

Question 5: What Do I Need To Go To College?

Question #1:
What Is College?

Question #2:
How Does The College
Catalog Work?

Question #3:
Is College Right For Me?

Question #4:
How Do I Choose A Major?

Question #5: What Do I Need To Go To College?

Question #6:
How Do I Choose The Right
College?

Question #7:
What Are My Housing
Options?

Question #8:
How Will I Pay For College?

Question #9:
How And When Do I Apply?

Question #10:
What Else Do I Need To
Know And Do?

What do you need to get into a college for an undergraduate program? The list is not long but it is important to have all the pieces in place.

The key components to get into a college undergraduate program are a high school diploma, a sufficiently rigorous level of study and the recommended courses which include:

- four years of English (Composition, American Literature, English Literature, World Literature)
- four years of Math (Algebra I and II, Geometry, Pre-Calculus)
- three years of Science (at least two lab courses - Biology, Earth Science, Chemistry, Physics)
- three years of Social Studies (Geography, U.S. History, World History, World Culture, Civics)
- at least two years of the same foreign language (Spanish, French, German).

The single most important thing you need to get into college is high academic achievement. When college admissions officers were interviewed they resoundingly agreed that there is no substitute for great grades and test scores.

Some colleges are easier to get into than others. Enrollment is tied to supply and demand of high achieving students. Over several years colleges build their reputations based on various criteria. This results in more students wanting to attend a college with a high reputation. Each school has a limited number of seats for each Area of Study or Program. Depending on the caliber and desirability of the candidates, a rolling cut-off exists. The last student to be admitted to that last seat or spot randomly determines what the cut-off is for that program that year.

Each college establishes its own criteria for entry. Some of the factors considered might include leadership, regional representation, being related to previous graduates, opportunity for several minority groups to be proportionately included (such as race, religion, disability, foreign applicants), community service and volunteering, sports, excellence in program participation in school life, the applicant's essay, the applicant's letters of reference and the interview.

Your personal requirement needs to involve not just knowledge but a positive attitude, a strong work ethic and your very best attempt to be as prepared as possible.

Now we can move to a month-by-month checklist, so you are on track in your Grade 12 year for entering college.

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In August:

- register for ACTs if necessary. ACTs are an alternative form of standardized testing which some colleges prefer. See the websites of your top priority colleges to see if they require ACTs. See <http://www.actstudent.org/> for complete information on ACTs.

In September:

- write all important college dates in your agenda as they become known to you
- prepare a file to hold all college materials and correspondence
- prepare for scholarship applications. Many of the “big” ones are due in the fall.
- make an appointment with your guidance counselor to confirm having your diploma requirements, to adjust course load if necessary, and to state your intention involving scholarships and specific college programs
- register for Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs). Information is in your school’s guidance office and online at <http://www.collegeboard.com/>. You should have taken these tests in your junior year - Grade 11 - but it does not hurt to take them a second time, especially if you were disappointed with your previous results or if you missed taking them. This applies to ACTs as well.
- work on your application essays
- create a short list of colleges to which you will apply and check their web sites to see if you will have to write any extra essays, submit a personal information form, or submit additional criteria such as letters of reference or a portfolio, other than those required by the Common Application
- look for announcements regarding the college fairs, scholarships, college speaker/representative dates at your school and other pertinent information
- check the school’s guidance department bulletin board for college information, including dates for scholarships and other funding. College undergraduate catalogs and viewbooks may also be available from the guidance department. Ask to sign them out or order them from the colleges. Also, view the undergraduate catalogue online.
- determine which type of application you will be using. The application fee can be waived if you cannot afford it. Talk to your guidance counselor about this if it applies.

In October/November:

- attend regional and local college fairs
- if you miss the counselor’s visit to your classroom for delivery of college information, find out when there is a makeup session and get the handouts
- go on to the college web sites and the application web site to familiarize yourself with the application process
- ask people to review and critique your essays

Open a joint bank account with family member(s) at the bank closest to where you will be living.