

# Lucy, You're Ready!

Get Real Tips and Strategies for Your  
College Applications!

## Realize Your College Potential and Get the Inside Scoop on How to:



Finalize your college list



Prepare and send your college applications



Afford college



Find scholarships

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# Finalize Your College List

How do you decide on your final college list? Great question! Below are some important ideas to consider as you narrow down your choices.

## As you decide where to apply, consider the following:

### ACADEMICS

**What are the average SAT® scores and GPAs of students enrolled at the school?** Do your SAT scores fall within, above, or below the average enrolled student at the college?

### GRADUATION RATE

Do most students graduate in four years?  
**Graduation rates can help predict the typical student's chances of success.**

### SIZE

Do you want a smaller or a larger campus?

### LOCATION

Do you prefer a big city, suburb, or small town?  
Is it close to or far from home?



### CAMPUS LIFE

Does the school offer cultural and social activities, such as student clubs and organizations, volunteer opportunities, or internships?

### HOUSING OPTIONS

Do students live on or outside of campus (for example, in dorms or apartments)?

### NET PRICE

High posted college prices — what is listed on the website — can be very different from “net price” or what each family actually pays. **Many colleges offer financial aid and scholarships to help students cover the full cost.** Some of the most expensive colleges offer the largest amounts of aid. So don't be deterred by high prices! Apply for admission and apply for aid to see what each college might cost for you, then make your decision about where to attend.

### MAJORS & PROGRAMS

Does the college offer a variety of majors that interest you? Start by making a list of your interests, and then connect them to college majors and careers. Think about where you see yourself when you graduate. If you're not sure, that's okay, too. Your major and your career can change. **College is about exploration!**



### SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Does the school offer tutoring, academic and financial aid advising, health services, or other support programs?

## Your Personalized Starter College List.

This college list was created just for you! Some students who live near you and had similar SAT scores successfully graduated from these colleges. Start here and then think big!

### Apply to at least four to eight colleges.

Here are some reasons why:

#### Saves you money

Colleges offer different scholarships and financial aid packages to help students pay for college. Consider these offers carefully.

#### Increases your odds of getting in

If you apply to only one or two colleges, you risk not getting into either school. If you apply to a balanced set of at least four to eight colleges, you have a much better chance of being admitted and having more options.

#### A good fit makes a difference

Students who apply to at least four to eight colleges increase their chances of finding a good academic, social, and financial fit. Colleges can be very different, and finding the right fit increases your chances of success and makes for a better experience.

COLLEGE	LOCATION	GRADUATION RATE <sup>1</sup>		MIDDLE 50% TEST SCORES			FULL PRICE ANNUAL COST OF ATTENDANCE <sup>2</sup>	AVERAGE "NET PRICE" PER YEAR <sup>3</sup>		
		FOUR-YEAR	SIX-YEAR	SAT <sup>®</sup> CRITICAL READING	SAT MATH	ACT		BASED ON FAMILY INCOME		
								\$0-\$30K	\$30K-\$48K	\$48K-\$75K
Case Western Reserve University	Cleveland, OH	65%	80%	600-720	670-760	29-33	\$60,084	\$16,325	\$21,690	\$25,740
Duke University	Durham, NC	87%	94%	670-760	690-790	30-34	\$64,653	\$7,463	\$5,981	\$15,430
Ohio State University	Columbus, OH	59%	83%	540-660	610-720	27-31	\$23,589	\$9,491	\$11,566	\$16,048
Yale University	New Haven, CT	90%	98%	700-800	710-790	32-35	\$63,920	\$8,185	\$8,295	\$7,477
Cornell University	Ithaca, NY	87%	93%	640-740	680-780	30-34	\$63,564	\$9,759	\$11,242	\$17,952
University of Notre Dame	Notre Dame, IN	90%	95%	660-750	680-770	32-34	\$62,461	\$13,157	\$11,070	\$17,919
Georgetown University	Washington, DC	88%	92%	650-750	660-750	29-33	\$64,540	\$10,987	\$11,841	\$17,115
Washington University in St. Louis	Saint Louis, MO	88%	94%	700-760	720-790	32-34	\$65,142	\$8,400	\$12,616	\$19,813
Harvard College	Cambridge, MA	87%	97%	700-800	710-800	32-35	\$62,150	\$4,245	\$3,243	\$5,888
Northwestern University	Evanston, IL	86%	94%	690-760	700-790	31-34	\$65,844	\$17,144	\$16,706	\$19,394
Swarthmore College	Swarthmore, PA	89%	93%	680-760	670-770	31-34	\$62,431	\$11,564	\$15,332	\$19,402
Kenyon College	Gambier, OH	86%	89%	630-720	600-690	28-32	\$62,140	\$9,170	\$10,905	\$11,639

