



APPLY YOURSELF! GUIDE

FLORIDA COLLEGE APPLICATION WEEK



Welcome!

You're about to start an exciting new journey, and the first step is applying to college. This guide is here to help you through the process of choosing which colleges to apply to, getting your application in, and taking the next steps.

This guide was adapted for Florida College Application Week from materials provided by the American College Application Campaign, Michigan College Access Network, and Take Stock in Children Serving DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands Counties. A special thanks to all three for permission to adapt these resources.

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(1) Where do I apply?

How to choose the college that's right for you.

With so many options available to you, it's important to do your homework to select a short list of colleges that suit your needs, interests and talents. This section provides tips on how to research and decide on the colleges you apply to for admission.

Think About Fit, Match & Cost

During your research, there are three important things for you to consider: **fit**, **match**, and **cost**. You can research this information online at www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org and www.FloridaShines.org.

Does the college **fit** your preferences?

Several factors will help you decide whether a college is a good fit for you, including the size of the school, the location of the school, and services available on campus. The college's graduation rates and retention rates (the number of students who return to school for their second year) are also important to know. Finally, does the school offer your major? If you're not sure what you'd like to major in, visit ACT Profile (www.act.org/profile) to learn more about careers and majors that align with your interests and talents.

Does the college **match** your academic record?

Ideally, you should select a college that is a good "match" for your interests and academic record. For this, you'll need to understand how your high school grade point average (GPA), your college entrance exam scores (SAT and/or ACT), and the courses you've taken in high school match the college's entrance requirements AND the average GPAs and scores of students admitted. Keep in mind that a school's minimum test score or grade requirements could be different from the average scores or GPAs of who they actually admit. You should plan to apply to multiple schools and should include at least one of each of the following types of schools:

- **"Reach" School** – this does not mean *out of reach*, it just means that the school may be more selective (look at the percent of applicants admitted) and your academic record may be on the lower end of what the college typically accepts. In other words, you *may* be admitted to this school
- **"Match" School** – typically, at a match school, your academic record will be similar to the "average" student admitted. In other words, you are *likely* to be admitted.
- **"Safety" School** – a safety school will usually have either open enrollment (meaning anyone who submits a completed application is admitted) or will be considered a "less selective" institution compared to your qualifications. Your academic record will exceed the institution's requirements and averages for students admitted. In other words, you will almost *definitely* be admitted.

What will the college cost?

The “sticker” price of a college may be very different from the “net” price of a college after you consider the amount of financial aid and scholarships that is typically available to students. You can research the percent of students who had full need met, the average financial aid package, and the average amount of debt at graduation.

Do Your Research

Whether you already have some schools in mind or don’t know where to start, the College Board’s **BigFuture** site (www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org) can help you research your options. From the homepage, you can look up information about schools you’re already interested in or you can use the College Search tool to find schools based on fit, match, and cost. Florida’s **FloridaShines** site (www.FloridaShines.org) has similar information specifically for Florida schools.

As you’re doing your research, fill out the worksheet on page 14 for a few of the schools you are thinking about applying to. This will help you figure out if the school is a good fit and match, and whether the costs seem reasonable.

Pick Your Top 3

After you’ve done some research, decide which schools you’ll be applying to. A safe bet is to apply to at least three schools—a reach school, a match school, and a safety school. Some students apply to more than three schools. For now, select your top three choices. You’ll apply to one or more of these schools during College Application Week.

Using the worksheet on page 15, make sure you have all the details about how to apply to these schools. You’ll probably need to check the admissions page on the university website to get all the information.



(2) How do I apply?

Preparing what you need to apply to college.

Now that you have narrowed down the list of colleges to which you plan to apply, it's time to start gathering all of the information and documents you will need to successfully complete your applications. It's a good idea to start gathering everything you need well before you submit your application. This section will help you with the process.

College Application Checklist

Each college has different requirements, so be sure to carefully review the admissions requirements for the colleges you've chosen. Here are some of the more common documents requested:

- Official Transcript
- Standardized Test Scores
- Application Form (Remember to print out the confirmation page!)
- Application Fee or Waiver
- Mid-Year Report Form
- Supplemental Forms, if required
- Essays, if required
- Interviews, if required
- Recommendation Letters, if required

College Application Worksheet

On page 16 is a worksheet with the information you will **likely need** in order to fill out your college applications online. Not all colleges require the same information, but this worksheet will help you be prepared for any application. Begin filling out this list early, so you have plenty of time to track down all the information. If there are questions you don't know the answer to, ask your parents, school counselor, or another trusted adult for help.

