December 2025 Newsletter
collegeapp101.com

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How Important is GPA in College Admissions?

A perfect SAT score (1600) or ACT score (36) has a way of dazzling teachers, parents, fellow students, guidance counselors, and, most relevant to a college application, admissions counselors. Yet, admissions committees reject applicants with those scores in droves each year. Why? In brief, an applicant's GPA (grade point average) is more significant. In terms of importance, GPA rises above an impeccable resume, a compelling application essay, a slate of academic awards, and so forth. The GPA exhibits a student's efforts in the classroom over the long haul. Therefore, it is the most important element of a college application. With the fall semester winding down and spring semester on the horizon, now is a great time to revisit the topic.

With some rare exceptions, college-bound high school students have a GPA. It is also common for college-bound students, especially underclassmen or middle school students taking high school courses, to overlook the importance of GPA. These students are neither careless nor lazy. They simply do not realize, as a 13- or 14-year-old, that their academic efforts in, for example, that Honors Algebra 1 class will matter, when they are an 18-year-old college applicant, who wants to present a stellar GPA in the college application.

Therefore, students and parents should be proactive now and get informed about their high school's GPA policies. Here are some questions to answer:

- How does the school calculate a student's GPA?
- How often is the GPA updated? Each quarter? Each semester? A different schedule?
- What courses are included in the student's GPA? High school courses taken during high school or also high school courses taken during middle school? Are grades from elective courses included in GPA calculation?
- Does the school use weighted or unweighted grades in GPA calculation?

In many cases, these questions are answered on the website of the school (or district), on the school's profile, or in an academic handbook. Getting answers may take some digging or a visit to the school's office of academic guidance. But knowing this information is crucial for strategizing for a high GPA. Students and parents should also know that, generally speaking, the higher a student's grades, the higher the GPA. And the higher the GPA, the higher the class rank, which matters a great deal to college admissions committees.

Gathering answers to these questions takes time and energy. But the academic honor, financial dividends (in the form of college

merit scholarships), and admissions offers that accompany a high GPA are worth the effort.

Career Planning Session

College App 101 is excited to announce a new career aptitude service: Career Planning Session. This service is for students, who do not know what college major to declare or career path to pursue. The Career Planning Session is a meeting to discuss a high school student's prospective career choices and the education that such career prospects require. A pre-meeting assessment is required. Connect with Dr. Riley at collegeapp101.com and request more information today.

College App 101 Podcasts

Designed for college bound high school students and their parents, these podcasts are brief, informational, and entertaining. They are available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and collegeapp101.com/podcasts/. Recent episodes:

- The Case for a Classical Education (K-12) Part 1
- Foresight's Role in Academic Success
- Fall 2025 Financial Tips: FAFSA, Generosity, and More
- Admissions Advice from a College Student

Dates to Remember

- Dec 1: a Regular Decision application deadline for many colleges (check your deadlines!)
- Dec 6: SAT test day
- Dec 13: ACT test day
- Early Jan: a Regular Decision application deadline for many colleges (check your deadlines!)
- Jan 9: regular registration deadline for the Feb 14 ACT
- Jan 23: late registration deadline for the Feb 14 ACT (fee increase)

Click here for SAT registration and here for ACT registration

Past College App 101 Newsletters

Past editions of the College App 101 Newsletter can be found here.