



Applying to University – Part 2 of the University Guide

Hamilton Gregg

A way to plan for the application process

Harrow International School of Beijing

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

At this point you should have a good idea of where you are going to apply. So, now you need to know what to do. Before we start you need to know this: ALL OF THE WORK YOU PRESENT ON AN APPLICATION MUST BE YOUR OWN. All of the school documents must come from official sources i.e. your school. Never, ever get some one else to represent you. We know there are lots of Agents out there who will do everything for you. That is cheating and lying. PERIOD. And it is false representation. Applying to university is something YOU do. Not an Agent, not your mother and not your friend of a friend. Applying is your responsibility. It is also your responsibility to make sure you meet all of the requirements for admission. It is a part of growing up.

You don't really need to know about the application process until the end of your second to last year in high school. But there are things you need to consider. But once you are ready and have your college list together it is time to consider several things:

- 1. Is there a school that you absolutely love above all others? Are you an appropriate candidate for that school (meaning you have the grades in the appropriate courses and the SAT and TOEFL scores)? If you meet these conditions, then you might be interested in applying Early Decision, Early Action or Priority (depending on the schools early options). Obviously, Early Decision requires more love than Early Action. Please be aware of each schools early program deadlines and policies.**

2. If you love all of your schools, which you should since you should never apply to a school you do not like, then you should apply regular admission to all of your schools. Again, it is your responsibility to know application deadlines.
3. For rolling admission to the state universities or to the UC system, for the great variety of other early plans such as priority, VIP, quick response, use November 15 is your deadline.

Please make sure your final list appears on Family Connection by the start of your final year in school. It is from Family Connection that we send the appropriate school documents - transcripts, letters of recommendation and any other document you need to send to complete your application from the school side.

***** SPECIAL NOTE! YOU submit your own applications online as soon as they are completed. The school components of your application are not your responsibility (i.e. transcript, letters of recommendation etc...) Regardless of our mailings, your applications should be sent as soon as you have completed them. Remember to save a photocopy of your completed application!**

a. Applications

Many colleges use either the Common Application or their own web based applications there is no need to request a hard copy. In fact, all of

your applications should be completed online.

b. The Common Application can be used for over three hundred colleges. Most colleges have their own supplement along with the Common Application. Be sure you complete all of the required materials for each college you are applying to.

What is the difference between the Common Application and the schools own application (if they use both)? NOTHING. There is no advantage of using a schools application if they also use the Common Application. This is a major myth that has no truth to it. But, remember that information required for the Common Application may be different from their own application. However, be sure you are completing all the required supplements if you are using either the Common Application or the schools.

Please be aware that there are several types of common application. What we have been talking about here is The Common Application. (www.commonapp.org) but there are others. For example, the University of California uses a common application that is common to all of the schools in the University of California system. Many provinces in Canada use a common application for all the universities in that specific province.

The important aspects are these:

- 1. It makes your life a lot easier to use a common application.**
- 2. If you make one mistake every school you apply to using a**

common application receives the mistake. So be careful.

3. Common applications provide you access to a number of different types of schools.
4. It may seem that by using the common application you can apply to as many schools as you want. Be aware that this may seem true, but schools know how and where you are applying. Common applications are not an excuse to apply broadly and widely. Do your research, pick your schools carefully and apply to no more than 10 schools.

c. Number of Applications

If you follow the plan you will start in the Spring before your last year with about 20 schools that sound the best to meet your educational, social and personal needs. These are schools you have researched and have an interest in. Over the summer you will narrow this down to no more than 10 schools. Our preference would be eight first choice schools. This does not mean the eight top schools in the world. Remember your list should have reach, mid-range, and safety schools, ALL first choices.

Reach School – With my demanding courses, GPA, and SAT scores, this schools admission requirements are just out of reach. Not WAY, WAY out of reach but I am close.

Mid-range - I have a 50-50% chance of being admitted.