1. Graduation rate data as well as the 25th and 75th percentiles of enrolled students' test scores are for the 2013-14 school year and come from the U.S. Department of Education.

2. Annual cost of attendance includes the full cost of tuition, fees, books, housing, food, and other expenses reported by colleges in the 2014-15 school year in the *Annual Survey of Colleges*. These costs are customized for you based on your home state.

3. These average net prices are estimated for 2014-15 using data from the U.S. Department of Education — your specific net prices will be based on your individual family circumstances. Net Price is the amount (for one year) left after grants and scholarships, which can usually be managed by a combination of family resources, earnings from a campus job, and low interest rate loans.

— Data from other sources and different school years will be slightly different, so remember that the best source of information is each college's website.

# Apply to College

Follow the steps below to ensure that you've handled all the application requirements.



## TALK TO YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Speak with him or her about your plans and applications. Find out which forms need to be sent by your school counselor.



## GET ORGANIZED AND BEAT THE DEADLINE

Keep track of deadlines for completing essays, and sending letters of recommendation and high school transcripts. Mark these dates on your calendar, and avoid missing deadlines. **Not all colleges have the same deadlines!**



## TAKE AN ADMISSION TEST

Many colleges require or recommend an entrance exam such as the SAT. You have another chance of taking one of these tests in the fall. **Be sure to send your SAT scores to the colleges on your list!**



## ASK FOR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

**Pick two or three people who know you best** — such as a teacher or a mentor — and ask them for letters of recommendation before you start your applications.



## WRITE YOUR ESSAYS

Review your applications and make a list of the different essays you have to write. **Sometimes you can reuse and adjust the same essay depending on the school.**



## CHOOSE CHALLENGING COURSES YOUR SENIOR YEAR

Your performance in your senior year shows admission officers that you can go on to succeed in college.

# Prepare Your College Applications.

Below is a list of all the essentials you'll need for your applications.



## Application forms and fees

Each college has its own application. Visit each college's website and either complete the application online or request a paper application. Most colleges prefer online applications because they are easier to review.



**TIP:** To fill out the application form, you may have to search for documents or get answers from your parents.

- The Common and Universal applications enable students to apply to several participating colleges by providing academic information, extracurricular activities, work history, essays, and recommendations online.



**TIP:** To check if any of the colleges on your list accept the Common or Universal application, go to [commonapp.org](http://commonapp.org) or [universalcollegeapp.com](http://universalcollegeapp.com).

- Colleges may require you to pay an application fee. Fees are nonrefundable. If you can't afford to pay, colleges may waive your fee.



## Admission Tests

Most colleges require or recommend that you send scores from tests such as the SAT. Colleges may also require you to take SAT Subject Tests™. Refer to each college's website or application to find its testing requirements.



**TIP:** December is usually the last month you can take a test that will be counted toward your college admission application.

- Keep in mind that you'll need to register at least four-to-five weeks before each test.

SAT Date	Registration Deadline
November 7	October 9
December 5	November 5

- Go online and find useful tips, advice, and resources that will help you prepare for the test: [sat.collegeboard.org](http://sat.collegeboard.org).



**TIP:** You'll receive four score reports every time you register for the SAT. This means you can have your test scores reported to four colleges for free. These four score reports must be used at the time of registration or up to nine days after the Saturday test date.

- The College Board provides fee waivers to eligible students for the SAT and SAT Subject Tests through forms provided by your school counselor or another school official. For more information about eligibility and how to obtain a fee waiver from the College Board, go to [sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-fee-waivers](http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-fee-waivers).



