

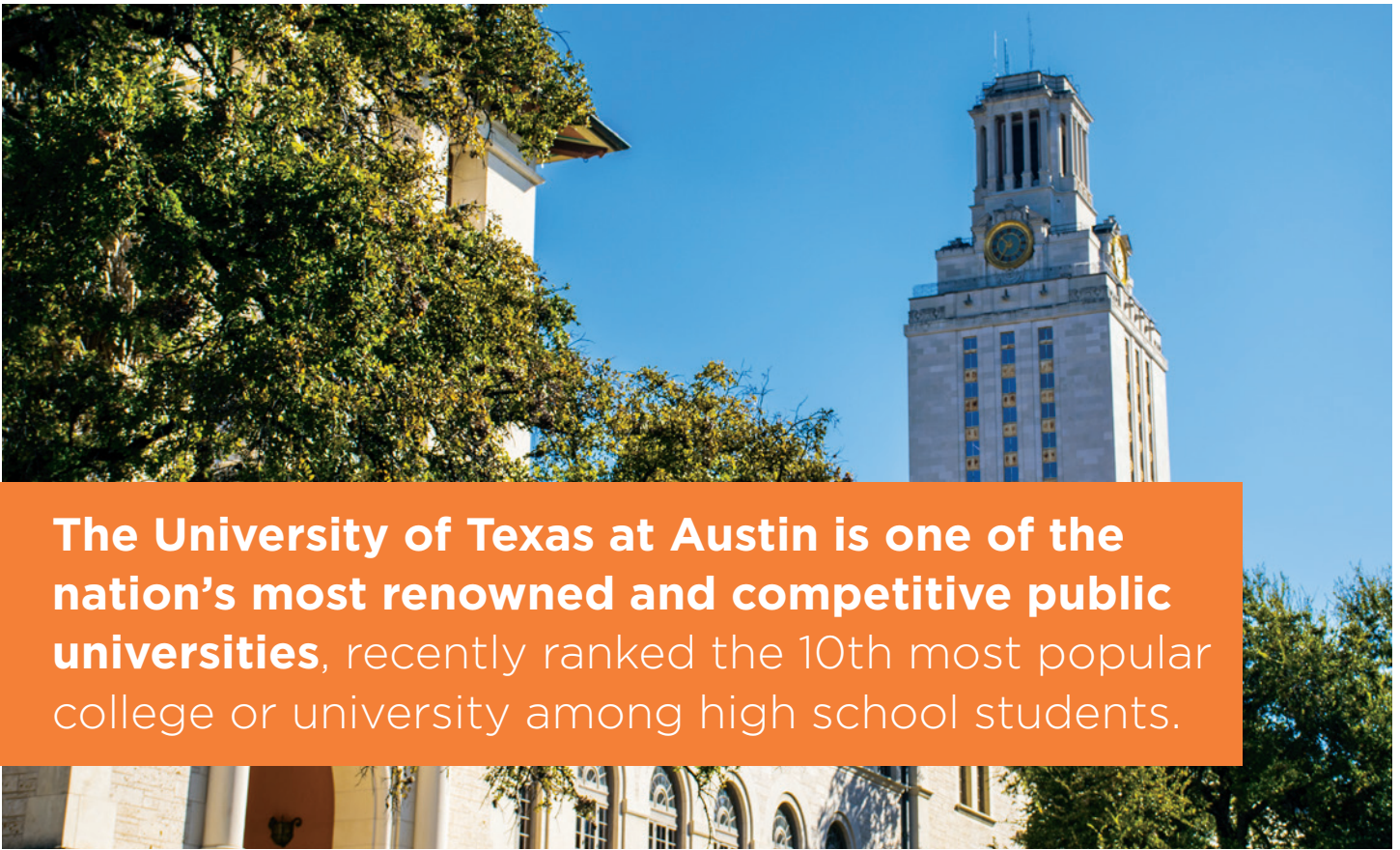


COLLEGE
MATCHPOINT

GUIDE TO APPLYING TO THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AUSTIN

2024 EDITION

COLLEGEMATCHPOINT.COM



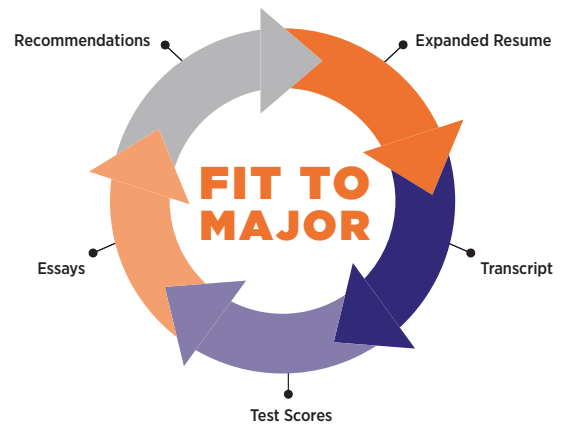
The University of Texas at Austin is one of the nation's most renowned and competitive public universities, recently ranked the 10th most popular college or university among high school students.

WITH ITS WORLD-CLASS ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, VIBRANT STUDENT LIFE, AND UNPARALLELED RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES, it's no surprise that more than 70,000 high school students applied to UT Austin last year.

The school's admissions process is highly selective and holistic in nature, so applicants need to take advantage of every opportunity in the application to showcase their talents, achievements, interests, and potential. Simply having strong grades and test scores is rarely enough to gain admission, especially to the most sought-after majors.

The key to crafting a compelling UT Austin application is demonstrating your fit for your first-choice major. The admissions office evaluates each applicant's grades, test scores, essays, resume, and recommendation letters through the lens of their preferred field of study. They look for students who have explored and excelled in disciplines related to their prospective major, both inside and outside the classroom. Selecting the right first-choice major and persuasively conveying your suitability for that program is essential.

This guide will walk you through each component of the UT Austin application, with strategic advice on how to put your best foot forward as a prospective Longhorn. From thoughtfully choosing your first-choice major to polishing your essays to securing the most powerful recommendation letters, we'll share tips and insights to help you authentically showcase your qualifications and maximize your admissions prospects.

