

A young woman with long dark hair, smiling, stands in a garden. She is wearing a white graduation dress with a red sash and a gold tassel. The background features a large, ornate university building with many windows and arches, surrounded by green hedges and red flowers. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

HM

GUIDE

to the
National Merit[®]
Scholarship Program

September 2021

GUIDE
to the
NATIONAL MERIT® SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



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Due to the global pandemic, some dates in this *Guide* are subject to change.

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Introduction

The National Merit® Scholarship Program, conducted by National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC®), is an annual academic competition for recognition and college undergraduate scholarships. Established in 1955, NMSC is a privately financed not-for-profit organization that operates without government assistance.

The competition is open to all U.S. high school students who meet published participation requirements. Scholarship winners are chosen on the basis of their abilities, skills, and accomplishments—without regard to gender, race, ethnic origin, or religious preference.

The goals of the National Merit Scholarship Program are to:

- *identify and honor academically talented U.S. high school students and encourage them to pursue rigorous college studies;*
- *provide professional services for corporations, company foundations, colleges and universities, and other individuals and organizations that wish to sponsor scholarships for outstanding participants in the competition;*
- *promote a broader and deeper respect for learning in general and for exceptionally talented individuals in particular;*
- *stimulate increased support for the education of scholastically able students; and*
- *encourage the pursuit of academic excellence at all levels of education.*

Although a sizable number of National Merit Scholarships are underwritten by NMSC with its own funds, the majority of scholarships awarded in the National Merit Program are sponsored by about 400 corporate organizations and higher education institutions. Since

the first scholarships were awarded in 1956, the educational opportunities of thousands of academically talented young people have been enhanced by the support of scholarship sponsors, such as those listed on pages 32–40.

Each year, educators in about 21,000 high schools provide the opportunity for their students to participate in the National Merit Scholarship Program. The cooperation and assistance of these principals and counselors are essential to the successful operation of the competition, and NMSC is sincerely grateful to them.

This *Guide* is updated and distributed annually as a reference for school administrators. NMSC welcomes suggestions for improving this distribution and all other program materials provided for schools and students.

Student participation and recognition

Typically, over 1.5 million students in about 21,000 high schools enter the National Merit® Scholarship Program each year. Some 50,000 entrants qualify for program recognition, and approximately 8,500 outstanding students receive scholarships for college undergraduate study. The awards, valued at about \$39 million, are underwritten by NMSC® with its own funds and by several hundred corporate organizations and higher education institutions.

Program entry

Students enter the National Merit Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) and meeting other program entry requirements (listed on pages 6–8). The test, administered annually in the fall, is cosponsored by NMSC and College Board. (Information about test registration and procedures is on pages 41–46.) Questions regarding the test should be directed to College Board. All inquiries about the National Merit Program should be directed to NMSC, which independently conducts the competition.

NMSC uses the PSAT/NMSQT as an initial screen of the large number of entrants to the program. A particular year's test is the entry vehicle for a specific year's competition. For example, the 2020 PSAT/NMSQT was used for entry to the 2022 National Merit Program. Most 2022 program participants will enter college in the fall of 2022. The announcement of Semifinalists in September 2021 marks the midpoint of the 2022 competition; it will conclude in the spring of 2022 when winners of National Merit Scholarships are notified and their names are released to news media. The 2023 program begins with the PSAT/NMSQT administration in the fall of 2021 and ends in the spring of 2023. Each competition spans about one and a half years.

To ensure that the competition is conducted in a timely manner and that all participants are treated consistently, NMSC adheres to specified program requirements and deadlines. A schedule of key dates for both the 2022 and 2023 competitions is on pages 47–49.

For 67 years, National Merit Scholarship Corporation has recognized the intellectual talents of students across the nation. High school students enter the National Merit Scholarship Program each year by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), and some 50,000 students qualify for program recognition. Approximately 8,500 receive awards worth about \$39 million.



Information for students who wish to enter the competition is provided in the *PSAT/NMSQT® Student Guide*, distributed to high schools each fall before the test administration, and on NMSC's website at www.nationalmerit.org.

Requirements for entry

To participate in the 2022 competition, a student must:

1. be enrolled as a high school student (traditional or home-schooled), progressing normally toward graduation or completion of high school, and planning to enroll full time in college no later than the fall following completion of high school;
2. take the PSAT/NMSQT in the specified year of the high school program and **no later than** the third year in grades 9 through 12, regardless of grade classification or educational pattern; and
3. attend high school in the United States, District of Columbia, or U.S. commonwealths and territories; or meet the citizenship requirements for students attending high school outside the United States (see box below).

To be eligible for the 2022 National Merit Scholarship Program, a student attending high school outside the United States must be a citizen of the United States; or be a U.S. lawful permanent resident (or have applied for permanent residence, the application for which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law.

When to take the qualifying test

Because a student can participate (and be considered for a scholarship) in only one specific program year, the year in which the student takes the PSAT/NMSQT to enter the competition is very important. The test must be taken in the specified year of the student's high school program, as described below.

1. **Students who plan to spend the usual four years in high school (grades 9 through 12) before entering college full time** must

take the PSAT/NMSQT in their third year (usually grade 11, junior year). They will be entering the competition that ends when awards are offered in the spring of their fourth high school year (usually grade 12, senior year), the same year they will leave high school and enter college.

Some schools encourage their **sophomore** students to take the PSAT/NMSQT for guidance purposes; however, if these students are spending four years in grades 9 through 12, they must take the test again when they are juniors to enter the National Merit Scholarship Program.

2. **Students who plan to leave high school early to enroll in college full time after spending three years or less in grades 9 through 12** usually can participate in the National Merit Program if they take the PSAT/NMSQT before they enroll in college. Such students must take the PSAT/NMSQT in either the next-to-last year or the last year they are enrolled in high school.
 - a) Those who take the PSAT/NMSQT in the *next-to-last year* of high school will be entering the competition for awards to be offered as they are finishing their final high school year.
 - b) Those who take the PSAT/NMSQT in their *last year* of high school will be entering the competition for awards to be offered the year after they have completed high school.
3. **Students who are dual enrolled in both high school and college** must take the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall of their third year of high school (grade 11, junior year) to enter the National Merit Program. The high school determines whether a student is dual enrolled and confirms the student's status as a high school student.
4. **Students who plan to spend five years in grades 9 through 12** usually can participate in the National Merit Program if they take the PSAT/NMSQT in both the third and fourth years of high school. A five-year student will not be eligible for the program until a written request for entry to the competition is approved by NMSC. The request should identify the student's name, high

school, and specific educational pattern (including the academic years spent in grades 9 through 12).

The student's highest possible level of recognition is determined by the qualifying score earned during the third year, the year in which all other competitors are considered. The student must qualify at or above that same level in the fourth year in order to compete in the fifth year, the year the student will leave high school and enter college.

Note: If there is a question about whether a student can participate in the National Merit Program because educational plans do not fit one of the previous descriptions, or for any other reason, contact NMSC immediately.

The student's responses to National Merit Scholarship Program eligibility questions on the PSAT/NMSQT answer sheet are used to determine whether the student meets requirements to participate in a particular year's program. (More information about these questions can be found on page 5 in the NMSC section of the 2021 *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide*.) Score reports provided to test takers and their schools indicate only whether or not the student is a program participant, not whether the student qualifies for recognition. A school official or the student should immediately write to NMSC regarding any error or change that may affect the student's participation in the program.

