# College Application Checklist

**College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Admissions Contact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Application deadline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Fee</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date You Sent Application</th>
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</table>

**Cost Box**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Room &amp; Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pre-application**

- [ ] Researched school online
- [ ] Discussed with parents
- [ ] Discussed with counselor
- [ ] Visited campus

**School Type**

Check one:
- [ ] Safety
- [ ] Likely
- [ ] Reach

**Financial Aid/Scholarships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAFSA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College financial aid application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(other)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Application Materials**

- [ ] Application proofread by you
- [ ] Application proofread by someone else
- [ ] Cover letter/personal statement

**Essay/Personal Statement**

- [ ] Written
- [ ] Proofread
- [ ] Proofed again

- [ ] Transcript sent

- [ ] Test scores sent

- [ ] Copy of application made and filed

**Additional Information**

- [ ] Portfolio (if required)

- [ ] Housing forms

**Letters of Recommendation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requested From</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Sent?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**College Web Site Password**

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**Cappex Fit Fact:** Put your name and College Application ID number (if applicable) on every page of application materials you send. Don’t miss out on colleges that want you. Go to Cappex.com now to get your college matches. It’s free and easy!
Can you afford your college choices?

Compare the cost of colleges along with your expected contributions to arrive at what’s called your Unmet Need or Financial Gap. You can get Cost of Attendance factors for your college choices on Cappex.com.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Details</th>
<th>College 1</th>
<th>College 2</th>
<th>College 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Name</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In State / Out of State</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost of Attendance</th>
<th>College 1</th>
<th>College 2</th>
<th>College 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuition &amp; Fees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room &amp; Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books &amp; Supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel to and from College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A  
Total Cost of Attendance =

Expected Family Contribution  (Calculate your estimated EFC using the FAFSA4caster at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov/)

B  
Expected Family Contribution =

Scholarships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholarships</th>
<th>College 1</th>
<th>College 2</th>
<th>College 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projected Need-based Aid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected Merit Aid Scholarships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Scholarships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C  
Total Scholarships =

Federal Student Loans

D  
Federal Student Loans =

Work Study  (Financial aid given in exchange for working on campus)

E  
Work Study =

Your Financial Gap: (To calculate this, subtract lines B, C, D, and E from line A.)

Unmet Need or Gap =
To make up this gap, you would either need to contribute more or take out a private loan.

Cappex Fit Fact: Know that 63 percent of all students receive some form of financial aid, be it grants, loans, scholarships or federal aid. For more tips on paying for college and to discover merit aid scholarships, go to www.Cappex.com.
5½ Steps to Writing a College Admissions Essay

1. Write in Your Own Voice
   No matter what the essay question is, you can express who you are by answering in your voice. Avoid common tactics of trying to sound overly intellectual. Simply showing that you can use the English language, follow directions and articulate who you are will go far.

1½. Know What Your Voice Is
   Your voice is distinctly yours. Recognize the qualities that distinguish you from others.
   What are 3 qualities that make you stand out from others?

2. Don’t Repeat Yourself: Don’t be Repetitive
   Your essay should tell admission representatives something they haven’t already read in your application.
   What are 3 things the admission representatives won’t know about you until they read your essay?

   If any of these 3 things match 1½, that should tell you what you need to get across to the admission representative!

3. Give Yourself Enough Time to Write, Revise, Repeat
   The writing process takes time, so give yourself enough of it. Before you even write, just brainstorm ideas. From there, craft an outline, and from there write a draft. Have someone like a parent, teacher or friend edit your essay. Take your editor’s suggestion, make changes and rework the piece. Here’s a checklist for writing your college admission essay:

   □ Brainstorm
   □ Outline
   □ Draft
   □ Edit
   □ Revise

4. Are You Answering the Right Question?
   With the stress of writing an essay, a lot of times the main point of the essay goes out the window. Remember, you need to answer the question the college asked. Even if you have the most beautifully written essay on your ability to talk to dogs, are you sure it answers the question? For every essay you write, re-read the question and double check that you have provided an appropriate response.

5. Get Some Mileage Out of It
   Essay questions may be different for each school, but in many cases you can use what you already have toward another question. It’s not as simple as copy and paste, but you can repurpose parts of your essay to make sense with a new question. Still, remember #4! Make sure that your repurposed essay answers the question. Also, avoid at all costs accidentally leaving the wrong college’s name in your essay.

