



The Sky is the limit!

Soar College Planning Guide

The Ultimate Guide to Planning and Paying for College



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Great Resources



College Planning

one-on-one assistance with college searches, essays, financial aid forms and comparing financial aid award letters.

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Preparing for College

College Planning Timeline

High school is a very important time. Students are maturing and are challenging themselves academically, socially and personally. With school, activities, and sometimes work, it is important for students to start building strong time management and organizational skills.

The below list can help students stay on track with preparations for college admission.

Freshman Year

- Meet with school counselor to plan course work.
- Build strong academic skills** by taking challenging courses.
- Get involved** at school by participating in sports, clubs or volunteer work that can make high school more fun and will help develop the leadership and teamwork skills that colleges value.
- Start a list of your activities, awards, community service and other unique educational experiences and maintain it throughout high school. This will serve as the beginning of a resume that will help with completing college admission and scholarship applications.
- Whenever possible, **visit a college campus**.

Sophomore Year

- Continue to do well in school and build a resume.
- October/November**
 - Begin to look at college catalogs, web sites and other information.
 - Attend the regional college fair at Georgia schools.
 - Contact the guidance office for details about the fair.
- January - July**
 - Save for college. Consider volunteering as it can be a wonderful experience and is a great addition to a college application.

Junior Year

- September**
 - Attend a local College Fair**
 - Check with guidance to see which college representatives will be visiting your school. If possible, schedule an appointment.
- October**
 - Take the PSAT/PLAN.
 - Attend the regional college fair usually held on Sunday.

Recommended Course Schedule for Students

**The following is only a recommendation. Please consult with your guidance office or the college you are interested in for more specific information.*

middle school		high school	
Math	Math should be included every year beginning with Algebra I in the 8th grade.	English 4 years	College Track
English, History, Science	These courses must be taken every year.	Math 3-4 years	<i>Suggested courses include:</i> Geometry, Algebra II, Trigonometry, Pre-calculus and Calculus
Arts; Computer Science	Colleges will expect you to be computer literate and to have taken some art.	History/Geography 3-4 years	U.S. History, World History
		Laboratory Science 3-4 years	Biology, Chemistry, Physics
		Language 2-4 years	Many colleges require at least 2 years of the same language
		The Arts	Several courses in the visual or performing arts add further strength to the applicant's record.

November

- Begin to compile a college list. Things to consider are affordability, location, size, etc.

December

- Receive PSAT test results. Attend a college admission information night and college fairs sponsored by your school. Check with the guidance office for additional information.

January

- Begin to think about criteria that are important in a college or university, such as size, location, etc.
- Attend a college admission information night sponsored by the high school.

February

- Identify teachers to ask for recommendation letters.

- Continue refining the college lists.

March

- Contact the colleges on your list to request information.
- Research private scholarships.
- Attend a college Fair.

- Plan to **visit colleges** during your spring break so you will be on campus when classes are in session. Call the admission office before you visit to schedule a campus tour and arrange for an interview. Many colleges have special programs for visiting high school students. If possible, make an appointment with a financial aid counselor to learn more about the college's financial aid opportunities. Bring your parents with you.

April

- Register for the May/June ACT/ SAT I and SAT II: Subject Tests.
- Continue to evaluate colleges and begin to eliminate schools from your list.

May

- Attend college fairs and sessions with college representatives at your school. Ask questions about financial aid, academic programs, student life, etc.

□ Take the SAT/ACT.

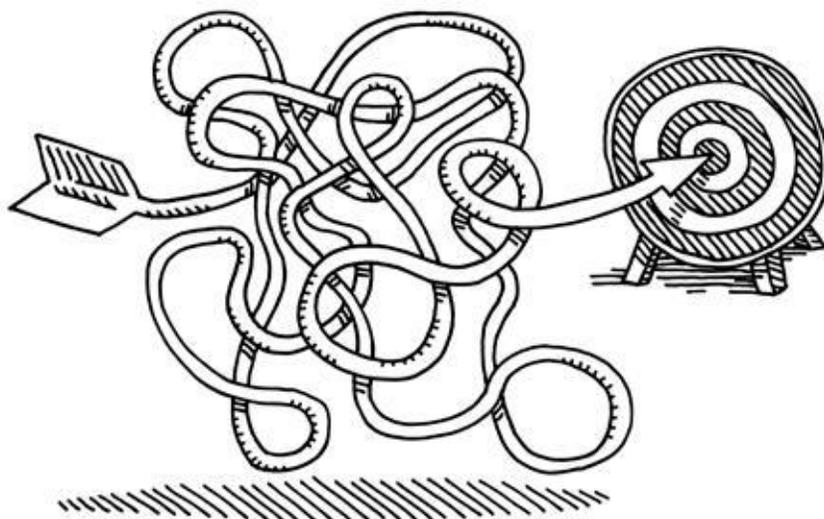
- Take Advanced Placement exams.

June

- Consider enrolling in an academic course at a local college, pursuing a summer school program, or working as a volunteer. If you work over the summer, save money for college.
- Before summer vacation, ask two teachers to write you a letter of recommendation for college.
- Register for the Common Application at commonapp.org

Tip #1: Before visiting a college, be sure to contact the

and a financial aid appointment. Bring your parents with you!



TEEN RESUME GUIDE

What is a resume?

A resume is an organized way to present yourself to an employer or college. It tells them how to contact you and about your prior jobs, your skills, and volunteer or work experiences. It also includes information about your education. Your resume gives an employer or college an idea about what kind of employee or student you are.

Why do I need one?

When you're filling out job applications, you usually need info on previous jobs including dates of employment and names of supervisors. If you bring a resume, it will be easier to fill out the application. Also, it is a helpful tool to give to teachers, coaches or employers when you ask them to write a recommendation for you. Your resume will remind them of your accomplishments and make it easier for them to include specifics about you.

What do I need to know?

1. Never make anything up.
2. Don't worry about a specific length, just make sure you list all activities you've been involved in from grades 9-12.
3. Make sure to proofread. Have someone else look it over.
4. Type it!
5. Save a copy on paper & on your computer.
6. Update it frequently. Add new clubs, activities, and jobs as they happen. This will help you remember all the details and save time later.
7. Use your own style but be sure to use a font that's easy to read.
8. Always remember to give your resume a KISS (Keep It Short & Simple).

What do I put on my resume?

We recommend that you brainstorm first and worry about format later. Make a list of the following:

- Name of your high school(s)
- Any jobs you've had
- Clubs, activities, sports you're involved in
- Projects you've done

- Volunteer/community service
- Skills you may have (computer programs, languages, artistic, etc.)
- Honors/awards you've received

What is a good format?

A good format is one that's easy to read. Believe it or not, people typically only take about 30 seconds to look at a resume but this is what they use to decide if they want you. You need to make sure your top qualities show up at a quick glance. You can do this with bold letters, different font sizes, and bullets. Check out some samples and decide what works best for you.

Have your friends look at it and ask them the first thing they see. Is that what you want your college/employer to know? If so, GREAT! If not, try a new format until you get the reaction you want.

Mary Smart

123 Washington St, GA 02903 | 770-257-4500 | msmart@education.edu

Volunteer Experience

Cranston Public Library September 2019 - present

- Tutored ESL students in an after school program
- Conducted story hour to elementary students at library camp

Providence Animal Rescue League December 2015 - June 2016

- Maintained cleanliness of animal cages
- Ensured animals were receiving proper care by walking, feeding and grooming them daily

School Activities

Students Against Drunk Drivers (SADD) 2018 - present

- Presented on the dangers of drunk driving at numerous high school assemblies
- Attended events at the state house and reported to the assembly the facts on teenage alcohol abuse

Drama Club 2017 - 2015

- Worked on 16 stage productions including: The Crucible, Hiram Night, and Smyrna Boys
- Worked the 2012 and 2013 Renaissance Youth Festival as an actor, stage crew, and technical crew member

Soccer team 2017 - 2016

- Starting right wing for three years.

Achievements

Ensemble award in the State Drama Festival 2018

Leading scorer on the soccer team with 13 goals 2018

July/August

- Polish your resume and, if the schools or scholarships you are interested in requires them, begin to assemble writing samples, portfolios or audition videos. Now is also a great time to begin to work on your college essay.
- Consider volunteer work: a way to experience possible careers.
- If you are interested in an athletic scholarship, contact the coaches at the colleges to which you plan to apply.
- Request admission applications.

Senior Year September

- Begin drafting your college essay.
- If you have not already done so, ask teachers to write you a **recommendation letter**.
- Make sure you understand the different college admissions terminology. See page 16.
- Meet with your counselor to review your college plans. It is a good idea to involve your parents in this meeting. Check with your guidance counselor regarding guidelines for college admission applications.
Keep a checklist or calendar with all the admission and financial aid deadlines for the colleges that you are considering. This is especially important if you are considering an early action or early decision admission application.

October

- **Make sure you know which financial aid forms you are required to complete:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), College Scholarship Service (CSS) PROFILE or the college's own financial aid application.
- Make sure you file your FAFSA before college deadlines. If the financial aid processor requests additional information, submit it promptly. For free help completing the FAFSA, make an appointment with Soar at soartocollege.com
- Attend the regional college fair at Georgia Colleges and investigate the colleges on your list.
- Set aside plenty of time to **draft, edit and re-write your college essay**.

- If applying for "early decision," or "early action," send in your admission application now or by the application deadline date.
- If necessary, register for December/January SAT tests.
- **Begin to send in regular admission applications.** Be sure to keep copies of everything you send and a record of the date sent.

November

- Check in with your guidance office once a week for new private scholarships that are available.
- Continue to submit admission applications. Be sure to keep copies of everything that you send.
- **Ask your guidance office to submit your transcripts** to colleges that you are applying to.
- Consider attending a financial aid information night, usually sponsored by your school.
- *If you are applying to the University of Rhode Island and wish to be considered for the Centennial Scholarship,*

Tip #2: Don't wait until senior year to get involved in activities. Join a school club or sport, volunteer, or get a job. Build your resume now.

December

- Make sure that your transcript and test scores are sent to the colleges that you are applying to.
- Your college applications should be completed prior to winter vacation.
- If you have applied for early decision, you should have an answer by now. If you have not heard, call the admission office.

January

- Request that your high school send a transcript of your first semester grades to the colleges you are applying to.

February/March

- **Monitor your applications** to make sure that all materials are sent and received on time.
- If you have not decided on a favorite school, arrange a second visit to the schools in which you are most interested. Talk to students and faculty and sit in on some classes.

SAT VS. ACT

The SAT and ACT are both standardized tests that help colleges assess you in comparison to other applicants. But how do you know which test you should take? For starts, most colleges will let you know if they require one test or the other so be careful to review application requirements at specific schools. However, some students find that one test helps show their strengths (or weaknesses) more than the other test. Which test is best for you?

