

# College Glossary: *Learn the Lingo*

What's a transcript? What's the difference between early action and early decision? When applying to college, you are bound to come across unfamiliar terms. This glossary can help you make sense of all the information you're sorting through.

## TESTING:

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### **ACT**

A standardized college admission test. It features four main sections: English, math, reading and science — and an optional essay section. The exam is scored out of 36 points. All WHS juniors take the ACT at no cost in March.

### **Admission Tests**

Also known as college entrance exams, these are tests designed to measure students' skills and help colleges evaluate how ready students are for college-level work. The ACT and the College Board's SAT are two standardized admission tests used in the United States. The word "standardized" means that the test measures the same thing in the same way for everyone who takes it.

### **College Board**

A company that provides the Advanced Placement (AP) Program and college entrance tests such as the SAT.

### **Official Scores**

ACT and/or SAT scores sent directly from the testing company (online) to a college, often required for an application to be considered "complete." Order and pay for your scores directly at [act.org](http://act.org) and [collegeboard.com](http://collegeboard.com)

### **PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test / National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)**

A preliminary version of the SAT. It is meant to prepare students for taking the SAT by simulating a shorter version of the exam, exposing students to relevant testing material, and showing students where they need to improve in order to reach their goal score on the SAT. The PSAT/NMSQT is also the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT), which only Juniors are eligible for. This means that students who obtain a certain score on the PSAT can qualify for National Merit Scholarships, which can go a long way toward financing your college education. WHS offers the PSAT to all 10th-11th graders each year Fall Semester.

### **SAT - Scholastic Aptitude Test**

The College Board's standardized college admission test. The test contains three sections: math, reading, and writing, and an optional essay section. The exam is scored out of 1600 points.

### **SAT Subject Tests**

Required mostly by extremely competitive colleges. Hour-long, content-based college admission tests that allow you to showcase achievement in specific subject areas: English, history, math, science and languages. Some colleges use Subject Tests to place students into the appropriate courses as well as in admission decisions. Based on your performance on the test(s), you could potentially fulfill basic requirements or earn credit for introductory-level courses.

## **COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS**

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### **Class Rank**

Westlake High School still ranks students by GPA. When filling out applications, we report your class rank based on your weighted GPA. Your class ranking can be found on your transcript and in Naviance.

### **College Application Essay**

An essay that a college requires students to write and submit as part of their application. Some colleges offer applicants specific questions to answer, while others simply ask applicants to write about themselves. Colleges may refer to this as a “personal statement.” It is recommended students begin to write their essay the summer before senior year.

### **Common Application [commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org)**

Also called “Common App”. A standard application form accepted by all colleges that are members of the Common Application association. You can fill out this application once and submit it to any one — or several — of the nearly 700 colleges that accept it. The Common App “opens” August 1st so students can get started early!

### **Demonstrated Interest**

A student’s level of interest and commitment to attending the institution to which he or she is applying as shown through visits, contact with the admissions office, application essays, and more. Some schools strongly consider demonstrated interest while others offer it no weight.

### **Early Action (EA)**

An option to submit your applications before the regular deadlines. When you apply early action, you get admission decisions from colleges earlier than usual. Early action plans are not binding, which means that you do not have to enroll in a college if you are accepted early action. Many early action deadlines are November 1st, November 15th, or December 1st.

### **Early Decision (ED)**

An option to submit an application to your first-choice college before the regular deadline. When you apply early decision, you get an admission decision earlier than usual. Early decision plans are binding, meaning you agree to enroll in the college immediately if admitted and offered a financial aid package that meets your needs. Some colleges have an early decision option called ED II, which has a later application deadline than their regular ED plan.

**Grade Point Average (GPA)**

A number that shows overall academic performance. It's computed by assigning a point value to each grade you earn. See also Weighted Grade Point Average.

**High School Code (CEEB Code)**

A six digit number assigned to WHS by the Educational Testing Service that is required on almost every application. Westlake's number is: 365450.

**Major**

The concentration of study in college

**Naviance**

Naviance is a comprehensive college and career readiness website Westlake uses to identify student strengths and postsecondary interests/goals. Students can use Naviance SuperMatch to find colleges that align with their preferences. Naviance is the tool students use to request transcripts and inform the Counseling Office where, when, and how they are applying to college. It is how the Counseling Office sends and keeps track of transcripts and other college application materials. It is also how teachers and counselors submit their letters of recommendation. Students may login through Clever.

**Open Admission**

A policy of accepting any high school graduate, no matter what his or her grades are, until all spaces in the incoming class are filled. Almost all two-year community colleges have an open-admission policy. However, a college with a general open-admission policy may have admission requirements for certain programs.

**Priority Date or Deadline**

The date by which your application — whether it's for college admission, student housing or financial aid — must be received to be given the strongest consideration.

**Regular Decision**

An application option that involves applying by a late fall or early winter deadline in exchange for an admission decision the following spring.

**Rolling Admission**

An admission policy of considering each application as soon as all required information (such as high school records and test scores) has been received, rather than setting an application deadline and reviewing applications in a batch. Colleges that use a rolling admission policy usually notify applicants of admission decisions quickly.

**Transcript**

The official record of your course work at a school or college. Includes your GPA, classes taken, and grades received. Your high school transcript is required for college admission and for some financial aid packages.

**Transcript Release Form**

A form which students list the colleges they are applying to, have their parent/guardian sign, and submit to the Counseling Office. This form gives us permission to send student transcripts to colleges and **MUST** be submitted BEFORE we can process any transcripts. There is a \$3 fee per transcript, and counselors require 10 school days to send your transcripts.

**Tuition**

How much your college courses cost. Tuition is the amount paid for each credit hour of enrollment. Tuition does not include the cost of books, fees, or room and board. Tuition charges vary from college to college and are dependent on such factors as resident or out-of-state status, level of classes enrolled in (lower, upper or graduate division), and whether the institution is publicly or privately financed.

**Undergraduate**

A college student who is working toward an associates (2 year) or a bachelor's (4 year) degree.

**Waiting List**

The list of applicants who may be admitted to a college if space becomes available. Colleges wait to hear if all the students they accepted decide to attend. If students don't enroll and there are empty spots, a college may fill them with students who are on the waiting list.

**Weighted Grade Point Average (GPA)**

A grade point average that's calculated using a system that assigns a higher point value to grades in more-difficult classes. For example, we assign the value of 5.3 (instead of the standard 4.0) for an A+ earned in an AP or honors class. Westlake High School uses a 4.0 weighted GPA scale.