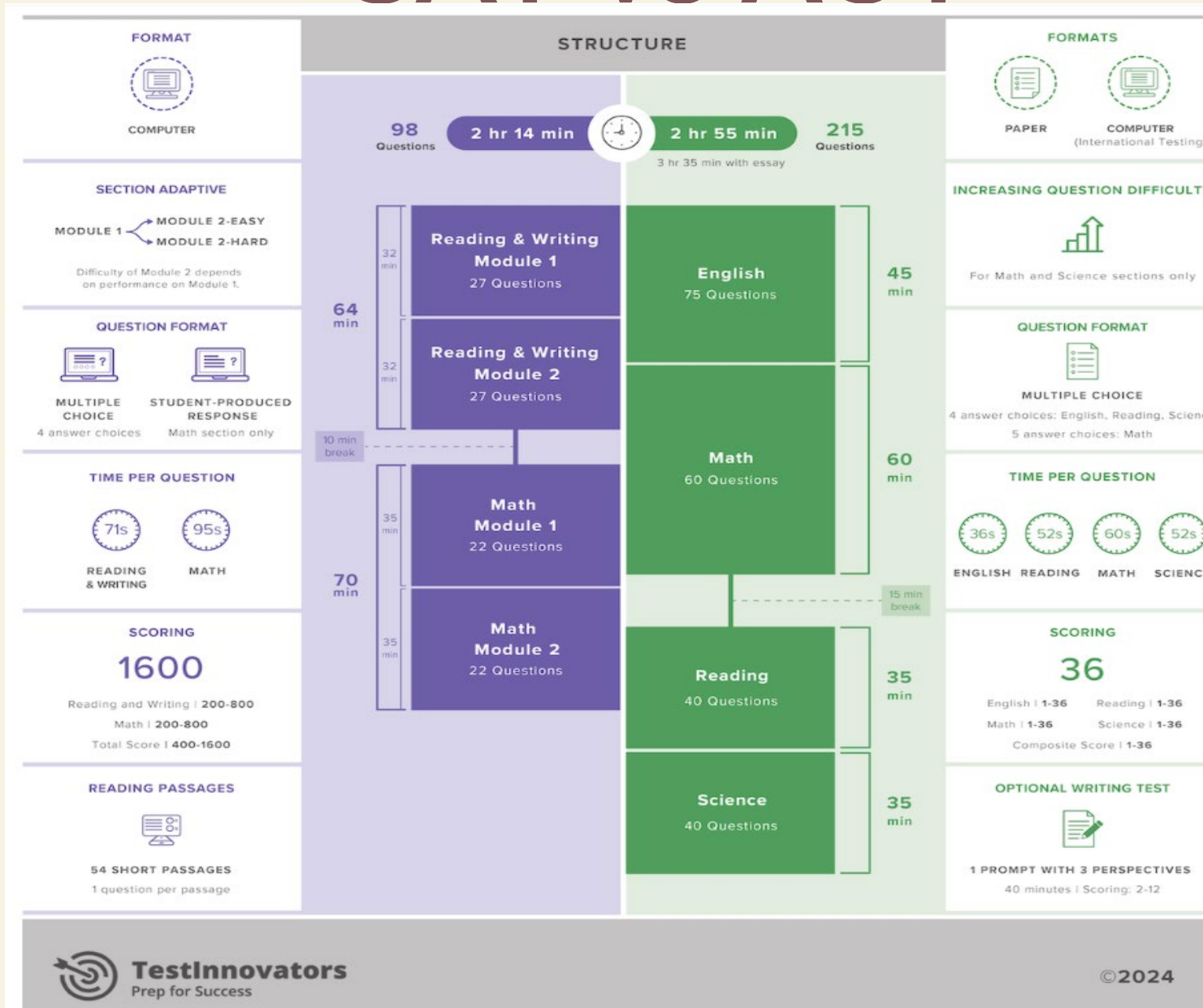
# Testing for College Admission

College admission tests, like the SAT and ACT, are standardized tests typically taken in junior and/or senior year. Colleges use scores from these tests to help them make admission decisions. Each college has its own policies, and they use scores differently. Test scores are just one part of your college application. Colleges place the most weight on your high school grades and whether you're challenging yourself. We recommend that students try both the SAT and the ACT and retake the one with which they are most comfortable.

More and more colleges and universities are moving to test optional admissions, meaning they do not require test scores. There are currently over 1,900 schools that do not require test scores. You can find a full list of test optional institutions at [fairtest.org](https://www.fairtest.org).



# SAT vs ACT





# CLT (Classic Learning Test)

The Classic Learning Test is an online college entrance exam designed for 11th and 12th grade students. This college entrance exam was launched in 2015 as an alternative to the SAT and ACT, and is accepted by over 200 colleges across the U.S. and Bright Futures. The CLT can be taken in school or at home.

