

## Unit 3



# How Do I Get In?

Admission to college can be competitive. If students create a plan to maximize their high school years, they increase their options for education beyond high school. There is no single path to college admission, but a well-thought-out plan will help students ensure that they have used their high school opportunities to maximum benefit.

The vocabulary of the college application process can be daunting. Students encounter the idea of GPA and transcripts, along with national standardized tests such as SAT and ACT. Extracurricular activities, both in and out of school, provide valuable learning and service opportunities for students. However, students need to remember to track their activities and awards in preparation for applying for both financial aid and admission.

States and local school districts set requirements for high school graduation, but many colleges require course work beyond basic requirements. These requirements can change from year to year. School counselors are a vital source of information about current graduation requirements.

### Lesson Overview

Students will complete a graphic organizer during an interactive presentation about the factors that colleges consider during the admission process. Following the presentation, students will outline individual action items that will improve the likelihood of success in the college process. Instructors can extend the lesson by assigning students an admission essay.

### Instructional Objectives

- Identify key factors that colleges consider in the admission process.
- Create individual action plan to optimize future choices and success.
- Define relevant terms used in the college application.

### Time Required

90 minutes

### Materials Required

#### For each student

- Student Workbook

#### For the classroom

- Unit 3 slides (available at [www.dallasfed.org/educate/navigate](http://www.dallasfed.org/educate/navigate))
- Classroom computer with Internet access and projector

## Procedure

1. **Display Slide 1.** Tell students that many high school students eagerly anticipate the day that an acceptance letter arrives from their college or university. There are many factors that will contribute to the student receiving an acceptance letter.
2. **Display Slide 2.** Introduce the items that colleges consider during the application process. Tell students to open the Student Workbook to pages 14–15 and take notes on each of these blanks during the lesson.
3. **Display Slide 3.** Use the visual on the slide and the information below to discuss the importance of course selection to the college admission process.
  - High school courses need to be varied. Most schools require a minimum of these core courses for graduation. Electives help students demonstrate a variety of interests.
    - Core classes (English, math, social studies, science)
    - Academic electives (Foreign languages, journalism, debate, college exploration/readiness, etc.)
    - Arts (Band, choir, theater, art, etc.)
    - Athletics
    - Career and technology
  - High school courses need to be challenging. Take the most advanced classes that you can.

Tell students that counselors and academic advisors can help them select classes that align with their academic goals. It is important for students to get to know these individuals. Summarize by asking students why varied courses and challenging courses could be important. Answers will vary, but might include the following:

- to demonstrate the breadth of interests and ability;
- to provide exploration for possible careers;
- to meet requirements for graduation and college admission.

Have students make a note under “Courses” that the courses they take should be varied and challenging.

4. **Display Slide 4.** Tell students to turn to the glossary in the Student Workbook. Select a student to read the definition of these four terms out loud. Discuss how these types of classes can be an important way to prepare students for college-level work, as well as earn college credit.
  - Advanced Placement, or AP, courses
  - Dual-credit courses
  - International Baccalaureate (IB) Program courses
  - Credit-by-exam

Students can select advanced courses based on past performance, testing results and other factors. Tell students that they should talk to their counselor about advanced courses that are available.

5. **Display Slide 5.** Tell students that all of their high school grades will be recorded on their official school transcript. This transcript will contain the final grade from every high school class they take. Use the following definitions to discuss these terms with the students.

- **Transcript**—an official record of a student’s grades  
*Transcripts are maintained by the school and are usually sent to colleges directly by the school.*
- **Grade point average (GPA)**—a number that represents a student’s average grade in all classes  
*Some schools calculate the GPA using a numeric grade from each class that ranges from zero to 100. Other schools assign points to letter grades earned (4 for “A,” 3 for “B,” etc.). In this system, the GPA ranges from 0 to 4. (Teacher note: If possible, find out the system for GPA calculations used in your school district.)*
- **Weighted GPA**—a GPA that is calculated with extra points added to the grade value for honors or advanced courses  
*Many schools add points to the final grade of an honors or advanced course, so a grade of 94 might be included in the weighted GPA as a 104. In schools with a zero to 4 scale, an A in these courses might receive 5 points (rather than 4), a B would receive 4 points (rather than 3), etc.*
- **Class rank**—a measure of a student’s grades compared to the other students in the class  
*The class rank is usually stated as a number compared to the number of students in the class. It can also be stated as a percentile. For example, if a student ranks 41st out of 427, the student is in the top 10 percent of the class.*

Ask students why grades are important in the college admission process. Answers will vary, but should include the following ideas:

- Grades can tell a college about a student’s academic successes and failures.
- Grades can help a college predict future success.
- Grades allow a college to compare the performance of different applicants.

