



Prepare Your Student for College from Your Couch

YOUR GUIDE TO NAVIGATING THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME.

5 WAYS to Keep Students Motivated at Home

It can be tough to stay motivated during a time of uncertainty, but these tips can help your student find some control.

ESTABLISH A ROUTINE. Without a set schedule, a leisurely morning can easily drift into a lazy day. When students are in school, they have bells that indicate the time of day and consequences, like tardy slips, that hold them accountable. Without a class schedule, it can be difficult to maintain consistency. So, find a new routine. Have your student set an alarm, get dressed, eat breakfast, and “get to class” (even if that means the kitchen table) by the same time every day.

WRITE A TO-DO LIST. Help your student identify what they want to accomplish daily. Factor in things already on the calendar, like e-learning requirements and homework. Then encourage your student to add in small tasks that help them work toward their goals. For example, if they want to read a new book, jot down “read at least one new chapter today.” Or, maybe your student wants to improve their ACT test score. A good goal would be to complete 30 minutes of ACT test prep every other day.

GET ACTIVE. Even though limited, your student can still break a sweat. Stream a home workout on YouTube or turn up the music and dance. If your student can safely distance themselves from others, have them walk the dog or go for a jog outside. Getting fresh air and exercise will help them keep their mind clear and find balance in the day.

STAY CONNECTED. Having meaningful conversations with friends and family is a great way for students to reboot when they're bored or listless. When physically seeing somebody they care about isn't a possibility, text messages, social media, phone calls, and video chats can help them connect to others.

ACKNOWLEDGE ANXIETIES. When there are things happening out of your student's control, it can be hard for them to focus on completing easy tasks. One way to tame anxieties is by acknowledging them. Have your student write down their fears in a journal, share concerns with a friend, or simply say worries out loud to themselves. Getting these burdens out can make them less powerful and allow more space for positive thoughts.

How to Set **SMART** GOALS for Students

WHAT ARE SMART GOALS?

SMART stands for specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound. These guidelines can help you sharpen your student's focus in the short-term so they can reach their end goal!

- **SPECIFIC:** The goal is direct and detailed.
- **MEASURABLE:** The goal is trackable.
- **ATTAINABLE:** The goal is challenging but reasonable.
- **REALISTIC:** Your student is capable of achieving the goal.
- **TIME-BOUND:** The goal has a deadline.

TIPS TO STAYING ON TRACK

SET SMALL GOALS. SMART goals can be big goals, but sometimes it helps to break them down even further to understand what needs to be done daily to stay motivated.

TRACK PROGRESS. Encourage your student to keep a journal, take a photo, download an app, or create a sticker chart. Having tangible evidence of growth can help them visualize the progress they're making.

REWARD YOUR STUDENT. Think of a little treat that's worth working toward. Maybe it's a new notebook, a movie night, or scoop of ice cream. Whatever it is, make it an item or experience your student can enjoy knowing it's a reward for staying on track.

PRACTICE FORGIVENESS. If your student misses a day or small milestone, don't let it derail their progress entirely.

College Application

TASKS FOR STUDENTS

ASK FOR A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION.

The goal of a recommendation letter is to humanize your student; to tell admissions officials and potential employers about them as a person, as well as a student, and to tell a bit about their character.

WRITE AN ADMISSIONS ESSAY.

College application essays can be an effective way for your student to communicate their uniqueness to admissions officials. Some colleges will have specific prompts they want students to answer. Others will ask them to describe their life story.

EXPLORE MAJORS.

It's important for students to pick a major that matches their interests. There are a lot of different factors that go into choosing a job, and a major helps students prepare for their career. We've found that when students choose a major that matches their interests, you are more likely to stay in college and complete their degree in a timely manner.

CREATE A COLLEGE LIST.

There are more than 4,500 degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States. How do you help your student sort through all these options and select the few institutions they want to learn more about? The type of colleges you consider will depend on your student's goals and expectations.

WRITE A RESUME.

Effective resumes give colleges a greater idea of who students are and what they're interested in pursuing. You may think a resume is only useful when trying to find a job, but some colleges encourage students to include one with their application materials. A resume should illustrate accomplishments beyond what colleges see in a transcript and highlight experiences students weren't able to mention in an essay or application form.

How to Go on a **VIRTUAL** College Campus Visit

RESEARCH THE SURROUNDING CITY.

The community will have an impact on your student's college experience. Do some online research to better understand where they will be living, and learn about the benefits available outside of the campus bubble.

READ STUDENT PROFILES.

Most colleges have a collection of student testimonials on their website or social media channels. Read through these to learn about your student's peers.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE NEWSPAPER.

The student newspaper is written by students and the articles cover stories that interest the students on campus. Look at a recent publication to learn about events and opinions written from your student's peers.

TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR.

Many colleges and universities have a photo or video tour of campus on their website. These can help you get a better feel for the classrooms, dorms, dining halls, and hot spots on campus.

REVIEW THE COLLEGE'S HOMEPAGE.

It seems simple, but a college's homepage often highlights the areas in which they excel. If you don't have time to really dig in, scan the information and note the parts you are most interested in learning more about. Then, bookmark the website so you can review it later.

USE ONLINE MAPS.