The CLT consists of three required sections :

Verbal Reasoning, which tests students' textual comprehension and analysis skills

Grammar/Writing, which tests students' textual editing and improvement skills

Quantitative Reasoning, which tests students' skills in logic and mathematics

There is also an optional essay portion of the exam that students can choose to take, but the score on this portion will not affect your numerical score on the exam. Each CLT exam section (excluding the writing section) consists of 40 questions.

The CLT test lasts for a total of two hours or 120 minutes. This total testing period is divided into the following time frames for each individual exam section :

40 minutes — Verbal Reasoning section

35 minutes — Grammar/Writing section

45 minutes — Quantitative Reasoning section

Additional 30 minutes — Optional essay section (not included in total two hour exam time)






# AP and AICE Exams

AP and AICE exams can be used to show mastery in college level courses and can be self-reported on the application . If a school requires an official report of AP scores, the student may pay to send only the tests on which a 4 or 5 was earned . It will not benefit, and may even hurt a student, if scores below a 4 are submitted . High scores on a variety of AP exams can help differentiate students at highly selective colleges, and can validate the grades you earned in your AP classes .

Although AP and AICE exam scores will not "make or break" an application, this does not mean that AP and AICE classes are not important . The weight of your curriculum and the grades you earn in those classes are the most important component of the application package, so students should always challenge themselves by taking the highest level courses appropriate for them and earning their best possible grades . If a student does well on these exams, they may get college credit or test out of prerequisites at many institutions which will save lots of time and money .



05

# Financial Aid





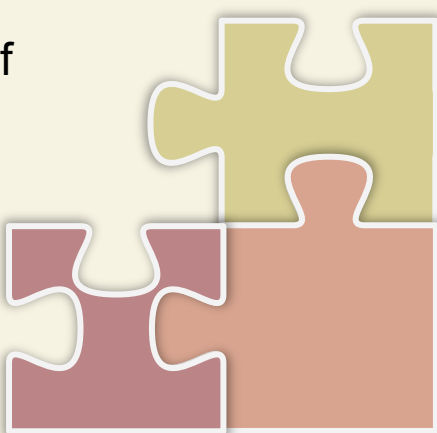
# Types of Financial Aid

**Loans:** If you apply for financial aid, you may be offered loans as part of your school's financial aid offer. A loan is money you borrow and must pay back with interest.

**Grants:** Grants can come from the federal or state government, the college or university, or a private or nonprofit organization. Most types of grants, unlike loans, are sources of financial aid that generally do not have to be repaid.

**Work -Study:** Federal Work -Study provides part -time jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay education expenses. The program encourages community service work and work related to the student's course of study.

**Scholarships:** Scholarships are gifts. They don't need to be repaid. There are thousands of them, offered by schools, employers, individuals, private companies, nonprofits, communities, religious groups, and professional and social organizations.







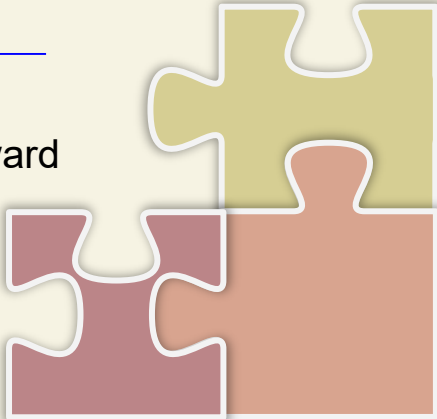
# Applying for Financial Aid

**FAFSA:** To apply for federal student aid, such as federal grants, work-study, and loans, you need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®). Completing and submitting the FAFSA is free and easier than ever, and it gives you access to the largest source of financial aid to pay for college or career school. In addition, many states and colleges use your FAFSA information to determine your eligibility for state and school aid, and some private financial aid providers may use your FAFSA information to determine whether you qualify for their aid. This will be available in October of the student's senior year at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

**FFAA:** Students must submit a completed Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) to apply for State Scholarship & Grant Programs, including Bright Futures. This will be available in October of the student's senior year at <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/>

**Scholarships:** There are many resources for searching for and applying to scholarships, and some colleges will offer scholarships called "merit aid" if the student meets certain criteria. You can find search engines for scholarships and much more information on scholarships and financial aid on our website at [https://www.pvchs.com/students\\_parents/counseling\\_department/scholarships\\_financial\\_aid](https://www.pvchs.com/students_parents/counseling_department/scholarships_financial_aid)

**CSS Profile:** The CSS Profile is an online application used by colleges and scholarship programs to award Institutional (their own) aid. Check your colleges' information to determine whether they require the CSS Profile. A list of participating schools can be found here: <https://profile.collegeboard.org/profile/ppi/participatingInstitutions.aspx>





**QUESTIONS?**