

How to make your college list

Before you apply to college, you need to make a list of colleges that interest you and meet your needs. Here is a guide with suggestions on how to go about doing that.



Reflect on your preferences and needs

There are over 4,000 colleges in the United States. To find colleges that might be a good fit for you, consider the general, academic, social, and financial characteristics that you want or need.

- **General:** Type of college, location, distance from home, size, etc.
- **Academic:** Type of degree, majors, online v. in-person, etc.
- **Social:** Housing options, student clubs, support services, student body, etc.
- **Financial:** Cost, availability of financial aid and part-time jobs, etc.

Explore college options online

Search college databases using filters based on the needs and preferences you identified. Start at [College Scorecard](#) or [Big Future](#).

Make a list of colleges that might be a good fit

[Make your college list](#) is a template to help you keep track of your list. Add more attributes for each category based on the preferences and needs you identified. Highlight or star the items most important to you.

Start with at least 5–10 colleges

Consider a variety of different options: community colleges or career and trade schools and four-year colleges or universities, [colleges in Minnesota](#), and colleges out-of-state.

Write down key facts for each college. List what you like and dislike about each college.

Find out more information

Learn more about each option on your list. Go to each college's website and sign up to receive e-mails and an information packet. You can also:

- follow college accounts on social media
- take an in-person or virtual campus tour
- attend an informational session
- talk to students, staff, and alumni of a school

Refine your list

Add or take off colleges as you do more research. Your goals, interests, and preferences might change. That's okay! Be flexible and open to different options.

Aim for a final list of 4–6 colleges to which you will apply. These should all be colleges you want to attend.

Try to have a balanced list of options, including a backup plan. Include more and less selective options. Also include ones you know you can afford and ones you think you may be able to with financial aid.

After you are done building your college list, start applying!