

Get Accepted Guide



**(Most) Everything You Need to Know
When Applying to College**



About the Get Accepted Guide

There's a lot of advice out there about how to get into college. You may feel like you have to be a straight-A student or have participated in countless extracurriculars. No matter where you're at in your high school journey or what your college and career goals are, **you can put together an amazing college application!**

About Get Schooled

Get Schooled is a national nonprofit organization that supports young people in getting to college, finding first jobs, and succeeding in both. We offer timely, helpful, and **completely free** support on our website, over social media (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube), and through our national advising textline. To date, we've supported over 1 million youth along their journeys, and 96% said we were supportive of them on their journey to college. Ready to reach your college and career goals? Learn more at [GetSchooled.com](https://www.getschooled.com)!

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***Text #Hello to 33-55-77
to get support from
our Advisors!***



The Basics

**What &
Where &
When &
How to Apply**

WHAT

First step: Stay organized throughout the college application process by using our college application requirements tracker!

Submitted by you

This is a list of information and documents that you will need to provide with your applications to ensure they're complete.

- Personal information
- List of extracurricular activities
- Essays, personal statements, or other writing supplements
- Transcripts
- Honors & awards
- SAT/ACT scores
- Resume
- Application fees or fee waivers

Submitted by Others

This information needs to be submitted by someone besides you, although **it is your responsibility to officially request it**. Often these are listed as “official” documents and need to come from the source (your high school, educators, etc.)

- Official SAT/ACT scores (sent directly by SAT/ACT to your colleges)
- Official high school transcripts (after graduation, sent by your high school)
- Letters of recommendation



WHERE

After you research your college options and narrow down your list of schools you plan to apply to, you can organize them into three categories:

- **Dream schools** are the ones you dream of going to, but are a bit more competitive to get into, due to things like small acceptance rates, minimum GPAs or test scores, or even high costs of tuition.
- **Target schools** are schools you feel confident about getting accepted to, even if they're not necessarily at the very top of your list.
- **Match schools** are schools you have a strong chance of getting admitted to. Your test scores, GPA, or coursework typically match those of other incoming students at these schools.

You can evaluate this list based on the kind of experiences you want to have in college, as well as the size, location, and academic programs offered at each.

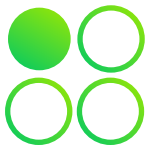
We recommend applying to at least one school that fits into each of these categories so you have options.

Financial fit is another important consideration when researching and applying to colleges. A school that's a good financial fit will not leave you with significant unmet need after scholarships and grants have been awarded. While it's a difficult decision to make, it doesn't make financial sense in the long run to attend a school that will leave you with significant unmet need or require you to take out a lot of money in loans. Once you've applied to colleges and receive your financial aid offer letters, we recommend using Scholarships360's free Financial Aid Award Letter Comparison Tool to determine which school makes the most financial sense to attend.

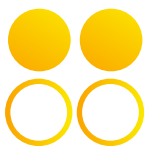
WHEN

There are four common college application deadlines—early action, early decision, regular decision, and rolling admissions.

A quick breakdown:



Early Action (EA) allows you to apply to college early (in November) and receive a decision in January or February. Students applying through EA typically have until May 1 to commit to a college. Applications are not binding. This is a great option for students who want to submit their applications early and have more time to weigh their college options.



Early Decision (ED) similarly allows you to apply to college earlier than most students (in November). Applicants receive their decisions by December. Applications are binding, meaning if you get accepted to a school you applied to through ED, you must attend there. This is a great option for students who are certain they match the admissions criteria of a specific college.



Regular Decision deadlines are anywhere from November to February. Colleges typically send their decisions in March or April, and students have until May 1 to commit to their school of choice. Most students applying to college submit their applications under regular decision deadlines.



Rolling Admissions allows students to submit their applications without a strict deadline. Schools with rolling admissions accept applications until spots in the incoming class are filled, rather than having a particular deadline. This is a great option for students who need extra time to get their application materials together or decide to apply to college later in the year.



