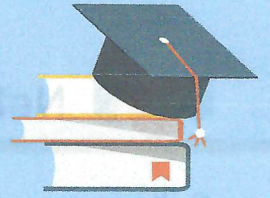


Why Go to College?



You probably know that while going to college is important, it takes a lot of hard work to get there. From time to time, you may find yourself wondering, "Is it really worth it?" The short answer is...yes!

Here are some reasons why going to college is a goal that is definitely worth working toward.



More career opportunities

A college education can open doors and prepare you for a career that is personally satisfying, financially rewarding, and a perfect match for your interests and values. *With a college degree, the sky is the limit!*



New experiences

Going to college will give you the opportunity to study a variety of subjects, try new things, expand your skills, and meet new people. Most importantly, college gives you the opportunity to become the person you aspire to be.



More money

Four-year college graduates earn almost twice as much as high school graduates. That comes out to \$1,000,000 or more over a lifetime.

Having a higher income provides financial stability and more money for the things that are important to you, like hobbies, travel, and entertainment.



Networking connections

College provides a unique opportunity to meet and interact with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Building relationships with professors, classmates, and alumni can lead to valuable connections and potential future career opportunities.



Sense of accomplishment

Getting to college, succeeding in college, and graduating take a lot of hard work, motivation, and persistence. Receiving a college diploma is a testament to your determination and your drive to succeed. It is an accomplishment you can be proud of for the rest of your life—and a reminder that you can do anything you set your mind to!



A better life

A college education will open doors and provide you with more options and opportunities. A college education is also likely to provide you with a greater income, which will allow you to purchase the things that make life more comfortable and enjoyable. *In short, having a college education will help you live your best life.*

There are many factors that will determine the kinds of opportunities that will come your way in life. The biggest factor, however, is your education. The better your education, the more choices and opportunities you will have. *For information on your college options, watch this short video.*



VIDEO

CHOOSING A COLLEGE

Choosing a college is about finding a college that's a good match for you. Knowing what you're looking for in a college will help you find a college that's a good fit.

The following questions and information will help you determine what's important to you in a college.

Type of College

What type of college are you interested in?

☐

Two-year college

☐

Four-year college

Two-year colleges offer affordable one- and two-year career programs. Students can also transfer to a four-year college after a year or two. Four-year colleges offer a wide variety of majors and programs.

Size

What size college do you want to attend?

☐

Small

☐

Medium

☐

Large

Larger colleges offer lots of majors, programs, and activities; smaller colleges usually have smaller classes and a more personal feel.

Location

Where do you want to attend college?

☐

Close to home

☐

In my home state

☐

Near a big city

☐

Close to nature

Other _____

Major

Is there a specific subject you want to study?

While most colleges offer popular majors such as business, not every college will offer the major you may be interested in.

Programs and Activities

Looking for a specific program or activity?

Study abroad program? Music program? Specific sport? Is there anything else that's important to you in a college? Campus diversity? Religious affiliation?

Admissions Requirements

Are admissions requirements a factor to consider?

Look for colleges that accept students with academic records (i.e., grades, test scores) similar to yours.

Your GPA _____

Your Test Scores _____

Cost

How important is cost to you?

☐

very important

☐

important

☐

not important

In order to save money, many students go to a public college in their home state, or they start at a community college. Remember, financial aid often makes it possible for students to attend colleges that would otherwise be too expensive.

Once you've determined what's important to you in a college, visit bigfuture.collegewboard.org and do a search for the colleges that meet your criteria.

After you have a list of colleges you'd like to consider, visit their websites and learn all you can about them. Talk to your parents and your counselor about your choices, and if possible, plan a college visit.

Having a Healthy School-Life Balance



Maintaining a healthy balance between school and life is crucial for your overall well-being, academic success, and personal development. Here are some strategies to help you achieve a healthy school-life balance.