Essay

Depending on which college(s) you're applying to, you might need to write an admissions essay or personal statement. This is your chance to show admissions officers who you are and to highlight your unique talents and strengths that you did not have a chance to otherwise describe on the application form. The essay also demonstrates your writing skills. Make sure you take full advantage of this opportunity to shine!

Tips for Writing Your Essay

Research Essay Requirements

Don't wait until the last minute to find out if you'll have to write a college essay.

Do check early to see whether your short list of colleges require an admissions essay and if so, what they require. For example, some may have word or page limits and formatting requirements. Take note of the essay topic and, if there are options, decide which topic you will write on.

Choose a Topic That Will Highlight You

Don't focus on the great aspects of a particular college, the amount of dedication it takes to be a doctor or the number of extracurricular activities you took part in during high school.

Do share your personal story and thoughts, take a creative approach and highlight areas that aren't covered in other parts of the application, like your high school records.

Keep Your Focus Narrow and Personal

Don't try to cover too many topics. This will make the essay sound like a résumé that doesn't provide any details about you.

Do focus on one aspect of yourself so the readers can learn more about who you are. Remember that the readers must be able to find your main idea and follow it from beginning to end. Ask a parent or teacher to read just your introduction and tell you what he or she thinks your essay is about.

Show, Don't Tell

Don't simply state a fact to get an idea across, such as "I like to surround myself with people with a variety of backgrounds and interests."

Do include specific details, examples, reasons, and so on to develop your ideas. For the example above, describe a situation when you were surrounded by various types of people. What were you doing? Whom did you talk with? What did you take away from the experience?

Use Your Own Voice

Don't rely on phrases or ideas that people have used many times before. These could include statements like, "There is so much suffering in the world that I feel I have to help people." Avoid overly formal or business-like language, and don't use unnecessary words.

Do write in your own voice. For the above example, you could write about a real experience that you had and how it made you feel you had to take action. And note that admissions officers will be able to tell if your essay was written by an adult.

Ask a Teacher or Parent to Proofread

Don't turn your essay in without proofreading it, and don't rely only on your computer's spell check to catch mistakes. A spell-check program will miss typos like these:

"After I graduate *form* high school, I plan to get a summer job."

"From that day on, Daniel was my best *fried*."

Do ask a teacher or parent to proofread your essay to catch mistakes. You should also ask the person who proofreads your essay if the writing sounds like you.

*Adapted from *The College Application Essay* by Sarah Myers McGinty.

Remember to bring your essay or personal statement with you on the day of your school's College Application Week event! You can bring a USB with you to the event, or email the essay to yourself ahead of time.

Application Fees & Waivers

Most colleges will require you to pay an application fee when you submit your application. These fees are usually around \$30, but could be more or less. The easiest and most common way to pay the application fee is by credit card. If you cannot pay by credit card, check the admissions website of the school you're interested in to see if there are other ways you can pay the fee. Most colleges will allow you to pay by check or money order, but it depends on the school.

Application Fee Waivers

If the cost of the application fee is holding you back from applying, you might be eligible for a fee waiver, which will allow you to apply for free.

Who is eligible for a fee waiver?

Typically, fee waivers are available to students for whom the college application fees would create a financial burden or hardship. If you were eligible for fee waivers to college entrance exams, such as the SAT or ACT, you're usually also eligible for college application fee waivers.

What kinds of fee waivers are there?

ACT Fee Waiver

If you received a fee waiver to take the ACT, you can also receive an application fee waiver for many colleges. The fee waiver may be found on page 37 here, and will need to be signed by your school counselor:

<http://www.act.org/aap/pdf/ACT-UserHandbook.pdf>.

College Board Fee Waiver

Similarly, if you have received a College Board fee waiver for the SAT or the SAT subject tests, you may also be eligible for up to four college application fee waivers. You should receive your college application fee waivers at the beginning of senior year through your SAT account. These fee waivers do not require school counselor approval.

