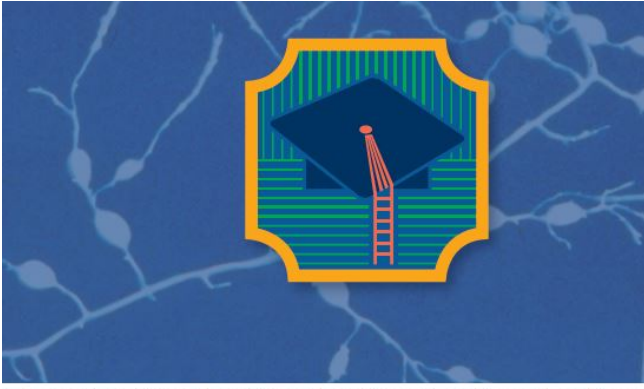


AMBASSADOR BADGES TO DO AT HOME



College Knowledge

The years after high school are an exciting time—you're going out into the world and figuring out what your adult life is going to look like. Some people will go to college right after high school, and some will take different paths. If you've decided that college is the best choice for you and your family, you may be feeling both excited and overwhelmed. Simplify the college preparation process by tackling it step by step, and you'll be ready to start your next chapter in no time!

Steps

1. Explore your options
2. Start the admissions process
3. Make a financial plan
4. Get set for success
5. Build healthy habits

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll understand the steps in the college admission process and be prepared to attend the school of my choice.



To earn this badge, please complete one option per step.

STEPS	BADGE REQUIREMENTS	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3
Step 1	Explore your options.	<p>Find your place. The location of a school plays a big part in the experience you'd have there. Do you plan to live at home while you attend your school, or go home on weekends? Do you want to be in a major city, or do crowds stress you out? Do you love warm weather? Look into the places that are home to your chosen schools and compare them. Think about the cost of living, entertainment options, and access to public transportation. Talk about your findings with family and friends. See the schools in-person or go by virtual tour to help narrow down your choices.</p>	<p>Investigate your interests. Yes, you're going to college to further your education—but you want to have fun, too! Activities and groups will help you get plugged into college life and make new friends. Are you an athlete? Passionate about politics? Do you want to join a sorority? Sing in an a cappella group? Research the activities and groups offered by your chosen schools and compare them. Talk about your findings with family and friends. See the schools in-person or go by virtual tour to help narrow down your choices.</p>	<p>Compare your program. Many people start college without any idea of what subject they'd like to specialize in. (And many change their minds along the way!) That's totally fine—college is all about self-discovery. But if you're passionate about a particular subject or career path, you'll want to make sure your college can guide you to your goals. Research your potential focus of study at your chosen schools, and compare the options. Is the school known for your field of study: classes, student clubs or groups, etc.? Talk about your findings with family and friends. See the schools in-person or go by virtual tour to help narrow down your choices.</p>

<p>Step 2</p>	<p>Start the admissions process.</p>	<p>Apply yourself. The first step in the application process is the application itself! College applications can look overwhelming, but don't be intimidated. Look at the application for one of the schools you're interested in, and practice filling it out. (Alternatively, you may be able to use the Common Application for multiple schools—go online to read about it and see if it's used by the schools you're interested in.) Email your practice application to a guidance counselor, teacher, or another adult to review and give you suggestions for improvement before you complete the final draft.</p>	<p>Do your best on the test. If you've been dreading the SAT or ACT, now's the time to face your fears. How do you improve your test-taking skills? Practice. There are lots of practice methods available: you can check out a book from the library, take online practice tests, sign up for an online prep class, or work with a tutor. Whichever method (or methods) you choose, keep working at it until you see improvement in your results.</p>	<p>Share your story. Colleges and universities want to see more than just a list of grades and activities—they're interested in who you are as a person. Admission essays and interviews give you the chance to show your best self: you can share what makes you stand out from the crowd, why you'd be a good fit for a particular school, and how your personal experiences have made you who you are today. Sharpen your storytelling skills by taking part in a mock interview with a friend or family member—you can find sample questions online—or writing a first draft of an application essay to share by email with a teacher, guidance counselor, or another adult.</p>
<p>Step 3</p>	<p>Make a financial plan.</p>	<p>Research in-state and out-of-state tuition costs. If you've just started thinking about the cost of your college education, you may not have compared the expenses between in-state and out-of-state schools. The base tuition cost for state schools is often much higher for out-of-state students. Choose one state school in the state where you are a resident, and one state school in a different state. Compare the base tuition costs of each, and think about how you might be able to save money while attending both out-of-state and in-state schools. Talk about your findings with your family or email your guidance counselor.</p>	<p>Find out about scholarships. The cost of a college education can look overwhelming at first—but there are many options available for financial assistance, including scholarships. Are you highly ranked in your class? Are you an athlete? Are you the daughter of a veteran? Can you make a prom dress out of duct tape? (Seriously—look it up!) There are special scholarship opportunities available just for Girl Scouts, too. Visit to see the latest offerings, and be sure to check with your local council as well. There are many other websites where you can search for different types of scholarships, too. Once you've researched your options, apply for at least one scholarship. Have a family member, teacher, or guidance counselor look over your application before you submit it.</p>	<p>Compare the costs of public, private, and junior college. People often assume that public schools are cheaper than private schools, but sometimes—depending on the location and financial aid received—they're similarly priced. Junior college (also called community college) can also be a great way to further your education at a significantly reduced cost. Choose the subject or career path you're most interested in and compare the cost of pursuing it at a public institution, private institution, and a junior college. Share your findings with your family, a teacher, or a guidance counselor to get their feedback.</p>

