Roadmap to College: Highly Selective Schools

Presented by: Loren Newsom
Understanding Selectivity

First - What is selectivity?
When a college is selective, that means it uses an application process to admit some students and reject others.

Next - Why are some colleges so selective?
It might not be the reason you think! Many think it’s because some colleges have higher standards, or they have better professors, or they offer a more rigorous degree.

Answer: Schools are selective because they receive more applications than they have seats in their freshman class.
## Highly Selective Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Acceptance Rate Fall 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stanford University</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvard University</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale University</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia University</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton University</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Naval Academy</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown University</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Institute of Technology (CalTech)</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Chicago</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Military Academy</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Pennsylvania</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claremont McKenna</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke University</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartmouth College</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomona College</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitzer College</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern University</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanderbilt University</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amherst College</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell University</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey Mudd College</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins University</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice University</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California – Berkeley</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Highly Selective Admissions

Five qualities admitted students demonstrate:

1. Passion
2. Initiative
3. Individuality
4. Love of Learning
5. Likeability
The college admissions process

- Application Process
- Your Timeline
- How We Can Help
Application Process
What’s on a well-rounded application?

- GPA
- Application essays
- Your Application
- Standardized test scores
- Letters of recommendation
- Extracurricular Activities

College admissions isn’t a competition for bragging rights. Focus on getting into the best school for you.
Highly Selective Admissions

How do highly selective colleges decide who gets in?

Part I: The Academic Ranking

1. Course selection
2. Class rank
3. Grades
4. Test Scores
5. Academic letters of recommendation
Highly Selective Admissions

How do highly selective colleges decide who gets in?

*Part II: The Personal Ranking*

1. Activities
2. Essays
3. The application
4. Interviews
5. Matchmaking
Highly Selective Admissions

An interesting new study on highly selective admissions shows:

"The majority of colleges and universities group applicants into “pools,” based on their personal characteristics and exceptional talents; applicants are then chosen in comparison to others within their pool, but are no longer compared to applicants outside their pool. In addition, some pools receive significant preference over others. Students are most commonly grouped by such factors as minority status, athletic recruitment, level of financial need, and other variables that align with “institutional fit.” This finding sheds light on why some students are admitted to college who may have inferior academic merit, meaning lower academic variables such as their high school grade point average, than rejected students.

-- Who Gets In and Why? An Examination of Admissions to America’s Most Selective Colleges and Universities by Dr Rachel Rubin, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Spark Admissions LLC (2014)"
Application Process

Tips for Students Applying to Highly Selective Schools

- Get past prestige.
- Be a high impact player in and out of the classroom.
- Prove that you love to learn.
- Be more than a high GPA and SAT/ACT score
- Prove you can handle the competition at highly selective schools
- Involve yourself in national and international level activities
  - Ex. DECA, summer programs, academic competitions, publications
What’s a “good” GPA?

Challenging Classes + Good Grades

Good GPA

It’s important to maintain your grades from freshman year until graduation, but colleges will look closely at your grades and coursework during junior year.
Extracurricular activities

Join 10 clubs that you only attend once or twice a year.  
Join 3 clubs, go to every meeting, and eventually take on a leadership role.

Schools would rather you be **heavily involved in a few activities** than marginally involved in a lot.

**Pick a few clubs or activities** you really like and plan to **stick with them** throughout high school.
Admissions Essays & Letters of Recommendation

**Admissions Essays**
- Express yourself!
- Avoid formulas.
- Proofread.
- Make sure you use the right school name.

**Letters of recommendation**
- Ask teachers or mentors who you know well.
- Ask for them early, and don’t forget to thank the teachers/mentors who write them for you!
Interviews

Purpose of Interviews

✓ There is so much more to grasp about a person off paper

✓ Colleges use this most often in highly selective programs

✓ It is the most efficient and fair way of assessing a student’s interpersonal skills

Tips for Students

✓ Make sure you read through the website and brochures

✓ Prepare your answers

✓ Prepare some questions

✓ Be comfortable

✓ Dress the part

✓ Keep your parents away!

✓ Do not talk about your numbers

✓ Save the best for last
Standardized test scores

✓ Almost **every school accepts the ACT and the SAT** for admission.

✓ Some schools require SAT Subject Tests.

✓ If you’re in an AP course, you should take the corresponding AP test.
  
    o You can get college credit, and they look GREAT on college apps.
The SAT and ACT

✔ Used by colleges for admissions and scholarships.

✔ Nearly every school accepts both, so you can choose the best one for you or take both!

✔ Doing well on these tests is a skill that can be taught.
Which test is best for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coca-Cola</td>
<td>pepsi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REDVINES</td>
<td>Twizzlers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARVEL</td>
<td>DC COMICS™</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There’s no “right” test. Only the right test for you.