HOW

You can apply to several colleges at the same time using the applications below or apply directly to your college of choice via their website. The undergraduate admissions website of the college will indicate what platform to use to apply:

- **Common App:** One application to apply to over 1,000 colleges worldwide.
- **Common Black College App:** Apply to nearly 70 HBCUs with one application and a \$20 fee.
- **Coalition for College Scoir Application:** Apply to over 150 distinguished and diverse public and private colleges and universities.
- **Individual college admissions websites**

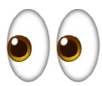
More tips for applying:

- Talk to your high school counselor to learn if you are eligible to receive [college application fee waivers](#).
- Read our tips for [making your college application stand out](#).

College Application Essay

There are many components that make up a college application– the most important of them being your essay. Your college application essay is a chance to share your story in ways that your resume or test scores can't. This is an opportunity to go deep–to share your passions, the experiences that have shaped you, and your reflections and hopes for the future (especially in college).

Your essay should be unique to you. While there's no such thing as a “perfect” college application essay, there are a [few things you can do](#) to ensure yours is authentic, compelling, and demonstrates personal growth:



Understand and unlearn common college application essay myths.

Before you start writing, check out our article about [common college application essay myths](#).



Choose a prompt that will best help you share your story.

If you're applying to college using the [Common App](#), you will have [one of seven prompts](#) to choose from. If you're applying to a college using its own application, you will likely have at least a few prompts to choose from. The prompt you choose is entirely up to you as long as it helps you best share your story and demonstrate personal growth!



Follow a 5-paragraph essay structure.

Make an [outline for your essay](#) and be sure to include an introduction that states the main topic or theme of your essay, three body paragraphs to explore and break down the topic or theme, and a conclusion paragraph that summarizes what you just wrote about and shares your hopes for the future.



Make sure you answer the prompt.

Pay close attention to what the essay prompt is asking you and make sure your essay addresses what the prompt is looking for.



Know how to answer smaller supplemental questions.

In addition to, or instead of, your main college application essay, you may need to answer smaller supplemental questions. These questions may give you anywhere from a 100- to 300-word count to help you stay focused. Be sure to always read the instructions for these types of questions to make sure you're staying within the word count and reaching your main point efficiently.



Know how to smartly use AI.

Tools like ChatGPT can't write your essay for you, but they can help you brainstorm ideas and proofread your drafts! [Read more here about the do's and don'ts of using AI for your college application essays.](#)



Have someone review your essay.

Before you submit your essay, be sure to have someone review it. Having a second opinion on your essay can help you catch spelling and grammar errors and more completely address the prompt you selected. We're here to help! [Submit your essay](#) to us for free review—we'll send it back to you with specific and actionable feedback within 7-10 days.

We'll review your essay for
FREE!

[Submit Here](#)



Extracurriculars

There are many reasons to participate in extracurricular activities. Extracurriculars can include things like part-time jobs, school leadership, participation in sports, taking care of family or community members regularly, and volunteering for causes you care about. Apart from gaining practical life skills, building relationships, and participating in something that brings you joy, extracurricular activities are a great way to show colleges what you're interested in.

Want to get involved and need ideas? Try one of these [10 activities to boost your college application!](#)



Awards & Honors

Be sure to share any [accolades and honors](#) you've been awarded in school, at work, and in your extracurriculars. This can be things like making the honor roll, being voted class secretary, getting a promotion at work, or winning a robotics competition. These recognitions show colleges that you're hard-working and dedicated! You can include these recognitions in your applications by writing about them and including any supplemental materials with them, such as newspaper clippings, web articles, or social media posts.

How awards translate:

Varsity Letter = Great Leadership Skills

HS Club Member = You Enjoy Community Building

Student of the Month = Dedication to Academics

Transcript

Your [transcript](#), an official record of all your grades throughout high school, is an essential component of your college applications. Whether you've performed well in classes or [took challenging courses](#) such as AP, IB, or Honors, your transcript signals to colleges that you're ready for a college-level course load.

There are two kinds of transcripts: **official and unofficial**. An **official transcript** is sent directly from your high school to a college. Be sure you're aware of which type a college requires before submitting your application.

If you're using the [Common App](#), you can "Invite a Counselor" in your application using their email address so they can submit your official transcript and any other necessary documentation. If you have completed (or are working on) any college courses through [dual enrollment](#), you will need to submit a transcript from your current high school as well as your college.



