



# A CTE Student's Guide to High School and Beyond



**Center for Advanced Learning  
Keller Independent School District**



# Table of Contents

Contact Information	4
About KCAL	5
House Bill 5 Graduation Plan	6
Endorsements and Pathways	7
CTSOs	9
Certifications	10
SAT, ACT, TSI	12
Post-Secondary Options	14
Military Academies	16
Junior Year Timeline	17
Senior Year Timeline	18
College Application Tips	19
How to Order a Transcript	19
Sample Resume	20
Resume-Writing Tips	21
Essay-Writing Tips	21
Sample Essays	24
Recommendation Letters	32
Thank-You Letters	32
Sample Thank-You Letter	33
Job Application Tips	34
Job Interview Tips	35
Employability Skills	36
Oral Skills	37
Job Shadowing, Internships, and Practicums	38
Career Interest Inventory Websites	39
College Search Websites	41
Popular Texas College Websites	42
Financial Aid and Scholarship Websites	44

## Contact Information

### **Keller Center for Advanced Learning**

**201 Bursey Road**

**Keller, TX 76248**

**817-743-8000**

<https://www.kellerisd.net/Page/21>



# About KCAL

## **KCAL Design**

The Keller Center for Advanced Learning will offer students the opportunity to take advanced courses within their chosen endorsement. Students will participate in field-based experiences, culminating in the senior practicum made possible with strong community and business partnerships. Each student will have the opportunity to participate in Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) and obtain certifications, certificates, licensures, and/or college credit within their program of study. KCAL is a collaborative, innovative educational experience that will empower KISD students to be highly competitive in our global society.

## **KCAL Mission**

In partnership with the community, we will inspire, empower and educate every student to excel in a diverse, global society for life-long success.

## **KCAL Vision**

We will provide a comprehensive program that prepares our students for post-secondary endeavors through rigorous curriculum, relevant experiences and lasting relationships.

## **KCAL Commitment**

We commit to our students to organize and maintain highly competitive CTSOs for students; to plan field-based experiences to include job shadowing, internships, and practicums; to provide multiple certifications/licensure opportunities; to create a culture focused on collegial relationships and effective collaboration with industry partners; and to support innovation and critical thinking that promotes risk-taking and entrepreneurship.

## **KCAL Goals**

Our goals are to help students identify career interests that are related to a career cluster, to develop an education plan, and to select a logical sequence of courses prior to enrollment at KCAL. We will offer each student career learning experiences and certification opportunities prior to graduation. We will provide each student with the academic and technical skills needed to pursue additional education (technical school, community college, or university). We will provide each student with the understanding and knowledge that ethical behavior and workplace skills are integral to successful employment. We will incorporate new and emerging foundation skills needed to perform tasks proficiently at current business and industry standards.

# House Bill 5 Graduation Plan

The Default Plan for Keller ISD students is the Distinguished Level of Achievement Plan, which includes one endorsement choice.

	9th	10th	11th	12th
<b>Keller ISD Graduation Requirements - 26 Credits</b>				
<b>English - 4 Credits</b>	English I	English II	English III	Advanced English
<b>Math - 4 Credits</b>	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra 2	Advanced Math
<b>Science - 4 Credits</b>	Biology	IPC, Physics OR Chemistry	Advanced Science	Advanced Science
<b>Social Studies - 4 Credits</b>	World Geography	World History	US History	Government/ Economics
<b>World Languages</b>	2 credits of the same world language			
<b>Physical Education</b>	1 credit			
<b>Fine Art</b>	1 credit			
<b>21st Century Skills</b>	.5 credit Professional Communications, Entrepreneurship, Problems and Solutions			
<b>Electives</b>	5.5 credits			
<b>26 CREDITS</b>				

Endorsement	Arts/Humanities	Business/Industry	Public Service	STEM	Multi-disciplinary
<b>Programs of Study</b>	English Fine Arts Social Studies World Languages	Agriculture Science Architecture/ Construction Arts/AV/ Communication Bus Manage/Admin Bus Communications Finance IT Marketing Transportation	Education/ Training Govt/Public Admin Health Science Hospitality/ Tourism Human Services JROTC Law Enforcement	Science Technology Engineering Math	
<b>Requirements</b>	<u>English</u> - 5 Credits <u>Social Studies</u> - 5 Credits <u>Fine Arts</u> - 4 or 5 Credits in one or two categories in sequence <u>World Language</u> - 4 Credits in one language OR 2 Credits in one and 2 in another.	4 or more Credits with at least 2 courses in the same pathway and one advanced course (Junior year or later)	4 or more Credits with at least 2 courses in the same pathway and one advanced course (Junior year or later)	All STEM must have Alg 2, Chem, Phys  <u>STEM Math</u> – Alg1, Geom, Alg 2, and 2-advanced math. <u>STEM Science</u> – Bio, Chem, Phys and 2 advanced sciences <u>STEM Eng&amp; Tech</u> -3 Credits in coherent sequence.	+4 Credits in AP or Dual OR +4 Advanced Courses (Junior & above) in Endorsement Areas for 4 or more credits OR +4 Credits in each foundation subject area – must include English IV, Chem and/or Phys & KISD graduation requirements
<b>Distinguished</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A total of four credits in math, including credit in Algebra II</li> <li>• A total of four credits in science</li> <li>• Completion of curriculum requirements for at least one endorsement</li> </ul>				
<b>Performance Acknowledgements</b>	For outstanding performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a dual credit course</li> <li>• In bilingualism and bi-literacy</li> <li>• On an AP test or IB exam</li> <li>• On the PSAT, the ACT-Plan, the SAT, or the ACT</li> <li>• For earning a nationally or internationally recognized business or industry certification or license</li> </ul>				

# Endorsements and Pathways

## Arts and Humanities

### English

Art and Literature

Creative Writing

### Fine Arts

Choir

Band

Dance

Orchestra

Piano

Technical Theater

Theater Production

Visual Arts—Drawing

Visual Arts—Electronic Media

Visual Arts—Painting

Visual Arts—Sculpture

### Social Studies

History

Social Sciences

### World Languages

American Sign Language

Spanish

Spanish for Native Speakers

German

French

Latin

## Business and Industry

Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources

Veterinary Studies

Architecture and Construction

Architectural Design

Construction Management

Interior Design

Arts, Audio/Video, and Communications

Animation

Audio/Video Production

Commercial Photography

Fashion Design

Graphic Design and Illustration

Business Management and Administration

Business Information

Business Essentials

General Business (all online)

Business Communications

Debate

Broadcast Journalism

Newspaper

Yearbook

Finance

Accounting

Finance

Hospitality and Tourism

Culinary Arts

Information Technology

Computer Maintenance

CISCO Networking

Computer Programming

**Business and Industry (continued)**

Marketing

Marketing: Fashion, Sports & Entertainment, or Social Media

Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

Aircraft Technology

Automotive Technology

**Public Services**

Education and Training

Education and Training

Government and Public Administration

Political Science

Health Science

Biomedicine

Certified Nursing Assistant

Clinical Rotations

Emergency Medical Technician

Pharmacy

Sports Medicine

Human Services

Child Guidance

Cosmetology

Counseling and Mental Health

Reserve Officer Training Corp

Military Science

Law, Public Safety, Security, and Corrections

Court Law

Law Enforcement—Police

**STEM**

Science

Biology

Chemistry

Environmental Science

Physics

Space Science

Engineering

Engineering

Math

Calculus

Statistics

**Multi-Disciplinary**

**Option 1:** Complete four credits from each of the four foundation subject areas:

English

Mathematics

Science

Social Studies

Must include English IV, and Physics and/or Chemistry

**Option 2:** Complete four advanced placement or dual credits from the following departments:

English

Mathematics

Science

Social Studies

Languages other than English

Fine Arts

Must include English IV, and Physics and/or Chemistry

**Option 3:** Complete four advanced courses (junior level or higher) from within one endorsement or among multiple endorsements.

## Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs)

CTSOs allow students to compete in their area of study. Competitions are held at the local, state, and national levels. By participating in a CTSO, students can develop leadership skills, strengthen occupational skills through the competitions, develop personal characteristics and employability skills, and explore careers. There are 9 approved CTSOs in the state of Texas.

BPA: Business Professionals of America

DECA: Distributive Education Clubs of America (marketing)

FBLA: Future Business Leaders of America

FCCLA: Family, Career and Community Leaders of America

FFA: Future Farmers of America

HOSA: Health Occupations Students of America

SkillsUSA

TAFE: Texas Association of Future Educators

TSA: Technology Student Association

<http://www.bpa.org/>

<http://www.deca.org/>

<http://www.fbla-pbl.org/>

<http://www.fcclainc.org/>

<https://www.ffa.org/home>

<http://www.hosa.org/>

<http://www.skillsusa.org/>

<http://www.tafeonline.org/>

<http://www.tsaweb.org/>



## Certifications

**Below are the certifications you are eligible to earn in our KCAL programs.**

**Animation:** Adobe ACA After Effects, Adobe ACA Animate, Autodesk Certified User (ACU) – Maya

**Architectural Design:** OSHA General Certification, NCCER, SkillsUSA Workforce Ready, Autodesk Revit

**Audio Video Production:** OSHA General Certification, Adobe Audition, Adobe After Effects, Adobe Premiere, SkillsUSA Workforce Ready, SBE Television Operator, ProTools

**Auto Tech:** ASE Student Certification, SP2 Environmental, 609 HVAC Certification

**Business:** Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) (Word, Excel, Power Point, Access, Expert), Office Proficient Assessment (OPAC)

**Child Guidance:** BLS

**CISCO Networking:** CCENT (After two years of CISCO)

**Commercial Photography:** Cyber Safety Awareness, SkillsUSA Workforce Ready, Adobe ACA Photoshop

**Computer Maintenance:** A+ Certification

**Construction:** OSHA General Certification, Cyber Safety Awareness, SkillsUSA Workforce Ready, NCCER, SP2 - Certification Training

**Cosmetology:** TDLR Cosmetology License- Texas Department of License & Regulations

**Court Law:** CPR / First Aid, OSHA

**Culinary Arts:** TX Food Handler, ServSafe Food Protection

**Education and Training:** CPR Certification / BLS; Education Fundamentals Pre-Pac Certification

**Fashion Design:** Interior Design Fundamentals Pre-Pac Certification

**Finance:** Everfi Financial Literacy

**Graphic Design:** Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator

**Health Science—Biomedicine:** CPR, OSHA

**Health Science—CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant):** Certified Nursing Assistant – CNA, CPR/First Aid (BLS); Phlebotomy Technician, Certified Patient Care Technician (CPHT) and EKG Technician

**Health Science—Pharmacy:** Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPHT), Sterile Products Aseptic Technique Certified, OSHA HealthCare Certified, HealthCare Provider CPR

**Health Science—Clinical Rotations:** CPR/First Aid (BLS)

**Health Science—EMT (Emergency Medical Technician):** Emergency Medical Technician

**Health Science—Sports Medicine:** AHA Basic Life Support certification

**Interior Design:** Interior Design Fundamentals Pre-Pac Certification

**Law Enforcement (Police):** National Incident Management System (NIMS), First Aid / CPR

**Marketing:** Everfi Venture, Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) (Word, Excel, Power Point, Access, Expert)

**Veterinary Studies:** OSHA General Certification, Certified Veterinary Assistant (CVA), Animal Health Care Attendant (ACT), Equine Specialist (iCEV), Beef Cattle Specialist (iCEV), Avimark Software Certification



# SAT, ACT, TSI

Most colleges require at least one admissions test as part of their application process. It is one of the main factors that colleges consider to predict a student’s college success. Most students take these tests in their junior year of high school. Some students take both tests more than once, but all that is required is one test with a score high enough to be admitted. Students can choose to take SAT or ACT, or both. Almost every colleges will accept either test. Most colleges require that ACT or SAT scores be sent to them directly from the testing companies and not from the student or the high school. You can request that your scores be sent to colleges when you register for the test if you would like. You also need to list your high school when you sign up for the test so that they receive your test scores. Below are the school codes for each KISD high school.