Safety – I am sure to get in (90%) as I exceed the academic admission

requirements

It doesn't make sense to apply to a college just because you can get in. You will apply only to a college where you want to go. There is no sense in applying to XYZ College because it takes "everybody" and you want a place where you know you will get in if, in fact, you would never go there! We are working toward finding a final college list that is consistent with your ideal colleges and have a range of selectivity for admissions. You will want to include at least one or two colleges where you have a 90% chance of getting in but that you also love.

d. Deadlines - Early, Rolling, Regular

Here is a review of Admission policies because it always needs review. Before moving forward remember that any Early admission plan, you are expecting the school to admit you based on the grades you earned in your second to last year in school.

1. *EARLY DECISION (ED)* means that you apply early and receive an early reply, *AGREEING IN DECEMBER TO WITHDRAW ALL OTHER APPLICATIONS AND ATTEND THAT COLLEGE if you are accepted.* You may apply to only one ED school. **THIS IS A CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT! A contract you, your parents, and your counselor will sign and send to the school that states you understand the conditions of Early Decision.**

Ethical and moral issues arise around this process. You should know that your school stands firmly on every commitment that we make to

every college. For Early Decision, highly selective colleges take from 30% to 55% of their freshman class, meaning the top students, *best of the best*, top SATs and grades in a rigorous program. If you are not at the top, but want the college to know it is your first choice, there are many ways to tell them: write it on your application, in your essay, and tell the admissions officer during your interview. It's not to your advantage to apply early, if you don't have a chance. You are not allowed second thoughts about other colleges if you are accepted Early Decision. Many applicants are denied altogether by mid-December, losing the opportunity to submit better test scores and higher grades earned during the senior year.

It's also devastating to be denied in December. Talk over the Early Decision possibility *carefully* at home and with your college advisor. It is a very important decision and needs to be considered completely.

2. **EARLY ACTION (EA)** is similar, although you are not committed to attend. There is no contract to sign. The risks are that you can be rejected on the basis of your junior year, and not deferred into their regular pool of applicants, and your chances of getting in from a deferred status plummets to 5% or less. *Priority applications* are similar but usually used by large State Schools to build a selective class.

1. **SINGLE CHOICE EARLY ACTION (SCEA)** is almost exactly the same as EA but because of Single Choice, you may apply to only this school

early. Stanford is an excellent example of a SCEA school.

4. ***REGULAR DECISION*** is what everybody applies for usually unless they are opting for one of the other mentioned application types.

5. ***ROLLING ADMISSION*** means your file will be evaluated as soon as it is complete. The turnaround time is about six weeks. So you can know pretty quickly if you have been admitted or not. Some colleges consider a complete file at the end of junior year and others wait for first term grades. Because many of the state universities have rolling admissions and students tend to apply early, many popular colleges may fill their housing on the main campus by January. The sooner you apply the better for rolling admissions. Essentially, at the beginning of the Rolling Admission process, the schools are more open to accepting a wider variety of students. As the school begins to fill up, the admission office becomes more and more selective.

e. College Essay

Up to this point everything about your application is complete. Your grades are in, you have taken SAT's and TOEFL, your teachers are writing your letters of recommendation. There is not much more for you to do except keep working hard in school.

The place where you can really shine is through the essays for your applications. The essay is probably *the* most important part of your application. This is the one place where you actually speak! This is where you let schools know how you think, what is important to you and what you have experienced. As with everything, make sure you follow the directions AND answer the questions. Many of the colleges will require you to write from one to five essays, each. So you will have a lot of writing to do. Therefore think carefully about the questions asked of you and spend a lot of time formulating your answers.

This is your opportunity to communicate to the admissions committee is who the person behind the numbers (SAT and grades) is - i.e. the real you. Make sure you use Spell Check and have someone else proof read it. DO NOT have everyone in the world read your essays. It is very important that it is your voice in your essays. Your personal perspective, the words you use, your writing style needs to come through on your essays. There is a saying "Too many chefs spoil the soup!" This is very true when it comes to college application essays. Never, ever have someone else write these essays for you. Remind your parents when they are reading your essays that you are writing the essays not them.

