



College Search

DEVELOP YOUR COLLEGE LIST WITH VARIOUS DEGREES OF SELECTIVITY:

REACH - you might have a 10-20% rate of being accepted.

COMPETITIVE - you have at least a 50/50 chance of being admitted.

PROBABLE - you meet all of the requirements and have a 75% chance of getting in.

WILD CARD - colleges with an acceptance rate lower than 25%. Even the strongest candidates for these schools should not expect that they will receive an acceptance.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

There are thousands of accredited four-year colleges in the United States. No wonder you may be feeling overwhelmed by all of the choices!

It's time to begin an organized search and start focusing on schools that will be right for you. Follow these steps!

Get to know yourself and what you want in a college.

- Develop and review your **Key College Criteria** List (found in this unit) – then prioritize it!
- Take career-interest inventories - they will help you look at majors and the schools that offer the best coursework for you.
- Look at your grades and test scores - so you can compare how you will fit in at different campuses.

KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU ARE NOT JUST LOOKING FOR GOOD SCHOOLS, BUT SCHOOLS GOOD FOR YOU!

Do your research.

- Look at college websites—you will find information on admissions, campus events, special programs and majors, athletics, the faculty, student services, financial aid, blogs, and more!
- Review books at your local library or school career center. Look for college guidebooks such as *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*, *The College Handbook* and the *Book of Majors* (both published by College Board) and other books such as *Colleges That Change Lives* and *The Insider's Guide to Colleges*.
- Use websites such as www.bigfuture.org, or www.petersons.com to help you find colleges that match your criteria and interests.
- Talk to people - your educational consultant, high school counselor, teachers, parents, friends, and college alumni.
- Attend college fairs in your area. Be prepared with questions to ask.
- Prepare to ask questions and take notes when college representatives come to your school!

Visit college campuses—in person or online: See the back of this fact sheet for information on making the most of your campus visit! If you can't visit, check out www.ecampustours.com and www.collegeweeklive.com for online virtual tours.

LOOK UP EACH COLLEGE'S MISSION STATEMENT. YOU CAN LEARN A LOT ABOUT THE CAMPUS CULTURE AND THE GOALS OF THE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP BY READING THESE. USE THIS INFORMATION TO DETERMINE IF YOUR GOALS MATCH THOSE OF THE UNIVERSITY!

Majors:

First things first. Before you can properly choose a college, you need to consider what you will study. If you haven't already spent time exploring your interests and passions, it is wise to do so before you begin choosing colleges where you will apply. If a university doesn't offer a major you are interested in, the college isn't likely worth considering. If your field of study is truly undecided, it will be important for you to find a school that readily offers opportunities to explore different majors and interests during your first year.

You will note that some colleges are known as liberal arts colleges. These schools are known for offering a wide breadth of coursework across many disciplines. Liberal Arts colleges typically offer numerous college major options, but each choice will likely include courses in language, history and literature.

Once you have an idea of what you want to study, the next step is evaluating the programs at each school. Here are some things to look for:

- Is the department accredited by a professional organization?
- What is the philosophy of the department in regards to the subject? Some departments may be very research focused, while others may be more theoretical in their approach. For engineering and science majors, it can be helpful to know if the courses are taught more 'hands-on' or theoretically.
- Consider the faculty. How many professors are tenured? Does the department have visiting faculty? How many professors are in the department?
- Who will teach your classes? Professors or teacher's assistants? Are professors readily available for discussions outside of class?
- Check out the facilities and availability of equipment and laboratories.
- Find out what graduates are doing when they leave the department. What percentage go on to graduate school versus find employment in their field? What employers are hiring them or what schools are they attending for graduate school? Consider this information in light of your goals.
- Find out if you are required to declare your major as a freshman or a sophomore. Some programs require that you apply with a preliminary major – such as pre-medical, pre-law, or pre-nursing and earn your way into the program through coursework. Be sure to find out the requirements and what it takes to compete for acceptance.
- How difficult/easy is it to get classes in your major area of study?
- Is the department open to minors, double-majors, or taking courses outside of the major?
- Read through the actual courses in the curriculum guide for your major. These are the classes you will invest your time in during the next few years.

