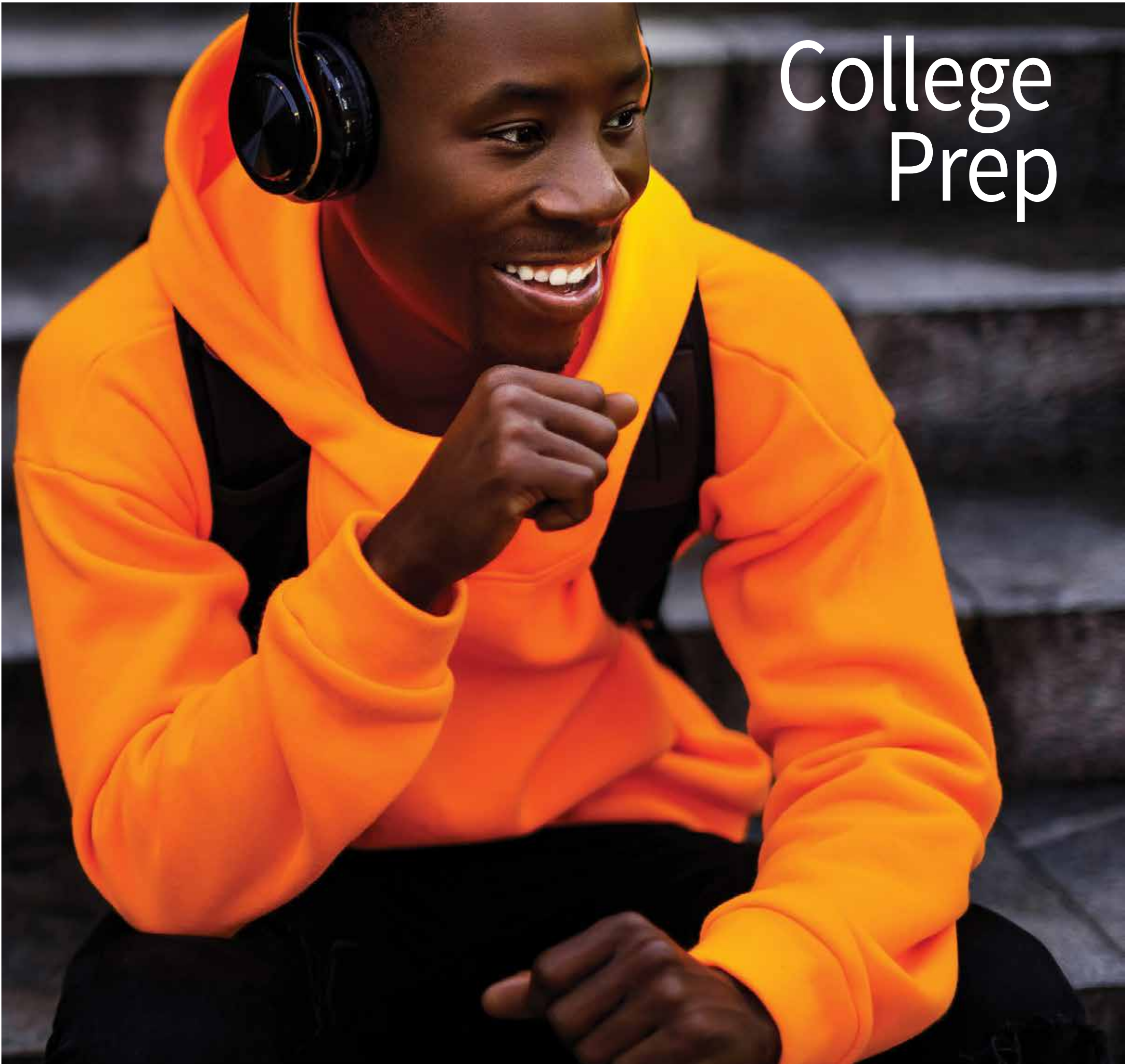


College Prep



Building a Class Schedule

An exciting part of college life is getting to choose your own classes.