There are sample essay questions on the common application. These questions never, if ever, change. An important tip - remember the essay is about YOU. The question may ask you to tell about an important person or event in your life or some similarly worded question. Do not tell a long story about that person or event. These essays should be about how that person or event affected you and helped you become a

better person. You are writing to the admission committee and they want to get to know you better. Once the person reads your essays they should have a better idea about who you are, how you write and what you think.

When you want help with your essay, see your college counselor for content. See a classroom teacher for style ideas and correct grammar and spelling. Your college essay is your best opportunity to distinguish yourself among other applicants. You have a chance to show your ability to think and write, and also what your character, values and aspirations are. It doesn't matter what the topic is, the essay should not be a description of events. Your college essay must tell how you feel about an event or activity and what you've learned from the experience. In other words, if you write about your trip last summer, or community service, don't spend the whole essay writing a travel log or describing the community service, tell the events in a short paragraph and use the rest of the essay to tell what you think of the event or experience or how you've changed because of it. Write about what you learned about yourself, the world and other people.

Some schools may ask you on supplements to write about why you have chosen that school. This is not the place to tell them they are the best school. They know that already. They want to know why you think it is the best school for you. What attracted you to apply? What about the education, the location or the programs they offer led you to apply?

Here are some college essay tips:

1) Count on writing several drafts before it is final.

2) Use all the standard rules of good writing. Be concise, be interesting, use a "grabber" in the first line or paragraph to catch the attention of the readers.

3) Don't try to write what you think the committee wants to hear. The readers are not looking for something in particular; they are looking to learn more about who you are.

4) Again, don't even think of having someone else write it for you, no one else can possibly communicate the "real" you. Besides that, *you* will learn who you really are. Writing is a learning experience that you need to practice.

5) The topic doesn't have to be dramatic, bizarre or unusual. You can write about the most ordinary daily activity you do, or a story you read. It's what you learn and observe or how you've changed that counts. In fact, one school actually asks you to write an essay about a typically daily activity!

6) Never use the essay to tell why you have such poor grades, or how you know your next term will be better. An essay of excuses, no matter how valid, highlights your weaknesses. Your essay should always be about your strengths. If you feel you have a good reason for poor grades, discuss it with your college advisor. They are the person to tell the colleges the reasons in their letter of recommendation, not you.

7) You should know that the more selective the college, the more emphasis it places on the essay. Good colleges expect good writers.

8) Most important, remember that English isn't just for English class!

Apply the good writing skills you have learned in class. Make the transition from writing assignments of analytical, expository, personal or argumentative styles to the writing of your essay. Tie in a literary reference, an object that you've read about. Integrating the personal statement with literature is an interesting way to write an essay. Be sure to support your essay with specific examples to bring emphasis to your essay.

f. Test Scores

***YOU* and only you are responsible for having your *official* test scores sent from The College Board (SAT) or ETS (TOEFL) to your colleges. Official scores cannot come from the school or your counselor. If you have not listed your colleges on your SAT/TOEFL/IELTS registration forms (the scores will be sent to four colleges which you designate at no extra charge), then you must go online, telephone or pick up additional score report forms in the College Advising Office. You must know your test registration number (found on the blue student copy, which contains your scores and which you receive in the mail. You can also find this information on your College Board account webpage) and the code numbers of the colleges to which you are applying (found in the SAT registration bulletin). You will wait until you have your final list of colleges before sending scores.**

By the way, you should know that if you are taking AP English, IB HL English or A - Level English, this does not exempt you from taking TOEFL. Though you may be doing well any one of these courses, depending on what is offered by your school, they do not satisfy the English language qualification requirement of the school. Though it does not truly make sense, the reason is that TOEFL or IELTS are standardized exams. While you could argue that the courses are standardized as well, schools look for the accurate reflection of international standards of English for non-native English speakers.

