

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

10 STEPS TO PREPARE FOR COLLEGE

9TH/10TH GRADE YEAR

1 CHALLENGING COURSES

Enroll in AP, AICE, IB, honors, or dual enrollment classes to prepare academically for college.

2 MEET WITH YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Stay connected for advice, resources, and support throughout your college journey.

3 GET INVOLVED

Colleges look for well-rounded students. Volunteer, join clubs, or take on leadership roles.

4 REQUEST LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Build relationships with teachers and mentors who can write strong letters.

5 RESEARCH 'BEST FIT' SCHOOLS

Look at location, size, majors, cost, support services, and student life to find schools that match your needs

6 VISIT COLLEGES

Tour campuses to see what feels right for you. Ask questions and explore different environments.

11TH/12TH GRADE YEAR

7 STAY ORGANIZED

Create folders or a digital spreadsheet to track application materials, deadlines, and progress.

8 PREPARE FOR TESTING ACT, CLT, PSAT, SAT, NMSQT

Study for free with Khan Academy or ACT.org; Ask for fee waivers to test at no cost!

9 COMPLETE THE FAFSA & CSS PROFILE + APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Start FAFSA on Oct. 1 at studentaid.gov. Some colleges also require the CSS Profile: cssprofile.org

Apply for scholarships!

- College Financial Aid & Admissions website/office
- Local businesses or non-profit organizations
- Your high school guidance counselor / staff
- Foundations or "Direct Support Organizations"
- <https://www.fastweb.com>

10 APPLY FOR EARLY ADMISSIONS

Apply early, hear back early! "Early Action" (non-binding) and "Early Decision" (binding) can boost your chances and give you more time to plan. Most deadlines are in November of your senior year—check with each college/university for details!



WHY COLLEGE?

- College grads earn 84% more than high school grads over a lifetime
- Build lifelong relationships, mentors, and career opportunities
- Gain independence, personal growth, and a path to your goals



ADMISSIONS TERMINOLOGY

GULF COAST STATE COLLEGE'S UPWARD BOUND (UB) PROJECT

EARLY DECISION (ED) I & II

Applying for admissions at select schools between Aug. 1 & Nov. 1 of your senior year. If accepted, you're *bound* to attend that college and withdraw all other admission applications.

EARLY ACTION (EA)

Applying by December so colleges can act early on your admission. You'll hear back sooner, but are *not bound* to attend if accepted. May be called Restrictive Early Action or Single-Choice Early Action.

REGULAR DECISION

The traditional admissions timeline of applying by January 1 & receiving a decision by May 1st. You can apply to multiple schools & wait to compare options.

ROLLING ADMISSION/DECISION

Schools review applications as they come in and give decisions on a rolling basis. In other words, there's no fixed deadline. You should still apply early, though, to improve your chances of being admitted.

OPEN ADMISSIONS

Almost anyone with a high school diploma or equivalency can enroll whenever they decide to start or restart college. Gulf Coast State College is an example of open admissions!

DEFERRED

If you apply ED or EA and aren't accepted or rejected outright, your application may be "deferred" to the Regular Admissions/Decision pool—where it will be reconsidered later.

WAITLISTED

You've neither been accepted nor rejected but placed on a waitlist. If spots open up (e.g., enrolled students decline or chose other schools), you might get in—but there's no guarantee.

CONDITIONAL ADMISSIONS

A school wants to see if you can handle college in the summer before fully admitting you. If you earn good enough grades, you'll be fully admitted for the fall semester.

DEPOSIT FEES

Payments you make *after* being accepted to reserve your spot at a college. Deposit fees can often be waived and are sometimes applied toward your first semester's tuition/bill.

The **Common App** is a free, online platform that lets students apply to over 1,000 colleges at once!



It streamlines the college application process by enabling students to fill out a single application and includes features such as account rollover (carry info over from year to year), tracking of essays, recommendations, deadlines, etc.

<https://www.commonapp.org>



The **Coalition App** is a similar online platform where you can simultaneously apply to over 150 colleges—particularly those committed to supporting first-gen, underrepresented, and low-income students.

Features a "Locker" tool, where students can store essays, projects, and other materials starting as early as 9th grade—which is ideal for planning ahead.

<https://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org>