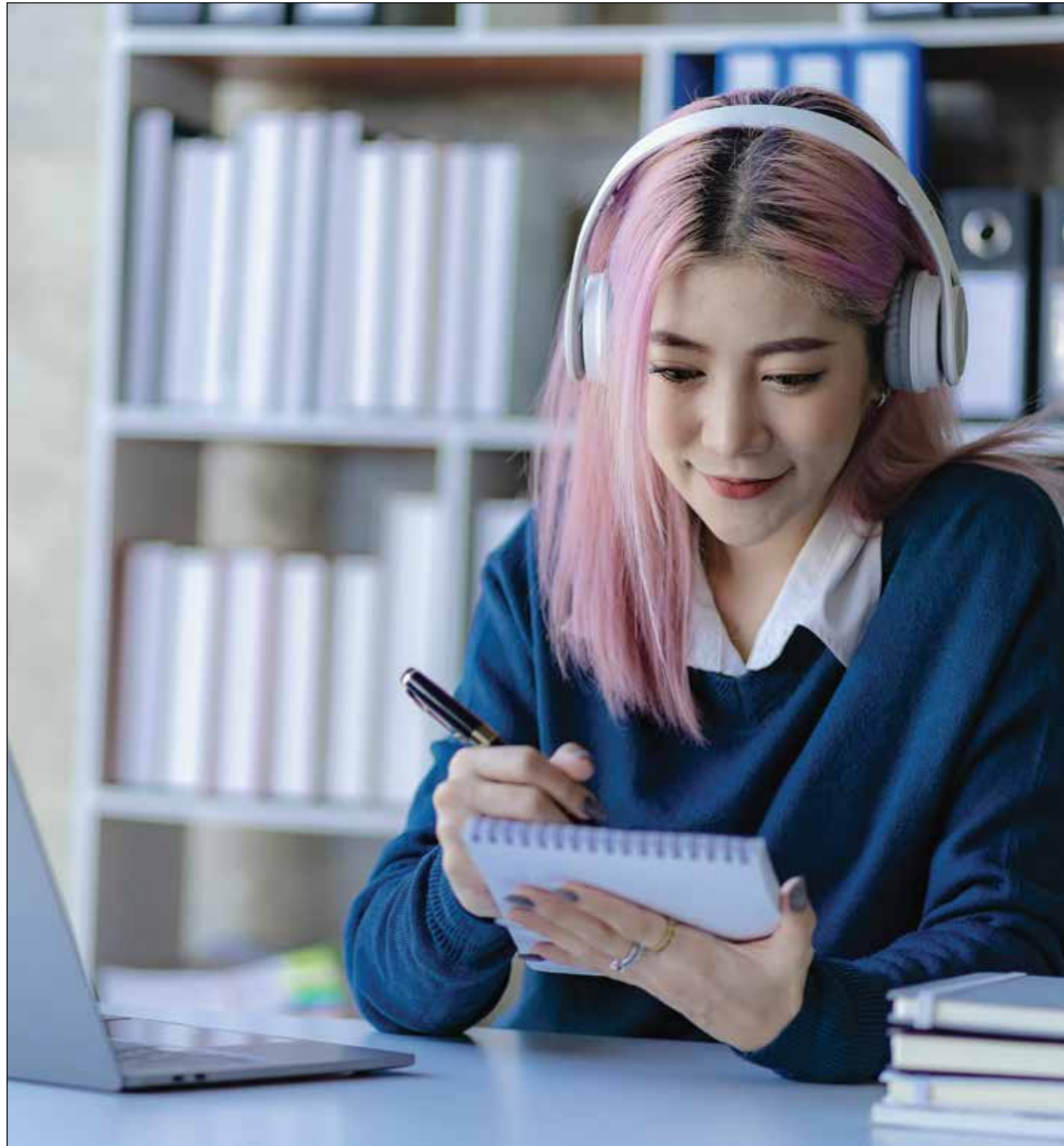
College tends to offer far more options than high school ever did with opportunities to deeply explore academic topics. There is likely a wealth of extra-curricular activities to choose from. You'll also need to carve out time to study and you may even need to work while attending school.