If a student misses the PSAT/NMSQT administration

A student who does not take the PSAT/NMSQT because of illness, an emergency, or other extenuating circumstance (but meets all other requirements for program participation) may still be able to enter the competition. The student or a school official must **write** to NMSC after the PSAT/NMSQT administration to request alternate entry procedures. The alternate entry request should include the student's name and home address, the contact information of the person making the request, the name and address of the student's high school, and a brief explanation of why the student missed the test. To be considered, a request should be sent as soon as possible but **must be postmarked no later than April 1** following the missed PSAT/NMSQT administration. NMSC will provide the alternate entry

form that requires the signature of the high school principal, guidance counselor, or other school official designated by the principal.

Program recognition

The PSAT/NMSQT Selection Index, calculated by doubling the sum of the Reading, Writing and Language, and Math Test scores, is used to determine which entrants receive program recognition. Score levels sufficient for recognition vary from year to year and from state to state; those for the 2022 competition are given on pages 13–14.

High scorers

In the spring following the PSAT/NMSQT administration, NMSC identifies about 50,000 program participants with the highest PSAT/NMSQT Selection Index scores and contacts their high school principals, asking them to identify any errors or changes in the reported eligibility of their high scorers. It is not until the beginning of the next school year that NMSC notifies high scorers that they have qualified as either Semifinalists or Commended Students.

Semifinalists

Some 16,000 of the high scorers, representing less than 1 percent of the nation's high school graduating seniors, qualify as Semifinalists in each annual National Merit Program. They are the only participants who have an opportunity to advance in the competition for some 7,500 Merit Scholarship® awards.

To ensure that academically talented students from all parts of the U.S. are included in this talent pool, Semifinalists are named on a state-representational basis. A participant can be considered for Semifinalist standing in only one state or other selection unit (explained on page 10), based on the high school in which the student is regularly enrolled when the PSAT/NMSQT is taken to enter the competition.

Using the most recent data available, NMSC determines an allocation of Semifinalists for each of the 50 states, based on the state's percentage of the national total of graduating high school

seniors. For example, the Semifinalist allocation for a state that enrolls approximately 2 percent of the nation's high school graduates would be about 320 (2 percent of the 16,000 Semifinalists).

To begin the process of establishing each state's Semifinalist qualifying score, the Selection Index scores of all students in the state who meet program entry requirements are arranged in descending order. The score at which the state's allocation is most closely filled becomes the Semifinalist qualifying score for that state. Entrants with a Selection Index score at or above the qualifying score are named Semifinalists. The scores of all Semifinalists are extremely high. Although this process results in qualifying scores that vary from one state to another and from year to year, it produces an equitable, representative distribution of recognized students nationwide.

In addition to Semifinalists designated in each of the 50 states, and without affecting the allocation to any state, Semifinalists are named in several other selection units that NMSC has established for the competition. These additional units are for participants attending schools in the District of Columbia, schools in U.S. commonwealths and territories, schools in other countries that enroll U.S. citizens, and U.S. boarding schools that enroll a sizable proportion of their students from outside the state in which the school is located. Boarding schools are grouped into geographic regions, each consisting of several states; the Semifinalist qualifying score for students in each region is the same as the highest qualifying score among the states within that region.

In September, NMSC sends principals of participating high schools a booklet listing the names of the 16,000 Semifinalists by state and high school. Principals of schools enrolling Semifinalists are also sent scholarship application information and instructions for the students and school. NMSC sends the names of Semifinalists to news media for announcement and to regionally accredited four-year U.S. colleges and universities in an effort to enhance the educational opportunities of these scholastically talented young people.

Commended Students

About 34,000 of the 50,000 high scorers in each annual National Merit Scholarship Program are named Commended Students based

To maintain the National Merit Scholarship Program's high standards, National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) management meets annually with an Advisory Council to review and refine procedures. Composed of experienced high school administrators, the Advisory Council serves as a bridge to the educational community, helping NMSC in its mission of recognizing and honoring the academically talented students of the United States.



on a national Selection Index qualifying score, applicable to all participants without regard to state-by-state distribution. The qualifying score for this level of recognition varies from year to year. All National Merit Program participants who score at or above the Commended level but below their selection unit's Semifinalist qualifying score are designated Commended Students.

In mid-September, NMSC sends principals a list of their school's Commended Students with *Letters of Commendation* for presentation to the students. Although Commended Students are honored for their academic promise, they do not continue in the competition for National Merit Scholarship awards. Some, however, may be candidates for Special Scholarships offered by corporate sponsors (explained on pages 22–23).

National Merit Program qualifying data for 2022

The National Merit Scholarship Program honors individual students for their exceptional scholastic potential. The program does not measure the quality or effectiveness of education within a school, district, or state. The table on pages 13–14 relates only to the 2022 National Merit Program, which began with the administration of the 2020 PSAT/NMSQT. **This information is provided as a reference for principals and counselors who understand the design and purpose of the National Merit Scholarship Program and the limited usefulness of the data.**

A number of factors should be kept in mind when interpreting data in the table. First, since Semifinalists are named on a state-representational basis, qualifying scores required for Semifinalist standing vary from one state to another. This ensures that students from all parts of the nation are included in the Semifinalist talent pool. The soundness of this method has been confirmed by the thousands of students representing every state who have earned the Merit Scholar[®] title and have gone on to excel in undergraduate studies and beyond.

Second, the decision to offer the qualifying test, and to whom, belongs to officials of the individual schools. Some schools administer the PSAT/NMSQT to all juniors, while others test only a few. Therefore, although the 21,000 high schools that administer the

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2022 National Merit Scholarship Program

Semifinalists and Commended Students—2020 PSAT/NMSQT*

	<i>Selection Index Qualifying Score</i>	SEMIFINALISTS		COMMENDED STUDENTS**	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>
Alabama	212	215	65	141	66
Alaska	208	38	15	2	2
Arizona	218	283	73	660	119
Arkansas	211	141	39	79	41
California	221	2,100	351	4,104	480
Colorado	217	298	93	656	141
Connecticut	220	184	68	674	140
Delaware	220	43	14	115	31
Florida	217	928	236	1,787	368
Georgia	219	503	104	1,212	210
Hawaii	217	63	19	146	32
Idaho	214	76	31	106	33
Illinois	218	715	139	1,851	247
Indiana	215	353	99	465	131
Iowa	211	170	49	59	40
Kansas	215	166	50	181	59
Kentucky	212	224	74	165	60
Louisiana	213	234	51	179	60
Maine	211	74	41	50	31
Maryland	224	370	56	722	153
Massachusetts	221	344	100	1,447	195
Michigan	217	541	134	957	228
Minnesota	218	271	95	568	131
Mississippi	213	141	44	93	43
Missouri	214	337	88	333	108
Montana	208	44	22	10	8
Nebraska	210	109	41	54	31
Nevada	214	114	30	118	41
New Hampshire	214	73	31	97	38
New Jersey	222	615	138	2,441	275
New Mexico	210	91	33	28	15

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2022 National Merit Scholarship Program (continued)

Semifinalists and Commended Students—2020 PSAT/NMSQT*

	SEMIFINALISTS			COMMENDED STUDENTS**	
	<i>Selection Index Qualifying Score</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>
New York	220	975	219	2,262	437
North Carolina	218	485	105	871	193
North Dakota	207	33	16	0	0
Ohio	215	695	188	915	241
Oklahoma	210	177	53	61	38
Oregon	220	183	44	183	55
Pennsylvania	218	682	184	1,357	288
Rhode Island	213	52	25	54	19
South Carolina	213	212	67	229	79
South Dakota	210	37	15	18	12
Tennessee	215	346	98	473	125
Texas	220	1,339	262	4,307	600
Utah	212	149	58	108	50
Vermont	211	32	18	19	14
Virginia	221	417	90	1,682	196
Washington	220	382	87	879	135
West Virginia	207	66	28	0	0
Wisconsin	214	307	114	259	118
Wyoming	208	24	12	2	2
District of Columbia	224	34	10	162	15
U.S. boarding schools	***	125	35	592	83
U.S. territories & commonwealths	207	41	22	1	1
Outside the U.S.	224	89	57	570	211
<i>Totals</i>		<i>16,740</i>	<i>4,230</i>	<i>34,504</i>	<i>6,469</i>

*A total of 895,072 students from 16,793 schools entered the 2022 National Merit Program by taking the 2020 qualifying test and meeting participation requirements.