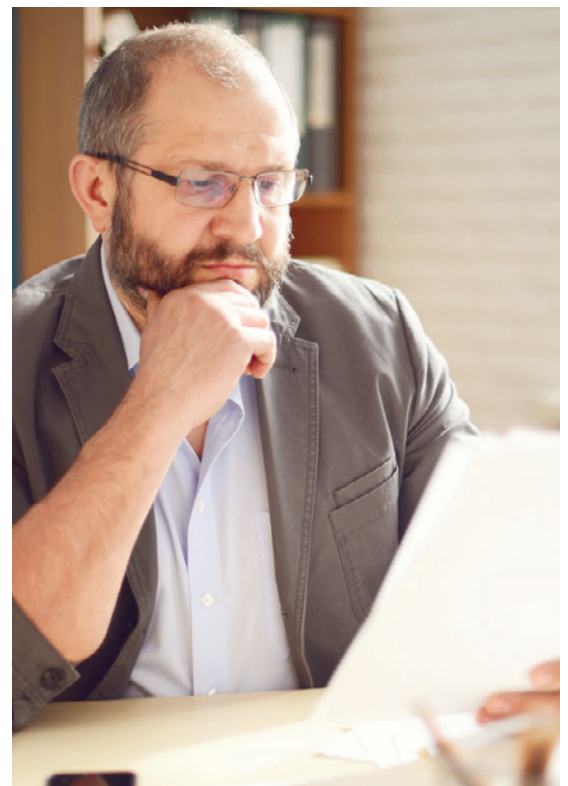




The UT Austin **Holistic Admissions Review** Process

It's hard to believe that a school as large as the University of Texas at Austin actually reviews every part of every student's application. But it does: UT is deeply committed to the holistic review of its applicants. **Holistic review** at UT means that the Office of Admissions takes everything into account, from test scores to extracurricular interests to special accomplishments, and views them through the lens of a student's first-choice major. By evaluating an application from a holistic perspective, the college gets to know applicants as people, not as numbers.

UT's comprehensive approach with an eye toward a student's fit-to-major means that each application item deserves the same amount of attention as the rest. While students often think of the personal statement as the make-or-break piece of the application, they should be putting just as much effort into their short answers, expanded resume, and choice of recommenders. The application should be cohesive, while still highlighting different aspects of the student's background and accomplishments and emphasizing how these make them a great fit for their major.



SECTION I: EVALUATING YOUR CHOICE OF MAJOR

At the beginning of the UT application, students are asked to select a first-choice major. That choice of a major is crucial since it becomes the lens through which an admissions reviewer evaluates each and every item in an application: transcript, test scores, essays, short answers, resume, and letters of recommendation. It's important to note that while students may list a second major, that major is rarely considered for students who aren't in the top 6% of their graduating class.

The University of Texas at Austin offers 170 fields of study across 12 undergraduate colleges and schools, with majors available in 120 of those fields. It's exciting to have that many options at the start of a student's college journey—but because students are asked to choose their first-choice major on their UT application, it can also be a bit overwhelming.

How can a 17-year-old know what they want to spend the next four years studying? And how should they navigate the selection process, knowing that it has an impact on their chances of admission? There's no magic formula, but it's important to understand major choice in context, so we'll take a look at this big—and exciting!—decision from a few angles. We encourage students to explore UT's wonderful online major tool, [Wayfinder](#), in order to home in on which major(s) most appeal to them.

DEMONSTRATING ACADEMIC FIT FOR AN “IMPACTED” MAJOR

UT Austin has several “impacted” majors: majors that have far more *competitive* applicants—rather than simply *qualified* applicants—than there are spaces available. What makes an applicant competitive?

- Excellent grades in rigorous coursework that demonstrates preparation for their desired major
- A resume highlighting outstanding and unique extracurricular experiences or independent projects that align with the major
- High ACT/SAT scores

Especially when applying for an impacted major, a student must demonstrate that their academic and extracurricular background is a good fit for that major.

WEIGHING THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTION VS. MAJOR

When applying to UT Austin, a student needs to dig deep and ask themselves:

- “Is my #1 goal to be a Longhorn?”; **OR**
- “Is my #1 goal to get a degree in [insert major here]?”

The answer might be both. And if the applicant is truly competitive for admission to a specific major, then they're in luck: they should absolutely list that major as their first choice. They will likely be able to be a Longhorn **and** get their desired degree.

But that's not always the case.

For the more typical applicant, the desired major might not match their background, making it hard to demonstrate that they would be a good fit for their chosen program. This isn't an easy position to be in, but it's important to tackle the issue head-on.

If the desire to graduate from UT Austin outweighs the desire for a specific degree, then the student has lots of options. They should do some research on the multitude of majors open to freshmen applicants to find a first-choice major that suits them—in terms of both interest and background.

However, if a student prioritizes graduating with a degree in a particular field—especially a highly competitive field such as engineering, computer science, or business—it's important to have a well-rounded list of good-fit colleges where the student can pursue their desired major, in the event they do not gain admission to that major at UT Austin.

Currently, the most impacted majors at UT Austin are Unspecified Business in the McCombs School of Business, all majors in the Cockrell School of Engineering, and Computer Science in the College of Natural Sciences. We've also noticed that many of the science majors in the College of Natural Sciences have increased in competitiveness. Finally, the School of Nursing and the School of Architecture are especially competitive programs when it comes to admissions.

How can students use their application materials to highlight their suitability for their desired program? **THE THREE BEST SPOTS TO SHOWCASE FIT FOR A MAJOR ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

1 THE EXPANDED RESUME

Since there's no required formatting or chronology for the expanded resume, students can and should organize their projects and activities with the most relevant items at the top. These should be the activities that match best with their major choice.

2 THE SHORT ANSWER ESSAY THAT ASKS YOU TO SHARE YOUR INTEREST IN YOUR FIRST-CHOICE MAJOR

The first short answer essay provides a great opportunity to show evidence of fit to major. In this essay, students should clearly state what they want to study at UT and specifically explain how their desired major fits into their longer-term plans.

3 THE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

When it comes to UT letters of recommendation, students should take this opportunity to create a case for their first-choice major. That means asking for recommendations from people who can speak to the student's skills, abilities, and passion as it relates to their major choice.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT IMPACTED MAJORS ARE COMPETITIVE. UT Admissions receives applications to impacted majors from many students who are academically qualified for admission and would likely do well in those majors—but there simply isn't enough room for all applicants who would be successful. That's why it's so important for a student to demonstrate academic fit and show the admissions committee why they're a stand-out applicant for that particular major.

IMPORTANT UPDATES TO ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS FOR FALL 2025

UT announced the following significant changes to its admissions policies for the high school class of 2025:

- 1. Test scores required.** UT is reinstating standardized test score requirements, starting with applications for the Fall 2025 semester.
- 2. New essay prompts.** There will be new essay prompts this year ([see page 20](#)), and the number of short answer essays will be reduced from 3 to 2.
- 3. New early action deadline.** There's a new early action deadline of October 15 and a guarantee that students will hear a decision by January 15. The regular decision deadline of December 1 remains the same.
- 4. Updates to recommendation letters.** There is now an emphasis on non-school recommendation letters (instead of relying only on teachers).
- 5. New waitlist.** UT has introduced a waitlist for non-auto-admitted students.



ADJACENT MAJORS TO CONSIDER INSTEAD OF IMPACTED MAJORS

INSTEAD OF BUSINESS, LOOK AT THESE MAJORS

For students interested in business-related careers, there are several majors outside of the McCombs School of Business that offer relevant coursework and skills. Additionally, any UT student can minor in Business, allowing them to complement their chosen major with a strong foundation in business principles.

College of Liberal Arts

Human Dimensions of Organizations. The tagline for this innovative program is “putting liberal arts to work.” For students who are interested in managing people and organizations, HDO is a wonderful path to a successful career in business, government, or non-profit. This can also be a wonderful opportunity for any student who doesn’t want to be constrained by a traditional business degree.

