

The Nuts and Bolts of the Four Year College Application Process

Topics for Today



- ✓ **Building the List**
- ✓ **Steps For Applying**
- ✓ **Types of Applications:**
Institutional Application, Common Application, Common Black College Application, GA Futures
- ✓ **Components of the Application:**
Accuracy, deadlines, essays, resumes, interviews, letters of recommendation
- ✓ **Campus Visits**
- ✓ **Standardized Testing:**
SAT, ACT
- ✓ **Financial Aid:**
FAFSA, GSFApp, CSS Profile, Institutional Scholarships, Search Engines
- ✓ **Athletics:**
NCAA and NAIA
- ✓ **Academic Common Market**

FACTORS FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION

Extracurricular
Activities

Essays

Letters of
Recommendation

Demonstrated
Interest



RIGOR OF CLASSES

GRADES & GPA

TEST SCORES

Cum GPA
Hope GPA
College GPA

How Do I Build My College List?

▶ Know your academic profile

- ▶ **Unweighted** core GPA
- ▶ Standardized test scores
- ▶ Curriculum (rigor)

▶ Search for the college's freshman profile

- ▶ Average or mid 50% GPA & test scores, **not just minimum admission requirements**
- ▶ Compare how you fit into the college's profile
- ▶ Pay close attention to how college's calculate GPA for evaluation of applications! Each one is different!

College Searching

- Naviance
- College Board - [Home – BigFuture | College Board](#)
- GA Futures - [GAfutures.org | Georgia Student Finance Commission](#)
- Many, many more!

The screenshot shows the BigFuture website's College Search interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'BigFuture' on the left and 'Plan for College', 'Pay for College', 'Explore Careers', and 'Communities & Events' on the right. Below this is a 'College Search' section with a search bar labeled 'Search by college name' and a heart icon with '0'. The main content area features the heading 'Find the right college for you.' followed by the instruction 'Choose a category to start exploring.' Below this are four category buttons: 'Location' (with a map icon), 'Majors' (with a graduation cap icon), 'Type' (with a school building icon), and 'Campus Life' (with a person and sun icon).

The screenshot shows the Naviance website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Naviance' on the left and 'Home', 'Self-Discovery', 'Careers', 'Colleges', and 'Planner' on the right. Below this is a 'Demo's Future Plan' section with a 'Plan' button and a description 'Quickly access your information from'. To the right of this is a 'Research Colleges' section with a list of options: 'Colleges I'm Thinking About', 'College Visits', 'College Compare', 'College Resources', 'Acceptance History', 'Enrichment Programs', and 'College Maps'. Further right is an 'Apply to College' section with 'Colleges I'm Applying To' and 'Test Scores'. On the far right is a 'Scholarships & Money' section with 'College-Specific Scholarships', 'National Scholarship Search', 'Scholarship Search', and 'Favorite Scholarships'. Below these sections is a 'Tasks from My School' section with a table of tasks. The table has columns for 'Task Or To-Do', 'Priority', and 'Date'. One task is 'Create presentation To-Do' with a 'High' priority and a date of '08/27/19'. There are also 'Military Path Highlights' and 'What's New' sections at the bottom.

