



Congressman Andy Harris, M.D.

Advice to all Students Seeking an Appointment to a U.S. Service Academy
What Does the 60% - 20% - 20% Actually Mean?



ACADEMICS – 60%

Getting in is a **60/20/20** effort, with **60% representing academics**. The academies are looking for a strong composite on the **ACT/SAT's**, which students should start taking in their junior year. If students take the PSAT in their junior year and do well, they will be on the Academy radar. They need to work hard to improve their scores as the Academies like to see a composite close to 29 – 30 on the ACT's and scores of 560-600 on the SAT's. **Many students who are actually offered appointments will score even higher.** So the advice the academies give is: **take the ACT & SAT tests early and often.** Students can be accepted with slightly lower scores (not lower than 560 on SAT), but the academies have minimum scores, so the higher the score, the more interest the academies will have.

They are also very concerned with **rank in class and GPA**. They like to see AP classes. The student should get a tutor if they do not score well on the ACT/SAT math section. Students need a thorough understanding of Algebra and Algebra II, not just good grades in Algebra. In their senior year, Academies are looking to ensure that students are maintaining a challenging core curriculum and not just coasting. All students who graduate from an academy will receive a “**Bachelor of Science**” regardless of their major because they will take enough math and science classes to be awarded a Bachelor of Science degree. The academies also produce a lot of engineers. They are basically engineering schools, but one can choose from a variety of majors. See the Academy catalogs.

LEADERSHIP – 20%

The second score is **20% leadership**. They are looking for **athleticism**, football, baseball, basketball, track and field, wrestling, swimming, etc. If the student wants to attend a service academy, we recommend joining an athletic team, **preferably a school team**. They also receive leadership or extra curriculum points for attending **Boys State/Girls State** in the summer of their junior year. Students should talk with their high school counselors to get a recommendation for Boys State/Girls State. They also get points for Eagle Scout or being captain of a sports team. Class officer, preferably president, and other offices are also valuable. Any other leadership activities can be added.

The academies have “**Summer Seminars**” for students to attend to see if they are interested in attending an academy and for the academies to get a look at potential candidates. Each academy evaluates the students at summer session. Suffice it to say, the students should know that reports of their summer session can be used during the candidate evaluation process. **Registration for Summer Seminar starts in January and February of the student's Junior Year for the summer of the student's junior year.** If unable to attend summer seminar, the Academy admissions recommend a “candidate visit” to the school. Contact the Academy admissions office to request.

FITNESS, ACADEMY OFFICIAL INTERVIEW & PERSONAL ESSAY – 20%

The other score is **20% and is made up of a composite of the fitness assessment, the interview the students will do with the Academy Liaison Officers, and a personal essay.** The fitness portion (CFA or Candidate Fitness Assessment) is in the schools' manual. Students can start getting prepared in high school. The liaison officers are looking for candidates who want to serve their country by joining the military. Most candidates apply to the academies, but also seek ROTC scholarships as back-up. They will want to see a strong commitment to serve our country. The personal essay on the Academy Application is very important and we recommend interested candidates write it and ask an English teacher to review it prior to submitting it to the Academy. If accepted, this essay will remain in the student file the entire four years while attending the Academy. Please be cautious of injuries (especially concussions) during team sports or fitness training because **all candidates will also take a Department of Defense Medical Exam Review Board exam**, otherwise known as **DoDmerb**.

ACADEMY CANDIDATE BOOKS

We highly recommend students read “**The Naval Academy Candidate Book**” (or **The Air Force Academy Candidate Book**, or **The West Point Candidate Book**), by **Sue Ross**, published by Silver Horn Books. Purchase the book for the Academy you are most interested in attending. The book details interviews with cadets or midshipman as well as professors and career military. Advice for parents is also provided. The editions by Sue Ross are the Third Editions of each book. They are sold at the bookstores at the academies, on Amazon, or can be ordered from Barnes and Noble.

TIMING

Students must open a “Candidate File” by going to the website for each academy they want to attend. The academies will then start the application process and send them application packets. We recommend applying to more than one academy if the student is serious about obtaining an appointment. The candidate scoring is slightly different at each academy, and many of our students who received appointments, did not get accepted at all the academies to which they applied. We also highly recommend applying to all nomination sources: both Senators, your Congressman and the President or Vice President, if qualified.

It is very important to **get the Academy application (to the Academies) completed prior to Dec 1, if at all possible.** If an Academy is interested in a particular candidate, early on they will send Letters of Assurance to them. The grades and ACT's must warrant this, but they will only do this after the application is complete, or nearly complete. We have had offers of appointment as early as we submit the nominations because the applications were complete and the Academies had already deemed them as a “fully qualified” candidate. This means the candidates had already completed their application, their DoDmerb review and their fitness assessment. Medical issues can delay the process, so the earlier they are resolved, the candidate reviews can occur, thereby enabling a candidate to be evaluated as “fully qualified.”



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