Requirements and Instructions for Semifinalists in the 2027 National Merit® Scholarship Program

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- ❑ Read this document completely and make sure you understand what is required of you. If you have any questions about the information presented here or in the *Information about the 2027 National Merit® Scholarship Competition* document, please contact the Scholarship Administration department at National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC®) by phone. We are available at (847) 866-5161 Monday–Friday from 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Central Time.
- ❑ Use NMSC's Online Scholarship Application (OSA) to submit your National Merit Scholarship Application. Follow all instructions to ensure your application is complete and no information is truncated.
  - ⇨ **DEADLINE:** Your completed National Merit Scholarship Application is due to NMSC on October 7, 2026. Your high school may indicate a different date by which they would like you to complete your part of the application.
- ❑ Send NMSC your SAT® or ACT® scores or sign up to take the SAT or ACT. (See Taking the SAT or ACT and Reporting Your Scores on page 2.)
  - ⇨ **DEADLINE:** You will be withdrawn from further consideration in the competition if NMSC does not receive a report of your SAT or ACT scores by January 31, 2027. **NMSC must receive your scores no later than December 31, 2026 for full award consideration.**
- ❑ Check page 2 to see if you need to complete any additional steps because you attend high school outside the United States and are not a U.S. citizen or you have already left high school and are enrolled full-time in college.

IMPORTANT: It is your responsibility to keep your mailing address and email address up to date. Changes can be made throughout the year via your OSA account.

REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A FINALIST

As a Semifinalist named in the fall of 2026, you must advance to Finalist standing before you can be considered for a Merit Scholarship® award to be offered in 2027. You must meet **all** specified requirements and deadlines, or you will be withdrawn from the competition. To qualify as a Finalist, you must:

1. Continue to meet the program entry requirements published in the *2025 PSAT/NMSQT® Student Guide*.
2. Be enrolled in the last year of high school and be planning to enroll full-time in college in the fall of 2027 **or** be enrolled in the first year of college, if you completed grades 9 through 12 in three years or less.
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 page 2).
4. Be fully endorsed for Finalist standing and recommended for a National Merit Scholarship by your high school principal (or school official designated by the principal). Your high school official will provide their endorsement when they complete your application, but they also reserve the right to revoke their endorsement at any point in the competition.
5. Have a record of consistently very high academic performance in all of grades 9 through 12 and in any college course work taken. Your school must provide a complete record of high school courses you have taken, grades earned, and course work you will take in grade 12. Your school is instructed to notify NMSC of any noticeable decline in your academic performance during the current year. If you are enrolled full-time in college and are no longer being monitored by your high school, high academic performance must continue and must be documented by an official transcript of your record (see page 2).
6. Submit the completed application to your high school official as soon as possible using NMSC's Online Scholarship Application (OSA). The school official will complete the school's sections of the application for final transmittal to NMSC by October 7, 2026.
7. Take the SAT or ACT and earn scores that confirm your 2025 PSAT/NMSQT performance (see page 2).
8. Provide any additional documentation and information that NMSC requests.

NMSC, National Merit, *Merit Scholarship*, *Merit Scholar*, and the corporate "Lamp of Learning" logo are federally registered service marks of National Merit Scholarship Corporation. *PSAT/NMSQT* is a registered trademark of National Merit Scholarship Corporation and College Board. *SAT* is a registered trademark of College Board. *ACT* is a registered trademark of ACT, Inc. College Board and ACT, Inc. were not involved in the production of this document.

SEMIFINALISTS ATTENDING HIGH SCHOOL OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

If you attend high school outside the United States, you must be a U.S. citizen, 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.

❑ **If you attend high school outside the United States and have not yet become a U.S. citizen, to become a Finalist you must submit with your completed National Merit Scholarship Application:**

- A letter signed by you explaining your plans for becoming a citizen, including the date on which you expect to be eligible and will apply for U.S. citizenship.

  AND

  - If you are a U.S. lawful permanent resident, a copy of your Permanent Resident Card (Green Card); or a copy of your passport including the identity/biographical page and the "I-551" stamp showing that you have been granted lawful permanent resident status.

    OR

  - If you have applied for U.S. lawful permanent residence, a copy of Form I-797 Receipt Notice from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) that verifies you filed the "Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status" (Form I-485).

⇨ **DEADLINE:** Your letter and documentation must be received by NMSC on or before January 31, 2027.

IMPORTANT: NMSC will not share citizenship information with any other organization or agency.

SEMIFINALISTS NOW ENROLLED FULL-TIME IN COLLEGE

Officials at the high school you last attended will be responsible for the high school's portion of the National Merit Semifinalist Application. They must complete the school's sections of the application for final transmittal to NMSC by October 7, 2026.