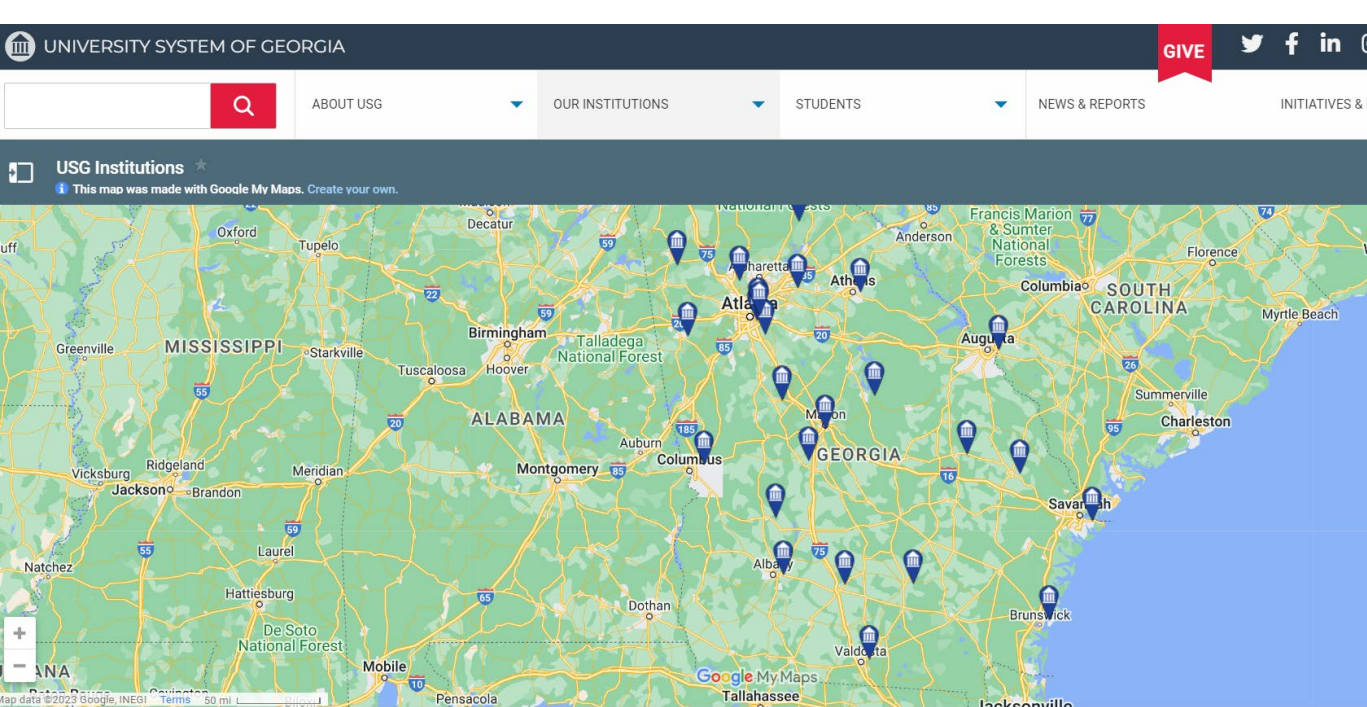
College Searching: Public Schools in Georgia

[USG Institutions | University System of Georgia](#)

[University System of Georgia \(usg.edu\)](#)

[Enrollment Management & Student Affairs | Freshman Admission | University System of Georgia \(usg.edu\)](#)

[USG Summer 2023–Summer 2025 Freshman Admission Requirements 2022USGDataChartweb.pdf \(gatech.edu\)](#)



BUILDING A COLLEGE LIST

“Reach schools” are those where your academic credentials fall below the school’s range for the freshman class.

“Target schools” are schools where your academic credentials fall within or perhaps slightly exceed the school’s range for the freshman class.

“Safety schools” are schools you will almost definitely get into because your academic credentials are much better than the typical range for their freshman class.

REACH SCHOOLS

Apply to 1 or 2

TARGET SCHOOLS

Apply to 2 or 3

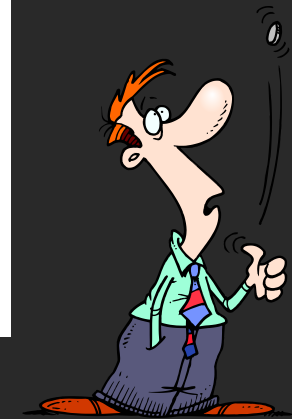
SAFETY SCHOOLS

Apply to at least 1

Students were applying to an average of 7 colleges in 2021, as per US News and World Report.