## Personal Essay

The college essay matters: Your essay reveals something important about you that your grades and test scores cannot — your personality. Your essay can give admission officers a sense of who you are, as well as showcase your writing skills.

- **Get started by brainstorming:** Brainstorming about your personality traits and defining your strengths is a good place to begin your essay.
- **Be specific:** Give your essay focus by figuring out how the question relates to your personal qualities. Make sure everything you write supports that viewpoint. Show what you mean by describing your personal experience. For example, you can write about a summer job or volunteering and what you've learned from it.
- **Be YOU:** Colleges want to hear about what's important to you and how life experiences have shaped you as an individual.
- **Get feedback:** Show your draft essay to family or teachers. Ask if it makes sense and sounds like you. Consider their feedback and make changes, but keep your voice.

For more tips, go to:  
[bigfuture.org](https://bigfuture.org)



## Letters of Recommendation

Many schools require letters of recommendation from a teacher or other adult who knows you well and can speak highly about your skills, qualities, and accomplishments. Teachers, a coach, or a mentor from an activity outside of school, or a supervisor from a job, can be good people to ask.

- Ask your references well in advance of the deadlines to write you a recommendation.
- Make sure your references know the earliest deadlines to ensure they have time to write a recommendation.
- Give them a short written summary of your achievements to help them write about you, such as a list of school projects you're proud of, community involvement, any challenges you've overcome, and your plans for the future.

## How do I apply?

Below you can compare the three ways to apply to college. Which option is right for you?

Option	It allows you	Consider that you
<b>Regular Decision</b> You want to apply to a broad range of colleges and take time to decide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To send your applications in December or January, depending on the college's deadline</li> <li>– To apply to <b>more than one</b> college</li> </ul> <b>Notification Date:</b> March or April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Can compare financial aid award notifications from several colleges before making your final choice</li> </ul>
<b>Early Action</b> You want to get admission offers early.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To send your applications in October or November, depending on the college's deadline</li> <li>– To apply to <b>more than one</b> college</li> </ul> <b>Notification Date:</b> December or January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Can accept an admission offer immediately or wait until the spring to make a decision</li> </ul>
<b>Early Decision</b> You are sure a college on your list is the right fit for you (academically, socially, and financially).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To send your applications in October or November, depending on the college's deadline</li> <li>– To apply to <b>only one</b> college Early Decision</li> </ul> <b>Notification Date:</b> December or January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Must accept</b> the admission offer and withdraw all other applications</li> <li>– May need to wait until the spring to receive a final financial aid award notification</li> </ul>

Colleges have different policies and application deadlines. Check with the admission office to see what they offer.

## Apply to College for FREE?

YES! Many colleges may waive your application fee.

### If you meet any of the following criteria, you may be eligible for fee waivers:

- You registered and took the SAT (or SAT Subject Test) using a fee waiver
- You are enrolled in or are eligible to participate in the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch program
- You enrolled in a federal, state, or local program that aids students from low-income families such as TRIO or Upward Bound
- Your family receives public assistance
- Your family lives in federally subsidized public housing
- You live in a foster home or you are homeless

- Many colleges may waive your application fee if you meet their criteria. Information about requesting a fee waiver may be found on colleges' admission websites.
- If you registered for the SAT using a fee waiver, the College Board will automatically provide four fee waivers for college applications.
  - » Log into your SAT account to **download your fee waivers**. You can use these fee waivers at 2,000 colleges.
- Many of the Common Application colleges will accept your fee waivers online.
- You can ask your school counselor to request a college application fee waiver for you using a National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) application fee-waiver form.
  - » For more information about NACAC fee waivers, go to [nacacnet.org](http://nacacnet.org).



# You Can Afford College

Grants, scholarships, and other financial aid **can make your college education affordable!**

## What is financial aid?

Financial aid is assistance to help you pay for college. It comes in different forms and from many different sources. The largest source of financial aid is the federal government, but you may also receive aid from your state, the college or university, and private organizations.

Financial aid makes up the difference between the college's posted cost of attendance and what you may need to pay out of pocket for your education.

The college's financial aid office will put together a package of aid from many different sources — the federal government, state government, and the college's own funds.

