



# College tips for parents

## My to-do list

- Expose my child early to the idea of college
  - Start talking at an early stage
  - Think about dreams and future plans
- Connect with my child's school
  - Help plan what courses my child will take
  - Keep in contact with the guidance office
- Learn the college preparation requirements
  - Coursework
  - Tests
- Encourage extracurricular activities
  - Sports
  - School clubs
  - Community service
- Plan a college budget
  - Research available financial aid
  - Fill out the FAFSA with my child
- Explore college options with my child
  - Visit a real college campus with my child
  - Check out the different services each college offers

It's never too early to start planning for college. There are many benefits to planning well in advance. You have an important view on what a college education can offer your child and the effort it takes to get there. Below are some tips for college planning, whether your child is 7 or 17.

## Early exposure to the idea of college

Start talking to your child about plans for the future. Ask what kind of work your child would enjoy. Encourage your child to talk to people who work in careers of interest. Along with that, help your child find out what training or education is needed for those careers. Help your child make a connection between his or her hopes and dreams and the education needed to accomplish those goals.

## Explore college options with your child

Bringing your child to a real college campus is a great way to make college seem like a reality. Most children and teens are not sure what they want in a college. Visiting a campus gives them a point of reference to compare with other schools. While you are on campus, take advantage of services and events local colleges have available to the public. Sometimes these activities are free or discounted. Some options to look into are concerts, exhibits, plays, planetariums, salon services and dining. Another option is to attend local college fairs where admissions representatives from various campuses are in one location, available to answer questions and offer highlights of their campus.

## Connect with your child's school resources

Your child's high school and his or her guidance counselor can be very helpful in the college planning process. Another option is to visit the high school college and career center, a valuable resource at any school. College and career center staff are focused on college preparation and college and career options. Stay involved by helping your child choose the proper courses in order to meet college admissions requirements. Students should strive to take a challenging yet manageable course load. Fulfilling admissions requirements now creates college opportunities for your child later.

## Learn the required college prep coursework

High school graduation requirements may be different than college admissions requirements. Typical college admissions requirements:

- 4 courses in English
- 3 courses in mathematics (including Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II)

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- 3 courses in history, social studies or government
- 3 courses in science (at least one laboratory)
- 3 courses in one foreign language or 2 courses each of two foreign languages are recommended (Note: American Sign Language may not satisfy these requirements)

## Encourage extra curricular activities

Summers count! Colleges seek well-rounded students with a range of interests and activities that will add to their campus and provide rich discussion in their classes. Students' interests and activities are part of the college application process. Students can find activities tied to their career interests, or in areas they would like to explore. Students who have, for example, held a summer job or internship, been involved in school clubs or sports, attended summer academic enrichment programs, or have been an active volunteer in their community will be a more competitive college applicant.

## Support their preparation for college entrance exams

Students seeking admission to most four-year colleges are required to take a college entrance exam. Either or both exams below can be included on their college application.

- American College Test (ACT)
- Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)

For students who wish to show aptitude in a particular subject, satisfy basic requirement for certain programs of study or to meet college admission recommendations, SAT Subject tests are available in math, history, science, English and languages. The subject test is a good indicator to the college of a student's interest in a specific major.

## Plan a college budget

College can be expensive, so planning how to pay for school is important. Start researching the different types of financial aid available. Students can apply for financial aid by filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is the starting point for access to all federal student aid (grants, work-study and loans).

You can visit the FAFSA4Caster website ([www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov)) in order to get an idea of the financial aid process. This website can also help you obtain early estimates of the type of aid your family might qualify to receive. You can also speak with a financial planner or tax consultant about other options, such as 529 college savings plans.

By staying involved in your child's education and planning ahead financially, you can help your child gain the experience and confidence necessary to pursue a college education.

## Need more information?

The College Place is here to help you with free college-planning resources and personal advice. Visit our website at [www.ecmc.org](http://www.ecmc.org).