**The national qualifying score for Commended Students in the 2022 program is 207.

***U.S. boarding schools that enroll a substantial portion of students from outside the state in which the school is located are grouped into geographic regions; regional qualifying scores for Semifinalist standing vary from 219 to 224.

PSAT/NMSQT enroll the vast majority of the nation's eleventh graders, the proportion of students tested in a particular year may differ markedly from school to school and state to state.

Third, while demographic changes that affect school enrollments are appreciably greater in some states and communities than in others, schools must design programs that are effective for all of their students. States and communities also differ in per capita income of residents, educational achievement of the adult population, per pupil expenditure for education, and qualifications prescribed for teachers. In addition, schools vary widely in educational objectives and standards, in numbers of seniors who plan to attend college, in curricular offerings, and in the extent to which students take advantage of the highest-level courses offered. Many factors influence student performance, and no single factor accounts for differences among educational units.

For these and other reasons, National Merit Program data provided to schools should not be used to measure the educational quality of a school, district, or state. **Qualifying scores and numbers of recognized students are relevant only within the context of a particular year's competition, and use of such data for any other purpose is neither valid nor appropriate.** NMSC regularly cautions news media, high schools, and all others interested in the competition against attempts to make comparisons on the basis of numbers of students honored in the National Merit Program. When this caution is ignored, conclusions drawn are usually erroneous and can be detrimental to the groups being compared as well as to the National Merit Program and the participating students.

Responsibilities of Semifinalists and their high schools

To compete for National Merit[®] Scholarships, Semifinalists must advance to the Finalist level of the competition by fulfilling several additional requirements. A Semifinalist can become a Finalist and compete for a Merit Scholarship[®] award in only one program year.

Requirements for Finalist standing

To qualify as a Finalist, a Semifinalist must:

1. continue to meet all requirements for participation in the competition (see pages 6–8);
2. be enrolled in the last year of high school and plan to enroll full time in college the following fall, or be enrolled in the first year of college if grades 9 through 12 were completed in three years or less;
3. be fully endorsed for Finalist standing and recommended for a National Merit Scholarship by the high school principal (or school official designated by the principal);
4. have a record of consistently very high academic performance in all of grades 9 through 12 and in any college courses taken;
5. complete the NMSC[®] Online Scholarship Application (OSA) with all information requested;
6. take an authorized administration of the SAT[®] or ACT[®], earn scores that confirm performance on the PSAT/NMSQT[®] taken for program entry, and arrange for the National Merit Program to receive an official score report of the SAT or ACT taken; and
7. provide any additional documentation and information that NMSC requests.

In late August, NMSC sends high school principals a list of their Semifinalists, along with instructions for using the OSA. Important

information about requirements and deadlines is available both through the OSA and on NMSC's website. Both the Semifinalist and the school official must supply a substantial amount of information on the application, which NMSC uses to determine whether the student qualifies to advance to Finalist standing and to select scholarship recipients.

What Semifinalists must do

One requirement on the OSA is the submission of a personal *essay* authored solely by the Semifinalist. Semifinalists must respond to an essay prompt provided on the OSA, which helps scholarship selection committees get to know the applicants better and discern the most outstanding students. Each Semifinalist also completes a section of the application listing *activities/volunteer service, leadership positions, honors or awards, and employment*.

The OSA requires the Semifinalist to supply *biographical information* that includes home address, parental employment, college choice, college major, and career plans. This information is used to identify candidates for corporate-sponsored and college-sponsored awards provided for Finalists who meet a grantor's specified criteria. It is important for the Semifinalist to report to NMSC all changes in this biographical information that occur after the scholarship application is submitted.

In addition, each Semifinalist in the 2022 competition must make all arrangements to *take either the SAT or ACT* on one of the national administration dates specified in the scholarship application materials and to *have an official score report sent* to NMSC. To become a Finalist, the Semifinalist must *earn SAT or ACT scores that confirm the PSAT/NMSQT performance*. The scores a Semifinalist submits will only be used to determine whether Finalist requirements are met and will not be used in the selection of award recipients.

A Semifinalist who attends high school outside the United States and has not yet become a U.S. citizen must submit citizenship documentation to NMSC with the Scholarship Application. The *Requirements and Instructions* document available through the OSA and on NMSC's website provides information about the documentation needed.

What high schools must provide

For a Semifinalist to advance to Finalist standing and compete for National Merit Scholarships, the student's high school principal (or a school official designated by the principal) must *endorse* the Semifinalist for further consideration. A school official must also complete several sections of the OSA, including the Semifinalist's academic record (course work and grades), information about the school, and a school recommendation and characterization of the Semifinalist. Further, the principal is asked to notify NMSC **at once** if at any time during the competition the academic performance of a student at either the Semifinalist or Finalist level declines noticeably, or if the school can no longer recommend the student for Merit Scholarship consideration.

High schools must provide a report of the student's *academic record*, which includes grades earned and course work completed in grades 9 through 11 and a list of courses to be taken in grade 12. The academic record is crucial, both in determining whether the Semifinalist qualifies as a Finalist and in choosing Merit Scholar[®] awardees. To help evaluators place a student's record in perspective, the scholarship application includes questions about the school's curricular offerings and grading system. This information is important because the thousands of schools that Semifinalists attend vary widely in grading standards and practices; in the number and difficulty level of courses offered (including accelerated and honors sections of college preparatory subjects); and in the way grade point average and class rank, if any, are calculated. In selecting Merit Scholarship recipients, each candidate's academic record is scrutinized in the context of the particular school as well as compared to the records of students in other schools. Selection committees evaluate grades earned in relation to course load, difficulty level, and depth and breadth of subjects studied.

In the school's *recommendation and characterization* of the Semifinalist, the school official is asked to describe qualities and attributes that distinguish the student from others. Because every Semifinalist who qualifies as a Finalist has an excellent academic record and outstanding test scores, the recommendation can be a valuable source of information about the student's demonstrated leadership and accomplishments, both in and out of school. The

recommendation is most helpful when it complements other information in the application, revealing personal characteristics that cannot be gleaned from test scores or grades. Citing the student's personal qualities with supporting examples is valuable because selection committees look for evidence of a student's motivation and ability to intelligently direct energy toward goals. For instance, if the candidate is considered to be a "leader" or is said to be "concerned for others," describe how this has been demonstrated and in what types of school or community activities. If the student is termed "creative" or "intellectually inquisitive," how has this specifically been shown? An effective characterization of the Semifinalist also points out how the student copes with challenges and describes situations that have resulted in personal or academic growth. Since the records of all students who attain Finalist standing are superior, no record "speaks for itself." Therefore, it is important to avoid generalizations. A thoughtfully and thoroughly prepared school recommendation is a vital and influential part of the student's scholarship application.

In the process of characterizing the Semifinalist, the school official is strongly encouraged to evaluate the rigor of the Semifinalist's course selections and provide a summary assessment of the Semifinalist in the areas of academic achievement, extracurricular accomplishments, and personal qualities and character.

Notifying schools of the status of their Semifinalists

Currently, about 95 percent (some 15,000) of the Semifinalists in each competition qualify as Finalists. In February, NMSC notifies principals of their Semifinalists who have advanced to the Finalist level. A *Certificate of Merit*, attesting to distinguished performance in the competition, is provided for presentation to each Finalist. NMSC also sends letters directly to Finalists informing them of the recognition and that they are being considered for a National Merit Scholarship. NMSC does not release the names of Finalists to the media, but schools may announce their Finalists if they choose.