Have students write the following sentence in the “Grades” box:

*“All of my grades will be on my transcript. It will also have my GPA and my class rank.”*

- 6. Display Slide 6.** Use the information on the slide to discuss how tests are an important part of the college admission process.
- 7. Display Slide 7.** Use the information below and on the slide to discuss the types of tests that students take.

General tests are designed to measure academic aptitude. One or more of these tests is generally required for admission to any college or university. For the college admission process, these tests are usually taken in the 11th and 12th grade years. However, the Duke Talent Identification Program allows 7th grade students to take the SAT or the ACT. High-scoring middle school students are recognized and invited to participate in a variety of enrichment programs.

- **ACT**—Consists of four tests (English, mathematics, reading and science) that are scored on a scale of 1–36. These four scores are averaged for a Composite Score. The ACT also includes an optional writing test.
- **SAT**—Consists of three sections (critical reading, writing and mathematics) that are each scored on a scale of 200–800. The total score is the sum of the scores on the three sections.

- PSAT/NMSQT—The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is administered to juniors. The test has a format similar to the SAT and allows students to practice for the college admission test. It is scored on a scale of 20–80 for each of the three sections. Scores on this test qualify students for several competitions that provide scholarships and recognition.

Course-specific tests

- Advanced Placement tests—These tests are taken after a student has completed an Advanced Placement course. They consist of multiple-choice and free-response questions. Scores are reported on a scale of 1–5. Schools have different policies on awarding credit or making placement decisions based on the test score.
- International Baccalaureate tests—These tests are taken after a student has completed an International Baccalaureate course. The tests are scored on a scale of 1–7, with up to three additional points available.
- SAT Subject Tests—These are content-specific tests that students can take to demonstrate skills and knowledge in various academic subjects. Each one is scored on a scale of 200–800.

Under “Test Scores,” have students write the following sentence:

“Some tests are used for college admission, like the SAT or ACT. Some tests are used for college credit, like AP or IB.”

- 8. Display Slide 8.** Tell students that it is important to start a tracking system to record awards and achievements. The slide contains two fictitious examples. Review the types of information that the tracking sheet contains. It is helpful to keep track of references that can describe the award or comment on your qualifications. Ask students to name other awards of which they are aware.

Write the following sentence under “Achievements.”

*“It is important to track my awards and keep copies of documentation.”*

The last page of the Student Workbook provides a form for students to use to track various achievements throughout their high school career.

- 9. Display Slide 9.** Use the information below and on the slide to discuss how extracurricular activities allow students to develop skills and talents in school-based organizations and activities. Discuss the variety of opportunities that are available at school. They can include:

- Athletics
- Academic clubs and competitions
- Fine arts
- Service organizations
- Student leadership

Under “Extracurricular at School,” have students list one activity that they currently participate in and identify a skill or a leadership quality that the activity can develop.

- 10. Display Slide 10.** Use the information on the slide to discuss how involvement in community organizations and volunteer activities can provide opportunities for students to develop skills, serve their community and build relationships that can provide references.

- Community organizations (Lions Clubs, Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.)
- Faith-based organizations (church, synagogue, etc.)
- Youth organizations and clubs (Boys and Girls Club, scouting, etc.)
- Federal programs (Upward Bound, Gear Up, etc.)

Many college applications ask students to list the places they volunteered, along with the number of hours of community service.

Tell students that paid and unpaid employment, such as internships, can allow for career exploration and reference development. They can also enhance a college application.

Under “Extracurricular Outside of School,” students should identify one organization that could provide opportunities for membership or volunteer service.

- 11. Display Slide 11.** Discuss the importance of personal references using the information on the slide. Have students think of two people who could provide a personal reference and write their name under “References.” Tell students that these names will likely change as they progress through high school, have new teachers, meet new people and experience new opportunities.
- 12. Display Slide 12.** Use the information on the slide and below to discuss additional components of the college application.
- Essay—The topics of college essays vary but provide an opportunity for the student to show creativity and explain qualities that are not captured in other parts of the application.
  - Auditions and portfolios—Music, art or theater programs may require an audition or work samples as part of the application for admission.
  - Interviews—Some colleges require (or offer) an interview with a school representative.