**CHS: 442583**  
**FRHS: 443753**  
**KHS: 443755**  
**TCHS: 443752**

**SAT (Standardized Admissions Test):** To register go to [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

The SAT is a test of reading, math, and writing. The scores range from 400 to 1600. The writing section is optional but highly recommended, as a lot of colleges want the writing score. Below are 2018-19 test dates. The SAT 1 is called the reasoning test, and that’s the one students take for their college admissions test. Some colleges will also require the SAT 2, which is called the subject test. The subject tests come in a variety of subjects, but colleges will tell you if you need a subject test for admission purposes.

2018-19 SAT Administration Dates and Deadlines				
SAT Date	SAT Subject Tests Available	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline	Deadline for Changes
August 25, 2018 <b>Register</b>	See SAT Subject Tests available on this date	July 27, 2018	August 7, 2018 (for mailed registrations)  August 15, 2018 (for registrations made online or by phone)	August 15, 2018
October 6, 2018 <b>Register</b>	See SAT Subject Tests available on this date	September 7, 2018	September 18, 2018 (for mailed registrations)  September 26, 2018 (for registrations made online or by phone)	September 26, 2018
November 3, 2018 <b>Register</b>	See SAT Subject Tests available on this date	October 5, 2018	October 16, 2018 (for mailed registrations)  October 24, 2018 (for registrations made online or by phone)	October 24, 2018

December 1, 2018 <b>Register</b>	See SAT Subject Tests available on this date	November 2, 2018	November 13, 2018 (for mailed registrations)  November 20, 2018 (for registrations made online or by phone)	November 20, 2018
March 9, 2019 <b>Register</b>	SAT Subject Tests not offered on this date	February 8, 2019	February 19, 2019 (for mailed registrations)  February 27, 2019 (for registrations made online or by phone)	February 27, 2019
May 4, 2019 <b>Register</b>	See SAT Subject Tests available on this date	April 5, 2019	April 16, 2019 (for mailed registrations)  April 24, 2019 (for registrations made online or by phone)	April 24, 2019
June 1, 2019 <b>Register</b>	See SAT Subject Tests available on this date	May 3, 2019	May 14, 2019 (for mailed registrations)  May 22, 2019 (for registrations made online or by phone)	May 22, 2019

**ACT (American College Test):** To register go to [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)

The ACT is a test of English, math, science, reading, and writing. The highest score is a 36. The writing section is optional but highly recommended, as a lot of colleges want the writing score. Below are 2018-19 test dates.

2018-2019 Test Dates (National)

Test Date	Registration Deadline	(Late Fee Required)
September 8, 2018**	August 10, 2018	August 11-26, 2018
October 27, 2018	September 28, 2018	September 29-October 14, 2018
December 8, 2018	November 2, 2018	November 3-19, 2018
February 9, 2019*	January 11, 2019	January 12-18, 2019
April 13, 2019	March 8, 2019	March 9-25, 2019
June 8, 2019	May 3, 2019	May 4-20, 2019
July 15, 2019*	June 14, 2019	June 15-24, 2019

### TSI: Texas Success Initiative

Many Texas colleges require the TSI test, which measures a student's predicted success in college-level English and math classes. If you do not score high enough on the TSI test, you will be required to take remedial classes in college before you can take the freshman-level courses in that area. You will have to pay for these courses but not receive any college credit for them. To study for the TSI, go to:

<https://accuplacerpractice.collegeboard.org/login>

<https://accuplacer.collegeboard.org/student/practice>

[https://www.testprepreview.com/accuplacer\\_practice.htm](https://www.testprepreview.com/accuplacer_practice.htm)

You may be exempt from the TSI based on your ACT or SAT scores. See exemption scores below. If you qualify, the college will need the official score report from ACT or SAT to process your exemption from the TSI.

ACT: composite score of 23, with a minimum of 19 on both the English and math tests **OR**

SAT: combined verbal and math score of 1070, with a minimum of 500 on both the verbal and math tests

## Post-Secondary Options

After high school you may choose to go to a community or junior college, a four-year university, a technical or trade school, join the military, or go directly into the workforce. You need to decide what is best for you and your future goals. Below are some tips to help you decide.

### Two-Year University (Community College/Junior College)

- Two-year universities are schools that offer core classes offer associates degrees.
- Two-year universities are great places to transition from high school to a four-year university.
- Two-year universities are usually cheaper and they still offer financial aid.
- Two-year universities also offer many certificates and programs in addition to traditional classes.
- Consider a two-year university if you are unsure of a career or if you need to work on your GPA.
- Many two-year universities will only require a high school diploma for admissions (check each school for more information).

### Four-Year University

- Four-year universities are traditional schools that offer associate, bachelor, master and even doctoral degrees.
- Four-year universities offer on-site housing.
- Four-year universities have higher admission requirements.
- Four-year universities will have many options for majors and will specialize in certain areas.
- The first two years at a four-year university will be spent working on the core curriculum and then the last two years will be spent working on classes in the major area.

### Trade/Technical Schools

- Trade/technical schools offer programs and certificates in many areas that do not require associate or bachelor degrees.
- Trade/technical schools do not usually have a core curriculum; students have classes related to the career choice only.
- Some trade/technical schools have on-site housing, but many do not.
- Check accreditation for trade/technical schools to ensure you are attending a quality school.

### U.S. Military

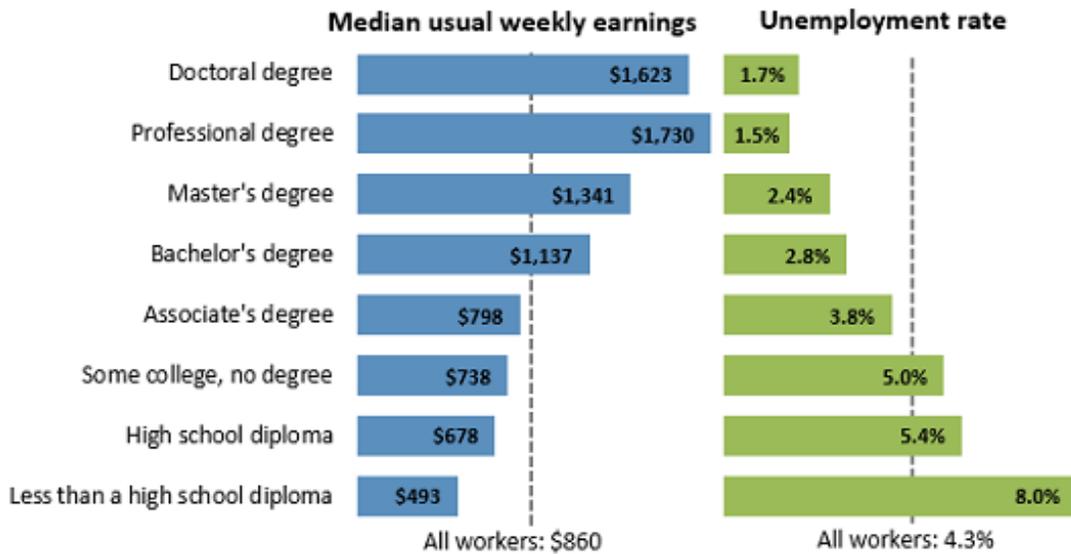
- Talk to a recruiter for specific information on each branch of the U.S. military. Do not sign any paperwork without discussing your decision and choice with your parents. Recruiters are often on the high school campuses to talk with students.
- Students can earn college credit while in the U.S. military.
- The U.S. military can pay for some or all of your college tuition.
- College ROTC programs can help you prepare for the U.S. military while attending college.
- You must take the ASVAB Career Inventory Program and Test your junior or senior year to determine the type of job for you in the U.S. military. Your recruiter can set this up for you if you don't take it at your high school when it is offered.

### Workforce

- You may decide to join the workforce immediately after you graduate from high school, but remember, it will be difficult to go back to school after you've been out for a while.
- Depending on each job, you will be required to do some sort of training.

The more you learn,  
the more you earn!

**Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2015**



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

Education	Average Yearly Salary	Average Monthly Salary
No High School Diploma	\$14,349	\$1,196
High School Diploma	\$23,233	\$1,936
Associate Degree	\$31,684	\$2,640
Bachelor's Degree	\$45,648	\$3,804
Master's Degree	\$56,958	\$4,747
Doctorate Degree	\$87,644	\$7,304

## Military Academies

If you are interested in applying to a service academy, start planning early. Begin with the recruiter and your guidance counselor. Research the admission requirements and demands of being in the academy to make sure you are the right fit. You will need to apply for a nomination from your senator or state representative in the spring of your junior year. All academies require a nomination except for the Coast Guard. See below for information.

**For general information on all military academies and how to apply for a nomination, start here:**

<https://www.usa.gov/military-colleges#item-35337>

**United States Military Academy—West Point (Army)**

<https://www.usa.gov/military-colleges#item-35337>

**United States Naval Academy (Navy and Marine Corps)**

<http://www.usna.edu/homepage.php>

**United States Coast Guard Academy**

<http://www.cga.edu/>

**United States Merchant Marine Academy**

<https://www.usmma.edu/>

**United States Air Force Academy**

<http://www.usafa.af.mil/>

**Congressional websites to request a nomination**

Congressman Michael Burgess: [www.burgess.house.gov](http://www.burgess.house.gov)

Senator John Cornyn: <https://www.cornyn.senate.gov/>

Senator Ted Cruz: [www.cruz.senate.gov](http://www.cruz.senate.gov)

Vice President: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-trump-administration/academy-nominations/>

# Junior Year Timeline

## 1. Do a credit and transcript evaluation.

Make an appointment to see your counselor (your junior conference will suffice). Evaluate your credits and review your transcript. Check your GPA and rank.

