

Which College is Right For Me?

With over 3200 colleges in the United States, a student can easily become overwhelmed with selecting the “right” one. The good news is most students can find many colleges that are a good fit. The bad news...well, there really isn’t any bad news. But students must do the footwork to educate themselves about the types of schools and programs available to them.

Many students do not take the time to really think about what they want in a college. Many apply to colleges suggested to them by their families and friends or college counselor. Others apply to schools that they see their friends applying to. Some buy books that describe various colleges, presenting viewpoints from students, faculty, and admissions.

In and of themselves, these are not terrible strategies for selecting a college. But since *you* will be the one to attend, why not take the time to really explore your options. That way you choose a school that is right for you and, in the process, gain greater clarity about your college options. So let’s start.

Brainstorm

Here are some simple questions to help clarify what would be an ideal college for you. I recommend writing down the questions and your responses in a notebook devoted to the college admissions process. That way you can easily access your notes later.

1. Is the geographic location of the school important to me? If so, where would I like to attend? Am I willing to attend a college near my hometown?
2. Can I see myself attending college in an urban, suburban, or rural environment? If I could create a “perfect” setting for a college, what would it look like?
3. Do I want to live on campus? Do I want a school in which most of the students live on campus or am I okay with a school that caters to commuting students? What do I need in a college to support my daily routine?
4. Are there any circumstances in which I would be willing to attend a single-sex college?
5. Do I prefer small or large class sizes? Do I enjoy participating in class discussions or would I be satisfied if most of my time in class was spent taking notes? Do I want to get to know my professors?

- 6. Is the religious affiliation of the college important to me?**
- 7. Can I handle an academically demanding environment or do I prefer a school that is more well rounded in which students study but also have the time to pursue other interests?**
- 8. Do my personal or career interests require specialized programs or majors? Must a school be strong in a certain subject area for me to attend?**
- 9. Do I plan to participate in an athletic program in college? If not, do I still prefer a college in which I have the opportunity to play intramural sports or to attend sporting events?**
- 10. Am I interested in joining a fraternity or sorority? If not, in what other types of group activities and clubs would I expect to participate and develop friendships?**
- 11. Do I want to spend part of my college experience studying abroad? If so, where would I go? What would I study?**
- 12. Have my parents and discussed how my college education will be financed? Do I need to apply for scholarships? Would I be willing to work while attending college?**
- 13. What's my biggest fear when it comes to choosing a college? For me, what would really compromise my enjoyment in college?**
- 14. Now that I have a better idea of the type of college I would like to attend, what can I do now to make that happen? What are the next steps?**