Economics. Economics is the largest major in the College of Liberal Arts. Students receive an excellent foundation in economics principles, and the program also offers **options to take courses in McCombs Business School** in accounting or finance. The department also has **fifth-year Masters options**. Especially for the mathematically-inclined student, Economics can be a great way to get into a business-related career.

Moody College of Communications

The Stan Richards School of Advertising & Public Relations. This program is ranked the number one undergraduate advertising program in the country, and it’s perfect for students who are interested in the advertising or public relations side of business.

Communication Studies. One of the three tracks in Communication Studies is Corporate Communications. In that track, students will gain skills around helping companies define their core messaging and communicating that across all platforms.

Communication and Leadership. The Communication and Leadership degree is the only leadership-focused degree at UT. It’s a broad degree, allowing students to customize it through minors and certificates. This is a great option for students who want to create a more personal plan for their major and career.

INSTEAD OF ENGINEERING, LOOK AT THESE MAJORS

Students who are drawn to the problem-solving and analytical aspects of engineering can find similar challenges and opportunities in the following majors within the College of Natural Sciences and the Jackson School of Geosciences. These majors offer a strong foundation in mathematics and scientific principles, preparing students for careers that require innovative thinking and technical expertise.

College of Natural Sciences

Physics. The Physics major helps students develop the ability to solve problems. They learn to apply a set of basic concepts and principles to a wide variety of physical situations and make the connection between theoretical understanding and real-world, physical phenomena of all kinds.

Jackson School of Geosciences

Geophysics. Geophysics combines adventurous fieldwork and sophisticated experiments with cutting-edge techniques in data science and powerful tools in computational modeling. The Geophysics major prepares students to explore the structure, dynamics, and evolution of the Earth and other planets.

Geosystems Engineering and Hydrogeology. Offered jointly by the College of Engineering and the Jackson School, this math-heavy degree is concerned with the behavior of fluids, both within the Earth and upon its surface. The first two years are spent in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences and the final two years in the Department of Petroleum and Geosystems Engineering.

INSTEAD OF COMPUTER SCIENCE, LOOK AT THESE MAJORS

For students passionate about working with data, algorithms, and technology, the following are other majors that provide a strong foundation in these areas. These majors, found in the College of Natural Sciences and the School of Information, equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in a variety of technology-driven careers.

College of Natural Sciences

Statistics and Data Science. The Statistics and Data Science curriculum equips students to execute all stages of a data analysis, from data acquisition and exploration to application of statistics and machine learning methods to the creation of data products (e.g., reports, apps and dashboards). Note: Data Science is becoming more competitive and may soon be considered impacted.

Mathematics. The Bachelor of Science in Mathematics allows each student to choose among options and concentrations based on their own academic and career goals.

School of Information

Informatics. Informatics majors learn the skills and knowledge required to collect, manage, and analyze data and information, and prepare for the great ethical responsibility that comes with these societally transformative roles. Students can choose from **6 concentrations.**

INSTEAD OF BIOLOGY FOR PRE-HEALTH STUDENTS, LOOK AT THESE MAJORS

Pre-health students often default to a Biology major, but there are several other majors that can provide excellent preparation for medical school and other health professions. The following majors, found in the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Natural Sciences, offer a more interdisciplinary approach to understanding health and well-being, while still fulfilling many of the prerequisites for health professional programs.

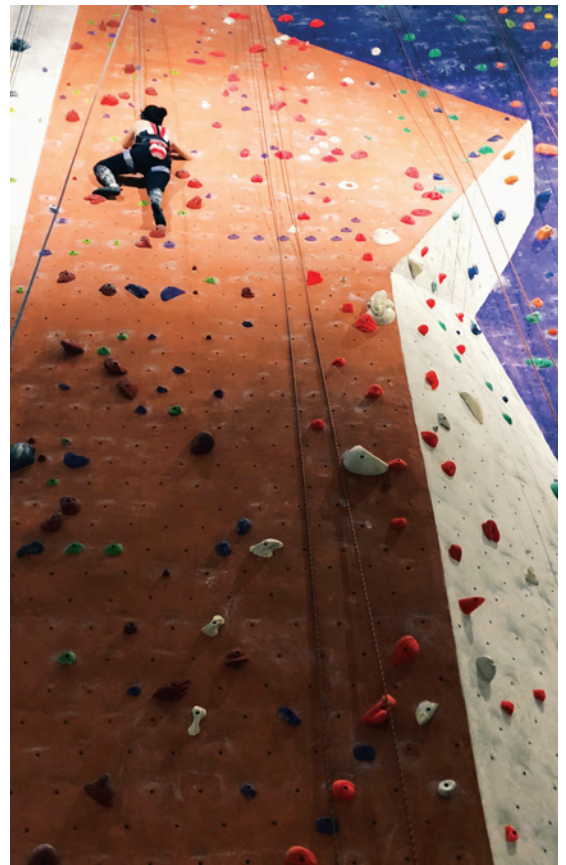
College of Liberal Arts

Health and Society. Health and Society is an interdisciplinary major that investigates how social, cultural, political, and economic factors shape health and well-being.

College of Natural Sciences

Public Health. The Public Health major helps future medical professionals understand why some patients have an easier time following a care plan than others, or understand what causes these conditions so we can prevent them. The BS in Public Health degree includes around 75% of the requirements for medical school as well as PA, dentistry, PT, OT, and veterinary programs, and the remaining requirements can be used as electives.

Human Development and Family Sciences. The flexibility and interdisciplinary nature of this BSA degree makes it an excellent choice for students interested in medical school and other health professions.



SELECTING A FIRST-CHOICE MAJOR EVEN WHEN UNDECIDED

It's fair to assume the majority of 17-year-olds aren't 100% sure what they want to study in college. Whether they're debating between majors in similar fields of study or just have a variety of interests, it's natural for a high school senior to have some uncertainty about their academic future.

Here's how to navigate those two scenarios:

STUDENTS DEBATING BETWEEN MAJORS IN SIMILAR FIELDS OF STUDY

Students who are debating between majors should first look at all the majors available in their interest areas to be sure they understand the full spectrum of options. After all, there are many fantastic options beyond the majors familiar to most students.

For example, a pre-health student might gravitate towards a Biology major; however, there are a variety of **pre-health options** at UT. The Wayfinder tool lists **various career fields** and shows the possible majors for a given career trajectory—so students have the opportunity to create a unique academic program that fits with their strengths and goals.

Once they fully understand their options, students can review their resumes to evaluate which major best matches their experience.

STUDENTS WITH A VARIETY OF INTERESTS IN DIFFERENT FIELDS

What if a student's interests span various fields? For this situation, we'd suggest an interdisciplinary major. There are a couple of ways to ensure a course of study that bridges different fields:

- 1 PICK A MAJOR THAT'S ALREADY INTERDISCIPLINARY.** For some examples, take a look at our blog post, in which we discuss **8 hidden gem majors** that provide education in interrelated areas of study, such as Health and Society or Arts and Entertainment Technologies.
- 2 CUSTOMIZE THE DEGREE TO MAKE IT INTERDISCIPLINARY.** Many undergraduates at UT will customize their degrees to make them interdisciplinary by adding a **minor or certificate** in an area that supports their career goals. For example, a student majoring in Dance may have an ultimate goal of opening their own teaching studio one day, so they could add a certificate in Business Foundations.