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) Fee Waiver

This fee waiver can be downloaded from NACAC’s website, provided below. You and your school counselor will each fill out part of the form before submitting it to the college.

<http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/feewaiver/Pages/default.aspx>

Who accepts fee waivers?

The following chart shows which Florida public universities accept which fee waivers, and how to submit the waiver. If you are applying to a school that isn’t listed here, make sure you contact the admissions office to find out what application fee waivers they accept and how to submit one.

The chart below is based in part on information from Take Stock in Children Serving DeSoto, Hardee & Highlands Counties.

	WAIVERS ACCEPTED	HOW TO USE THE WAIVER
FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY (FAMU)	ACT, SAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use a fee waiver, you must complete a paper application, not an online application. • Download and print a paper application from the “Freshman Applicants” page. • Mail your paper application along with the original fee waiver to the address listed on the application. • Be sure to keep a copy of the fee waiver for yourself!
FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY (FAU)	NACAC, ACT, SAT, Free/Reduced Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit application without payment. • Mail fee waiver to the address listed on application screen.
FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY (FGCU)	NACAC, ACT, SAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After completing every page on the FGCU application checklist, hit the “Application is Complete” button. • This will direct you to a payment page where you should hit the “Cancel” button. • Do not complete the credit card information. • Mail fee waiver to the address listed on application screen. • Include with the waiver a note explaining that your application has been completed via the FGCU website but was not paid for.
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY (FIU)	NACAC, ACT, SAT, Free/Reduced Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After completing the application and reaching the payment page, select the pay by check option. • Then mail in the fee waiver to the admissions office address on the page.

FLORIDA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY	ACT, SAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the payment page at the end of the application, select the waiver option. • Mail fee waiver to the admissions office address listed.
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY (FSU)	NACAC, ACT, SAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit application without payment. • Mail fee waiver to the address listed on application screen or fax waiver form to (850)644-0197.
NEW COLLEGE	NACAC, ACT, SAT, Common App	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit fee waiver through Common Application website
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA (UCF)	NACAC, ACT, SAT, Free/Reduced Lunch, Tax Return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit application without payment. • Mail a written request and fee waiver to the address listed on application screen.
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA (UF)	SAT, ACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select “mail payment” as the payment option and then mail in the waiver. • The address will be listed on the application screen.
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA (UNF)	NACAC, ACT, SAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bypass the payment page and submit your application. • Mail your fee waiver to the admissions office, email it as a PDF or Word attachment to admissions@unf.edu, or fax it to 904-620-2414.
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA (USF)	NACAC, ACT, SAT, Free/Reduced Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit application without payment. • Mail fee waiver to the address listed on application screen.
UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA (UWF)	NACAC, ACT, SAT, Free/Reduced Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application should give the option to mail in application payment. • Mail fee waiver to the address listed on application screen.

**Application is not considered complete until either payment or the application fee waiver is received by the university.

Make sure you bring a way to pay your application fee with you to your school's College Application Week event. If you're paying by check or using a fee waiver, you'll need to bring a stamped envelope as well.

Residency

If you are applying to an in-state university, you will be asked whether you are a Florida "resident for tuition purposes." This determines whether you pay the lower in-state tuition or the higher out-of-state tuition.

What is a Florida "resident for tuition purposes"?

A person who has, or a dependent person whose parent or legal guardian has, established and maintained **legal residency** in Florida for **at least twelve consecutive months**. As part of the admission process, a student applying to a state university in Florida must complete a residency form or affidavit in order to declare Florida residency for tuition purposes. College staff will review the information and related documentation to verify your residency and eligibility for in-state tuition.

Am I a dependent or independent person?

You're probably a dependent, but there are some exceptions. If you think you might be an independent, ask your school counselor or a trusted adult for assistance.

Who is the claimant, or the person claiming residency?

If you are a dependent, the claimant, or person claiming residency, is your parent or legal guardian.

What do I need to do to prove Florida residency?

You and/or your parent or legal guardian will be asked to provide various forms of documentation, such as copies of driver's licenses or State of Florida Identification Card, voter registration, Florida vehicle registration, or other form of documentation. The admissions office will provide you with guidance about the process.

