

Riley Baker Educational Consulting

www.rileybaker.com

139 Sunset Ridge Road

Northfield, IL 60093

847.441.8687

rileybaker@rileybaker.com

March 2013

9th – SAT

Reasoning Exam

available in US only

Underclassmen—Make plans for a productive summer. Investigate summer programs, jobs, internships, and opportunities to visit college campuses

Juniors – Create an initial list of colleges

Prepare for spring SAT/ACT exams

April 2013

13th - ACT and ACT plus Writing

(register by 3/8 - late registration 3/22)

Seniors should have their final letters of acceptance by April 1st

Juniors – Visit colleges

Prepare for AP Exams

Seniors – Compare offers of admission; revisit top choices

Evaluate financial aid packages and explore college funding options

Lowering Test Anxiety

When you're a high school student immersed in the college admission process, it's hard to believe that ten years from now, SAT scores will have nothing to do with the quality of your life. There's just too much emphasis on a test that isn't even a very good predictor of success in college.

That's why nearly 850 colleges, including some highly selective colleges such as Mt. Holyoke, Bowdoin and Bates, no longer require the SAT. There are also a number of public institutions where students who have strong academic records don't need to submit test scores. Knowing that if they have a 3.0 GPA they're guaranteed admission to Arizona State University can help students keep the SAT in perspective.

Before taking the SAT, students should find some colleges where the average scores are close to their PSAT scores so they know that they will have options, even if their SAT scores are no higher than their PSATs. You don't want to go into the SAT thinking "if I don't get these scores up 300 points, my life will be over." Not only does it create needless suffering, but that kind of pressure can backfire and sabotage months of SAT preparation.

If students really can't deal with the SAT, there is another option. Colleges accept either the SAT or ACT, and some students score significantly higher on the ACT, which is more closely tied to the high school curriculum. Another advantage to the ACT is that there is no penalty for wrong answers. You can just go ahead and answer all questions on the ACT, without having to agonize over whether or

not to guess. Only correct answers count in determining your score on the ACT.

With either the SAT or ACT, it makes sense to plan on taking the test at least two times. Knowing there is another chance reduces the "now or never" pressure that can cause students to miss questions they could otherwise answer.

Once their anxiety levels are lower, students can start taking steps to improve their scores. The best long-term strategy is simply to read more. Being able to read critically is a skill that will serve them well in college and beyond, but very few students seem to have the time or motivation to read outside of what's required for school. The editorial page of the newspaper is a great resource. In less than ten minutes a day, a student can read a column and identify the writer's main idea. This is an excellent way to sharpen your critical reading skills.

Familiarity is a great antidote to fear. One of the reasons the SAT is so scary is that it is a very different type of test from tests students are used to taking in school. Becoming familiar with the test is a great antidote to fear. Students who take practice tests become comfortable with the format and often find the math questions are tricky but not as difficult as they first seemed. Understanding the scoring system also lowers stress, as students realize that they can do well on the test without answering every question correctly.

Taking these steps to reduce test anxiety will enable students to perform to the best of their ability.

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 -

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law.html

National Association for Law Placement -

<http://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 that 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 for applying to 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” which 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 broad understanding of history and the factors that have influenced the development of our society, and a fundamental

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: Understanding Your Financial Aid Package



The most desirable type of aid is grant or scholarship money. This is truly “gift” aid, money that doesn’t need to be repaid. For some colleges, this may come in the form of a tuition “discount” or as an offer of in-state tuition to a resident of another state. Grants may be merit or need-based. Merit grants are generally offered to students who rank in the top quartile of the entering class or who have another desirable attribute, such as the ability to play the oboe or to quarterback the football team.

Loans usually make up part of the financial aid package; these may be subsidized or unsubsidized loans. The interest on subsidized loans is paid by the sponsor (often the U.S. government) until the student has completed his/her education and begins to repay the amount borrowed. The interest on unsubsidized loans must be repaid

along with the principal amount. Repayment schedules vary from loan to loan. Although loans may comprise a part of the financial aid package, families are under no obligation to borrow this money for education. The loan amount is simply money that the family is expected to pay towards college expenses.