## 2. Create a personal file and résumé.

Keep everything related to college admissions in one place. Consider organizing it with file folders. Begin your resume. See the sample resume later on in this booklet.

## 3. Ask yourself “what do I want to be when I grow up?”

If you are unsure of what career field you want to be in, consider shadowing someone in that field, take an interest inventory or take the ASVAB. See the counselors for more information.

## 4. Consider your post-secondary options.

Think about whether you should go to a four-year university, a two-year university, a technical school, join the military, or go into the workforce. For help with these decisions, make an appointment to see your counselor or discuss this with your parents.

## 5. Exams.

In October of your junior year, you will be automatically signed up to take the PSAT. Junior year is also the time to begin taking your ACT and SAT. It is best to take your ACT and/or SAT during the spring of your junior year. Be sure to send a copy of your scores to your high school as well as the colleges in which you are interested. Consider taking practice exams offered at different high schools, online, and at local tutoring centers.

## 6. Research schools and requirements.

Go to each school's website to find out more information. Call the school and sign up to receive information. Talk to an admissions representative. Find out what you need to be accepted to each school. Take advantage of holidays to research or visit your college. There are several college fairs throughout the year in the metroplex where you can talk directly with admissions officers, but never hesitate to call the admissions office to ask questions.

## 7. Visit schools.

Schedule visits to the colleges in which you are interested. If possible, go on a regular school day to see a “real” day at the college. Take advantage of preview days offered by the colleges. Bring an official letter that states you were on an official college tour to your attendance clerk after each college visit. Every junior receives one college day and every senior receives two college days that do not count against attendance.

## 8. Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.

If you are planning to play sports in college, you must register with the NCAA eligibility center. Go to [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org) to register. You need to register in your junior year and send your transcript and ACT/SAT scores by the end of junior year.

# Senior Year Timeline

## 1. Check your courses for your senior year.

Make sure your schedule has all of the courses you need to graduate. See your counselor if you have questions.

## 2. Look at the junior timeline and catch up on any steps you are behind on.

If you have not checked your credits, created a personal file, explored career options, considered post-secondary options, taken college entrance exams, researched schools and requirements, visited schools, or registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center (if playing competitive college sports), do it now!

## 3. Update your résumé.

Make sure your résumé is updated with any new information and check for errors. Have a parent, teacher, or counselor look it over for content, grammar, and punctuation.

## 4. Get Organized!

Keep all of your college information and materials together and organized. Keep all paperwork and copies of correspondence (including emails) from the colleges. Organize information in a binder, folder, or crate and keep it where it is easy to locate.

## 5. Apply.

Using the school's website, apply to the college. Remember to include the application fee, send your transcript, and send your official college entrance exam scores (ACT or SAT) to the college from the testing companies. Send recommendation letters when requested. Remember to give recommenders two weeks to complete letters of recommendation.

## 6. Request transcripts.

Each college will require an official transcript sent from your school's registrar's office. Each transcript is \$3. You will request your transcript online at <https://kellertx.scriborder.com/>. Please allow several school days for each transcript to be processed and sent. Transcripts for Texas colleges are sent electronically, others are mailed. When you graduate, you will receive two free transcripts. You will need to request these online as well and tell the registrar where to send them.

## 7. Complete your FAFSA at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

In October, you will be able to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In order to get any financial aid from the government or any college, you must fill out the FAFSA form. The college financial aid office will be able to answer questions you have about your application. If you have questions about what FAFSA is asking, call **1-800-433-3243**. Be sure to send this information to the colleges you have applied to and they will work up a financial aid package in addition to any government money (if applicable).

**8. Apply for scholarships.** Check with your counselor for scholarship opportunities and see the scholarship information in this booklet and on the KCAL counseling website. Start with [www.collegeguidanceconsultants.com](http://www.collegeguidanceconsultants.com) to apply for scholarships (the user name is keller and the password is keller). Check this website weekly for updated scholarships. There will also be local scholarships available at your high school in the spring. Go to the counseling office for more information. A huge amount of scholarship money goes unclaimed each year because students do not take the time to fill out the forms.

## College Application Tips

Most college applications consist of 3 main parts: the application (including the application fee), your official transcript, and your official ACT and/or SAT scores. Some colleges require other pieces such as recommendation letters, essays (usually a part of the application), counselor reports, teacher reports, interviews (usually for elite schools), auditions or portfolios (for special programs such as music or art), SAT 2 subject tests (usually for elite schools or programs), and anything else a school deems necessary to their application process.

### Applications are online in 3 formats:

Texas public universities: [www.applytexas.org](http://www.applytexas.org) Opens July 1.

Private universities, both in and out of Texas: [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org) Opens August 1.

University websites: if a school doesn't use Apply Texas or Common App, they will have their own application. You can find it under prospective students, incoming freshmen, or similar wording.

Proofread and spellcheck your application before you click submit. Have your parents, teacher, or counselor read over it to check for errors. You want your application to be perfect before you send it in. Triple check it and have someone else do the same.

Remember deadlines! They are extremely important and will not be extended. Allow extra time before a deadline to request transcripts, test scores, recommendation letters, and anything else that you need to depend on someone else to do for you. Chances are if you have a deadline, many other students do too, and the person you need to complete your request may be inundated.

## Transcripts

To order an official transcript, go to <https://kellertx.scriborder.com/>. Transcripts are \$3 each plus a \$4 fee for each transaction.

To view and print your unofficial transcript, go to Home Access Center, click on Grades, then click on the Transcript tab.

# Sample Resume

## Jane Smith

123 Main Street Keller, Texas 76248

[khsstudent@kellerhigh.com](mailto:khsstudent@kellerhigh.com)

### Education

8/2007-present **Keller Central Fossil Timber High School** Keller, TX

### Work Experience

2/2008-5/2009 **Keller Burgers** (Keller, TX) 8 hrs/week  
*Cashier*

- Took customer orders and prepared food for drive-thru

6/2009-present **Keller Family Dentist** (Keller, TX) 15 hrs/week  
*Intern*

- Greeted patients; made phone calls for appointment reminders
- Filed and organized office

### Community Service

4/2008-3/2009 **Keller Homeless Shelter** (Keller, TX) 3 hrs/week  
*Volunteer*

- Served meals to the homeless 3 nights a week

11/2008-8/2010 **Keller Nursing Home** (Keller, TX) 1 hr/week  
*Volunteer*

- Visited and read to nursing home residents

### Activities

9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> **Keller Central Fossil Timber High Student Council** 2 hrs/week, 36 weeks/year  
*Member (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade), Secretary (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade—elected)*

- Helped organize many student activities such as blood drives

9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> **Keller Central Fossil Timber High Volleyball Team** 10 hrs/week, 18 weeks/year  
*JV Team (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade) and Varsity (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade)*

- Earned district champions trophy 11<sup>th</sup> grade year

10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> **Keller City Church** 1 hr/week  
*Sunday School Teacher*

- Taught 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday school

### Honors and Awards

10<sup>th</sup> **Letter K Award**

- Earned highest score on world history test

11<sup>th</sup> **Gold Award**

- Chosen by teacher for outstanding attitude in class

12<sup>th</sup> **Volleyball Team Captain**

- Elected by teammates

### Skills, Talents, and Achievements

#### Languages

- Fluent in Spanish

#### Musical Instruments

- Self-taught on piano; play at church and in school jazz band

#### Computer Skills

- Proficient in Microsoft Office and Photoshop

## Resume-Writing Tips

- ✓ Include headings for activities, skills, honors and awards, community service, leadership experience, and jobs (paid or not). If you don't have anything to put under a certain heading, leave it off and expand on the ones you do have.
- ✓ Be sure to list how many hours per week or weeks per year you participated in each activity. If you have an activity that takes up a very large amount of time, the admissions representative needs to know that so they understand why you might not have as many other activities as students not in that position.
- ✓ Try to fit your resume onto one page if possible.
- ✓ Use the above resume template or feel free to browse the internet for a resume template you like.
- ✓ Do not use wild fonts or colors.
- ✓ This is your chance to brag on yourself. Go into detail and explain what your duties or experiences were for each activity.

## Essay-Writing Tips

Your essay is the main way the college admissions officers get to you know you personally aside from your GPA and test scores. You want to show them your personality, allow them a glimpse into who you are as a person, and let them see what you want to do with your life. Always have an adult proofread your essay, and it is advised to type it up in a word processing program so that you can use spellcheck to catch errors. Then you can copy and paste the essay into your application. This will also allow you to re-use an essay if you need it for another college or scholarship application.

- **Write about *your* personal experiences.** You can write about a family member, coach, teacher, etc., but we are looking to admit you, not your grandmother.
- **Don't try and include everything.** Focus on one topic, not everything you've been involved in during high school. Essays are a chance to elaborate on something that is important to you.
- **Tell them something about you that they won't get to see anywhere else in the application.** Listing extracurricular involvements again is a missed opportunity to show a different aspect of you.
- **Pull them in from the beginning.** An attention-grabbing intro is the first stop to a memorable essay. We read thousands of applications and your GPA and testing are important, but not what sets you apart—that is your essay.
- **Answer the question** that is being asked in the prompt.
- **Be conscious of hot topic issues and potentially controversial topics** (politics, religion, war, pending/recently passed legislation). If an opinion or idea is an important part of who you are, don't be afraid to write about, but be sure to be respectful of both sides of any issue and remember that regardless of your individual opinions, your essay is a professional document.
- **Write naturally.** Use your voice to show your personality. Be expressive, but your goal shouldn't be to dazzle them with your word choice (or command of a thesaurus).

- **Be you.** Your essay can be funny, if that is your personality. But if you don't consider yourself funny, this isn't the space to try to be.
- **Edit and proofread your essays carefully.** Then have someone else, preferably a teacher or counselor, edit and proofread them as well. Spell-check doesn't catch everything.

Tips taken from <https://blogs.hopkins-interactive.com/blog/2014/09/tackling-the-college-essay/>

### What Do Colleges Want to Know?

Generally, there are three types of questions: The "you," the "why us," and the "creative." Here are tips and actual sample questions for each type. Don't assume that the questions are currently being used by a college (most colleges adjust questions annually).

