

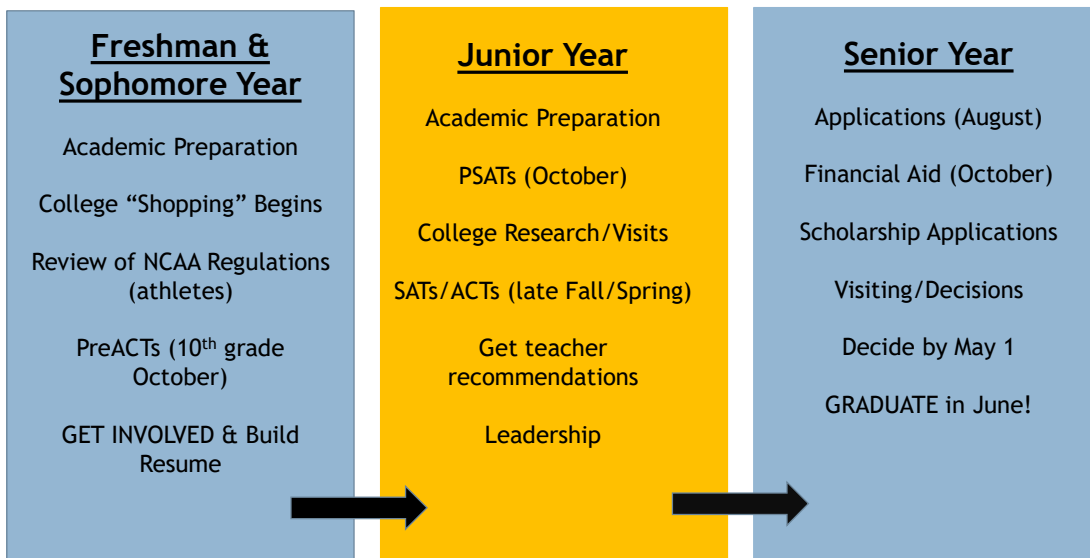
College Admissions 101

An Introduction to the College Application Process
Brooke Stoudt, Wissahickon HS College & Career Counselor



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College Planning Timeline



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Introducing...

SCOIR

All WHS students and parents have access to Scoir. Parents, contact Brooke Stoudt to create your account.



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Spring 2025 Testing Updates

- Colleges are currently evaluating their testing policies for the Class of 2026 (and beyond in some cases)
- Many announcements have already been made and others will continue through the spring
- Anticipate most colleges to be test optional for the Class of 2026, but we have seen a shift with some highly selective institutions

What Does Test Optional Mean?

- Students can choose to include test scores in their evaluation. “What % of admitted students submitted scores?”
- Students who have scores do not need to send
- Students can choose different options for each school
- Students should review information regarding average scores for school and/or major. Check most current information.
- Some colleges are “test free” or “test blind” - no scores considered (ex. University of California)

Harvard won't require SAT or ACT through 2026
Higher Education
 The test-optional movement aims to limit the role of the standardized exams in...

Will Test Optional Become the 'New Normal'?
Admissions Insider

As more colleges embrace the practice for a few years—or permanently—the debate is changing.

Columbia University becomes first Ivy League institution to go permanently test-optional
College Board

Penn State extends test-optional admissions to 2025
Admissions Insider

NCAA permanently ends SAT, ACT eligibility requirement for Division I, II student-athletes
DIVE BRIEF

Purdue University reinstates admissions test requirements for fall 2024
DIVE BRIEF

Published Oct. 5, 2023



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The SAT is *DIGITAL*!

What You Should Know About the Digital SAT

IT'S SHORTER
The new digital exam will be closer to two hours long.

2024 ROLLOUT
The digital SAT will be available to U.S. students in 2024 and to international students in 2023.

SHORTER QUESTIONS
Reading passages will be shorter, and math questions will be "less wordy."

CALCULATORS
Students can use a calculator for ALL math questions.

NOT AT HOME
Digital SATs will be administered in school or at designated test centers only.

SAME SCORING
The digital SATs will still be scored on a 1600-point scale.