Semifinalists who do not meet all Finalist requirements and standards are withdrawn from the competition. They are notified directly by NMSC at their home addresses.

National Merit[®] Program scholarships

Some 8,500 awards with a total value of about \$39 million are offered each year to outstanding participants in the National Merit Scholarship Program. In addition to 7,500 National Merit Scholarships that are awarded to Finalists, about 1,000 Special Scholarships are sponsored by business organizations for other high performers in the competition. All winners are chosen on the basis of their scholastic and extracurricular accomplishments, abilities, and potential for future academic success.

Types of awards

Three types of scholarships for undergraduate study are offered each year. National Merit[®] \$2500 Scholarships and college-sponsored scholarships are offered **only** to Finalists. Corporate-sponsored awards may be Merit Scholarship[®] awards reserved for Finalists or Special Scholarships offered to other outstanding students.

National Merit \$2500 Scholarships. The 2,500 National Merit \$2500 Scholarships offered annually are an integral part of the competition because every Finalist is considered for one and winners are chosen in every state and other selection unit. These single-payment scholarships are awarded on a state-representational basis, as in the designation of Semifinalists. This method ensures that distinguished students nationwide will be among each year's Merit Scholarship recipients.

NMSC[®] convenes a committee of college admission officers and high school counselors to choose the winners. Working in teams, committee members use their professional skills in evaluating the scholarship applications of all Finalists within a state or other selection unit.

Most of the one-time National Merit \$2500 Scholarships are financed by NMSC with its own funds. However, companies and business organizations that provide corporate-sponsored scholarships help underwrite National Merit \$2500 Scholarships with grants they provide to NMSC in lieu of paying administrative fees.

Each Finalist competes for one of 2,500 National Merit \$2500 Scholarships. A Selection Committee of college admission officers and high school counselors assesses a substantial amount of information provided on student applications, including each student's academic attainments, personal essay, leadership abilities, and other characteristics that distinguish Merit Scholar awardees.



Corporate-sponsored Scholarships. Each year about 220 corporations, company foundations, and professional associations finance approximately 2,000 scholarships for National Merit Program participants who meet both the competition standards set by NMSC and criteria specified by the sponsor. A corporate organization may provide awards for children of its employees or members, for residents of areas where the company is located, or for students planning to pursue college majors or careers the sponsor wishes to encourage. These scholarships are not subject to state-by-state distribution because only program participants who meet a sponsor's criteria can be considered for these awards. Almost all winners are chosen by NMSC's professional staff.

Of the 2,000 corporate-sponsored awards, about 1,000 are **National Merit Scholarships** offered to Finalists who meet sponsors' criteria. NMSC identifies Finalists who may be eligible for each sponsor's awards from information students provide on the OSA. (Some sponsor organizations also require candidates to file Entry Forms.) A corporate sponsor may offer a specific number of awards or elect to sponsor a scholarship for every eligible Finalist.

More than two-thirds of the corporate sponsors choose to complement their National Merit Scholarships with **Special Scholarships** for high-scoring program participants who meet the sponsor's criteria *but are not Finalists*. This enables a sponsor to offer a predetermined number of scholarships in each annual competition, even though the number of Finalists eligible for its awards varies from year to year.

To be considered for a Special Scholarship, students who meet a sponsor's criteria must file Entry Forms that are made available through the sponsor organization. NMSC then contacts a pool of high-scoring candidates through their high schools and provides Special Scholarship Applications patterned after the National Merit Scholarship Applications completed by Semifinalists. (See pages 16–19.) About 1,000 outstanding students are recipients of Special Scholarships each year.

Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards and Special Scholarships are usually named for the sponsoring organization. However, the "National Merit" title is not included in the name of a Special Scholarship. Examples of a sponsor's

scholarship names are “National Merit 3M Scholarship” and “3M Scholarship.”

The sponsor organization decides whether to provide **renewable** or **one-time** awards and also determines the dollar amount for its scholarships. One-time awards provide a single payment that can range from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Renewable awards, which cover up to four years of undergraduate study, provide a fixed stipend that can range from \$1,000 to \$10,000 per year and is the same for every recipient of the sponsor’s scholarships.

College-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards. About 180 four-year regionally accredited U.S. colleges and universities annually support about 4,000 National Merit Scholarships that can be used only at the respective sponsor institution. Finalists who have notified NMSC that a sponsor college is their first choice (and have not been offered another Merit Scholarship award) are referred to the sponsor college or university for consideration. College sponsor officials then select winners of awards the institution will underwrite.

A sponsor college may decide to offer a Merit Scholarship award to every eligible Finalist who is admitted to the institution or choose to limit the number of awards it provides. A college-sponsored Merit Scholarship award is renewable for up to four years of undergraduate study at the sponsor institution. It is not transferable and is offered with the condition that it must be used at the institution financing it. For that reason, an offer is canceled if the winner decides not to attend the sponsor college or university.

Each college sponsor chooses the annual stipend their institution offers to award recipients, within a range of \$500 to \$2,000 per year. All college-sponsored scholarship recipients at the institution will receive the same stipend amount, as determined by the college.

Winner selection

Although all students who attain Finalist standing in the National Merit Scholarship Program are distinguished, unfortunately **not all Finalists receive a National Merit Scholarship**. The National Merit Program is very competitive, and, in recent years, only about half

Steps in the 2022 National Merit® Scholarship Program

1,500,000 Entrants. U.S. high school students who took the PSAT/NMSQT® in October 2020 and met other program participation requirements entered the 2022 competition for National Merit Program recognition and scholarships. Nearly all program entrants were juniors who planned to enroll in college in 2022. (See pages 6–8 for entry requirements.) NMSC uses PSAT/NMSQT Selection Index scores (calculated by doubling the sum of the Reading, Writing and Language, and Math Test scores) to determine 50,000 high-scoring participants who qualify for program recognition.

50,000 High Scorers. In April 2021, NMSC asked high school principals to identify any errors or changes in the reported eligibility of students whose scores qualify them for recognition in the fall. See page 9.

Participants who qualify for National Merit Program recognition

34,000 Commended Students. In late September 2021, more than two-thirds of the 50,000 high scorers will receive *Letters of Commendation* in recognition of their outstanding academic promise. Commended Students (see pages 10–12) are named based on a nationally applied Selection Index score. Although they will not continue in the competition for National Merit Scholarships, some of these students may be candidates for Special Scholarships provided by corporate sponsors.

16,000 Semifinalists. In early September 2021, about a third of the 50,000 high scorers will be notified that they have qualified as Semifinalists (see pages 9–10). Named on a state-representational basis, Semifinalists are the highest-scoring program participants in each state. NMSC will provide scholarship application materials explaining requirements (see pages 16–17) to advance in the competition for National Merit Scholarships to be offered in 2022.

15,000 Finalists. In February 2022, Semifinalists who meet academic and other requirements will be notified that they have advanced to Finalist standing and receive *Certificates of Merit*. All Merit Scholarship® winners (Merit Scholar® awardees) will be chosen from this group of Finalists based on their abilities, skills, and accomplishments. (See pages 23–26.)

Scholarship winners

1,000 Special Scholarship recipients. Beginning in March 2022, NMSC will notify winners of Special Scholarships provided by corporate sponsors (described on pages 22–23). Recipients, who will be chosen from candidates sent scholarship applications in late November 2021, will be outstanding students (although not Finalists) who meet their sponsors' eligibility criteria. Sponsors will handle public announcement of their Special Scholarship winners.