g. School Forms

1. Teacher Evaluations - There are several different types of schools forms. The first is called the Teacher Evaluation or Teacher Recommendation. For the Common Application it is called the Teacher Evaluation. This is where two of your teachers will write about you as a student. Each teacher will complete a form that asks him or her some questions about you. They complete some multiple choice questions that compares you to other students in your class or compared to other students they have taught during their career, along with some other questions. They will also write a letter with more detail about your performance in that class, what areas do you excel in and in what areas you need work.

Typically schools want a letter of recommendation from a Humanities (English or Social Studies) and Quantitative (Math or Science) teachers. It is important that you choose teachers who know you best and can

really speak to your strengths. The teachers you choose must be from the last two years of high school. You should not choose a teacher who taught you three years ago. Those teachers are too far removed from who you are because presumably you have changed and matured.

Unless there is a specific reason, you should not have more than two teacher letters or recommendations. Too many letters may look as if you are trying to prove or hide something. Follow directions carefully. If you cannot follow directions on something like an application, the school may worry there is something hiding underneath.

2. Secondary School Report, Counselor Report, High School Report – this form has many different names but know that this form is for your school counselor. Like the Teacher Evaluation, this form asks the counselor to complete some information not only about you as a student but also about the school you attend. Your counselor will also write a letter of recommendation that will not only describe you as a student but illuminate your leadership, athletic or artistic talents. It is also the place where any issues may be explained from an official point of view.

No matter who is writing and completing these recommendations for you, their job is to put you in the best light for the admission committee. They are also going to be realistic and not make you out to be Super Student unless you really are one. Universities know you are not perfect so they expect to read about your excellence as well as your flaws. You are, after all, human.

All letters of recommendation and their respective forms are confidential. They must be. As opposed to the UK, where letters are open, in the US letters are not shared with parents or students. In fact, when you apply to universities that expect letters of recommendation you will see something like this:

IMPORTANT PRIVACY NOTICE: Under the terms of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), after you matriculate you *will* have access to this form and all other recommendations and supporting documents submitted by you and on your behalf after matriculating, unless at least one of the following is true:

1. The institution does not save recommendations post-matriculation (*see list at www.commonapp.org/FERPA*).

2. You waive your right to access below, regardless of the institution to which it is sent:

Yes, I do waive my right to access, and I understand I will never see this form or any other recommendations submitted by me or on my behalf.

No, I do *not* waive my right to access, and I may someday choose to see this form or any other recommendations or supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf to the institution at which I'm enrolling, if that institution saves them after I matriculate.

(From the Common Application)

The basic principal is that you agree that you will not see the letter until after you enter school nor will you or your parents ask to see the letters. By waiving your rights, you are allowing teachers to be honest in their letters of recommendation.

If you choose not to waive your rights, your teacher will write a very bland letter that most likely will hurt your chances for admission. So, waive your rights, it is to your benefit, even though you may feel you are

loosing something. Have faith that your teachers are writing to help your chances for admission. And besides, if you have been a good student, what do you have to worry about?

Here are some pointers about teacher recommendations:

1) Nicely ask your teacher if she or he will write a recommendation for you.

2) Give the teacher the proper university or college forms filled in as requested. In other words, make sure all the personal biographical information about you is completed. There is nothing worse for a teacher to find a form on their desk with no name on it! Your teacher will write one letter, copy it, and attach it to each of the forms for different colleges. Most of the time this letter will be uploaded to the online link to be submitted with your other school materials. *The same teachers will write all of your recommendations.* Give your teacher plenty of time to write their letter for you. Trust me when I tell you that if you ask your teacher at the last minute to complete forms and write letters they will NOT be happy and it may affect what they write about you. Give your teacher at least three weeks to write your recommendations. Respect the fact that they have other things to do - teach, grade papers and write other recommendations. They also have other things they want or need to do. So give them the respect they deserve.