**REMEMBER THAT MANY SCHOOLS ARE TRACKING
“DEMONSTRATED INTEREST” – OR HOW MUCH
EFFORT THEY PERCEIVE THE STUDENT IS MAKING
TO GET TO KNOW THEIR SCHOOL.**

BE SURE TO USE YOUR NAME (NOT YOUR PARENT'S OR A FRIEND'S) WHEN SIGNING UP FOR CAMPUS TOURS AND APPOINTMENTS WITH COLLEGE STAFF.

Campus Visits

Although campus visits can be time consuming and costly, there is no better way to determine if a school feels right for you. It is worth the time to organize your visits and ensure you make the most of them! Here are a few tips to get you started:

Before: Check the college website for the following:

- Tour schedules & how to register
- Location of the office where tours begin
- Campus maps & parking
- Academic calendar - it's best to visit when classes are in session
- Special events you might want to attend while on campus
- Suggestions for places to spend the night before or after your tour
- Instructions on how to arrange an interview with an admissions officer, meeting with a department representative for your potential major. SEE TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS ON THE RÉSUMÉ DATA SHEET!
- Virtual tour to get a feel for the campus

Also:

- Make a list of questions that are important in finding a good fit
- Pack your camera and notebook so you can keep a record of your trip

During:

- Walk around to get a feel for the campus.
- Take the campus tour and ask questions.
- Go into the library - does it look like a place where you'd like to study?
- Read the notices on bulletin boards - do any interest you?
- Have lunch or coffee at the student union and talk to students; ask them about student life, traditions and activities on campus.
- Walk through the recreation center and sports complex.
- Attend a class lecture, sporting event, play, or concert.
- Explore the surrounding community and investigate transportation options so you'll know how to get around town and what it has to offer.
- Read the student newspaper and other publications.
- Walk through the dorms to check out décor, cleanliness, and comfort.
- Check out the Career Center and the services it offers to students and graduates.

After:

Complete your Campus Visit Worksheet while your memory is fresh! Ask family members their opinions. Little brothers and sisters can be pretty observant at times!

- Make sure you have the name of the admissions officer you met and send a thank-you note or email. Ask for a business card.
- Review your notes. Compare what the colleges have to offer and your reaction to what you learned while you were there.
- Add, delete, or place the college in a "maybe" category.

DEMONSTRATED INTEREST:

Throughout the years, advancements in technology have provided colleges with a vast amount of data to utilize in their college admissions decisions. Much like the exercise students go through to explore options and find a “good match” college, colleges are working toward finding “good match” students. Students that actively learn about the campus, academic programs, location, and other factors are typically perceived as students that are more interested in the institution and thus, more likely to accept an offer to attend. This is so important that many schools are now measuring how interested they think students are in their school — this is called **Demonstrated Interest**.

A few examples of ways you can demonstrate interest in colleges include:

- Visit the campus
- Follow the school on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram - write a few posts or “like” material on the site - actively participate.
- Call the admissions office to ask a question or request a brochure.
- Open email messages that colleges send to you.
- Attend college fairs and visits that college admissions representatives make to your high school.
- Get to know a couple of students that attend the school.
- Send a thank you note or additional questions to college representatives you met.
- Connect with your college admissions representative to communicate your interest!

Notes:



Student Key College Criteria

In order to gain the answer to the question, “What am I looking for in a college?” you will be asked to consider a few questions. You will then prioritize several key characteristics to develop the criteria for your college list. This exercise will give you the basis for making a good college match.

