

Finding the Right College for You



Congratulations on making the decision to go to college—now it's time to pick a school.

Factors to Consider When Picking My School

- Program of study
- Selectivity
- School size
- Class size
- Distance from home
- City and neighborhood
- Campus culture
- Diversity
- Internship opportunities
- Research opportunities
- Extracurricular activities
- Support services
- Religious affiliation
- Net price
- Financial aid options
- Campus housing availability
- Housing options near campus

Use ECMC's Choosing the Right College for You worksheet to help you choose a college: www.ecmc.org/opportunities

Factors to Consider When Beginning Your Search

- **What career fields and programs of study interest you?** Identify careers that interest you and determine which majors or education pathways will best prepare you for each career. Investigate the requirements necessary to enter into those programs of study or majors. You must be admitted as a degree- or certificate-seeking student in order to receive financial aid, though you may not have to declare a major right away.
- **How can you identify careers?** Below is a list of websites that can help you identify different careers:
 - <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>
 - www.onetonline.org
 - <https://roadtripnation.com>
 - www.bls.gov/ooh
 - www.khanacademy.org/college-careers-more/career-content
- **What are your academic strengths?** One way to identify a career field or major course of study is to look at the academic subjects you already enjoy, especially those in which you perform well. Identify careers that concentrate in these subject areas to ensure selection of a major you'll likely do well in and enjoy. Once you've identified career interests, identify colleges that offer majors that align with your interests.
- **What kind of campus and learning environment works best for you?** Do you want to attend a college in the middle of the city or in a quiet remote setting? How far from home do you want to be?

Do you prefer lectures or a more hands-on approach to learning? Do you prefer to be in a small class or large class? All of these questions are necessary when finding a college that's a "good fit" for you.

- **Do you plan to commute or live on campus?** Living on campus gives you the "total college experience" and introduces you to a life of independence. As a resident student you can just roll out of bed, put on your sweat pants and hustle to class. As a commuter student, getting to and from campus may take more time; however, you can save money by eliminating on-campus room and board costs.
- **What kind of campus atmosphere and services will allow you to thrive?** Many colleges seek a diverse student body in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, geography and more, but you may want to focus on schools that celebrate their students' diversity or where more students are like you—or different from you. You may need a college with a small student-to-faculty ratio that allows for more personal attention

Colleges offer more than just academics to help students succeed. Health and wellness care, counseling, child care, food support, tutoring, mentoring, disability services and legal support are examples of support services made available to students to help them succeed at college. Research support services offered by the colleges you are interested in and determine if these services meet your needs.

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There is no right answer to these questions. Base your final decision on the type of student you are, your educational goals and what situation best fits your needs. Talk to friends, family, teachers and counselors for help with identifying your goals in going to college.

You can learn a lot about a college by visiting its campus. Sign up for an in-person tour on the colleges' websites. Visit <https://campustours.com> or www.thecollegetour.com for virtual tours.

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/TCP.

Most Common College Types

Type of Institution	Description	Degrees Offered	Admissions
Career and Technical Education (CTE) Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A CTE institution focuses on a highly specialized curriculum; can be nonprofit or for-profit Geared for students who want to learn a specific skill and find employment within two years Examples include cosmetology, HVAC, culinary and automotive technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificates of completion Associate of Applied Science (AAS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed application for admission High school transcript showing proof of completion
Community College Junior College (2-year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A college is an institution with multiple academic departments Offers traditional academic, continuing education and remedial programs Offers technical programs, such as cosmetology, HVAC, culinary and automotive technology Offers general education prerequisite courses required for most bachelor's degree programs at four-year colleges and universities Ideal for students looking to transfer to a four-year college and pursue a bachelor's degree, students looking to earn an associate degree or certificate, and students looking to further their education Some colleges offer a limited number of bachelor's degree programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificates of completion Associate of Arts (AA) Associate of Science (AS) Associate of Applied Science (AAS) <p>May offer limited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Arts (BA) Bachelor of Science (BS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incoming freshmen and transfers Completed application for admission High school transcript showing proof of completion College transcript, if previously attended College placement testing may be required depending on the school
College (4-year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A college is an institution with multiple academic departments Offers traditional academic programs; may offer technical, continuing education and remedial programs Offers general education prerequisite courses and upper-level, major-specific undergraduate and graduate courses Colleges can be specialized in a specific area or liberal arts based Liberal arts colleges offer primarily liberal arts majors, yet many offer degrees in STEM fields as well Colleges (especially liberal arts colleges) tend to be smaller than universities and offer fewer majors; they may not offer graduate degrees (master's and doctoral) Some colleges offer associate degree programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Arts (BA) Bachelor of Science (BS) <p>May offer limited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associate of Arts (AA) Associate of Science (AS) Associate of Applied Science (AAS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incoming freshmen and transfers Completed application for admission High school transcript showing proof of completion (more selective colleges require a higher grade point average) College transcript, if previously attended Supplemental documents may include essay, personal statement and/or academic resume SAT or ACT score may be required depending on the school
University (4-year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A university is an institution with multiple schools and colleges (college of liberal arts, school of engineering, college of business, etc.) Offers traditional academic programs; may offer technical, continuing education and remedial programs Even though universities tend to focus more on research and specialized majors, most universities have a college of arts and sciences that offers liberal arts programs Universities tend to be larger than colleges and offer more majors; they offer graduate degrees (master's and doctoral) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Arts (BA) Bachelor of Science (BS) Master of Arts (MA) Master of Science (MS) Master of Business Administration (MBA) Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) There are many other graduate and undergraduate degrees, but these are the most common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incoming freshmen and transfers Completed application for admission High school transcript showing proof of completion (more selective universities require a higher grade point average) College transcript, if previously attended Supplemental documents may include essay, personal statement and/or academic resume SAT or ACT score may be required depending on the school