Woodlands
Test Prep

THE ROAD TO

NATIONAL MERIT

Woodlands Test Prep

OVERVIEW

- What is a National Merit Scholarship?
- How do I become a National Merit Scholar?
- What preparation is helpful?



Woodlands Test Prep

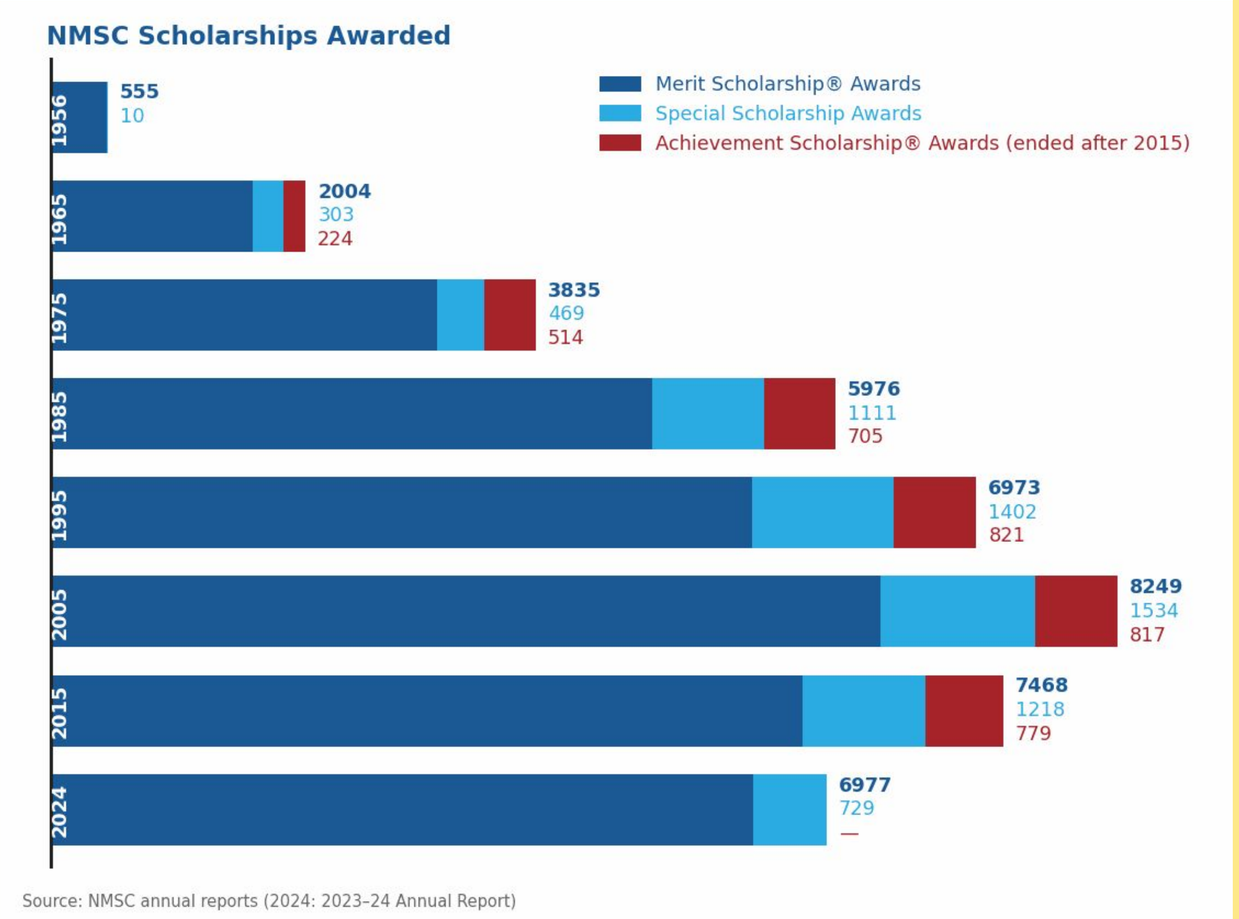
BASIC FACTS

- Founded in 1955 to recognize academically high-achieving students
- PSAT and NMSQT joined to become qualifying test in 1971
- 2,500 National Merit $2,500 scholarships are awarded
- 700 corporate-sponsored scholarships are awarded
- Approximately 140 colleges offer about 3,500 National Merit Scholarships
- National Merit also recognizes Commended students who do not continue in the scholarship competition

