

# College Insights

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## September 2018

10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students—  
Register & prepare for PSAT

Seniors – Finalize college list;  
work on applications & essays;  
review transcript for accuracy;  
request recommendation  
letters from teachers and  
counselors; meet with visiting  
college reps

### 8<sup>th</sup> – ACT and ACT plus Writing

## October 2018

10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students—  
Review test materials & take  
PSAT

6<sup>th</sup> — SAT Reasoning  
and Subject Tests  
(register by 9/7 — late  
registration 9/26)

27<sup>th</sup> — ACT and ACT plus  
Writing (register by 9/28 —  
late registration 10/14)

Attend area college fairs and  
meetings

Meet with college reps visiting  
high school

Seniors - Continue work on  
college applications; complete  
Early Decision/Early Action  
applications

Complete CSS Profile if  
required by colleges

FAFSA available October 1st

## Decoding College Application Plans

You've finalized your college list but which application plan should you use? The options can often be confusing to both students and parents. Here's a quick run-down of the differences and a look at the pros and cons of each plan.

**Regular Decision (RD).** Under regular decision, you'll need to apply by a certain deadline set by the individual college. The college will review your application and let you know whether you've been admitted by a specified date (often, but not always, April 1.) If you're admitted under RD you won't have to accept your offer of admission or send in a deposit until May 1. Applying RD is straight-forward and simple. Because deadlines are often later under RD than for certain other plans, you'll have more time to submit your application materials to the school. You'll also have more time to retake the SAT or ACT in the Fall of senior year, which can be a plus for students who aren't happy with their scores.

**Rolling Admission.** Some colleges use a rolling admission plan. At these colleges, you may apply at any time after a college begins accepting applications until a final closing date set by the college. In some cases, the final deadline can be as late as a few weeks before the start of the term. Rolling admission schools review applications as they come in, and let applicants know their admission decision as soon as it is made. So, one benefit of applying to a rolling admission school is that you won't have to wait for months to know whether you've been accepted. If you're admitted, you'll have until May 1 to accept the offer. One potential downside is that at some rolling admission colleges, competition for admission can get tighter the later you apply, as available spots may begin to fill up. So, if you're applying to a rolling admission school, make sure to complete your application in a timely manner.

**Priority Application Deadline.** When looking through college application instructions, you may notice that some schools mention a priority application deadline that is sooner than the regular decision deadline. Applying by the priority deadline will put your application at the front of the line for review and, depending on the school, you may also receive your decision earlier than students who apply by the regular deadline. At some schools, you must apply by the priority application deadline to be considered for merit scholarships. Tip: Always check each college's admission website to see if there is a priority deadline; these deadlines are sometimes only mentioned on the college's own website, and not on other sites.

**Early Action (EA).** According to data from the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), about a third of colleges offer Early Action application plans. If you choose to apply under Early Action, you'll complete your application by an earlier deadline than regular decision candidates. Colleges review all EA applications first and let students know their admission decision two to three months before regular decision applicants receive theirs. If you're admitted, you'll have until May 1 to decide whether to attend.

In a survey of college admission officers, NACAC found that the number of EA applicants rose, on average, by 15% last year. In fact, survey respondents reported that 43% of their applications came in during EA. Applying EA can increase your chances of admission at some – but not all – colleges. The NACAC study found that among colleges responding, the average acceptance rate for students who applied EA was 71% compared to 65% for regular decision applicants. However, keep in mind that this can vary by college, and applying EA alone is unlikely to improve your chances if you are (continue reading this article on p.3)

## Famous lawyers and their undergraduate degrees:

**Hilary Clinton**  
(former) Secretary of State  
Political Science

**Ann Coulter**  
Radio Personality  
History

**John Grisham**  
Author  
Accounting

**Elizabeth Marston**  
Co-Creator of Wonder Woman  
Psychology

**Judy Scheindlin**  
Judge Judy  
Government

**Will Shortz**  
Puzzlemaster  
Enigmatology



## Resources

**American Bar Association -**  
[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education.html](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education.html)

**National Association for Law Placement -**  
<https://www.nalp.org/prelaw>

## Focus on Majors: Pre-Law

If becoming a lawyer sounds like a good way to ensure job security, earn a decent living, challenge your brain, and make a difference in the world, you might think majoring in “Pre-Law” would be your best bet. Think again. There is no such thing as a “Pre-Law” major.

Although there is no Pre-Law major, the term itself is not meaningless. It refers to advising programs that support students in preparing for and applying to law school. These programs often have advisors who devote themselves to helping students understand different types of law, explore various legal careers, and manage the law school application process. Pre-Law advising programs often sponsor lecture series, job shadow opportunities, and internships.

