

College Lingo: Types of Colleges, Admissions, and Financials

Types of Colleges

Colleges that Change Lives (CTCLs): A group of liberal arts colleges that have been identified as superbly preparing students for a career, graduate school, or life in general.

Community Colleges: Two-year colleges that award Associate's degrees. Some students attend a community college before transferring to a four-year college. This option tends to be more affordable, and also helps students who may not be socially or academically ready for a four-year college.

For-Profit Schools: These are run as businesses with the main goal to make money for the owners. They traditionally have lower graduation rates and higher loan default rates. While they might sometimes be the right choice, in general they are best avoided.

Four-Year Colleges: Schools that award a B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) or B.S. (Bachelor of Science) degree for completing four years of prescribed course work.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities or HBCUs: Institutions that were founded before the Civil Rights era with the purpose of educating African American students.

Honors Programs/Colleges: These are small schools within a larger school that typically offer smaller class sizes, priority for housing, sometimes dedicated housing, easier access to student research, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities. Most honors colleges have an early deadline, have higher academic qualifications for admittance, and require a supplemental application. Honors colleges do not always mean more difficult classes or coursework, just more intimate with a communal structure of support.

Ivy League: A collection of eight colleges in the Northeast, including Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, and Yale. Contrary to popular belief, "Ivy League" refers to the athletic conference itself and is not an indication of academic quality.

Institutes of Technology or "Polytechnic" Colleges: Colleges with strong programs in math, science, and engineering. However, they also offer many strong programs in the humanities and other areas of academia.

Liberal Arts Colleges: Typically smaller institutions with few, if any, graduate programs and/or graduate students. Liberal Arts colleges focus on the undergraduate experience and foster a strong sense of community on campus. The traditional core curriculum on liberal arts includes literature, language, history, philosophy, math, psychology, and science.

Midsized Research Universities: Student populations of roughly 3,000 to 8,000. These colleges fall between large state schools and liberal arts colleges, and usually offer many of the amenities of both.

Private Colleges: Run by non-profit organizations, not by the government. The “sticker price” is usually higher than at state schools, but private colleges often have large endowments that can allow them to offer great scholarships.

Public Colleges (also called state schools): These schools have large student populations of over 10,000 and receive the majority of their funding from the state government. These institutions offer many opportunities to students across an array of disciplines. They often feature vibrant Greek life, Division 1 sports, and large spacious campuses. They have two different prices: the lower one for students who live in-state, and the higher for students who live out-of-state.

Religiously Affiliated Institutions: Colleges with a religious affiliation, which may or may not be particularly apparent to students day to day.

Service Academies: For those interested in a career in the armed services, these academies will prepare them for a life in the military.

Single-Sex Colleges: Colleges with a student population comprising only one gender. While some students worry about not being able to have friends of the opposite sex, there are usually plenty of co-educational opportunities.

Admissions

Admissions Tests (or College Entrance Exams): The SAT and the ACT are standardized tests that most colleges require. The ACT Compass Test is a placement test administered by ACT and generally used by schools that do not require the SAT or ACT in order to place students in first-year classes. “Test-optional” schools do not require an applicant to submit test scores.

Common Application (or Common App): An online application form that allows students to apply to multiple schools. Fill out the application once and submit to any number of the 900+ colleges that accept it. Students must write one essay, and some schools will require additional supplemental essays. There is a separate application fee for each school applied to. Begin your application and save it as you work on it over time. Visit www.commonapp.org.

Common Black College Application: A common application for 61 HBCUs. Apply to all for one \$20 fee. www.commonblackcollegeapp.com.

Class Rank: A measurement of how your academic achievement compares with that of other students in your grade.

Deferred: 1) If you apply to a school Early Action or Early Decision, you will be either admitted, rejected, or deferred. If deferred, your application may be considered in the pool of regular applicants and you might be accepted later.
2) If you have been admitted to a college, you may ask them for a deferred admission, or permission to postpone enrolling there, usually for up to one year.

Demonstrated Interest: Some colleges want to know if a student is sincerely interested in their school. Attending college fairs or recruiter visits to high schools, sending thank you notes, e-mailing or calling specific departments, visiting campus, and alumni interviews are all ways that students can demonstrate their interest. Only about half of colleges report tracking this.

Early Action (EA): An option to apply to a college before the regular deadlines and receive an early admission decision. **EA is not binding**; you do not have to enroll if admitted, and you have until May 1 to inform the school of your decision. EA does not restrict where else you can apply, although some highly selective private schools practice **Restrictive** or **Single Choice** Early Action, which allows you to apply EA only to them and to public schools.

Early Decision (ED): An option to apply to a college before the regular deadlines (October or November) and receive an early admission decision (usually by December). **ED is a binding contract**. If admitted, you are committed to attend that school if their financial aid package meets your needs. If applying ED to a school, you may not apply EA or ED to any other colleges. If admitted ED, you must withdraw any other regular applications.