	ACT	SAT
Content	<p>Five sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English - Includes punctuation, grammar & usage, and sentence structure. 75 questions in 45 minutes. • Math - Includes pre-algebra, algebra, geometry and trigonometry. 60 questions in 60 minutes. • Reading - Includes readings based on four topics: social studies, natural science, prose fiction and humanities. 40 questions in 35 minutes. • Science - Measures the interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem-solving skills required in the natural sciences. 40 questions in 35 minutes. • Writing (optional) - 40 minute essay measuring writing skills. 	<p>Two sections with subsections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math - Divided into two parts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With calculator: 55 minutes • No calculator: 25 minutes • Delves into algebra, problem solving & data analysis, and advanced math. Max score is 800. 58 questions, 80 minutes. • Evidence-Based Reading & Writing This section is separated into two tests. Max score for entire section is 800: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing & Language - Read passages, find mistakes and weaknesses and answer questions about how to fix them. 44 questions, 35 minutes. • Reading - Multiple choice questions based on reading passages. 52 multiple choice questions, 65 minutes. • Essay (optional) - 50 minutes to read a passage, build an argument, and support your explanation
Essay	Optional	Optional
Scores	Each section score ranges from 1-36. Your ACT score is the average from all sections.	Each section is scored on a scale of 200-800. Your total test score can be a max of 1600.
Penalty for incorrect answers	No	No
College score sharing	If you take the test multiple times, you can choose which scores to send to your colleges.	If you take the test multiple times, you can choose which scores to send to your colleges.
Question difficulty	Question difficulty is random	Questions become more difficult as you progress within each section of the test
Popularity	Tends to be more popular with public schools and schools in the Midwest and South.	Tends to be more popular with private schools and schools on the east and west coasts.
When to take the test	Offered 7 times per year: January or February, March or April, June, September, October, November and December.	Offered 7 times per year: January, March, May, June, October, November, December
Registration	www.actstudent.org	sat.collegeboard.org

April

- Review your financial aid award letters with your parents.** Be sure that you understand the terms and conditions that apply to each type of aid offered. Contact the SOAR for help.
- Decide on the college that you will attend and send in your tuition deposit.** Inform other colleges that accepted you of your enrollment decision. Other students will want your spot! Be sure to respond by May 1.
- If your first- choice college places you on a waiting list, do not lose all hope. Contact the college admission office to let them know you are still very interested and keep the college updated on your activities.
- If you want to live on campus, complete a housing/meal plan application and send it along with any necessary deposits.

May

- Work with your parents to **establish a budget** for your tuition, books, supplies and living expenses.
- Determine how much of the total cost is covered by your financial aid package. When planning for college costs, it is always very helpful to create a four-year student expense budget.

June

- Carefully read any information you receive from your college,** especially a request for additional information.
- Request that your high school sends a copy of your final transcript to the college you will attend. Notify the college financial aid office of any private grants or scholarships that you will be receiving. Find out when payment for tuition, room, board, etc. will be due and start to think about ways to cover additional costs. Refer to page 33 of this guide for assistance.
- Apply for a summer job or consider volunteering at a community service agency. Plan to save a portion of your earnings for college.
- search for outside scholarships and grants.

July

- You can expect to receive your bill from the college in the early part of this month. If you have a balance due, make arrangements to make payment by the due date.

August/September

- Contact your roommate to prevent duplication of major room items (refrigerator, TV, etc.)
- Gather all the stuff that you think you will need for your dorm room. Pack about half because that is usually what will fit. If you need to pick up items near school, use this tool to find a home store near you: www.bedbathandbeyond.com/store/selfservice/findyourcollege.jsp
- Start looking forward to a great college experience!

Tip #3: Whatever criteria you decide to use in your school selection process, you should always apply to one school where you know you will be accepted, and you know you can afford to attend.

Applying to College

Developing a College List

Your college list should address all of the characteristics that will make you comfortable in a college community, such as school size, location, and quality of a particular academic program. As you visit college campuses, conduct research on schools and reassess your interests and ideas about what you desire in a school. Meanwhile, continue to revise your list.

Your final college list should be comprised of no more than eight schools and no fewer than three. Your list should mostly include schools where you are likely to get accepted. Even with outstanding credentials, some of the colleges that you apply to may not offer you admission. The most highly selective colleges deny far more students than they accept, with several now accepting less than 12%.

With the cost of college today, you should also research colleges that offer merit scholarships and consider applying to schools where your academic profile may be slightly higher than that of the typical student. This will increase your chances of receiving merit scholarships.

Your goal during this process should also be to identify “good value schools.” Good value schools are those that have a

very good reputation for the major you are considering with a more reasonable cost. As an example, students that are thinking about becoming teachers should consider applying to Georgia Schools, which has an excellent reputation for training future educators and has a lower cost for in state residents. The combination of GA cost of attendance and reputation make it a good value school.

However, while you are identifying good value schools, don't completely rule out higher priced colleges. The amount of financial aid private (and often higher priced) colleges offer could make attendance affordable for your family.

Before making an enrollment decision, you should always consider the amount of money you will have to borrow for each year of your education. College loan debt has now surpassed credit card debt and many students over-borrow making life after graduation difficult. When you are making decisions about where you will enroll, think about debt in relation to salary. What will be your return on investment for pursuing?

X career at a school that requires you to borrow Y? You will thank yourself when you graduate with less debt than your classmates.

Whatever criteria you decide to use in your school selection, you should always apply to one school where you are very confident you will be accepted and that is somewhat affordable for your family.



how to organize Your College List

Your college list should have schools in the below categories.

Reach

Most students have little difficulty identifying reach schools that they believe to be perfect matches for their needs. At a reach school, your credentials may not be as strong as those of students previously admitted or the school has a low acceptance rate making it hard for any student to be accepted. You should limit the number of reach schools on your college list.

Possible

Your credentials for admission are truly competitive and you are qualified for admission. This is a school where you have at least a 50/50 chance of admission.

Likely

These are schools where your credentials are very competitive and it is highly likely that you will be admitted. It is extremely important for students to find several “likely” schools where they truly believe they can be happy and productive.

College APPLICATION Checklist

How do I know what I don't know?

Ask! This guide provides you with general information but depending on the school you are applying to, there may be some additional requirements. Make sure you read through each school's instructions thoroughly. If you are not sure about something, just call the school's admission office or Soar for some quick clarification. You should **never** be embarrassed to ask about something that could affect your future!

College list. Narrow down your list of schools (we recommend 4-6). Make sure there is at least one safety school on your list. "Safety means you know you will get accepted and can afford to attend regardless of the financial aid package you receive.

Application. Download a copy of each school's admission application. Make note of the following:

- Do they accept the Common Application?
- Are there additional supplements or essays?
- How many recommendation letters do you need?
- What is the application fee?

Resume. Create a resume/activity sheet. This can be used in the activity portion of the application as well as for any job interviews

Recommendation

Get recommendation letters. Find out the policy at your high school but make sure you ask teachers in advance if you would like for them to write you a recommendation letter. It is also a good idea to give them a copy of your resume/activity sheet so they can personalize the letter for you

Standardized test scores. Request your SAT/ACT scores be sent to the schools you are applying to. If a school is a "test optional" school, you do not need to send these scores but can do so if you feel it will help your application.

Essays. Complete your college essays, remembering you use your unique voice.

Application fee/fee waiver. You may have a completed application but without sending in your application fee or fee waiver, it will not be processed by the college/university. Make sure you send it!

Deadlines! Make sure you meet all deadlines!

Factors to Consider in Compiling Your College List

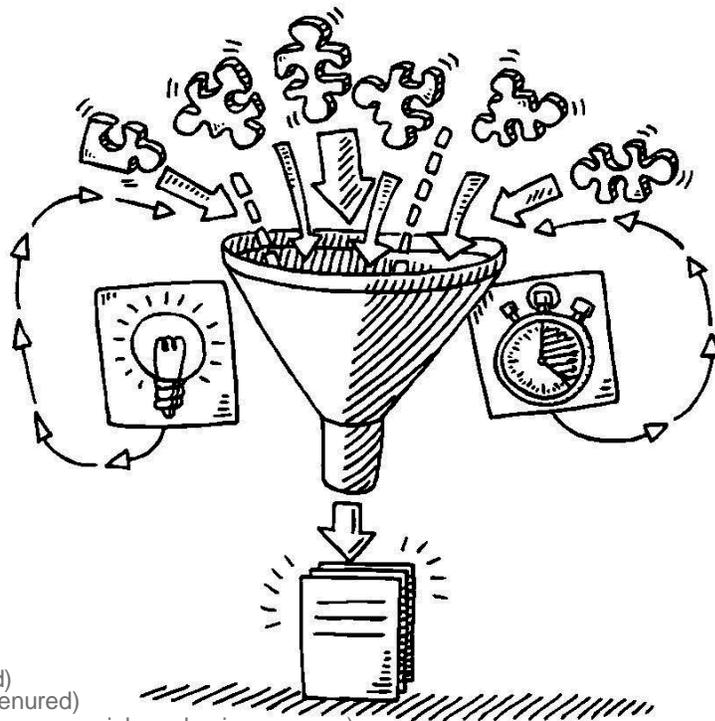
This is a valuable tool for discussion during the initial phase of developing a list of colleges. Think about the following categories and check off the ones that are important to your college search.

General

- Distance from home
- Location (urban, suburban, rural)
- Cost- consider financial aid as part of the cost
- Selectivity (percentage of applicants admitted)
- Diversity of student body/faculty
- Athletic program(s)
- Public or private
- Size (Small - under 2,000 students, Medium - under 5,000 students, Large - more than 5,000 students)
- Safety
- Campus programs (Greek system, arts & culture, clubs & organizations)
- Academic profile (average GPA/SAT)

Academic Programs

- Degrees offered (2 year, 4 years, etc.)
- Curriculum requirements
- Special programs (study abroad, college exchange, accelerated, honors)
- Academic calendar (semesters, trimesters)
- Teaching (by professors, graduate students, average class size)
- Availability of courses (registration procedures, matriculation and graduation rates)
- Support services (writing center, academic advising, computer facilities, study skills center)
- Academic reputation (competitive, supportive, innovative, relaxed)
- Faculty (student/teacher ratio, act as advisors, diverse, tenured)
- Academic resources (research opportunities, guest lecturers, special academic programs)



Campus Services

- Health facilities (medical care, counseling, dental, hospital)
- Career center (internships, job placement assistance, graduate school counseling)
- Library (availability of staff, volume of books, computer access)
- Residence hall facilities (hall options, hall programming, roommate selection, amenities)
- Dining facilities (menu choices, location(s) on campus, quality of food)
- Academic advising (departmental, student's choice, assigned, easily available)
- Athletic/Sport facilities (access and availability, quality and condition, intramurals)
- Religious services
- Art and culture (theater, live performances, musical groups, museum or art gallery)

There is more to applying to college than just sending in an application. College essays, letters of recommendation, and standardized tests are required for admission to most colleges. Understanding college application requirements early on will help you stay organized and avoid a last minute rush.

You should decide early on if you are going to apply to college through early admission, early action, regular admission, or another type of admission.