3) Finally, after you hear from a college, let your teachers know where you got in. They have an interest in what decisions the colleges made. They helped get you in, hopefully! Be sure to thank them regardless of

the admission decisions! They are pleased to write the letters for you, but want to be kept up-to-date with the results.

**** NOTE: If your school is using Family Connection it is important that you use the same password for the Common Application you used to register for Family Connection. This will ensure that the two programs align themselves and we can submit documents online. Be sure to *Waive Your Rights* on the Common Application or any school that asks. Your Secondary School Report form will be submitted to the college to meet your deadline along with the following:**

- 1. Transcript (including three and a half years of courses and grades)**
- 2. Counselor letter of recommendation, signed by your college advisor**
- 3. School profile (description of our school, information of test scores of your class, where previous classes have matriculated, and grade distribution).**

If your school does not use Family Connection, then speak with your counselor about what you need to do to have your schools documents submitted electronically.

*****PLEASE NOTE*****

Submit your application as soon as it is completed; do not wait for the Secondary School Report (SSR) to go out. The sooner you submit your applications, the sooner you will believe that you are really going to college next year! Lots of students think that by waiting some miracle will occur. We are not sure what it is but it happens. Most of the time, students wait because they believe they are going to write the next

Amazing Essay or that they have made some glaring mistake. It is important to believe in the process and let go. Submit your application.

Exceptions: There are a handful of colleges who will ask you to complete a “pre-application”. This is the first step and usually consists of biographical information. For these schools you must complete Part 1 of the application before you complete Part 2. As always, be sure to follow directions completely. Again, your application is your responsibility.

VIII. WHAT ADMISSIONS DEANS ARE LOOKING FOR

When you write your applications, consider what the college admissions deans are looking for when admitting their freshman class. If you have done your research properly you will know what kinds of information they are specifically looking for in the application. Remember, you want to stand out but you have to be true to your self and in what you present. If you tell a school you are at the top of your class they will know whether that is true or not by looking at your grades and SAT Scores. While they differ in whom they take, they all use the same basic yardstick in evaluating their applicant pool.

a. General Evaluation

Generally speaking one or more admission members evaluate each applicant. Each student is given an overall rating. The rating number is

then brought to a committee meeting, where an admissions staff makes a decision. There are usually six important parts to every applicant's file:

1. Transcript – strength of courses taken, grades earned
2. Test scores – TOEFL and SAT I, SAT II (if you take them)
3. Application and essay(s)
4. Teacher recommendations
5. College advisor's recommendation
6. Other: interview, coach's ratings, special talent, outside recommendations

Let's be clear about this evaluation- these six parts are *NOT* equal. Transcripts are #1 because that is the most important factor. PERIOD! There is nothing that counts as heavily as your transcript, that is, which courses you have taken and how well you have done. Colleges put your academic work at the top of their evaluation process because this is what you have done everyday of your high school career. Next are your test scores. Your SAT scores have been verified over time as a reliable predictor of college success when evaluated with high school grades. Your application and essay are very valuable tools in the evaluation process. They show how well you write and how clearly you think. A creative essay can easily distinguish you from your classmates.

Recommendations are very important, as teachers are the only people who have had direct contact with you as a student. They can write about your curiosity, motivation, dedication, effort, and so on. Because of that, you will want to choose teachers who you think will write the strongest recommendation you can get. Your Counselor letter is written by your college advisor and summarizes your academic work, speaks of your personality and highlighting your special talents. Interviews, activities and special talents are usually important but they will not substitute for meeting the academic requirements the college is looking for. Ever!

b. Standing Out... Special Talent

A special talent can make a big difference. We think of sports, because it's often the most talked about talent, but each of you has some special talent you will want to highlight on your own application. Some of you are outstanding musicians, writers, actors, poets, editors, photographers, and leaders. Others of you have a strong social conscience, or unique hobbies or an unusual background. Maybe being highly organized or committed to community service is your special talent. Admissions committees are always looking for the strongest points in your application, things that set you apart from other applicants. Your special talents are what make you interesting. Colleges love lop-sided students. Colleges look for a well-rounded class, *not* a group of well-rounded students. Distinguish yourself!

