

Applying in the USA

Understand that there is a college for every student who wants to go. The USA has 4000 degree-granting institutions

Try to match your own grades and special abilities with the standards for the school you want to attend.

During your junior year, move to finish any requirements needed to apply to certain colleges.

Successfully complete high school or an academic equivalent (such as a GED).

Take the SAT or ACT test because about 85% of colleges require one or the other for first-year students. Nearly all schools will take either one, but a few schools will only accept one or the other, so check the school website to see if they are picky or not.

Use college and scholarship search sites to your advantage.

Look at colleges that have features that interest you, such as ideal major, class size, location, and the like. Check out their websites, since many of them have application information. It is also worth checking out books about scholarships at your public and school libraries.

Contact schools for information. If you contact the schools that you are interested in by signing in on their admissions website, they will probably send you a pile of information about the school. Most schools now have information online. You should do this as early as possible if you are still in high school, because some colleges have unusual apply-by dates or a list of required high school classes. They will send out reminders of important due-dates and information.

Narrow down your list of schools. It would be a good idea to visit some schools to decide what college(s) you want to apply to based on the information they sent you, the information you received from other people, and your own reconnaissance.

By October of your Senior year you should know who you are applying to and what they want in terms of references, test scores, etc.

Do not leave this decision until several days before the due date for forms and paperwork. A lot of information may need to be obtained, including references for some colleges.

It is also important to be certain about your choice and not just apply "for the heck of it" or because everyone else is going to that college. It needs to suit you and what you want.

Oftentimes, a college will give a visiting student a fee waiver. These can save you \$50 or more, plus visiting beforehand can help you decide whether or not you even want to bother applying.

Apply if the college fits you and your interests. This sounds simple, but it is an important consideration.

Middle tier and top tier schools usually require you to write essays. They expect these essays to be impeccable, thoughtful and creative. Be sure you are unique in expressing yourself, but avoid a level of eccentricity that would be detrimental. There is a lot of advice online about how to write these, so look around and see what other students have done.

Figure out who can write your letters of recommendation. Give them plenty of time to write the letters and keep track of whether they have actually sent them out. You should be thinking well in advance about which teachers

you want to write recommendations. And, it isn't a bad idea to do a little extra schmoozing with those teachers to be sure they know you and have something nice to say about you.

Also consider issues related to residency, expenses, quality of final qualifications, scholarship/bursary availability and your own eligibility etc.

Decide whether you want to apply with early admission. Early admission is a way of telling a school that you really want to go there.

- Do apply for early admission; you'll have a slightly higher chance of getting in. Schools use early admission to gauge who really wants to go to their school; many students who they accept eventually end up going somewhere else, a situation that is not ideal.
- Disadvantage of early admission is that if you get accepted, you have no flexibility. You have to go to that school, even if you got a scholarship to a different school, or your best friend was attending a different school. Be sure you're comfortable with the school if you decide to apply early admission.

Complete most applications by January. Most of the more respected schools require applications to be completed by January of your Senior year. By around April 1st they will tell you whether you are admitted, then you will have to decide by May 1st if you will go there.

For many middle level schools or less selective schools, you can apply at any time and they will tell you in a few weeks whether you are accepted.

There are also schools (but not famous ones) which have empty seats in their Freshman class right up to the start of school in September. So, if you don't get accepted in April, then you can still work on applications and find a school that will take you right up to the start of the Fall term.

Thank the individual(s) who wrote you letters of recommendation. You may have been asked to submit letters of recommendation along with your application. Never forget to thank the people who were willing to write those for you! Without their contribution, your application might not have been accepted.

Once you have been accepted, apply for financial aid (optional). Go directly through the school itself, or apply for FAFSA, a governmental body. Many top tier schools will waive the price of admission if your family's income falls below a certain mark. Talk with your high school guidance counselor if you believe this to be the case.