Making the Most of College Visits

- Pick up a copy of the latest **campus newspaper**.
- Read the course catalog and check out the list of faculty, their degrees and the courses they teach.
- **Meet a coach** if you are interested in a sport.
- If you have a particular interest that you want to pursue in college, arrange to meet with the person in charge of the activity.
- **Talk to a student** you meet on campus about his or her experiences at the college. Ask what they like best and least about the college.
- Go to the financial aid office and ask whatever questions you have about the financial aid process. You might want to call ahead for an appointment to ensure that the financial aid officer will be able to spend time with you. What percentage of need does the school meet?
- Investigate the quality of the **career services office**. Ask about the percentage of graduates who are employed in their area of study (for example, how many education majors are actually teaching today and what is their average starting salary?).
- If you are undecided about two schools, arrange to spend a night in the dorm and sit in on several classes. This will help you get a better feel for what a typical day is like.

College FAIR TIPS

- **Make a list of questions** to ask the college representatives.
- Bring student information **labels** with your name and address on them to save time filling out college information cards.
- **Take notes** when talking to college representatives.
- Pass out **copies of your high school resume**.
- Get business cards from the representatives.
- **Follow up** once the fair is over.

Types of Colleges

Four-year colleges

Four-year colleges award bachelor's degrees upon completion. Some four-year schools are liberal arts colleges, which tend to focus on undergraduate education, while others are universities, which offer graduate, doctoral and professional degrees in addition to undergraduate degrees. Certain four-year colleges focus on specialized studies, for example in art, music, agriculture, or religion. A bachelor's degree is necessary if you are considering pursuing an advanced degree such as a master's degree, Ph.D. or professional degree such as a J.D. (for lawyers) or an M.D. (for doctors).

Four-year colleges may be public or private. Certain colleges may be single sex, have a religious affiliation, or are considered a historically black college or Hispanic serving institution. The type of school you choose to attend depends on your individual preferences and goals.

Keep in mind that it may take you more than four years to graduate from a four-year college depending on your program and availability of classes.

Community/Junior colleges

Community and junior colleges offer associates degrees or certificates in two years and are often much more affordable than four-year schools. Many community colleges offer programs that teach you a specific skill to prepare you for a job immediately upon graduation. Other programs prepare graduates to transfer to a four-year college to pursue a bachelor's degree. If you are undecided on your major or want to save some money, you may want to consider pursuing your first two years at a junior/community college.

Trade school/Technical colleges

Entering a program at a trade school could lead to a certificate, license, or degree, depending upon the school and program. Technical colleges and trade schools teach skills that prepare you for a specific career, such as computer technology, culinary studies, cosmetology, automotive repair, medical assistance, paralegal studies, etc. The length of time it will take you to complete your program depends on what you study but can range from less than one year to several years.

Private vs. Public

Public colleges, which receive funds from the state government, tend to have a lower sticker price, especially for in-state residents. However, private colleges may have more funds available for financial aid. You shouldn't rule out a school just because it is private or public. Instead, pay attention to whether or not it is the right fit for you and it has the potential to meet your personal and financial needs.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM A COLLEGE ADMISSION INTERVIEW

- How do you like your high school? What has been the most positive experience you have had? The most negative? What would you change about your high school?
- What is your role in the school community? What would your teachers say about you as a person? As a student?
- How and in what ways do you expect, plan and hope to transfer your secondary school contributions, achievements and activities to the college level?
- What has been your favorite subject in high school? Why?
- What might you study in college?

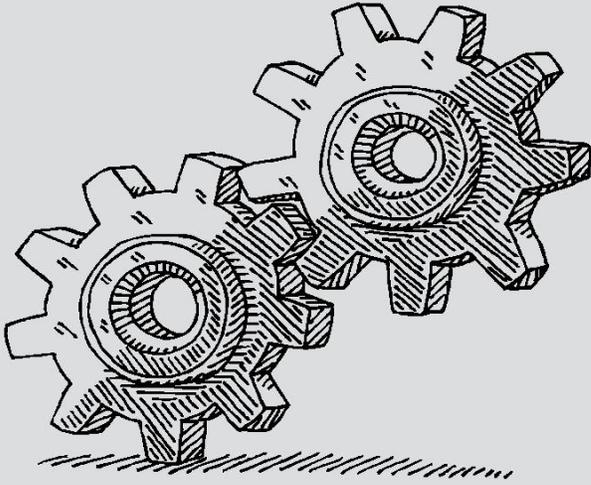
Tip #4: Sometimes, at the conclusion of a college tour, you may have the chance to speak with an admission officer. This is an excellent opportunity for you to market yourself to the college. Be prepared with a list of questions to ask.

- What events, if any, would you deem critical in your life thus far? Who has most influenced you?
- How have you spent your summers?
- How would you describe yourself as a person?
- Have you ever thought of not going to college? What would you do?
- What is the most significant contribution you have made to your school?
- What are you looking for in a college? How did you become interested in this college/university?
- What are some of your goals for the future? Personal? Professional?
- Tell me about a particular class or assignment in which you found yourself most intellectually stimulated.
- How do you spend your free time?
- Why do you think you are a good match for this college?
- Many qualified students apply to our school. What characteristics single you out from others?
- Do you have any questions? (Have some in mind.)
- What is your reason for participating in athletics (or student government, or the newspaper, etc.)? What are the benefits?

Questions to Ask During An Interview or Tour

- How large are your classes?
- What is the average GPA/SAT score?
- Who teaches the courses (graduate assistants or professors)?
- Does this school have a core curriculum? How restrictive is it?
- How adequate is the library? Are you able to get the books you need when you want them?
- When do you have to declare your major? What are the most popular majors?
- What percent of students get a job in their field after graduation?
- Tell me about housing. Are some dorms much better than others? How are rooms chosen (by seniority, etc.)? Do many live off campus? If so, why? Also, do the dorms shut down on holidays and breaks or can long distance students arrange to stay on campus or in their dorms?
- Can you tell me anything first-hand about the (French, English, History, etc.) department?
- What impact do fraternities have here? Athletics?
- What do you like best about your experience here?
- What kind of students do you think are happiest here? Which ones are the least happy?
- What do you think are the greatest challenges of this college? What do students complain about?
- (Ask a student this one) If you could attend another college now, where would you go? Why?





Getting Started

- Make sure you answer the essay question.
- Write as if you are brainstorming and then go back and revise and edit.
- Think about what you are going to write about for as much time as you actually spend writing.
- If you get stuck, brainstorm with someone you are close with.
- Don't ask yourself, "What should I write about?" Instead ask, "What are they asking and how can I best tell them about me?" Have someone read your essay to see if your point comes across.

College Essay Tips

Choose a theme

Avoid creating a list of your activities and accomplishments. Tell the reader something about yourself that isn't evident in the rest of your application. Think about your best personal trait, your interests, values and goals. Focus on one of these qualities and make it the theme of your essay. For example, your best trait might be determination, creativity, or compassion. Tell a story that makes that trait clear to the reader. Provide evidence by citing specific instances from your life.

Be clear, concise and direct.

Be clear about the theme of your essay from the first paragraph. Grab the reader's attention with a compelling opening sentence. Keep your essay around 500 words, unless otherwise specified in the application.

Make your story unique.

Many students write about similar topics in their college essay: family; loss; vacations; sports; career goals. Your job is to make your essay unique. One of the best ways to do this is to use imagery and sensory details. Be creative. Your essay will surely stand out.

Use your voice.

The college essay may be your only opportunity to show your personality to the admission office. Avoid writing it like a research paper. Let your personal voice shine through. For example, if you are witty, show the reader your sense of humor. (Just be cautious! What you think is funny, someone else may not.)

Accentuate the positive.

Even if you are writing about a painful experience, focus on what you learned from it and how it changed you for the better.

Type your essay.

Type your essay in a Word document first and then copy and paste into the Common Application or the school's application.

Proofread and edit.

You may have a beautifully crafted essay or a wonderful story to tell, but if you don't take the time to proofread, your essay may be overlooked and end up in the rejection pile. Spelling errors are unacceptable. Careful proofreading shows the reader you care and you aren't sloppy. Before you send your essay to colleges, have someone you trust read it and provide feedback.

Contact the SOAR for essay review.

SAMPLE COLLEGE Essay

I have a passion for writing. It started when I was little and has continued to evolve throughout every stage of my life. I believe the seed was first planted when my mother started reading to me. She would make the stories come to life with great drama or silly voices and I hung on to every word. We would construct a reading fort out of couch cushions or hang a sheet over the table and pretend we were in a secret castle where we read in whispers so as not to disturb the sleeping giant guarding the door.

I loved the sound of the words and couldn't wait to write them. I remember in elementary school, we would make homemade cards for our parents to mark a special occasion or holiday. While all the other kids fought over stickers and glitter glue to decorate their cards, I was busy

writing an essay about the joys of the season and my love of family. Even when I was sent to my room for what I can only imagine was a well-deserved "Time Out", I would make good use of my solitary confinement by writing a reflection on the great injustice that was cast upon me when the altercation in question was clearly my sister's fault. In short, writing became the vessel I used to navigate life. Whether the seas were calm under sun-filled skies or raging under dark, thunder-filled clouds, writing would guide me safely home. It has been the one constant thing in my life that I can always turn to, besides my mom.

When you look at my transcripts, you will see a GPA that is more average than scholarly. I make no excuses for the fact that I simply could have done better, tried harder. However, these grades do not define me. Instead they represent a time in my life when I lacked focus and drive, a time when the

goal of social inclusion was greater than that of academic excellence, when finding a friend you could really trust far outweighed finding the symbol for sulfuric acid on the periodic table in chemistry. I admit that I had succumbed to the social pressures of high school. I wandered aimlessly in search of my own identity and direction. I felt like I had fallen into a deep hole and finally realized that the only person with the power to pull me up was the very same one that had let me fall... Me. I started writing again and once again it proved to be the

Tip #5: Unless the application specifies otherwise, your essay should be no more than two pages double spaced.

beacon of light that guided me in a new direction, setting sail with renewed strength, determination and the personal acknowledgment that while I may not graduate with honors, I will graduate with honor.

I ask that when you review my academic record you don't rush to judgment and reach for the "Declined" stamp with the impossibly red ink but rather you take a moment to think about what I have shared with you. I want to study communications in all forms. I want to challenge my reading level and develop my writing style. Who knows, someday when I'm published I'll be able to reflect on the education I received at Keene and credit my time there as the stepping stone to my wildly successful literary career.

Until then, what I know for sure is...I have a passion for writing.



College ADMISSION TYPES

Early Decision

Early Decision is an early application process that binds you to attend the school if you are accepted. The student and a parent must sign an agreement that, if accepted, the student will attend unless the aid award is inadequate. The colleges share early decision lists, so if accepted, you must withdraw all other applications. Students not admitted under Early Decision are usually not reconsidered with the regular decision applicants. (SAT I, SAT II, and ACT tests should be taken in the spring of the junior year if considering this option.)

Early Action

Early Action is an admission plan that allows a student to submit his or her application by the college's deadline and receive an early admission decision. The Early Action student, if accepted, is not automatically bound to enroll. Students accepted under Early Action are not required to notify the college of their enrollment intentions until May 1. Check with each specific college to see if you can apply Early Action to more than one college with no penalty. (SAT I, SAT II, and ACT tests should be taken in the spring of the junior year if considering this option.)