7,500 Merit Scholarship winners. Beginning in March 2022, NMSC will notify winners of the three types of National Merit Scholarships:

- National Merit® \$2500 Scholarships
- Corporate-sponsored scholarships
- College-sponsored scholarships

During April through July, NMSC will release the names of Merit Scholar designees to news media for publication. (See pages 20–23 and 26–27.)

of the 15,000 Finalists have been selected to be Merit Scholar® awardees. A student may be considered for more than one scholarship, but no student can receive more than one monetary award from NMSC.

To select winners of two types of awards, National Merit \$2500 Scholarships and corporate-sponsored awards, committees of experienced professionals evaluate a variety of information submitted about each candidate in conjunction with the scholarship application. They carefully weigh each student's academic record (including course load, difficulty level, depth and breadth of subjects studied, and grades earned) in the context of the high school's report of class size, percentage of seniors going to college, curricular offerings, and grading system. Students' essays and the recommendations of school officials may provide information about students' personal qualities, demonstrated leadership abilities, and service to their schools and communities. Winners are candidates judged to have the strongest combination of academic and extracurricular attainments and the greatest potential for success in rigorous college studies. Winners of these two types of awards are notified in March.

Recipients of college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards are chosen by officials of the sponsor institution. College officials base their decisions on information Finalists file with the college as part of the admission process. NMSC begins sending college-sponsored Merit Scholarship offers to winners in early May.

Scholar announcements and award administration

Beginning in March, formal scholarship offers are sent to winners, and notifications are sent to their high school principals. NMSC releases the names of Merit Scholarship recipients to news media nationwide in scheduled announcements (one for each type of Merit Scholarship award) on three dates in April, May, and June, followed by a second release of college-sponsored award winners in July. (See page 48.) The announcements identify Scholars' high schools and Merit Scholarship sponsors. Special Scholarship winner announcements are handled independently by the corporate sponsors.

Every scholarship recipient is responsible for fulfilling admission requirements of the college or university to be attended. In addition, each recipient must comply with all terms specified in the NMSC scholarship offer, which cover conditions of eligibility, standards of student performance, and other requirements.

NMSC scholarship payments, which are sent to Scholars at their colleges, must be used exclusively for undergraduate education at a college or university in the United States that holds accredited status with a regional accrediting commission on higher education. NMSC scholarship stipends are not payable for students' attendance at service academies or institutions that are limited in purpose or training. Winners of one-time awards are sent a single check in the fall following their selection; four-year scholarship winners receive payments in installments, generally twice a year. To receive a scholarship payment, the winner must be enrolled full time, be in good standing, and be pursuing a course of study leading to a traditional baccalaureate degree.

Sponsors and their support for scholarships

About 400 independent sponsor organizations currently underwrite scholarships through the National Merit[®] Scholarship Program. Beginning with the first competition in 1956, corporations and business organizations have underwritten both National Merit Scholarships and Special Scholarships in every annual competition. Colleges and universities began sponsoring Merit Scholarship[®] awards in 1963. The generosity of scholarship sponsors is key to the success of the National Merit Program, in which scholarships worth over \$1.7 billion have been awarded.

Sponsor support

Corporate organizations and colleges and universities have underwritten 80 percent of the 423,400 scholarships offered to date, committing a total of over \$1.5 billion. NMSC[®] has used over \$199 million of its own funds to support 85,000 Merit Scholarship awards.

Corporate sponsors. Over the National Merit Program's 66 competitions, business organizations have significantly increased their commitment for scholarships. In the first competition, 24 companies provided about \$800,000 to finance 195 Merit Scholarship awards and 10 Special Scholarships. In 2021, about 220 corporate sponsors committed approximately \$16 million to underwrite some 1,000 Merit Scholarship awards and 1,000 Special Scholarships. To date, corporate and business organizations have provided about 160,500 awards worth a total of over \$876 million for program participants with qualifications of interest to the sponsor. Corporate sponsors also make a modest supplemental grant to NMSC, in lieu of paying an administrative fee, which is used to underwrite National Merit[®] \$2500 Scholarships that all Finalists have an opportunity to win.

College sponsors. College-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards were introduced in the eighth annual competition, when nine institutions underwrote 175 scholarships valued at approximately \$400,000.

About 400 corporate organizations and higher education institutions partner with NMSC to shine a spotlight on America's academically talented youth. Sponsors contribute greatly to the continued success of the National Merit Scholarship Program by underwriting approximately 6,000 awards each year worth about \$33 million. Each sponsor is identified in the name of the scholarship it supports.



In 2021, about 180 U.S. colleges and universities committed about \$17 million to underwrite approximately 4,000 Merit Scholarship awards for students to attend sponsoring institutions. Over 59 competitions, colleges have expended and committed nearly \$673 million for 177,700 Merit Scholarship awards. Funds from college and university sponsors are used exclusively for scholarship payments to their Merit Scholarship recipients.

NMSC services for sponsors

The National Merit Program provides educationally sound and cost-effective professional services for corporations and higher education institutions that wish to sponsor scholarships for scholastically talented young people in whom they have particular interest.

For corporate sponsors, NMSC:

- identifies scholarship candidates who meet a sponsor's criteria (i.e., children of company employees, residents of plant communities and areas specified by the sponsor, or students planning to pursue particular college majors and careers);
- collects information about the most outstanding candidates eligible for a sponsor's awards;
- selects scholarship recipients and determines their annual stipends;
- sends scholarship offers to award winners;
- announces Merit Scholarship winners through news media nationwide;
- provides scholarship certificates for sponsors to present to their award recipients;
- sends scholarship stipend checks to recipients through their colleges; and
- administers the awards and monitors winners' progress toward their undergraduate degrees.

For college sponsors, NMSC:

- identifies Finalists who wish to attend the sponsor institution and refers them to college officials for scholarship consideration;
- sends scholarship offers to award winners;
- distributes news media announcements about winners;
- provides certificates for presentation to winners;
- sends scholarship payments to winners; and
- administers the awards throughout the recipients' undergraduate years at the sponsor college or university.

Sponsor identity. The sponsor is identified with the awards it supports in several ways, including the name of the scholarship: for example, “National Merit AbbVie Inc. Scholarship” and “National Merit Boston University Scholarship.” Information about the sponsor is included in NMSC media announcements about Merit Scholarship winners. Scholarship certificates identify the sponsor and are often presented at events held by sponsors to honor their award recipients. Award grantors are also named on scholarship stipend checks.

Names of corporate scholarship sponsors with descriptions and numbers of awards offered are listed in the *PSAT/NMSQT*[®] *Student Guide*. This publication is distributed to more than four million high school students before the annual competition begins in October.

National Merit Program scholarship sponsors

Each sponsor organization underwrites from 1 to nearly 200 scholarships annually. Following is a list of 397 corporate organizations and higher education institutions that have financed scholarships awarded by NMSC during the past four academic years. Sponsors that will offer scholarships for the first time in 2022 have been added.