All of these steps take time. Do yourself a favor and start your essays early!
Getting Letters of Recommendation

1. Are You Asking the Right Teacher?
   Take the “Am I Asking the Right Teacher?” True or False Quiz! Fill each box with a “T” for “F”:  
   - This teacher has taught me in a class junior or senior year  
   - This teacher can reflect on my intellectual growth  
   - This teacher has taught me in a core academic discipline  
   - This teacher would be able to tell a good story about me  
   - This teacher agreed to write my letter of recommendation without hesitation  
   - This teacher knows me as person outside the classroom  
   - This teacher can assess my academic and personal achievements and potential  

Did you have more than 3 “F’s”? You might want to think about a different teacher who passes the test.

2. Make the Request Early
   You can ask as early as Junior year!

3. Give Your Teacher Some Direction
   A. Provide a Clear Deadline  
   The colleges you’re applying to might have different deadlines, so give your teacher one deadline to work with. Simple math:  
   \[
   \text{If } X = \text{(Your earliest application deadline)} \quad \text{Then } \quad \text{(A couple weeks before } X) \quad \text{is the deadline you give your teachers.}
   \]

   B. Giving your teacher a bit of guidance on what they should express about you to admissions officers will only make their job easier. Name 3 qualities of yours that you’d want your recommendation to express:
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality 1</th>
<th>Quality 2</th>
<th>Quality 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
   
   For each quality, provide some proof! Remind your teacher with examples of how you exhibited these qualities. You can cite projects, papers, awards, honors, or other accomplishments in or out of the classroom. Write your examples below each quality:
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of quality 1</th>
<th>Example of quality 2</th>
<th>Example of quality 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
   
   C. Write your own letter  
   In a thoughtful and concise letter to your teacher include what you brainstormed in B and a brief summary of why you want to attend the colleges you’re applying to.

4. Package it Nicely
   After a teacher has agreed to write your recommendation, provide them with an organized folder that includes:
   - A list of all the colleges that need recommendations
   - Addressed and stamped envelope(s) for each college
   - Your letter from 3C
   - Any forms for the recommendation from the college
   - A note with the deadline
   - Super helpful tip: Make sure to clip the right forms to the right envelopes to keep it simple for your teacher to assemble and send.

5. Extra Tips Checklist
   - Send a “Thank You” note to your teacher
   - Double, triple, quadruple check the letter of recommendation guidelines for each application
   - To increase the credibility of the recommendation, waive your right to view the letter

Keep your college search on track!  
Make your free Cappex.com profile today.
Speak the Language: College Admissions

If you’re not familiar with the college admissions process, it probably seems like it has a language all its own. To help you learn the lingo, here are definitions of some of the college admission terms you’re likely to come across.

Acceptance Rate: The percentage of applicants a college accepts for admission.

Accreditation: Certification that a college meets the standards of a state, regional or national association.

Candidates Reply Date Agreement (CRDA): This agreement, sponsored by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, states that in order to allow students to consider all their college options, students have until May 1 to accept any college’s offer of admission.

Common/Universal Application: Standardized application forms accepted by many colleges. After you fill out the Common or Universal application, you can send it to any college that accepts it as the institution’s own application.

Competitive College: A college with a rigorous, highly selective admissions process. Competitive colleges typically admit fewer than 25 percent of applicants.

Deferred Admission: A student’s option to defer an offer of admission for up to two years.

Personal Statement: Sometimes referred to as a college application essay. Personal statements are essays that give admissions officers insights into your character, personality and motivation.

Reach School: A college where admission might be a stretch for you, based on the average GPA and test scores of accepted students and the college’s overall admission requirements.

Retention Rate: The percentage of students who return to a college for their sophomore year. An indicator of student satisfaction.

Safety School: A college where, based on the average GPA and test scores of accepted students, you have a high likelihood of being admitted.

Student-Faculty Ratio: The number of students at a college compared to the number of faculty. Some colleges see this as an indicator of class size and professor accessibility, but a lower ratio doesn’t guarantee either. For a true indication of class size and professor accessibility, speak with students and professors at a college.

Supplemental Material: Items you include with your college application to provide more information about your talents, experiences and goals. Materials could include work samples, additional essays, newspaper clippings, music CDs or art slides. Verify if a college welcomes (or requests) these materials before sending.

Transcript: An official record of classes you have taken and the grades you received. Usually you must provide a high school transcript with your college application.

Waitlist: A list of students a college may eventually decide to admit if space becomes available.

Yield: The percentage of accepted students who go on to enroll at a college. Competitive colleges have high yield rates.

