

# A Step-by-Step College Guide

## 1. Pre-College Study Courses

Colleges usually offer preparation courses. These courses help students learn about the college. They also give information about the courses and programs. There are classes that teach students how to study, take notes and take tests.

There may be assessment courses, too. They will help students choose their course of study. These classes help students prepare for college and are well worth the time. Students who take these courses do better in college.



## 2. Support Services

Colleges have support services for all students. One service is to assign an advisor to each student. The advisor will help choose the courses to take. The advisor also will give information about finding help.

Students can get help from their advisor to choose a college major. Their advisor also can help them choose a future career.

Special support services are also provided on college campuses. Examples of services include a note taker, a sign language interpreter, tape recordings of lectures, books on tape and help with taking tests.

Colleges will tell students about the help they offer but students must go and ask for the help. Most of the services will be provided at no charge. Each college will have a list of those services. The services to look for are:

- Tutoring
- Textbooks on tape
- Lectures on tape
- Counseling and guidance
- Testing

You must apply and become eligible for these services. First, ask for an application. Then schedule and complete the testing that is required.

## 3. Contacting a College for Information

For information from a college that is not local, write a letter. Websites are often the best way to ask for information. Usually there is a form on the website to fill out. If you write a letter it should be short. Ask for:

- College catalogue
- Application form
- Services for students with learning disabilities
- Financial aid forms

Address your letter: "To Whom It May Concern" at the college admissions office. Look in the school library or career center for a current college catalogue to find the address.

It is also possible to call a college for information. Start by calling the admissions office. Have your information ready, including name, address, telephone number and graduation year. Request a catalogue, a list of programs and information about special services.

# A Step-by-Step College Guide

page 2

## 4. Completing a College Application

College applications must look neat and be complete. First make a SAMPLE. Be neat and fill in all of the information. Write N/A for questions that do not apply. To compose a paragraph, write it on a piece of paper first, then copy it on to the application.

Type the application if possible. Use black ink if writing. Ask for help when completing the application. Look for the due date and send it at least two weeks early. Make a copy of the application in case it is lost. You will need to send a check or money order for the fee.

## 5. Transcripts & Test Scores

Request a transcript from your high school. There will be a fee for each transcript you order. It will cost a few dollars for each copy. When ordering, a transcript, be ready to give the address of the college. The high school must send the transcript directly to the college.

The high school also must send your test scores to the college. Most high schools have a form for ordering test scores and transcripts. These also will cost several dollars to order. Give the address of the college when ordering.

It is important to order these early. The high school needs time to make copies and mail them to the college.

## 6. Completing a College Essay

Some colleges may require an essay with the application. The college will use the essay to check writing skills. Practice writing and editing the essay. Have a parent or teacher read the essay and give advice.

Be sure to look at the directions for writing the essay. The directions will tell you things like how long the essay should be and how to space the lines and margins.

In addition, the essay directions will give topic choices. If the topic is not given, write about an interesting experience. This should be an important, life changing experience. This gives the college a chance to have personal information.



# A Step-by-Step College Guide

page 3

## 7. College Interviews

Some colleges will ask for an interview. This is much like a job interview. Prepare for the college interview as you would a job interview.

Possible questions:

- Why do you want to go to college?
- Why did you choose this college?
- What is your career goal?
- What activities do you want to do? (clubs, sports, other)
- What is your major?
- What was your favorite class?
- What are your hobbies and talents?
- What jobs have you had?
- Do you plan to work in college?

## 8. Program Interviews

There are two steps to enter a program for students with learning disabilities. There are several assessments to take. There is also an interview with the program staff. Prepare for this interview by answering these sample questions:

- What is your learning disability?
- How does it cause difficulty for you?
- How do you compensate?
- What are your learning strengths and weaknesses?
- What writing classes did you have in high school?
- What type of assistance did you get in high school?
- What services will you need?
- What accommodations will you use?
- Are you planning to take a full load?
- How much will you study each day?
- How do you plan your study time?

- What study skills courses have you had?
- What study skills courses are you willing to take?
- Are you willing to work harder than other students to earn a degree?



## 9. Financial Aid

Colleges can assist students in obtaining scholarships and loans. These will help pay for college tuition and other costs. Students must complete application forms for this assistance. Some forms will require parent income information.

