

College Direction

www.collegedirection.org

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January 2015

24th – SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

Seniors – Apply for a pin and then complete and send the FAFSA as soon as possible after Jan. 1st. Apply online at www.fafsa.ed.gov

Seniors – Search and apply for scholarships that match your qualifications

Seniors – File any additional college applications

Juniors - Investigate summer options

February 2015

7th – ACT and ACT plus Writing

(register by 1/9 - late registration 1/16)

Juniors – Begin your college search

Juniors - Map out dates and prepare for spring SAT and/or ACT exams

Seniors – Contact colleges to be sure your applications are complete. Send mid-year grades if required. Update colleges with any new information that might affect admission

Using the Internet to Research Colleges

Searching for college information? The Internet can be a terrific tool for college research. However, with the dizzying abundance of websites related to college admissions, knowing where to look and which websites to trust is key. Here are some tips to help you optimize the Internet as a resource.

Get the most out of college websites. Individual college websites are the best sources of information on the Internet. Start by clicking on the “Admissions” or “Prospective Students” link, then look for details on admissions requirements, application procedures, costs and financial aid, and an overview of what makes that college or university unique. But don’t stop there! Under “Academics”, look for links to individual departments you may be interested in. Use the site search function to find the college’s course catalog and research graduation requirements. Then do a search for the student newspaper and read back issues to get a sense of what life on that college campus is like.

Find the information you need. Google can be a college hunter’s best friend if you use it effectively. Say, for instance, you want to find a list of colleges that offer a specific major or a particular extracurricular activity. Open Google and click on Advanced Search. Enter the major or extracurricular you’re interested in, then specify “.edu” as the domain. This limits the search mainly to colleges and universities, and usually turns up quite a few hits. Another tip: If you’re interested in a specific major or career field, do a Google search using the major or career and the word “Association.” This will usually turn up any professional associations related to the field or major, and, often, you’ll find a wealth of resources on their website.

Consider the source. Unfortunately, while information on the Internet seems unlimited, not all of it is reliable. When you find a useful college website, try to pinpoint who created it and how trustworthy the source might be. Who owns and operates the site? What is their purpose? Is the site a non-profit venture or a commercial venture with the ultimate goal of selling you products or services? Do they share your contact information and personal data with other sites?

Take discussion forums with a grain of salt. College admissions discussion forums such as College Confidential have become extremely popular. While they can be a useful place to exchange ideas and information, they can also be riddled with inaccurate information and opinions presented as “fact.” If you’re going to participate in a college discussion forum, be especially careful about who is offering advice. Is it another student with no more knowledge than you, or an admissions expert? Also, consider who moderates the forum. Do they attempt to correct inaccurate or misleading information, or does the site take an “anything goes” approach? Finally, these forums are not always as anonymous as they may seem. College admissions officers do read these boards, so be careful about posting your personal information or preferences.

Trust, but verify. While there’s a wealth of helpful data on the Internet, make sure to always verify important information yourself. If you see a negative report about a college on a review site such as Unigo.com, don’t automatically rule the college out without doing your own research. Most important of all: always believe what the college website says about its deadlines and admissions requirements over anything published on a site that is not run by the college.

Careers in Design

Possible Career Paths for Design Majors

- Animator
- Apparel Designer
- Art Director (assistant)
- Brand Identity Designer
- Cartoonist
- Catalog Page Designer
- Cinematographer
- Communication Specialist
- Contractor
- Costume Designer
- Designer/Sales
- Exhibit/Display Staff
- Fashion Illustrator
- Fashion Reporter
- Graphic Designer
- Home Fashion Coordinator
- Illustrator
- Interior Designer
- Jewelry Designer
- Landscape Architect
- Layout Artist
- Lighting Designer
- Logo Designer
- Merchandising Analyst
- Multimedia Designer
- Patternmaker
- Preservationist
- Photographer
- Retail Store Designer
- Retail Visual Merchandiser
- Set Designer
- Technical Designer
- Video Game Designer

Gifted with a passion to create, designers use their artistic ability to produce functional items that are visually pleasing. Their influence is seen in the clothes we wear, the physical spaces we inhabit, the merchandise we buy and the print and web publications we enjoy. Although many designers are employed by corporations and manufacturers, a significant number are self-employed as consultants and freelance designers. Through their vision and skills, designers put their imprint on our world.

