



Getting to College

Steps to get you started on the journey

Thinking about college can feel both exciting and overwhelming at the same time. Below are some tips and resources to help you start navigating through the process.

➤ **Research, Research, Research!**

Do you like big schools or small schools? Do you want to be in the city or the country? It is never too early to think about what types of schools you are interested in applying to, and there are many resources available to help you do this.

- **Check out Collegeboard.com.** It is a great place to get started and provides you access to endless information about colleges near and far.
- **Take a look at school websites.** Many schools have virtual tours that can show you what it is like to be at the school, and also provide information about different academic programs and opportunities that are offered.
- **Visit college campuses.** This is a great way to familiarize yourself with the different offerings that schools have and will help you start figuring out what you want and don't want in a school.

➤ **Standardized Tests (SATS, ACTS, Subject Tests, TOEFL)**

Many colleges require applicants to take either the SATs or ACTs, and sometimes additional tests in order to be admitted. It is important that you figure out early on what tests your schools require, and what testing dates are available for each one. Generally students take tests during the spring of junior year and fall of senior year of high school.

- **SATs and Subject Tests:** www.collegeboard.com
- **ACT:** <http://www.actstudent.org/>
- **TOEFL:** <http://www.ets.org/toefl>

➤ **Applications**

Application deadlines for college vary greatly, but you should generally start working on the application process in the summer before your senior year of high school. This will give you plenty of time to put forth the best applications possible.

- **Look up application deadlines and requirements:** www.collegeboard.com and school admissions websites both have information regarding deadlines and requirements
- **Get to know the Common Application:** many colleges accept the Common Application which is one application that can be sent to multiple schools. You can register for it during the summer before your senior year at www.commonapp.org.



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- **Think about teachers who can write you recommendations:** almost every school requires you to submit teacher recommendations when you apply. It is always a good idea to have a list of teachers that know you well so that when it comes time to get recommendations, you know who you want to ask.

➤ Essays

Writing your college essay can take some time, and is a key component of the college application process. Many students go through multiple drafts and topics before settling on the one that they want to submit, so starting early is key.

- **Find out if your school offers help:** many schools incorporate writing the college essay into English classes, and this can be a great way to get started.
- **Check out the essay questions:** www.commonapp.org has a list of questions to choose from, and college websites also list their essay questions. Once you know the questions, you can start brainstorming about what you want to write.

➤ Financial Aid

Paying for college can be a big expense, but there are lots of resources available to help cover the costs. The trick is to know where to find them.

- **Collegeboard.com** offers lots of information about the type of financial aid that colleges are able to provide. Because financial aid opportunities vary widely from school to school, it is important to do your research in this area.
- **FAFSA.gov** offers information about financial aid that the government offers to students going to college and is also where you will go to apply for this financial aid. It is an important website to keep in mind as you go through the process.
- **College financial aid offices** are great places to go to get more information. They can tell you about specific financial aid requirements for their schools and can also help guide you through the process.
- **Scholarships** are often a great way to fill in gaps when it comes to paying for college. **Big Sister Boston** has many scholarship opportunities so make sure to be on the lookout when those opportunities arise. Also, as with everything else, the earlier you start researching opportunities the better.

➤ Resources

This process can be daunting, but there are a lot of great resources in the area that can help you get started. Below is a list of local organizations that we encourage you to check out.

- Bottom Line: www.bottomline.org
- uAspire: <https://www.uaspire.org/students/advisors#boston>
- Let's Get Ready: <http://www.letsgetready.org/GetStarted/Students/>
- College Advising Corps: <http://advisingcorps.org/college-future/>
- ASA College Planning Center: <http://www.asa.org/for-students/college-planning/#collegeplanninglocations>



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