Restrictive Early Action

Restrictive Early Action is a program for students who know at the time of application that this is their first-choice school. Generally, Restrictive Early Action differs from Early Decision in the following ways:

- Restrictive Early Action programs usually provide time for families to consider financial aid awards from multiple schools before making a final commitment to enroll.
- Applicants agree not to apply to any other school under an Early Action, Restrictive Early Action, Early Decision, or Early Notification program.

Regular Admission

The college has a specific deadline date for Regular Admission. Generally, the college will also have a time frame for notification of admission decisions sometime after the application deadline.

For example, the application deadline may be December 15 and notification may be March 31 with an acceptance of admission offer by May 1.

Rolling Admission

Rolling Admission is a procedure whereby a college accepts or rejects a student shortly after the student's application folder is complete. Many colleges use this system in selecting their incoming freshman class.

Wait List

Wait List is a term used by institutions to describe a process by which the institution does not initially offer or deny admission, but extends to a candidate the possibility of admission in the future.

Deferred Enrollment

Many colleges allow an accepted candidate to defer enrollment for a year if he/she plans to work, travel, perform military service or develop an independent study program. Generally, a student may not defer in order to become a full-time student at another institution.

Admission policies vary from school to school. Remember to consult with individual institutions for specific admission policies.

Athletics, the College Process & NCAA Eligibility Center

Athletics and the College Process

If college coaches at either the division I or the division II level contact you, you can feel confident that you may have the ability to compete in college at this level. If you have not heard from any coaches but hope to play a sport in college, we suggest the following.

- **Self-Assessment:** Take the time to be honest with yourself about your abilities and potential. If you have never been a starter in your sport, can you realistically hope to compete at the college division I or II level? How good is the program at the schools you are looking at? Do they welcome all to the program with potential for development or only those they recruit?
- **Talk with others:** Talk to your high school coach(es), your counselors or former high school students who were similar to you in ability. Ask for their help in aiding you with your self-assessment.

After taking these steps, if you realistically feel that you may be of interest to some college coaches, we recommend that you do the following:

- Talk to your high school coach(es) about the schools that you are considering. Discuss other programs that might be of interest to you. Ask if he or she will contact these schools on your behalf. If you are in a sport where college coaches request videos of your play, start to discuss what you might send.
- When communicating with the admission offices at these colleges, be sure to inform them that you are a varsity athlete and tell them the sport(s) you play. They will often pass this information on to the respective coach.
- Contact the college coach(es) directly. Let them know of your interest in applying to their school and your intention to participate in their program. You might want to consider sending an athletic resume or setting up a visit to meet with the coach.

Keep in mind that your interests and those of the college coach are not always the same. A coach's goal is to build the best team possible. Typically, a coach is allowed to present to the admission committee a list of his or her most desired candidates from the applicant pool. There is no guarantee that the admission committee will admit all candidates on a coach's list nor follow his order of preference - academic and personal factors must be taken into consideration. For this reason,

coaches often create their lists by striking a balance between an applicant's athletic ability and academic credentials, while factoring in a student's enthusiasm (or lack of interest) in attending that college.

NCAA Eligibility Center

The NCAA has established an eligibility center for both recruiting and eligibility purposes for student-athletes in divisions I and II. This does not apply to division III applicants. All students with an interest in division I or II programs, but especially those interested in making official visits (expenses paid) in the fall of their senior year, should register with the Eligibility Center. You can register online at: www.ncaa.org and follow the links to register to become a student-athlete.

John Hoops
123 Main Street
Anytown, GA 02888
(404) 555-5555

My High School
456 School St.
Anytown, GA 02888

EXPERIENCE

2015-2016	GA High School, Varsity Basketball
2013-2015	GA High School, Junior Varsity Basketball
2012-2015	GA Youth Basketball League – First Team Division

ACHIEVEMENTS

GA High School

2015 (Junior Year) Starting center; leading scorer on team with 100 field goals, All-State, All-Division, Honorable Mention; Team was Division I Quarter-Finalist in GAHSL.

GA Youth Basketball League (GAYBL)

2015	Starting center on team
2015	Division Champions
2014	Division Champions

REFERENCES

Burt Smith, Athletic Director
Joe Brown, Basketball Coach (GA High School)
Judy Jones, College Counselor/Advisor
Ann Johnson, Basketball Coach (GAYBL)

The Eligibility Center certifies that you have completed a core of courses that may be different from your high school's graduation requirements, including two years of natural or physical science. Also be aware that the NCAA core requires four years of English. Check with your guidance counselor if you have any questions or concerns about these requirements.

For more information please visit www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future.

How to Apply

To apply to college, you will either have to apply directly at the school or through what is known as the Common Application. The Common Application is an online only application that allows you to submit a college application to multiple schools at one time. Not all schools accept the Common Application, but it can certainly reduce the amount of applications you need to complete if at least some of the schools on your list accept it. Remember to read instructions on your application carefully - whether it is the school's own application or the Common Application - to ensure you don't miss anything that will land your application in the not accepted pile.

THE COMMON APPLICATION

1. Go to www.commonapp.org.
2. Click on “Apply Now” and then “Create an Account” to get started. Once you have created a profile, you will have access to the application which can be sent to numerous schools.
3. Enter your profile, family and education information as requested.
4. Decide if you want to enter your test scores. You have the *option* of submitting your ACT/ SAT test scores. If you apply to a “test optional school” we recommend leaving this section blank. You will still need to send official scores through the SAT/ACT site if schools require them.
5. Enter your activities. Make sure to list everything you've done in high school. Activities in the community count as well. Don't sell yourself short!
6. Include your writing sample. Don't forget to proofread, proofread and proofread again!
7. Submit. Your application is not submitted until you pay the fee. You can submit one school at a time so you don't have to pay all fees at once.

The Common Application Essay Questions

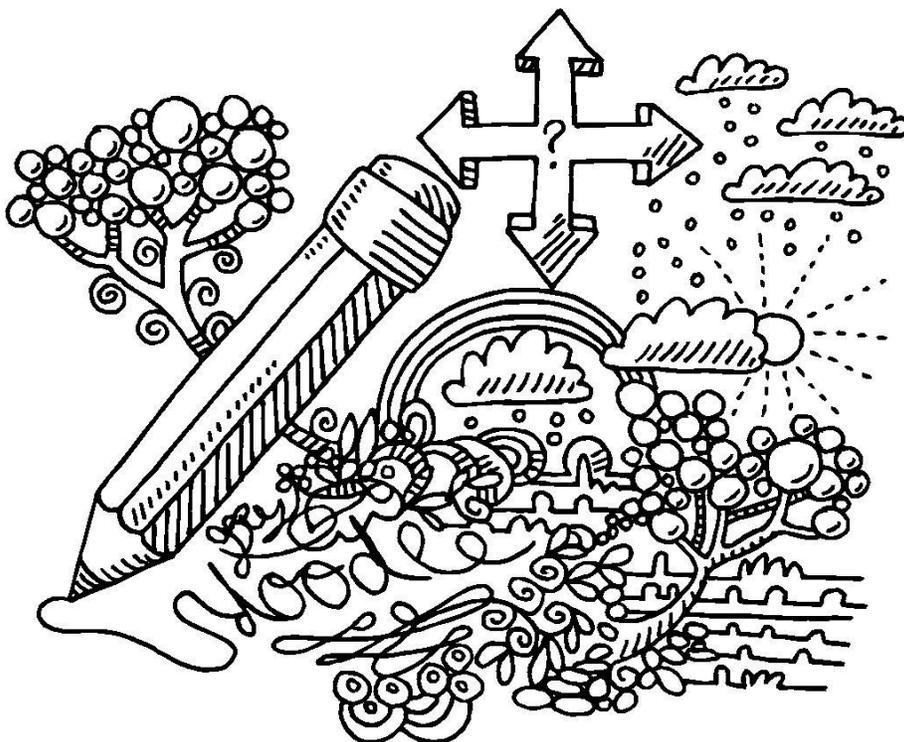
The below language is from www.commonapp.org. This will give you an idea of what you need to start thinking about for your college essay.

“The essay demonstrates your ability to write clearly and concisely on a selected topic and helps you distinguish yourself in your own voice. What do you want the readers of your application to know about you apart from courses, grades, and test scores? Choose the option that best helps you answer that question and write an essay of no more than 650 words, using the prompt to inspire and structure your response. Remember: 650 words is your limit, not your goal. Use the full range if you need it, but don’t feel obligated to do so. (The application won’t accept a response shorter than 250 words.)

- Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
- The lessons we take from failure can be fundamental to later success. Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you and what did you learn from the experience?
- Reflect on a time when you challenged a belief or idea. What prompted you to act? Would you make the same decision again?
- Describe a problem you’ve solved or a problem you’d like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
- Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

Please write an essay (250-650 words) on the topic selected.”

-From www.commonapp.org, 2016/17 application



Financial Aid 101

What is financial aid?

Financial aid is a source of money that helps students and parents fund a college education. Financial aid comes in the form of grants, scholarships, student employment, and loans.

Many families find the financial aid process to be the most complicated and trying part of the college application process. A college education doesn't come cheap and most families need some sort of aid to help meet college costs.

Financial aid may be awarded to students based on merit or based on their family's financial need. Some aid, including certain types of education loans, is available to families regardless of need or merit.

Need-based aid: Awarded based on a family's financial need.

Merit-based aid: Awarded for academic achievements and other talents. Usually renewable if student maintains a certain GPA, as required by the college.

Financial need is calculated by subtracting your family's Expected Family Contribution, or EFC, from the school's total Cost of Attendance.

Where does the money come from?

There are four main sources of financial aid: federal, state, institutional and private.

Federal aid is typically awarded as grants, loans and work study through your school's financial aid office.

States offer grants, scholarships and loans. You can learn about opportunities in your state by contacting your state's department of education. Different states have different requirements for applying for the state grant. In Rhode Island, state-funded grants are awarded through the financial aid offices at Rhode Island's colleges and universities. You must file the FAFSA to qualify. Contact your individual schools about deadlines and any additional requirements.

Institutional aid, which is provided by your college or university, comes in the form of grants and scholarships and is awarded through the financial aid office. In some cases, your school may even have its own loan program.

Private funding may be provided by local businesses, lenders, community organizations or religious foundations. Private

Rule #1: Always maximize your free money options, including grants & scholarships, before turning to loans for college.

funding comes in the form of loans, grants, and scholarships. You must secure private funding on your own.

Types of financial aid

There are four types of financial aid: grants, scholarships, loans & student employment.

Gift Aid: Grants & Scholarships

Grants are awards that don't have to be repaid, are usually based on financial need and are considered a gift from your school, the federal government, the state or a private foundation. The number one rule of thumb when paying for college is to always maximize your free money options, including grants & scholarships, before borrowing.

A grant may be awarded to you by the federal government, your state, or the college or university that you are attending. You must submit your financial aid application by the school or state deadline in order to receive these awards.

Typically, a school will award you any federal grants you are eligible for before awarding you institutional grants. College grants may be based on need, merit or some combination. Contact your colleges for details on their grant programs.