Before designers can begin to create, they must first consider the needs of their client, looking at both the function of the intended design and those features that would be important to users. After determining requirements such as desired size, color, cost, weight, shape and materials, designers prepare sketches to illustrate their vision for the design. Often, computer-aided design tools (CAD) are utilized to make visualizing the final product easier. Industrial designers may use computer-aided industrial design (CAID) tools which also produce machine-readable instructions for automated production machinery. Since design needs for a specific industry may be highly technical, designers generally specialize in a particular area, such as automobile, clothing and textiles, floral, theatre, industrial, interior, medical, website or landscape design.

Fashion designers design clothing and accessories. Most are employed by apparel manufacturers, although some design for individual clients. *Interior designers* may specialize in either residential or business design, planning the interiors of both new and existing structures. They must consider their client's taste, needs and budget in planning functional, comfortable and aesthetically-pleasing spaces. *Commercial and industrial designers* use their artistic talents to produce such items as automobiles, kitchen appliances, furniture, toys, and sports and office equip-

ment. *Graphic designers* develop the layout and design of media including magazines, newspapers, web pages, journals, signs and other publications. Flowers and foliage are the raw materials used to express the creativity of *floral designers*. While their areas of specialization may differ, designers have much in common.

Along with a passion to create, designers must have an eye for color and detail, a sense of proportion and balance and an appreciation for beauty. Sketching ability is important, even with the increasing use of computer-aided design tools. Since designers often work as part of a product development team, strong communication skills are vital, as is the ability to understand and solve design problems. Because tastes in style and fashion change, designers must be open to new ideas and quick to react to emerging trends.



Most entry-level design positions require a bachelor's degree, except for some positions in floral design or merchandise display. The Bachelor of Fine Arts degree includes a study of art and art history, principles of design, and specialized study in each of the design disciplines. Additional courses in business, marketing, and psychology are recommended for designers who hope to freelance. Training in architecture is often helpful for those wishing to work in interior design. Increasingly, familiarity with computer-aided design software is a requirement for job consideration. For many positions, it is the quality of the applicant's portfolio (a collection of the designer's best work) that leads to a job offer.

Financial Matters: Merit Scholarships



Merit scholarships can help families keep college expenditures manageable. While some merit scholarships are tied to a student's financial need, many do not consider a student's family's income or financial situation. Regardless of your family's financial situation, good college planning should always consider merit scholarship opportunities. There are two categories of merit scholarships available to students: institutional scholarships and private scholarships. This month we'll look at scholarships provided by colleges.

Institutional scholarships are scholarships that colleges offer to admitted students. Colleges are actually the largest source of scholarship money in the U.S. Institutional merit scholarships can range from a few hundred dollars to the full cost of attendance. The majority of merit scholarships awarded by colleges are given without regard to financial need; even students

from very wealthy families may receive institutional merit scholarships.

Colleges can offer the following types of merit scholarships:

Academic scholarships – Academic scholarships are awarded based on the student's grades and test scores (SAT or ACT). What type of grades and test scores are required to be considered for an academic scholarship? In general, colleges look for students who have maintained grade averages of 3.0 (B) and above, with the largest scholarships reserved for students who maintain a 3.5 (B+) average and above. In terms of test scores, there are some colleges that offer merit scholarships to students with SAT scores in the 1100 (reading and math only) range or ACT composite scores in the 26/27 range, but the size of scholarships generally increases once a student's scores go above 1200 on the SAT or 28 on the ACT. The test score "sweet spot" for sizable scholarships at many schools is 1300+ and above on the SAT (reading/math) and 30+ on the ACT.

Personal quality scholarships – Colleges sometimes offer scholarships in hopes of attracting students with certain personal characteristics. Some common characteristics tied to the awarding of college scholarships can

include demonstrated leadership ability, special talents in the visual or performing arts, or a desired type of diversity (geographic, ethnic, economic) which the student will bring to the college's campus. Some colleges also offer scholarships to students who plan to major in particular departments. While some types of personal quality scholarships don't have grade or test score requirements, often the student's high school academic achievement is considered in making awards.

