



PLAN FOR COLLEGE

WITH THE

PSAT/ NMSQT®

www.collegeboard.com

5 Steps to Success

Preliminary SAT®/National Merit® Scholarship Qualifying Test

Date: _____

Location: _____

Time: _____

Cost: _____

For more information, contact:

Go online to learn about the PSAT/NMSQT

www.collegeboard.com/psat/

- Key dates
- How to prepare
- Sample test questions
- What test scores really mean
- Expert advice on planning for college

1. TAKE TOUGH COURSES

Choose college prep, honors, or Advanced Placement Program® courses if you can. In general, for college prep you'll need:

- 4 years of high school English
- 3–4 years of math (at least algebra and geometry)
- 3–4 years of science (at least two lab courses)
- 2–4 years of history and social studies
- 2–4 years of foreign language

2. TAKE THE PSAT/NMSQT®

The skills tested on the PSAT/NMSQT® are the skills you'll need in college. The PSAT/NMSQT lets you:

- assess your skills in verbal reasoning, mathematical reasoning, and writing
- get specific suggestions on how to improve your skills
- compare your academic skills with those of other college-bound students
- practice for the SAT®
- enter scholarship competitions
- ask colleges to send you information
- get information about a college major of interest to you

3. PREPARE FOR COLLEGE WORK

- Read. Read. Read.
- Write a lot—it's a critical college skill.
- Get involved in problem solving in your math and science classes.
- Go to the library, museums, aquariums—places to learn about literature, art, history, and science.

4. THINK ABOUT YOU

What subjects do you like to study? While in college, you'll choose a major to study in depth. Your major might be related directly to a career such as nursing or engineering. Or you might choose liberal arts, such as history, foreign languages, or social studies. Think about what interests you and what you do well as you plan for college and a career.

5. FIND OUT MORE

Talk to teachers and counselors about college, and ask older students about colleges they attend. Visit campuses near home.

PAYING FOR COLLEGE

Don't rule out college because of cost. Nearly all colleges offer financial aid to students who need it. Ask your counselor what kinds of financial aid opportunities exist: on-campus work, loans, grants, scholarships.

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ACADEMIC CALENDAR

FOR SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS

September 2003

- Plan to take the PSAT/NMSQT®. Prepare by reading the *Student Bulletin*, taking the full-length sample test, and reviewing the PSAT/NMSQT section of collegeboard.com.
- Review your course selections; be sure your courses are preparing you for college with solid academic courses in at least 4 or 5 areas.
- If you plan to request testing accommodations due to a disability, pick up a College Board Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Brochure and Eligibility Form and talk with your teachers and counselor. September 15 is the SSD Eligibility Form postmark deadline for students without SSD codes who receive school-approved accommodations.

October 2003

- Take the PSAT/NMSQT at your school. Get a good night's sleep, and remember to eat some breakfast. Bring #2 pencils, an approved calculator, a watch (with alarms turned off), your social security number (optional), and an e-mail address (optional). Be sure to check "yes" on the answer sheet for Student Search Service® to get college planning information.

November 2003

- Juniors: Continue your search for colleges. Use collegeboard.com to find schools that meet your criteria.
- Look over your extracurricular involvement. It's important to develop more than just your academic skills. Remember: Colleges prefer quality (depth of involvement) over quantity.
- If high school alumni visit during the holidays, be sure to talk with them about their college experiences.

December 2003

- PSAT/NMSQT score reports are sent to schools. Use the "Improve Your Skills" section to help build the skills you need in high school and college. Use your test, the correct answers, and your responses to help prepare for the SAT®.
- Juniors: Create a file to manage your college search, testing, and application information.

January 2004

- Explore financial aid possibilities with your counselor, through your career/college center, online resources such as www.collegeboard.com, your library, and through your parents' connections (employers, professional organizations, religious affiliations, etc.).
- Visit www.collegeboard.com/psat/. Some of this year's PSAT/NMSQT questions and answers will be posted.

February 2004

- Talk to your counselor and/or teachers about taking SAT II: Subject Tests this spring. Even if a college does not require them, Subject Tests can often support an application.

March 2004

- When registering for next year's courses, be sure to select strong college preparatory courses. Consider honors and AP® courses.
- Juniors: Register online at www.collegeboard.com to take the SAT this spring. While you're there, you can get help with preparing for the test.
- Juniors: Create an initial list of colleges and contact them for additional information.

April 2004

- Prepare for AP Exams, if applicable. Visit www.collegeboard.com for more information.
- Attend college fairs in your area. Plan ahead to ensure you target the colleges that interest you.
- Visit colleges; if possible, attend classes on campus.
- Consider applying for a college summer program designed to introduce high school students to college majors/courses. (Financial assistance may be available.)

May 2004

- Take AP Exams, if applicable.
- Create a résumé—record all your accomplishments, involvements, and work experiences.
- Juniors: Review material received from colleges and refine your potential list.

June 2004

- End the year with strong grades.
- Ask your English teacher for a suggested summer reading list.
- Juniors: Talk to teachers now about writing letters of recommendations you'll need in the fall.
- Juniors: Register online for fall SAT tests to ensure your choice of test site.

Summer

Stay involved:

- Work to help pay for college.
- Attend a summer program at a college.
- Participate in an internship relevant to your career interest.
- Read!