

# Finding the right college for you

## Factors to consider when picking my school:

- Program of study
- School size
- Class size
- Support programs
- City and neighborhood
- Campus culture
- Distance from home
- Extracurricular activities
- Religious affiliation
- Net price
- Financial aid options
- Outside learning options
- Housing options near campus

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

## Factors to consider when beginning your search:

- **What career fields interest you?** Identify careers that interest you and determine which majors will best prepare you for that career. Investigate the academic requirements necessary to enter into those majors. You must be admitted as a degree-seeking student in order to receive financial aid; however, one usually does not have to declare a major right away. Some majors, such as science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM), may require students to declare earlier or at the time of enrollment due to a more rigorous curriculum structure. For example, science, technology, engineering and math majors often require students to complete advanced-level calculus. Medical and applied science or pre-med students, in addition to calculus, must complete very high-level science courses. Liberal arts majors (scientific theory, humanities, social science, etc.) or pre-law majors often require students to complete courses that focus on reading comprehension, analysis and critical thinking.
- **What are your academic strengths?** The best 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 majors that concentrate in these subject areas to ensure selection of a major you'll likely enjoy and do well in. Once you've identified a major or majors, identify colleges that offer those majors.
- **What kind of 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? How often do you want to come home? Do you prefer lectures or a more hands-on approach to learning? Do you prefer to be in a smaller classroom or a larger classroom? 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, getting to and from campus may not be as easy; however, you can save money by eliminating on-campus room and board costs.
- **What campus environment will allow you to thrive?** Some students may need a diverse community that celebrates the differences among its student body. Other students may require a college with a small student-to-faculty ratio that allows for a better rapport with professors and advisors. Many colleges offer programs for students with various learning disabilities. It's important to understand and accept the challenges you're likely to face and find a school that can help you meet those challenges.

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.

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## 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).

## Most common college types

Type of Institution	Description	Degrees Offered	Admissions
<b>Career and Technical Education Institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be nonprofit or for-profit, these schools focus on a highly specialized curriculum</li> <li>• Geared for students who want to learn a specific skill and find employment within two years</li> <li>• Examples include cosmetology, HVAC, culinary and automotive technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificates of completion</li> <li>• Associate Applied Science (AAS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed application for admission</li> <li>• Proof of high school completion</li> </ul>
<b>Community College</b>  <b>Junior College (2-Year College)</b>  <b>State College</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A college is one institution with multiple academic departments</li> <li>• Offers traditional academic, continuing education and remedial programs</li> <li>• Offers technical programs, such as cosmetology, HVAC, culinary and automotive technology</li> <li>• Offers general education prerequisite courses required for most bachelor's degree programs at four-year colleges and universities</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Some colleges offer a limited number of bachelor's degree programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificates of completion</li> <li>• Associate of Arts (AA)</li> <li>• Associate of Science (AS)</li> <li>• Associate Applied Science (AAS)</li> <li>• May offer limited:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor of Arts (BA)</li> <li>• Bachelor of Science (BS)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incoming freshmen and transfers</li> <li>• Completed application for admission</li> <li>• High school transcript showing proof of high school completion</li> <li>• College transcript, if previously attended</li> <li>• College placement testing may be required depending on the school</li> </ul>
<b>College (4-Year)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A college is one institution with multiple academic departments</li> <li>• Offers traditional academic programs; may offer technical, continuing education and remedial programs</li> <li>• Offers general education prerequisite courses and upper-level, major-specific undergraduate and graduate courses</li> <li>• Colleges can be specialized in a specific area or liberal arts based</li> <li>• Liberal arts colleges offer primarily liberal arts majors, yet many offer degrees in STEM fields as well</li> <li>• Colleges (especially liberal arts colleges) tend to be smaller and offer fewer majors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor of Arts (BA)</li> <li>• Bachelor of Science (BS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incoming freshmen and transfers</li> <li>• Completed application for admissions</li> <li>• Transcript showing successful completion of high school (more selective colleges require a higher grade point average)</li> <li>• SAT, ACT, and/or SAT Subject Test scores may be required depending on the school</li> <li>• Supplemental documents may include essay, personal statement and/or academic résumé</li> <li>• College transcript, if previously attended</li> </ul>
<b>University (4-Year)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers traditional academic programs; may offer technical, continuing education and remedial programs</li> <li>• Universities usually offer a greater number of majors and are typically larger than colleges</li> <li>• Even though universities tend to focus more on technical and specialized majors, most universities have a college of arts and sciences that offers liberal arts programs</li> <li>• The main difference between colleges and universities is size; universities also offer a more diverse curriculum and types of degrees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor of Arts (BA)</li> <li>• Bachelor of Science (BS)</li> <li>• Master of Arts (MA)</li> <li>• Master of Science (MS)</li> <li>• Master of Business Administration (MBA)</li> <li>• Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD)</li> </ul> <p>*There are many other graduate and undergraduate degrees, but these are the most common</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incoming freshmen and transfers</li> <li>• Completed application for admissions</li> <li>• Transcript showing successful completion of high school (more selective universities require a higher grade point average)</li> <li>• SAT, ACT, and/or SAT Subject Test scores may be required depending on the school</li> <li>• Supplemental documents may include essay, personal statement and/or academic résumé</li> <li>• College transcript, if previously attended</li> </ul>