The best way to pick the right test? Take a practice test for each and see how you score. Find free practice tests at PrincetonReview.com/Events
### Comparing Tests

#### Old SAT (no longer available)
- Math
- Critical Reading
- Grammar and a Mandatory Essay

#### Current SAT
- Math
- Evidence-Based Writing and Reading
- An Optional Essay

#### ACT
- English
- Math
- Reading
- “Science”
- An Optional Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Old SAT</th>
<th>Current SAT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wrong answers cost</td>
<td>¼ of a point</td>
<td>No wrong answer penalty</td>
<td>No wrong answer penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter sections alternating between subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td>Longer sections testing each subject all at once</td>
<td>Longer sections testing each subject all at once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three section scores</td>
<td>200-800</td>
<td>Two section scores 200-800</td>
<td>Four section scores (1-36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score between</td>
<td>600-2400</td>
<td>Total score between 400-1600</td>
<td>Total score between 1-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(average 1550)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(average 21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learn more and compare the SAT and New SAT in depth at PrincetonReview.com/SATChanges.
Wait...what about the PSAT?

- Doesn’t count towards your college admission.
- Practice for the real SAT.
- High scores can qualify you for a National Merit® scholarship (among others).
First Impressions

SAT and ACT scores provide a quick way for schools to compare applicants, but they don’t tell an applicant’s whole story. There’s a lot more to your app than just your score.
SAT Subject Tests

✓ 1 hour exams (up to three in one day)
✓ Administered in January, May, June, October, November, and December
✓ Basic registration fee is $26, plus $20 for each additional test
✓ Scored from 200-800
✓ Most selective schools require at least 2 Subject Tests for admissions.
SAT Subject Tests

These are used for more competitive college admissions.

- **Math:** Math Level 1 and Level 2
- **Science:** Biology E/M, Chemistry, Physics
- **Social Science:** U.S. History, World History, Literature
- **Language (Listening):** Chinese, German, Spanish, Japanese, Korean, French
- **Language (Reading):** French, German, Hebrew, Spanish, Latin, Italian
## SAT Subject Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>50 %ile</th>
<th>75 %ile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. History</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World History</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Level I</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Level II</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Biology</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molecular Biology</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAT Subject Tests

- Students should only take these exams if they are in Honors, Pre-AP, AP, or Dual courses.
- Students should only take these if required or requested by the colleges to which they apply.
- Scores can be used for funding/scholarship decisions.

Examples:
- Harvard: requires 3 of any kind
- UT Austin Engineering: requires Math L1: 560 or Math L2: 530
- Rice: requires 2 related to field of study
## Admission tests...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... measure intelligence?</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... can be used to award aid?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... reflect your GPA in high school?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... predict your college GPA?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... can be prepared for?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... should be prepared for?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... test what you’ve learned in HS?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Breaking down college admissions year-by-year

**Freshman**
- Grades
- Activities
- A practice PSAT
- SAT Subject Test(s)

**Sophomore**
- Prep for SAT/ACT

**Summer**
- Prep for SAT/ACT

**Junior**
- Grades
- Activities
- SAT/ACT
- SAT Subject Tests

**Summer**
- Visit schools
- Work on your college essays

**Senior**
- Grades
- Activities
- SAT/ACT (if needed)
- Watch for early Application Deadlines (some start as early as Oct 1)
3 Pillars of Admission

Dream College

Great Grades
Great Test Scores
Great Applications
Great Grades – *Homework Help*

- 40 subjects, 3,000 tutors

6,000 students get help every night from The Princeton Review.

96% of students say they improved their grades.

Sign up for 30 minutes free tonight
Great Grades – *Homework Help*

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Increasingly, dieticians have been called on to advise in both the public and private sector. As health issues related to diet increase, many government entities have been expanding their efforts to address the problem of malnutrition, especially in regards 9 of children. In America child obesity rates have doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the last 30 years, 10 causing many problems. As our healthcare system is already both overpriced and unstable, many policy makers are retaining the services of dieticians to advise on the best ways to reverse the poor food choices of society.

Which choice most effectively establishes the main topic of the paragraph?
Great Test Scores – Test Prep

Online student portal to track your progress
Great Test Scores – Test Prep

• Better Scores. Guaranteed.
  • SAT: 100 point score guarantee
  • ACT: 3 point score guarantee

Great Applications – *College Advisor*

- Get started identifying your Dream, Match and Safety schools with The Princeton Review College Advisor app.
Great Applications

College acceptances this year include:

- Harvard University
- Princeton University
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Duke University
- Dartmouth College
- Cornell University
- Rice University
- Washington University in St. Louis
- New York University
- Stanford University
- Yale University
- University of Pennsylvania
- Johns Hopkins University
- Tufts University
- Columbia University
- University of Michigan
- Emory University
- Boston College
- Brown University
- Harvey Mudd College
- Northwestern University
- Wesleyan University
- University of Virginia
- University of California – Berkeley
- University of California – Los Angeles
- University of Southern California
- University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill

The Princeton Review College Admissions Consulting earned a 96% happiness score!
Important Links

SAT vs. ACT
PrincetonReview.com/college/sat-act

HS Timelines
PrincetonReview.com/college-advice/college-prep-timeline

Free Practice Tests and Events
PrincetonReview.com/Events

Free 30 Minute Tutoring Session
PrincetonReview.com/academic-tutoring

Questions?