So, what *is* the best major to pursue for law school? The most common majors of law school applicants are: Political Science, History, English, Psychology, Criminal Justice, and Economics. But this doesn't mean that they're the best choices. Majors with the highest acceptance rates into law schools include: Physics, Philosophy, Biology, Chemistry, Government Service, Anthropology and Economics. In truth, the *best* major for applying to law school is the major that most interests you.

The American Bar Association (ABA) has identified a list of “Core Skills and Values” that competitive law school applicants should possess. They include:

Analytical / Problem Solving Skills  
Critical Reading  
Writing Skills  
Oral Communication/Listening Abilities  
General Research Skills  
Task Organization/Management Skills and Public Service and Promotion of Justice  
These skills can be developed and honed in almost any major you might choose.

Successful law school applicants should have a broad understanding of history and the factors that have influenced the development of our society, as well as a funda-

mental understanding of political thought and the contemporary American political system. They should also possess mathematical and financial skills, such as an understanding of basic pre-calculus mathematics and an ability to analyze financial data. Knowledge of human behavior, social interaction, cultural differences, international institutions and issues, world events, and the increasing interdependence of the nations and communities within our world are also important.

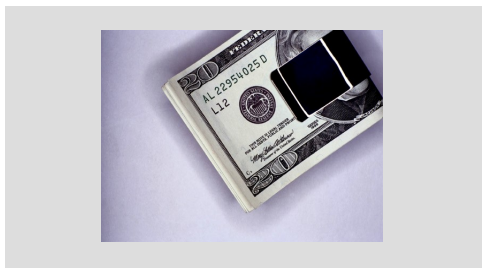
If most of what you know about legal careers comes from watching Perry Mason or Law & Order reruns, you're in for a huge surprise. Criminal trial attorneys account for only a small percent of practicing lawyers. Traditional legal career paths include private practice lawyer, government attorney, corporate lawyer, entertainment lawyer, and public interest lawyer. Most attorneys spend a tremendous amount of time researching matters and composing documents.

Many law school graduates never actually practice law. They view legal education as a useful foundation for a wide range of careers. Several bestselling authors, politicians, corporate business people, and entertainers have attended law school and have found that their legal backgrounds played a significant role in their success. Non-traditional careers for law school graduates include journalism, real estate, nonprofit management, entrepreneurship, and the arts.

Employment of lawyers is expected to grow by 10 percent through 2020. Because the number of law school graduates now is outpacing the number of openings at law firms, new lawyers are increasingly working in non-traditional careers, where legal education is desired but not required.

The median salary range for lawyers with less than one year of experience is \$45,000 to \$68,000 per year, according to a 2010 PayScale survey. The median annual wage of all lawyers that year was \$112,760. Of course, many lawyers earn far in excess of these figures, depending on the field of law they practice.

## Financial Matters: Filing the FAFSA



The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the primary form used by colleges to determine eligibility for need-based aid. In some cases, colleges will not consider an applicant for merit aid unless that student has first submitted a FAFSA. The FAFSA should be filed as soon as possible after October 1st of the student's senior year, and then yearly while attending

college. The FAFSA collects basic information about both the student's and his/her parents' incomes and assets, and uses this information to determine an *expected family contribution* (EFC). The EFC is the amount that the student and family is expected to contribute towards that individual's college expenses during the next academic year. The difference between the EFC and the *total cost of attendance* at your college of choice is known as *demonstrated need*. Colleges use this information to prepare a customized financial aid package for each admitted student who qualifies for financial aid.

The package may include both grants and loans, as well as self-help such as work-study opportunities. **Only some**

**colleges guarantee to meet 100% of established need, so financial aid may not cover all of your expenses at a particular college.**

Complete the FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). You'll need your 2017 tax returns and other financial records noted on the site. You'll also want to apply for a Federal Student Aid ID (FSAID) for both student and a parent so you can sign your form electronically.

Families of underclassmen can get an early estimate of eligibility for aid by completing the FAFSA4caster available at [www.FAFSA4caster.ed.gov](http://www.FAFSA4caster.ed.gov). This online tool will also provide information about other sources of financial aid for college.

## Decoding College Application Plans (continued from p.1)

not already a good candidate for the school. With the exception of Restricted Early Action programs (see below), students applying EA to one school may also apply EA to other schools.

