



Admissions

What you won't hear anywhere else

PREPMATTERS™ EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING, TEST PREP & SUBJECT TUTORING

WHO AM I?

1) I was named after a Methodist bishop and originally located in a town founded and named for the alma mater of John and Charles Wesley.

2) I closed entirely during the Civil War as every student left to fight.

3) I've been undefeated in football since 1836 (my founding), having never had a football team.

4) Lively exchanges of two literary Societies led to a tradition of Debate that is still prominent today.

5) My present location is due to a gift from the founder of Coca Cola, brother to one of my presidents.

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WHO AM I?

Emory University, with campuses in Atlanta and Oxford, Georgia.

What Tutors Say

It's been another intense and memorable season of test prep for the PrepMatters tutors. Each student and family probably only knows their own tutor, so we thought our readers might enjoy hearing comments from several of our outstanding staff members. We asked several of our tutors to share with us their general impressions about tutoring this fall.

Susie Dykeman: This fall I saw more students who have already started tutoring for spring tests and know that they want to focus on the ACT alone, as opposed to the SAT or both. The idea that they can choose the ACT over the SAT is really taking hold. The SAT and ACT each play to different student strengths, so it's nice to see that students feel comfortable with choosing the best option for them.

Sunhee Hong: I guess the thing that's stood out most to me is how much the College Board's decision to allow for score choice has turned the decision making process of what test to take into a more fluid situation. It has created tougher decisions for myself and families because we now have to decide how many times -- and when -- a student should take a particular test. The fact that an individual school's position on the matter is subject to change has further complicated the planning process. Our standard advice about comparing the ACT and SAT still holds true, and I am pushing students to make an informed decision on one test or the other as quickly as possible.

Kristin Keating: This fall, as I helped my students work on their college applications, I was also busy completing my own applications for PhD programs, so I was a fellow sympathizer in their plight. This year, I was even more impressed with those students who diligently stuck to their deadlines while I procrastinated on the ones I had set for myself. As I attempted to capture my own best qualities on paper, I appreciated even more the wide variety of interests and talents students have that will contribute to their college campuses.

Cynthia Liu: I've really enjoyed working with students on strategy for the various tests, whether it be the PSAT, SAT, ACT, GRE, GMAT, or LSAT. Most of my students found the focus on strategy to be the most helpful, particularly in the graduate tests where timing and efficiency are key.

Garrett Lowe: This fall has been a mixture of juniors beginning and seniors finishing. I have seen a real growth of interest in the ACT, although still a reluctance by some to try the ACT. I also feel more strongly that determining whether a student is stronger on one test than another is an essential first step to successful test prep. Outside of that, the fall has been a great and delightful blur of getting students ready, helping them keep the test in perspective and pointing out the snares that most commonly trip them up.

These are but a few of PrepMatters' outstanding tutors who work hard to help students achieve their best performances in their academic fields of endeavor.

TRAPS AND AMBUSHES

College admissions is a confusing landscape. Since every college can do its own thing, you are probably dealing with a different set of rules and policies for every college on your list. It's also confusing because everyone you know has an opinion about what you should do. One person has a success story you should copy. Another heard about a failure you should avoid at all costs. A third has a friend who knows a sure-fire way for you to get what you want.

People are no doubt trying to genuinely help, but it makes no more sense to blindly follow the advice of anyone with an opinion than it would to take a poll at a neighborhood party on the best way to fill out next year's tax return. There are too many variables. They undoubtedly know what worked for them, but that doesn't mean that their path is the right path for you.



Should I send optional material?

Are you one who thinks that bombarding admission offices with extra material will impress? That's not necessarily the case. What impresses admissions is quality, not quantity.

That's not to say there isn't a place for optional material. Resumes and an additional letter of recommendation can work well especially when you have something to add that wasn't adequately covered in the application. That's why colleges request portfolios of art students and auditions of performing arts students. It's something extra that's over and above what the regular application covers.

On the other hand, sending more detail of what you've already concisely listed in the application might be a waste of time -- or worse, might get the reader focused on trees (of detail) and not the forest (of key talents and accomplishments). Be particularly wary of investing in expensive materials that might never even be opened.

Here's a good rule of thumb. If you have something you want to send and are wondering if you should, consider this. Write it up and ask yourself if it adds another dimension to your application -- not more detail but another dimension. If it does, send it. If it doesn't, you might want to file it away for another occasion.

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Do Colleges Like the IB? (and what is it?)

The IB (or International Baccalaureate) is a rigorous college preparatory program offered by several hundred schools in the U.S. and in 130 other countries around the world.

It has a standardized curriculum which means that the colleges familiar with it know what the grades actually represent. That's a big plus for colleges who otherwise are dealing with thousands of different grading scales for thousands of different secondary schools. In addition, the IB is an advanced program, with half or more of the courses in the final year considered to be at the college level. That makes it easier for colleges to assess a student's preparedness for college, which ultimately is admissions' goal.

Many colleges and universities, particularly those with international applicants, are familiar with the IB and, as with the AP program, will award college credit for appropriate scores from final exams in the higher level courses.

In the U.S., the IB program is not as widely used nor as widely understood as the AP program. The IB also has a

different philosophy from that of the subject-driven AP program. The IB program describes its philosophy as students asking challenging questions, learning how to learn, developing a strong sense of their own identity and culture, and developing the ability to communicate with and understand people from other countries and cultures. In that way it shows its roots, since it was originally developed for Foreign Service children who frequently received their schooling in more than one country.