IX. COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING

Taking the SAT is a big challenge for Mainland Chinese students. First of all, the SAT is not offered anywhere in China with the exception of Hong Kong. Because of this, most US universities and colleges do not require that you take the SAT at this time. However, if you can, you should think about taking the SAT. This will help you stand out and will give you the opportunity to apply or qualify for scholarships. The second reason it is a big challenge is the fact that the SAT is a US test. The reading, grammar and terminology used on the test is very American. It can be very difficult for students unfamiliar with this kind of language to do well. Therefore, colleges don't expect that you will get a perfect score. What they want to see is how well you do. Colleges and universities do NOT want you to take time away from school to take SAT Preparation courses. All they want is for you to take the test and perform as best as you can. Take the test, see how you do and if you think you need extra help, speak with your counselor.

**** Remember – how you do in school everyday is far more important than how you do on SAT. There is no question that TOEFL or IELTS plays a significant role in the admission process. Plan to do well on this test.**

**** While it is important to do well on either of these tests, if you are in a school where English is the main language of study, you are actually getting the best preparation for tests of this sort. However, there are**

certainly a large number of programs and companies which offer Test Prep. As with SAT preparation companies, be sure you know what you are getting before your sign up with them. Be wary of any company which “Guarantees” something. What you put in to the program is generally what you will get out of it.

a. How to Apply for the SAT Tests

The SAT Reasoning Test is a three-hour and a half test that measures critical reading, math, and writing abilities. The SAT Subject Tests are one-hour tests in specific subjects. Subject tests measure the student’s knowledge of particular subjects such as literature, foreign languages, mathematics, science, and history. Students choose which tests they will take.

Since the test is not officially offered in China unless you are an international student attending a designated international school, students who want to take the SAT must register using the registration form provided by your schools. It is important to meet the registration deadlines set by your school to submit your registration on time. **IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO REGISTER ONLINE** for the SAT at this time from tests in the mainland. Be sure to use the exact same name each time you register for a College Board test and the name you use must match your passport name. It is a computer system that sends all of your tests together only if you write your name and address exactly the same each time.

b. Test Centers

At the moment, SAT is only offered in Hong Kong at a specially designated testing center for Mainland Chinese students. There is adequate space for any student who wants to take the test to be able to do so. You do not need to travel to Singapore, Seoul or Tokyo to take the SAT.

If you are attending an international school chances are that your school is an SAT Test Center. Only students attending that school may test there. You will complete a registration form and hand it in to the counseling office.

TOEFL and IELTS are both offered throughout the year in Mainland China. You should register through ETS for the TOEFL and through British Council for the IELTS. Please know that either of these tests is acceptable for US colleges and universities.

Who takes the TOEFL or IELTS? Students whose first language is not English. It is not about what passport you hold or where you live. It is about your English ability. Most international students should take either one of these tests. Take the TOEFL or the IELTS any time during the spring of your Junior Year or over the summer before your final high school year.

c. When to Take the SAT Reasoning Test

For the sake of simplicity here is a recommended schedule for testing:

Junior Year/Senior 2

October - PSAT

December - SAT I

May - SAT I

June - SAT II

Senior Year/ Senior 3

October - SAT I

November - SAT II

Here is the reasoning behind this plan and some explanations.

If you take the PSAT in October of your Junior Year it is a good idea to take SAT I in December. Why? Well, since you just took the Practice SAT (PSAT) it is important to see how well you do on the real test. There should be a correlation of scores between the two types of tests. Second, with the PSAT you receive all the answers to all of the questions on the test. Plus you have the test book. So, you can easily see your strengths and weaknesses. You can see what questions you missed, what the content of the question was and the difficulty of the question. You get this for free and it is the best test preparation available. Spending some time reviewing the PSAT results will give you a very good idea what you need to work on to improve your SAT Scores. If you have taken the time

to do this, then when you sit the SAT in May, you should do much better.