An important note: Undergraduate Studies is no longer a major option for students hoping to explore their options. Instead, students can consider alternatives such as Liberal Arts undeclared and College of Natural Sciences undeclared.

WHAT DOES FIT-TO-MAJOR LOOK LIKE IN GRADES 9 & 10?

Of course, most 9th and 10th graders have no idea what they want to major in or what careers they're interested in. That's why exposure is key for them to learn what options are out there, so they can gain knowledge and experience to feel confident choosing a major that fits them in their senior year. Here are steps your 9th and 10th graders should be taking:

1 EXPLORE MAJORS EARLY

9th and 10th grade is the right time for your student to start exploring majors based on their academic interests. What classes and learning experiences most excite them? If your student loves science, they might want to investigate STEM careers. Do they enjoy building things? Perhaps they should research engineering jobs. If they have an aptitude for writing, they could explore communications-related careers, such as marketing or public relations. Here are three excellent ways to explore careers:

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS: You can help your student by connecting them with people you know in careers of interest, so they can talk to them about what they do. Our [Guide to Informational Interviewing](#) walks you through the process step by step.

SHADOWING: Informational interviews can easily turn into an opportunity for your student to shadow someone for a day or even a few hours to see if the career is interesting to them.

INTERNSHIPS: In high school, internships can be as short as a week, are typically unpaid, and can give your student a real taste of a career, ideally with a small project they can assist with.

2 ENGAGE IN RIGOROUS COURSEWORK

Taking the most rigorous possible course load—at least in the subjects that relate to possible majors—is another good way to explore majors. For example, it's better in the early years to take an engineering/CS, business, health sciences, or art class to figure out if it's truly an interest. Your student should aim for A's in all their classes but particularly those that relate to a potential major.



3 PURSUE LEADERSHIP IN AREAS OF INTEREST

Your teen should start to explore activities that interest them, with the goal of ultimately developing leadership in that area. Obviously, they won't be the president of an organization freshman year, but by finding and sticking with an activity they love, they can set themselves up for leadership opportunities in upper grades. The most important tip is not to sit on the sideline and wait to get involved. Students should dive into activities in or outside of school early in high school that help them identify areas of interest and engagement.

4 TAKE PART IN COMMUNITY SERVICE RELATED TO A SPECIFIC INTEREST

Early high school is an ideal time for students to think about community problems they might want to try to impact now or even in a future career. If they care about animals, encourage them to volunteer at a local shelter. If they care about homelessness, have them volunteer with a non-profit working in this area. The amount of community service hours isn't the most important factor—it's increasing their focus and commitment to a specific area of interest. Focusing on hours can be useful as a way to determine what areas resonate, but the hours themselves aren't the goal.

By focusing on these four areas, not only will your student have a fulfilling high school experience, but they'll also build a resume that supports their choice of major.

UT AUSTIN HONORS PROGRAMS

If your student is driven and curious, they might be looking for a more rigorous curriculum than those offered by standard majors. At UT Austin, such students can thrive in **freshman honors programs**.

There's no central honors college at UT Austin. Instead, the university offers a mix of college-wide honors programs, department-specific honors programs, and honors majors that are open to freshman applicants based on their first-choice major. Students can express their interest in honors programs on their UT application, without having to submit a separate application.

While each program offers something different, honors programs usually include the following:

- Program-specific classes open only to honors students
- Individualized advising
- Research opportunities
- Exposure to innovators in their fields
- Access to dedicated honors housing

COLLEGE-WIDE HONORS PROGRAMS

College-wide honors programs require that students complete a separate major within the college. For example, you might major in Mexican American Studies within the Liberal Arts Honors program. Here are the options for college-wide honors programs:

- Liberal Arts Honors Program
- Engineering Honors Program
- Moody College Honors Program
- Natural Sciences Honors Programs: Dean's Scholars, Health Science Scholars, and Polymathic Scholars

DEPARTMENT-SPECIFIC HONORS PROGRAMS

The Natural Sciences Honors Program also includes two department-specific honors programs, which means that the program is only open to students in a specific department within the school. Those two programs are as follows:

- Turing Scholars (Computer Science)
- Human Ecology Honors (Advanced Human Development and Family Sciences or Advanced Nutritional Sciences)





HONORS MAJORS

Perhaps the most well-known honors programs are UT Austin's honors *majors*:

- Canfield Business Honors Program (McCombs School of Business)
- Plan II Honors Program (College of Liberal Arts)

Students can pursue these majors alone, but most complete at least one other major.

Maybe because of its unusual name, there's some mystery surrounding Plan II Honors. Plan II is a true interdisciplinary liberal arts degree with a reputation for being one of the most prestigious college honors programs in the U.S. Students who apply to Plan II frequently have Ivy League and other state flagship institutions on their college lists. Plan II Honors graduates enter a variety of career fields and often pursue graduate/professional programs, including medical and law school.

Given the wide variety of honors program options at UT Austin, we recommend that students conduct thorough research on each program, which should include attending information sessions for programs of interest. And remember: if a student is genuinely interested in pursuing an honors program, there's no reason not to do so, since their honors application will have no effect on their general admission to UT.





SPECIAL PROGRAMS

At UT Austin, a select group of majors, known as “special programs,” require a separate or delayed application.

ATHLETIC TRAINING & SPORTS MANAGEMENT: Students interested in these fields of study should apply first to the College of Education as an undeclared major. After successfully completing a series of prerequisites, the student will be eligible to declare a major in Athletic Training or Sports Management.

HUMANITIES: The Humanities major offers especially motivated students seeking an interdisciplinary academic experience the chance to devise an independent course of study that culminates in an Honors thesis. Students are only eligible to apply to this major after successful completion of their first year at UT.

PHARMACY: Undergraduate admission to the College of Pharmacy is a two-step process. First, students should apply to a first-choice major in a related field (for example, a major in the College of Natural Sciences). After completing their initial studies in their pre-pharmacy major, students are eligible to apply to the professional program in the College of Pharmacy.

SOCIAL WORK: Students admitted to the Steve Hicks School of Social Work enter UT as “Pre-Social Work” majors. Only after successfully completing certain prerequisites can students apply to declare their major in Social Work.





SECTION II: THE EXPANDED RESUME

UT Austin takes a holistic approach when evaluating applications, carefully considering all components to get to know each applicant as an individual. While grades and the transcript are crucial, the expanded resume is one of the most important parts of the UT application after academic performance.

Since space to describe activities is limited on the Common Application, the expanded resume allows students to provide comprehensive details on their extracurricular involvement, accomplishments, and experiences in a way that lets their personality and the impact they've had shine through. UT admissions officers place substantial weight on the expanded resume to assess an applicant's fit for their first-choice major and potential contributions to the UT community.

The expanded resume is basically a list of every experience a student has had that will help the admissions office get a sense of who they are as an applicant. UT expects that these resumes might run three to four pages—or even more—so instead of just listing titles and dates, students should describe their activities, define their roles, and elaborate on their specific experiences.