Some students who might not otherwise qualify as an in-state resident might nevertheless receive a temporary classification for in-state tuition. For example, members of the armed services stationed in Florida, as well as their spouses, and dependent children, may qualify for in-state tuition. Additionally, undocumented students who meet certain requirements, such as graduating from a Florida high school, may qualify for in-state tuition but are not classified as residents for tuition purposes.

To complete the residency section of the application, you'll need to have copies of at least **two** documents establishing the **claimant's** residency. For most students, the claimant will be your parent or legal guardian.

Examples of documents that apply include: driver's license, vehicle registration, voter registration, or resident alien information.



(3) YOU DID IT! Now what?

Next steps after you've applied to college.

Congratulations—you've applied to college!! You've taken the first step in going to college, but you're not done yet. Here are some tips and reminders for what to do once you've filled out the application:

- ✓ **Make sure your application fee has been paid.** If you completed an online application, you likely paid your application fee using a credit card when you submitted the application. If you submitted a paper application, make sure you sent in a check to cover your application fee. Some schools don't require an application fee. Keep track of what institutions you paid a fee to as well as the method of payment and delivery. If you are using a fee waiver, make sure that you submitted it according to the college's procedures.
- ✓ **Make sure your transcripts have been sent.** Follow up with the colleges where you have applied to ensure they received your transcript and all the necessary documents that went along with your application.
- ✓ **Create a FSA ID for your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).** Students will need a "FSA ID," which consists of a user-created username and password, to apply for federal financial aid. Do this early – you'll need it every year you apply! To create a FSA ID, go to www.fafsa.ed.gov.
- ✓ **Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).** You CAN afford to go to college – fill out the FAFSA to unlock thousands of dollars in grants and loans. At some Florida colleges, the deadline to receive some forms of aid is March 1, so get your application in early. However, be sure to complete the form even if you don't meet your school's deadline, as you might still qualify for federal aid. Go to www.fafsa.ed.gov to complete your application, or ask your school counselor for assistance. Some communities offer programs, such as College Goal Sunday and financial aid nights, to help students and their families with the financial aid application process.
- ✓ **Apply for Florida state grants and scholarships.** In addition to the grants and loans available through the federal government, the State of Florida offers a variety of merit- and need-based scholarship and grant programs. These include Bright Futures, First Generation Matching Grant, and Florida Student Assistance Grant. Learn more at www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org.
- ✓ **Apply for scholarships.** There are thousands of scholarship dollars available, based on both need and merit. Contact your local community foundation, local education foundation, ask your school counselor, and research local scholarships available in your community and national scholarships.

- ✓ **Accept an admission offer.** Schools have a deadline, usually around May 1, by which you need to confirm you are attending. Once you start getting offer letters, research each school's deadline and make sure you confirm your attendance in time.
- ✓ **Figure out next steps for the summer.** Aside from buying books and dorm decorations, you will likely need to take placement exams and attend orientation. Make sure you know your college's placement exam and orientation schedules, and SIGN UP EARLY. You'll be scheduling courses at orientation, and you want to make sure you get the first choice!
- ✓ **Have a wonderful first day of college and a wonderful semester!**

WORKSHEETS

College Fit, Match & Cost

Complete this form for each college you are considering using the BigFuture College Search tool at bigfuture.collegeboard.org.

Name of College: _____

FIT

Location of College (City, State): _____ Setting: _____

Size of College: _____ Number of Undergraduate Students: _____

4-year or 2-year? _____ Students live on campus or commute? _____

Public or Private? _____ Co-ed? Women/Men Only? _____

Do they offer my major? _____ Is the campus diverse? _____

% Students that return sophomore year: _____ Graduation Rate: _____

What services are available on campus that are important to me? _____

How does the college fit your preferences? Excellent Good OK Somewhat Doesn't Fit

MATCH

How selective is this college? _____ Percentage of Applicants Admitted: _____%

Have I taken the required high school courses? _____

How does my GPA compare with the average GPA of admitted students? Below Matches Above

How do my test scores compare with the average scores of admitted students? Below Matches Above

Comparing my academic record to this college, this would be a: Reach Match Safety

COST

Total estimated cost to attend: \$ _____

% freshmen with need who received aid: _____ % of need met: _____

% of need met through scholarships/grants: _____ % of need met through loans: _____