Student Name:

Date:

How important are the following features of a school? (You can add comments below each feature)

	VERY IMPORTANT			NOT IMPORTANT	
	*****	****	***	**	*
ACCESSIBLE TEACHERS	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					
SMALL CLASSES	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					
DISCUSSION-ORIENTED CLASSES	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					
ACADEMIC AND CAREER ADVISING	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					
LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					
WIDE VARIETY OF CLASSES IN SEVERAL CAREER FIELDS	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					
STRONG RELIGIOUS LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					
A SCHOOL WITH “PRESTIGE”	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					
LOCATED NEAR A MAJOR CITY	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					
LOCATED IN A RURAL AREA	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					
CLOSE TO HOME	<input type="checkbox"/>				
COMMENTS:					

What aspects of a college are most important to you?

- Majors Offered
- Reputation
- Size
- Distance from Home
- Chances of Getting in

What category of school best describes your college education plans?

- Ivy League
- Private College
- Public College/ University
- Community College
- Trade School

What is your greatest concern in the college transition?

- Finding a college that best fits my needs
- Finding my major
- Leaving home
- Paying for college
- Getting into my first-choice school

What size school do you prefer?

- Small (Less than 3,000 Students)
- Medium (3,000 to 10,000 Students)
- Large (10,000 to 30,000 Students)
- X-Large (30,000+ Students)

List activities that interest you here:

How important is climate or topography? Do you love rainy weather or dislike it? Do you want to be near forests or cities or beaches or mountains?

Check the qualities that describe the kind of people you would like to go to school with:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> RELAXED | <input type="checkbox"/> OUTDOORSY | <input type="checkbox"/> OPINIONATED |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AMBITIOUS | <input type="checkbox"/> CREATIVE | <input type="checkbox"/> ARTSY |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATIVE | <input type="checkbox"/> SERIOUS | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LIBERAL | <input type="checkbox"/> INVOLVED | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTREPRENEURIAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FASHIONABLE | <input type="checkbox"/> OPEN-MINDED | <input type="checkbox"/> SUPPORTIVE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SPONTANEOUS | <input type="checkbox"/> CARING | <input type="checkbox"/> PRACTICAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DARING | <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD VALUES | <input type="checkbox"/> SPIRITED |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ACCEPTING | <input type="checkbox"/> CAREER-ORIENTED | <input type="checkbox"/> FUN |

Use this page to keep notes and thoughts about any of the important factors in your college preferences:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying most of the page below the text. It is intended for the user to write their notes and thoughts about college preferences.

Now, put it all together...

Look back over your answers and notes to create a prioritized list of the most important criteria to YOU, when choosing a college. This list will help narrow down the thousands of accredited colleges in the United States or beyond, by focusing on the factors that are most important to you in a college campus.

KEY CRITERIA LIST IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE: Most important to least important

	KEY CRITERIA	NOTES
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

College Matrix

**WORK
SHEET**

Student Name:

STATS: GPAs (weighted/unweighted, etc.):

SAT: Reading/Writing: Math: Essay: Composite:

ACT: English: Math: Reading: Science: Composite:

The following list reflects your prioritized Key College Criteria from your Key College Criteria Worksheet:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Description and other important information regarding your selected college major:

STUDENT NAME:

GPA:

TEST SCORES:

NAME OF COLLEGE (PROBABLE SCHOOLS)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
NOTES					
NOTES					
NOTES					
NOTES					
NOTES					

STUDENT NAME:

GPA:

TEST SCORES:

NAME OF COLLEGE (COMPETITIVE SCHOOLS)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
NOTES					
NOTES					
NOTES					
NOTES					
NOTES					

STUDENT NAME:

GPA:

TEST SCORES:

NAME OF COLLEGE (REACH SCHOOLS)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
NOTES					
NOTES					
NOTES					
NOTES					
NOTES					

STUDENT NAME:

GPA:

TEST SCORES:

Wild Card Schools: Colleges with acceptance rates of less than 25% are considered very selective. These schools include the Ivy League Schools, some private and public schools, several small visual and performing arts schools, and the service academies. There are many reasons that can cause acceptance rates to be low. It is wise for students interested in applying to these schools to understand that a rejection or waitlist notice is more likely regardless of the academic, testing, and extracurricular strength of the applicant. If your grades and scores match the scores at these schools, by all means, apply! But do so understanding that many other, equally-qualified students are doing the same.