Set Goals

- ▶ Set achievable short-term and long-term personal and academic goals.
- ▶ Develop step-by-step plans to reach your goals, and reward yourself for your successes.

Develop time-management skills

- ▶ Make to-do lists or use a planner to prioritize tasks and assignments.
- ▶ Allocate specific blocks of time for studying and completing your work.
- ▶ If you don't have enough time for everything you need to do, think about what activities you can shorten, eliminate, or postpone.

Manage stress

- ▶ Have ways to manage stress—do yoga, practice mindfulness, or have relaxing hobbies.

For more tips on reducing stress, check out this short video.



Practice self-care

- ▶ Prioritize sleep, aiming for 7–9 hours each night.
- ▶ Engage in regular exercise, eat a balanced diet, and manage stress.

Limit screen time

- ▶ Social media, TV, and video games can all be huge time wasters. Schedule small chunks of time for these activities, and stick to your schedule.
- ▶ Try to use your screen time for productive purposes, such as studying, and your leisure time for doing offline activities, such as reading, playing sports, or spending time outdoors.

Maintain a social life

- ▶ Foster and maintain healthy relationships with friends and family by setting time aside for socializing, even if it's just over phone or text.
- ▶ Join school clubs, sports teams, and other organizations that help you stay connected to other students and have some fun.

Reflect and adjust

- ▶ Regularly evaluate your schedule and habits to see what's working and what needs to be adjusted.
- ▶ Be flexible and willing to modify your routines to achieve a more effective balance.

Ask for help

- ▶ If you're having difficulty keeping up with your schoolwork, activities, and other responsibilities, don't hesitate to ask for help. Reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness; it's a sign of strength.

10 Habits of Successful High Schoolers

Anyone can be successful with the right habits. Developing the following habits will help you get good grades, and have a great high school experience.



① Have good attendance.

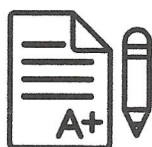
Attendance is the number one school success factor!

Be in school unless you have a legitimate reason (like an illness) for being absent.



② Be organized.

Use a planner to record assignments, tests, and appointments. Make To-Do lists and cross things off as you complete them.



③ Do all of your homework.

When you've done your homework, you get more out of your classes. Your homework grades are also often a large part of your final grade.



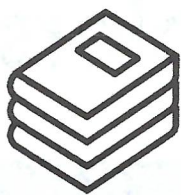
④ Participate in class.

Pay attention, ask and answer questions, and participate in discussions. Keep a positive attitude, and ask for help when you need it.



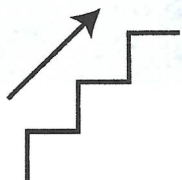
⑤ Get involved.

Participating in extracurricular activities is a great way to make friends, develop new skills, and have fun.



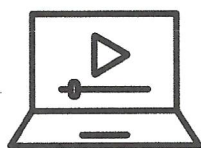
6 Study smart.

Create a daily study plan. Decide what you want to get done and the order in which you're going to do it. Break large assignments into more manageable parts.



7 Set goals.

Having goals gives you direction, focus, and purpose. Set some academic and personal short-term and long-term goals.



8 Be smart with technology.

Never post anything that's mean, offensive, or embarrassing. Limit the amount of time you spend on social media and gaming.



9 Take care of your health.

Have a healthy diet, exercise, get 8-9 hours of sleep each night, and find healthy ways to deal with stress.



10 Have a growth mindset.

Understand that being good at something isn't a talent or a gift. It's something that comes with hard work and perseverance.

Think about which habits you need to work on and come up with a plan to improve those habits!

Completing an Impressive College Application

Your college application is a representation of you, and it's important that you present yourself in the best possible light. Here are some tips to help you submit an impressive college application.

Be sure to do the following:

- ▶ Follow the instructions exactly and answer every question honestly.
- ▶ Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- ▶ Submit an application that is clean, neat, accurate, and complete.
- ▶ Include all of your activities and awards. (Quality is more important than quantity.)
- ▶ If you have a noteworthy achievement, special talent, unique characteristic, or something that will bring diversity to a campus, be sure it's included.
- ▶ Proofread, proofread again, and then have someone else look over your application.