AbbVie Inc.	Anadarko Petroleum Corporation
Abilene Christian University	Anixter Inc.
ACI Worldwide, Inc.	Aon Foundation
Acushnet Company	Apache Corporation
ADP Foundation	Archer Daniels Midland Company
Aerojet Rocketdyne Foundation	Arizona State University
Akzo Nobel Inc.	Arkema Inc. Foundation
Albany International	Armstrong World Industries Foundation
The Allergan Foundation	ARRIS International, plc
Alliance Data Systems Corporation	ASC Partners, LLC
Ameren Corporation Charitable Trust	Ascension
American Air Liquide Holdings, Inc	Aspen Technology, Inc.
American City Business Journals, Inc.	Astellas US LLC
American Electric Power Company, Inc.	AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP
American Financial Group	Auburn University
American University	BASF Corporation
AmerisourceBergen Corporation	Battelle
The AMETEK Foundation	Baylor University
	Belmont University
	Bentley Systems, Incorporated

Bethel University
Trust Under The Will of
Mary E. Beyerle
BNSF Railway Foundation
The Boeing Company
BorgWarner Inc.
Boston College
Boston University
Bowdoin College
Bradley University
Brady Corporation
Foundation, Inc.
Brandeis University
Bridgestone Americas
Trust Fund
Brigham Young
University
Bristol-Myers Squibb
Foundation, Inc.
Broadridge Financial
Solutions, Inc.
Brooks Brothers Group, Inc.
Brown & Brown, Inc.
Bucknell University
Bunge North America, Inc.
Bunzl USA, LLC
Butler University
CACI International Inc
Calvin University
Cardinal Health
Foundation
Carleton College
Carlisle Companies
Incorporated
Carpenter Technology
Corporation
Case Western Reserve
University
CC Services, Inc.
CDK Global, LLC
Centre College
Chemtura Corporation
Chevron U.S.A. Inc.
Citizen Watch Company of
America, Inc.
Claremont McKenna
College
Clemson University
Coalfire Systems, Inc.
Colby College (Maine)
Colgate-Palmolive Company
College of Charleston
College of Wooster
Colorado College
Colorado State University
Commvault Systems, Inc.
Computer Aid, Inc.
Conagra Brands
Foundation
Corning Incorporated
Creighton University
Crum & Forster
CSX Corporation
Davidson College

Denison University
Dentsply Sirona Inc.
DePauw University
Gaylord and Dorothy
 Donnelley Foundation
Dollar Tree, Inc.
Dow Jones & Company, Inc.
Drake University
E*TRADE Financial Corporation
Eastman
Eaton Charitable Fund
Electrolux North America
Ellucian Company L.P.
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical
 University
Emerson Charitable Trust
Emory University
The Estée Lauder
 Companies Inc.
Eversource Energy
 Foundation, Inc.
FedEx Custom Critical, Inc.
FedEx Freight Corporation
FedEx Ground Package
 System, Inc.
Ferro Corporation
Fifth Third Foundation
Florida Atlantic University
Florida International University
Florida State University
Fluor Foundation
FMC Corporation
Fordham University
Formosa Plastics
 Corporation, U.S.A.
Fox News Channel, LLC
Franklin and Marshall College
FTS International, LLC
Furman University
GAF
Gannett Foundation, Inc.
Gates Industrial Corporation
 Foundation
GEICO Philanthropic
 Foundation
Genentech, Inc.
General Dynamics Corporation
General Dynamics Ordnance
 and Tactical Systems
Georgia-Pacific Foundation, Inc.
GKN Foundation
Gleason Family Foundation
Global Tungsten &
 Powders Corp.
Gordon College
 (Massachusetts)
Goshen College
W.W. Grainger, Inc.
Greyhound Lines, Inc.
Grinnell College
The Guardian Life Insurance
 Company of America
Gustavus Adolphus College
Harding University

Harvey Mudd College
Hendrix College
Henkel Corporation
Hill-Rom Holdings, Inc.
Hillsdale College
Hope College
Hormel Foods Corporation
Charitable Trust
The Harvey Hubbell Foundation
Hunter Industries Incorporated
Illinois Tool Works Foundation
Illinois Wesleyan University
Indiana University Bloomington
Ingalls Shipbuilding Division of
Huntington Ingalls Industries
Insperity Services, L.P.
International Union of
Bricklayers and Allied
Craftworkers
Iowa State University
Ithaca College
J. Walter Thompson Company
Fund, Inc.
Jack Henry & Associates, Inc.
Jacobs Engineering Foundation
John Bean Technologies
Corporation
Johnson & Johnson Services Inc.
Kalamazoo College
Kaman Corporation
Kansas State University
The Kennametal Foundation
Kenyon College
Knovel
L3Harris Technologies
LANXESS Corporation
Lawrence University (Wisconsin)
Lehigh University
Leidos, Inc.
Lewis & Clark College (Oregon)
Liberty Mutual Scholarship
Foundation
Liberty University
Loews Corporation
Louisiana State University
Louisiana Tech University
Loyola University Chicago
LPL Financial LLC
The Lubrizol Foundation
Luther College
Macalester College
Macy's, Inc.
Mannington Mills, Inc.
Maritz Holdings Inc.
Marquette University
Marsh & McLennan
Companies, Inc.
McGraw Hill LLC
Mead Johnson &
Company, LLC
Mead Witter Foundation, Inc.
MetLife Foundation
Miami University-Oxford
Michigan State University

Michigan Technological
University
Mississippi State University
Missouri University of Science
and Technology
The MITRE Corporation
Molex LLC
Montana State University-
Bozeman
Moody's Foundation
Motorola Solutions Foundation
National Distillers Distributors
Foundation
National Oilwell Varco, LP
Nationwide Foundation
New College of Florida
New Jersey Manufacturers
Insurance Company
New York Life Foundation
The NewMarket Foundation
NextEra Energy
Foundation, Inc.
NiSource Charitable Foundation
Norfolk Southern Foundation
North Dakota State University
Northeastern University
(Massachusetts)
Northrop Grumman
Corporation
Northwestern University
Nouryon Chemicals LLC
Novartis US Foundation
Novo Nordisk Inc.
NVIDIA Corporation
Oberlin College
Occidental College
Occidental Petroleum
Corporation
Ohio University-Athens
Oklahoma Christian University
Oklahoma City University
Oklahoma State University
Old National Bancorp
Franklin W. Olin College
of Engineering
Omron Foundation, Inc.
ON Semiconductor
Oregon State University
Ouachita Baptist University
Owens Corning Foundation
Parker Hannifin Foundation
Sagar G. Patel Memorial Fund
Frank E. Payne and Seba B.
Payne Foundation
The Penn Mutual Life Insurance
Company
Pennsylvania State University
Pepperdine University
The PepsiCo Foundation, Inc.
Pfizer Inc
Pilkington North America, Inc.
Pomona College
PPG Foundation
PPL

PricewaterhouseCoopers
Charitable Foundation, Inc.
Principal Life Insurance
Company
Public Service Enterprise Group
Purdue University
Putnam Investments, LLC
Quanex Foundation
Raytheon Company
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Research Triangle Institute
Reynolds American Foundation
Rheem Manufacturing Company
Rhodes College
Robert Half International Inc.
Rochester Institute of
Technology
Rockwell Automation Charitable
Corporation
Rolls-Royce North America Inc.
Rose-Hulman Institute of
Technology
RSM US LLP
Rutgers, The State University of
New Jersey
S&P Global
Saint Louis University
St. Olaf College
Samford University
Santa Clara University
Schindler Elevator
Corporation
Schneider Electric North
America Foundation
Scripps College
Scripps Networks
Interactive, Inc.
Sensient Technologies
Foundation
Sentry Insurance
Foundation, Inc.
Siemens Foundation
Snap-on Incorporated
Sogeti USA
Solvay America
Sony Electronics Inc.
South Carolina Sports Medicine
and Orthopaedic Center
South Dakota School of Mines
and Technology
South Dakota State University
Southern Company
Services, Inc.
Southern Methodist University
Southwest Airlines Co.
Southwestern University
(Texas)
C. D. Spangler
Foundation, Inc.
Spirit AeroSystems, Inc.
SRI International
State Farm Companies
Foundation
Stony Brook University

