



COLLEGE 101

12th Grade College Readiness Information and Timeline

12th Grade Timeline

SEPTEMBER— ALL ABOUT FAFSA/WASFA

Prepare to apply for the FAFSA or WASFA so you are ready when applications open on October 1st.

OCTOBER— PARTS OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION

Each college applications will have different requirements. Figure out what you need to prepare your application.

NOVEMBER— HOW TO APPLY

Determine what steps you need to complete for your college application.

DECEMBER— SCHOLARSHIPS

Research and apply for scholarships NOW.

JANUARY— ACCESSING THE COLLEGE BOUND SCHOLARSHIP

So, you are College Bound: Learn how the College Bound Scholarship will help you pay for college.

FEBRUARY— UNDERSTANDING FINANCIAL AID AWARD LETTERS

Understand your financial aid award letter and determine your next steps.

MARCH— MAKING YOUR DECISION

Now that you've received your admission letters, determine which college is the best choice for YOU!

APRIL— TRANSITIONING TO COLLEGE

Make sure you've completed everything you need to enroll in the college you've selected.

MAY— WHAT TO EXPECT YOUR FIRST TERM

Understand what to expect in order to be successful for your first term and all through college.

JUNE— COLLEGE RESOURCES TO USE

Colleges offer many resources to help you be successful. Use them, most of them are FREE to use.

SEPTEMBER: ALL ABOUT FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the first step to apply for **financial aid**. **Completing the FAFSA is free and gives you access to the largest source of financial aid** to pay for vocational, technical, 2-year and 4-year colleges. Based on the info you provide, each college will calculate your financial aid **award**.

WHEN SHOULD I APPLY?

As early as **October 1 of your senior year**.

Make sure you **know the financial aid priority deadlines** for the colleges you are interested in.

You need to **submit the FAFSA every year** while in college.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents should complete the FAFSA. Some undocumented students may be **eligible** for the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (**WASFA**). **Check out the "All about WASFA" handout for more information.**

WHAT INFO DO I NEED TO PROVIDE?

Basic info, such as legal name, birthdate, etc.

Parent and student **tax/income information**

Your **list of colleges**

DO I NEED A FSA ID? (FEDERAL STUDENT AID ID)

An FSA ID gives you access to your FAFSA info and serves as your legal signature. You AND one parent (biological or adoptive) will need to create an FSA ID (username and password). Be sure you and your parent use separate email addresses. If your parent is undocumented they should not create an FSA ID. They will instead print, sign and mail a signature page.

What information do I need I need to create and FSA ID? Basic info, such as social security number (SSN), legal name, birthdate, contact info, etc.

DON'T FORGET:

Be sure to write down the answers to your challenge questions in the application and store them in a safe location with your FSA ID.

HOW DO I COMPLETE IT?

1. Create a Federal Student Aid Identification (FSA ID) at fsaid.ed.gov
2. Use your FSA ID to log in and complete the FAFSA at fafsa.gov
3. **Check for an email** confirming you have successfully submitted the FAFSA.

SEPTEMBER: ALL ABOUT WASFA

The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is the first step to apply for **financial aid** for some undocumented students who live in Washington state. Completing the WASFA is free and gives eligible students access to **state financial aid** to pay for vocational, technical, 2-year and 4-year colleges in Washington. Undocumented students with or without **DACA** should complete the WASFA. **If you are a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident, check out the “All About FAFSA” handout and do not complete the WASFA.**

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Eligibility is based on **immigration status**. Students must meet individual program and residency requirements. For specifics, use the eligibility questionnaire at readyssetgrad.org/wasfa

WHEN SHOULD I DO IT?

File as early as **October 1 of your senior year**.

Make sure you **know the financial aid priority deadlines** at the colleges you are interested in. (Often the WASFA deadline is not listed, but it is the same as the FAFSA deadline.)

You need to **submit the WASFA** every year while in college.

HOW DO I COMPLETE IT?

1. Go to **wsac.wa.gov/wasfa**. and click on “Start a New WASFA.”
2. Complete the eligibility questionnaire.
3. Create an account and save your login and password.
4. Complete and submit your application.

What is the parent signature on the WASFA? You will need to send an email invitation to one parent (biological or adoptive) to electronically sign your WASFA. Be sure you and your parent use separate email addresses.

DON'T FORGET: Your parent's signature is needed to complete your application.

Your parent must electronically sign within 72 hour of being invited.

WHAT INFO DO I NEED?

- **Basic information**, such as legal name, birthdate, etc.
- Parent and student **tax/income information**
- Your **list of colleges** (Washington state colleges only)
- Your **DACA number** if you have one

Is my family's information protected?

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) and colleges that access your application only use your information to determine eligibility for state financial aid. Campuses are not permitted to use the information for other purposes or share the data with other parties. If you have questions about the WASFA, contact the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) at 1-888-535-0747, option 2 or email wasfa@wsac.wa.gov

OCTOBER: PARTS OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION

All colleges have an **application**. Typically, you can submit a vocational, technical, 2-year or 4-year college/university application online and sometimes in person, or by mail.

WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY TO MOST COLLEGES?

Your **official transcripts** from **high school** and college if you have earned college credit

Your test scores from the **SAT or ACT**

WHAT ADDITIONAL STEPS MIGHT I NEED TO COMPLETE A 4-YEAR COLLEGE APPLICATION?

Personal Statement – a way for the college to get to know you and why you are interested in the school

Short Answer Responses – additional questions that may focus on specific concepts, such as diversity, culture and examples of persistence/overcoming adversities.

Activity Log/Resumé – a list of **extracurricular activities** that can include clubs, sports, jobs, and anything you do outside of school.

Letter of Recommendation – a letter from a teacher, counselor, coach, etc. that can speak to your qualities, characteristics and capabilities.

ANYTHING ELSE?

You may need to pay a fee in order to submit a college application.

However, **you may be eligible to receive a fee waiver:**

- If you are a College Bound Scholarship student
- If you receive free and reduced price lunch
- If you participate in programs like TRiO, Upward Bound, or GEAR UP
- If you are a youth in foster care
- If you took the SAT or ACT with a fee waiver
- Contact your high school counselor, college admissions office, National Association for College Admission Counseling, or The College Board to inquire about fee waivers.

Quick Tips

*-Some programs like **apprenticeships** vocational and technical certifications have a unique application process. Check out ini-wa.gov for more information on apprenticeships or visit sbctc.edu for vocational and technical training programs.*

- You could be competing against MANY other applicants. Make sure your answers are a clear and true representation of who you are and how you have prepared yourself!

NOVEMBER: HOW TO APPLY

TIPS FOR APPLYING:

- **Complete and submit at least 3** college **applications** this fall
- **Apply for financial aid** by completing the **FAFSA** or **WASFA** on October 1st to ensure you have options to pay for college
- **Use a professional email address** with your name. Check your email often, as you will receive important, time-sensitive messages
- Talk to your counselor if you are unable to pay application fees. You may be eligible for **college application fee waivers**
- **Keep track of deadlines** by using a spreadsheet or planner
- **Proofread, review and revise college essays.** Have at least one other person look over your finalized application
- **Check the status** of your college and financial aid applications ensure they have been received. You can do this via the **online college portal**, email or by phone
- Be sure to **save all parts of your college application**; you may be able to reuse your work for other college or scholarship applications
- After you submit your **application**, you should receive a **confirmation message**. If you do not, contact the college admissions office to check the status of your application

THE COMMON APPLICATION

The common application allows your college application to be sent to numerous colleges at once. It is used by **over 700 4-year institutions in the U.S.** To start the common application, visit **commonapp.org**

2-YEAR COLLEGE ENTRANCE PROCESS

1. **Apply** online, in person or by mail
2. **Submit** the FAFSA or WASFA
3. Take a **placement test** at the college. Some colleges accept transcript or other information to consider placement
4. Schedule an **academic advising** appointment