If you report a college choice using the OSA, it should be the college you plan to attend during the 2027–2028 academic year.

To be considered for Finalist standing, you must meet all requirements specified on page 1, and:

❑ **Immediately after the end of the current term**, you must arrange to have your college send an official transcript of all college course work you have taken to NMSC. NMSC will review your transcript to make sure you continue to meet Requirement #5 on page 1.

TAKING THE SAT OR ACT AND REPORTING YOUR SCORES

To become a Finalist, you must confirm your PSAT/NMSQT performance with scores from the SAT or ACT. The scores you submit will only be used to determine whether you meet Requirement #7 (page 1) for Finalist standing and will not be used in the selection of award recipients.

College Board and ACT, Inc. will not report your scores to NMSC unless you request it, and you cannot substitute a printout or screenshot of your scores for the official report.

⇨ **DEADLINE:** You will be withdrawn from further consideration in the competition if NMSC does not receive a report of your SAT or ACT scores by January 31, 2027. **NMSC must receive your scores no later than December 31, 2026, for full award consideration.**

AUTHORIZED TEST ADMINISTRATIONS

Only scores earned on administrations of the SAT or ACT from August 2024 through December 2026 will be considered by NMSC. NMSC will not accept scores from a test administration taken earlier than August 2024 or later than December 2026.

CALCULATION OF AN NMSC SELECTION INDEX

NMSC will use your SAT or ACT scores to calculate a Selection Index score. This places your SAT or ACT performance on the same scale as the NMSC Selection Index score from the PSAT/NMSQT, which qualified you for recognition as a Semifinalist.

Please note that NMSC will only consider the highest set of scores from a single administration of the SAT or ACT.

SAT

NMSC will calculate an NMSC Selection Index score from the SAT using the Reading and Writing section score and Math section score. Semifinalists may refer to the *National Merit Scholarship Program SAT and ACT Conversion Tables* worksheet for assistance in calculating their Selection Index scores. This worksheet is available in the Competition Instructions section of the OSA.

ACT

NMSC will calculate an NMSC Selection Index score by using concordance tables to convert your ACT scores to the SAT scale. Semifinalists may refer to the *National Merit Scholarship Program SAT and ACT Conversion Tables* worksheet for assistance in calculating their Selection Index scores. This worksheet is available in the Competition Instructions section of the OSA.

IF YOU HAVE NOT YET TAKEN THE SAT OR ACT

It is solely your responsibility to register now to take the SAT or ACT. Please see the following chart for more information on how to register.

	SAT	ACT
NMSC's Code for Score Reporting	**0085**	**7984**
Remaining Test Dates	September 12, 2026 October 3, 2026 November 7, 2026 December 5, 2026	September 19, 2026 October 17, 2026 December 12, 2026
Contact information	www.collegeboard.org (866) 630-9305 (domestic) (212) 713-8000 (international)	www.act.org (319) 337-1270

We urge you to take the SAT or ACT no later than November or October, respectively, and not wait until the December administrations. NMSC will also accept scores from the SAT School Day taken October 1-30, 2026. Contact the test coordinator at your high school for further details.

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY TAKEN AN AUTHORIZED ADMINISTRATION OF THE SAT OR ACT

Log in to your account with College Board or ACT, Inc. to see if you have already sent scores to NMSC. If NMSC is not listed, it is solely **your responsibility** to **immediately** request that an official score report be sent to NMSC. See the section above for more information on reporting your scores to NMSC.

COLLEGE CHOICE

College choice is not considered in determining whether a Semifinalist qualifies as a Finalist or in the selection of National Merit® $2500 Scholarships.

National Merit Scholarships can be used only for attendance at a college or university in the United States that holds accredited status with a regional accrediting commission on higher education. Merit Scholarship stipends are not payable for attendance at service academies or certain institutions that are limited in their purposes or training.

All National Merit $2500 Scholarships and corporate-sponsored awards are transferable from one regionally accredited U.S. institution to another, but college-sponsored awards are not (as explained on page 4).

You are asked to report your first-choice college (to which you are applying for admission) on your National Merit Scholarship Application using the OSA. However, if you are unsure, indicate "undecided" on your application and report your first-choice college to NMSC as soon as possible.

It is your responsibility to apply and be admitted to the college you plan to attend.

- ⇨ **IMPORTANT:** Remember to keep your college choice up to date during the academic year. To report your college choice or a change in your choice, log back in at osa.nationalmerit.org using the username and password you created when you set up your account. You will receive a confirmation email acknowledging your request for a change in first-choice college. **It is your responsibility to ensure your request to change your college choice has been successfully submitted.** (Please note that you may not make a change to your college choice until your high school transmits the completed application to NMSC.)