My calculated net price: \$ _____

Does the cost seem reasonable? _____

I plan on applying to this college: Yes No

My Top 3 Colleges

(1) Name of College: _____

Essay/Personal Statement Required? Yes No

Essay/Personal Statement Topic and requirements: _____

Recommendation(s) Required? Yes No

How many? _____

SAT/ACT Required? Yes No

Application Cost: _____

Fee waiver accepted? Yes No

Payment methods accepted? _____

Application Deadline: _____

Deadline for scholarships/financial aid: _____

(2) Name of College: _____

Essay/Personal Statement Required? Yes No

Essay/Personal Statement Topic and requirements: _____

Recommendation(s) Required? Yes No

How many? _____

SAT/ACT Required? Yes No

Application Cost: _____

Fee waiver accepted? Yes No

Payment methods accepted? _____

Application Deadline: _____

Deadline for scholarships/financial aid: _____

(3) Name of College: _____

Essay/Personal Statement Required? Yes No

Essay/Personal Statement Topic and requirements: _____

Recommendation(s) Required? Yes No

How many? _____

SAT/ACT Required? Yes No

Application Cost: _____

Fee waiver accepted? Yes No

Payment methods accepted? _____

Application Deadline: _____

Deadline for scholarships/financial aid: _____

College Application Worksheet

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Legal Name: _____

Any Other Names Used: (for transcripts, etc): _____

Social Security Number: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Place of Birth: _____ Are you a US citizen? YES NO

If you are not a citizen, what type of visa do you hold, or are you applying for? _____

If you are a permanent resident, what is your alien registration number? _____

**If you are a permanent resident, you will need to attach a photocopy of your alien registration card to the application.

Gender: M F Race/Ethnicity: _____

Are you an active duty service member? YES NO

Are you a veteran? YES NO

Are you a dependent who is eligible for military/veterans benefits? YES NO

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Type of Application: _____ Term: _____

Planned Major: _____

HIGH SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of School: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Expected Graduation Date: _____

OTHER POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

*includes dual enrollment

Name of Institution: _____

Dates Attended: _____ to _____ Credit Hours Completed: _____

Degree Obtained/Expected: _____ Date: _____

CURRENT & EXPECTED COURSEWORK

Courses you are currently enrolled in (FALL): _____

Courses you expect to complete before entering (SPRING/SUMMER): _____

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

ACT Date(s) Taken: _____ Scores: _____

SAT Date(s) Taken: _____ Scores: _____

SAT Subject tests: Subject: _____ Date(s) Taken: _____ Scores: _____

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Are you currently or have you ever been charged with or subject to disciplinary action for scholastic or any other type of misconduct at any educational institution? YES NO

Have you ever been charged with a violation of the law which resulted in, or, if still pending, could result in probation, community service, a jail sentence, the revocation or suspension of your driver's license (including traffic violations which resulted in a fine of \$200 or more)? YES NO

If your answer to either of the above questions is yes, you must submit a full statement of relevant facts, and may be required to supply the institution with copies of all official documentation explaining the final disposition of the proceedings.

If your records have been expunged pursuant to applicant law, you are not required to answer yes to these questions. If you are unsure whether to answer yes to either question, it is strongly suggested that you answer yes and fully disclose all incidents. By doing so, you can avoid any risk of disciplinary action or revocation of an offer of admission.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Have you participated in any programs or activities to help you prepare for higher education (University Outreach, Talent Search, Upward Bound, etc)? _____

Do you have any special talents or skills? Have you received any awards? _____

Do you participate in any extracurricular activities? _____

Do you do community service? _____

Are you employed? _____

FAMILY INFORMATION

Parent/Legal Guardian 1

Name (First and Last): _____

Relationship: _____ Email address: _____

Occupation: _____ Highest Level of Education Completed: _____

Mailing Address (if different from yours): _____

Parent/Legal Guardian 2

Name (First and Last): _____

Relationship: _____ Email address: _____

Occupation: _____ Highest Level of Education Completed: _____

Mailing Address (if different from yours): _____

Are you living in a single-parent household? YES NO

How many people, including yourself, live in your household? _____

Please indicate your family's gross income for the most recent tax year, including both taxed and untaxed income. _____

Do you have family obligations that prevent you from participating in extracurricular activities?

Please describe. _____