Students study six core courses, of which three must be (and a fourth may be) at college level, and they must take comprehensive examinations in each at the end of the year. In that way it probably is closer to a European educational model, which perhaps is why some students have found it easier to receive credit for their IB work from European universities than from ours in the U.S.

Perhaps it's not as well known, but it's a definite winner for colleges who understand what it is.

College Cousins

A large and diverse student population and a concrete campus on busy city streets is the experience of students at Boston University (in Boston, of course) and George Washington University (here in D.C.). At each, students must fulfill general requirements.

GW's requirements span
 seven categories and
 include two courses in
 math and two in foreign
 language. BU's include
 eight integrated courses
 organized around historical
 developments and cultural traditions.

Boston University and George Washington University

Social life at both universities revolves heavily around their surrounding cities so no one need complain about running out of opportunities. The flip side of having so much at your doorstep, however, is that it can put a damper on campus spirit. That's where sports can have an impact and make a positive contribution to campus spirit. GW and BU both offer plenty of competition although neither fields an intercollegiate football team BU competes in 23 Division I sports (13 for women and 10 for men) and GW competes in 22 sports (12 for women and 10 for men).

These two popular institutions represent a departure from the stereotypical tree-lined campus and weekends dominated by the grid-iron, but they are bursting in vitality and opportunity. Both have solid academic reputations and are well regarded. Their students must have a certain poise because these aren't universities for the timid and shy. They are for those ready to forge their own path and embrace all that the universities and their cities have to offer.

	Boston University for Fall 2007	George Washington University (for Fall 2007)
Number of Applications	33,930	19,606
Number Accepted	19,888	7,197
Percent Accepted	58.6	36.7
Number in Freshman Class	4,163	2,137
Undergrad Enrollment	18,733	9,550
% Men and Women	39% to 61%	44% to 56%
% in Fraternities & Sororities	4%	18%
Middle 50% SAT (all sections)	1850 - 2080	1800 - 2070
Middle 50% ACT	27 - 31	26 - 29
Percent in Top 10% of Class	61%	66%
Most Popular Majors	Business/Marketing Social Sciences Communication/ Journalism	Social Sciences Business/ Marketing



Studying for the GMAT

So you want to go to business school, but you aren't sure how to get started. The GMAT is a tough test, but you should have a great shot at it if you have the right preparation. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- The GMAT is a CAT: a computer adaptive test that adapts itself to your skill level as you move through the test. You and the person next to you will probably be answering different questions.

- Because it is a CAT, you can schedule your test at a testing center for virtually any day of the year. You can set up a study schedule, and only set your date when you have a pretty good idea of when you expect to reach your personal best. At the same time, you don't want to wait too long. Some of the testing centers fill up, so you'll want to make your reservation well in advance.

- Hoard your practice tests! Because the GMAT is a CAT, there just aren't a whole lot of realistic practice tests out there. In fact, the tests put out by the major test-prep companies are notoriously bad predictors of your score. Only the two official practice tests put out by the GMAC are realistic enough to predict your score, so save them until you're ready to give them your best shot.

- Troll the internet, but be careful! There are a lot of companies and websites wanting your GMAT attention, but some of them offer live questions from real GMATs. If you use those sites, you'll be in danger of having your score invalidated or even being barred from taking the GMAT again.

Our PrepMatters staff can help answer more specific questions about a GMAT study plan.

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Siblings and the SAT

Every child tests differently, even those in the same family. And every child is affected by his or her sibling's score, no matter what the claim and no matter what that score was.

"I started with two smart twins, brother and sister, who possessed very different strengths from each other. With siblings, it's extremely difficult to not compare abilities, especially on standardized tests. With twins, it's practically impossible. While Beth in many ways was intellectually superior to her brother, Max had a knack for the kind of math that baffled her. Max also had the bluff confidence common to teenage boys, while Beth shared the shaky diffidence of so many of her female peers. Coincidentally, the twins, through very different skill sets, had the potential to reach nearly identical scores."

From Conquering the SAT

Every sibling story is different, but almost every one contains the seeds of competition, irresistible to anyone seeking to differentiate himself from his brothers and sisters. That competition can spell disaster on the SAT or ACT for a sibling who is focused on the wrong goals and fueled by family-rooted pressure rather than personal motivation. Parents, however, can do much to reverse a negative dynamic if they:



1. Focus on efforts, not results. Even when talking about results, speak in terms of that child's personal improvement, not in comparison to others.

2. Praise the skills that are specific to that child. "You're great at reading," or "I love how careful you are on the math section," will tell that child that she has valuable skills that are unique to her.

3. Don't allow competitive talk, even if it's in jest. Joking isn't funny to someone who suspects that the joke is true.

Max and Beth had to work through their sibling issues along with their test issues. They had to learn to support each other in conquering the test in their own ways, and their parents had to learn to value and encourage their differing skill sets. Hopefully that will be the way it plays out in your house too.

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NEXT ISSUE:

OUR DECEMBER ISSUE WILL

BE OUR HOLIDAY ISSUE.

Vol. 3 • Issue 10 • 2008

SUBSCRIPTION VALUE \$60. PROVIDED AT NO CHARGE.