A well-planned schedule can help you stay on track with your academic goals, manage your time effectively and balance your extra-curricular activities. Learning how to schedule early on can keep you on track and help you save valuable time. It can even make the difference in whether you graduate in four years or five.

SELECTING CLASSES

An academic advisor is a key partner to your academic success and can help ensure you plan a pathway to achieving your degree. Make a list of the courses you need to take and refer to it throughout your college career so that you can ensure you are on track to meet your graduation requirements.

Consider your learning style when selecting classes. Do you learn best through lectures? Do you prefer more interactive classes? If there are choices available, research the class size and format. Will you excel



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taking online courses or do you prefer in-person classes?

Talk to your fellow students, especially those in your major, to find out how different professors teach so you can match their style to your needs.

When you can, make room

in your schedule to take classes that you will enjoy, that will give you the opportunity to learn about something that you've always wanted to learn about, especially in your first few years of school. It may prompt you to change your

major or to add a minor.

Consider the difficulty of the coursework when you are building your class schedule. Balance each semester so that you have some classes that are challenging with others that are less difficult. If you can,

look at a syllabus before signing up for a class. Some classes will require more writing or projects. Figure out ways to spread these classes out.

Some classes you need to take to graduate will have prerequisites. Plan those carefully so you don't miss out on a class that is offered only once a year because you don't meet the requirements.

SCHEDULING AIDS

Create a time management plan to help you balance your academic and personal obligations. Allocate time to study, work and other activities. Build your schedule around these priorities and avoid overloading your schedule with too many classes.

Most colleges and universities have online registration tools. Use them to help you search for classes, view available times and locations and register for classes. These can help you avoid signing up for classes with conflicting times or that are too far apart on campus for you to make it from one class to the next.

Don't hesitate to reach out to professors or teaching assistants during office hours or over email to get additional help or support. They can help to clarify concepts and answer questions about coursework.

Be flexible when building your schedule. Sometimes classes may be full or schedules may change and you'll have to adjust your plan. Be prepared to make changes. It's part of college life.

Campus Visits

One key step to choosing a college is visiting the potential campus.

Visiting the campus provides critical information about whether it is a good fit for you and whether the college or university is somewhere you want to spend the next several years of your life. Educational institutes understand the importance of this and set up events where they can show off what they have to offer and answer questions that you have.

Many students start making campus visits during their junior year, taking advantage of spring breaks or summer vacation.

PLANNING THE VISIT

Create a budget and set aside money for your trips. Calculate how much you will need to spend on transportation, food and other miscellaneous costs. This will help you determine how many campus visits you can do and set priorities for the most important ones.

Plan your trip so that you'll be able to take in all you want to do. Research the college's website for available dates and times for campus tours and information sessions. The college may be able to help you with such things as transportation, lodging and meals or you may have to make all those reservations and ticket purchases on your own.



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Find out whether there are programs at your high school that arrange group trips to colleges. You can also get together a group of friends and road trip to colleges you are all interested in. You may want to make it a family trip to involve those who will be helping support you through your college career.

Get a map of the college campus before you go and highlight places you want to visit while there. If you are not attending a formal college-sponsored visit, contact the admissions office and see whether they can arrange a guided tour or suggest good times to visit. Some schools have virtual tours online that

can give you a good introduction to the campus and help you prepare for your visit.

DURING THE VISIT

Make the most of your time on campus. Attend an information session or meet with an admissions counselor. Walk around the campus and explore different buildings

and facilities. Attend a class or meet with a professor in your area of interest. Indulge in the campus culture and talk with current students.

Ask about campus safety. Federal law mandates that educational institutions provide information on crime in and around campus. Look at their annual security reports and ask the school about anything that concerns you.

Check out the gym or theater. Visit a dorm if possible. Make notes about your experience. Try to imagine yourself participating in different events. What places made you feel comfortable? What aspects didn't you like?

In addition to exploring the campus, spend some time in the local community. Does it have the sort of environment you are comfortable with? Look at off-campus housing and work opportunities. Research whether it is a safe community.

AFTER THE VISIT

Evaluate your experience and review your notes. You may want to create a grid to compare colleges or, if you are a visual learner, draw cloud pictures of various aspects you observed.