REPORT OF A SPONSOR COLLEGE AS FIRST CHOICE

Consideration for a college-sponsored Merit Scholarship award is limited to Semifinalists who qualify as Finalists and who also:

1. report to NMSC that a sponsor college is their first choice (see *Sponsors of National Merit Scholarships in the 2027 National Merit Scholarship Program*);
2. have applied for admission to the sponsor college; and
3. have not been offered any other National Merit Scholarship (corporate-sponsored, National, or another college-sponsored award). No student will receive more than one scholarship offer from NMSC.

A college-sponsored Merit Scholarship award can be used only at the institution financing it and therefore is canceled if the winner changes college choice.

SCHEDULE SPECIFIC TO COLLEGE-SPONSORED AWARDS

MARCH 1, 2027

A Finalist who has reported a sponsor college as first choice **before** March 1 will be included in the first group referred to that institution for scholarship consideration. Only the sponsoring college you have listed as your first choice will be notified.

MARCH 1 THROUGH MAY 31, 2027

Periodically NMSC will notify sponsors of additional Finalists who have reported (by May 31) the college or university as their first choice. Only the sponsoring college you list as your first choice will be notified.

MAY 3, 2027

NMSC will begin emailing college-sponsored Merit Scholarship offer notifications.

⇨ **IMPORTANT:** NMSC will not process any college change requests for a Finalist once a college-sponsored Merit Scholarship offer has been posted to their OSA dashboard. The change in college choice will not be reported to the newly selected college and the Finalist cannot be offered another college-sponsored award from NMSC. This applies even if the new college choice also sponsors Merit Scholarship awards. Finalists who are uncertain of their current college choice may change it to "undecided" to prevent an offer for a school they may not attend. Such notification must be submitted online at osa.nationalmerit.org **before** May 3. Finalists can subsequently report a firm college choice no later than May 31.

MAY 31, 2027

Deadline for NMSC to receive reports of a sponsor college as first choice. Because it is necessary to treat all Finalists consistently and conclude the annual competition in a timely manner, only college choice reports that NMSC receives by May 31, 2027, will be used to identify the final group of candidates to a college or university that sponsors awards.

If you have any questions about the information presented here, please contact NMSC's Scholarship Administration department by phone. We are available at (847) 866-5161, Monday–Friday from 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Central Time.

SCHEDULE AND DEADLINES FOR THE 2027 MERIT SCHOLARSHIP® COMPETITION

2026

September 9	NMSC releases names of more than 16,000 Semifinalists to news media
October 7	Schools transmit completed National Merit Scholarship Applications to NMSC using the OSA
October 17	ACT administration date (We urge you to take the ACT no later than October 17 and not wait until December) Semifinalists who took an earlier authorized administration of the ACT should have requested the ACT Program to report scores to NMSC (code 7984)
November 7	SAT administration date (We urge you to take the SAT no later than November 7 and not wait until December) Semifinalists who took an earlier authorized administration of the SAT should have requested the SAT Program to report scores to NMSC (code 0085)
December 5	Last date for Semifinalists to take the SAT
December 12	Last date for Semifinalists to take the ACT
December 31	Only Semifinalists whose SAT or ACT scores have been received by this date will be considered for the National Merit $2500 Scholarship

2027

January 24	Selection committees begin choosing Merit Scholarship award winners
January 31	Last day for NMSC to receive SAT or ACT scores and other documentation required for Finalist consideration
February 4	NMSC notifies high school principals about the status of their Semifinalists. This notification will be posted to each high school's OSA dashboard.
February 8	NMSC mails letters to Finalists' home addresses informing them of their status. A copy of the letter will also be posted to the Finalist's OSA dashboard.
March 1	NMSC mails Certificates of Merit for Finalists to high school principals.
March 1	Finalists who have reported a sponsor college as first choice before this date will be included in the first group referred to the institution for scholarship consideration
March 10	NMSC begins offering corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards
March 25	NMSC offers National Merit $2500 Scholarships
May 3	NMSC begins offering college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards (see **IMPORTANT** note on page 4)
Mid-May	Finalists who have not yet been selected to receive a Merit Scholarship award will be notified at their home addresses
May 31	Deadline for NMSC to receive reports of college choice for identifying the final group of candidates for college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards

NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP WINNER ANNOUNCEMENT DATES

After NMSC receives award acceptances, the names of Merit Scholar® designees will be released to news media nationwide in four announcements:

April 21	Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners
May 12	National Merit $2500 Scholarship winners
June 2 and July 12	College-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners