



Factors to consider in choosing a college

Use individual college websites, [Iowa College Aid's Higher Education Data Center](#) and the U.S. Department of Education's [College Scorecard](#) to gather this information:

- Cost
- Average student loan debt
- Location
- Size of campus/total enrollment
- Academic programs and majors
- School expertise
- Diversity
- Average ACT score
- Support services
- Extracurricular activities/campus life
- Safety and security
- Faculty/student ratio
- Type of learning environment
- Housing options
- Average salaries for graduates
- Job placement rates

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Applying for College & Financial Aid

Deciding where to apply

There's no magic formula to choosing the best school for you, but here are some tips that can help as you decide where to apply:

MAKE A LIST Identify colleges that offer programs and majors related to your career interests. Think about what other factors are important to you, like location, size of the student body or extracurricular options.

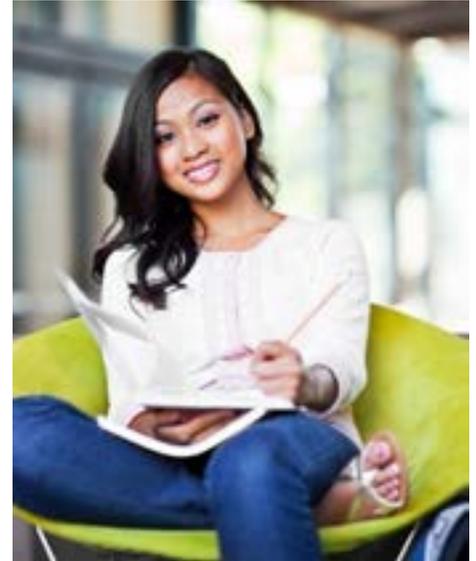
DO YOUR HOMEWORK Gather information about each college by talking to your school counselor, attending college fairs and visiting college websites. Many colleges offer virtual campus tours.

SCHEDULE VISITS Contact an admissions representative to schedule each college visit. Go to several campuses if you can to determine which fits you best, both socially and academically. Try to visit when classes are in session. Prepare specific questions to ask.

MAKE ANOTHER LIST Write down the college characteristics that are important to you and check off items offered by each college.

APPLY TO SCHOOLS THAT MAKE THE CUT Make sure you know the application requirements and deadlines. Some colleges require essays, personal interviews or letters of recommendation. Apply to at least one college where you are confident you will be accepted, but don't be afraid to reach!

For more help preparing for education after high school, order a free copy of ["Your Course to College."](#)





(continued)

Decoding the alphabet soup

E, F, *what?* Here are some abbreviations you're likely to encounter as you navigate the process of applying for college and financial aid:

AP: ADVANCED PLACEMENT This program administered by the College Board lets high school students take college-level courses in high school.

CLEP: COLLEGE LEVEL EXAMINATION This program lets students earn credits in undergraduate college courses by taking exams.

COA: COST OF ATTENDANCE This is the total cost of attending college for one academic year, including tuition, fees, room, board, supplies, transportation and personal expenses.

EFC: EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION This is the amount of money you and your family are expected to contribute to your education, determined by your FAFSA. (The difference between your EFC and a school's COA is your official Financial Need.)

FAFSA: FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID [This form](#) is the application for all forms of federal aid and some forms of state and institutional aid.

QTP: QUALIFIED TUITION PROGRAM These programs, also known as 529 plans, let you contribute to an account established for paying a student's qualified education expenses at an eligible school. Iowa's QTP is [College Savings Iowa](#).

Test day tips—from people who know

Performing well on a college entrance test is about more than the facts and figures in your head. Keep in mind these test-day tips from ACT:

- Wear comfortable clothes. Dress in layers so you can adjust to the temperature of the room.
- Make sure you know where the test center is. You might even try a test drive a few days before.
- Arrive at the test center by the time listed on your test ticket. No one is admitted late.
- Make sure you know what kind of ID you need. Take your ID and your testing ticket with you.