Cappex Fit Fact: More than half of all students enrolling said a “very important reason” for going to college was “to find my purpose in life.” Go to Cappex.com today to see which colleges match your fit factors. It’s free and easy!
Speak the Language: Financial Assistance

When it comes to money, you don’t need any misunderstandings. To help you navigate the waters of paying for college, here is a list of commonly used terms and what they mean.

**Award Letter:** Official notification of the type and amount of financial aid a college is offering you.

**Demonstrated Need:** The difference between what your family can contribute toward college expenses and the actual cost of attending college.

**Expected Family Contribution (EFC):** How much money you and your family are expected to contribute toward college expenses. EFC is based on your FAFSA application and a calculation by the federal government.

**Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA):** The federal application every student must submit in order to be eligible for federal financial aid. For more information and to complete the FAFSA visit www.fafsa.ed.gov.

**Grants:** Money for college that does not have to be repaid. Most grants are need-based and are awarded by the state or federal government.

**Institutional Aid (or Campus-Based Aid):** Financial assistance given by a college, typically either need-based or merit-based aid.

**Loans:** Money given to a student that must be paid back. There are several types of loans, including low to zero interest student loans given out by the federal government, like the Perkins and Stafford loans. These are the best options, since you don’t have to pay back the money until you graduate. Private loans, offered through banks and credit unions, typically have higher interest rates.

**Merit Aid:** Financial aid awarded to you from a college based on your individual achievements and talents. For a full listing of what’s available, visit www.meritaid.com.

**Need-Based Aid:** Financial aid given based on the ability of you and your family to pay for college.

**Scholarship:** Money for college that does not have to be paid back. Usually awarded based on specific criteria, such as your academic performance, extracurricular activities, ethnic heritage or religious affiliation. Scholarships may be awarded by colleges, private groups or states.

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** After you file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), you will receive a SAR stating your EFC (expected family contribution) and eligibility for financial aid. This report is also sent to the colleges you indicate on the FAFSA.

**Student Loan:** Financial aid that must be repaid. Student loan programs are available through the federal government and private lenders.

**Work-Study:** Financial aid given in exchange for work (typically at a job on campus). To qualify for the Federal Work Study (FWS) program, you must complete the FAFSA.

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**Cappex Fit Fact:** There is more than $11 billion in merit scholarships available to students. Many of these scholarships are renewable each year. Go to MeritAid.com today, and find out which scholarships fit you before you apply.
FAFSA: Why You Need It, How to Start
A worksheet you can share with your parents

How do I know if I should fill out the FAFSA?
Most college financial aid, of any type, requires the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and many colleges and states require your FAFSA information to award their own grants and scholarships.

Check-off any of the college financial aid you’re interested in qualifying for:

☐ Need-based financial aid, such as government funded Pell Grants, which you don’t have to repay
☐ Merit aid, such as grants and scholarships from colleges, which you don’t have to repay
☐ State-sponsored financial aid
☐ Student loans, such as Perkins and Stafford Loans, and PLUS Loans for parent borrowers
☐ Work-study programs (a job on campus while you attend)

If you placed a check mark next to any of these, you should definitely fill out the FAFSA.

Tip: Use the FAFSA4caster to estimate your eligibility for federal student aid. Simply go to www.fafsa.ed.gov.

When should I fill out the FAFSA?
FAFSA is available starting January 1st of your senior year, and you should start the application as early as possible that month.

Why so early, you ask? The FAFSA takes time, and many colleges and states have their own varying deadlines, some as early as February 15. Check your state’s deadline at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

What things do I need to get ready to file?
Make sure you have:

☐ Your Social Security number, or if not a U.S. citizen, alien registration number or permanent residence card
☐ Your driver’s license number
☐ Your parents’ and your most recent tax return(s). Tip: If you file in January, you can estimate the most recent year’s taxes. Corrections to the estimates can be made later in February.
☐ Your parents’ and your most recent bank statements
☐ Your parents’ most recent business, mortgage, and investment records

Ready to start?
Go to www.fafsa.ed.gov and start with the “FAFSA on the Web Worksheet” which outlines everything you need to file. Completing that worksheet will save you time once you start the actual FAFSA. On that site, you will also need to establish a Federal Student Aid ID called a PIN.

Once you enter all of your information, double-check your work and print out a copy to keep for your records. After your FAFSA is filed, you can log on and check the status at any time. Note: Some private colleges also require the CSS Profile, found at collegeboard.com, which is a separate financial aid form.

Two-thirds of all undergraduate college students receive some type of financial aid. You can learn more about financial aid and merit scholarships at the colleges you’re considering at Cappex.com.