



Prepare for College from Your Couch

**YOUR GUIDE TO NAVIGATING THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS
PROCESS FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME.**

How to Go on a **VIRTUAL** College Campus Visit

RESEARCH THE SURROUNDING CITY.

The community will have an impact on your college experience. Do some online research to better understand where you will be living, and learn about the benefits available outside of the campus bubble.

READ STUDENT PROFILES.

Most colleges have a collection of student testimonials on their website or social media channels. Read through these to learn about your peers and visualize yourself in their shoes.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE NEWSPAPER.

The student newspaper is written by students and the articles cover stories that interest the students on campus. Look at a recent publication to learn about events, and opinions written by potential peers.

TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR.

Many colleges and universities have a photo or video tour of campus on their website. These can help you get a better feel for the classrooms, dorms, dining halls, and hot spots on campus.

REVIEW THE COLLEGE'S HOMEPAGE.

It seems simple, but a college's homepage often highlights the areas in which they excel. If you don't have time to really dig in, scan the information and note the parts you are most interested in learning more about. Then, bookmark the website so you can review it later.

USE ONLINE MAPS.

Maps found on the Internet can do more than get you from point A to point B. Use it to look at the campus from a bird's-eye view to better understand the size of the campus. Or, try mapping the distance between common places, like the library and the dining hall. Use extra features to check out restaurants, theaters, and coffee shops that are within walking distance of the dorms.

FOLLOW THEIR SOCIAL CHANNELS.

Most colleges have some kind of social media presence. Follow the schools you are interested in applying to on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube to get brief updates on the happenings around campus.

How to Ask for a **LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

ASK SOMEONE WHO KNOWS YOU WELL.

The recommender should be able to speak to your personality and give insight into who you are beyond your grades. Ask someone who you interact with regularly, like a teacher, counselor, employer, or community leader.

GIVE YOUR RECOMMENDER PLENTY OF TIME.

Try not to wait until the last minute to ask for a letter of recommendation—give your recommender at least a month to write a letter. The request should be genuine and heartfelt. Talk about the impact they’ve had on your life and explain how grateful you are for their guidance.

MAKE IT EASY ON YOUR RECOMMENDER.

After you’ve asked for a letter of rec, give that individual all the necessary details:

- What the letter is for (university application, job, scholarship)
- Who to address the letter to
- Submission requirements including deadline and desired format

You may also want to include materials they need to “brag” about you. Include personal information describing: future aspirations, intended major, awards, honors, accomplishments, and relevant extracurricular activities

These materials will help your recommender stay focused on key topics while including personal anecdotes.

FOLLOW UP AND SEND A THANK YOU.

As the application deadline approaches, it’s a good idea to contact your recommenders and politely remind them to submit their letters. After they’ve submitted your letter, write a card thanking them for their time and dedication to helping you achieve your goals.

Paying for College

FINANCIAL AID Checklist

☐ **START SAVING.**

When it comes to saving for college, every penny counts. Now is the time to take responsibility for your finances. Keep track of your spending habits and identify areas where you can cut back.

☐ **GET FAMILIAR WITH THE PROCESS.**

Understanding the ins and outs of financial aid can be a daunting task. Read articles and talk to friends or family members who have already gone through the college application process.

☐ **TALK ABOUT FUNDING YOUR FUTURE.**

It's important to know your budget before choosing a school so you can figure out the amount of money you need to secure through financial aid and savings.

☐ **UNDERSTAND COLLEGE COSTS.**

Spend some time researching the typical costs associated with paying for college. Tools like the US Department of Education's College Scorecard can give you a quick snapshot of schools based on program, location, and size.

☐ **COLLECT NECESSARY DOCUMENTS.**

Before you start the financial aid application process, gather everything you need to fill out the forms correctly, including your Social Security Number, driver's license number, and W-2 forms.

☐ **COMPLETE THE FAFSA FORM.**

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) provides you with access to state and federal aid as well as financial assistance from many colleges. Seniors should submit the FAFSA as soon as possible after it opens on October 1.