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SAT VS. ACT



SAT Score Range: 400-1600	ACT Score Range: 1-36
Scores in: Evidenced-Based Reading & Writing; Math	Scores in: English; Reading; Math; Science (optional beginning April 2025 for digital testing, September 2025 for all administrations); Writing (optional)
Digital Exam	Paper/Pencil Exam- digital option available April 2025
August, September (new!), October, November, December, March, May, June	September, October, December, February, April, June, July
No Essay	Essay optional – position on complex issue (not recommended)
Total Time: 2hours, 14 minutes	Total Time: 2 hours, 55 minutes (no essay) 3 hours, 40 minutes (with essay) 2 hours, 5 minutes (Spring 2025 digital testing, varies)

**EXAMS ARE VIEWED EQUALLY BY ALL COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES
STUDENTS CAN TAKE BOTH**

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General Testing Information

- Check registration deadlines - usually 1 month in advance
- Fee waivers are available for students on Free/Reduced Lunch
 - 2 SAT Waivers/4 ACT Waivers
 - Application Fees Waived
- Using Accommodations: Students who have documented accommodations in school through an IEP or 504 may be eligible for testing accommodations (e.g. extended time, small group). Students must apply for these accommodations with the College Board/ACT and be approved- speak with your school counselor!
- Test Prep: WHS is not permitted to share recommendations regarding tutors. We DO maintain and provide a tutor list to families who wish to explore options.
- Students are responsible for sending/sharing scores with colleges. This information is not provided by the high school at any time.
- More information about Test Optional: www.fairtest.org



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What is Superscoring?

Colleges take the best score from each section of test and use highest scores in admissions decision. Check for individual school policies.

SAT	EVIDENCED-BASED READING/WRITING	MATH
MARCH	550	620
JUNE	590	590

Score Choice: term used by College Board that allows students to pick and choose which SAT test dates to send. Not all colleges allow score choice.

ACT	ENGLISH	MATH	READING	SCIENCE
DECEMBER	27	30	26	29
APRIL	28	29	29	31

Students can test as many times as they want. However, it is advised not to test more than three times (unless interventions have been put into place).

*Most colleges will not superscore between the ACT and SAT if both are submitted.
Most colleges will superscore between the digital and paper SAT.*



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Finding the Right “Fit”

What Criteria Should I Use To Evaluate Fit?

To start the conversation, think about...

Size

Location

Admissions Criteria

Major

Setting

Other Factors:

Cost

Social Experiences

Services for Disabilities



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College Research

- On-Campus Visits - Info Sessions, Panels, Tours
 - Check with individual colleges regarding on-campus visit opportunities
 - Register in advance through admissions website
 - Schedule early for popular days off (i.e. Spring Break, Presidents Day)
 - Great way to see campus, meet/talk to students, learn about off-campus community

- Virtual Visits
 - Register online in advance through admissions website
 - Live vs. recorded programming
 - Connect with admissions representatives, students
 - Good way to learn about campus, programming, students
 - Not going to get the full effect of campus community



Tip! Take notes on your tour. They could be helpful when answering “why ___ University” essays.



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College Research

- Admissions Representative Visits
 - Each fall, over 100 college reps visit WHS to meet with junior/senior students.
 - Admissions employees mostly, some alumni or current students
 - Typically, the admissions person responsible for first read on application or school/student advocate
 - Impressions matter!
 - Visit dates/times posted in Scoir
 - Ask Questions
- College Fairs
 - Learn about a lot of schools in a quick amount of time
 - Connect with reps who don't visit WHS
 - Less invasive - can grab & go!



[Main Line College Fair](#)

Wednesday, May 21st 6PM-8:30PM
Villanova University



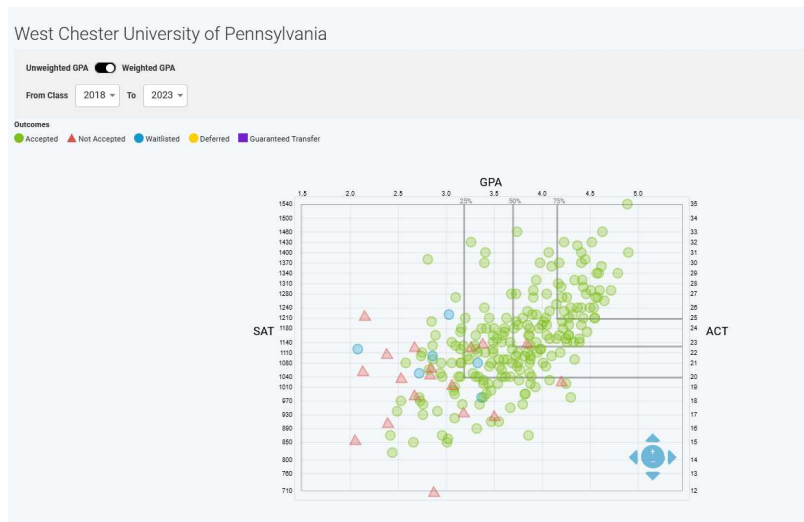
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College Research

Scoir Scattergrams

To access from parent account:

- Log into Scoir account
- Choose a student from "My Students"
- Click on Colleges & Applications (left menu)
- Click on Scattergram
- Select or type college name
- Filter by graduating class for more or less detail
- Testing data: doesn't hold much current value since test optional
- GPA: uses student GPA at end of 11th grade



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Finding the Right Fit

What Criteria Will the College Use to Evaluate Applicants?