<p>Step 4</p>	<p>Get set for success.</p>	<p>Study, buddy. College courses can be quite different from high school courses. Your classes might be much larger than you're used to, and subjects that you found easy in high school may be more challenging at the college level. How do you face those challenges? Study! Make a plan for when, where, and how you will study at college. Start by looking at potential study locations at one of the schools you're interested in, keeping in mind how you like to study. Visit them in person, if possible, or try an online campus tour. Do you prefer quiet or do you like to study to music? Public or private spaces? If you'll have a roommate, how will that affect your habits? If you'll be living at home, how will you step up your game to meet the increased time and effort you'll need to put in? React out to family members, teachers, or guidance counselor about their tips for studying in college, and share your thoughts with them.</p>	<p>Plan for academic integrity. As a Girl Scout, you know all about being "honest and fair." However, college academic demands and deadlines may tempt even the most honest student to cut corners. Academic integrity means never plagiarizing, cheating, or misquoting information. Colleges and universities take this very seriously. Choose one of the schools you're interested in and review their Academic Integrity Code (some schools may use a slightly different name, such as Academic Honor Code). Talk about what you've read with a teacher, guidance counselor, or another adult. Was any of the information new or surprising to you? How would you handle it if you saw a fellow student—or new friend—going against the code of your new school?</p>	<p>Prevent procrastination. We've all been there: one more hit of the snooze button, one more episode of that amazing TV show, my paper's not due until Friday so I'll just pull an all-nighter later this week... Procrastination can take many forms. When you put off assignments or studying, it almost always adds to your stress level and reduces the quality of the final product. Research techniques for fighting procrastination, either online or in books you can take out from the library. (Just make sure you're not doing it when you should be doing something else!) Try a few different techniques until you find what works best for you. Talk about your findings with a family member, teacher, or guidance counselor, and get their input. How do they address procrastination in their own lives?</p>
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<p>Step 5</p>	<p>Build healthy habits.</p>	<p>Be a self-starter. In high school, you may have a block schedule or the same classes each day. Your teachers may push you to turn in your assignments on time. In college, you may have a class as little as once a week. And your teacher may not even know your name, let alone ask where your homework is! It's all up to you—and some students can struggle to stay motivated. Plan to succeed by creating a practice calendar. Look at a traditional freshman student course load at one of the colleges or universities you're interested in. Then create a mock calendar for yourself. Schedule in study time, meals, rest, and personal things that are important to you (like exercise, phone calls home, or that one TV show you can't miss). If you'll have a job on top of classes, be sure to include it, too. Then go over your calendar with your family, a teacher, or your guidance counselor to see what they think</p>	<p>Balance school and socializing. You're going to make a lot of new friends in college—and it's going to be so much fun. If you're living on campus, you're not going to have any adults saying it's time to go to bed, go to class, or write a paper. That means it's all up to you to find a balance between spending time with your new friends and getting your work done. Talk to a current college student and ask how she balances her social life with schoolwork, then come up with your own plan. Discuss your plan with your closest friends, and see if they have other suggestions—remember, you'll want to carve out time for old friends, too!</p>	<p>Manage stress. College can be a lot of fun, but it can be stressful, too. Academic pressure may feel more intense when it's layered on top of a poor diet, lack of sleep, or homesickness. Along with at least one of your friends or family members, pay attention to your stress level over the course of several weeks, and take notes about it. When do you feel the most stressed? Do you notice a difference when you're tired or hungry, or when you've been looking at a screen for a long time? Does exercise make a difference? Caffeine? Do your hormones seem to factor in? Try at least three different healthy ways to prevent stress before you feel it, or push back against it when you do. Compare your ideas and results with your friend/family member, and talk about what worked best. Then talk about times when you think you may feel stressed or anxious at college—maybe finals, writing papers, meeting your new roommate for the first time—and how you will manage it in a healthy way.</p>
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Coping with Setbacks

As the number of students applying to college increases, it's important to arm yourself with the understanding that you may not get in everywhere you apply. In most cases, this has nothing to do with who you are as a person. Schools are looking to create classes of students who are different from one another in all sorts of ways, and there's really no way to predict who will get accepted to a school and who won't. The best you can do is highlight the subjects and extracurricular activities you're truly passionate about, keep your options open, and trust that you'll connect with a school that's just right for you. Wherever you go, college is what you make of it: go in with an open mind and you're guaranteed to find inspiring teachers and amazing new friends.