Self-help Aid: Work-study & Loans

Work-study and loans fall into the category of "self-help aid." Self-help aid requires some sort of investment from the student or parent.

The Federal Work-Study Program provides funding to financially-needy students in exchange for work. Work-study jobs can be found both on and off campus. Funds are awarded based on need, the school's level of funding and when the

student applies for financial aid since funds are limited. The amount of money a student earns during his or her work-study position cannot exceed the amount he or she is awarded by the school.

Students participating in the Federal Work-study program will earn at least the federal minimum wage. Undergraduate students are paid on an hourly wage. The Federal Work-study program requires that schools pay

students at least once a month and must pay the students directly unless they request their wages be applied to tuition, fees or their bank account. Only U.S. citizens and permanent residents are eligible for this program.

Education loans are borrowed money that must be repaid with interest. If you receive a loan, you will need to sign a promissory note binding you to the terms of the loan and stating that you agree to repay your loan.

NET PRICE CALCULATOR

Look for this tool on each college's financial aid website. This can help you estimate what the cost of college will be at each school for a family like yours.



The Eligibility Puzzle

Today, most families require some financial assistance to pay for college. However, you must apply to know if you are eligible. Below, is the **Federal Methodology** for determining financial need, or eligibility.

$$\text{Cost of Attendance} - \text{Expected Family Contribution} = \text{Financial Need}$$

Cost of Attendance (COA)

The school's COA includes tuition, fees, room & board, books and school supplies, travel costs, and personal and incidental expenses.

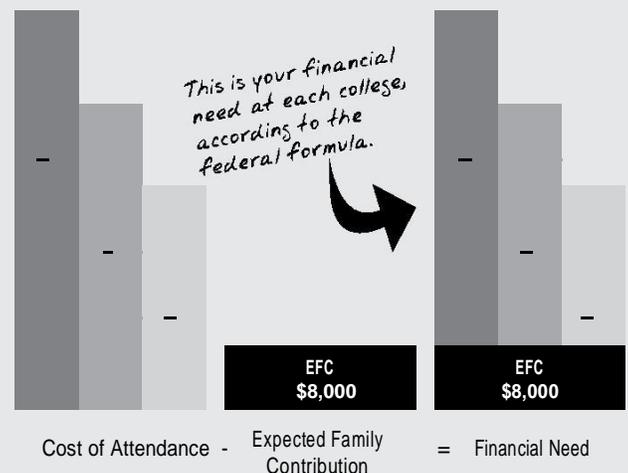
Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

EFC is the amount your family is estimated to be able to contribute toward college costs each year. EFC indicates both a student's and a parent's ability to pay. EFC is determined when you submit the FAFSA. Many factors affect EFC, including parent income & assets, student income & assets, age of parents, number of children in college, number in the household, etc. Not all factors have the same weight. Both parents and students are expected to contribute to college costs.

Financial Need

The below example demonstrates how your financial need differs at colleges of different costs, yet your EFC remains constant.

Unfortunately, schools do not always have enough funds to meet 100% of your financial need. For example, at College B, your financial need may be \$30,000 but the school may only offer you \$20,000 in financial aid. The \$10,000 difference would be considered gap or unmet need.



Grants & Scholarships

Grants

Federal Pell Grant

Description: Grant for financially needy undergraduates awarded through the college financial aid office. Grants do not need to be repaid.

Eligibility: U.S. citizens or permanent residents; full/part-time undergraduates; need-based

Amount: Up to \$5,815 for the 2016/17 academic year.

How to apply: Complete the FAFSA by your school's specified deadline.

More Information: studentaid.ed.gov

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)

Description: Grant for financially needy undergraduates awarded through the school financial aid office. FSEOGs are awarded to the lowest income undergraduate students. Preference is given to Pell Grant recipients.

Eligibility: U.S. citizen or permanent residents; full/part-time undergraduates; need-based

Amount: \$4,000 maximum award; \$100 minimum award.

How to apply: Complete the FAFSA by your school's specified deadline.

More Information: studentaid.ed.gov

Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program

Description: Program for students who are enrolled in a teaching program and intend to teach full-time in a high-need area at a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves students from low-income families. Student must meet certain requirements after graduation or grant must be repaid as a Federal Direct Unsubsidized Student Loan with interest accruing from the date of each grant disbursement. **Eligibility:** For U.S. citizens or eligible non-citizens; undergraduate or graduate students at participating schools. You must meet certain academic achievement requirements. **Amount:** \$4,000 maximum award per year; must sign agreement to serve each year. If you fail to meet the teaching requirements after graduation, grants must be paid back as Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loans.

How to apply: Contact the financial aid office at your college if you are interested in this grant. You must complete the FAFSA for eligibility, but you do not have to prove financial need.

More information: studentaid.ed.gov

Tips on searching for scholarships

Be Diligent

You can't accomplish your whole search in just one day. Devote a small amount of time two or three times a week to look for scholarships. Stay focused on your goal.

Ask Everyone

Talk to everyone – friends and family, neighbors, the postman, etc.– about your scholarship search. Ask them to check with their employers, clubs, and organizations. Also, make sure your guidance counselor knows you are interested in scholarships. A lot

of scholarships come from guidance nominations. You want to cast a wide net.

Look Everywhere

Don't limit your search to just the web. Look in your guidance department, local libraries, and through scholarship books. Check out retail establishments, religious organizations, community centers, local newspapers and trade publications.

Follow Up and Follow Through

These are two critical tips because good opportunities can go right out

the window if you don't do what you're supposed to. Don't lose out on money because you didn't return a call, submit an application or missed a deadline. Do the work!

Never pay a scholarship search service

Most of these are scams. There are plenty of free search tools available.

Start your search at fastweb.org

College & University Grants

Description: A grant that is considered a gift from your school and may be awarded based on financial need, academic merit or some combination. Institutional grants often supplement federal awards to help financially needy students meet the total cost of attendance.

Amount: Up to your total cost of attendance. Your award will be determined by your school's procedures for awarding institutional grant aid and by their availability of funds.

How to apply: Find out what your school's procedures are for awarding institutional aid. Your school may require that you complete other financial forms in addition to the FAFSA, such as the CSS Profile or an institutional financial aid form.

Scholarships

Millions of dollars are awarded each year in private scholarships. Scholarship searches can be huge research projects, but it can be well worth your effort with the free money you may find.

Local vs. National Scholarships

Scholarships are not only for straight-A students and exceptional athletes.

Many scholarships are awarded based on financial need and for other qualities. Certain organizations offer scholarships to children of their employees. Some scholarships are provided to members of a religious affiliation or minority group. Other scholarships are awarded to students who, say, like to fish or golf. Searching for local scholarships is a great way to find free money.

Local scholarship award amounts tend to be less than their national counterparts, but they are often much easier to get since there are many fewer applicants.

You can start your local scholarship search in your guidance office or online for free local scholarship search site.

Institutional Scholarships

Many colleges now offer some type of merit scholarship. Merit scholarships are most often awarded based on certain academic requirements such as GPA, SAT scores, class rank, etc. or may be awarded for some other talent. Certain colleges only award institutional scholarships to students who can prove financial need. When inquiring about merit aid, you should ask the following questions:

- What types of scholarships do you offer and what are the dollar amounts?
- What are the criteria for the scholarships?
- If I meet the criteria, am I guaranteed to get one?
- What do you need to do to keep the scholarship?

Private Scholarships

Many businesses, community organizations, and foundations also award scholarships to qualifying students. These scholarships may be awarded based on need, merit or for some other quality. You never know what you will be eligible for unless you look. During your search, beware of scholarship scams. You

Rule #2: Search for local scholarships! They are less competitive than national scholarships and can reduce the amount you need to borrow.

shouldn't ever have to pay anyone to find you scholarships. There are plenty of free resources available.

Scholarships do not need to be repaid and are awarded based upon particular, often competitive, requirements.

Education Loans

Types of Loans

Federal Direct Student Loans

Description: Loan for students funded by the U.S. Dept. of Education. These loans come in two forms: subsidized and unsubsidized. The federal government pays the interest on subsidized loans while the student is in school. The student is responsible for all interest charges on unsubsidized loans. Graduate students are not eligible for subsidized loans.

Rates: 3.76% fixed for subsidized and unsubsidized undergraduate loans for 2016/17; 5.31% for graduate students. Rates change annually and are based on the 10-year Treasury bill plus a markup.

Fees: 1.069% default fee. Fees are deducted from the disbursed amount to the school. Fees can change, so check the studentaid.ed.gov for any updates.

Eligibility: U.S. citizen/permanent residents; full/part-time students. Subsidized: For students who have financial need, as determined by the FAFSA and school costs. Unsubsidized: For students who do not have financial need.

Repayment Term: Up to 10 years for standard repayment. Graduated, extended, and income-driven repayment options also available. Deferment and forbearance options available.

Grace Period: 6 months

Annual Limits:

Dependent Student Limits		
Year in School	Subsidized Limit	Total Limit
First	\$3,500	\$5,500
Second	\$4,500	\$6,500
Third-Fifth	\$5,500	\$7,500

Independent Student Limits		
Year in School	Subsidized Limit	Total Limit
First	\$3,500	\$9,500
Second	\$4,500	\$10,500
Third-Fifth	\$5,500	\$12,500
Grad Students	\$0	\$20,500

Aggregate limits also apply.

How to apply: Complete the FAFSA by your school's deadline. You will also have to complete an additional application, known as a Master Promissory Note (MPN), to accept your award.

More information: studentaid.ed.gov

Saving for College

Investing in your child's future is one of the best investments your family can make. But college isn't cheap. To help curb the costs of college, start saving as soon as you can.

Start Saving Early

The earlier you start saving, the more money you will have to put towards the tuition bill – meaning the less you will have to borrow and pay interest on. Set a goal of how much you would like to save each year, increasing your contributions annually to offset the rising cost of tuition.

Start a College Savings Account

Starting an account specifically for college funds is a great way to monitor your college savings and watch your money grow. Keep in mind that when it comes time to fill out the FAFSA, students are expected to contribute a higher percentage of their assets/savings than parents, so it may be best to create the account in the parent's name. Also, consider looking into Coverdell Education Savings Accounts, Education Savings Bonds and 529 Plans. Consult your financial advisor for more information on which option works best for your family.

Track your Spending

When college is still years away, it is easy to put off saving. Try and distinguish between your needs and your wants. Monitor your spending and decide where you can cut costs from your monthly budget. A \$2 cup of coffee a day translates to \$730 a year. If you put that money in your college account instead for 18 years, you've saved \$32,181 at a 9% annual return.

Make Regular Contributions

The more often you put money away, the better. Saving regularly will help you accumulate savings without putting as much burden on your wallet as an annual contribution might. Consider getting funds automatically transferred to your college savings account from your checking account or payroll each month. If you receive a bonus from work or some other large sum of money, put it directly in your college savings account instead of spending it.

When You Have More, Save More

If you receive a raise at work, increase the amount of money you direct towards your college savings account each month. If you finish making payments on an installment loan, such as a car, use the funds you were previously applying toward that payment to invest in your college savings account.