Maps found on the Internet can do more than get you from point A to point B. Use it to look at the campus from a bird's-eye view to better understand the size of the campus. Or, try mapping the distance between common places, like the library and the dining hall. Use extra features to check out restaurants, theaters, and coffee shops that are within walking distance of the dorms.

FOLLOW THEIR SOCIAL CHANNELS.

Most colleges have some kind of social media presence. Follow the schools your student is interested in applying to on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube to get brief updates on the happenings around campus.

3 THINGS TO CONSIDER

When Choosing a College

1

TYPE OF SCHOOL.

- **Vocational-technical schools** offer career-oriented programs that can last from a few months to a few years, awarding a certification or license in a specific field
- **Community colleges** offer two-year programs leading to an associate's degree and transfer programs that are similar to freshman and sophomore classes at four-year colleges and universities
- **Colleges** offer academic programs leading to four-year bachelor's degrees
- **Universities** offer four-year and graduate programs in liberal arts, business, engineering, education, medicine, and other fields.

2

TWO-YEAR OR FOUR-YEAR.

Some students choose to start out at a two-year community or technical college. They're often closer to home and more affordable, and they award two-year associate's degrees, which is all that's required in some careers.

However, many careers require the four-year degrees offered by colleges and universities. Research some careers to find out which is the best path for your student.

3

PRIVATE VS PUBLIC.

- **Private colleges and universities** are often smaller, with fewer students, more access to faculty, and better chances of getting into programs and classes. They're also, typically, more expensive.
- **Public colleges** often have a wider range of degree options, but it can be more difficult to get into major programs. However, both kinds of colleges strive to work with students to help them achieve their goals.

Paying for College

FINANCIAL AID Checklist

- START SAVING.**
When it comes to saving for college, every penny counts. Now is the time for your student to take responsibility for their finances. Keep track of spending habits and identify areas to cut back.
- GET FAMILIAR WITH THE PROCESS.**
Understanding the ins and outs of financial aid can be a daunting task. Read articles and talk to the school counselor or friends and family who have gone through the college application process.
- TALK ABOUT FUNDING THEIR FUTURE.**
It's important to know your budget before choosing a school so you can figure out the amount of money you need to secure through financial aid and savings.
- UNDERSTAND COLLEGE COSTS.**
Spend some time researching the typical costs associated with paying for college. Tools like the US Department of Education's College Scorecard can give you a quick snapshot of schools based on program, location, and size.
- COLLECT NECESSARY DOCUMENTS.**
Before your student starts the financial aid application process, gather everything you need to fill out the forms correctly, including Social Security Numbers, driver's license numbers, and W-2 forms.
- COMPLETE THE FAFSA FORM.**
The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) provides students with access to state and federal aid as well as financial assistance from many colleges. Seniors should submit the FAFSA as soon as possible after it opens on October 1.
- APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS.**
Don't forget to fill out scholarship applications not covered by the FAFSA form. To find scholarships, use online search tools like [scholarships.com](https://www.scholarships.com) and talk to the school counselor.
- REVIEW FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE.**
After your student has submitted ACT test scores and completed the FAFSA, the financial aid office at the colleges they've been accepted to will send an award letter outlining what they can provide, which may include grants, scholarships, loans, and/or work study programs.

5 KEYS to Financial Aid Packages

COST OF ATTENDANCE.

The estimated amount of money the college or university charges for tuition and fees. This may also include other educational costs such as books, supplies, and living expenses.

EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC).

This is the number used to define how much financial aid your student is eligible to receive based on your family's income, assets, benefits, size, and the number of family members attending college at the same time.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS (GIFT AID).

Gift aid is money that does not have to be repaid. Keep in mind that there may be academic requirements, work study obligations, or athletic or artistic fulfillments.

LOANS.

Federal and college loans can be critical to your student's ability to earn a higher education. It is important to keep in mind that this money must be repaid and that the terms (interest rate, payment schedule, etc.) can be complicated.

NET COST.

This is the gap between what financial aid covers and the cost of attendance. It's your student's remaining out-of-pocket balance. Net Cost is NOT what college will cost your student, as financial aid often includes loans. Do not use net cost alone to compare which college or university is the least expensive.

As you review your student's financial aid packages, remember to pay special attention to which funds are gift aid and which are loans.

WORKSHEET: Create a College List

Fill out information about each quality listed. After doing research, circle **0** (dislike), **1** (indifferent), or **2** (like) for each. Then, total the points for each school. The colleges with higher totals indicate a better fit based on your student's interests.

COLLEGE NAME:

Major: _____ 0 1 2

Location: _____ 0 1 2

Size: _____ 0 1 2

Cost: _____ 0 1 2

Extracurriculars: _____ 0 1 2

(Insert Own): _____ 0 1 2

Total: _____ + _____ + _____ =

COLLEGE NAME:

Major: _____ 0 1 2

Location: _____ 0 1 2

Size: _____ 0 1 2

Cost: _____ 0 1 2

Extracurriculars: _____ 0 1 2

(Insert Own): _____ 0 1 2

Total: _____ + _____ + _____ =

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Location: _____ 0 1 2

Size: _____ 0 1 2

Cost: _____ 0 1 2

Extracurriculars: _____ 0 1 2

(Insert Own): _____ 0 1 2

Total: _____ + _____ + _____ =

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