Continue to research the college and stay in touch with the admissions representatives. Make a list of the next steps in the application process such as application deadlines, required documents and financial aid information.

College Entrance Exams

Even the bravest of students may experience anxiety when it comes to taking college entrance exams.

The pressures are high. Test scores can make a difference between getting into a dream school or having to settle for a second or third choice. A high score can also open the door to scholarships or special programs at a university.

The most common standardized college entrance exams are the SAT and the ACT.

These aren't the only two college prep exams, however. The CLT—Classic Learning Test—is a newer alternative that some colleges accept. Other schools may require SAT subject tests or advanced placement tests. International students may be required to take a TOEFL—Test of English as a Foreign Language.

PREPARING FOR THE EXAMS

The University of Portland advises students that the best way to prepare for college exams is to take challenging high school classes and apply yourself to your studies. The College Board agrees and also adds that you should read and write as much as you can.

However, that doesn't rule out specific test prep. Start early and stay consistent. Create a study schedule that fits your needs and stick to it.



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While there will be lots of people telling you what the “right” way is to prepare, find what works for you and fits your learning style.

Some preparation techniques include taking practice exams, using study guides or online resources and seeking assistance from a tutor or teacher.

When taking practice tests (and both major tests have free online versions), be sure to time yourself and create an environment that is like the test-taking one.

REVIEW THE TEST'S FORMAT

The SAT has two main sections—evidence-based reading

and writing and math, with an optional essay. The ACT has four sections—English, math, reading and science with an optional writing section. This can help students decide which test they want to take. If a student excels in math, the math portion makes up 50% of the SAT while it is only 25% of the ACT. The SAT allows for

more time per question than the ACT does.

TAKING THE EXAMS

Get a good night's sleep the night before the exam and then eat a good breakfast.

If you are going to a testing center, arrive early to give yourself time to check in, find your seat and relax. Bring your admission ticket, photo identification and any necessary supplies such as a calculator and pencils. Bring a snack for breaks to help you keep your energy up.

Do not take any items that are forbidden and know what the policies are before you arrive.

Once the exam starts, manage your time wisely by pacing yourself and answering the easier questions first. Remember to read the directions carefully and check your work for errors.

AFTER THE EXAMS

You will receive a score report indicating your performance. If you are not satisfied with your score, you can retake the exams. However, keep in mind that while some colleges will use only your highest score, others may take an average of all your attempts.

When you are researching schools to apply to, knowing your score can be helpful. Some schools require specific scores while others use the score only as one factor among many. There are even schools that offer test-optional admissions.

Extra-Curricular Activities

College isn't all classes and studying. Learning takes many forms—including participating in campus organizations and activities.

These activities are an essential part of your college experience. They help you develop new skills, make friends and build a sense of community on campus. They're also a great way to form connections, identify mentors and network.

SELECTING ACTIVITIES

Take some time to identify your interests. Consider what hobbies or activities you enjoy and what skills you would like to develop. This will help you find an activity that is both enjoyable and beneficial.

While some people choose activities that will help build a resume or contribute to future job skills, you can also benefit from something that is completely separate from your major. First, you never know what skills you might need in the future, but secondly, it is important to have mental breaks doing things that enrich your life.

Consider trying something you've never done before. College can be a great time to break out of old routines, experience new things and expand your boundaries.

Most colleges and universities



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offer a variety of extra-curricular activities, including clubs, sports teams and volunteer organizations. Research the options and identify ones that align with your interests and goals.

Club fairs are a great way to learn about the different extra-curricular activities offered on campus. Attend the fair, talk to representatives

from different clubs and learn more about what they have to offer.

Attend a meeting or two of the extra-curricular activity you are interested in. This will give you a better sense of what the activity is like and whether it is a good fit for you.

If you can't find an organization that focuses on your pas-

sion project, consider starting one. Seek out a faculty member who will support you and research whether your university has available funds that can be used to start new groups.

MANAGING PARTICIPATION

When selecting extra-curricular activities, be mindful of

time commitments. Make sure you have enough time to balance your academic responsibilities with your extra-curricular activities.