Suburban Propane, L.P.	University of Alabama at Birmingham
Synthomer Foundation	University of Alabama in Huntsville
Tate & Lyle Americas LLC	University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa
TD Ameritrade Services Company, Inc.	University of Arizona
Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America	University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
TechnipFMC plc	University of Central Florida
TEGNA Foundation, Inc.	University of Chicago
The TeleTech Community Foundation	University of Cincinnati
Tennessee Technological University	University of Dallas
Teradata Corporation	University of Dayton
Texas A&M University	University of Evansville
Texas Christian University	University of Florida
Texas Instruments Foundation	University of Georgia Foundation
Texas Tech University	University of Houston-Main Campus
Textron Charitable Trust	University of Idaho
3M Company	University of Iowa
Trane Technologies Charitable Foundation	University of Kansas
The Travelers Employees' Club	University of Kentucky
Tredegar Corporation	University of Louisville
Trinity University (Texas)	University of Maine
Truist Financial Corporation	University of Maryland
Truman State University	University of Miami
Tufts University	University of Minnesota
Tulane University	University of Mississippi
United Services Automobile Association	University of Missouri-Columbia

University of Montana-
Missoula
University of Nebraska-
Lincoln
University of Nevada,
Las Vegas
University of Nevada, Reno
University of New Mexico
University of North Dakota
University of North Texas
University of Oklahoma
University of Oregon
University of Pittsburgh
University of Puget Sound
University of Richmond
University of Rochester
University of St. Thomas
(Minnesota)
University of South Carolina
University of South Florida
University of Southern
California
University of Southern
Mississippi
University of Tennessee,
Knoxville
University of Texas at Dallas
University of Tulsa
University of Utah
University of Wisconsin-
Madison
University of Wyoming
The UPS Foundation
USG Foundation, Inc.
Utility Workers Union of
America, AFL-CIO
Valparaiso University
Vanderbilt University
Varian Medical Systems
Verus Claims Services, LLC
Viacom International Inc.
ViaSat, Inc.
Villanova University
Virginia Commonwealth
University
Vulcan Materials Company
Foundation
Walgreen Co.
Washington and Lee
University
Washington State University
Waste Management National
Services Inc.
Wayne State University
(Michigan)
Weatherford International, LLC
West Virginia University
Foundation, Inc.
Western Washington
University
Westlake Chemical
Corporation
Wheaton College (Illinois)
Whitman College

Wichita State University

Willamette University

Wofford College

Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company

Zoetis Inc.

PSAT/NMSQT[®] procedures and reports

The PSAT/NMSQT, which is cosponsored by NMSC[®] and College Board, is the official route of entry to the National Merit[®] Scholarship Program. High school officials should refer to the College Board website at collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat-suite-educator-guide for a full description of the PSAT/NMSQT and an explanation of the content areas on the test. Schools that register to administer the test receive copies of the *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide* for distribution to students well before the first test date in October. In addition to a full description of the test and question types, the *Student Guide* provides test-taking tips and includes a full-length Practice Test. It also contains valuable information about the National Merit Scholarship Program. For the latest updates to testing policy, please see sat.org/covid19.

Note: The PSAT[™] 10 and PSAT[™] 8/9 will not be considered for entry to the National Merit Scholarship Program. Please contact NMSC directly with questions about entering the program.

Registration, test dates, and fees

Questions about testing arrangements should be directed to the PSAT/NMSQT office. Write to PSAT/NMSQT, P.O. Box 6720, Princeton, New Jersey 08541-6720, or go to the College Board website at www.collegeboard.org. Educators may contact the PSAT/NMSQT office toll free at (888) 477-7728, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday; educators in schools outside the U.S. may call (212) 237-1335. The PSAT/NMSQT office fax number is (610) 290-8979, and the email address is psat@info.collegeboard.org.

School registration. Registration for the PSAT/NMSQT is by high school, not by individual student. A link to the ordering announcement is emailed to PSAT/NMSQT Coordinators in early June. To receive test materials in a timely manner, schools should place their order by August 18 online at ordering.collegeboard.org, following directions given in the ordering announcement.

Test dates. Three equivalent forms of the PSAT/NMSQT are developed each year. In 2021, the Primary test date is Wednesday, October 13, the Saturday test date is October 16, and the Alternate test date is Tuesday, October 26. Schools can choose to administer the PSAT/NMSQT on multiple test dates, choosing the Primary or the Saturday test date plus the Alternate test date. The official who registers the school must indicate the test date(s) chosen and the number of students to be tested.

If a change in test date is required. For students' PSAT/NMSQT scores to be considered in the National Merit Program, the test administration date cannot be changed from the date for which the school registered without written authorization from the PSAT/NMSQT office. If a high school finds that it will not be possible to administer the PSAT/NMSQT on the date originally chosen, a school official should contact the PSAT/NMSQT office immediately. Because a change in test date requires the use of a different form of the PSAT/NMSQT, the request must be received in time for new test materials to be provided before the rescheduled test date.

If an emergency on the test date forces the high school to cancel the PSAT/NMSQT administration, the test coordinator must call the PSAT/NMSQT office immediately for instructions.

Test fees. The fee for the 2021 PSAT/NMSQT is \$18.00 per student tested. There is a \$4.00 charge for each unused test book exceeding 20% of the total number ordered. There is also an \$8.00 charge per test for international shipments (does not apply to U.S. territories and Canada). Schools may charge students an additional amount to cover local administrative costs, but the total fee must be the same for all students. Some schools cover all or part of the cost for their students. Fee waivers may be available from College Board for juniors from income-eligible families.

Test materials and administration

Test books, answer sheets, and administration instructions will be mailed so that schools receive them at least one week before the test date. Schools that have ordered by August 18 will

receive answer sheets and *Coordinator Manuals* by September 22. Upon receipt, the test coordinator should verify that test books are for the particular test date chosen by the school and that the quantities of test books and answer sheets are sufficient. Cartons containing test books and answer sheets then must be resealed and stored in a secure, locked place until the test is given.

If there are questions about a shipment or there is a shortage, contact the PSAT/NMSQT office at once. To update an order or track shipments, go online to ordering.collegeboard.org.

Detailed directions for administering the test are given in the *PSAT/NMSQT Coordinator Manual* sent with test materials. A PDF file of the *Coordinator Manual* can be downloaded from the College Board website at www.collegeboard.org. In advance of the test date, the school official in charge of the administration must read the manual carefully to ensure that all conditions will be met. **Only the scores of students who are tested according to procedures given in the manual will be considered in the National Merit Scholarship Program.** NMSC reviews all Irregularity Reports and reserves the right to make decisions regarding students' participation in the National Merit Program.

Schools should allow approximately 3 hours and 50 minutes for test-related activities. Actual testing time is 2 hours and 45 minutes, plus 10 minutes for breaks. (Some students testing with accommodations may require more time.) An additional 45 to 50 minutes are needed for distributing materials, and for students to sign a Certification Statement and complete identifying information on the answer sheet. Another 5 minutes or more are needed for the collection of test materials after the test and the dismissal of students. (See the *Coordinator Manual* for directions about an option for completing student identification information on the answer sheet before the test date.)

Immediately after testing (and no later than the next school day), the test coordinator must return students' completed answer sheets and the Coordinator Report Form to the PSAT/NMSQT office. (Schools that test on the Saturday test date or participate in the Test Administration Study must also return test books.) The Coordinator Report Form, which must be completed and signed, certifies that the test was administered according to procedures and instructions

in the *Coordinator Manual*. A delay in returning answer sheets (and test books, if applicable) and/or the signed Coordinator Report Form may result in scores not being reported to NMSC for consideration in the competition. High schools that test on the Primary or Alternate test date also must keep all test books in locked storage until PSAT/NMSQT scores are received.

Special testing arrangements for individual students

For the following situations, special arrangements must be made. Arrangements for all but the last situation must be made **well before** the test administration date.