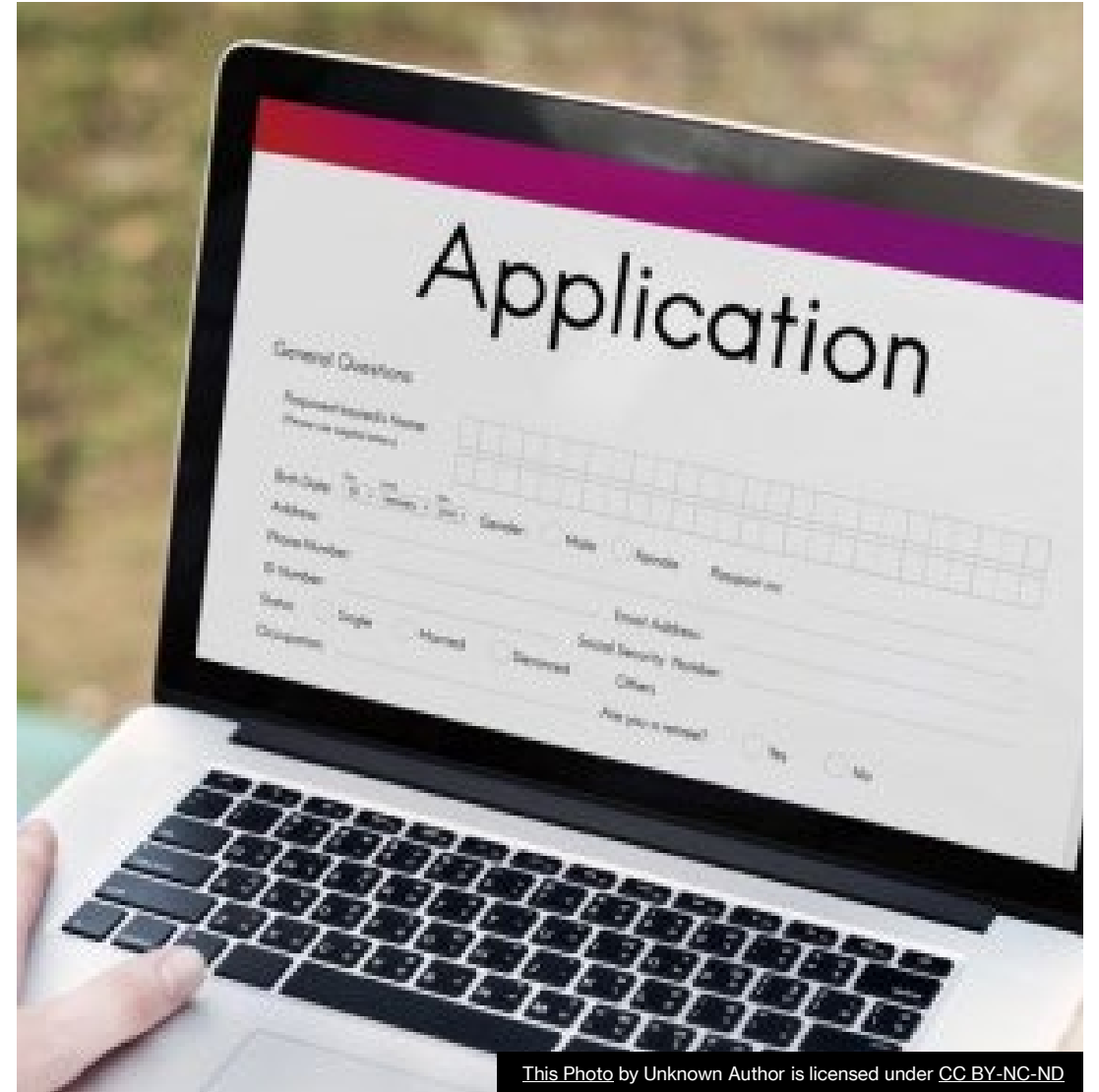
College Admissions: Start the Process Early

- Scholarships
- Housing
- Stress Relief
- Options for Financial Aid
- Increase Chances for Admission
- Allows Time to Become Admissible



Types of Applications

- Institutional Applications
- Common App:
 - <https://www.commonapp.org/>
 - [Application guide for first-year students \(commonapp.org\)](#)
 - [How the Common App Works](#)
- Common Black College Application:
 - <https://commonblackcollegeapp.com/>
 - [Common Black College Application FAQ's](#)
- GA Futures:
 - <https://www.gafutures.org/>



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Components of the College Application: General

- **Accuracy** – First impressions count! Be careful with your grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. Remember that you can save an application and return to it later. If possible, have someone read over your application before clicking "Submit."
 - **Optional** – Means you should do it if you can! Take advantage of all opportunities to set your whole self in a positive light with the admissions counselors.
 - **Timeliness** – Apply as early as you can.
 - **Organization** – You will help yourself if you keep a list or spreadsheet of all of the colleges you are applying to, their deadlines and requirements. Then, prioritize the ones with the earliest deadlines and/or the ones that are most important to you.
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Types of Application Deadlines

Regular Deadline: Receive a decision at the standard response date.