Figure out how you want to be involved. Attend meetings, participate in events and volunteer for leadership roles if possible and appropriate. This can help you get more out of the experience and make meaningful connections with your peers.

Extra-curricular activities can help you develop a variety of skills including leadership, teamwork, communication and problem solving. It can help you evolve social skills that will contribute to both your enjoyment of life and your future professional success. Be intentional about building these skills and leveraging them in your academic and professional pursuits.

While extra-curricular activities are important, so is finding balance. Don't take on so many activities that it interferes with your studies or—just as importantly—time for self-care and relaxation. They should enrich your life, not cause you so much anxiety or stress that it becomes difficult to function. When you need to, take a step back.

Extra-curricular activities can provide for some of your most memorable college experiences, adding depth to your life, enriching your relationships and helping you learn life-long skills. They're also a great way for you to find "your people" and form long-lasting friendships.

Finding a Faith Community

Finding a faith community in a new town can be challenging for college students.

For many students, faith is an important part of their identity and finding a community that shares their beliefs can be a key factor in their well-being and success. It's why it is crucial to find supportive communities that offer opportunities for spiritual growth and learning.

CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS

Many colleges and universities have religious organizations that cater to a variety of faiths. These organizations offer opportunities for fellowship, worship and community service. You can research these organizations online or visit the campus student center.

Many campus ministry groups are affiliated with religious organizations and offer opportunities for students to connect with others who share their faith. These groups often hold weekly meetings, Bible studies and other social events. Some provide weekly meals or even offer off-campus housing.

Many colleges and universities have chaplains who offer spiritual support to students of all faiths. These chaplains can provide counseling, guidance and mentorship to students who are looking for support or a listening ear.



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Other campuses hold events that celebrate diversity and inclusivity, including events that celebrate religious holidays and traditions. Attending these events can be a great way to connect with others who share your faith or to learn about other faiths and cultures.

Also, you're at college. You might be able to take classes in theology, comparative religion

or other religious studies. This can provide a learning experience and help you meet others with similar interests to you.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Attending religious services in the local community is another way to find faith communities. Most churches, synagogues, mosques and other places of worship offer ser-

vices that are open to the public. Religious organizations in college towns often have ministries designed to support students.

Check local directories, online resources or ask your fellow students for recommendations. If you belonged to a religious community back home, leaders of that community may be able to connect

you with communities in your college home.

Volunteering with a faith-based organization can be a great way to meet like-minded people and make a positive difference in the community. You can find opportunities for community service through campus organizations, local churches or online directories.

Online communities, such as social media groups or forums can be another great way to connect with others who share your faith. These communities can provide support, advice and a sense of belonging. They also have the advantage of being accessible at hours that are convenient for you as a student, especially since many brick-and-mortar faith organizations have hours that may not work for you.

The National Catholic Reporter recommends that students use their college years to learn about faiths other than their own. They suggest attending interfaith events and study groups, attending services that are different from what you grew up with and building friendships with people of different religious backgrounds. All this, they point out, is important for living in today's pluralistic society.

Getting suggestions from your friends is also an important way to find a faith community. "Community" means you are practicing your faith with others. Seek out a way to do that with people you care about and who are sharing your college experience.

Navigating the Library

Even with the internet, the library remains a central part of college life.

Navigating a college library can be a daunting task, especially for first-year college students who are still getting used to the academic environment. However, with a little guidance and preparation, using it can become second nature.

LIBRARY LAYOUT

The first step is to familiarize yourself with the library layout. Take a tour and make note of where important areas are located, such as the reference desk, circulation desk, stacks and study areas. Learn where the restrooms are. If you already know your major, find out where most of the books in your subject area are shelved. Knowing where these areas are located will save you time.

Some libraries will have computer labs, archives and special collections.

Many university libraries will offer floor plans and maps. Also, large universities may have multiple libraries, each with a different focus. Learn which libraries your campus has and where they are.