Under “Other,” list these three additional components.

## Closure

- 13. Display Slide 13.** Tell students that all colleges and universities require an application and supporting documents. It is important to remain aware of upcoming deadlines throughout high school. Counselors, teachers and advisors are crucial sources of information about the admission process.
- 14. Display Slide 14.** Review the areas that the class has discussed.

## Assessment

15. Have students imagine that as seniors they receive an acceptance letter to the college of their choice. Have them write the acceptance letter to themselves explaining the reasons that the college admitted the student. They should make their final copy on page 16 of the Student Workbook.
16. The letter should highlight at least four of the areas discussed in the lesson. Letters should be written in correct format. To assess student performance, consider the following questions.
  - a. Does the letter contain a college logo and a salutation?
  - b. Does the letter include four areas of consideration that were introduced in the lesson?
    - Courses
    - Grades
    - Test Scores
    - Achievements
    - Extracurricular at School
    - Extracurricular Outside of School
    - References
    - Other
  - c. Does the letter use correct spelling and grammar?

## Extension

1. Have students write a college admission essay using one of the following prompts.
  - Tell about a life-changing experience. How did it change the way you look at the world or relate to other people?
  - Tell about a person who shaped your life. How did this person affect you? What did you learn from them?
  - If you could change one thing in your community, what would it be? Why?
2. Invite a representative from a local college or university to talk about the admission process.

### Unit 3 Slides

**Unit 3 How Do I Get In?**

I've been accepted!

Grades: A, B

Extracurricular: "Great student!", "Wonderful worker!", "Very helpful!"

1 NAVIGATE: Exploring College and Careers

**What Do Colleges Look At?**

Courses, Grades, Test Scores, Achievements

Extracurricular: At School, Outside of School

References, Other Items

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**Course Selection**

Variety of Courses

Challenging Courses

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**Course Selection: Learn the Lingo**

- Advanced Placement (AP) Courses
- Dual-credit Courses
- International Baccalaureate (IB) Courses
- Credit-by-exam

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**Grades: Learn the Lingo**

TRANSCRIPT

Course Grades: A, GPA 3.5, 99/400, Class Rank 3.8, Weighted GPA

- Transcript
- Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Weighted GPA
- Class Rank

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**Tests**

Standardized tests are required for college admission.

Every test has a different scoring scale.

Test scores can provide opportunities for:

- Scholarships
- Placement in select programs
- College credit

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**Tests: Learn the Lingo**

- General Tests: ACT, SAT, PSAT
- Course-specific Tests: Advanced Placement (AP tests), International Baccalaureate (IB tests)
- SAT Subject Tests

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**Extracurricular Activities at School**

- Athletics
- Academic clubs and competitions
- Fine Arts
- Service organizations
- Student leadership

Get involved outside the classroom.

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## Unit 3 Slides

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### Extracurricular Activities Outside of School

**Get involved in your community.**

- Community organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Youth organizations and clubs
- Federal programs

Volunteer activities allow you to serve your community and to build a resume for college.

**Internships and jobs**

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### Achievements and Awards

Award or Recognition	Organization	Date	Contact or Reference	Brief Description
Outstanding Social Studies Student	Your Junior High	4/23/2014	Principal Jones	Awarded to the student with highest grade in social studies.
1st Place in the Regional Science Fair	Your School District	2/18/2014	District Science Coordinator	Competed against other science projects from the entire school district.

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### References

"Great Student!"  
—12th grade science teacher

"Best employee"  
—Manager

"Focused on the future"  
—High school counselor

"Wonderful person"  
—Next door neighbor

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### Other Parts of the Application

Other parts of the application may include

- Application essay
- Auditions
- Portfolios
- Admission interview

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### Application process

**NSU NAVIGATE STATE UNIVERSITY ADMISSION APPLICATION**

PERSONAL INFORMATION

FULL LEGAL NAME: FIRST NAME, LAST NAME, MI, SUFFIX OR BIRTH NAME

DATE OF BIRTH: MONTH, DAY, YEAR

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: NUMBER, NUMBER, NUMBER

GENDER: MALE, FEMALE

MAILING ADDRESS: ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE, COUNTRY

PHONE: NUMBER, NUMBER, NUMBER

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### Review

Course Selection, Grades, Test Scores, Achievements, Extracurricular (At School, Outside of School), References, Other Items

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