4-YEAR UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE PROCESS

1. Submit your FAFSA or WASFA
2. Research admission requirements for each school you're interested in attending
3. Create an account for your online college application
4. Request letters of recommendation
5. Request official transcripts
6. Send SAT or ACT scores
7. Write and edit your personal statement essay and other short essays
8. Complete and submit your college application
9. Receive a confirmation email that your application was successfully submitted

DECEMBER: SCHOLARSHIPS

Money for education expenses based on criteria such as academics, athletics, community service or financial need. Community organizations, colleges, religious institutions and private companies are examples of scholarship providers. **Regardless of your background or immigration status, there is likely a scholarship for you.**

WHAT TYPES OF SCHOLARSHIPS CAN I APPLY FOR?

Academic/Merit: Based on GPA, test scores and/or coursework

Athletic: Based on athletic performance

Creative: Based on talent in art, music, dance

Community service: Based on involvement in your school or community

Diversity: Based on race, ethnicity, family heritage, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

Need: Based on financial need

Other: Leadership, alumni, etc.

DO RESEARCH

Is the scholarship renewable? If yes, learn about the renewal requirements. If it's not, think about how you are going to replace these funds the following year.

Is it portable? Can you take the scholarship with you if you **transfer** schools? Some scholarships are bound to specific colleges.

WHERE CAN I LOOK FOR SCHOLARSHIPS?

Your high school counselor is a good place to start. Here are some places to begin your research:

TheWashBoard.org: thewashboard.org

FastWeb: fastweb.com

Beyond Dreaming Scholarship List: scholarshipjunkies.org/beyond

The colleges you are interested in or local organizations such as Act Six, College Success Foundation, and Washington State Opportunity Scholarship.

You may also be eligible for one of these state programs such as the College Bound Scholarship (Chapter 3) or Passport to Careers.

HOW DO I APPLY?

1. **Research** scholarships you are **eligible** for.
2. **Submit** your **applications**. Make sure you follow instructions carefully!
3. **Complete** the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (**FAFSA**) or Washington Application for State Financial Aid (**WASFA**).

JANUARY: ACCESSING THE COLLEGE BOUND SCHOLARSHIP

You're about to graduate and go to college. It's time to figure out what you need to do to get your College Bound Scholarship. There are forms to complete and deadlines to meet. It's essential you and your family understand the process.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

1. Meet the College Bound Scholarship pledge requirements
2. File the **FAFSA** or **WASFA**. You may file as early as October 1 of your senior year. Remember, each college has their own financial aid deadlines.
3. Be admitted to and enroll in a college in Washington within one year of high school graduation.
4. Be a U.S. citizen, eligible non-citizen, or meet the program's state residency requirements.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- College Bound will send you a **"match email"** notifying you when your FAFSA or WASFA is matched to your original College Bound application.
- College Bound will automatically identify you as a College Bound student to all of the colleges you listed on the FAFSA or WASFA.

If you don't receive your "match email" notifying you that your College Bound application matched with your FAFSA or WASFA, call **888-535-0747** or email **collegebound@wsac.wa.gov**

WHAT WILL THE COLLEGE DO?

1. **Determine** if your income meets the eligibility guidelines.
2. **Calculate** your financial aid award.
3. **Send** you a financial aid award letter (by mail or email) indicating how much aid you will receive.
4. **Disburse** your **financial aid** to you, including your College Bound Scholarship, before classes begin.

Quick Tips

*-Students would have applied to College Bound in middle school before the end of their 8th grade year and committed to meeting the College Bound Pledge in high school to receive the scholarship. College Bound combines on your award letter with other **state financial aid** to cover **tuition** (at public college rates), some **fees** and a small book allowance.*

FEBRUARY: UNDERSTANDING FINANCIAL AID AWARD LETTERS

After filing the FAFSA or WASFA, you'll receive a different **financial aid** award letter from each college you applied to. Once you have received ALL of your financial aid **award** packages, you can make a decision about which college best fits in your budget.