#### **The "You" Question**

Many colleges ask for an essay that boils down to, "Tell us about yourself." The school just wants to know you better and see how you'll introduce yourself. For example:

- "Please complete a one-page personal statement and submit it with your application." (James Madison University)
- "How would you describe yourself as a human being? What quality do you like best in yourself and what do you like least? What quality would you most like to see flourish and which would you like to see wither?" (Bates College)
- "Describe the most challenging obstacle you've had to overcome. Discuss its impact, and tell what you have learned from the experience." (Guilford College)

#### **Your Approach**

This direct question offers a chance to reveal your personality, insight, and commitment. The danger is that it's open-ended, so you need to focus. Find just one or two things that will reveal your best qualities, and avoid the urge to spill everything.

#### **The "Why Us" Question**

Some schools ask for an essay about your choice of a school or career. They're looking for information about your goals, and about how serious your commitment is to this particular school. For example:

- "Why is UVM a good college choice for you?" (University of Vermont)
- "Please tell us about your career goals and any plans you may have for graduate study." (Westfield State College)
- "Please relate your interest in studying at Georgetown University to your future goals." (Georgetown University)

#### **Your Approach**

The focus is provided: Why did you choose this school or path? This should be pretty clear to you, since you probably went through some kind of selection process. Make sure you know your subject well. For example, if you say you want to attend Carleton College to major in agriculture, the school will be able to tell how carefully you've chosen (Carleton doesn't have an agriculture major).

## The "Creative" Question

Some colleges evaluate you through your choice of some tangential item: a national issue, a famous person, what you would put in a time capsule, a photograph. Here the school is looking at your creativity and the breadth of your knowledge and education. For example:

- “Do you believe there’s a generation gap? Describe the differences between your generation and others.” (Denison University)
- “Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.” (Common Application)
- “What is the value and importance of community service in our society and tell us what it means to you.” Ohio Wesleyan University

## Your Approach

Again, you have something to react to, a way to show yourself and write about your real views. Just don't forget the importance of writing an informed essay. For example, don't write about a fantasy lunch with a famous writer and get the titles of her novels wrong. Also, when thinking about how creative to get, use common sense. Being creative to the point of wacky is a risk you may not want to take.

This article is based on information found in *The College Application Essay*, by Sarah Myers McGinty, which is available through our online store.

Article taken from <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/essay-skills/108.html>

## Sample Essay Questions

### Common App

- Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
- Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you, and what lessons did you learn?
- Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
- Describe a place or environment where you are perfectly content. What do you do or experience there, and why is it meaningful to you?
- Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

### Apply Texas

- Essay A: What was the environment in which you were raised? Describe your family, home, neighborhood, or community, and explain how it has shaped you as a person.
- Essay B: Some students have an identity, an interest, or a talent that defines them in an essential way. If you are one of these students, then tell us about yourself.
- Essay C: You’ve got a ticket in your hand—where will you go? What will you do? What will happen when you get there?

### Quirky College Essay Questions

- Tell us your favorite joke and try to explain the joke without ruining it. (University of Chicago)
- You are required to spend the next year of your life in either the past or the future. What year would you travel to and why? (Brandeis University)
- Tell us the meaning of YOLO “you only live once.” (Tufts University)
- If you could choose to be raised by robots, dinosaurs, or aliens, who would you pick? (Brandeis University)
- What does Play-Doh have to do with Plato? (University of Chicago)
- So where is Waldo, really? (University of Chicago)
- What is the best invention? (University of Southern California)
- What is so odd about odd numbers? (University of Chicago)
- Why are you here and not somewhere else? (University of Chicago)
- Create your own group of three and describe how they fit together (such as little pigs, French hens, and a family of bears).

### Sample Essays

#### Breaking Into Cars

I had never broken into a car before.

We were in Laredo, having just finished our first day at a Habitat for Humanity work site. The Hotchkiss volunteers had already left, off to enjoy some Texas BBQ, leaving me behind with the college kids to clean up. Not until we were stranded did we realize we were locked out of the van.

Someone picked a coat hanger out of the dumpster, handed it to me, and took a few steps back.

“Can you do that thing with a coat hanger to unlock it?”

“Why me?” I thought.

More out of amusement than optimism, I gave it a try. I slid the hanger into the window’s seal like I’d seen on crime shows, and spent a few minutes jiggling the apparatus around the inside of the frame. Suddenly, two things simultaneously clicked. One was the lock on the door. (I actually succeeded in springing it.) The other was the realization that I’d been in this type of situation before. In fact, I’d been born into this type of situation.

My upbringing has numbed me to unpredictability and chaos. With a family of seven, my home was loud, messy, and spottily supervised. My siblings arguing, the dog barking, the phone ringing—all meant my house was functioning normally. My Dad, a retired Navy pilot, was away half the time. When he was home, he had a parenting style something like a drill sergeant. At the age of nine, I learned how to clear burning oil from the surface of water. My Dad considered this a critical life skill—you know, in case my aircraft carrier should ever get torpedoed. “The water’s on fire! Clear a hole!” he shouted, tossing me in the lake without warning. While I’m still unconvinced about that particular lesson’s practicality, my Dad’s overarching message is unequivocally true: much of life is unexpected, and you have to deal with the twists and turns.

Living in my family, days rarely unfolded as planned. A bit overlooked, a little pushed around, I learned to roll with reality, negotiate a quick deal, and give the improbable a try. I don’t sweat the small stuff, and I definitely don’t expect

perfect fairness. So what if our dining room table only has six chairs for seven people? Someone learns the importance of punctuality every night.

But more than punctuality and a special affinity for musical chairs, my family life has taught me to thrive in situations over which I have no power. Growing up, I never controlled my older siblings, but I learned how to thwart their attempts to control me. I forged alliances, and realigned them as necessary. Sometimes, I was the poor, defenseless little brother; sometimes I was the omniscient elder. Different things to different people, as the situation demanded. I learned to adapt.

Back then, these techniques were merely reactions undertaken to ensure my survival. But one day this fall, Dr. Hicks, our Head of School, asked me a question that he hoped all seniors would reflect on throughout the year: "How can I participate in a thing I do not govern, in the company of people I did not choose?"

The question caught me off guard, much like the question posed to me in Laredo. Then, I realized I knew the answer. I knew why the coat hanger had been handed to me.

Growing up as the middle child in my family, I was a vital participant in a thing I did not govern, in the company of people I did not choose. It's family. It's society. And often, it's chaos. You participate by letting go of the small stuff, not expecting order and perfection, and facing the unexpected with confidence, optimism, and preparedness. My family experience taught me to face a serendipitous world with confidence.

"We liked Stephen's essay because it catches your attention right away and continues to demonstrate critical thinking, initiative, and problem solving. His personality comes through as he naturally conveys humor. Through his anecdotes from growing up, we got a sense of how he might approach his studies here at Hopkins."

—*Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee*

### How to Become an Adult

In the US, legal adulthood comes at 18, but it is my understanding that adulthood comes through responsibility, tears, laughter, and most of all: parenthood. It is effortless to watch other people's children grow and flourish, but having my own was a terrifying new world for which I was ill-prepared. I was not ready for my first, Stanley, but now I cannot envision a world without him. Today, I am the proud parent of not one, but seven beautiful, boisterous, carnivorous plants. Within my small family I have four sundews, two Venus flytraps, and one tropical pitcher plant. Of course they have scientific names, but I only use them when I am angry and my inner-parent reveals itself. Many might ask, "How does a person become the parent of seven carnivorous plants?" and I can only answer that with a story, my story.

It was an ordinary Wednesday afternoon when I came home from school only to find a charming plant that resembled a leafless, dew-splattered fern perched on the counter. With the eloquence that only a teenager could muster, I asked my mother, "What's that?" She carefully explained that he was our new carnivorous plant and he was going to be on fruit fly kitchen duty. Over the next couple of weeks my fascination with him grew, and eventually I adopted him as one of my own. In all sincerity, I did not begin as the ideal parent. I would give Stanley water to drink if he looked drier than usual and that was the extent of my nurturing efforts. However, my complacency did not last. Come winter, around his half birthday, Stanley became afflicted with a mysterious ailment. His stems curled and his one delicate green frond dried up. After carefully examining him, I concluded that not only was the lake water I had been using contaminated with some sort of root-eating larva, but my mother's African violets had given him aphids. It was then that I was faced with the harsh reality of the situation: I had a plant that I was absolutely obsessed with, but knew nothing about.

In my desperation to keep my sundew alive, I began to contact other plant enthusiasts in an increasingly desperate attempt to help my poor Stanley. To my great surprise, a close friend was also a carnivorous plant caregiver and was well

versed in childhood care. His advice, coupled with some new dirt and the stocked shelves of the nearby library's horticulture section, allowed me to nurse Stanley back to health. Stanley regained his strength and shortly after the winter incident, I adopted Simone, another sundew. Then came Diana, my first Venus flytrap. Consequently, the carnivorous plant aficionado was so impressed with Stanley's care that he entrusted me with the care of his carnivorous plants when he left for college. This brought my family's size to the current seven.

My true reward of having Stanley is that he opened the door to the world of botany. I would never have invested so much time learning about the molecular structure or chemical balance of plants if not for taking care of him. I have loved learning for his benefit, whether it be discovering the best fluoride-free water, finding the ideal amount of sunlight, or reading that he uses a form of electrical signaling to improve digestion. I also love the rarity of being Stanley's parent. People have their judgments, but I have also found that most people are genuinely curious and I am always open to questions. Ultimately, I love how Stanley has forced me to be adaptive. That first winter I did not have a "Gardener's Guide to Carnivorous Plants," I simply had my own observations. This was the most significant lesson that Stanley and friends taught me: the universe lacks a guide to the galaxy, and life is all about discovering your own way.

"Michaela showed her innate curiosity through a unique topic. The beginning of her essay is intriguing and makes you want to learn more. More importantly, she elaborates on an interesting aspect of her life outside of academics, yet still demonstrates the depth of her desire to be perpetually learning. It also gave us insight into how she responds when she is passionate about something."

—*Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee*

### **Building a Twenty Story Apartment Building**

"If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go with others."

As an intern at a construction engineering firm this past summer, I learned first-hand about the challenges of building a twenty story apartment building: not just the structural or mechanical challenges, but also the intricate ways in which groups of people interact to complete a project properly. While I am primarily interested in core structural and civil engineering subjects, I have learned that engineering needs to be approached in a holistic manner that incorporates economic, environmental, and interpersonal systems. I want to be taught engineering in a way that encompasses all of these different frontiers. I hope to one day build technologically innovative and environmentally friendly skyscrapers designed for a rapidly urbanizing world.