Submit forms, scores, and transcripts

Applications for admission require a high school transcript, and most have sections for your counselor to complete. Follow your school's procedures for submitting applications, requesting transcripts, and getting the required forms completed. Most 4-year colleges also require ACT or SAT scores. Make sure your scores have been sent to any college requiring them.



If an essay is required...

College applications often ask that you write an essay or personal statement. Your essay should not include information that can be found on your application or transcript. Instead, it should offer insight into who you are and what makes you unique. Think of it as an opportunity to share your dreams and passions, talk about an obstacle you've overcome, or show how an event has helped shape who you are. *Admissions officers read lots of essays. Take the time to write an essay that stands out.*

If recommendations are required...

Many applications require one or more letters of recommendation. Choose people who know you well, give them plenty of time, and tell them: 1) what information should be included; 2) when it needs to be completed; 3) what to do with it once it's written.

Anyone you ask to write a recommendation will welcome written information with regard to your strengths, interests, talents, leadership skills, and future plans.

Make copies

Before you submit an application, make a copy and note the date it was submitted. You should receive confirmation from any college you've applied to that they've received your application. If you don't receive confirmation, contact the college to make sure they have everything they need.

Be aware of deadlines

Start early, and give yourself plenty of time to prepare transcripts, complete forms, and/or write recommendations. Have all required information submitted well before the deadline.

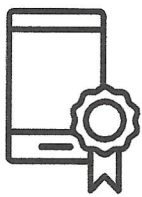
If you have questions or need help with an application, see your counselor.

FINANCIAL AID

Overview

Financial aid is money that is given, earned, or lent to help students pay for their education. Financial aid makes it possible for millions of students to go to college.

Four Types of Financial Aid



Grants

Grants are funds given, usually because of financial need. Grants do not have to be paid back. *The Pell Grant provides billions of dollars each year to students with financial need. When students submit a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), they automatically apply for a Pell Grant.*



Scholarships

Scholarships are generally awarded for exceptional academic achievement, outstanding talent, and/or financial need. Scholarships do not need to be repaid.



Loans

Loans are funds borrowed from a lender (e.g., bank, college, the government). Loans must be paid back. *Loans make up over half of the financial aid awarded.*



Work-Study

Work-study programs provide students who have a financial need with part-time jobs to help fund their education.

Financial aid is most often awarded in the form of a package. Packages, consisting of grants, scholarships, loans, and/or work-study, are put together by the college's financial aid office. *Packages will vary from college to college, so compare them carefully.*

Do you have financial need?

Financial aid is usually awarded on the basis of **financial need**. Financial need is the difference between the cost of attending a college (tuition, fees, books, room and board) and the amount a family can afford.

For example, if a family can afford \$7,000 and the cost of attending a college is \$22,000, the student has a financial need of \$15,000.

After you and your parents complete the FAFSA, you will get a report that tells you how much your family is expected to pay for your college the following year. Take that number and subtract it from the cost of the college you're planning to attend. *This will tell you what your financial need is, and how much aid you may be eligible to receive.*

How to get money for college

1. Complete college applications.

In the fall of your senior year, complete college admission and financial aid applications.

2. Complete a FAFSA – *this is very important!*

For information and instructions on how to complete a FAFSA, go to fafsa.gov.

3. Complete the PROFILE, if necessary.

Some colleges (generally smaller, private colleges) require the completion of this application also.

4. Apply for scholarships.

Search for scholarships online at fastweb.com and scholarships.com. Also ask your counselor for information on local scholarships.

If you need help or have questions, talk to your school counselor or to a financial aid counselor at a college you're considering. The following sites also have excellent information: studentaid.gov and bigfuture.collegeboard.org.