TYPES OF STUDENT LOANS:

- **Subsidized loans:** The government pays the interest while you're in college. If you qualify, this is your best option.
- **Unsubsidized loans:** Interest gets added to the amount you borrow as soon as you take out the loan.
- **Parent loan:** A loan your parent can take on your behalf to pay for your college expenses. Your parent is legally tied to the loan and its repayment.
- A **federal loan** has lower interest rates and better repayment plans than a private loan. They are determined by the FAFSA
- A **private loan** can come from banks, colleges and private organizations. They usually have higher interest rates, which accrue as soon as you take out the loan.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID:

- **Scholarships:** College aid awarded based on academics or other achievements
- **Grants:** A form of gift aid, usually based on financial need
- **Work Study:** On-campus or off-campus employment which allows you to earn money for college expenses
- **Loans:** Money you borrow and have to repay with interest

AFTER RECEIVING YOUR AWARD LETTER

1. **Review the offer** and compare it to the **cost of attendance** (COA) of the college. Pay close attention to the breakdown of each expense, such as **tuition**, books, room and board, etc.
2. **Inform the college of any changes** and private scholarships since submitting your **FAFSA** or **WASFA**.
3. **Accept the awards** for the college you're planning to attend. Make sure to accept by the specified **deadline**.
4. **Contact the financial aid office** at the college if you have any questions.

Quick Tips

Accept grants, scholarships, and work study before accepting loans to reduce your debt after college. Avoid private loans and credit cards, if possible.

$$\begin{array}{r} \textit{Cost of Attendance} \\ - \textit{Scholarships/Grants} \\ \hline \textit{Money Gap} \\ \textit{(work study, loans, savings)} \end{array}$$

*Smallest money gap=
Best, most affordable option*

MARCH: MAKING YOUR DECISION

You've submitted your college **applications** and now the waiting game starts! This can take anywhere from a month to several months, depending on the type of school. Colleges will typically communicate their decision through email, mail or their online portal. Don't forget to check with the college admissions department if you have any questions.

I JUST RECEIVED A DECISION FROM A COLLEGE, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

ACCEPTED- You were accepted. Congratulations!

WAITLISTED- You have not been accepted or denied. The college is waiting to see how many students will accept their offer to determine if they have more space.

DENIED- You were not accepted. Consider exploring other college options.

Deciding which college to attend can be difficult, but finding the right college for you will help you succeed and become a college graduate. Feel free to speak with your school's GEAR UP team or high school counselor about your options.

COMPARING COLLEGES

Financial:

Consider how much of the cost of attendance will be covered by **grants** and **scholarships**

Academics:

Check if the academic **major** you are interested in is available at the college. Consider the types of **academic support** available (e.g. writing center, math tutoring, disability services, etc.).

Social:

Determine if the college is a good social and cultural fit for you (e.g. diversity, student groups, mentorship opportunities, etc.).

Think about the type of environment you like (close to home, big campus, rural setting, etc.).

Quick Tips

-Don't forget to confirm your enrollment. For many colleges, the college confirmation deadline is May 1.

-This is a huge decision! Take time to think through what each college has to offer. Don't be afraid to get input from important people in your life, but always remember to choose the college that best meets YOUR needs.

APRIL: TRANSITIONING TO COLLEGE

You've been accepted to the college you'd like to attend! There are still many steps you need to take before you start classes

STEPS FOR 4-YEAR COLLEGES

1. Pay your new student/enrollment confirmation fee. If you are unable to pay the **fee**, **contact your admissions office** and ask to defer your deposit.
2. Request an **official transcript** from your high school and any colleges where you earned credit. Send transcripts to your college as soon as final grades are posted.

STEPS FOR 2-YEAR COLLEGES

1. **Submit** any other requested **financial aid forms** by the deadline.
2. **Complete the math and English placement tests** for your college

Quick Tips

-If you plan to transfer from a 2-year college to a 4-year college in the future, talk to your advisor about which credits will transfer.