☐ **APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS.**

Don't forget to fill out scholarship applications not covered by the FAFSA form. To find scholarships, use online search tools like [scholarships.com](https://www.scholarships.com).

☐ **REVIEW FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE.**

After you've submitted your ACT test scores and completed your FAFSA, the financial aid office at the colleges you've been accepted to will send you an award letter outlining what they can provide, which may include grants, scholarships, loans, and/or work study programs.

6 TIPS to Writing a Stellar Admissions Essay

1

START EARLY. The first thing you should do is list how many essays you need to write and their deadlines. Start in the spring of your junior year or summer before senior year so you have plenty of time to brainstorm potential topics and writing points.

2

CREATE AN OUTLINE. Take the prompt of each essay and break it down. Next, pair personal stories or experiences that illustrate your answers. Organize your thesis along with these anecdotes, in bullet-point format, into a clear beginning, middle, and end. This is your outline.

3

READ SOME EXAMPLES. Some colleges will publish essay examples on their website. It's a great opportunity to get a feel for what that college identifies as a strong essay and what it doesn't. (Just remember to not follow them so closely that you would be plagiarizing their content.)

4

ADDRESS WHAT'S NOT ON YOUR TRANSCRIPT. Remember, colleges already have your transcript and resume, so use your essay to provide additional information. How can you expand upon the information presented in the other parts of the application or highlight new traits?

5

BE SPECIFIC. While considering your anecdotes, focus on specific details and really flesh out the scene. You might not have enough space to tell your entire life story, but you can make your essay come to life with vivid details.

6

REVIEW YOUR WORK. After you've finished a draft of your essay, have someone you trust (a parent, counselor, or teacher) review it. Check for grammatical and spelling errors. Be sure to limit the number of people who review your essay to one or two. Too many voices can muddle yours.

5 WAYS to Stay Motivated at Home

It can be tough to stay motivated during a time of uncertainty, but these tips can help you find some control.

ESTABLISH A ROUTINE. Without a set schedule, a leisurely morning can easily drift into a lazy day. When you're in school, you have bells that indicate the time of day and consequences, like tardy slips, that hold you accountable. Without a class schedule, it can be difficult to maintain consistency. So, find a new routine. Set your alarm, get dressed, eat breakfast, and "get to class" (even if that means your new desk is the kitchen table) by the same time every day.

WRITE A TO-DO LIST. Start by figuring out what you want to accomplish by the end of the day. Factor in things you already have on the calendar, like e-learning requirements and homework assignments. Then, add in some small tasks that will help you accomplish your personal goals. For example, if you want to read a new book, jot down "read at least one chapter today" on your list. Or, maybe you want to improve your ACT® test score. Make it a goal to complete 30 minutes of ACT® Academy™ every other day.

GET ACTIVE. Even though you're limited, there are still options to break a sweat. Stream a home workout on YouTube or turn up the music and choreograph a dance. If you can safely distance yourself from others, walk your dog or go for a jog outside. Getting fresh air and exercise will help keep your mind clear and find balance in your day.

STAY CONNECTED. Having meaningful conversations with friends and family members is a great way to reboot when you're bored or listless. When physically seeing somebody you care about isn't a possibility, text messages, social media, phone calls, and video chats can help you connect to others.

CLEAR YOUR HEAD. When there are things happening out of your control, it can be hard to focus on completing a easy tasks. One way to tame anxieties is by acknowledging them. Write down your fears in a journal, share your concerns with a friend, or simply say your worries out loud to yourself. Getting these burdens out of your head can make them less powerful and allow more space for positive thoughts.

WORKSHEET: Explore Majors

It's important to pick a major that matches your interests. There are a lot of different factors that go into choosing a job, and your major helps you prepare for your career. We've found that when you choose a major that matches your interests, you are more likely to:

- **Remain in your major**
- **Stay in college**
- **Complete your degree in a timely manner**

Remaining in your major means you won't lose time or money by having to take additional classes in a newly-chosen course of study. When you're interested in what you're studying, you are more likely to stay the course and stay in college. As a result, you have a better chance of completing your degree on time.

