

RESOURCES

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KnowHow2GO



the 4 steps to college

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WHY COLLEGE?

COLLEGE IS THE FIRST STEP IN PURSUING A SUCCESSFUL AND FULFILLING CAREER. IT'S NOT ONLY WHERE YOU EXPLORE DIFFERENT CAREER OPTIONS, BUT ALSO WHERE YOU LEARN ESSENTIAL JOB SKILLS.

“But college is so far off,” you may be thinking. “It’s too early to start preparing now.” Think again! Planning for college takes time. There are lots of things you need to know and do. Now is exactly when you need to think about what you want to do after high school. The choices you make today will determine your life tomorrow.

THE MOST COSTLY EDUCATION IS THE ONE NOT BEGUN

- ❖ Every bit of education you get after high school increases your chances of earning a good salary. College graduates tend to earn more money than people who stop their education at the high school level.¹ A college education is a great investment.
- ❖ The more education you get, the more likely it is that you will always have a job. In a world where 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs require postsecondary education, a college degree is becoming essential.²
- ❖ Continuing education after high school is much more important for today's students than it was for their parents. Most good jobs today require more than a high school diploma. Employers want to hire people who know how to think critically and solve problems.
- ❖ Education beyond high school provides many opportunities for meeting new people, exploring new interests and experiencing success. Make the most of your life!

FACT

Studies show that the more math courses students take in high school, the more likely they are to graduate from college.³

1. U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Population Division, Education and Social Stratification Branch, Current Population Survey, Educational Attainment.
2. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000–2010 Employment Projections.
3. Clifford Adelman, "Mathematics Equals Opportunity" (U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

PREPARE FOR COLLEGE TODAY

You have big plans, big dreams. You know college is the place to start pursuing them. But going to college doesn't just happen; there are four steps you need to take to make college a reality.

BE A PAIN IN THE BEHIND



Be a pain. Tell everyone you know that you want to go to college. Tell your parents, teachers, counselors, coaches and clergy members. Don't stop until you find an adult who will help you.

This step is essential. The next three steps become easier with a supportive adult, so get yours!

2

PUSH YOURSELF



Push yourself. Find out what classes you need to take in high school to meet college entrance requirements. Colleges look for students who've taken classes that have challenged them. In addition:

- Study hard, turn in all assignments on time and do your best to earn good grades.
- Read, read, read!
- Participate in civic or other extracurricular activities to acquire a well-rounded education.

Find the right fit. There are more than 6,500 two- and four-year colleges, universities and trade schools in the country, ranging in size from fewer than 100 to more than 50,000 students and offering thousands of courses, subjects, degrees and certificates. You have an extraordinary range of options. Find a school that matches your career interests and reflects your goals and personality:

- Explore different occupations, and talk with friends and family about possible career and college choices.
- Review your academic strengths and weaknesses.
- Make a list of preferred colleges and visit the campuses to help you get a feel for college and keep you excited about going.

FIND THE RIGHT FIT



3

GET YOUR HANDS ON SOME \$\$\$



4

Get your hands on

some cash. There is money available to help you pay for college or trade school. Each year,

Federal Student Aid gives eligible

students over \$80 billion through grants, work-study programs and loans. There is also over \$50 billion in state, institutional and private funds! Fill out the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) to apply for federal financial aid as well as scholarships and grants from many state, regional and private aid programs.

Also:

- Attend, with your parent or guardian, programs about financial planning or affording college at your school, church or in the community.
- If you're a senior in high school, fill out the FAFSA. You can submit it as early as Jan. 1.
- Not yet a senior? Not a problem! Go to www.FAFSA4caster.ed.gov to get an estimate of your eligibility for federal student aid.

KNOW THE FACTS, BUST THE MYTHS

Getting into college takes self-discipline and hard work. Each year, more than 16 million students attend colleges across the U.S.—so don't get discouraged or scared off! There are lots of myths about college out there. Want the truth? Here are some myth-busting facts.

Myth #1—*It's better to get good grades in easy courses than to get average grades in more difficult courses.*

Fact—It's true that higher grades look better on a college application. However, the more you challenge yourself now, the better prepared you'll be for the challenges of college. A college preparatory program or some Advanced Placement courses can help you succeed in college.

Myth #2—*You need to decide on a career before you can choose a college.*

Fact—College is a time to explore. Many students discover their ideal field while taking a course they didn't expect to like. If you aren't ready to decide on a major or a career, choose a college that allows you to keep your options open. Take your time.

Myth #3—*You can't get into college if you did poorly in ninth or tenth grade.*

Fact—Colleges look for improvement in performance as a sign that a student can and will do the work. In fact, a vast improvement as a junior and senior indicates to a college admissions panel that the applicant has grown as a student. However, one good semester as a senior will not make up for three poor years.

Myth #4—*The best time to visit colleges is after you have been accepted.*

Fact—Many students fall for this myth, only to find that none of their first-choice colleges “feel” right when they actually visit them. Try to visit colleges before you apply, and again, if possible, after you are accepted. Make the visit with your family or mentor.

Myth #5—*Only the very best students receive financial aid from colleges.*

Fact—Although high-ability students or students with special talents may receive merit-based scholarships, many scholarships are based on financial need—colleges generally want students they've admitted to be able to attend, and will help them find the resources to do so.

TEN WAYS ADULTS CAN HELP

Recruit your parents or other supportive adults to help you continue your education after high school. Together you can:

1. Make high school count by preparing academically for higher education.
2. Discuss your skills, interests and career options as well as the schools you're interested in attending.
3. Meet with your high school guidance counselor or a college adviser to determine which schools match your academic abilities.
4. Gather information about the schools you're interested in attending, including information on financial aid.
5. Save money as early as possible to help pay for your college education.
6. Visit college campuses and ask lots of questions.
7. Apply for admission to college before the deadline.
8. Apply for financial aid. Complete the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) online at www.fafsa.ed.gov.
9. Consider loan programs in addition to scholarships, grants and work-study programs. Complete any necessary applications or forms and submit them before the deadlines.
10. Learn more about tax credits, deductions and other options for managing education expenses.