Hopkins' professors are change agents whose research connects structural engineering challenges to economic and environmental considerations. I am fascinated by Professor James Guest's work in modeling the ways in which production costs can be incorporated into designing the optimal structure of a building. This work illustrates the power of combining fundamental engineering concepts with economic considerations. Studying AP Physics, I can already see the practical utility of applying fundamental science concepts such as Archimedes' principle of leverage to engineering, and I look forward to building my core knowledge through Hopkins' two-year sequence of math and science courses while putting it to work through research opportunities in labs such as the Center for Advanced Metallic and Ceramic Systems. Under the guidance of the engineering department's professors, I will be able to develop both my theoretical knowledge and practical engineering skills to their full extent.

Hopkins attracts students from across the world, creating a global forum. Every student brings a different perspective and unique insights that can enrich, challenge, and improve the academic community as a whole. As I traveled through Africa, I heard a proverb that has stayed with me: "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go with others." During my blood cancer research at Northwestern University, I saw that our team was able to tackle more advanced issues than any individual would have been able to accomplish on his or her own. An essential component of engineering is complex problem-solving, and with a varied group this process becomes far more effective. Student

groups—such as Hopkins Baja and Design, Build, Fly—provide powerful examples of teams coming together to make something bigger than themselves. These groups give me the opportunity to combine applied engineering with hands-on learning while helping me develop an international viewpoint. I hope to further extend this perspective through study abroad opportunities in Madrid, Santiago, or Rome, learning about the growing needs of an interconnected global community.

The world-class faculty, cutting-edge labs, global student community, and innumerable research opportunities provided by Johns Hopkins will help me achieve my goal of designing and building structures that meet the economic, technological, social, and environmental needs of the twenty-first century.

“We liked this essay because it provides a clear and coherent explanation for Kyle’s interests in civil engineering, and how he plans to pursue that here at Hopkins. Throughout the essay, he uses specific examples of how he would take advantage of all Hopkins has to offer—programs, research positions, and professors. The real strength of the essay lies in how the writer talks about his engineering passions in relation to other fields like economics and environmental studies. He makes a good argument for interdisciplinary studies and why studying these things at Hopkins will aid his experience.”

—Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee

### Returning to Peru

Returning to Peru to visit my father’s homeland, I was disturbed by the significant pollution, land degradation, unsustainable practices, and lack of clean water surrounding me. The memory of a destitute boy, surrounded by waste, consuming water from a filthy communal tap in a dilapidated shantytown of Lima, Peru still haunts me.

Exploration drives discovery. This pivotal experience formulated my passion and career objective: preserving the environment and protecting our resources.

Since my discovery, I have never stopped preparing for a future in environmental engineering. I’ve immersed myself in rigorous classes of environmental science, chemistry, biology, math, physics, and geology. I have organized a “Walk for Water” to raise awareness of water conservation, worked extensively with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Youth Ocean Conservation Summit, and even received my first grant for a project designed to install a green roof, rain barrels, and a rain garden at my school.

For billions of years, Earth’s structure and composition has developed to maintain a balance of order for the prosperity of life. Unfortunately, humans have not returned the favor. Instead, we have created unprecedented amounts of habitat destruction, resource depletion, toxic waste, and water insecurity. Environmental engineering is the integration of science and engineering principles to develop solutions to these eminent and future crises. I want to collaborate with the top school of public health to address the risks of contaminated water, and develop efficient ways to conserve and purify water resources globally while preserving major ecosystems. I want to end land degradation in endangered and vulnerable biomes such as my father’s homeland. I want to create alternatives to produce clean energy. I want to reduce the ecological footprint left by our species.

The Hopkins Overnight Multicultural Experience allowed me to appreciate the spirit of exploration and discovery that radiates from students and teachers, and still from my parents who met during their doctoral studies at Johns Hopkins. Hopkins students don’t submit themselves to demanding internships or research due to requirement; they yearn from a deeper understanding of what is at hand. That is who I am: self-driven and determined to go beyond what is necessary. I loved immersing myself in a culturally diverse environment, interacting with passionate individuals, and being constantly stimulated by new ideas. I want to be deeply connected with my original work, knowing that I will make a difference in the world yet still be able to absorb streaming information around me throughout my life.

Naturally, I will always continue my love for music, soccer, art, and the outdoors. My passion for the environment serves as my roots, connecting me to the very earth which “natured” me. My interests continue to anchor my identity, while branches grow of ambition and curiosity. Exploration and discovery flower as the fruit of my tree, as I strive to reveal as much as possible about not only myself, but the world we inhabit. I remain intrigued by the ongoing stream of what is already known, and what remains to be exposed.

“This essay does a great job of providing background on Anna's interest in environmental engineering and explaining why she wants to pursue the area as an undergraduate here. What stood out the most to us was Anna's ability to connect with the way students learn at Johns Hopkins in a meaningful way by relating it to her own interests and passions. We could tell she has thought about why Hopkins is where she wants to pursue her intellectual passion.”

—*Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee*

### Shelves One Through Five

Pushed against the left wall in my room is a curious piece of furniture. Initially, it was a six foot tall and three foot wide red oak bookcase. Strangely, as the five shelves began to fill with books, the dimensions of the bookcase slowly evolved into a looking glass. Now, years later, my reflection is almost complete: each bookshelf cradles the stories of my life.

Shelf One is the base, and rightfully so. It contains my building blocks. Among the bright covers and large lettered titles lie countless fairy tales, fables, and legends. My Indian heritage mixes with my American lifestyle as the spines interchange from gifts from my father's father to Barnes and Noble bought, creating a cocktail of the morals I grew up on. The heroes in my childhood storybooks were my teachers, driving me to my own heroic actions of enthusiastic community service, whether it was volunteering at the Parks and Recreation center or serving at the Special Olympics.

As I grew out of the innocence of *Aesop's Fables*, I developed a ravenous hunger for words. I wanted to read as much as I could, absorbing each book that changed my way. Shelves Two and Three sag with the weight of the dialogues that satiated my hunger. Everything ranging from the science fiction of *A Wrinkle in Time* to the ridiculous amusement of *The Big Friendly Giant* to the horrors of *Columbine* gathers in those shelves. Here is the embodiment of my curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Here is the explanation for my desire to do more, learn more, and see more. My parents aided these passions, constantly introducing me to new cultures and new places. Our travels all over the country and the world taught me the importance of adaptability and an open mind. With these characteristics, I am always able to communicate to whomever I speak to, regardless of their language or culture.

Shelf Four is the stinging slap I received from reality in my early teens. No longer could I spend all my time trying out the delicious foods at this new restaurant or learning from the displays at the rare exhibit. Now my weekends were filled with daunting math textbooks, designed to help me conquer the beast of numbers. While Shelf Four holds the memories of slogging through countless hours of math, it also displays my development of a logical and rational mind. This is where I grew the qualities of being a strong leader. Now, well versed in the feeling of failure, I am also educated in perseverance and success. I use these experiences to help those who come my way. I am able to connect with others easily because I am willing to share the trials I have faced, and the knowledge I have gained from them.

Looking to the very top, Shelf Five waits patiently. It is partially filled with an assortment of articles from *The Economist*, *New York Times*, and *Washington Post*, all of which highlight my love for the political sciences, fostered by the debate team. Alongside those, stacked neatly, are aerospace engineering papers, about plasma propulsion, pork chop plots, and Hohmann transfers. They feature my fascinations with physical science and innovation for the future. Countless college brochures, scribbled on with notes and reminders, complete the first half of this top shelf, and they are the present.

Now, standing in the front of a bookcase, I find that I am completely content. I can see myself with a simple, yet comprehensive clarity, like staring into a mirror. Though Shelf Five is unfinished, it is no less hopeful or less promising than the previous four. Soon, I will fill this shelf with the ideas that will further define who I am. I will look upon this shelf in the future with a sense of wholeness, because I know that this bookshelf is me.

“By transforming her bookshelf into a metaphor for her life, Neha's essay is creative and shows an affinity for learning beyond textbooks. She writes about books in a way that demonstrates a process of self-reflection. We got a good sense of who she is and how she would participate in the intellectual community at Hopkins.”

—Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee

### The Red Room

My name is Brontë, and if you ask me, I'll tell you my favorite book is *Jane Eyre*. This may or may not be a coincidence. Throughout my life, I've read this book a total of three times, although it would be untrue to claim that the same person read it each time, as I believe I've been drastically different people at each reading.

The first time I read it, I was in fourth grade. I'd been raised on a diet largely composed of poetry and dreams, nurtured by parents whose literary tendencies allowed me to read just about anything. My brother and I had spent most of our childhood wandering around the woods, creating fantasy worlds akin to those that we read about.

My family has books where other families have religion, as well as books where other families have furniture. Our coffee and tea mugs often perch haphazardly on shifting geological structures of multicolored novels. Most of their spines are broken, and my mother's lacy annotations usually peep out from the yellowed pages. In our family, books are both carelessly treated, a place to stack a dirty dish in the absence of a table, and simultaneously worshipped. Each line is parsed, with cursive handwriting pointing out the important bits. Reading in my house is like having a conversation. In my parent's books, I can pick up where they left off twenty-five years ago, writing my own replies to decades-old thoughts in the margins.

At first reading, *Jane Eyre* had everything a romantic eight-year-old could desire. The subtext was over my head, but I was completely entranced by the red room. The horror of it all piqued my curiosity: how would Jane survive the night?

I read *Jane Eyre* the second time, in secret, the summer after eighth grade. On “brain rest” for a concussion, I had missed the last two months of school and reading was forbidden, so I hid in my closet, or sat outside in the sweltering DC heat where I knew no one would follow me. I hid the book under my bed for nighttime forays when I couldn't sleep due to an almost constant migraine. I was well into my fourth month post injury, with no real signs of progress. Reading made the pain almost indescribably worse, yet I couldn't resist. I felt as though I was Jane in the red room. Escape was beginning to look unlikely. It was lonely and boring and nearly unbearable. I couldn't understand how Jane was capable of moving on. That summer, it seemed unthinkable that either Jane or I could carry on with our lives after experiencing the horror of the red room.

The most recent time I read *Jane Eyre*, I was working at a center that provides temporary housing for homeless women and preschool education for their children. There, I observed many kinds of metaphorical red rooms. As I became closer to the teachers and mothers, they began to share pieces of the children's stories with me. These young children had suffered in ways that were foreign to me, a fifteen year old, who had thought herself so mature. For example, a four year old boy, who grew to feel like my own child, came to school with increasing numbers of bruises and a black eye.

The thing that became most remarkable wasn't how these children had suffered, but that they kept on living, learning, and developing. Everyone has a red room, and I'm sure I will experience many more as I mature. But, as Jane says, “I am no bird: and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will.”