Woodlands Test Prep

AWARDS OVER TIME

- Merit Scholarships go to Finalists: National Merit $2500, corporate-sponsored, and college-sponsored awards
- Special Scholarships are funded by corporate sponsors for high scorers who are not Finalists
- Achievement Scholarships were part of NMSC's separate program for Black students, which ended after 2015



Woodlands Test Prep

NATIONAL MERIT PROCESS

- Junior year PSAT is the official test for entry
- About 1.2 million students take the PSAT junior year
- PSAT scores are used to calculate the Selection Index
- PSAT scores come out Oct. 22, Nov. 5, or Nov. 12, 2026, depending on when your school submits its tests

OCTOBER - JUNIOR YEAR

APRIL - JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER - SENIOR YEAR

OCTOBER - SENIOR YEAR

FEBRUARY - SENIOR YEAR

MARCH - SENIOR YEAR

Woodlands Test Prep

SELECTION INDEX

- Calculated by dropping zeros, then doubling the verbal score and adding the math score
- Example:
    - Verbal = 740
    - Math = 720
        - 74 x 2 = 148 + 72 = 220
        - Maximum = 228

Woodlands Test Prep

SELECTION INDEX CUTOFFS

- Commended cutoffs are set nationally

Class of 2018	Class of 2019	Class of 2020	Class of 2021	Class of 2022	Class of 2023	Class of 2024	Class of 2025	Class of 2026	Class of 2027
211	212	212	209	207	207	207	208	210	208

- Semifinalist cutoffs are set by state

Texas Cutoffs									
Class of 2018	Class of 2019	Class of 2020	Class of 2021	Class of 2022	Class of 2023	Class of 2024	Class of 2025	Class of 2026	Class of 2027
221	221	221	219	220	219	219	219	222	219

Woodlands Test Prep

NATIONAL MERIT PROCESS

- NMSC asks principals to verify students' eligibility
- Commended scores become widely, although unofficially, known

OCTOBER - JUNIOR YEAR

APRIL - JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER - SENIOR YEAR

OCTOBER - SENIOR YEAR

FEBRUARY - SENIOR YEAR

MARCH - SENIOR YEAR

Woodlands Test Prep

NATIONAL MERIT PROCESS

- Semifinalists and Commended students are officially notified
- Semifinalists are allocated proportionally to each state based on high school populations

OCTOBER - JUNIOR YEAR

APRIL - JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER - SENIOR YEAR

OCTOBER - SENIOR YEAR

FEBRUARY - SENIOR YEAR

MARCH - SENIOR YEAR

Woodlands Test Prep

NATIONAL MERIT PROCESS

- Semifinalists complete their application online
- Application includes essay, transcript, confirming SAT or ACT score, and recommendation from high school
- Given opportunity to select first choice college; can always change it later

OCTOBER - JUNIOR YEAR

APRIL - JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER - SENIOR YEAR

OCTOBER - SENIOR YEAR

FEBRUARY - SENIOR YEAR

MARCH - SENIOR YEAR

Woodlands Test Prep

NATIONAL MERIT PROCESS

- Finalists are officially notified
- Approximately 95% of Semifinalists become Finalists

OCTOBER - JUNIOR YEAR

APRIL - JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER - SENIOR YEAR

OCTOBER - SENIOR YEAR

FEBRUARY - SENIOR YEAR

MARCH - SENIOR YEAR

Woodlands Test Prep

NATIONAL MERIT PROCESS

- Scholarships begin to be awarded

OCTOBER - JUNIOR YEAR

APRIL - JUNIOR YEAR

SEPTEMBER - SENIOR YEAR

OCTOBER - SENIOR YEAR

FEBRUARY - SENIOR YEAR

MARCH - SENIOR YEAR

Woodlands Test Prep

HOW TO PREPARE

- Remember that cutoff scores are VERY high in Texas
- Dedication to practice is important
- Ideally, start during or right after sophomore year
- Focus serious prep and practice during summer between sophomore and junior years

Woodlands Test Prep

FINALLY

- National Merit Scholarships can be worth a lot of scholarship money if you are flexible in where you want to attend
- Preparation ideally begins by at least the summer between sophomore and junior years
- Just one way to showcase what makes you special to colleges!