Students are often awarded work-study funds as part of their package. Work-study provides students with money to be earned through on-campus employment. There are several advantages to work-study jobs over other types of student employment. Money earned in this manner is not considered in determining the following year’s financial aid package. On-campus employers also tend to be more understanding of the student’s primary role as scholar, and usually permit time off for academic responsibilities.

Students who have applied for financial aid will receive their college’s financial aid package soon after notification of their acceptance. Although all colleges use the FAFSA form (and may also use the CSS Profile or their own institutional form) to determine their offers of aid, the packages still may vary a good deal from institution to institution, not only in the amount of aid but also in the type of aid offered. You’ll want to compare offers from each of your colleges to help you and your family decide which college you will attend.

Road Trip!

Virtual tours, college viewbooks, attending area meetings, talking with current students - all of these provide a look at life at a particular college. Unfortunately, none of these can take the place of a campus visit when you’re trying to determine just how well a college fits you. Whether compiling your initial college list or making your final decision about which college to attend, it’s best to get a first-hand look at life at that institution.

If you’re just beginning the college search process, start your visits close to home. Even if you don’t plan on attending a local school, visits to nearby institutions will allow you to more carefully focus on such factors as size, diversity of student body, type of institution, majors and courses of study. Visit both public and private

colleges, residential and commuter campuses, universities and liberal arts colleges. Once you’ve determined the characteristics most important to you, you can begin to visit colleges that are further away. And since college vacations rarely are at the same time as your high school spring break, this month may be the perfect time to visit.

Seniors who have begun receiving admissions decisions will want to pay a second (or third) visit to each campus they are seriously considering. This is the time to go beyond the group tour. If possible, arrange an overnight visit with a stay in the dorms. Attend classes and talk with current students about what they like and don’t like. Eat at the dining hall and check out the library. Picture yourself attending that school, and determine where on your

list of acceptances that college falls. If you have received offers of admission from several schools, let those at the bottom of your list know that you will not be attending. Sending notification to those colleges early is the right thing to do—you’ll be opening a place for a student for whom it’s the perfect fit!

goseecampus.com

If you’re planning your own spring break college tour, you might first register at www.goseecampus.com. The site provides a convenient way to organize campus visits. In addition to facts about each college, the site includes links to the visit registration page, as well as resources such as campus maps, event calendars, restaurant recommendations, and travel directions.

Riley Baker
Educational Consulting

139 Sunset Ridge Road
Northfield, IL 60093

Phone:

847.441.8687

E-mail:

rileybaker@rileybaker.com

Website:

www.rileybaker.com

Avoiding the Dreaded Disease: Senioritis

After working so hard through high school, some students believe they can slack off during the last few months of senior year. Mid-year grades have been submitted and some students have been accepted at their favorite school. Why not kick back and enjoy life? But an offer of admission is conditional, and students are expected to maintain their academic performance throughout senior year. Every year, colleges around the country rescind admission offers.

You are admitted to a college based on the information in your application, and if there are any changes, you need to let the college know. If you have dropped a class that was listed on the transcript you submitted to colleges, your application has changed. Colleges receive your final transcript during the summer, and you don't want to find out in July that you no longer have a place in the incoming freshman class.

It is much better to be honest and explain why you dropped the class or why your grades have gone down. If the drop in academic performance is severe enough to jeopardize your acceptance, admissions officers may be able to advise you on how to salvage things.

There's another reason to keep working hard in school. It makes the transition to

college level work easier. That's one of the advantages of taking AP courses, which require a high level of commitment throughout senior year in order to prepare for AP exams in May. The anti-slacker curriculum built into AP classes will help you adjust more easily to college-level academic requirements.

If you start procrastinating during senior year, it's difficult to get back to good study habits when you arrive at college. There will be lots of distractions on campus and no parents reminding you to finish your history paper before you go out for pizza with your friends.

While you do need to keep your grades up, making sure you have some fun throughout high school will help you avoid burnout. Just don't go overboard quite yet. Summer is only three months away, and you will have plenty of time to play before you go off to college.

It's not just lower grades that can torpedo an offer of admission. While spray painting the school gym might seem like a fun prank, a disciplinary issue can torpedo your spot in the freshman class.

More importantly, students who keep senioritis under control will get their reward when they embark on the great adventure of college, beginning in just a few short months.