Federal PLUS Loan

Description: Loan for parents of undergraduate students and for graduate students funded by the U.S. Dept. of Education.

Rate: 6.31% fixed for 2016/17 Rate changes annually and are based on the 10-year Treasury bill.

Fees: 4.276%. Fees are deducted from the disbursed amount to the school. Fees can change, so check the website below. **Eligibility:** U.S. citizen/permanent resident; parents of dependent undergraduate students. Also available to graduate students. A credit check is required.

Amount: Up to the difference between college costs and total financial aid received.

Repayment Term: Up to 10 years for a standard repayment. Loan repayment begins within 60 days after final disbursement. Parents can choose to defer payments until up to 6 months after the student leaves school or drops below half-time status. Interest accrues during this period.

Minimum payment: \$50/month

How to apply: Submit the FAFSA by your school's deadline. You will also need to complete an application, known as a Master Promissory Note.

More Information: studentaid.ed.gov

State-Based Education Loans

Description: An alternative loan for students and/or parents available from state-based lenders. These lenders often offer low fixed rates and affordable monthly payments. **Eligibility:** A credit check & cosigner are usually required. **Amount:** Loan limits vary by program.

Repayment Term: Repayment terms vary by program. **How to apply:** Each lender will have specific procedures for you to follow.

More information: www.risla.com for Rhode Island residents & students going to school in Rhode Island. Other students check with your state.

Private Education Loans

Description: A private loan for students available from a nationwide lender, generally with a variable interest rate based off of Prime or LIBOR plus a mark-up. Variable rates are currently low so the advertised rate on most of these programs may not be what you pay over the life of your repayment term. When interest rates rise, so will your monthly payment amount. Fees and rates vary widely based on loan program and credit rating.

Eligibility: A credit check is usually required; cosigner is often required.

Amount: Loan limits vary by program.

Repayment Term: Repayment terms vary by program. **How to apply:** Each lender will have specific procedures for you to follow.

15 Questions to Ask Before Borrowing a College Loan

As a rule, you should always take advantage of any available scholarships and grants, and pay what you can from income and savings, before turning to education loans.

If you do need college loans, Federal Direct Subsidized Loans are a good place to start. You must have financial need to be eligible. If you do, your school will include it in your aid package. If you

do not have financial need, your school may award you a Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan instead. These federal student loan programs have annual & aggregate borrowing limits.

If you still need to borrow after exhausting these options, you may want to consider looking into the Federal PLUS Loan (for parents) or a state-based education loan. Remember to limit the amount you borrow!

Before you borrow, always ask the lender:

1. What is the interest rate?
2. Is the interest rate fixed or variable? (Variable rates can change monthly or annually until your loan is paid off, which means your payment can also change.)
3. Is the rate I receive based on my credit?
4. Does the interest rate ever change? (Some loans have different rates while you are in school vs. after you graduate.)
5. What are the fees?
6. What is the loan term?
7. What would my monthly payment be if I borrowed \$X,XXX?
8. When would my first payment be due?
9. How are loan funds disbursed? (to you or the school?)
10. What steps do I need to take to complete an application?
11. How long does it take to process an application?
12. Are there loan limits? Annual? Aggregate?
13. Who is eligible for this loan?
14. Do I need a cosigner?
15. What deferment and forbearance options are available to me?

SMART COLLEGE BORROWING

The average student graduates with nearly \$30,000 in student loan debt. Some students graduate with much less, and others, with a lot more. Many students and parents are surprised to learn that they owe hundreds of dollars a month in student loan payments. That's why before you borrow, you should understand your college loan options and learn about how to borrow responsibly.

What amount is the “right” amount to borrow for college?

This is a difficult question students & parents need to face before making an enrollment decision. While many students are eager to sign whatever it takes to go to their dream school, they often don't understand how much it will cost them after they graduate. Others decide if they need to borrow for college, they just won't go. What is the right choice?

The reality is borrowing for college isn't always bad - as long as it is done responsibly. College graduates earn much more than high school graduates, so college is a good investment. But families should be careful not to borrow outside of their means. Think about your return on investment.

Only borrow what you absolutely need.

You don't need to borrow the full amount listed on your financial aid award letter. It is tempting to borrow a little extra for something you *want* but don't actually *need*. When you borrow money, you pay it back with interest, increasing your total costs. **A good rule of thumb is to only borrow what you absolutely need and no more.**

Don't ignore interest.

When you borrow, you pay back your loan with interest. It is easy to underestimate how much interest you will pay over the course of your repayment period. The chart in the next column provides examples of how much interest you would pay on a \$10,000 loan with varying terms & rates.

Please note all figures are estimates.

Interest rate	Number of payments	Est. Monthly Payment	Total Interest Charges	Total Cost of Loan
Assuming a \$10,000 loan with zero fees and a 10 year term				
4.0%	120	\$101	\$2,149	\$12,149
5.0%	120	\$106	\$2,728	\$12,728
6.0%	120	\$111	\$3,322	\$13,322
7.0%	120	\$116	\$3,933	\$13,933
8.0%	120	\$121	\$4,559	\$14,559
9.0%	120	\$127	\$5,201	\$15,201
10.0%	120	\$132	\$5,858	\$15,858
11.0%	120	\$138	\$6,530	\$16,530
12.0%	120	\$143	\$7,217	\$17,217
Assuming a \$10,000 loan with zero fees and a 15 year term				
4.0%	180	\$74	\$3,314	\$13,314
5.0%	180	\$79	\$4,234	\$14,234
6.0%	180	\$84	\$5,189	\$15,189
7.0%	180	\$90	\$6,179	\$16,179
8.0%	180	\$96	\$7,202	\$17,202
9.0%	180	\$101	\$8,257	\$18,257
10.0%	180	\$108	\$9,343	\$19,343
11.0%	180	\$114	\$10,459	\$20,459
12.0%	180	\$120	\$11,603	\$21,603

How much will you earn?

Before you borrow, do your research on entry level salaries in your field of choice (The Bureau of Labor Statistics web site is a great place to start: www.bls.gov). Will you be able to afford your monthly payments with the salary you will make?

Remember to account for all four years of your education when estimating your total borrowing needs. Too many students have a “borrow now, deal later” attitude that ends up getting them into trouble.

How will your education debt affect your future goals?

When deciding between two schools, you may find you want to go to one more, but it will mean you have to borrow a lot more. Think about how that will affect your ability to reach your future goals. Will you be able to afford to reach your goals with a higher student loan payment?

Rule #3: Be a good consumer and compare rates & terms before borrowing.



Student Loan FAQ

What are Entrance and Exit Interviews?

If you have federal student loans, you will be required by law to complete an entrance interview prior to receiving a loan and an exit interview before you graduate. Entrance interviews help you understand your federal student loan responsibilities. Exit interviews are used to inform you about your repayment obligations and options. Certain schools allow you to complete your entrance and exit interviews online.

What is a grace period?

After you graduate, you may be entitled to a grace period, or a period during which you aren't required to make student loan payments, typically for six months. Although a grace period applies to all federal student loans, not all non-federal loans afford you this option so make sure to check with your lender to determine when you will need to begin making payments on your loans.

Making payments towards your student loans during your grace period can be a good idea. You may also want to consider making payments while in school to reduce the amount of interest that is added to your balance or to reduce your total principal balance.

What is deferment and forbearance?

Your lender may grant you a temporary postponement of payments called a deferment or forbearance. Whether you receive a deferment or forbearance depends on your eligibility and the type of loan you have. Federal loans typically offer more deferment & forbearance options than non-federal

education loans. If you are going back to school at least half time, you are unemployed, in the military or performing another public service, or having trouble making your student loan payments for any other reason, contact your lender or student loan servicer to see if you qualify for a deferment or forbearance.

What happens if I default on my student loan?

Defaulting on your student loan has many serious consequences. If you are having trouble making payments, remember to call your student loan lender or servicer to learn about your deferment and forbearance options or to see if you qualify for a different repayment schedule. If you default on a student loan, you may:

- Be ineligible for federal and private student aid in the future.
- Lose your deferment and forbearance options.
- Have to pay your entire loan balance immediately.
- Pay additional costs if your account is turned over to a collection agency or attorneys.
- Hurt your credit and therefore your ability to borrow in the future, rent an apartment, or even get a job.
- Have your federal or state tax refund withheld so that it can be applied to your defaulted loan balance.
- Have your wages garnished.

Applying for Aid

Follow this simple step-by-step process to make sure you qualify for as much financial aid as possible.

1 Apply for an fsa id

Apply for an FSA ID at fsaid.ed.gov. Your FSA ID will consist of a username and a password that

will enable you to “sign” documents electronically and make corrections to your FAFSA through the web. Both the parent and the student must each apply for a separate FSA ID. Please note the email addresses must be different as well. Your FSA ID is your electronic signature. If you forget your FSA ID you can reset it.

2 Submit the FAFSA

You should file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at www.fafsa.ed.gov

any time after October 1 as possible. The FAFSA is used by all colleges to determine your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and your eligibility for federal and state aid, including subsidized student loans. Many colleges also use the FAFSA to determine eligibility for institutional aid.

The FAFSA cannot be filed until October 1, but it must be completed and received prior to the college’s priority deadline date. The FAFSA must be filed for every year the student is in school. A FAFSA requires a signature from both a parent and the student applicant if the student is dependent. To sign the online application, you must use your FSA ID (see Step 1).

Families are encouraged to **file the FAFSA early**. If you do not have all the necessary tax information required for the form, you can estimate and update the FAFSA once you file your tax return.

There is no fee involved in filing the FAFSA and all families are encouraged to apply regardless of their family circumstances.

3 Submit other financial Aid forms

Some private independent colleges require a CSS PROFILE application or an institutional financial aid form to determine your eligibility for their own sources of financial aid. The PROFILE application can be completed as early as October and is only available online at profileonline.collegeboard.com. Make sure you know if you need to file any forms in addition to the FAFSA and that you submit them by the school’s specified deadline.

Book your appointment at www.soartocollege.com

Tips for Filing the FAFSA

Don’t miss deadlines. This is a common mistake. In addition to your school deadlines, some states require you to file by a specific deadline in order to qualify for the state grant. In GA, state-funded grants are awarded by GSF and colleges and universities. Contact the individual colleges you are applying to in GA for deadlines and additional requirements to be sure you are considered for these state grants.

Don’t include your retirement savings in your assets. The federal government does not expect your family to cash out its 401(k), 403(b) or other qualified retirement savings accounts to pay for your child’s education. However, while you will exclude these numbers from your assets, you will need to report the amount you contribute to your retirement annually as nontaxable income on the FAFSA.

Get free help completing your form. There are many free resources available to help you complete your FAFSA. If you live in Georgia, you can get free one-on-one assistance at SOAR. Visit soartocollege.com to book your appointment.

4

Apply for scholarships

Millions of dollars in scholarships are available each year. Start your search online. Use tools like **big future**.

collegeboard.org/scholarship-search to search for national scholarships. Don't forget to check your guidance office and local library for opportunities. Scholarships are a great way to help pay college tuition, books and living expenses and can reduce the amount you need to borrow. View our tips on searching for scholarships on page 22. You should always maximize the amount of free money you use to pay for college before borrowing.