“Brontë's essay does a great job of letting us know who she is. She successfully connects pieces of her life experiences (the concussion, work experience, and nuances about her family) in an interesting way that demonstrates an evolution of learning and reflection. By examining the story many times through different lenses, it's clear she has the same kind of intellectual curiosity that Hopkins students embody.”

—Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee

### Community Service Isn't For Me

I've recently come to the realization that community service just isn't for me. Now before you start making assumptions, keep reading.

In September of my sophomore year I joined a club called buildOn that focuses on breaking the cycle of poverty, illiteracy, and low expectations through service and education. Little did I know, just twenty-two months and \$57,794 of fundraising later, I'd be headed on a plane to the Kasungu District of Malawi to break ground on the construction site of a second village's first school!

The experiences of immersing myself in the Malawian communities—of sharing the same straw-thatched, mud-brick homes of host families, of learning bits and pieces of the Chichewa language, of exploring the dynamics of multi-chief, polygamous villages—have been the most enriching aspects of my education to date. I may have traveled a world away, but by the time I left, I was no longer an outsider. To see my eight-year-old host sister, Esther, thirst for knowledge as she meticulously traced letters of the alphabet into the sandy floor of her Standard-Two schoolroom, makes me wonder what stories she'll tell when she finally gets the chance to put pen to paper. To know my host mother, my amai, will no longer have to tie strips of fabric onto public buses to know which ones to take home from the market because she'll be able to read their destinations herself, reassures me the adult literacy program is empowering women to be self-sufficient. These memories, though seemingly not monumental, drive me to go the extra mile now that I'm home. They fuel my passion for the case I'm investing in, legitimizing the work that I do.

On trek, I have the ability to directly impact the communities in which we build. I strive relentlessly to confront the stereotypes of gender roles and female inferiority, volunteering to work beside men in the trenches of the foundation, though it's traditionally seen as a male-only job. Furthermore, buildOn's arrival places a spotlight on the village, giving impetus for the people to highlight their needs in front of an audience of district legislators and international agencies. Our presence speaks to the idea that the people have a voice, and more importantly, their voice is being heard. This attention is a catalyst for change, inspiring the villagers to become assertive in their quest for aid in a way that giving a check never could.

That being said, as well-intentioned as I may have been in committing to Trek, I also acknowledge that every one of the aforementioned factors is a priority of my own doing. The people of Malawi asked for a school, not a student. I'm not a professional architect or builder. I don't profess to being a “superior” individual. As charming of a companion as I can be, it isn't my presence in these villages that changes the peoples' lives. *So why, I ask myself, did I incur the expenses to fly myself to Malawi for this endeavor instead of donating that money to hire skilled laborers in my place?*

It seems there comes a time, in all our lives, when we find ourselves stopped at the crossroads. Sublimation meets moral obligation, and taunted are we as we weight them head-to-head. For two years now, the NCHS chapter of buildOn has accomplished many great things. But did we do the *right* thing? I think about it in the context of philanthropy overall: when is giving money better than giving time? Who benefits when I arrive as an unskilled laborer in a village? How do you measure positive contributions, and from whose perspective? I'm still wrestling with these questions as I strive to strike the right balance between making a contribution and raising awareness while maximizing the ultimate benefit to the recipients. Truly, community service isn't for me, it's for Esther and Amai and all the others I seek to serve.

"Kyla's essay highlights her ability to think critically and conveys her true passion for service. As she wrestles with philosophical questions about how to make the greatest impact through service, it became clear to us she is a person who wants to make a meaningful impact in an area that really matters to her—an excellent quality of our student body here at Hopkins. Rather than simply stating that building schoolrooms in Malawi was something she did, she deeply considers her role in this service experience."

—Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee

### More Than Thick Eyebrows

Rarely have I studied a topic that flows from my ears to my brain to my tongue as easily as the Italian language. The Italian blood that runs through me is more than the genetics that gave me my dark hair and thick eyebrows. It is the work of the generation that traveled from Istria in the north and Sicilia in the south, meeting through friends in Chicago, and encouraging their Children to study hard and make a living for their future families. In time, that influence would be passed on to me; finding my grandfather's meticulously-written electricity notes circa 1935—filled with drawings and words I did not yet understand—inspired me to take Italian at my own high school.

The moment I realized that my Italian heritage was wholly a part of me was a rather insignificant one, yet to me is one of the most remarkable realizations of my life. The summer after my second year of Italian study, I was driving in my car, listening to a young trio of Italian teenagers, *Il Volo*, meaning "The Flight." As one of the tenors sang a solo, *Ti voglio tanto bene*, I realized that I could understand every word he was singing. Though it was a simple declaration of love and devotion in a beautiful tune, what mattered was that I was not just listening to three cute teenagers sing a song. I was fully engaged with the words and could finally sing along.

After that moment, I sought out all the Italian I could get my hands on: watching *Cinema Paradiso* and *La Dolce Vita*, absorbing phrases of the language I felt I could now call my own. Even better, was that I felt confident enough in my skill that I could use it with my closest living Italian relative, my father's mother, *la mia nonna*. More than speaking the language, I discovered my family's past. In conversing with her and my father, I discovered that I will be only the third person in my paternal grandparents' family to attend college, that my grandmother had only a sixth-grade education, that my grandfather, despite never holding a degree in mathematics or physics, worked for three decades on CTA train cars as an electrician. The marriage of my grandparents in 1952 represented a synthesis of the culture of northern and southern Italy and America.

Having now studied three full years of this language, I only want to consume more of it. I want to read Dante's *Divina Commedia* in its original vernacular, to watch my favorite Italian films without the subtitles, to sing every Italian refrain with fluid understanding of what the melody means, and to finally—finally!—visit my grandparents' childhood homes: the town of Trapani in Sicilia and the Istrian peninsula on the Adriatic coast. To me, the Italian language holds an essential connection to my past, but also a constant goal for the future. It is likely that I will never fully master the vernacular and colloquialisms, yet learning this language will stimulate me intellectually and culturally for life. I believe I can claim Italian as mine now, but there is still so much more to learn. Italian is a gift that I will hold dear forever, and I am glad that I received it so early in life.

"Beyond being well-written and superbly descriptive, this essay really does a great job of illustrating Caroline's appreciation for her heritage and the Italian language, as well as the desire to keep digging and learning more about it. She provides a clear story about how she arrived at her passion for Italian, how she pursues her passion currently, and how she plans on continuing to do so in the future. More importantly, she goes on to explain how it affects her view of the world."

—Johns Hopkins Undergraduate Admissions Committee

## Recommendation Letters

Many college and scholarship applications require one or more recommendation letters. If it doesn't specify who has to write the letter (for example, your school counselor or an English teacher), you may choose a teacher, counselor, coach, sponsor, church pastor, boss, or any adult who is not related to you. You want to choose people who can tell anecdotal stories about you and who have known you for a significant amount of time. It is customary to give recommenders at least two weeks to write your letter. When you ask them to do so, you will want to include your resume and possibly answers to some of the questions listed below. If you are asking a recommender to mail a letter for you, include a stamped addressed envelope. Follow up with the recommender to make sure your letter is sent.

What do you feel are your strengths?

What obstacles have you overcome?

Name one achievement of which you are most proud.

What are you looking forward to in college? How will the college or university meet your needs?

What is your passion? What intrigues you?

In what areas are you a leader inside or outside of the classroom, and how are you a leader?

List six adjectives that best describe you.

Is there any other information the recommender might need to know about you before writing your letter?

## Thank You Letters

It is customary to send a thank you note to anyone who writes you a recommendation letter or who interviews you for a job, college admissions, or an audition. You will also want to send a thank you letter to anyone who awards you a scholarship. Some tips for the letter are below.

- It is extremely important to pay careful attention to spelling, grammar, and the organization of your letter. Letters may be handwritten or typed, but should be limited to one page.
- Include your full name, return address, phone number, and email at the top of the letter.
- Use a formal salutation including the appropriate prefix and suffix. Do not use first names; instead use Dear Dr. Jones or Mrs. Smith, for example.
- Be sure to reference specifically what you are thanking them for: their time for an interview or audition, or a scholarship you received. If writing a thank you note for a scholarship, list the name but do not list the amount.
- Always proofread! Try reading it aloud before sending it off. Have someone else read it as well.

## Sample Thank You Letter

**Date**

**Contact Information:** *(Your contact information)*

Your name

Your address

Your city, state, zip code

Your phone number

Your email address

**Contact Information:** *(The person you are writing to)*

Name

Title

Company

Address

City, state, zip code

**Greeting:** Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

**Body of Thank You Letter:**

**For a scholarship:** I am writing to say thank you very much for awarding me the Fill in the Blank Scholarship. I am honored to be the recipient of your scholarship and was very excited to find out that I won it. I am looking forward to attending Texas University to study education. I plan to use my degree to work with students with autism, and then earn my masters in counseling so that I can be a special education counselor. Your generous scholarship will help me achieve those goals. By awarding me this scholarship, you have lightened my financial burden and allowed me to focus on my education. Thank you again for your generosity and support. I will work hard and hope to one day help students achieve their goals as you have helped me.

**For an interview or audition:** Thank you so much for your time in interviewing/auditioning me today. I enjoyed speaking with you and meeting the other members of your team. I am looking forward to attending Texas University and with my degree I plan to pursue a job in civil engineering. After speaking with you I feel that I am a great fit for your school/program and that it is exactly what I am looking for. I appreciate the opportunity you gave me to ask questions and learn more about your school, as well as to present my strengths and interests. I know I will be an asset to your campus/program and that I will achieve the high goals I have set for myself. Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

**Closing:** Sincerely,

**Signature:** Handwritten signature (for a mailed letter)

Typed signature

## Job Application Tips

- **Thoroughly read job descriptions** to make sure you are qualified and it is a job that you would want to do.
- **Create an original cover letter.** It should state why you want to work there, what qualities and experience you have that would be good for the position, and any leadership experience if you have any. Always thank them for their time and state that you look forward to hearing from them.
- **Make sure your responses are on target and error free.** Be sure to answer the question they are asking, don't be vague, and don't put a bunch of words that don't really say anything just to fill up the space. Have someone proofread for spelling and grammar errors before submitting and even consider typing answers up in a word processing document to check for errors before pasting it in to the job application.
- **Fill out all fields within the application process.** Do not leave fields blank. This is a reason a lot of employers throw out applications.
- **Have resume and reference information ready before beginning the application.** This makes the process go much faster and minimizes errors.
- **Clean up your public social media profile and make sure it's current.** Many potential employers (as well as college admissions reps) look at applicants' social media sites before interviewing and hiring. If there is anything questionable on yours, remove it! Make sure it states updated information about you.
- **Review all the information before submitting.** Have someone proofread your application, print it out to read on paper yourself, or walk away from it for an hour, then re-read it with fresh perspective.
- **If the application asks for references, make sure to include a current or recent supervisor,** if you have one. If you don't have a current or recent supervisor, use an adult such as a teacher, coach, or counselor who knows you fairly well.
- **Make sure your email address is appropriate and check it often.** Do not put a questionable email address on your application (for example, hotmama63@yahoo.com; instead create an email with some variance of your name). Check your email and voicemail often in case a potential employer calls for an interview. Make sure all contact info (address, phone number, email address) is current.
- **Be confident.** This is your first opportunity to sell yourself to your future employer. You want to showcase all your strengths and experiences. Don't be shy!

