

# College Prep Glossary

*Before you can really dive into your college search headfirst, we need to build your knowledge base. Refer to this glossary anytime you have a question about college prep jargon.*

**ACT:** A standardized test used for national college admissions. All 4-year colleges and universities in the US accept ACT scores. All students take this test during 2nd semester of 11th grade.

**Associate's Degree:** This is a 2-year degree typically offered by community colleges, and sometimes at 4-year colleges and technical schools. Getting an associate's degree may be your first step towards transferring to a 4-year university/college.

**Community College:** A non-residential school (students do not live in dorms) where students go to obtain an Associate's Degree and/or achieve higher training in a specified area. Community colleges often offer a post-secondary education as a pathway to a 4-year college. (e.g. Wake Tech)

**4 Year University/College:** Where students go to obtain a Bachelor's degree. These are often residential colleges (some students live in dorms). A Bachelor's degree is considered more competitive in the world of work and provides you with more job opportunities than an Associate's Degree. At a 4 Year University, you declare a "Major" which is your primary area of study.

**AP Classes/Tests (Advanced Placement Classes/Tests):** The AP program offers standardized courses that give students the ability to earn college credit while in high school. Credit is accepted by participating colleges for students who score high enough on AP tests. Taking an AP Course and doing well in that course (A or B) looks great on college applications. Colleges may ask, "How many AP courses did your school offer? How many AP courses did you take?" This shows colleges the extent to which you took advantage of the opportunities at your school.

**Award Letter:** A financial aid document sent to admitted students that outlines the terms of an awarded financial aid package.

**Bachelor's Degree:** This is a 4-year degree typically offered by 4-year colleges and universities. (e.g. Bachelor of Science in Business, Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, Bachelor of Science in Biology, Bachelor of Arts in English).

**Class Rank:** Class rank measures how your grade point average (GPA) stacks up against your peers'. Colleges look at this number to determine how competitive you were in your academic environment.

**Common Application (Common App):** A standard, free application form used to apply to over 450 American colleges and universities. This saves you time. You fill out 1 application and can send it to many colleges. This link (<http://www.commonapp.org/search-colleges>) provides a list of all colleges that accept the common app.

**Concentration (Major):** An area of concentration in a particular field of study. Students typically declare their major by the end of their sophomore year of college. It is okay and perfectly normal to go into college without knowing what your Major will be. However, it is best to have a general idea of what field/ what type of work you are interested in.

**Deferred Admission:** A type of admission that gives an accepted student the option to postpone enrollment one year.

**Early Action (EA):** Under this admission program, a student can apply early to more than one college but is not bound to attend if accepted. Early Action is almost ALWAYS a great idea!

**Early Decision (ED):** Under this admission program, a student can apply early to only one choice college and must attend this college if accepted. Early Decision is VERY RARELY a good idea.

**Expected Family Contribution (EFC):** This is the amount a student's family can be expected to contribute to one year of college expenses. When you complete the FAFSA, you will receive your EFC. Your EFC is based on your family's financial income and assets. It is then subtracted by the cost of attendance (COA) of attending each school you're admitted to. The resulting sum is considered your financial need, or the amount of financial aid you're eligible for.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** The FAFSA is a financial aid form that must be filled out by all students seeking federal, and sometimes state, aid. Most colleges require the FAFSA. All students should fill out the FAFSA.

**Gap Year:** A gap year refers to a student taking a year after he graduates high school, before he continues his education in college. Students considering a gap year should heavily focus on the purpose of that gap and how they will be better prepared for college after that year.

**Grade Point Average (GPA):** A GPA is a calculated average of the letter grades a student earns throughout school. GPA indicates overall academic performance. You increase your GPA by taking weighted courses (honors/AP) AND DOING WELL IN THOSE COURSES.

**Grant:** A grant is money given to a student for college that does not need to be repaid. Free Money! Grants differ from scholarships in that they are awarded based on need only. Scholarships may be based on need and/or merit.

**Legacy:** A legacy is college applicant whose parents or grandparents graduated from the prospective school.

**Liberal Arts:** A liberal arts education exposes students to a broad course of study, including humanities, social sciences, mathematics, and natural sciences in addition to their chosen Major.

**Major:** An area of concentration in a particular field of study. Students typically declare their major by the end of their sophomore year of college. More on majors.

**Minor:** A minor is a secondary field of study, typically different from one's major.

**Need-Based Financial Aid:** Financial aid based on a student's family's inability to pay full tuition. More on need-based financial aid.

**PSAT/NMSQT** (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.): The PSAT is standardized test used to prepare students for the SAT and qualify students for National Merit Scholarships. This is taken during the 10th grade year

**Registrar:** College registrars manage student records, schedule classes, prepare transcripts, and collect college tuition and fees. More on the registrar.

**Residential Life:** The college department that manages dorms and on-campus housing.

**Rolling Admissions:** An admissions type that allows students to apply at any time during the admission period, usually on a first-come, first-serve basis. Rolling Admissions does not mean you should procrastinate.

**SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test):** The SAT reasoning test is the most widely-used standardized test for college admissions.

**SAT Subject Tests:** SAT Subject Tests are standardized tests given in individual subjects that improve a student's academic credentials. Only a few highly selective colleges require SAT Subject Tests.

**Scholarship:** A scholarship is money given to students for college that doesn't need to be repaid. Scholarships are awarded based on a wide variety of criteria including academic, extracurricular, or athletic merit.

**Standardized Tests:** These tests evaluate academic skill and provide academic performance reports to educational professionals like teachers, professors, and admissions officers. EOC scores, ACT scores, and SAT scores are all types of standardized test scores.

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** This financial aid report, that includes the Expected Family Contribution, is sent to students after colleges receive the student's FAFSA. The college will determine your Financial Aid Package based on this report.

**Transcript:** The official record of a student's academic process, in high school or college. This is like a footprint of your entire high school career.

**Undergraduate:** A college student working toward an undergraduate associate's or bachelor's degree. Students pursuing a bachelor's degree at a 4 year college/university are considered undergraduate students. When applying to college as a senior, you will be applying to "Undergraduate Admissions".

**Valedictorian:** Valedictorian is a title given to a student at a high school graduation. Usually this title is given to the highest ranked student in the graduating class.

**Wait List:** A list of applicants who might be accepted once admitted students decided whether to accept or reject a school's offer.

**Work-Study:** A federally funded program that gives a student a campus job in exchange for financial aid. More on work-study.