Early Action: Receive a decision earlier than the standard response date BUT are NOT required to accept the admission offer or pay deposit prior to May 1

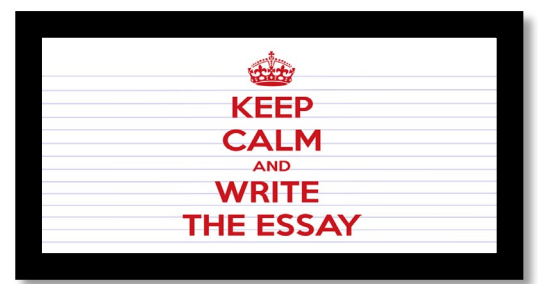
Early Decision (BINDING): Commit to enroll at a college if admitted & offered a satisfactory financial aid packet. Application deadlines are usually November to December. *You can only apply ED to one school.*

Single Choice/Restricted Early Action: You cannot apply early to other colleges, but you can apply regular decision to other colleges

Rolling: Admission decisions are usually made within 6 weeks of submitting the application.

Priority Deadlines: Mostly associated with getting into institutional scholarship pools. Check those deadlines closely.

Components of the application: Essays



- Some schools do not require these. Some have one. Some have multiple essays. Check the website/review the application to see.
- Essays are your opportunity to give admissions counselors insight into who you are as a person; your character and what motivates you. Essays also give an indication of your writing abilities. There is no "right" or "wrong" topic as long as you can write well and show how it is meaningful to you.
- Write your essay in a word document and then copy and paste it into the application.
- Watch the word count!
- Do multiple drafts and have someone read your essay before you click "submit."
- Learn some background information about the school, especially if you are going to talk about why the school is a good fit for you.

[How to Write the Best College Application Essay – BigFuture \(collegeboard.org\)](#)

[College Essay Tips from College Essay Guy](#)

[Common App How to Approach the Essay](#)

COMMON APPLICATION ESSAY PROMPTS

Below is the full set of essay prompts for 2024–2025 – THE PROMPTS HAVE NOT CHANGED IN THE LAST FEW YEARS BUT IT IS NOT GUARANTEED THAT THEY WON'T CHANGE IN THE FUTURE

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.



Components of the Application: Resumes



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- A resume is a list of activities and experiences you have participated in. You can either upload this to your college applications or keep it around as a list to refer to when you are filling out applications.

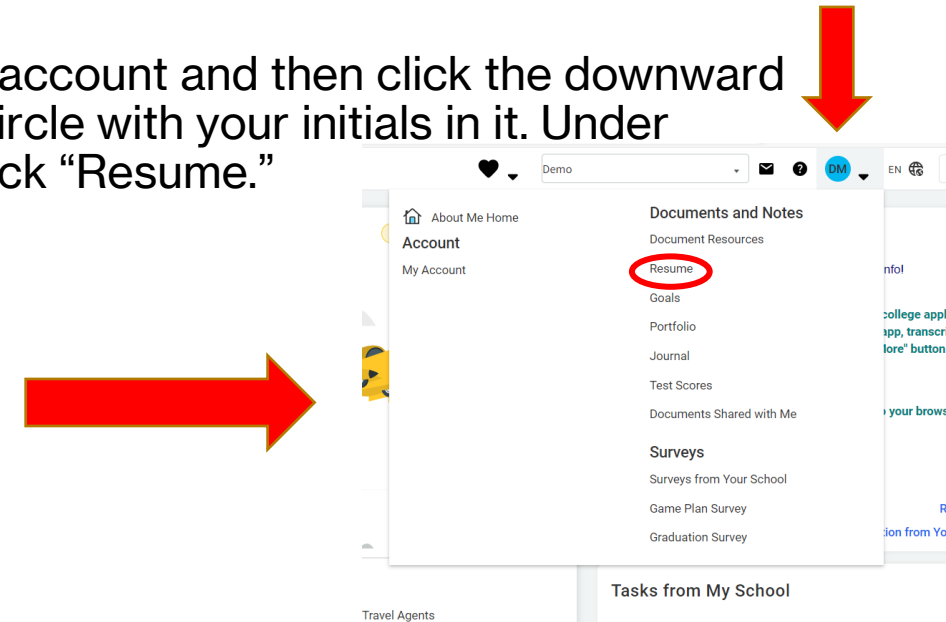
[Your High School Resume](#)

<https://www.collegeessayguy.com/blog/college-resume-templates>

<https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/high-school-resume>

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/the-college-admissions-resume-1987053>

- In Naviance, log into your account and then click the downward triangle next to the blue circle with your initials in it. Under Documents and Notes, click “Resume.”