5

Review & compare your award letters

Each college's financial aid office then determines what aid it has available to help meet your demonstrated financial need. Schools will aim to meet as much of your need as possible but not all schools can afford to meet 100% of your financial need. The financial aid office will put together a financial aid package or award letter for you. The aid may come in the form of grants, work-study, scholarships, and loans.

Remember, when your financial aid package arrives in the mail, read it over carefully. Decide which portions of the award you would like to accept. Pay attention to the school's instructions. You may have to complete additional paperwork to fully accept the award.

If you feel that the award does not fully meet your financial needs or your needs have changed due to illness,

unemployment or some other reason, you can appeal the award. Make sure you have documentation that supports your request. Many schools will take a second look at your financial aid package, if asked.

Your financial aid package may or may not cover your total financial need. If financial need is not entirely met, this unmet need is called "gap." This means that resources must be found to meet the full cost of education.

6

Apply for loans, if necessary

Your school may include Federal Direct Student Loans in your award letter. To accept these awards, you will need to complete a Master Promissory Note. If federal student loans are not listed on your letter, you may still be eligible to borrow under the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan program. Contact your financial aid office about the procedures for applying. Also keep in mind that just because a loan is included in your award letter doesn't mean you are obligated to accept it. Limit your borrowing as best as possible.

Some schools also include Federal PLUS Loans in their award packages. Before accepting this award, make sure to compare this loan to other options as you might find a better deal for your family. Be sure to consider benefits as well, such as deferment, forgiveness in the unfortunate incidence of death, and rate discounts. If a PLUS loan was not included in your award letter, but you believe it is the best option for your family, you will still apply.

If you decide to take out a state-based education loan or private student loan, you will need to select a lender and complete an application with that lender. Be sure to use the

tips on page 25 of this guide for comparing your loan options.

Rule #4: Pay attention to financial aid deadlines! Don't lose out on free money just because you apply too late!

Comparing Award Letters

What all parents should know about comparing financial aid award letters before making a decision about where to enroll.

With college costs on the rise and exceeding \$50,000 a year in some cases, college has become increasingly more difficult to afford. Often times, income, assets and savings, including education savings plans, are not enough to cover your family's contribution. Financial aid can help reduce the cost of college but families are still often left with a considerable gap.

Ideally, you should attempt to get as much free money as possible before turning to loans to cover college costs. You may receive grants and/or scholarships in your financial aid package from your school, but outside scholarships are also available to help families fund a higher education.

Local scholarships are widely available and are often easier to obtain than national scholarships.

Visit fastweb.org to search through a comprehensive list of hard-to-find local scholarships. Scholarships are not just for straight-A students and exceptional

athletes. Many scholarships are available to financially needy students or to students with certain interests, students that belong to community or religious organizations, or children of employees of a particular company.

10 Tips for Comparing Award Letters & Coming Up with a Plan to Pay the Balance Due

Making sense of financial aid award letters can be a daunting task for families as they make college enrollment decisions. Comparing financial aid offers from multiple colleges aren't always easy. Use this guide to compare your awards & come up with a plan to pay your tuition bill:

- 1. Add up your direct costs.** Direct costs are costs paid directly to the school such as: tuition & fees, room & board and other fees. Books, travel costs, personal expenses and other miscellaneous costs, while they add to your total cost of attendance, are considered indirect costs.
- 2. Calculate your total gift aid.** Gift aid is free to you and includes grants and scholarships. The first step to comparing award letters is to sum up your total gift aid. Subtract any gift aid from your total direct costs. Do not subtract work-study or loans from your total costs since these are considered self-help aid.



XYZ College University

Student Financial Aid Award Notification

Dear Student,

CONGRATULATIONS on your acceptance to XYZ College University! On behalf of the university we are pleased to offer you the following financial assistance towards your pursuit of higher education.

Student Financial Aid Offer

Award	Fall	Spring	Total	Acceptance
Federal Pell Grant	\$2907	\$2908	\$5815	yes no
College Work Study	\$750	\$750	\$1500	yes no
Institution Grant	\$500	\$500	\$1000	yes no
Direct Stafford Subsidized Loan	\$2750	\$2750	\$5500	yes no

This award is the result of a review of your financial aid application. Next to each type of award you have the opportunity to accept or decline all, none or some of the financial assistance offered to you. Please indicate your choices by circling the appropriate response. Then sign and date the letter below and return to the financial aid office within fifteen days. Two copies of the letter are enclosed: please keep the second copy for your records. If you have any comments, questions, concerns or any unusual circumstances, please contact our office as soon as possible. We look forward to seeing you in the fall.

Director
Financial Aid
XYZ College/University
(101) 555-1234

signature

date

3. **Consider what savings you have available to help meet tuition costs.** Do you have a 529 college savings plan or a Coverdell savings account? Any other savings or gifts meant for college? Subtract any resources you will use from your direct costs.
4. **Determine if you have any income available to help pay college costs.** Most colleges offer a payment plan that allows you to spread out the cost of tuition over the course of a school year. Typically, a payment plan administrator charges a one-time enrollment fee. Be aware that making payments late can result in high fees. Contact the college Bursar's office or Financial Aid Office to get information regarding payments plans. Some popular plan administrators are Tuition Management Systems (TMS), Academic Management Systems (AMS) and FACTS.
5. **Add up federal student loans.** If Federal Direct Subsidized or Unsubsidized Loans are included in your financial aid award, decide if you would like to accept these awards. Remember, you will have to pay interest on loans, so you want to borrow as little as possible. Make sure you understand the terms of these loans before accepting them. Subtract the amount of Federal Direct Student Loans you will accept from your direct costs.
6. **Think about how you will meet the difference.** The remaining balance may be higher than your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Most schools are not able to meet 100% of your financial aid eligibility. Some schools may include the Federal PLUS Loan in your financial aid package. Keep in mind that you can apply for this loan regardless of whether or not it is listed on the financial aid award letter and you don't have to accept it just because it is included. If you plan to borrow, whether it is a PLUS loan, state-based loan, or private education loan, remember to be a good consumer and explore rates (APR) and terms. Factor your borrowing into the whole picture when determining which aid package is best for your family.
7. **Subtract any additional loans you plan to borrow from your direct costs.** This includes PLUS loans, state-based loans and private education loans (remember to be careful to compare rates, terms and fees for any of these options before signing the note!). Make adjustments if you still have a balance due.
8. **When comparing award letters, focus on the ratio of gift aid to total aid received.** It is easy to get swept away by a big financial aid offer. But remember, it isn't always the total award amount that is most important. Pay attention to how much of your financial need each college met and *how* they meet your need. The higher ratio of gift aid the better. Also, figure out if awards are renewable. Be wary of scholarships and grants that are only good for your first year.
9. **You do not need to accept the financial aid package as is.** Loans need to be paid back with interest, so try to limit the amount you borrow by reducing your award amounts or declining loans if you don't need them. If you think you need more aid, you can always try to appeal the offer. Make sure you have documentation to support your request. Many schools will take a second look at the award package, if asked.
10. **Send in award acceptance forms by the deadline.** If you do not, the aid awarded to you may go to another student.

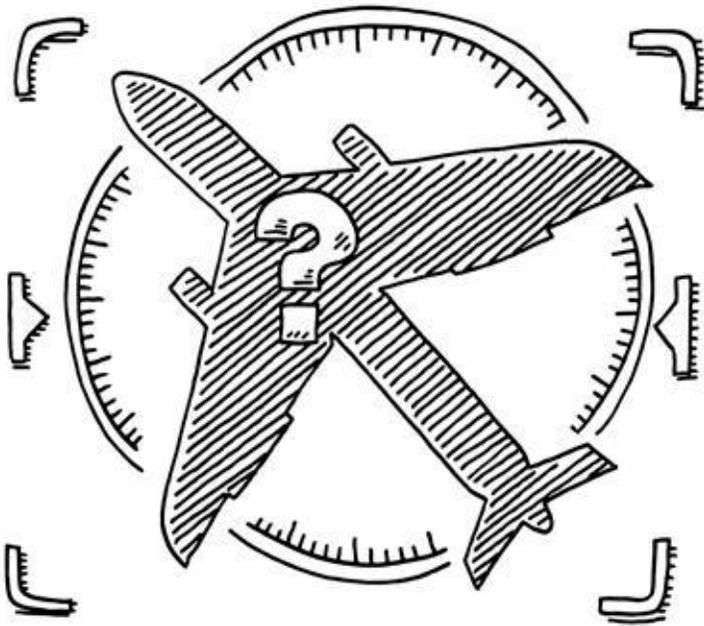
Use our Meeting College Costs Worksheet on the page 33 to help you compare your award letters and determine how you will meet the tuition bill.



FINANCIAL AID MYTHS

“Only straight ‘A’ students get financial aid!”

Reality: A good academic record can help students qualify for merit-based scholarships. However, most federal financial aid, such as Pell Grants, Federal Work-study, and Federal Direct Subsidized Loans, is awarded based on need and not on merit. Furthermore, many outside scholarships are awarded based on need or for other qualities. Visit rischolarships.org to get matched with hard-to-find local scholarships.



“We saved for college, so we won’t qualify for aid.”

Reality: Saving money for college doesn’t mean you won’t qualify for aid if you need it. Only a portion of your assets is included in your Expected Family Contribution. File the FAFSA to find out if you qualify.

“We were not eligible for aid when our first child went to college, so we won’t be eligible when our second child goes to school.”

Reality: If both of your children are in college at the same time, your Expected Family Contribution will have to cover the cost of attendance at two schools instead of one. This may mean you are now eligible for financial aid. Plus, your financial situation may have changed. Apply each year to find out if you qualify.

“Our family just can’t afford college.”

Reality: While college costs may be on the rise, billions of dollars in financial aid are available to help families pay tuition bills. Grants, scholarships, student loans and work-study can all help defray the cost of college. Also, most financial aid is based on your family’s financial need, meaning the less money you have and make, the more aid you may be eligible for.

“It doesn’t matter how much money we make. Our child will fund her education herself.”

Reality: Expected Family Contribution is based off of both parent and child income, regardless of whether the parents are willing to pay for college, as long as the child is not considered “independent” of the parents. See definition of “independent student” in the glossary on page 35.

“The FAFSA form is too hard to fill out!”

Reality: Applying online makes filling out the FAFSA easier. The web application provides step-by-step instructions on how to complete the form and allows you to skip questions that are not relevant to your family. Make an appointment with an experienced counselor today at soartocollege.com.

“Private schools are too expensive for our family.”

Reality: Some private schools offer more financial aid to attract students from all income levels. Cost shouldn’t be the only factor you consider when developing a college list. Finding a school that meets career, academic and personal needs is also important. Just make sure to apply to at least one reasonably affordable school that you will be happy at and think you will be accepted to in case the financial aid offered at other schools does not meet your needs.

