

# HGIEC - News to Know



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## Decisions Are Out!

It has been yet another interesting year in Admission. With final decisions either out already or wending their way to awaiting students, it has been another landmark year for colleges.

The other night Bloomberg ([www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com)) sent out the recent results from top colleges posting their admission numbers. As stated in the article, 7% seems to be the rule of the day for Ivy League Colleges. This remarkable percentage - 7%, of students admitted to the likes of Stanford and 6.9% at Harvard only increases the desire of students to seek a place at such schools.



While these colleges are reporting low percentages in admission, their applications this year continue to rise, generally speaking. Yale saw a minute decline this year. These numbers do not speak to fewer students getting in, the number of available slots remains the same. But with rising applications, the percentage of acceptances must go down.

So, what else is behind the numbers. First of all students are applying to more colleges than ever. In the old days, (speak with your parents if they applied to university in the US), students would typically apply to a few colleges. This was true up to about 10 years ago, according the Bloomberg article. Now it

seems that it is normal to apply to more than 12 and some up to 20. (Not that I advocate that at all).

Demographically speaking, the number of college age students is just past the peak and should be on the decline. For those of you budding economists, you will know that scarce resources forces more attention. Fortunately one can no longer buy a place at university! So, students are seeking other ways to gain admission to the select few prestigious schools with rocketing applications and dwindling admission rates.

All of this for what? Certainly there is the bearing of “name” as a factor.



But at the end of the day, do these schools really offer better education or better chances of success. One good thing about all of this is that savvy consumers are

looking for alternatives.

So what does this really mean. Certainly students need to be aware of the following:



1. Spend time assessing your self. Know your strengths - academically, personally and socially.

2. Research a variety of colleges but know your limitations. In other words, be realistic.

4. At this time it is important to investigate - look at different types of schools: big, small, State Universities, Liberal Arts, there is so many to choose from why limit your initial investigation?

5. Use a variety of resources - Princeton Review, College Confidential, College Board and the schools website.

3. Be aware that when creating a FINAL list of schools there should be several schools in each of the following categories - Reach, Mid-Range and Safety remembering that you may end up at your safety. So all choices should be First Choice schools.

Once you have started the process, keep your mind open to opportunities. There are lots of great schools, bad schools are the ones not chosen for the right reason.

### *So What About Testing? When and Why?*

#### **Admissions is not about the test!**

Students are admitted to schools based on grades earned in school. Test scores should support the grades earned. Most people approach testing with the wrong focus. Too much emphasis is placed on testing hoping the high test scores will mask poor academic performance. Wrong!

If you are in the second to last year of high school you should be thinking about testing. It can be a bit confusing when it comes to taking the test, and preparing for the tests.

Before we talk about when to take the tests, let's talk about preparing. There seems to be an interesting myth about Preparing for the SAT. I have known students to take months off from Chinese schools to "prepare" for the SAT. I am not sure what they are actually doing to prepare, but I am sure it involves spending hours and hours taking practice test after practice test and memorizing vocabulary words.

While I understand that in test based culture such as China, Japan and Korea, preparing for the test is the

logical thing to do, many people go about preparing in all the wrong ways. Before I venture too deeply here, I want to be clear - I am not a Test Prep Guru. However, if you attend an international school, chances are that by going to school every day you are preparing for the SAT. That's right - going to school is the best test prep.

In school you learn reading, writing and arithmetic. These are the basics of SAT. While there are gradations of reading and writing, spending time does not necessarily improve results.

What students should do is speak with their English teachers about how to improve their critical reading and writing skills. A review of Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry will cover most of the math needed to perform well on the test.

While taking practice tests is good to familiarize yourself with the layout of the test and the types of questions asked, one should not think that the SAT is as easy as a practice test.

Many, many students come to me after test prep courses or working on practice tests and say "I got a 2200 on the SAT". Only to find out that the

score was in one of the aforementioned situations.