This gives students a chance to highlight all their experiences: academic, extracurricular, professional, and personal. And it means they can show off their accomplishments in a more detailed way, which enables them to clearly demonstrate their fit for their first-choice major.

WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS INCLUDE ON THE EXPANDED RESUME?

In a word: *everything*.

There's a reason they call it "expanded." UT wants students to list everything that might be even remotely relevant to their potential at the university. All extracurricular involvement, starting with the summer before ninth grade, should be included. Here are some examples:

- School clubs
- Sports (school or community)
- Arts and performance (school or community)
- Community involvement or service
- Independent academic activities
- Awards/recognition
- Travel
- Hobbies
- Career-related exploration

In addition to extracurricular activities, students should highlight every activity related to their intended major, including academic classes. For example, students might list classes they took in high school that directly relate to their first-choice major and highlight important class projects and the skills they learned from these endeavors.

HOW SHOULD STUDENTS ORGANIZE THE EXPANDED RESUME?

The expanded resume is unlike a typical professional resume in that it provides much more comprehensive detail. No need to be concise here. In fact, the expected length for the expanded resume is three to four pages, though five to six pages may be acceptable for students with a great deal of involvement.

So how do you organize pages and pages of activities? For starters, remember that organization in the traditional reverse chronology setup isn't necessary. We recommend students organize the resume to highlight activities that align with their first-choice major *or* that showcase in-depth involvement and engagement. For example, students applying to the McCombs School of Business would list any of their business endeavors and business-related internships toward the top.



TYPICAL SECTIONS

If your student is struggling with how to organize their expanded resume, here are some typical sections to get them started:

Extracurricular/school-related activities

This is where the student would list any school clubs or independent projects they worked on: everything from acting in a school play to participating in student government to leading study sessions for classmates.

Volunteer work/community service

Here, students should list the experiences they've had in their community. Whether it's an extended volunteer commitment or a one-time community service event, it's worth listing. Just remember: if all the student's activities are one-offs (meaning that they've served only a few hours at several different organizations), this might demonstrate a lack of depth of involvement. If that's the case, it might be best *not* to include a section devoted just to community service.

Internships/work experience

This is a great spot to highlight experiences that will demonstrate fit for the student's first-choice major. Even if the internship/job itself doesn't match up perfectly with the desired major, there are sure to be applicable skills that the student has gained during the experience. Think outside of the box.

Summer programs

Anything a student does during the summers is fair game, as long as it shows a passion for something—and some motivation (no video game marathons). This can include sleep-away camp, academic programs hosted by universities, mission trips, or even independent projects completed over the summer.

Awards

This is the recommended section for honor roll distinctions, school awards, or honor societies, including National Honors Society or Mu Alpha Theta.

In general, students shouldn't waste too much space on the awards section. Include a brief description of the award only if it's unique or the reader wouldn't be able to infer its significance. For example, "High Honor Roll, Valley High School" or "Most Valuable Player, Lacrosse" are self-explanatory; "New Vision Award" isn't.



THEMED SECTIONS

Another way to organize the resume is thematically. This can be helpful if a student doesn't have a host of awards or community service experience—instead, it highlights the experiences they *do* have.

Here are some examples of themed sections:

- Internships
- Business endeavors
- Robotics
- Sports
- Theater and dance
- Music
- Social justice/community organizing
- Independent research
- Languages
- Computer programming

Remember, students should create themed sections that best showcase their experiences. This is just a starting point.

HOW SHOULD STUDENTS DESCRIBE EACH ACTIVITY AND ACCOMPLISHMENT?

UT's preferred formatting involves listing grade level, hours per week/weeks per year, and position titles (especially if they're leadership titles). For example:

Captain of the Canton High
School basketball team 4 hrs/wk - 20 wks/yr 11, 12

Formatting it this way will also make it easier when it's time for the student to describe their activities on the Common Application activities section since it requests this same information.

Of course, it doesn't stop there. The point of the expanded resume is to list as much information as possible about the activity. Below the basic information, students will include a bullet list—using active verbs—that expands on the activity with information that the reader couldn't glean from the title.

The most important thing to remember is: *go beyond the obvious*.

For example, if a student is describing their involvement on the basketball team, the reader will know that they attended practices and games, but nothing else goes without saying. Even if the student





lists themselves as captain, the expanded resume is the place to say they were elected captain by their peers. And remember: some accomplishments expand beyond the activity itself. For example, maybe the student was the only basketball player to work with the booster club on a special fundraising project.

As the student is describing their experiences, they should highlight special projects or leadership positions, but they shouldn't leave something out just because it seems tangential. Here's an example to show the kinds of notes a student might include:

An activity note:

Captain of the XYZ soccer team 5 hrs/wk 11, 12

An EXPANDED statement:

Captain of the XYZ soccer team 5 hrs/wk 11, 12

- Elected (or Assigned) position
- Arrive early and work with coach to get practices started
- Mentor new team members
- Assist with equipment
- Lead warm up drills

In the end, students should remember this is *their* resume: they have the freedom to present it in whatever way they feel best highlights their strengths, accomplishments, and fit for their first-choice major.

SECTION III: ESSAYS

The personal essay and short answer questions in the UT Austin application work together to provide admissions officers with a comprehensive view of each applicant. While the personal essay offers a window into a student's world, highlighting their growth, values, and unique experiences, the short answer questions allow students to showcase different facets of their personality, interests, and goals. By carefully crafting responses to both the essay and short answer prompts, students can paint a multi-dimensional portrait of themselves, helping admissions officers understand who they are and what they would contribute to the UT Austin community.

PERSONAL ESSAY

UT's new essay requirements include a more open-ended personal statement. All freshman applicants to the University of Texas at Austin must submit a personal essay, between 500 and 650 words, which plays a crucial role in the holistic review process.

This long essay is a student's primary vehicle for communicating the aspects of their personality, perspectives, and relationships that a resume alone can't convey. It's their chance to give the admissions committee a sense of who they are and how they see the world.

HERE'S THE PROMPT:

Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

Please keep your essay between 500–650 words (typically two to three paragraphs).

Students are used to writing academic papers, where their teachers provide clear prompts, a list of expectations, and even a rubric that lays out exactly what they need to do to earn full credit. Personal essays are a different beast. This prompt is particularly open-ended. That means the expectations can seem frustratingly amorphous, and no one can tell your student with 100% accuracy what they need to do to succeed. That freedom of thought, though, is representative of what college will be like for your student, so it's a great chance to embrace that new mindset.



HERE ARE 7 TIPS FOR HOW TO APPROACH UT'S PERSONAL ESSAY.

- 1 REFER TO THE COMMON APP PROMPTS.** Since this essay prompt aligns with the Common Application's personal statement, students can simplify their application process by using one of the Common App prompts for their UT Austin essay. This will allow them to write a single essay that can be submitted to all their schools.
- 2 CHOOSE A TOPIC THAT LED TO GROWTH.** When choosing a topic for the personal essay, students should explore moments that have produced some type of change in their life or thinking. It could be a significant event or experience that completely changed the course of their life, or it could be a smaller, more personal experience that holds special meaning to them. The admissions committee wants to get a glimpse of who the student is beyond their application, understanding what they care about and how they make sense of the world. Students should choose a story that has a clear narrative arc demonstrating how they have grown or changed as a result of the experiences they describe, while showcasing their personality, values, and growth.

