

# 2. Researching

Learn as much as you can about schools that interest you to discover if they are right for you. You should learn a lot more than just whether or not they offer your possible major. Empower yourself by having the necessary information to make knowledgeable decisions. Fortunately, learning about colleges has never been easier. The information you should be looking for is usually just a click away.

## Some questions to help you get started:

- How much does it cost to attend and might you qualify for financial aid? (The schools' online Net Price Calculator is a good place to start, but contact the admission/financial aid office to discuss aid options).
- What types of financial aid are available?
- What resources are available? How do they support a student with learning differences or who is physically challenged?
- What activities and clubs are available?
- What are your housing options?
- Does the college have a career guidance and placement office? Pre-professional advising (pre-med, pre-law, pre-vet, etc.)?
- Your counselor will be able to help you think of many, many more questions that you should be considering.
- And if you can...visit the college or university. There is no substitute for first-hand experience.

## Resources to help your research:

**Financial Aid:** [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)

**Campus Safety:** <http://ope.ed.gov/security>

**General Information About Schools:**

<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>

[www.collegeresults.org](http://www.collegeresults.org)

<http://nsse.iub.edu>

[www.nationalcollegefairs.org](http://www.nationalcollegefairs.org)

Research...

Spring 11th Grade through Fall 12th Grade

# 4. Deciding

Once the admission offices have notified you of their decisions, you need to make your decision as to which school you will attend. It is a big decision, and an important one. Take your time, carefully evaluate all of the information and make the choice that is best for you.

- No college can require you to commit to attending prior to May 1, the National Candidates Reply Date, with the exception of Early Decision or NCAA athletic scholarship programs.
- If you have received financial aid offers, compare them carefully. Determine exactly what your out-of-pocket cost will be to attend each school.
- Attend prospective student events at the colleges to which you were admitted.
- Talk to your family, your counselor and those you trust.
- You should never submit an enrollment deposit to more than one school. It is an unethical practice that may result in your acceptances being withdrawn by the colleges involved.
- Once you have decided, notify the colleges that you will not attend and request to have your application closed.
- If you have been offered a spot on a college's Wait List, learn what you need to do to be an active member of the Wait List. Be sure that you have a place to attend if you are not eventually offered admission off the Wait List.

Decide...  
Spring 12th grade  
May 1 = National Candidates Reply Date



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Overwhelmed?

**That's understandable**  
—there is a lot of information out there and this is a major life decision for you— and your family.

One way to help you manage the college research and application process is to break it down into **four easy steps.**

1. Preparing
  2. Researching
  3. Applying
  4. Deciding
- Begin now!



National Association for  
College Admission Counseling

# 1. Preparing

**Talk** – talk with your family, your high school counselor, friends, coaches, and anyone else who has served as a positive role model for you about your hopes, dreams, aspirations, fears, and desires for your future.

**Learn** – engage your education, learn how to study and take the most challenging courses that are available and appropriate for you. A strong academic performance in high school demonstrates to a college you are ready for the academic challenges you will face there.

**Participate** – get involved in a few extracurricular activities you really enjoy and commit to them. Strive to become a leader in that activity. Start writing for the school newspaper in ninth grade and work your way up to editor senior year. Life on a college campus is more than classes and a college wants students who will enrich the experience for others.

**Plan** – what do you need to do between today and when your college applications are due to make yourself a viable applicant to the college or university of your choice? Are you taking the necessary courses? What standardized tests are required?



Prepare...  
9th Grade  
10th Grade  
11th Grade  
Fall of 12th Grade

# 3. Applying

Actually applying for admission to a college is not as intimidating a task as you may think. Yes, you will need to complete forms online; gather information about yourself, your family, your activities; and, most likely, you will need to write a personal statement. It is all very doable. Your counselor is there to help—ask.

## Some things for you to remember:

Do not miss deadlines—submitting an application for admission or financial aid after the deadline may automatically make you ineligible for consideration.

Fill out the FAFSA and/or additional financial aid forms because financial aid procedures can differ from school to school. No application for admission can be due prior to October 15. This is a bonus for you!

You need to be the sole author of your application—complete it yourself. You may ask for advice, but the words need to be yours.

No college should ask you where they rank on your list. You are not obligated to tell a college where else you are applying.

You should never feel pressured into applying to a college—admission officers are there to tell you about opportunities and give you accurate information.

Apply...  
Fall of 12th Grade



Different application plans have different requirements and obligations. Be sure you understand them:

**Early Decision** – if you apply Early Decision, you are committing yourself to attend that college if admitted. You file the application early in senior year and are notified of the college’s decision around the end of the fall semester. You may have only one active Early Decision application filed at a time.

**Early Action** – you apply to the college during fall of your senior year and the college notifies you well before their Regular Decision deadline as to their decision. You are not obligated to attend the school. You may submit Early Action applications to multiple colleges.

**Single Choice Early Action or Restrictive Early Action** – this is the same concept as Early Action, BUT the colleges that use this form will restrict your ability to apply Early Action or Early Decision to other colleges.

**Rolling Admission** – a college will make its admission decision soon after an application is completed. Decisions are released on a “rolling” basis.

**Regular Decision** – A college has a specific deadline by which all application must be completed. All of the applications are evaluated, all decisions made, and notification letters are then mailed to all applicants.