The other reason for taking the SAT in December is that it will help your college counselor review the colleges you are thinking about. Though grades are the most important factor, the next hurdle you need to overcome in the admission process is the SAT. Your counselor will know if you are on track with your college list.

Up to this point in the schedule you should have two SAT scores – December and May. June is a good time to sit SAT II if you need them. Not every school requires SAT II. However, those that do require them ask for either two or three SAT II scores. If you take a couple of SAT II tests in June you will have an idea what they are looking for on the test. If you score high enough on one or more of the tests, you are done. It does not make any sense to wait to take SAT II unless you are really not prepared for them. Let's say to take two tests in June and score really well on one of those tests. That is one test out of the way, so you can concentrate on the other subjects for your Senior Year.

Research shows that students do best on their SAT Subject Tests at the end of the course when they have prepared for final exams. Junior students usually take one of the math tests (there are two Math I and Math 2) and choose from science, literature or history – depending on their academic strengths, previous SAT Subject Test scores, and interests. Each SAT Subject Test is one hour; students may take up to three on any test day. Most selective colleges require two, rather than the previous three SAT Subject Tests in the areas of the student's choice, although math is usually required. It is the student's

responsibility to research and know which colleges on her list require what tests. At this time six colleges, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Georgetown, MIT and Olin College of Engineering, still require three SAT Subject Tests for admission. The more academic disciplines that you can document on a national level, the stronger your record, and the wider your college choices will be. You are working toward the strongest record you can build, not the minimum requirement that the colleges say they want. When you are in doubt about which SAT Subject Tests to take, discuss the matter with your teachers and your counselor. They will consider your grades in the subject, your teacher's evaluation, and how well you do on a practice test, so that an educationally sound decision will be made. The more areas you cover well in SAT Subject Tests, the stronger your record. This is of course, if you need to take the SAT Subject Tests.

g. Score Reports to Colleges

At the time you register for the SATs, you will have an opportunity to list four colleges by code number that you wish to have your scores without additional fees. There is an additional fee for sending additional scores to each college. YOU, not the school, are responsible for sending your official SAT scores to your colleges. All of your SAT scores go to the colleges. Most colleges use your highest scores; they usually look at the highest verbal and the highest math, not necessarily the highest set. If you send 7 SAT Subject Test scores, they will usually choose the top two or three. SAT scores are mailed directly to your

home and to school in about three to four weeks after the test is taken. Scores will also be sent via the Internet to the colleges that you designate when you register for the test.

h. A Level

A-Level examinations are given May-June. These tests are designed to measure your mastery of college-level work in specific courses. Senior scores on these tests have no impact on the college admissions process because the test is given after all admissions decisions have been made. Enrolling and doing well in any advanced course, however, will show up on your transcript. Any advanced course requires that you do well. Key words here are “doing well.” As a Harrow student you are enrolled in A-Levels – demanding courses but you have also taken IGCSE and AS-Level courses to get to A-Level. Schools in the US and Canada will be looking at all of the grades you earned during the last three years of school, in other words, they will see all of these grades. It is important that having arrived at the final year, you work hard to make sure the grades you earned reflect your true ability.

When grades are sent to schools during your last year we will send Predicted A-Level grades. What are these? Predicted A-Levels are basically an assumption based on the current work you are doing in class and how, based on this effort, your teachers think you will do on A-Level examinations. Predicted scores are not what you will earn, they are what your teacher thinks you will earn. Therefore, it is terribly important that you, the student, look to perform as best you can all

through the last year in college.

i. Studying for SATs

There have been loads of studies on the effect of Coaching/SAT prep on SAT performance. Almost all indicate that becoming familiar with the test is a good idea. But they have found conclusively that doing well in school is the best test preparation.