- 3 FOCUS ON RECENT EXPERIENCES.** Although the story a student chooses to tell might be rooted in their earliest experiences, the primary focus of the narrative should be on the past three or four years. For most teenagers, high school is a period of rapid personal and interpersonal growth. During that time, students have probably begun to form their own individual ideas and beliefs, explore new interests, and take on more responsibility at school and home. They've also gained experience navigating new social and emotional challenges, and they may have started developing a stronger sense of what they have to contribute to the communities they belong to.
- 4 USE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES AND ANECDOTES.** Specificity and vivid details are what make personal essays come alive and make them memorable for the reader. Students should make sure their essays sparkle with unique aspects of their experiences. This is why revision is key to personal essay writing—sometimes it takes multiple drafts to remember and layer in meaningful details.
- 5 AIM FOR AT LEAST 30% REFLECTION.** While the narrative part of a student's essay tells us what happened, the reflection tells us why living those experiences mattered to a student—not to the person next to them and not to a generic student, but to that student personally. The reflection aspect of the essay helps the reader understand how the student has grown and changed over time. It's where a student will look back at the narrative and think seriously about how they have changed because of it.
- 6 ASK FOR FEEDBACK, BUT PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY.** While we encourage students to have others whose opinion they respect review the essay for feedback on clarity, coherence, and impact, we do caution students not to have too many people weigh in. Sometimes having too many people offering different opinions about the essay can be paralyzing—especially when those well-meaning readers might not understand the job of a personal essay in college admissions. Ultimately, it should be an authentic essay a student feels represents them well, one they feel proud of sharing with admissions.
- 7 PROOFREAD CAREFULLY—BUT DON'T OBSESS IF A TYPO SLIPS THROUGH.** It goes without saying that once a student has completed their final draft, they should proofread it carefully. Using apps such as Grammarly can be helpful, but another set of human eyes is always a good idea. Despite a student's best efforts, sometimes a typo or a mistake can slip through, making them paranoid that this one detail will derail their entire application. Admissions counselors assure us that this is not the case. They realize everyone is human and mistakes happen, especially in such a stress-filled process as college applications.



THE BIGGEST PERSONAL ESSAY WRITING MYTH

Students often assume the admissions committee must want to hear about either their most impressive achievement or their most harrowing defeat. In brainstorming examples from their lives, students tend to focus almost exclusively on extremes (the highest highs, the lowest lows), which are usually things they've already listed on their resume as well.

These don't necessarily make for bad essay topics—in the hands of a thoughtful, introspective writer, virtually any subject can make for a compelling and personally revelatory piece. But both have certain risks.

Focusing too narrowly on extreme highs and achievements (including activities, honors, and so on) can result in essays that read more like long-form resumes than visceral, compelling stories. Too much of an external focus makes the essay flat, giving the reader little sense of the writer's inner life.

By contrast, when students write about extreme lows, including a traumatic event or loss, they can sometimes get too caught up in exploring painful thoughts and feelings. They also may not yet be ready to reflect on the experience. The experience begins to define the writer, instead of the writer defining the experience and placing it within the broader context of their personality and life.

We often remind students that it's okay to pick what feels like a small topic. Often, it's the subtler experiences that are more defining.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTING ON INTERNAL EXPERIENCES

As students flesh out their essays, they should remember to include both external and internal experiences.

Let's say, for example, that your student is a compassionate, caring person who has always believed in using their talents to strengthen their community. In their essay, they would want to include some details or examples that would help demonstrate how this quality manifests in their life. It's easy to talk about how they completed 150 hours of community service every year at a local homeless shelter—and they've no doubt already listed that on their resume. But their essay can—and should—explore aspects of those experiences that aren't communicated by the resume if they are truly meaningful for your student.

There's likely more to the story—an internal journey that your student hasn't yet communicated. Perhaps they were raised in a family that prided itself on toughness and self-sufficiency. As a child, they often heard adults in their life urge others to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” or pass harsh judgment on people who were out of work and unable to support their families. When your student first started volunteering, they sometimes found themselves echoing these beliefs in their thoughts, especially during challenging or frustrating moments.

But then they began to pay attention to those thoughts and reflect on moments where they arose. As they observed the social workers and other adults who worked at the shelter, they sought to learn from the way they talked about the communities they worked with. During your student's volunteer shifts, they began spending time talking with the people who came to the shelter, forming relationships with them and seeking to better understand their lives. In their free time, they watched documentaries about homelessness and checked out books from the local library. Eventually, as their convictions became stronger and their sense of purpose clearer, they began to have conversations with their family about the work they were doing, even inviting family members to start volunteering with them once a week.

This learning process may still be ongoing, but they're proud of the change they've seen in their own thoughts and behaviors. They feel like they've finally begun to develop a more nuanced understanding of an issue they care about, as well as a more empathetic perspective toward the people they work with. And within their own family, they are making a quiet but intentional effort to expand their worldview and advocate for those communities.

BOTTOM LINE: Unless the student articulates their internal experiences, the admissions committee won't know how important they were to the student's personal growth.

SECTION IV: SHORT ANSWER PROMPTS

UT's updated essay requirements include two short answer prompts that provide students with the opportunity to share more about their interests, experiences, and motivations. (A third essay is optional.) These questions are intended to help students showcase their fit for UT and their first-choice major.

REQUIRED SHORT ANSWER 1: FIRST-CHOICE MAJOR

SHORT ANSWER PROMPT

Why are you interested in the major you indicated as your first-choice major? (300 word max)

HOW TO APPROACH THIS QUESTION

In this short answer, students need to communicate to the admissions committee what they personally find engaging and exciting about their proposed field of study. The admissions committee doesn't expect the student to already be an expert in their field or to have their future career in this field planned out. But they *do* want to know that the student didn't just open the course catalog and pick a major at random.

Remember, the student should demonstrate how *they* specifically—not just a generic student—will take advantage of the opportunities available to them at UT.

So, rather than writing a dry sentence like “I plan to apply for Department X's summer research grant,” a student should write a sentence or two describing a burning question they hope to answer through their research: “With the support of Department X's summer research grants, I could deepen my understanding of [*insert specific topic they're passionate about*] and finally discover an answer to [*burning question*]*—something I've been fascinated by since my sophomore-year internship at [relevant workplace].*” The first sentence could just as easily apply to a thousand different applicants. The second is focused, detailed, and could only have been written by—and about—one student.