Athletic Scholarships – Students who are recruited to play athletics in college may receive scholarships at NCAA Division I and Division II colleges. Contrary to public opinion, there are very few "full ride" scholarships available for student athletes. In general, larger athletic scholarships are awarded for top-ranked players in the money-making sports such as football and men's basketball. In other sports, athletes may receive smaller scholarships or none at all.

Some colleges do not offer merit scholarships. Instead, they offer only need-based aid. This is important to understand if merit money is important to your family. If so, you may want to focus your college list mainly on colleges that offer sizable scholarships to students with grades, test scores, and other characteristics similar to yours.

Avoiding Senior Slump

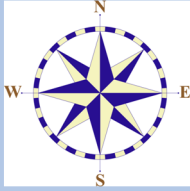
Check for tell-tale spots, or perhaps for a suspicious tan. Recurrent outbreaks of senioritis hit America's high schools each year, peaking when students return from winter break. After surviving SATs and ACTs, after filling out seemingly endless college applications, after writing essay after essay in search of scholarship dollars, senior year students feel entitled to some down time. Moaning and groaning about workload, many seniors let their grades slip and assignments slide.

While their attitude is perhaps understandable, students must know that the second half of senior year is not a good time to slack off. Although col-

leges have contributed to the idea that "senior year grades don't count" by admitting so many students under the early options, it's important to remember that these same colleges want to see your final and often your mid-year grades. A serious decline in the grade pattern that won you admission in the first place may lead to a letter from the admission director asking for an explanation. In some cases, accepted students have found their offers of admission rescinded. Even dropping classes after you've submitted your application requires an explanation and may trigger an academic review.

But why are colleges so fussy about

senior year anyway? Concerns about ill-prepared students abound. Some colleges find that as many as two-thirds of entering freshmen require remedial classes before they can begin college-level work and many of these students never earn their college degrees. A demanding senior year schedule including honors and AP courses or an IB (International Baccalaureate) diploma will help to ensure that you have the skills needed to succeed in college. So if there are signs of an outbreak of senioritis nearby, you might want to avoid those infected and prevent a nasty surprise letter from your first choice college.



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What Happened to those Lazy Days of Summer?

As competition for selective college admission increases, those lazy days of summer have become a distant memory for many high school students.

Some students opt to go to a summer program held on a college campus. Although college-based programs may be expensive, they do provide a head start on the transition to college. Learning how to do research in a university library, how to live with a roommate, even how to do laundry, can help students become more independent and self-confident. You could also earn college credit for classes unavailable at your high school.

Many enrichment programs don't offer credit but do provide an opportunity for students to pursue their interests. Students who want to perfect their Spanish may want to do a home-stay in Spain or Latin America. Budding engineers might enjoy a camp where they can build a robot or explore engineering specialties.

Community service is another path to a meaningful summer experience. For example, when volunteering with the Student Conservation Association, you'll spend your days repairing hiking trails, building shelters, fighting invasive species and protecting wildlife habitats.

Of course, you don't have to travel across the country to be involved in community service. There are many local

organizations that would welcome your help during the school year as well as in the summer.

Some students need or want to earn money. Having a job can help you learn how to work with people, prioritize tasks and manage time. Earning a paycheck can be a wonderful boost to self-esteem.

Summer jobs can also offer opportunities to explore career interests. For the future veterinarian, a job at an animal hospital is an excellent way to see what being a vet is really like. Working as a camp counselor is great for students interested in teaching or psychology.

Some students create their own summer programs. A prospective science major might contact professors at local colleges who are doing interesting research and see if they could use some help in their lab over the summer. This can be a way for a student to find out if microbiology is really where she's headed and, if things go well, to ask for a recommendation letter.

With so many options, students need to keep in mind that there's not one "best" summer activity. If you find something you are excited about doing, you're likely to experience the kind of personal growth that makes for more interesting college applications. And the time to start looking is now!

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