SEARCHING FOR BOOKS

Knowing how to search for books is an important skill when using a college library. You can search for books by author, title, subject or key-



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word. A useful place to start is the library's online catalog or database. College libraries use a catalog system to organize their collection of books, journals and other materials. Ask a librarian for help if you're unsure of how to use the catalog system.

LIBRARIANS TO THE RESCUE

Speaking of librarians, they can be one of the heroes of your academic journey.

Trained to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students, their goal is to help you feel confident using library resources and to connect you to other campus resources.

Reference librarians are experts in research and can help you find the resources you need. If you're struggling to find a specific book or article, don't hesitate to ask for help. They can also help you with citation formatting and

other research-related questions. They'll have good information on developing research strategies, accessing scholarly sources and refining research topics.

Librarians can help you evaluate information sources, explaining the difference between scholarly and popular sources and demonstrating how to identify bias in information sources.

Today's librarian has a lot of technological know-how and

can help explain how to access and use library technology such as databases, online catalogs and research tools.

STUDY SPACES

Most college libraries offer a variety of study spaces, including quiet areas, group study rooms and computer labs. Learn where these are and then find out what the rules and etiquette of each room are. Some spaces are first-come, first-served while others can be reserved. They are likely to fill up fast during midterms and finals.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Take advantage of online resources such as e-books, articles and databases. Many of these resources can be accessed from anywhere, making it a convenient option. Most college libraries subscribe to databases that provide access to newspaper, magazine and scholarly journal articles. Others offer streaming videos and online tools that you can log into with your student ID or password.

Find out whether there are 24/7 support resources available through your library where you can ask research questions via email, text or live chat.

Navigating a college library may seem overwhelming at first, but with a little practice and preparation, it can become a valuable resource for your academic success.

Studying Abroad

Studying abroad during college can be a life-changing experience.

Studies abroad offer students the opportunity to explore new cultures, learn new languages and gain a broader perspective on the world.

PLANNING

There are many different study abroad programs available ranging from year-long or semester-long programs to summer programs. Common study abroad formats include exchange, faculty led, third-party, internship, language immersion, research and volunteer programs. Research your options and choose one that aligns with your academic goals, language proficiency and budget.

You'll need to carefully plan. Research such things as visa requirements, health insurance and travel arrangements well in advance. Talk to an academic advisor about how credits earned abroad will transfer back to your home institution.

Studying abroad can be expensive. Budget carefully and explore available scholarships and financial aid options. Find out the cost of living in your host country and plan accordingly.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE EXPERIENCE

This is an opportunity to



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immerse yourself in a new culture. Participate in local activities, explore the city and country and interact with locals. If you are studying in a country where the primary language is different from your native language, take the opportunity to learn the language. This will help you navigate your host country and improve your language skills, which can be a valuable asset to you in the future.

Studying abroad can be challenging academically and culturally and you'll need to manage your expectations. Be prepared to adapt to a new academic environment, navigate cultural differences and manage homesickness.

Safety is always a concern when traveling abroad. Research the safety of your host country, take precautions to protect yourself and always be aware of your surround-

ings. Follow the advice of those who know the country well and pay attention to the rules of the host country.

Document your experience through photos, journaling and blogging. This will serve as a personal record of your experience and allow you to share it with others.

RESPECTING THE HOST COUNTRY

Respecting the culture of

the host country demonstrates a willingness to learn and understand different cultures, promotes cultural exchange and helps to build positive relationships between individuals and nations.

Learn about the culture before you arrive by researching the history, customs and traditions of the country. Observe cultural norms and customs such as dress codes, greetings and social behaviors. If your host country has a dominant religion, be respectful of its practices and traditions.

Food is an important part of culture. Try local cuisine and be open to trying new foods.

Engage with the local community through volunteer work, attending cultural events and participating in local traditions.

Be aware of your own cultural biases and try to be open-minded and respectful of cultural differences. Avoid making assumptions or judgments about the local culture based on your own cultural norms.

Respect the laws and regulations of your host country, including following traffic laws, avoiding illegal activities and respecting cultural property.

Be humble and willing to learn from your host country, its culture and its people.

Depart with your sense of adventure intact and be ready for a life-changing experience that you'll remember for the rest of your days.