Components of the Application: Interviews

- Some colleges will offer you the opportunity to interview with an alumnus or with an admissions counselor. Check to see if the colleges you are applying to will allow interviews.
- The interview is primarily for you to learn about the college and for the college to learn about you. The interview can have a positive effect on your chances of admission. Do your homework beforehand so that you have some good questions to ask about the college. Then, relax and be yourself!
- [How to Make the Most of a College Interview](#)



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Components of the Application: Letters of Recommendation



- Some colleges require letters or recommendation. Others recommend them. Others don't read them at all. Check to see what the college you are applying to requires.
- Letters of recommendation paint the complete picture of you as others see you; your character, talents, and special attributes.
 - Request letters from academic teachers you have had in the past year or two.
 - Request letters from teachers who know you well. Your relationship is more important than the grade you earned in the class.
 - If possible, you might want to ask teachers whose subjects relate to your major.
 - Provide your recommender with a resume or a list of activities.
 - Give recommenders a minimum of ten business days to complete your recommendation.
- [Tips for Letters of Recommendation](#)

Campus Visits

- Campus visits can give you a feel for the atmosphere of the college.
- Virtual visits through the college website can provide valuable information and show demonstrated interest to admissions counselors if they are providing virtual sessions.

<https://www.campusreel.org/>

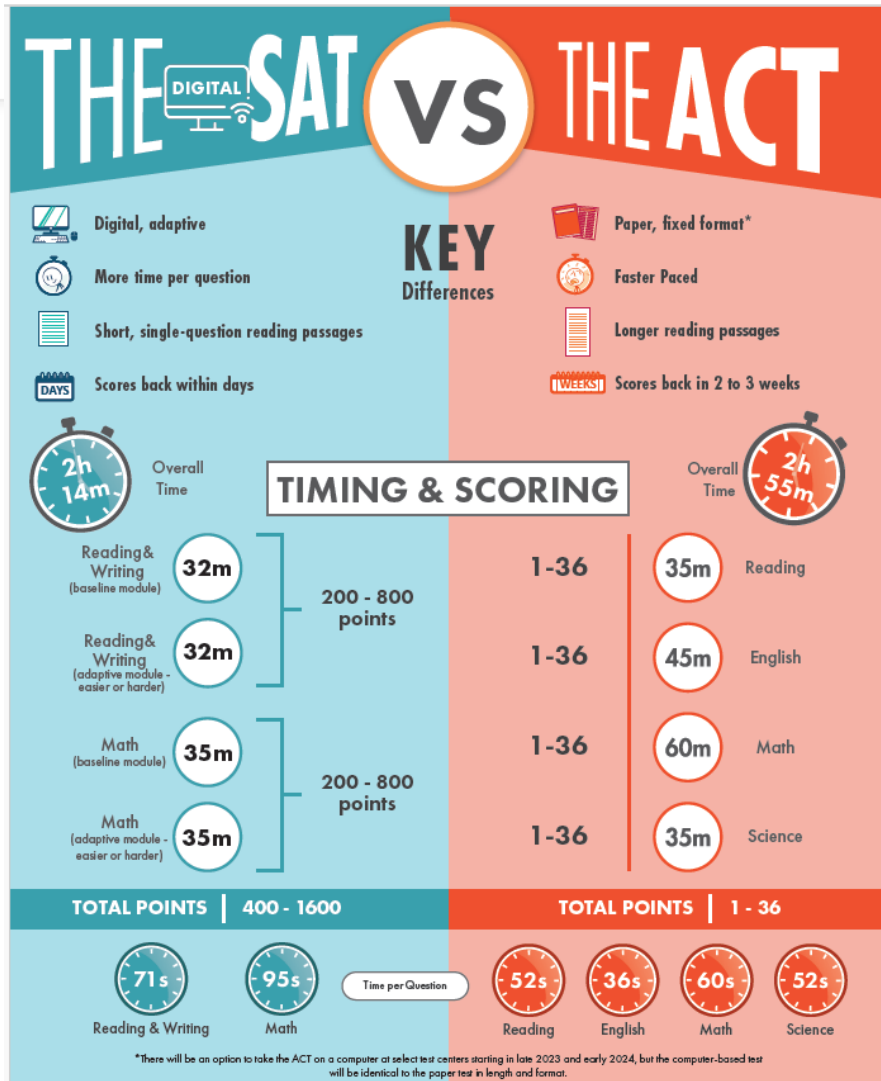
<https://www.youvisit.com/collegesearch/>