**Restricted Early Action/Single Choice Early Action (REA).** Like Early Action, Restricted Early Action requires you to apply by an earlier deadline and provides an early admission decision. If you're admitted, you also have until May 1 to decide whether to attend. However, as its name implies, Restricted Early Action adds an important restriction to the mix. You may not apply to any other college through Early Action, Restricted Action, or Early Decision; you must restrict your "early" application to a single school, although this may not apply to state/public colleges. You may, however, apply to other colleges through regular decision, rolling admission, or by priority deadlines. This plan is mostly used by highly competitive schools that admit a very small percentage of applicants. While the acceptance rate for the REA pool at some schools is higher than for those who apply RD, keep in mind that you will still be competing against other extremely strong applicants. Some students may benefit from more time to

improve their test scores or to provide their first semester grades. Before deciding to apply REA, carefully read the college's website to make sure you understand the specifics of its individual program. When you apply REA, you are giving up the opportunity to apply Early elsewhere, so this choice is best reserved for a school that you strongly prefer.

**Early Decision (ED).** Early Decision plans are the most restrictive. When you apply Early Decision, you make a commitment to attend the school if you are admitted. You complete your application by an early deadline and receive your admission decision by the college's stated date. If you're admitted, you'll be required to send in your enrollment deposit right away and also to withdraw any applications you've submitted to other schools. By applying ED, you also agree that once you're admitted, you won't continue to apply to other colleges. The only exception to this is if the college is unable to provide enough financial aid to cover your family's demonstrated need (as the college determines it). Because ED is a serious commitment, it should be reserved for a school that you are absolutely positive is your top choice.

Colleges offering ED share certain characteristics. They tend to be among the most selective schools, and they also are more likely to be private colleges than public universities. Last year, the growth in the number of students applying Early Decision slowed somewhat after increasing each of the two prior years.

Can applying ED help boost your odds of admission? At first glance, the answer might appear to be yes. When NACAC surveyed admission officers, they found that, on average, the percentage of students admitted in the ED round was higher than for those who applied RD (60% versus 48%). However, the best option boils down to the specific college and specific applicant, and not to averages across many colleges. Before deciding to apply ED to any college, ask the admission office for data on the acceptance rates and admission profile for the previous ED applicant pool. Compare your admission profile (GPA, test scores) to those numbers. While Early Decision can provide a solid boost at most colleges, it is seldom enough to get an applicant who is far below the admission profile in. In short, ED can help, but it won't work miracles.



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## “Doing” High School Well

Adults will tell you: “Enjoy high school—these are the best years of your life!” But many teenagers would not agree. What can you do to make sure that your high school years are truly special?

**Get involved.** Join a club or activity that interests you and participate fully. Which one doesn’t much matter. Just follow your passions in finding a club that suits you or get together with a friend or two and start your own group. Extracurricular activities are what make high school fun and give you a place to belong.

**Challenge yourself.** It might be tempting to take the easier route with grade-level classes, but try that AP or honors class and move beyond your comfort zone. Don’t fear the teacher whom everyone says is really demanding—the best teachers are those who will encourage you to think outside the box and to stretch your mind.

**Ask for help.** There’s no glory in doing it all yourself; ask for help when you need it. Meet with your English teacher after school for help with an essay or ask your math teacher to explain a difficult concept. In this way you’ll establish relationships with your teachers outside of the classroom and perhaps find yourself with a true mentor.

**Try not to focus on being with the “popular” kids.** High school students tend to form cliques of like-minded individuals. Make your friends based on shared interests and values. Welcome

opportunities to get to know new friends throughout high school.

**Take care of yourself.** That means eating well, getting an adequate amount of sleep and exercise, and finding ways of managing the stress that comes with being a high school student. Learn to manage your time well so you don’t get caught with last-minute assignments. Set aside time each day to work on each subject, even getting ahead in reading or other assignments when you can. Make sure you build in time for fun and relaxation. Go for a run, play with your dog, read a novel, chat with a friend—anything to break up long hours of study.

**Do good—volunteer.** Helping others will make you feel good about yourself. Look for volunteer activities that you generally care about, not just those you think will look good on your resume.

**Don’t sweat the small stuff.** You’ll encounter a lot of petty ideas and petty people during your high school years, but you don’t need to get caught up in focusing on things that really will not matter. Spend your time and effort on those things that are important to you.

**Keep your grades in perspective.** Of course you’ll want to do the best you can in each of your classes, but don’t let one or two B’s on your transcript convince you that you’ll never get into college. There are wonderful colleges out there for students who’ve shown a range of achievement; there’s a place for every student who truly wants an education.