

College Checklist

An end-to-end checklist for students preparing to start college, from applying to arriving on campus.

Research and decide

- List schools that match your goals, budget and location.
- Compare programs, class sizes and graduation rates.
- Visit campuses in person or take virtual tours.
- Estimate the total cost of attendance for each school.
- Note application and financial aid deadlines for each one.
- Narrow your list to reach, match and safety schools.

Apply and submit

- Register for and take any required entrance tests.
- Request transcripts from your high school.
Allow at least a week or two for the registrar to process requests.
- Ask teachers for letters of recommendation early.
- Draft, revise and proofread your application essays.
- Complete each application and double-check every field.
- Submit before the deadline and save confirmation emails.

Pay for college

- Submit your financial aid application as early as it opens.
Aid is often first-come, first-served — apply the day forms open.
- Search and apply for scholarships and grants.
- Compare the award letters from each school.
- Understand any loans before accepting them.
- Set up a plan to cover tuition and living costs.
- Keep copies of every financial document you submit.

Accept and enroll

- Review your offers and choose your school.
- Pay your enrollment deposit by the deadline.
- Decline other offers so spots open for others.
- Submit your final high school transcript.
- Set up your student email and online accounts.
- Complete any required health and immunization forms.

Housing and registration

- Apply for on-campus housing and pay any deposit.
- Complete a roommate questionnaire if offered.
- Sign up for new-student orientation.
- Meet with an advisor and plan your first-term courses.
- Register for classes as soon as your window opens.
- Buy or rent textbooks once your schedule is set.

Pack and prepare

- Build a packing list by category, from clothes to tech.
- Coordinate large items with your roommate to avoid doubles.
- Set up a checking account and a way to receive money.
- Pack important documents and a copy of your ID.
- Fill any prescriptions and pack a basic first-aid kit.
- Confirm your move-in date, time and parking details.

Move in and settle

- Arrive within your assigned move-in window.
- Check your room for damage and report it right away.
- Unpack essentials first, then organize the rest.
- Locate your classes, dining hall and library.
- Save campus safety and health center contacts.
- Attend orientation events and meet people early.