

## CHOOSING A COLLEGE

Think about your goals for college and determine the type of institution that best suits you. Make an informed choice by comparing the colleges that interest you.

These characteristics can help you distinguish one college from another:

- Size
- Location (geographic as well as urban, suburban or rural)
- Public or private
- Majors offered and flexibility of degree programs
- Type of institution (two-year, four-year, conservatory, etc.)
- Types of degrees offered (associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral)
- Faculty accessibility
- Cost of attendance
- Support services
- Campus activities

## FINANCING YOUR EDUCATION

A college education is the single best investment you can make for your future and your career. Don't miss out because of expected costs. Financial aid is available in many forms for families who need assistance, and merit scholarships are available for deserving students.

Your high school guidance staff and the financial aid staff at any college or university can help you and your family realize your college dreams. Information also is available at these websites:

- [finaid.com](http://finaid.com)
- [fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com)
- [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov)
- [collegeanswer.com](http://collegeanswer.com)
- [scholarships.com](http://scholarships.com)

## ADDITIONAL ONLINE COLLEGE SEARCH AND PLANNING RESOURCES

College Board  
[collegeboard.com](http://collegeboard.com)  
SAT information, test questions and planning and financial tools

ACT  
[act.org](http://act.org)  
ACT information, test questions and planning tools

Peterson's  
[petersons.com](http://petersons.com)

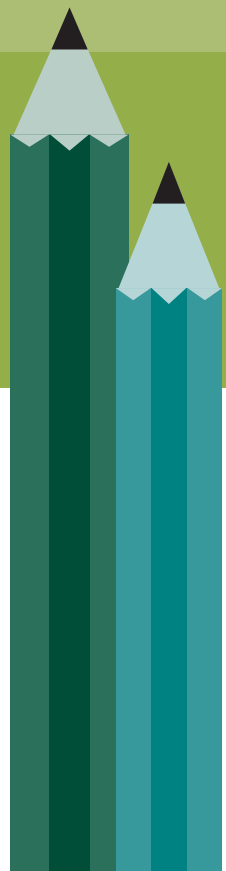
*U.S. News & World Report* rankings  
[usnews.com](http://usnews.com)

Princeton Review  
[princetonreview.com](http://princetonreview.com)



MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

# COLLEGE PLANNING GUIDE



## WHY IS COLLEGE IMPORTANT?

You've probably heard that a college degree can open many doors for you. It's true, but what are the advantages that going to college can provide?

For starters, since many careers require a college degree, attending college will increase your opportunities. Also, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, a college graduate will earn \$1 million more in a lifetime than someone who doesn't attend college. Most important, the people you meet, the experiences you have and the knowledge you gain from college will impact you for the rest of your life.

## HOW SHOULD YOU PLAN FOR COLLEGE?

Effective planning and preparation are both key to college success. Even if you're not yet sure about attending college, making the right choices now will keep college attendance available as an option for you.

This planning guide is just one tool that can help you in the process. It offers guidance regarding college readiness and provides additional sources of information.

## PREPARING FOR SUCCESS

It is strongly recommended that college-bound students complete these courses in high school:

- **English:** four years
- **Mathematics:** four years
- **Biological and physical sciences:** four years
- **History and social sciences:** four years
- **Foreign language:** two years of a single language

### GUIDELINES FOR EIGHTH GRADE

- Consider taking algebra I in order to take precalculus or calculus as a senior in high school.
- Consider taking a foreign language course.
- Develop good study habits, which will assist you in high school as well as in college.
- Visit the websites of colleges that interest you and note their high school curriculum requirements.
- Let your guidance counselor know you want to follow a college preparatory program when planning your high school schedule.

### GUIDELINES FOR NINTH AND 10TH GRADES

- Work hard to get good grades. Most colleges will review your academic performance in ninth, 10th and 11th grades when making an admission decision.
- Start compiling a notebook as you research and visit colleges that interest you. Keep track of web addresses, high school curriculum requirements, and important dates and deadlines. Note of what you like, what you didn't like and what information you still need while researching colleges.
- Visit the colleges that most interest you, perhaps as part of a family vacation or other activity. Talk to current students or alumni of these colleges to get a real idea of what they're like.
- Keep developing good study habits. Ninth graders should aim for at least an hour of study each weeknight, and 10th graders should aim for two hours of study each weeknight.
- Ask your guidance counselor about scholarships available from your high school, in your community or nationally.
- Begin to identify your areas of academic strength as well as areas of particular interest or passion.
- During the summer months, participate in meaningful activities—such as workshops, community programs and enrichment opportunities—both for personal fulfillment and as an achievement you can include on college applications. Consider job shadowing to learn more about professions that interest you.
- Explore college websites in greater depth.

### GUIDELINES FOR 11TH GRADE

- Maintain good grades. This year is especially important since it will be your grade point average from ninth through 11th grades that college admissions officials will be reviewing.
- Take a majority of academic courses, such as English, math, science, social studies and foreign language.
- Take the ACT or SAT exam between March and June. If you aren't satisfied with your initial score, take the test again in early fall of your senior year. The ACT writing assessment is required by most colleges, so keep your options open and take it.
- Continue looking at college websites and brochures. Narrow your search to three to five potential colleges or universities.
- Establish an email account to use just for college application purposes and check it often. Most colleges and universities will send you periodic updates on your application status and having a dedicated email account works best if you are applying to several institutions.
- Start a comparison worksheet on the colleges and universities that you might want to attend.
- Visit as many of the colleges and universities that interest you as you can. It's difficult to judge the "feel" of an institution unless you've visited campus.
- When planning your senior year, choose at least three or four academic courses per semester. Continuing with math, foreign language and lab sciences greatly enhances your opportunity for academic success in college.
- Search for potential scholarships using free online search services such as fastweb.com, finaid.com and collegeanswer.com. Many scholarship applications must be completed as early as November of your senior year to apply for funds available the following fall.

### GUIDELINES FOR 12TH GRADE

- Keep your grades up. Many schools review final grades and may rescind an offer of admission if grades slip this year.
- Take four academic courses—such as English, math, science, social studies or foreign language—per semester.
- If you haven't already done so, take the ACT or SAT exam as soon as possible. Most colleges and universities require a test score in order to make an admission decision.
- Apply for admission to the three to five colleges or universities that most interest you no later than October. Check websites and brochures for specific application deadlines.
- Revisit the colleges and universities that most interest you. Many offer day or overnight options that enable you to stay with current students and attend class with them.
- Attend a financial aid workshop with your parents in your local school district. Revisit free online search services—such as fastweb.com, finaid.com and collegeanswer.com—and note application deadlines, which may be as early as November.
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, online as soon after January 1 as possible to apply for need-based financial aid for the following academic year.
- When you receive admissions offers, remember to send in any required deposits. Deposits are normally refundable until May 1.