<https://campustours.com/>

<https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/virtual-tours>

Youtube 😊

Standardized Testing



SAT Test Date*	Registration Deadline	Deadline for Changes, Regular Cancellation, Late Registration
May 4, 2024	Apr 19, 2024	Apr 23, 2024
Jun 1, 2024	May 16, 2024	May 21, 2024

ACT Test Date	ACT Regular Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline
April 13, 2024	March 8, 2024	March 24, 2024
June 8, 2024	May 3, 2024	May 19, 2024
July 13, 2024	June 7, 2024	June 21, 2024

- Register for the SAT at www.sat.org/register
- Register for the ACT at www.actstudent.org

Standardized Testing 2024-2025

- Scores must be sent directly from the testing agency.
- Not all schools are requiring SAT/ACT these days but many scholarships still require scores.
- Check individual colleges for testing requirements.

Anticipated 2024–25 Test Dates

SAT Test Date
August 24, 2024
October 5, 2024
November 2, 2024
December 7, 2024
March 8, 2025
May 3, 2025
June 7, 2025

Anticipated ACT Test Dates (**Note: these dates are approximate and not guaranteed**)

Sept 7, 2024
Oct 26, 2024
Dec 7, 2024
Feb 7, 2025
April 11, 2025
June 7, 2025
July 12, 2025

The SAT has gone digital!

SAT Suite of Assessments

Home

Digital

SAT

PSAT/NMSQT

PSAT 10

PSAT 8/9

For K-12 Educators

For Higher Ed Professionals

More

What's Changing

We're not just putting the current SAT on a digital platform—we're taking full advantage of what it means to deliver an assessment digitally.



Take the SAT Suite on a Laptop or Tablet

Students can test on a personal device or a school-issued device. If students don't have a device, we'll provide one on test day.



Shorter Test Experience

The SAT will take about two hours instead of three and feature shorter reading passages with one question tied to each.



Faster Score Delivery

Students and educators will get the information they need to make key college decisions quicker.



Calculators Are Allowed on the Entire Math Section

A graphing calculator will be built into the testing app or students can bring their own.



Students Get More Relevant Information

Digital score reports will also connect students to information on two-year colleges, careers, and workforce training programs.



The Digital SAT Will Be More Secure and Flexible

Each student will see a unique version of the test—and schools, districts, and states will have more flexibility in when to test.

Click here for a video to help you prepare for test day - [What to Expect from the Digital SAT \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Financial Aid

- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** – This is an extremely important federal form that tells colleges about your financial need. It doubles as your application for the Hope Grant, the Zell Miller Grant, the Hope Scholarship and the Zell Miller Scholarship. Fill out this form at <https://studentaid.gov/>.
- **Georgia Student Finance App (GSF App)** – This form allows you to apply for state aid for Georgia colleges. It does *not* give you access to federal aid.
[State Program Applications | Georgia Student Finance Commission \(gafutures.org\)](https://gafutures.org/)
- **Institutional Scholarship Forms** – These are created and administered by the college and are sometimes required in order to earn scholarships that are specific to a certain college. Check the college's website for these!
- **College Scholarship Service Profile** – This is used at many private colleges. Check the college's website to see if this is required. You can complete this at <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>.
- **Net Price Calculator** – Can be found on most colleges' websites. These allow you to plug in some numbers and receive an accurate idea of how much aid you might be awarded.



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Financial Aid

Scholarship Search Engines and Resources:

- Naviance
- www.gafutures.org
- www.fastweb.com
- [Home – BigFuture | College Board](#)
- www.finaid.org

Athletics in College

If you are planning to play for the college's official team, do not forget to complete the proper eligibility forms for that school's conference and send your test scores if necessary.

NCAA - [NCAA Eligibility Center](#)

NAIA - www.naia.org





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Other Useful Information

Want to study something uncommon at an out-of-state school?

The Academic Common Market tuition-savings program for college students in 15 SREB states, who want to pursue degrees that are not offered by their in-state institutions. Students can enroll in out-of-state institutions that offer their degree program and pay the institution's in-state tuition rates.

<https://www.sreb.org/academic-common-market>