Students' responses to this question should demonstrate the following:

- 1 THEY HAVE ALREADY BEGUN EXPLORING THIS SUBJECT ON THEIR OWN, INDEPENDENTLY AND/OR THROUGH ORGANIZED OPPORTUNITIES (E.G., CLASSES, SUMMER PROGRAMS, INTERNSHIPS).**
- 2 THEY HAVE A SENSE OF HOW THIS MAJOR FITS INTO THEIR LONG-TERM GOALS.**
- 3 THEY HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT WHY UT WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT PLACE TO STUDY THIS SUBJECT.**



PERSONALIZING THE ANSWER

If a student hasn't had the opportunity to participate in summer programs or take coursework directly related to their first-choice major, they might need to get a little more creative here. **Remember:** *learning experiences don't have to be formally organized.* Taking the initiative to explore a topic independently can demonstrate to colleges that a student is self-motivated and intellectually curious. Here are some ways students might independently explore their interests:

- Reading books and other publications related to their interests
- Watching relevant lectures on YouTube or listening to podcasts
- Starting conversations with friends, family, or classmates about what they're learning
- Finding ways to incorporate interests into assignments (e.g., researching famous social psychology experiments for an AP U.S. History project)
- Talking with a teacher or reaching out to a professional in their field to learn more
- Gathering information from real world experiences, even if they don't seem directly connected to the major. (For example, if a student is an aspiring Accounting major who currently works a retail job, they might pay close attention to how a small business handles expenses compared to a large chain. Or, if they're an aspiring Education major who cares for younger siblings, they might help their siblings with their homework assignments and come up with creative ideas to teach them difficult concepts.)

BOTTOM LINE: Students should be sure that their answer to this question doesn't regurgitate information from their resume and instead offers new insight into their personal connection with their first-choice major.

REQUIRED SHORT ANSWER 2: MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY

SHORT ANSWER PROMPT

Think of all the activities—both in and outside of school—that you have been involved with during high school. Which one are you most proud of and why? (Guidance for students: This can include an extracurricular activity, a club/organization, volunteer activity, work or a family responsibility.) (300 word max)

HOW TO APPROACH THIS QUESTION

For this essay, students should choose an activity that holds personal significance: one that has had a meaningful impact on their personal growth, skill development, or understanding of the world around them. Here are some tips for how they can approach it.

- 1 EXPLAIN THEIR ROLE AND CONTRIBUTIONS.** Students should clearly describe their involvement in the activity, highlighting any leadership positions, initiatives they took, or projects they completed. They should discuss how they contributed to the success of the activity, the impact they made on others, and why they're proud of this activity. This essay is also a great place for students to write about their leadership experiences, even if it's not leadership in the traditional sense.
- 2 SHOWCASE THEIR PERSONAL GROWTH.** Students should reflect on how this activity has shaped their character, values, and goals. They should consider discussing any lessons they learned, skills they developed, or insights they gained through their participation.
- 3 BE SUCCINCT.** While it's important for students to use illustrative examples where appropriate, they should remember that the short answers are primarily about providing extra information to the admissions committee. Students should be concise and focused in their responses.
- 4 ALWAYS KEEP THEIR FIRST-CHOICE MAJOR IN MIND.** If possible, students should choose an activity that provides additional evidence of their fit for their first-choice major—ideally highlighting something they didn't mention in their short answer essay about their major. They should demonstrate how the skills, experiences, or insights gained through this activity relate to their intended field of study.

5 DIVERSIFY. Students should make sure to choose a topic they didn't already talk about in their other essays, and they should go deeper than what's on their expanded resume. For example, a student applying as a communication major might talk about their job at a restaurant and describe how they were able to diffuse a tense situation with a customer resulting in praise from a supervisor. The student could delve into what they learned about themselves in this situation and how they can see themselves using their skills in their career.

PERSONALIZING THE ANSWER

When writing about their chosen activity, students should focus on their unique experiences and perspectives, using specific examples and anecdotes to illustrate their contributions. Then, by reflecting on how the activity has shaped their values, goals, and understanding of themselves and the world around them, students can create a response that is authentic, meaningful, and truly showcases who they are as individuals.

OPTIONAL SHORT ANSWER 3: ACADEMICS

SHORT ANSWER PROMPT

Please share background on events or special circumstances that you feel may have impacted your high school academic performance. (300 word max)

HOW TO APPROACH THIS QUESTION

This question provides students with the opportunity to explain any academic missteps, family circumstances, or medical issues that may have impacted them during high school, particularly over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The student shouldn't go into every detail of what happened. Instead, they should state the basic facts—just enough to convey the relevant circumstances—and then explain the impact and what they learned from the experience (at least a third of the answer should be about what the student has learned).

The most important thing to remember is: no matter what the situation, frame any answer to this question in a positive way.

PERSONALIZING THE ANSWER

A student's answer to this question will likely already be personal—it is, after all, describing a unique event or set of circumstances. But students shouldn't let the unique experience be the only “personal” part of the answer. By personalizing their reflections on the lessons they've learned as a result of hardship, students can demonstrate growth and self-knowledge.



SECTION V: LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Recommendations are a crucial part of any student’s college application. No matter how exceptional a student appears based on their essay, short answers, and resume, the recommendations serve as a reliable confirmation that the student is as promising as the rest of their application implies. Because of the power that recommendations hold, it’s important to be discerning when choosing recommenders.

UT’s recent policy change encouraging students to ask two *non-teachers* for recommendations means that students will likely be requesting different recommenders for UT than for other colleges on their list that require teacher recommendations.

With only two chances, students really need to consider who will write the most compelling endorsement of their talent, character, and potential—and ideally be able to explain why the student would be an excellent fit for their choice of major. While UT states that letters of recommendation are optional, we highly suggest using this opportunity to the fullest by carefully selecting letter-writers who can attest to your student’s abilities and unique characteristics.

For starters, they should be sure the recommenders they choose know them well enough to say something unique about them. If a student’s recommendations are boilerplate or general—and don’t speak specifically to that student’s strengths and abilities—they won’t serve as a value-add for the application. Similarly, students should choose people who they think would be excited to write these recommendations, as that excitement will shine through in the letters and stand out to admissions officers.

CHOOSING THE BEST RECOMMENDERS FOR THE FIRST-CHOICE MAJOR

Students should go out of their way to find recommenders who can speak to their potential in their first-choice major. That might be someone who understands the student's skill set as related to that major, or it might be someone who can speak to their passion for that specific field.

Here are some examples of people to consider asking, based on popular majors:

BUSINESS: A manager from a summer job or internship, a local business owner they've shadowed or assisted, or a leader from a business-related club or organization or a Scout leader

ENGINEERING: A supervisor from a research project or lab, a mentor from a robotics or coding club, a supervisor from a volunteer project, or an engineer they've interviewed or job-shadowed

NURSING: A volunteer coordinator from a hospital or clinic they've volunteered at, a supervisor from a healthcare-related summer program, or a healthcare professional they've shadowed

EDUCATION: A supervisor from a summer camp or after-school program they've worked at, a coordinator from a tutoring program they've volunteered with, the parent of children they babysit for, or a mentor teacher they've observed or assisted

COMPUTER SCIENCE: A teacher or mentor from a coding bootcamp or workshop they've completed, a leader from a computer science-related club or organization, a software developer they've shadowed, or a supervisor from an internship

PSYCHOLOGY: A supervisor from a psychology research lab they've assisted with, a mentor from a mental health awareness club or organization, a psychologist they've interviewed or shadowed, or a parent of children they babysit for

COMMUNICATION: A manager from a summer job or internship, the leader of a nonprofit organization they volunteer with, a mentor from a debate club or public speaking organization, or a communication professional (journalist, marketer, etc.) they've interviewed or shadowed

Students will want to make sure that their recommendations offer a ringing endorsement of their suitability for and interest in their first-choice major. It's important to communicate that to the recommender.