**TIP:** Get prepared for federal financial aid applications that begin on Jan. 1 by creating your FSA ID: [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov)

## How much is my family expected to contribute for college?

The only way to know for certain how much of your financial need will be met by a particular college is to apply to that college.

**TIP:** Make sure you apply for aid at every college where you are thinking about applying. The college's financial aid office will tell you how much aid is available for you and your family.

You can get an estimate of how much and what types of financial aid you might be eligible to receive from a college. To find out, go to the college's website and enter your information on their Net Price Calculator.

The College Board's Net Price Calculator also provides estimated awards for hundreds of colleges. To get a personalized estimate of what a particular college will cost you, go to [studentnpc.collegeboard.org](http://studentnpc.collegeboard.org).

The screenshot shows the College Board's Net Price Calculator website. The navigation bar includes links for SAT, AP, College Planning, College Search, Professional Development, Store, and More. The main heading is "The College Board's Net Price Calculator". Below the heading, there are three tabs: "Home", "Participating Schools", and "What is the Net Price Calculator?". The "Home" tab is selected. The main content area features a welcome message: "Welcome! We're glad you're exploring how to plan and pay for your college education. Colleges that you may think are out of your price range may be affordable." Below this message is a photograph of four diverse students smiling. At the bottom of the page, there are three columns of content: "Using the NPC" with two bullet points, "Financial Aid 101" with a paragraph of text, and "Announcements" with a list of participating schools including Marlboro College, Wittenberg University, and others.

## What are the different sources and types of financial aid?

Not all aid is the same and financial aid awards differ from student to student. Your financial aid offer may include grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study.

### Grants

**Grants do not have to be repaid** and most are “need-based” — they are awarded based on your or your family’s financial situation. You may get a grant from the federal government, your state’s government, a private organization, or the college itself.

### Scholarships

**Scholarships do not have to be repaid.** Most scholarships are “merit-based” — they are awarded to students for their academic performance, extracurricular achievement, or athletic ability. Many scholarships have requirements — maintaining a certain GPA, for example — that you have to follow to continue receiving aid.

### Loans

**Student loans must be repaid** after you graduate from college. Most student loans are funded by the federal government and have low interest rates.

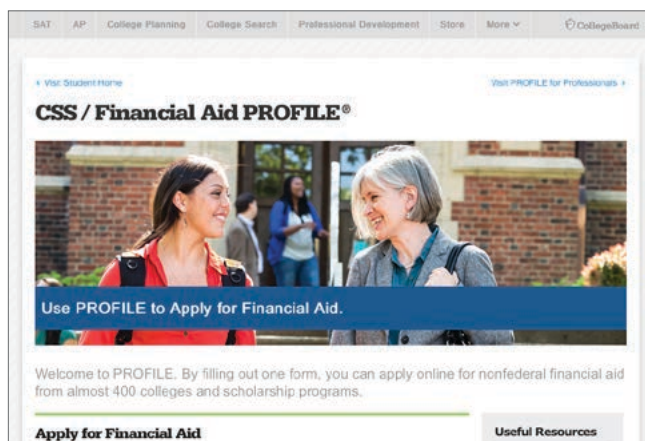
### Work-Study

Work-study is a federal financial aid program that supports students through part-time work on or near campus. **You earn your own money to help pay college expenses** — like books and housing — while fitting your hours into your academic schedule.

## How do I apply for aid?

To apply for most financial aid you’ll need to:

- **Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** The FAFSA gives you access to grants, work-study, and loans from the federal government and other sources. Although the FAFSA may seem complex, there are many free resources to help you.
  - » **Jan. 1, 2016**, is the first day you can file the FAFSA, but you’ll find it easier to complete if you file your tax returns first: [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov).
- **Complete the College Board’s CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE®:** The PROFILE is an online application that collects information used by hundreds of colleges and scholarship programs to award their financial aid dollars.
  - » To learn which colleges request the PROFILE and their application deadlines, go to [cssprofile.org](http://cssprofile.org).
  - » There is an application fee for the PROFILE. Fee waivers are available to students who meet the income criteria.



FOCUS ON YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATIONS NOW. WE WILL SEND YOU MORE INFORMATION ABOUT APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID.