Colleges will use a combination of the following:

- Strength of Courses
- Grades/GPA
- Essay
- Teacher/Counselor Recs
- Demonstrated Interest
- Personal Accomplishments
- Personal Characteristics
- Interview
- Admissions Test Scores
- **Senior Grades**

Don't be humble!



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How To Apply

Application information can be found on college website or Scoir.

COMMON APPLICATION - www.commonapp.org (most popular)

COALITION APPLICATION - Integrated on Scoir

COMMON BLACK COLLEGE APPLICATION - <https://commonblackcollegeapp.com/>

SCHOOL SPECIFIC APPLICATION - found on individual websites

Colleges may offer students their choice of application.
Students should choose the option that makes the most sense
based on college list.



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College Applications

- Applications open August 1 prior to senior year
- Average student applies to 5-8 schools
 - 2 Reach, 2-4 Target, 2 Likely
 - Students applying to highly selective schools tend to apply to more
- Application Fees
 - Free → over \$80
 - Fee waivers for Free/Reduced Lunch
- WHS Common App Bootcamp
 - 9 am - Noon
 - Wednesday, June 25, 2025



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College Applications

The screenshot shows the Common App profile page for the University of Delaware. The page is divided into several sections:

- Navigation:** Dashboard, My Colleges, Common App, College Search, Financial Aid Resources.
- Profile Section:**
 - Personal Information:** Legal first/given name* (Stacy), Middle name, Last/family/surname*.
 - Share Name:** Would you like to share a different first name that you go by? (Yes/No) with a "Clear answer" button.
- My Colleges:** Lehigh University, Northeastern University, University of Delaware (selected), University of Maryland, University of Michigan, University of Pittsburgh.
- College Information:**
 - Contact Info:** Phone: (302) 831-8123, Email: admissions@udel.edu, Address: 210 South College Ave, University Visitors Center, Newark, DE 19716, USA.
 - Links:** College Website, Admissions Office, Virtual Tour, College Navigator.
 - Application Deadlines:**

Application Deadlines	Fall 2023	Spring 2023
First Year	Early Action - 11/01/2022 Regular Decision - 01/15/2023	First Year Regular Decision - 11/01/2022
 - Application Information:** Application Fees: First Year International Fee - \$75.

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Essay Prompts 2025-2026



Common App Essay: 650 WORDS

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.



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Essay Prompts 2025-2026



Changes to the Additional Information Section-These questions remain optional!

Challenges & Circumstances (250 word max):

Sometimes a student's application and achievements may be impacted by challenges or other circumstances. This could involve:

- Access to a safe and quiet study space
- Access to reliable technology and internet
- Community disruption (violence, protests, teacher strikes, etc.)
- Discrimination
- Family disruptions (divorce, incarceration, job loss, health, loss of a family member, addiction, etc.)
- Family or other obligations (care-taking, financial support, etc.)
- Housing instability, displacement, or homelessness
- Military deployment or activation
- Natural disasters
- Physical health and mental well-being
- War, genocide, or other hardships

If you're comfortable sharing, this information can help colleges better understand the context of your application. Colleges may use this information to provide you and your fellow students with support and resources.

Additional Information Question- word count reduced to 300 word max (down from 650 word max)



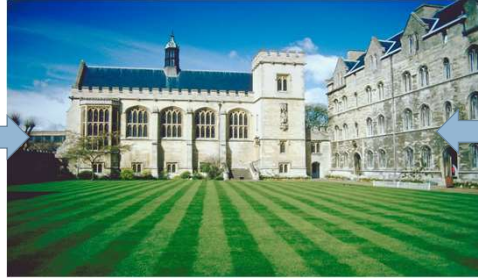
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Parts of a Completed Application

HIGH SCHOOL



Transcripts
Mid-Year Reports
Counselor Rec
Teacher Rec
Fee Waivers
ED Agreements



COLLEGE

STUDENT



Application
Test Scores
Self-Reported Transcripts
Outside Recommendations

Application materials from WHS are sent electronically via Scoir unless otherwise requested by a college.