There are other ways to achieve high scores on the SAT. Certain areas such as Reading Comprehension or math skills need the most attention. Sometimes focusing on vocabulary can greatly affect your scores. Some students choose to work with a private tutor or with a test review program. No matter what method is chosen, many of our students have seen score increases once they have made a commitment to take such work seriously. There are never any guarantees with such work since test taking is not an area where miracles occur.

Cramming the night before does not help. Instead of overwhelming your brain, get a good night's sleep. Be sure to eat breakfast. Prepare yourself for the SATs as you would for sports... get in shape - physically, intellectually, and emotionally!

Here is a tip:

Students with the highest SAT scores concentrate best for the full three hours. Others "get sick of the test," slow down and often give up. Look at the clock. When you go into the third hour, eat some raisins or candy

that you've brought with you during the break. Psyche yourself up, tell yourself you are just as fresh this third hour as you were when you walked in ... you're young, three and a half hours of concentration is easy at 15 and 16! Chances are that you won't be devastated with some horrible score as they almost always are consistent with your grades at school. Take each question as it comes and give it your best shot. The easy answers count as much as the hard ones.

X. FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

When it comes to paying for college there is no question that it can be a financial burden to your family. With the current financial crises families are looking for a variety of ways to pay for the ever-increasing costs of university tuition. There are two forms of assistance you can receive to pay for school.

a. Financial Aid is for families who need money because they do not have enough money to pay. Need is the most important word in the previous sentence. Lots of people want Financial Aid, but in order to get Financial Aid your family needs to prove they cannot pay. In order to get an idea how your family will fare go to www.collegeboard.com click on either the For Students or For Parents tab then look for the Pay For College tab. On the left hand side you will find under Tools the **Calculator**. Your parents can enter their financial data in the section and see if they will qualify for Financial Aid. There are a few things to be aware of - 1. Many international families do not qualify for Financial

Aid because of the company benefits given to families living abroad. 2. Not every school offers financial aid to international students. If you are American, it should be no problem if you qualify. If you are an international student, please check each schools' website to make sure there is money available for you. 3. The school will expect the family contributes some money for your schooling. But, they are not interested in forcing your family into bankruptcy so that you can go to school. They all will try to be reasonable in the Financial Aid award.

Financial Aid is typically a package made up of Grants, Loans, and Work-Study. A Grant is essentially free money. Loans are just like a bank loan, they need to be paid back. Work-study requires that you find a job on campus in which you earn money to help pay for books, food etc...

If you apply for Financial Aid you will need to compete the appropriate form required by the schools. Some require the CSS Profile found on the College Board website. Others require the International Financial Aid application which can be found on the schools website.

There are two types of schools when it comes to Financial Aid: Need Aware and Need Blind.

Need Aware: This means that the school, when looking at your application will look to see if they can give you money based on your Financial Aid application. If they cannot meet your need i.e. give you the money you need, they will not accept you and obviously not give you money.

Need Blind: This means the school will not look at how much money you need and if they accept you will try to give you the money you need. In fact, the school will work to make sure they give you what you need.

b. Scholarships are monies based on Merit. This means you earn the money. Typically schools will look at your grades and SAT scores to determine whether or not you merit a scholarship. The best forms of scholarship come from the schools themselves. Most schools offer a wide variety of scholarships based on a number of factors. In most cases, by just applying to the school you have applied for scholarships at that school. In other cases you will need to complete a scholarship application for the scholarship you hope to win. This may include additional essays and other information. It is important to check each schools website to see what the various forms of scholarship are and how you apply for them.

The nice thing about scholarships is that you do not need to pay them back. But you need to continue to be a good student. Many scholarships require that you maintain a certain grade point average. Scholarships can be Full ride meaning that you don't have to pay a thing to partial, meaning they are helping you pay for your schools costs.