NAME OF COLLEGE (WILD CARD)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
NOTES					
NOTES					
NOTES					

Notes:



College Fair Checklist

WORK SHEET

College fairs are a rare opportunity to meet with college representatives without the time and expense of a road trip or plane ride! Much like a campus visit, in order to get the most from the college fair, it is wise to do a bit of planning.

BEFORE THE FAIR:

- Pre-register:** If the fair offers it, pre-register for priority access and to make quick information requests from colleges.
- Print out your Student Admittance Pass:** Bring it with you to the college fair along with a pen and notebook to take notes.
- Develop Your Target List:** Check out the list of colleges attending the college fair and build your target list. Do a bit of research on college websites to familiarize yourself with their offerings.
- Create your Criteria List:** Decide what is really important to you in a college.
 - Do you want to attend a two or four-year school? Public or private?
 - What size school do you think you would thrive in: small, medium, or large?
 - What programs of study are you considering or exploring?
 - How far from home do you want to go?
 - Do you wish to participate in any specific extra-curricular activities or athletics?
 - Do you want to attend a school in an urban, suburb, or rural environment?
 - Do you require any special services?

DURING THE FAIR:

- Review the list of sample questions on the back of this student checklist to develop a list of questions that matches your criteria.
- Be open-minded and visit a variety of schools.
- If the fair is crowded, be prepared to ask your most important questions of college representatives and allow others a chance to do the same.
- Keep your registration sheet on hand for representatives to scan if you'd like additional information.
- Collect college information, as well as business cards or contact information for the schools that are interesting to you.

AFTER THE FAIR:

- Information overload:** By the time the fair is over, you should have a bag filled with information about colleges —and a possible case of information overload.
- Organize for success:** Find a place to organize your college data. Read through your notes, write down contacts, and scan the brochures and catalogs.
- Follow up:** Consider calling or emailing schools you found interesting. For more information, schedule a campus visit, or do some additional online research.

College Visit Checklist

WORK
SHEET

Complete a checklist for each college

Name of College:

Website:

Address:

Admissions Contact:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Before:

- Visit college website. What is the *Mission of the College*?
- "Follow" or "Like" college on Twitter or Facebook
- Find name of local representative:

Email:

Phone:

- Schedule a campus tour. Date:

- Check out college brochures, Viewbooks, and Facebook pages.
- Make an appointment with an academic advisor from your potential major.

Date:

Where:

Bring:

- Consider sitting in on a class within your major.

Class:

Where:

Bring:

- Note on your calendar local recruitment events such as visits to your high school, college fairs, and introductory sessions at local venues:

- Make a list of reasons you want to attend this school. List reasons for the major you would choose.

- Make a list of questions to ask the Admissions Office, major department or students you encounter:

During:

- Take pictures of the campus.
- Attend a Campus Tour.
- Take notes on your visit to review later.
- Complete an admissions interview.
- Check out campus housing options.
- Talk with a representative from your major.
- Talk with a student from your major.
- Check out the area around the campus.
- Write down contact information for people you meet.
- Visit library, computer labs, and other campus facilities.
- Dine in the dining facility and/or other local eateries.
- Pick up a copy of the school publication.
- Listen to school radio station.
- Explore the campus on your own.

After:

- Write thank you notes to everyone you met on your visit.
- Review your notes and compare colleges.
- Rate your school!
- Put the college in the “Yes”, “No”, or “Maybe” categories.

Evaluate the school:

Overall Impression:

Which organizations/activities would you join?

Are there research, internship, study abroad, or volunteer opportunities that appeal to you?

Are there cultural, athletic, or social activities that you are interested in?