Meeting College Costs Worksheet

	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
Enter college name on this line				
Direct Costs				
Tuition & fees				
Room & board				
Health insurance fees				
Other fees				
Total Direct Costs (A)				
Gift Aid				
Federal Pell grant				
Federal SEOG grant				
Federal TEACH grant				
State grant				
College grant				
College scholarship				
Outside scholarships & grants				
Total Gift Aid (B)				
Personal Resources				
529 Plan				
Coverdell savings account				
Other college savings account				
Parent savings & assets				
Student savings & assets				
Other				
Total Resources (C)				
Self-help Aid				
Tuition payment plan				
Federal Direct Subsidized Loan				
Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan				
Federal PLUS Loan				
State-based student loan				
Private education loan				
Home equity loan				
Total Self-help Aid (D)				
Summary				
Total Direct Costs (A)				
Total Gift Aid (B)				
Amount Due to School (A - B)				
Total Personal Resources (C)				
Total Self-help Aid (D)				
Gap (A-B-C-D)				

Don't forget to come up with a plan for paying indirect costs, like books, transportation & living expenses. Visit us online at www.SoarToCollege.com to help with the College Costs Calculator.

Glossary

-A-

Accrued Interest - The interest that accumulates on the unpaid portion of the loan.

Amortization - The process of repaying debt in regular payments over a period through installments consisting of principal and interest.

Annual Percentage Rate (APR) - The percentage rate that represents the annual cost of borrowing a loan. This includes interest charges and any fees or additional costs associated with the loan.

Award Letter - A document from your college financial aid office detailing the financial aid awarded to the student.

-B-

Balance - The remaining portion of an unpaid debt. A balance may be comprised of both principal and interest.

Budget - A plan that outlines your income and spending during a time. **Bursar** - The office at a school that oversees collecting education costs.

-C-

Collection Agency - A company hired by a lender or bank to collect and recover funds on a defaulted loan or line of credit. A collection agency may also add collection fees to the balance that the borrower will need to repay.

Consolidation - The act of combining existing federal student loans into a single loan.

Compound Interest - Interest computed on the accumulated unpaid interest as well as on the original principal.

Cosigner (a.k.a. Co-borrower) - A secondary person who signs the promissory note of a loan and assumes responsibility of paying a loan should the borrower fail to pay.

Cost of Attendance (COA) - The total sum of attending a school, including tuition, fees, room & board, books and supplies, food, incidentals, travel expenses and personal expenses. The Cost of Attendance is different at each school.

Credit Bureau - An agency that collects and distributes credit history and information. **Credit History** - A person's history of borrowing and repaying debts.

Credit Limit - The amount of credit you are authorized by an issuer. For example, with a credit card, you may have a credit limit of \$1,000.

Credit Score - A numerical evaluation of an individual's credit history. Many lenders use the credit score to determine how likely a borrower is to pay back a loan.

CSS PROFILE - A supplemental financial aid form required by some schools to be eligible for institutional financial aid.

-D-

Daily Periodic Rate (DPR) - The rate of interest that accrues on an outstanding

balance on a single day. The rate is calculated by dividing your annual interest rate by 365.

Debt-to-Income Ratio - The proportion of monthly debt payments to monthly income.

Default - A failure to meet the terms of a loan as stated in the promissory note. Typically, a borrower who fails to make several payments in a row on a loan is considered in default. Defaulted loans are often assigned to collection agencies or attorneys.

Deferment - A temporary postponement of repaying a loan as agreed by the lender, typically granted to students while they are in school.

Delinquent - A failure to meet the terms of a loan as stated in the promissory note and/or to make timely payments on a loan. Delinquency may result in late fees and will have a negative impact on your credit score. Continued delinquency can result in default.

Disbursement - When a lender releases loan funds to a school or borrower.

Disclosure Statement - A document outlining the actual cost and terms of a loan along with the stated interest rate and any fees.

-E-

Entrance Interview - A session in which an administrator, counselor or financial aid officer informs student borrowers about rights and responsibilities of having federal loans.

Equal Credit Opportunity Act - A law established by the federal government that prohibits lenders from discriminating on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, or participation in any public assistance program.

Exit Interview - A session in which an administrator, counselor or financial aid officer informs student borrowers of their student loan obligations and responsibilities.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) - The amount of money a family is expected to contribute towards a student's education. This amount is calculated by the federal government upon receipt of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Family income, assets, size of family and number of students attending college among other factors are considered when calculating the EFC.

-F-

Fair Credit Reporting Act - A law established by the federal government that allows individuals the right to examine their own credit report.

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) - A financial aid application that must be completed to be eligible for federal aid and many other types of aid provided by your state or college.

Federal Direct Student Loan Program - A loan program in which the lender is the federal government and the school manages

funds.

Federal Pell Grant - A federal grant awarded to undergraduate students based on financial need.

Federal Direct Student Loan - A federal loan awarded to students based on need with a subsidized option, where the federal government will cover interest payments while the student attends college, and an unsubsidized option, where the student is responsible for all interest charges.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) - A federal grant awarded to only the neediest students.

Federal Work-Study - A program that allows undergraduate and graduate students to work part-time while attending school. Work-Study funds are awarded based on need, the school's level of funding and when the student applies for financial aid. The amount of money students earn during their work-study position cannot exceed the amount they are awarded by their school.

Financial Aid Package - The package of grants, scholarships, work-study and loans offered to a student by a school's financial aid office.

Finance Charge - A fee charged to your account and added to your outstanding balance.

Financial Need - The difference between Cost of Attendance (COA) and Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

Fixed Rate - An interest rate that does not change over the life of the loan, resulting in stable monthly payments.

Forbearance - A temporary period, as agreed by the lender, in which no payments or smaller payments are due. In general, interest continues to accrue while a loan is in forbearance.

-G-

Garnishment - A court order that allows a creditor to deduct a portion of a borrower's salary prior to the paycheck being given to the employee when the borrower has not responded to notices regarding their unpaid debts.

Gift Aid - Financial aid such as scholarships and grants that a student does not need to repay.

Grace Period - Credit cards: The period between the purchase date and the date that the purchase begins to accrue interest. Student loans: The period after you drop below half-time status, leave school or graduate and your loan repayment term begins.

-H-

Holder - The lender, institution or agency that owns the legal title to a borrower's loan.

-I-

Identity Theft - When someone uses your personal information to access credit in your name. Your social security number, name, and driver's license number can all be stolen for someone else's personal gain.

Income Contingent, Sensitive, or Based Repayment - Programs in which the size of a student loan payment is contingent upon the borrower's income. As the borrower's income increases, the size of the monthly student loan payment also increases.

Independent Student - A student that is at least 24 years old by January 1st of the academic year and reports only his or her income and if relevant, his or her spouse's income when applying for federal aid. Also, a student that is under 24 and not claimed as a dependent by his or her parents during the previous tax year, a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces, an orphan or ward of the court, a graduate student, or a supporter of a legal dependent themselves. A student cannot legally declare independence simply because his or her parents will not help fund the cost of his or her education.

Institutional Methodology - The method that a institution of higher learning uses to determine how much they believe a family is able to contribute to the cost of their child's education.

The institutional methodology is used to determine how institutional funds are awarded and cannot be used when awarding federal government funds.

Interest Rate - The rate paid on borrowed money expressed as a percentage.

Interest Capitalization - The process of adding accrued interest to the principal balance of a loan. Interest is typically capitalized after a period of payment deferral, delinquency, or forbearance.

-J-

No terms.

-K-

No terms.

-L-

Lender - The institution that provides funds to eligible or approved applicants.

Loan - Money that is borrowed and must be repaid with interest.

Loan Forgiveness - When a student loan is either reduced or canceled when a borrower meets certain criteria such as performing military service, teaching in a critical subject in a high need area, disability, etc.

-M-

Merit-based Aid - Aid that is awarded to a student based on academic or other merit. Financial need is not necessarily considered when awarding merit-based aid.

-N-

Need Analysis - The method used to calculate how much money a family

is

able to contribute to their child's college education. To be considered for financial aid, a family must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and, if applicable, a CSS PROFILE or any supplemental forms required by the college.

The formula used to determine need is as follows: Cost of Attendance (COA) - Expected Family Contribution = Financial Need **Need-Based Aid** - Financial aid that is awarded based on financial need.

Need-Blind Admission - A school policy in which financial need is not taken into consideration when deciding whether to admit a student. Not all schools have a need-blind admission policy.

-O-

Origination Fee - A fee, typically paid by the borrower to the lender, generally used to fund the cost of administering a loan. Origination fees may be added to the principal balance or deducted from the principal loan amount prior to the loan's disbursement.

-P-

Pell Grant - See Federal Pell Grant.

PLUS, Loan - A federal loan available to the parents of dependent undergraduate students and to graduate students used to help finance the cost of education.

Prime Rate - A short-term interest rate quoted by a commercial bank as an indication of the rate being charged on loans to its

best commercial customers. Banks and other lenders frequently charge more than the quoted Prime Rate.

Principal - The amount of money borrowed or the amount that remains unpaid on a loan. **Private Loan** - A private supplemental loan for students available from lenders nationwide.

Promissory Note - The legal and binding document which borrowers are required to sign prior to loan funds being disbursed. The Promissory Note states all terms and conditions of the loan.

-Q-

No terms.

-R-

Repayment Schedule - A document that outlines the monthly payment amount, payment due dates, interest rate and total repayment period of a student loan.

Repayment Term - The period as stated in the promissory note in which a borrower agrees to repay a loan with interest.

-S-

Scholarship - A form of gift-aid that does not have to be repaid. Eligibility may include a need component or a merit component such as outstanding academic achievement.

Self-Help Aid - Financial aid such as student loans and work-study that requires some sort of investment from the student.

Servicer - A business or company that manages the billing and administration of loans.

Simple Interest - Interest that is paid only on principal. Interest is not compounded.

State Grant - A financial aid program that is run by the state and available for state residents. Grants do not need to be repaid.

Student Aid Report (SAR) - An official document students and parents receive after completing the FAFSA that notifies them of their eligibility to receive financial aid and their Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

Subsidized Direct Loan - A federal student loan in which the federal government will pay any interest accrued while the student is attending school or in deferment.

-T-

No terms.

-U-

Unmet Need (a.k.a. Gap) - Any financial need that is unmet by the financial aid package. Ideally, a school will provide the full amount of aid needed to meet financial need as determined by the school and/or the federal government (Cost of Attendance - Expected Family Contribution = Financial Need). However, due to budgetary constraints, schools are often not able to provide this full amount of aid. The amount of money the family is expected to contribute beyond the EFC is known as unmet need or gap.

Unsubsidized Direct Loan - A federal loan in which the student is fully responsible for paying all interest charges accrued while they are in school, deferment, in his/her grace period or in repayment.

US Department of Education - The federal agency that administers many student aid programs such as Federal Student Loans, Federal Pell Grants, Federal Work-Study, and Federal PLUS Loans.

-V-

Variable Interest Rate - An interest rate that changes periodically throughout the life of the loan. Variable interest rates are often based off Treasury bill rates, the Prime rate, or the LIBOR rate and may change monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually.

-W-

Work-Study - See Federal Work-Study.

-X-

No terms.

-Y-

Yield - The rate of return on an investment.

-Z-

No terms.

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