## Job Interview Tips

- **Be early.**
- **Dress appropriately for an interview.**
- **Bring a copy of your resume and references, along with any portfolio items or work samples that might be relevant.**
- **Look everyone in the eye and smile appropriately. Shake hands and introduce yourself. Pay attention to your body language—fidgeting, hair twirling, lack of eye contact, slouching, etc, can look bad to the interviewer.**
- **No gum!**
- **Turn off your cell phone.**
- **Be prepared with a list of questions to ask, but don't ask questions that can be obtained on the company's website. If you come prepared with knowledge of the company that you did through prior research, interviewers like that.**
- **Show the interviewer that you are enthusiastic about the position.**
- **Use appropriate language, including being grammatically correct.**
- **Be confident and sell yourself.**
- **Be polite to everyone at the interview. Your interviewer may ask others their impression of you.**
- **Be yourself.**
- **Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses. You don't want to tell them you can do something you can't and then be in over your head if you get the job.**
- **Come with a list of questions you'd like to ask about the company and the position.**
- **At the end of the interview, shake their hand, thank them for their time, and say you look forward to hearing from them. It's ok to ask when you should expect to hear back about the job.**
- **Send a thank-you letter or email.**



# Employability Skills

Employability skills, otherwise known as soft skills, are attributes that employers want to see in the people they hire to work for them. Many employers feel that they can teach the knowledge people need to know in a job, but they can't teach soft skills. In most people, these need to be developed. These include skills such as professionalism, enthusiasm, punctuality, good communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Professionalism, or work ethic, includes punctuality, honesty and integrity, having a good attitude, being a hard worker, taking the initiative, dressing appropriately, and being a team player. If you see something that needs to be done, do it without being asked. This could apply at a job or at school. Think about when you go to a store or a restaurant and deal with people in customer service. You want someone who is pleasant and acts like they want to help you. You can exhibit a good customer service attitude in any job, in class, or in life in general. This is professionalism.

Enthusiasm and attitude are immensely important. People with enthusiasm and a good attitude are the ones others want to be around. It can help you get a job, keep it, and get promoted. A positive attitude every day goes a long way. If you act like you don't care, employers will assume you don't. All other things being equal, a candidate who can demonstrate a positive attitude and eagerness to tackle the job will have an advantage over one who displays an attitude viewed by the employer as negative or disinterested. In fact, many employers would rather provide job skills training to an enthusiastic but inexperienced worker than hire someone with perfect qualifications but a less-than-positive attitude. Managers sometimes worry that this type of person will not get along with supervisors and co-workers, treat customers disrespectfully, and not put much effort into his or her work. On the other hand, employees who are viewed as enthusiastic are known to provide good customer service, resolve interpersonal conflict effectively, and work productively with others.

Communication is how we give and receive information and convey our ideas and opinions with those around us. Communication comes in many forms:

- verbal (sounds, language, and tone of voice)
- aural (listening and hearing)
- non-verbal (facial expressions, body language, and posture)
- written (journals, emails, blogs, and text messages)
- visual (signs, symbols, and pictures)

It is important to develop a variety of skills for both communicating TO others and learning how to interpret the information received FROM others. Knowing our audience and understanding how they need to receive information is equally as important as knowing ourselves. To an employer, good communication skills are essential. In fact, employers consistently rank good communication skills at the top of the list for potential employees. Recognizing that people may need to receive information in different ways in order to be successful will help improve communication skills.

Problem-solving and critical thinking involves figuring out what to do rather than waiting on someone to tell you what to do. Everyone experiences problems from time to time. Some of our problems are big and complicated, while others may be more easily solved. There is no shortage of challenges and issues that can arise on the job. Whether in an office or on a construction site, experiencing difficulties with the tasks at hand or with coworkers, the workplace presents ongoing challenges on a daily basis. Large or small, these problems

need to be dealt with constructively and fairly. Having the necessary skills to identify solutions to problems is one of the skills that employers look for in employees.

Problem solving and critical thinking refers to the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve problems. This doesn't mean you need to have an immediate answer, it means you have to be able to think on your feet, assess problems, and find solutions. The ability to develop a well thought out solution within a reasonable time frame, however, is a skill that employers value greatly.

Teamwork is an essential part of workplace success. Like a basketball team working together to set up the perfect shot, every team member has a specific role to play in accomplishing tasks on the job. Although it may seem as if one player scored the basket, that basket was made possible by many people's planning, coordination, and cooperation to get that player the ball. Employers look for people who not only know how to work well with others, but who understand that not every player on the team can or will be the one who gets the ball. When everyone in the workplace works together to accomplish goals, everyone achieves more.

Networking is the final, and for most people most difficult, employability skill. You've probably heard the phrase "it's not what you know, it's who you know." Traditional networking involves talking to people. For some this may be an easy activity, while for others it may be scary and uncomfortable. Luck plays a big role in life, and there is no better way to increase your luck than by knowing a lot of people. Getting to know as many of your peers as possible at school is a great way to network. Another good way to network is to join clubs and organizations in and out of school. When you meet someone new, treat that person as a friend. You never know when someone can help you with something in the future. Treat everyone you meet as the most important person in the room and you can't go wrong.

## Oral Skills

Oral communication is the ability to talk with others to give and exchange information and ideas, such as asking questions, giving directions, coordinating work tasks, and explaining and persuading. Oral communication describes any type of interaction that makes use of spoken words, and it is a vital, integral part of the business world, especially in an era dubbed the information age. For oral communication to be effective, it should be clear, relevant, tactful in phraseology and tone, concise, and informative. People will often make judgments about you based on the way you speak. These judgments can be right or wrong, but if you want to make the best impression, improving your oral skills is one way to do it. There are three main points to consider when assessing someone's oral skills:

Nonverbal: eye contact, body language, poise

Verbal: enthusiasm, elocution

Content: subject knowledge, organization, mechanics

Practicing speaking is the best way to improve oral skills. You can do it by having a conversation or by simulating a presentation. Having someone critique you or count how many times you say "um," for example, is a great way to practice.

## Job Shadowing, Internships, and Practicums

When it comes to learning about the working world, there are many ways to get more direct observations and experience to determine if a particular job is right for you. Taking advantage of job shadowing, an internship, or a practicum experience will give you priceless knowledge of the true ins-and-outs of a job.

**Job shadowing** is an opportunity for students to observe professionals in particular careers as they go through a day on the job.

**Internships** are extended learning experiences in which students work temporarily at entry-level jobs in careers that interest them. They can be paid or unpaid.

**Practicums** are the capstone classes in a series of courses throughout high school designed to give you hands-on experience in a certain field. They may or may not include an internship.

Any of these options can show you what the working world is like.

### Benefits:

- Show you the realities of the job
- Teach you important skills, such as time management and computer skills
- Help you choose a major
- Inspire a career choice
- Connect you with experienced people who can mentor you

**Before you begin looking for one of these opportunities, there are some steps you can take.**

### Think About Your Goals

To begin the process of finding the right internship for you, think about fields you want to explore or skills you want to learn. Do you love photography? Do you want to know what scientific research is like or what a lawyer does all day? Do you want to learn how to build a website? Having clear goals in mind makes it more likely that you'll find an internship you can get excited about.

### Use the Internet

Once you have goals in mind, you can begin looking for an internship online. Start by searching for local businesses and organizations in your areas of interest and see if they offer internship programs. You can also check out these resources:

- [Internshipprograms.com](http://Internshipprograms.com) lets you search by employer, field, date and location.
- [GoAbroad.com](http://GoAbroad.com) shows opportunities in different countries.
- [Idealist.org](http://Idealist.org) allows you to search for internships at nonprofits.

### Take Advantage of Other Resources

Using personal contacts and local resources are also great ways to find an internship. Try these methods for finding opportunities:

- Ask your high school counselor and teachers for help.
- Check with your coaches and club advisers.
- Find out if family and friends know someone in a field that interests you.
- If there's a specific company or organization you'd like to work for, don't be afraid to contact someone there.
- Look for recent internship guidebooks at the library.

## Career Interest Inventory Websites

If you want to find out ideas on the best careers for you, doing an interest inventory is a great first step. These are short little quizzes that are “all about me.” Once you have finished the inventory, it will give you a list of job ideas that your answers suggested might be a good fit for you. Below are four good ones to try.

<https://www.iseek.org/careers/clusterSurvey>

**ISEEK Career Cluster Interest Survey:** This free survey will give you several different career clusters to explore based on your personal qualities and interests.

<https://texascareercheck.com/ExploreCareer/InterestProfiler>

**Texas Cares Interest Profiler:** Texas Workforce Commission's free interest inventory.

<https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>

**O\*Net Interest Profiler:** My Next Move 60-question interest inventory.

<http://assessment.texasgenuine.org/>

**Texas Genuine:** Free career interest inventory based on the state career clusters.

Once you have your list of potential career ideas, you will need to research them to see which ones sound like possibilities for you. Try looking up the careers in one of the two career websites below. There you can find out information on the career, including what kind of training you'll need, how much you will make, job outlook for the future, work environment, and much more.

<http://online.onetcenter.org/>

**O\*Net:** U.S. Department of Labor interactive database of occupational information that contains comprehensive information on job requirements and worker skills/abilities for over one thousand occupations.

<http://www.bls.gov/oco>

**Occupational Outlook Handbook:** For hundreds of different types of jobs, the OOH tells you the training and education needed, earnings, expected job prospects, what workers do on the job, and working conditions. In addition, the handbook gives you job search tips, links to information about the job market in each state, and much more.

Below are a few more resources to explore careers.

[TEXASgenuine.org](http://www.texasgenuine.org)

**Texas Genuine: Career and Technical Education;** Click on the “Got 60 Seconds” button to view a minute-long Career and Technology Program Compilation Video featuring students talking about their career choice.