Test Scores

Some colleges require SAT/ACT scores, others won't accept them at all, and others [allow you to submit them voluntarily](#). Be sure you're aware of your colleges' testing requirements before submitting your applications. [Read more here about sending your SAT and/or ACT scores to colleges](#). Be sure to also request fee waivers if you're eligible ([SAT](#) & [ACT](#)).

Letters of Recommendation

You may be asked to provide [letters of recommendation](#) as a part of your applications. Letters of recommendation help admissions staff get to know you better from someone you've worked with in a close capacity—like trusted educators, coaches, club advisors, or work supervisors. Follow these tips when asking for a letter of recommendation:

1

Make a [brag sheet](#).

Write down some of your important accomplishments and strengths and send them to your recommenders before they start writing. This will help them give you a timely and accurate recommendation.

2

Give your recommender plenty of time.

Be sure to give your recommenders plenty of time to write you a letter—at least **four weeks before a deadline**, if possible.

3

Provide clear instructions.

Most recommendations are submitted online through a portal or via email. Let your recommender know how they will need to submit when it's time.

4

Send reminders.

Ask your recommender if they would like you to remind them as the submission date approaches. If they say yes, make sure you make a note to follow up with them.

5

Send a thank you note.

Saying thank you is a super important (and often forgotten) step when receiving a letter of recommendation. Be sure to reach out to your recommender to thank them for their time and effort.

After You Submit

Keep your senior year momentum going.

Even after your applications are submitted, it's essential to [keep your academic momentum going!](#) Your performance during your second semester can potentially affect your acceptance to schools, since your counselor will submit your official transcript at the end of your senior year. Additionally, any financial aid you've already been awarded, such as scholarships, may have minimum GPA requirements you'll need to meet.

Some students may feel overwhelmed, burnt out, or even a bit unmotivated after submitting their college applications—which is totally normal. College application season is a highly stressful time for many students, so once your applications are complete, be sure to practice some [self-care](#). Whether it's hitting the gym or playing your favorite instrument, be sure to take some time for yourself to recharge and do things you enjoy. This can help you stay focused and motivated to finish the school year off strong!

Check your email and mail regularly.

Be sure to check your email and mailbox regularly, since the majority of colleges will send their decisions in either of these ways. They may also reach out if your application is incomplete or to request additional information. If you receive any requests like this, it's important to respond **ASAP** with the material(s) you're being asked for. We recommend checking both your mail and email once a day to ensure you don't miss anything important.

Apply for scholarships.

There are **millions** of dollars out there right now in college scholarships! Check out some of our free scholarship resources to help you find \$\$\$ for college:

- Find college scholarships using our brand new [Scholarship Finder](#). Search by your identity, location, and area of study to find just the right fit! Our regularly-updated scholarship lists, broken down \$\$\$ amount, identity, and more.
- Read our guide on [how to effectively find scholarships](#) before starting your search..
- Check out our hand-picked [scholarship lists](#), broken down by state, dollar amount, and identity.
- Sign up to receive [free scholarship alerts](#) sent to your email every other week.
- Use our [scholarship application requirements tracker](#) to stay organized during your search.

Complete the FAFSA or state-based financial aid.

College is expensive, but the cost can be cut down significantly with the help of financial aid! Once you send in your college applications, it's time to [complete the FAFSA](#) to be considered for federal, state, and institutional financial aid like [scholarships, grants, work-study and federal loans](#).

To be able to complete the FAFSA, students must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents. If you are not in a position to complete the FAFSA, your state may have its own state-based aid application instead! [Read more here about states with state-based aid for college](#).

[No matter which type of financial aid form you're completing, we're here to support!](#)

You Belong in College!

Applying to college takes time, preparation, and persistence. If you find yourself struggling or are doubting your place in college, check out these [stories from students](#) who've overcome challenges they've faced throughout their college journeys. No matter your grades, test scores, or background, ***you belong in college!***

Have any questions or need some support as you navigate college applications?

Get Schooled's Virtual Advisors are here to help! Text us by scanning the QR code.





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