Potential College Major:

Does the major match my interests? _____

Does this major prepare me for the career I want to have? _____

What college courses would I typically take for the major? _____

What are the jobs available with my planned level of education? _____

What high school courses can help me prepare for the major? _____

WORKSHEET: Create a College List

Fill out information about each quality listed. After doing your research, circle **0** (dislike), **1** (indifferent), or **2** (like) for each. Then, total your points for each school. The colleges with higher totals indicate a better fit based on your interests.

COLLEGE NAME:

Major: _____ 0 1 2

Location: _____ 0 1 2

Size: _____ 0 1 2

Cost: _____ 0 1 2

Extracurriculars: _____ 0 1 2

(Insert Own): _____ 0 1 2

Total: _____ + _____ + _____ =

COLLEGE NAME:

Major: _____ 0 1 2

Location: _____ 0 1 2

Size: _____ 0 1 2

Cost: _____ 0 1 2

Extracurriculars: _____ 0 1 2

(Insert Own): _____ 0 1 2

Total: _____ + _____ + _____ =

COLLEGE NAME:

Major: 0 1 2

Location: 0 1 2

Size: 0 1 2

Cost: 0 1 2

Extracurriculars: 0 1 2

(Insert Own): 0 1 2

Total: + + =

COLLEGE NAME:

Major: 0 1 2

Location: 0 1 2

Size: 0 1 2

Cost: 0 1 2

Extracurriculars: 0 1 2

(Insert Own): 0 1 2

Total: + + =

NOTES:

B I N G O

WATCH AN
ACT ACADEMY
VIDEO ON ANY
TOPIC.

[ACADEMY.ACT.ORG](https://academy.act.org)

EMAIL OR TEXT
SOMEBODY
IN COLLEGE
AND ASK
ABOUT THEIR
EXPERIENCE.

RESEARCH
3 COLLEGES
YOU'RE
INTERESTED IN
ATTENDING.

DO A VIRTUAL
CAMPUS VISIT

SIGN-UP FOR
STUDENT
NEWSLETTERS
FROM ACT.

[ACT.ORG/STUDENT](https://act.org/student)

LEARN 5 FACTS
ABOUT A CITY
WHERE YOU'D
LIKE TO ATTEND
COLLEGE OR
UNIVERSITY.

CALL A LOVED
ONE AND ASK
FOR THEIR
BEST PIECE OF
ADVICE.

READ A
BOOK FOR 30
MINUTES.

WRITE 3 GOALS
YOU WANT
TO COMPLETE
WITHIN THE
NEXT MONTH.

WRITE A
JOURNAL
ENTRY DATED
10 YEARS IN THE
FUTURE.

DO A RANDOM
ACT OF
KINDNESS.

INTERVIEW A
PARENT ABOUT
THEIR JOB.

REGISTER FOR
AN UPCOMING
ACT® TEST

[ACT.ORG/THE-ACT](https://act.org/the-act)

MAKE UP A
DANCE TO
YOUR FAVORITE
SONG

FIND 1
SCHOLARSHIP
OPPORTUNITY
THAT FITS YOUR
NEEDS AND
QUALIFICATIONS.

EXPLORE
POTENTIAL
COLLEGE
MAJORS

[MYACT.ORG](https://myact.org)

BRAINSTORM
3 PEOPLE YOU
CAN ASK FOR A
LETTER OF REC.

TAKE A
PRACTICE ACT
TEST.

DO 100
JUMPING JACKS

WRITE A THANK-
YOU LETTER
TO SOMEBODY
WHO HAS
MADE A
DIFFERENCE IN
YOUR LIFE.

FIND THE TEST
PREP OPTION
THAT IS BEST
FIT FOR YOU.

[ACT.ORG/TESTPREP](https://act.org/testprep)

FIND A QUOTE
THAT SPEAKS
TO YOUR SOUL.

MEDITATE FOR
5 MINUTES

DRAW A
PICTURE OF
YOUR FUTURE.

DOWNLOAD
AND READ
AN EBOOK OF
YOUR CHOICE.

[ACT.ORG/STUDENT](https://act.org/student)