Scores earned during practice situations are NOT real scores, and of course you know that. One should also not plan on earning a score similar to a practice test. The SAT, the real SAT, is a beast unto itself. Usually students who earn a high score during a practice session do not even come close when they take the real test. Usually the score is lower on the real test.

There are a few reasons to really prepare for the test.

1. There are some students who really just cannot perform well on tests. These students may benefit from professional test preparation.
2. There are some students who need to jump some hurdle on testing. For example, perhaps they have a real problem with the Critical Reading section.
3. Some students need help learning how to approach the test.

But a majority of students do not need test preparation. It is a billion dollar a year business that cashes in on people who do not really benefit.

## When to take the Tests?

Here is a basic schedule for taking the Tests.

### Grade 10 (US Equivalent)

October: PSAT

### Grade 11 (US Equivalent)

October: PSAT

December: SAT I

May: SAT I

June: SAT II (if needed, first run through)

### Grade 12 (US Equivalent)

October: SAT I (if needed)

November: SAT II (if needed. **Meets ED/EA deadlines**)

Some will ask, "Why this schedule?" The reason for this is as follows - taking the PSAT is the best test prep come right behind going to school every day. The PSAT provides a great resource for preparing for the test. Why? The test is similar in content and expectations with only the actual writing section missing.

When a student gets their PSAT scores back, the score sheet tells the student exactly what questions were answered correctly, incorrectly or not answered. It also describes the content of the question as well as the difficulty of the question. Wow! With all that information in hand a student can quickly see what areas need improvement. And the best feature? The student has the actual test so they can go back and look to see why they made the error.

There is no other test prep that does all of this and for a very limited cost.

So why take a PSAT followed by SAT in December of Grade 11. So you can do two things - correlate PSAT Test scores to taking a real test and seeing what areas are limiting higher scores (by looking at the PSAT). All of this information should supply a very focused area for preparation since the student now knows where they need to improve.

By taking this action the student can then spend January - April really preparing for the SAT and the best thing is it will not cost thousands of dollars. The goal is to be prepared to take the SAT I in May. If all goes well, this could be the last time a student takes the test. (depending on previous scores from both SAT and PSAT).

June should be the time to take the SAT II, if needed. How do you know if you need to take the SAT II? Check the admission policies of the schools you think you will apply to next year. If any one of them requires (recommends) SAT II, then you know you need to take them. Otherwise, there is no reason to take SAT II.

For students who need to take SAT II, check to make sure you know how many you need to take. Some schools expect two SAT II, some want three. If you have any schools that want three, you're taking three.

So now the hard part is to determine which three to take. Most students take Math. There are two types - Math 1 and Math 2. Generally speaking, Math 1 covers math similar to the SAT I math. It is just an hour long. Math 2 is for advanced math students. Speak with your school counselor if you need advice or shoot me an email.

Students usually take a science as another SAT II. If you are looking for a third test that is not a second science - Literature or World History or another language most often fit curriculum offered in international

schools. However, you should definitely purchase an SAT II book on the subject since most IB, A Level or other curricula do not cover the material in the way College Board expects.

I have heard students say they don't want to take SAT II in June, they are not prepared. Yeah, I know that but since November is the last time you are going to take SAT II, why place all your cards on the one test date. Take the test in June, learn what is being asked, spend the summer covering material, then take the test in November when you are really ready.

Now, lots of students worry that if they wait until November and they are applying Early to a school, the test scores will not make it on time. Remember that all Language with Listening tests are only offered in November. Many students have not learned enough language to take the language test in Grade 11. Most students take the test in the Grade 12. Furthermore, lots of the last bits of science and math expected on the SAT II are taught from September through November.

So, November is the last test date for Early applications. Where does this confusion come from? Application deadlines! Many students confuse application deadlines with all the other stuff. An application deadline means that is when the student must have their section completed. Most counselors and teachers try to meet that deadline as well. But since most schools are waiting for bits and pieces to arrive, test scores specifically and mailed school forms, they wait.

What students need to know is that their application must arrive on or before the deadline.

Good luck on testing!