

Finding the Perfect College

Most students want to find the “perfect” college. The truth is, there’s no such thing. You can find many colleges where you can be happy and get a great education. The college search is about exploring who you are and what you want and then finding colleges that will meet your goals.

BEFORE SEARCHING CONSIDER THESE 8 FACTORS

Size	Location
Available majors and classes	Available extracurricular activities
Distance from home	Makeup of the student body
Housing options	Campus atmosphere

Questions to consider:

- Which of these aspects are things you feel you must have to be comfortable at a college?
- On which factors are you flexible?
- What do you want to accomplish in college?
- Do you want to train for a specific job or get a wide-ranging education?
- If you have a major in mind, do the colleges you are considering specialize in that major?

Bigfuture.collegeboard.org is a great option to sort through the many options out there, based on your preferences.

Here are steps you can take to find colleges where you will thrive.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

Although it’s good to have some ideas in mind about what sorts of colleges will be right for you, stay open to all the possibilities at the beginning of your search.

TALK TO PEOPLE WHO KNOW YOU

Tell parents, teachers, relatives, friends, and your school counselor about your goals, and ask if they can suggest colleges that may be a good fit for you.

DON'T LIMIT YOUR SEARCH

At the start of this process, you may rule out colleges because you think that they are too expensive or too hard to get into, but this may not be the reality. Remember that financial aid can make college more affordable, and colleges look at more than just grades and test scores.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Once you have a list of schools, it’s time to do some research. To learn more about the colleges you’re considering, check out college guidebooks and websites. Jot down your questions and get answers by:

- Talking to your school counselor or teachers
- Checking out colleges’ student blogs, if available
- Contacting college admission officials
- Asking admission officials to recommend current students or recent graduates with whom you can have conversations
- Visiting college campuses, if possible

College Application Tips

Here are some tips to keep in mind as you start your college application process.

STAY COOL

College applications can be stressful to complete, but this is also an exciting time. Work with your counselor, your parents, and others to get through it all. You got this!

PLAN AHEAD

Review each part of the applications before you get to work. Some applications will require the same basic information and others will have unique requests.

GET ORGANIZED

Keep track of the materials and many parts for each application. Make a folder for each application to keep all materials together. Tell your counselor or other appropriate school personnel which materials your school needs to send to the college (such as your transcript and recommendations).

BE ACCURATE

Ensure that you put together an organized and accurate application. Review for grammar and typos. Make sure your name is the same on all elements of your application. Double-check that all documents you're submitting (like transcripts) are correct.

SUBMIT AND SAVE

Print and save the completed application before you send it and keep a copy for your files. And remember: only submit it once—either online or via mail.

USE A FEE WAIVER

If you used an SAT® fee waiver, you are automatically eligible for application fee waivers to over 2,000 colleges.

ASK FOR HELP

Ask your counselor, teachers, or parents to review your application, essays, and other materials before you submit them. Request a letter of recommendation at least two weeks before your deadline and provide supporting material to help them write the best one for you.

SET A SCHEDULE

Allow for time to get your requirements together, get input from your counselor or other adults, review them as a whole, and revise as needed. Keep a close eye on the application deadline, along with other deadlines for financial aid and scholarships.

BE CAREFUL NOT TO

- **Procrastinate!** There is a lot to do, especially if you have several applications to complete and essays to write. You may not do the application (and yourself) justice if you leave it until the last minute.
- **Type your essay directly into the application.** Draft it separately, and then upload the final proofread version.
- **Send a photocopy of your own test score report unless requested to do so.** Ask the testing organization to send your official test scores directly to the colleges.
- **Take on the application process alone.** Your school counselor is your best resource in the college application process. Teachers and parents can also help provide advice and support.

College Application Materials Checklist

Use this checklist to keep track of the application forms and materials required by each school to which you're applying.

FORMS	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
Requires secondary school report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires midyear school report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TEST SCORES				
Requires entrance exam	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires test scores be sent from testing agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires SAT Subject Tests™	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires other state test scores	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RECOMMENDATION LETTERS				
Requires teacher letter of recommendation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires counselor (or other school official) letter of recommendation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ESSAYS/INTERVIEWS				
Requires essays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recommends interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FINANCIAL AID FORMS				
Requires FAFSA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires supplemental institutional form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires state form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>