Self Reported Transcripts

- Some colleges now allow/require students to self-report their academic transcript and/or test scores.
- Systems include the SSAR, SRAR, Courses & Grades (Common App), Internal Program
- Students add their own academic record: courses, grades, credits, GPA
- Students may need to submit application first - ALLOW PROCESSING TIME!

Samples of Self-Reported Transcript Schools:

Penn State University	Arizona State University	University of Delaware
University of Pittsburgh	University of Arizona	University of Illinois
Temple University	University of Connecticut	Virginia Tech
Florida State University	University of Washington	Georgia Tech
University of Florida	Rutgers University	Clemson University



Letters of Recommendation

WHS/WVA Teachers

- Ask two junior year teachers - at least one from a core subject
- May need to complete information for teacher
- Does not need to be from best subject area
- Try to avoid teachers from 9/10, when possible



Outside Letters

- One is sufficient
- Coach, Boss, Mentor - not family
- Must be sent directly from individual (often through app)

Counselor Letters

- Students must do Senior Questionnaire on Scoir
- Parents can do Parent Brag Survey on Scoir
- Will write automatically - no need to formally ask

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Admission Deadlines

Colleges often have multiple deadline options!

Early Decision (ED)

Set deadline date - usually Nov. 1 or Nov. 15
Must attend if accepted - signs contract (BINDING)
Student may only apply to one school ED
Some admissions advantages
ED I vs. ED II

Early Action (EA)

Set deadline date - usually Nov. 1 or Nov. 15
Response well before the college's regular response date
Not binding

Restrictive/Single Choice Early Action (REA)

Must note individual college restrictions under REA Policy
Not binding
Some admissions advantages

Regular Decision (RD)

Set deadline date
Set response date
Deadline usually Jan.1 or later

Rolling Admissions

Admitted as Reviewed
May see a listed deadline of March 1
Be aware of Priority Deadlines

Open

Students accepted upon applying
Must graduate from high school

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Admissions Decisions

ADMIT

Students are accepted to university.

May include merit award offer.

Students may still need to send senior grades.

Decision valid until May 1**

***Students accepted under ED may need to reply within a couple weeks.*

DENY

Student did not gain admission.

No further action required.

Appeals may be available but are often unsuccessful unless new information is provided.

DEFER

Initial review complete but no decision made.

Students will move to regular decision pool.

Additional information may be requested - i.e. senior grades, letter of continued interest, deferral opt-in.

Only in Early Action, Early Decision, and REA.

WAITLIST

Admission remains a possibility.

Students will need to opt-in.

Waitlist offers may be made based on space available or unfilled needs.

Offers likely after May 1.

Students will need to pursue another school.

MAY 1: National Reply Date


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Paying for College

- **FAFSA** (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) - Federal Aid
 - FAFSA Application Available October 1st of senior year
 - Tax information used will be from TWO years prior.
 - Ex. Class of 2026 will use tax return from 2024.
 - *To complete or not complete?*
- **PHEAA** (PA Higher Education Assistance Agency) - State Aid
- **CSS Profile** (College Board) - required by some schools to determine institutional need-based aid. Check CSS Profile website for listing.
- Scholarships - academic, athletic, service, leadership, arts, essays
 - Studentscholarships.org
 - Raise.me (micro-scholarships)
 - Scholarships_360 Instagram
 - Goingmerry.com
- “Net Price Calculators” on college websites



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Financial Aid Night

Thursday, April 24th
7:00PM
WHS Audion

Presented by Fran McKeown from
PHEAA


Parents/Guardians of All Grade Levels Welcome!

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COLLEGE & CAREER UPDATE
Wissahickon High School
Belong. Inspire. Engage. Excel.

Week of February 24, 2025



WISSAHICKON HIGH SCHOOL
JUNIOR PARENT NIGHT: COLLEGE 101
Parents/Guardians of the Class of 2026 are invited to learn more about the college search and application process.
TUESDAY | MARCH 4, 2025
7:00PM - 8:00PM | WHS AUDION
A recorded slide presentation will be made available for those who are unable to attend.

College & Career Update

- Weekly newsletter sent out on Sunday afternoon
- Includes important information on upcoming events and opportunities for students related to college and career planning

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QUESTIONS?

Let's chat.

Brooke Stoudt

College & Career Counselor

bstoudt@wsdweb.org

Schedule an appointment:

[Calendly](#)