TO DO BEFORE STARTING COLLEGE

- Confirm your acceptance** by submitting your enrollment verification and deposit by May 1 or your college's deadline.
- Accept your financial aid award.**
- Schedule your advising and orientation appointments.**
- Apply for housing** if you will be living on **campus.**
- Submit immunization records.** Access these records from your doctor or school district.
- Sign up for **student support programs** (TRIO, EOP, CAMP)
- Register for classes**

ORIENTATION

Many colleges require new students to attend an orientation, where you will learn about campus resources, register for classes and meet your peers.

HOUSING

On-campus housing may include residence halls, apartments or houses. You will need to apply and submit a deposit through your college.

Off-campus housing includes living at home, renting an apartment/house or living in residential fraternities or sororities.

MAY: WHAT TO EXPECT YOUR FIRST TERM

College is different than high school in many ways. It's important to know what to expect, so you can be successful.

WHAT TO DO FIRST

FIND food, housing, transportation, medical facilities, mental health and fitness resources on campus.

LEARN where you can receive academic support and form study groups.

GET TO KNOW your classmates. Classes vary in size depending on your college. When you connect with new people, you become part of a new community.

BUDGETING TIPS

Books and materials are expensive. **Buy or rent used books** to save money; electronic versions may also be available.

Cut down on any unnecessary daily expenses (eating out, morning coffee, on campus parking, etc.).

Create a **quarterly or semester** budget and stick to it!

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME

- Some classes meet daily and some meet fewer times during the week. They may start as early as 8 a.m. or as late as 8 p.m. **Create a class schedule that works best for you.**
- Seek help from friends, tutors, campus resources or **professors** during **office hours.**
- In college you have **much more freedom** in your schedule, and no one is going to tell you where or when you need to be. You will need to juggle classes, social activities, friends, finances and maybe even a new living situation or job. **Manage your time by balancing your classes, homework and personal interests.**

Quick Tips

- For every hour you spend in class, you should spend at least 2 hours on assignments.*
- Never be afraid to reach out for help- When in doubt, reach out!*
- College can be some of the best times of your life, but it can also be very difficult. Remember why you're there to help you finish your **degree**.*

JUNE: COLLEGE RESOURCES TO USE

Colleges offer many resources to help you be successful. They are included in your tuition and fees so use them!

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

ACADEMIC ADVISING: Helps you understand the college's academic systems, find your **major** and access **campus** resources

LIBRARIES: Offer a variety of learning spaces where you can get help with research or collaborate with others

TUTORING CENTERS: Offer help with subjects like math, science and writing from your peers.

OFFICE HOURS: Times when your **professors** are available to answer questions you have about class.

GET INVOLVED

STUDENT UNION: Provides meeting spaces, events, study groups and a comfortable environment where you can connect with the college community.

STUDENT LIFE: Offers a variety of on-campus job opportunities.

STUDY ABROAD: Provides meaningful global travel experiences for college credit.

RECREATION CENTER: Many colleges have gyms, sports fields, group fitness classes or club sports.

PERSONALIZED SUPPORT

CAREER CENTER: Offers you career counseling and help in developing a resume, writing a cover letter and preparing for a job interview.

DIVERSITY/MULTICULTURAL CENTER: A space primarily for students of color and other communities to receive social and emotional support and feel safe to express their ideas and experiences.

COUNSELING SERVICES: Provides confidential counseling and mental health support.

DISABILITY RESOURCES: Provides reasonable academic accommodations for eligible students.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT): Provides different technology services and is a first stop for most campus-technology-related requests.

VETERAN SERVICES: Serves as a liaison to the Department of Veterans Affairs and helps veterans transition out of the military and into academic life.

FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS

FINANCIAL AID OFFICE: Helps you understand your **financial aid** award and provides information on additional funding resources and helps you search and apply for **scholarships**.