Click on “Explore Colleges” to be instantly connected to a map of all the public and state colleges in Texas with a link to each college’s landing page and their website. Click on “Find Programs” to access a list of programs organized by career clusters. Within the link to each program field are career options that include more detailed descriptions. Click on “Career Focus” to select a career cluster, use the search box, or access the A-Z index to find the career you have in mind. There is an overview of the many career possibilities, potential salaries in Texas, and the educational requirements for these positions.

<http://www.cyberguidance.net/dpl/node/5>

**Bob Turba’s Cyber Guidance Office:** Contains a large number of career and college planning features such as “What can I do with a career in . . .?”, evaluating yourself to choose a college, and paying for college.

**Career Information Hotline**

**1-800-822-PLAN**—provides information about any specific career or post-secondary school. Callers can request up to three informational printouts at a time.



## College Search Websites

Once you have a career or college major in mind, your next step will be to research colleges who offer that program of study. You can use the websites below to do a college search with different criteria that is important to you. For example, in addition to having the major you want, you need to consider price, location, and size of the school, among other things.

[www.collegeboard.org/collegesearch](http://www.collegeboard.org/collegesearch)

**College Board Online:** Find college matches, explore the latest college info, see if you're on track to get in, and prepare for campus visits.

[www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)

**Peterson's:** Has a step-by-step guide to college planning, including college choice, testing, and financial aid.

<https://www.comptroller.texas.gov/programs/education/msp/>

**Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation:** Compendium of Texas colleges and financial aid calendar; has a list of all Texas colleges and what their admissions requirements are, tuition and fees, types of financial aid, and admission deadlines—click on “Texas Colleges and Universities.”

[www.usnews.com/education](http://www.usnews.com/education)

**US News and World Report:** Has information on America's best colleges and their rankings by location and majors.

[www.cappex.com](http://www.cappex.com)

**Cappex:** Type in any college and find out everything about that school, such as enrollment numbers, available majors, cost, etc. They have a “what are my chances” calculator, which will tell you your likelihood of being accepted into a college; also has a scholarship search.

## Popular Texas College Websites

Abilene Christian University	<a href="http://acu.edu">http://acu.edu</a>	Abilene
Angelo State University	<a href="http://angelo.edu">http://angelo.edu</a>	San Angelo
Austin Community College District	<a href="http://austincc.edu">http://austincc.edu</a>	Austin
Austin College	<a href="http://austincollege.edu">http://austincollege.edu</a>	Sherman
Baylor University	<a href="http://baylor.edu">http://baylor.edu</a>	Waco
Blinn College	<a href="http://blinn.edu">http://blinn.edu</a>	Brenham
Cisco College	<a href="http://www.cisco.edu">www.cisco.edu</a>	Cisco
Concordia University Texas	<a href="http://concordia.edu">http://concordia.edu</a>	Austin
Culinary Institute LeNotre	<a href="http://culinaryinstitute.edu">http://culinaryinstitute.edu</a>	Houston
Dallas Baptist University	<a href="http://dbu.edu">http://dbu.edu</a>	Dallas
Dallas Nursing Institute	<a href="http://dni.edu">http://dni.edu</a>	Dallas
East Texas Baptist University	<a href="http://etbu.edu">http://etbu.edu</a>	Marshall
Hardin-Simmons University	<a href="http://www.hsutx.edu">www.hsutx.edu</a>	Abilene
Houston Baptist University	<a href="http://hbu.edu">http://hbu.edu</a>	Houston
Howard Payne University	<a href="http://hputx.edu">http://hputx.edu</a>	Brownwood
Lamar University	<a href="http://lamar.edu">http://lamar.edu</a>	Beaumont
Lubbock Christian University	<a href="http://lcu.edu">http://lcu.edu</a>	Lubbock
LeTourneau University	<a href="http://letu.edu">http://letu.edu</a>	Longview
McLennan Community College	<a href="http://mclennan.edu">http://mclennan.edu</a>	Waco
McMurry University	<a href="http://mcm.edu">http://mcm.edu</a>	Abilene
Midwestern State University	<a href="http://mwsu.edu">http://mwsu.edu</a>	Wichita Falls
Our Lady of the Lake University	<a href="http://ollusa.edu">http://ollusa.edu</a>	San Antonio
Prairie View A&M University	<a href="http://pvamu.edu">http://pvamu.edu</a>	Prairie View
Ranger College	<a href="http://www.rangercollege.edu">www.rangercollege.edu</a>	Ranger
Rice University	<a href="http://rice.edu">http://rice.edu</a>	Houston
Stephen F. Austin State University	<a href="http://sfasu.edu">http://sfasu.edu</a>	Nacogdoches
Sam Houston State University	<a href="http://shsu.edu">http://shsu.edu</a>	Huntsville
Southern Methodist University	<a href="http://smu.edu">http://smu.edu</a>	Dallas
Southwestern University	<a href="http://southwestern.edu">http://southwestern.edu</a>	Georgetown
Saint Edward's University	<a href="http://stedwards.edu">http://stedwards.edu</a>	Austin
Tarleton State University	<a href="http://tarleton.edu">http://tarleton.edu</a>	Stephenville
Tarrant County College	<a href="http://www.tccd.edu">www.tccd.edu</a>	Fort Worth

Texas A&M Health Science Center	<a href="http://tamhsc.edu">http://tamhsc.edu</a>	Round Rock
Texas A&M International University	<a href="http://tamiu.edu">http://tamiu.edu</a>	Laredo
Texas A&M University	<a href="http://tamu.edu">http://tamu.edu</a>	College Station
Texas A&M University Commerce	<a href="http://tamuc.edu">http://tamuc.edu</a>	Commerce
Texas A&M University Corpus Christi	<a href="http://tamucc.edu">http://tamucc.edu</a>	Corpus Christi
Texas A&M University Kingsville	<a href="http://tamuk.edu">http://tamuk.edu</a>	Kingsville
Texas A&M University Texarkana	<a href="http://tamut.edu">http://tamut.edu</a>	Texarkana
Texas Christian University	<a href="http://tcu.edu">http://tcu.edu</a>	Fort Worth
Texas Lutheran University	<a href="http://www.tlu.edu">www.tlu.edu</a>	Seguin
Texas State Technical College	<a href="http://tstc.edu">http://tstc.edu</a>	Multiple locations
Texas State University	<a href="http://txstate.edu">http://txstate.edu</a>	San Marcos
Texas Southern University	<a href="http://tsu.edu">http://tsu.edu</a>	Houston
Texas Tech University	<a href="http://ttu.edu">http://ttu.edu</a>	Lubbock
Texas Wesleyan University	<a href="http://www.txwes.edu">www.txwes.edu</a>	Fort Worth
Texas Woman's University	<a href="http://twu.edu">http://twu.edu</a>	Dallas
Trinity University	<a href="http://trinity.edu">http://trinity.edu</a>	San Antonio
Universal Technical Institute	<a href="https://www.uti.edu/">https://www.uti.edu/</a>	Irving
University of Dallas	<a href="http://udallas.edu">http://udallas.edu</a>	Irving
University of Houston	<a href="http://uh.edu">http://uh.edu</a>	Houston
University of the Incarnate Word	<a href="http://uiw.edu">http://uiw.edu</a>	San Antonio
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor	<a href="http://umhb.edu">http://umhb.edu</a>	Belton
University of North Texas	<a href="http://unt.edu">http://unt.edu</a>	Denton
University of Saint Thomas	<a href="http://stthom.edu">http://stthom.edu</a>	Houston
University of Texas Arlington	<a href="http://uta.edu">http://uta.edu</a>	Arlington
University of Texas Brownsville	<a href="http://utb.edu">http://utb.edu</a>	Brownsville
University of Texas Dallas	<a href="http://utdallas.edu">http://utdallas.edu</a>	Richardson
University of Texas at El Paso	<a href="http://utep.edu">http://utep.edu</a>	El Paso
University of Texas at Austin	<a href="http://utexas.edu">http://utexas.edu</a>	Austin
University of Texas Pan American	<a href="http://utpa.edu">http://utpa.edu</a>	Edinburg
University of Texas of the Permian Basin	<a href="http://utpb.edu">http://utpb.edu</a>	Odessa
University of Texas at San Antonio	<a href="http://utsa.edu">http://utsa.edu</a>	San Antonio
University of Texas at Tyler	<a href="http://uttyler.edu">http://uttyler.edu</a>	Tyler
Wayland Baptist University	<a href="http://wbu.edu">http://wbu.edu</a>	Plainview
West Texas A&M University	<a href="http://wtamu.edu">http://wtamu.edu</a>	Canyon

## Financial Aid and Scholarship Websites

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid:** Application for free government grant money. Be sure to check out the Texas Grant, Pell Grant, Academic Competitiveness Grant, and National SMART Grant.

[www.StudentAid.gov/fsaid](http://www.StudentAid.gov/fsaid)

**Federal Student Aid ID:** Get your FSAID, the new way to sign your FAFSA that replaces the PIN.

<http://blog.ed.gov/2016/01/11-common-fafsa-mistakes/>

**US Department of Education Blog:** 11 common FAFSA mistakes to help you with filling out your application.

<http://blog.ed.gov/2015/12/7-things-before-fafsa/>

**US Department of Education Blog:** 7 things you need to know before you fill out the FAFSA to make it go smoother.

[www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)

**FAFSA Student Aid on the Web:** The US Department of Education puts this site up for free information on preparing for and funding education beyond high school; get your FAFSA questions answered here.

**Education Department's Federal Student Aid Information Center**  
1-800-433-3243

<http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/index.cfm?objectid=A3119543-CBF8-C202-F1B0EEFD5F4B9805>

**TASFA: Texas Application for State Financial Aid:** Put out by College for all Texans. Has good information about finding financial aid for Texas residents.

**Texas Financial Aid Information Center**  
1-888-311-8881

<http://collegeguidanceconsultants.com>

**E-Scholarships Monthly:** Has an extensive list of scholarships to apply for; includes requirements, contact info, and due date. The user name is keller and the password is keller.

[www.discoverstudentloans.com/scholarship](http://www.discoverstudentloans.com/scholarship)

**Discover Student Loans:** Has a scholarship search that you can personalize with your future career goals, interests, and other specific info to find scholarship relevant to you.

<https://www.skillsusa.org/membership-resources/scholarships-financial-aid/>

**SkillsUSA:** National career and technical scholarship program application for CTE students

[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

**Fastweb:** Free scholarship, financial aid, and college search, along with career planning. Excellent website!

[www.collegeanswer.com](http://www.collegeanswer.com)

**Sallie Mae College Answer:** Has a scholarship search and information about Sallie Mae college loans.