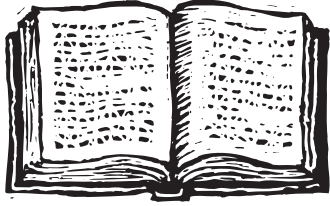
Scholarships are available for many reasons. They are not limited to students with a high grades. Grants and scholarships are awarded for such reasons as strong academics, sports, band, cultural group, clubs and referral by school staff. The high school will have a list of possible scholarships. Read through it to find where you are eligible.

Financial aid is based on student need and parents' income. Grants or loans must be paid back. They are usually funded through the government or a bank.

For students with learning disabilities, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation will pay for some education costs if you are eligible for these services.

# A Step-by-Step College Guide

page 4



## 10. Enrolling in a College

Each student is assigned an advisor. The advisor will help determine which courses to take. Meet with this person often. This will keep you from making mistakes with scheduling classes.

Get ready before meeting with your advisor. Go through your *Personal Career Profile* and prepare to share your plans. Share your career plans with the advisor. Be ready to explain your career choice. Talk about experiences that relate to your career.

When meeting with your advisor, ask questions. Be sure to understand all of your options. Ask the advisor to develop a long term plan. This will show the classes you need to take over the next few years. Also ask your advisor to put you in classes with teachers who will be helpful with your specific needs such as large print, more time to read or sitting up front.

## 11. Next Steps

After you have studied this guide, answer the questions on the worksheet, *Questions to Ask when Considering College as an Option*. This will help guide your future plans.

If you choose to go to college, even part time, complete the check-sheet, Timeline & "To Do" List for Going to College. This will guide you through your high school activities. You will then be more prepared to attend college. Keep this checksheet in your notebook or on the wall in you room. Check off each item as you complete the activity.

As you begin to look for a college to attend, use the *Selecting the Right College* guide. This guide will help you look at the advantages and disadvantages for each college. Use this guide to keep score. Then you can make the best decision for you. It is important to go over the guide with your parents as you begin to make your decision.



# College Note Guide

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# College Note Guide

page 2

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# Questions to Ask

## When Considering College as an Option

1. Do I want to go to college? Why?
2. What are my learning strengths and weaknesses?
3. What is my learning disability?
4. How do I accommodate my learning disability?
5. What support services will I need?
6. How prepared am I academically?
7. What career am I pursuing?
8. What do I want to study in college?
9. What other way can I get the career preparation I need?
10. Where do I want to go to college?
11. Does this college have the support services I need?
12. How can I pay for the tuition?

# Timeline & To-Do List

## For Going to College



### Freshman & Sophomore Year

- Take specific academic classes to meet college entrance requirements.
- Make up any classes you have failed.
- Begin to volunteer, baby-sit, take a paper route, do lawn work to build your work experience and resume.

### Junior Year

- Take specific academic classes to meet college entrance requirements.
- Check your credits with your counselor in September.
- Complete your career assessments, exploration and planning.
- Begin to explore colleges in the local area.
- Find a college with a program in your career area and visit it.
- Decide if you are willing to attend a college away from home.
- Write or call colleges of interest.
- Get a job in your area of career interest.
- Read all information you receive very carefully.
- Make appointments for site visits to schools that interest you.

### Senior Year

- Take the SAT or ACT if required.
- Check your credits with your counselor early in the year.
- Visit schools and programs in your area of interest.
- Talk with people in special services.
- Apply early in the year to the program you want.
- Get all deadline information for admission and financial aid.
- Get on all program waiting lists.
- Take a study skills class at a local college.
- Apply for financial aid early, usually before March.
- Ask your high school counselor about scholarships.
- Apply early for housing, if needed.
- Complete testing requirements for special services.
- Get copies of your IEP, ITP, Psychology Report, and *Personal Career Profile*



## Selecting the Right College

Use the information you have gathered about each college to complete this chart. In the column for each college, answer yes or no to each question. Give one point for each yes answer. Add the columns to get a total score for each college. The college with the highest score may be the right college for you.

Criteria	College 1	College 2	College 3
Name of College			
<input type="checkbox"/> Are costs are within your budget?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Do the special programs & assistance fit your needs?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Has program in your area of interest			
<input type="checkbox"/> Are there extra curricular activities that interest you?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Is it in a good location for you and your family?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the campus size right for you?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Do you have friends attending this college?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:			
Score			