

## BONUS: MORE STUFF YOU REALLY MIGHT NOT KNOW

---

### THE STANDARDIZED TEST & PLACEMENT TEST GAME

This test score information is especially helpful during your college admission process. If you're barely squeaking by with your test scores, know your options and take placement tests seriously! (The importance of test scores on your admission process varies from school to school.) This is something I didn't think about (or, really understand) until I started working closely with students who did not meet ACT admission requirements.

First, let me just point out what I tell most students when I bring up test scores: **We know that standardized tests are not the best measure of your intelligence and they certainly don't define your worth or merit as a student and scholar**, but (unfortunately) they are widely used so it benefits you to be as informed as possible so you can work within the system. (Essentially, you got to know the rules to play the game.)

Not only is the overall ACT score a basis for admissions, at some schools so are some (or all) of the individual subject tests. For instance, a university I worked at required ACT subject test scores of 19 in Math and a 18 in English (in addition to an overall score minimum). If students don't meet those scores they can't be admitted. . . no matter how good their highschool GPA was! As an additional component to this, some schools "cherry pick" or take the best scores from multiple tests while other schools will only let you submit one set of ACT scores (one test date). Know the rules and submit scores accordingly!

There is an option open to students at some universities to try and attain a higher score by taking the [ACT Compass](#) test. Compass comes from the folks who make the ACT (College Board) and allows you to take ACT subject tests one at a time. (The scoring is different but has equivalents to ACT scores.) If your ACT scores are holding you up from admission to a university, it always pays to ask about this option. Sometimes Admission Counselors don't mention this unless they're asked. (Also, taking the Compass is usually \$10-\$20 a subject test – much cheaper than retaking the ACT!)

At many community colleges and colleges that offer developmental/remedial courses, students need to take the Compass or another placement test to see which class they place into. (Developmental or remedial courses are classes that are not college level but those which you need to pass in order to get into the college level course.) TAKE THESE PLACEMENT TESTS SERIOUSLY! It might be tempting not to study and just answer whatever - without concern for your score, but those tests determine how many developmental (non-college level) classes you need to sit through before you can start earning credit. That's time and money, people! If you legitimately need two developmental math classes before you are at the college level, then that's where you're at and you'll make it work. But it's worthless to sit through a class you don't need.

Before you take placement tests, spend a little time brushing up on the info. And, find out if you are able to take a test more than once. (If you are just a few points away from the next class up, it might be wise to try it again. But, only if you're close!)

## SAP, ACADEMIC PROBATION, & APPEALS

There's this thing called "Satisfactory Academic Progress" which some folks refer to as "SAP" - for short. Essentially, schools want you to be progressing satisfactorily by passing most of the classes you attempt/take. If you drop a class or fail a class you don't get credit and it counts against you. Though the specifics might differ from school to school, the completion ratio is usually around 70%.

So, 70% of the classes you attempt, you need to pass. If you're taking 4 classes, you can fail or withdraw from one and still meet SAP because you would have a 75% completion ratio. If you take 5 classes and fail 2 of them, you are at a 60% completion ratio and wouldn't meet SAP. (These examples assume all the classes are the same amount of credit hours each!)

If you don't successfully complete (a.k.a. pass) 70% or more of your classes then you don't meet SAP. This can lead to academic probation and, perhaps more disastrous, can lead to losing federal financial aid! If you find yourself in this situation, make sure you read all warning emails you receive thoroughly and learn about your options.

Become an expert on your school's probation and appeals process! Some questions you need to answer include: *How many semesters are you on probation? What does your SAP or GPA need to be for you to get off of probation? Can you appeal the decision? How? What documents do you need to provide with an appeal? When is it due? Who can you contact with questions?*

This is such a small detail but you might find it important – sometimes students want to use a summer, January or May term classes to boost their GPAs and get off of probation. This is a calculated risk! Because those sessions are shorter than the regular semester, you have less time to learn the information. If you have a low GPA, chances are that some classes don't come easy to you. Proceed with caution! It might be better to wait till the regular semester where you have a longer length of time to absorb the information and complete the coursework.

## **WITHDRAWING FROM CLASSES**

There's a period of time at the beginning of the semester where, even after classes start, you can usually add and drop classes with no major issues other than maybe some additional fees. Learn when that deadline is AND learn the rules around the extra fees. Plus, if you join a class a few days late you **MUST** go talk to the professor to introduce yourself and talk about what you need to get caught up on. No exceptions!

About halfway through the semester, there is a "Last Day to Withdraw". This means that, until this point, you can withdraw from a class and get a "W" on your transcript instead of a letter grade. (KNOW THIS DATE!) This should only be done in the most extreme circumstances.

### **Why? Let me tell you!**

1) You have spent time and money on this class already! 2) It will negatively affect our SAP – remember that one from above? 3) It could mess up your schedule for following semesters if it's a prerequisite course for other classes you need. 4) More than a "W" or two on your transcript (without some kind of major life event) is not a good sign.

All of that being said, *if you know you will fail a class, you should withdraw*. But, when I say "you know you will fail" I do not just mean you think that you will fail/have already talked yourself into dropping/want the easy way out! I mean you have reviewed your syllabus, all posted grades, all graded work that has been returned to you, and upcoming work between now and the end of the semester, done the math to see what you need to pass the class AND you have spoken with your instructor! Make an informed decision and always leave on the best note possible.

Note: When is both the WORST yet most popular time to start these type of conversations with your instructor? The day before the last day to withdraw. Don't be that student!!!

In the event that something major happens in your life and you are considering withdrawing from several or all of your classes, you should, without a doubt, seek out help from an academic advisor, success coach, or someone who can talk you through the process. Also, dropping several classes can negatively impact your Financial Aid. So, it is wise to check with your Financial Aid Counselor, too.

Finally, if there is a major life event, family crisis, or illness that has impacted your decision to withdraw from classes, definitely speak with someone about your options. (Some schools have better policies with this stuff than others.) Also, as odd as it might feel, keep documentation of your situation (in the form of doctor's notes, obituaries, foreclosure or eviction notices, etc.) because you might need to use them as documentation to "prove your case" in an appeal or something of that nature.

## **SHOW UP & OWN UP AT JUDICIALS**

If you do something wrong academically or legally, you might find yourself in judicial trouble with your university. Your offense could be a number of things like cheating on a test, plagiarizing, having too many unpaid campus parking tickets, fighting, breaking residence hall policies, smoking weed, or a number of other wrongdoings.

First and foremost, make sure you know what your university's policies are! (Ideally you would do this before you break the policy. Ahem!) Every school has some type of student code of conduct. If you live on campus, there's usually another one specifically for campus housing. You sign this stuff (usually virtually) or you can't be enrolled. Take a look at it!

**If you messed up, do not avoid the situation! Address it head on.** Show up at that judicial meeting (in professional attire). Be ready to talk about what happened and, more importantly, how you will do better next time.

Don't take this as legal advice or anything. I have just seen firsthand how terribly a situation can go awry when students avoid a judicial situation instead of addressing it. If you are summoned to a judicial hearing and you don't go, it's likely going to happen without you. You're not doing yourself any favors by letting the person adjudicating your case or your judicial board sit and wonder where you are.

Your sanctions or repercussions will likely be worse if you're not there to defend yourself and/or apologize for your actions. It might just be a fee or fine placed on your student account. Or, it could be expulsion. You just got to take this stuff seriously.