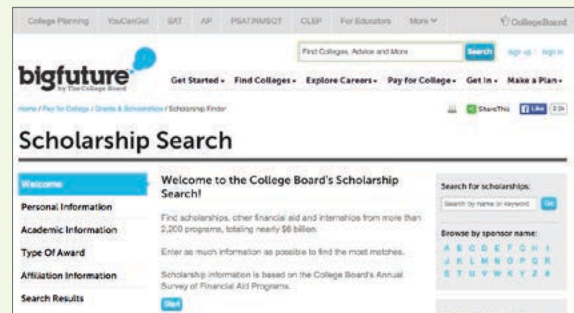
# Find Scholarships

Start your scholarship search early.

## Here are some ways to get started now:

- Almost every state has a grant or scholarship program for its residents, and the awards are usually limited to students who will attend college in that same state.
- National scholarships are open to people from across the country. Examples of national scholarships include those sponsored by:
  - » Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund
  - » Hispanic Scholarship Fund
  - » Jack Kent Cooke Foundation
  - » The American Indian Graduate Center and American Indian Graduate Center Scholars
  - » United Negro College Fund (UNCF)
- You may find scholarships sponsored by
  - » Your church, mosque, synagogue, or other religious community
  - » Local branches of organizations such as the Rotary Club or the Kiwanis
  - » Parents' employers
  - » Your employer
- Ask your school counselor or principal about awards for students graduating from your high school and for residents of your town, county, and state.
- Check out a college's website and financial aid materials for information on the scholarships it offers. Awards can be offered on a university-wide basis or within a particular college or major.

To search for scholarships, visit the College Board's Scholarship Search



[bigfuture.org/  
scholarship-search](https://bigfuture.org/scholarship-search)

# Plan Your College Applications

When you log into [bigfuture.org](https://bigfuture.org), use this table to help organize your college list. It will help you keep track of your deadlines!

	COLLEGE	LOCATION	APPLICATION DUE DATES		COMMON APP ACCEPTED	COLLEGE APPLICATION FEE WAIVER AVAILABLE	CSS/FINANCIAL AID PROFILE	MY FAMILY'S ESTIMATED NET PRICE	NOTES
			EARLY	REGULAR					
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									

GO TO THE COLLEGE'S WEBSITE



APPLICATION DUE DATES

[commonapp.org](https://commonapp.org)

COMMON APP ACCEPTED

[css.collegeboard.org](https://css.collegeboard.org)

COLLEGE APPLICATION FEE WAIVER AVAILABLE

CSS/FINANCIAL AID PROFILE

CODE

GO TO THE COLLEGE'S NET PRICE CALCULATOR



MY FAMILY'S ESTIMATED NET PRICE

# College Application Checklist

## STARTING THE APPLICATION

- Learn about things to consider when finalizing your college list. For example, each college's graduation rate, location, support programs, and net price.
- Review your personalized starter college list.
- Understand the essential components you need for your college applications.
- Take an admission test such as the SAT®.
- Find out if the college accepts online or paper applications.
- Download paper forms from the college's website.
- Create an account at [commonapp.org](https://commonapp.org) or [universalcollegeapp.com](https://universalcollegeapp.com).
- Find out how many essays you need to write and how long they need to be.
- Find out if you qualify for an application fee waiver.
- Meet with your school counselor to request your high school transcript.
- Request letters of recommendation.
  - TIP:** Find out how the letters need to be submitted (look in the application forms for instructions).

## PREPARING THE APPLICATION

- Complete the college application forms.
  - TIP:** Follow all instructions in the application materials.
  - TIP:** Use exact name on all your forms.
- Write your personal essay.
- Proofread your essay for spelling and grammar.
- Check that your letters of recommendation are complete.

## SENDING YOUR APPLICATION

- Make copies of all application materials.
- Send your admission test scores, if required.
- Pay the application fee (use a fee waiver if you qualify).
- Have your school counselor send your transcript.
- Have your recommenders send their letters.
- Sign and send your application.

## AFTER SENDING YOUR APPLICATION

- Make sure the admission office received your application materials.
- Write thank-you notes to your recommenders.
- Request an interview (call the admission office).
- Visit the campus.