KEEP IN MIND: while UT encourages letters of recommendation from non-academic references (like coaches or bosses), students cannot submit a letter written by a relative. Also, while UT "encourages" students to ask non-teachers for a recommendation letter, it's not a requirement. If a student doesn't have anyone they feel comfortable asking, they can still submit a teacher recommendation.



SECTION VI: AFTER SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

Submitting an application to UT is a two-step process. After carefully completing and submitting the application, applicants will receive an email from the university with instructions for the next steps as well as access to the applicant information portal, **MyStatus**. Applicants can expect this email within 2-3 days of submitting their application.

UPLOADING ADDITIONAL APPLICATION MATERIALS THROUGH MYSTATUS

Once students are logged in to MyStatus, they should use the included Document Upload System to do the following:

- Upload their extended resume
- Request their recommendation writers to submit their letters
- Submit official transcripts

Once a student has completed all the necessary steps, they should check back regularly (save those login credentials!) to ensure that any additional application materials have been received by the university and that their application is complete.

NEW DATES & DEADLINES FOR FRESHMAN ADMISSION

- **Early Action deadline: October 15**
To meet the October 15 Early Action deadline, applicants should ensure that supporting application documents are received by the university on or before October 15. We urge students not to wait until the last minute to apply, ideally submitting before October 8. Processing can take several days, and unforeseen glitches can occur. Students who meet the Early Action deadline will receive an admission decision by January 15.
- **Regular Decision deadline: December 1**
International applicants and students who are not ready to submit by the Early Action deadline should use the Regular Decision deadline of December 1. Students should make sure all supporting application materials are received by the university by December 1. Students who meet the Regular Decision deadline will receive an admission decision by February 15.

	Deadline*	Admission decisions
Early Action	October 15	January 15
Regular Decision	December 1	February 15

* We recommend submitting a week before the deadline to account for possible unforeseen issues.



SECTION VII: ALTERNATIVE ADMISSIONS PATHWAYS

To expand enrollment options for Longhorn hopefuls, The University of Texas System has developed two alternative pathway programs to select applicants.

COORDINATED ADMISSIONS PROGRAM (CAP)

Students who successfully complete **CAP** requirements during their first year at a participating university—including UT Arlington and UT San Antonio, among others—will be guaranteed admission to UT Austin’s College of Liberal Arts. Students seeking a degree outside of liberal arts should keep in mind that participating in CAP will not guarantee admission to the Schools of Business, Engineering, Natural Sciences, or Communication, and UT’s School of Architecture doesn’t accept CAP applicants.

PATH TO ADMISSION THROUGH CO-ENROLLMENT (PACE)

PACE participants spend their freshman year taking one class per semester on the Forty Acres, while taking the remaining first-year coursework at Austin Community College-Rio Grande. After successful completion of PACE requirements, students continue their sophomore year as full-time UT Austin students with eligibility to transfer into majors in the Colleges of Liberal Arts, Education, Communication, or Social Work.

CONCLUSION

The UT Austin application can be overwhelming, but the good news is that it gives each student the chance to showcase who they are as a person. It can be refreshing to know that the Office of Admissions at UT Austin will review the expanded resume, personal essay, short answer essays, and letters of recommendation, along with the rest of the application, and will make their decisions based on the application *as a whole*. By selecting an appropriate first-choice major and putting equal effort into each part of the application, students will maximize their chances of success in the application process.



COLLEGE MATCHPOINT

The team at College MatchPoint has developed a set of tools and resources to help students and families successfully navigate the college admissions process. We are committed to helping all students thrive in their selected college, and the first step is reducing the stress of the admissions process for students and parents alike.

With that in mind, we've used our team's expertise—developed over years of working with students, parents, and college admissions officers—to create a library of free resources that you can use as you navigate the college journey.

WWW.COLLEGEMATCHPOINT.COM

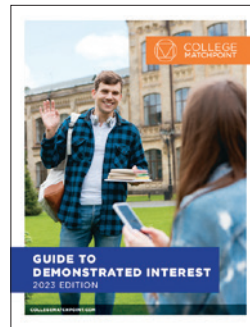
FREE RESOURCES



Guide to Engagement in High School: The i4 Framework

The most successful college applicants have engaged in activities that are based on their interests, aptitudes, and motivations. This guide presents our i4 framework and walks you through how your student can optimize their interest, involvement, initiative, and impact to successfully engage during high school and develop into a strong college applicant.

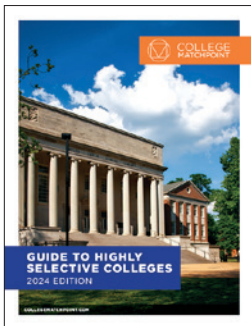
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Guide To Demonstrated Interest

Demonstrated interest is the degree to which you show a college that you are sincerely interested in attending their school. It has become an important, subtle tool that colleges use to efficiently and accurately enroll a specific target number of students each year. This guide offers tips on showing demonstrated interest no matter your personality type, and we provide some examples of emails and conversation starters to use with admissions representatives.

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Guide To Highly Selective Colleges

Applying to a highly selective college can be daunting, but if your student has their heart set on one, there are some guidelines they can follow to help them stand out from the crowd. This guide discusses what highly selective colleges look for in students, how to achieve “depth” in activities, and the importance of having a specific application strategy for the most selective schools.

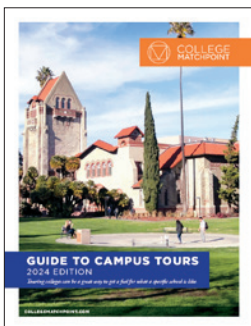
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Guide to Summer Planning

For many of today's college-bound high school students, the summer is no longer nine weeks of total relaxation, but rather an opportunity to spend time actively working, learning new skills, or diving deeper into an area (or areas) of interest. This complete guide to summer planning walks you through the various types of summer opportunities—from volunteer work to independent projects, and everything in between—and offers tips for how your student can take their involvement up a notch during the summer.

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Guide To Campus Tours

Touring colleges can be a great way to get a feel for what a specific school is like, but because these visits are brief, it's crucial to go into them prepared. In this guide, we provide a college tour checklist, a list of not-to-be-missed campus destinations, and tips for making the most of your college visits. With this guide in hand, you can focus on taking advantage of this special time together with your student.

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Guide to Exploring College Majors

Choosing a major is an exciting journey, and it's one to go into prepared—the choice of major will not only determine what they study for the next four years, but also has the potential to impact the rest of the student's likelihood of admissions to many schools. This guide offers suggestions for how to navigate the process, important stats about majors and their career tracks, information about how a major choice will affect your student's high school years, and much more.

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