U.S. students temporarily outside the country. For students who will be studying outside the U.S. when their U.S. high schools administer the PSAT/NMSQT, testing arrangements must be made in advance. Preferably by August 13, the student or an official of the U.S. school must contact the PSAT/NMSQT office and provide the country and city where the student will be on the test date and, if known, the name and address of the school to be attended. The PSAT/NMSQT office then will send information to the student about where the test can be taken, with instructions to use the code number of the U.S. high school regularly attended.

Students with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities must be approved for accommodations by College Board Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) well in advance of test day. Students who have not already been approved for accommodations must submit a request for accommodations. Your school's SSD Coordinator can submit requests for accommodations online. Requests must be submitted by specified deadlines before the test date and cannot be submitted with, or after, the return of answer sheets. Information about the process for requesting testing accommodations is provided on the College Board website at www.collegeboard.org/ssd. Contact the SSD office by calling (844) 255-7728.

The PSAT/NMSQT is available in braille, large-print, pre-recorded audio (MP3), assistive technology-compatible (ATC), and reader's script formats for students who cannot use a regular-print format.

The *PSAT/NMSQT Coordinator Manual* provides instructions for testing students with approved accommodations and students who have been approved for ATC or MP3 audio formats.

Students who cannot test on their school's date. If it is known in advance that one or more students cannot take the test on the day their high school will give it, a school official may make arrangements for them to test at your high school on the Alternate test date. The student may also test at a nearby school that has chosen another test date. For example, a school administering the PSAT/NMSQT on Saturday may arrange for a student whose religious observance prevents Saturday testing to be tested at a school giving the PSAT/NMSQT on the Primary or Alternate test date. These arrangements are possible only if another school agrees and has enough test materials and space available.

Homeschooled students may request to test at a local high school since the PSAT/NMSQT cannot be administered at home. These students are instructed to indicate on their answer sheets that they are homeschooled to ensure their scores are not included in testing schools' summary reports.

Students who miss the PSAT/NMSQT administration. A student who meets all other requirements for participation in the National Merit Program but does not take the PSAT/NMSQT because of illness, an emergency, or other extenuating circumstance may still be able to enter the competition. To request information from NMSC about alternate testing arrangements, refer to pages 8–9 for procedures and the postmark deadline date.

Online score reports

PSAT/NMSQT scores are released online to educators in late November with guidance for connecting assessment results to instruction. Schools should go to psat.org/scores in the fall for more information about score availability for schools and their students. Schools receive summaries that provide data about their students' answers compared with other students nationwide. Resources are also available to support counselors and other educators during

score release. Educators may visit the College Board website at counselors.collegeboard.org/score-resources for further information. Additionally, educators can find benchmarks and further context for scores in the brochure *Understanding PSAT/NMSQT Scores* at psat.org/resources. PSAT/NMSQT percentiles and score conversions are available at research.collegeboard.org/programs/sat/data/data-tables-technical-resources/psat-nmsqt-score-information.

Students can access their PSAT/NMSQT scores online in early December. When students receive their scores, schools can remove test books from storage (if they tested on the Primary or Alternate test date and did not participate in the Test Administration Study) and distribute them to their students. Each student's online score report provides the student's total score, Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and Math section scores, and test scores; percentiles; NMSC Selection Index score and responses to eligibility questions used to determine whether the student meets requirements for entry* to the National Merit Scholarship Program; the student's performance on each test question; and a link to free, personalized SAT[®] practice recommendations at Khan Academy.

*An asterisk printed next to a student's Selection Index score indicates that the Selection Index score will not be considered in the National Merit Scholarship Program because the student does not meet all entry requirements (outlined on pages 6–8). If the student made a coding error when completing the entry requirement questions on the answer sheet or a change has occurred that may affect participation, a school official or the student must write to NMSC at once. An asterisk can also indicate that a student's Selection Index score is reported for guidance-purposes only. In such a case, your school will have information from College Board about why the Selection Index score cannot be considered.

Key dates

2022 National Merit[®] Scholarship Program

2020

October 14, 17, 29, 2020 or January 26, 2021: Students entered the 2022 program by taking the 2020 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT[®]).

2021

August 24: National Merit Scholarship Application instructions for Semifinalists mailed to high school principals. Separate mailing of the booklet listing all 16,000 Semifinalists and this *Guide* to high school principals.

September 13: List of Semifinalists mailed to admission officials of four-year regionally accredited U.S. colleges and universities.

September 15: Date for news media nationwide to release NMSC's announcement of Semifinalists.

September 16: *Letters of Commendation* for Commended Students mailed to high school principals.

September 11: Authorized ACT[®] administration for Semifinalists.

October 2: Authorized SAT[®] administration for Semifinalists.

By October 6: Schools submit completed National Merit Scholarship Applications to NMSC[®].

October 23: Authorized ACT administration for Semifinalists.

November 6: Authorized SAT administration for Semifinalists.

Late November: Application instructions for Special Scholarship candidates mailed to high school principals.

December 4: Last authorized SAT administration for Semifinalists to be considered for Finalist standing.

December 11: Last authorized ACT administration for Semifinalists to be considered for Finalist standing.

2022

February 7: *Certificates of Merit* for Finalists mailed to principals.

February 14: Notification of advancement to Finalist standing mailed to Semifinalists' home addresses.

March 9: NMSC begins notifying winners of corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship® awards and Special Scholarships. Each winner's high school is also notified.

March 24: NMSC begins notifying winners of National Merit® \$2500 Scholarships. Each winner's high school is also notified.

May 2: NMSC begins notifying winners of college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards. Each winner's high school is also notified.

Mid-May: Finalists not chosen to receive a National Merit Scholarship are notified at their home addresses. Candidates not chosen as Special Scholarship winners are also notified.

National Merit Scholar press releases

April 20: Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners

May 11: National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners

June 1: College-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners

July 11: Additional college-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners

A few additional National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners and corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship recipients will be announced individually during the summer.

Key dates

2023 National Merit® Scholarship Program

2021

Early June: 2021 PSAT/NMSQT® ordering information emailed to high school PSAT/NMSQT Coordinators.

By September 15: PSAT/NMSQT Coordinators register their schools to administer the 2021 PSAT/NMSQT.

Mid-September: Copies of the 2021 *PSAT/NMSQT Student Guide* are delivered to high schools for distribution to students.

Wednesday, October 13, Saturday, October 16, or Tuesday, October 26: Administration dates for the PSAT/NMSQT. (The Primary test date is Wednesday, October 13.)

Late November: 2021 PSAT/NMSQT online scores are available to educators.

2022

April 1: Postmark deadline for students who missed taking the 2021 PSAT/NMSQT to request consideration for alternate entry to the 2023 National Merit Program (see pages 8–9).

Mid-April: High school principals are notified if any of their students are among the 50,000 entrants with the highest PSAT/NMSQT Selection Index scores and asked to report any errors or changes in the reported eligibility of their high scorers.

Early September: Principals are notified of their Semifinalists in the 2023 National Merit Scholarship competition.

Note: Dates for completion of the 2023 National Merit Program will be published in the September 2022 *Guide*.

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NMSC Mission Statement

The mission of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) is to recognize and honor the academically talented students of the United States. NMSC accomplishes its mission by conducting nationwide academic scholarship programs. The enduring goals of NMSC's scholarship programs are:

- To promote a wider and deeper respect for learning in general and for exceptionally talented individuals in particular
- To shine a spotlight on brilliant students and encourage the pursuit of academic excellence at all levels of education
- To stimulate increased support from individuals and organizations that wish to sponsor scholarships for outstanding scholastic talent

NMSC Lamp of Learning Logo

NMSC's "Lamp of Learning" logo is modeled after an oil-burning lamp—a classic symbol of knowledge and wisdom. Education fuels the flame that burns from the lamp, which is shown resting on a base that represents the Book of Knowledge. The logo is symbolic of the enduring goals of NMSC's scholarship programs.



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