Early Decision II (EDII): An option available at some schools for early application that falls after the first round of ED applications (usually due in January for an answer in February). Like ED, EDII is binding; you apply to just one college early and agree to attend if admitted.

First-Generation Student: A student whose parents or legal guardians have not completed a bachelor's degree at a four-year college or university. They are the first in their family to attend a four-year college or university.

Foundation or Safety School: A school you will almost certainly get into because your test scores and grades are well above the average in the school's profile. This should also be a school the student knows he or she can afford, making it a financial safety as well.

Gap Year: A break between high school and college when a student takes time for traveling, volunteering, learning a new language, or other experiences that lead to personal growth and maturity. Students usually secure admission to a college in their senior year as usual, then request a deferral for their gap year.

Legacy Applicant: A college applicant with a relative (usually a parent or grandparent) who graduated from that college. Some colleges give preference to legacies.

Need-Aware Admissions: A policy of making admissions decision that sometimes considers the financial circumstances of applicants. While most students will be admitted without regard to their ability to pay, at these schools, some slots will be reserved for those who can pay full tuition.

Need-Blind Admissions: A policy of making admissions decisions without considering the financial circumstances of applicants. Colleges that use this policy may not offer enough financial aid to meet a student's full need.

Open Admission: Colleges grant acceptance to all high school graduates without regard to additional qualifications such as test scores or specific high school courses. Colleges usually administer a placement test such as the COMPASS to place students in appropriate courses.

Reach School: A school where your class rank, GPA, or test scores might be below or barely within the mid-range for their admitted student profile. These are often highly competitive schools that admit a low percentage of applicants.

Residential Learning Communities: Residence halls that group students to live and learn together, sometimes around an academic interest (honors, science, math, etc.) and sometimes around an extracurricular interest (arts, outdoor adventurers, etc.).

Rolling Admission: An admissions system where applications are accepted, evaluated, and decided upon as they are received (from as early as September until as late as the following summer). You still have until May 1 to accept the offer. You can also apply early to any other colleges you like.

Posse Scholars: The Posse Foundation provides four-year, full-tuition leadership scholarships from Posse's partner institutions of higher learning, which in Atlanta are Bard, Boston University, Brandeis, The College of Wooster, and George Washington University. Counselors nominate students in spring of their junior year. Visit www.possefoundation.org.

Probable, Fit, or Match School: A realistic choice where your grades and GPA fit the profile of the middle 50% of students.

Technical College System of Georgia: A network of 23 colleges in Georgia, mostly two-year, which offer technical education, custom business and industry training, and adult education programs. For more information, visit www.tcsq.edu.

Test Optional School: One that does not require the applicant to submit ACT or SAT test scores.

Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG): A formal program between some two-year schools (like GA Perimeter) and four-year schools (including private and public schools like Agnes Scott, GA Tech, and UGA). Admission to the four-year school is guaranteed to students with a minimum GPA at the two-year school.

Transcript: Official record of your course work at a school or college. Your high school transcript is required for college admissions. Request through Parchment, the online system Grady uses. Visit www.parchment.com.

Transfer Student: A student who enrolls in a college after having attended another college.

School Profile: A form created by each high school that provides colleges with information about the student body and opportunities offered at that specific high school. This provides the college a context within which to assess the student's application. See Grady's school profile [here](#).

Undergraduate: College student who has not yet graduated from college.

Weighted Grade Point Average (GPA): a grade point average that's calculated using a system that assigns a higher value to more difficult classes, such as APs.

Waiting List: A list of applicants who were not admitted to a school during the first round of acceptances, but who may be admitted to a college if space becomes available.

Financials

Academic Common Market: If a student wants to study a specialized field that is not offered at their in-state institutions, this program allows them to attend an out-of-state college that does offer that field of study, while paying in-state tuition rates. Administered by the Southern Regional Education Board. For more information, visit www.sreb.org.

Achieve Atlanta Scholarship: Awarded to **all** APS high school graduates with financial need (those who qualify for a Pell grant), and an 80 GPA (75 GPA for two-year school). Everyone who qualifies will receive up to \$5,000. For more information, visit www.achievetlanta.org.

Cost of Attendance: The total amount it will cost you to go to school. This includes tuition (cost of classes), room and board (housing and food), fees, books, transportation, and other personal expenses. Make sure you consider this and not only the cost of tuition.

CSS Financial Aid Profile: This online form will allow you to apply for non-federal financial aid from some schools. It is more in-depth than the FAFSA, and many schools (especially private schools) use this form to collect additional information to assist in financial needs assessment. While FAFSA is only for federal aid, the CSS Profile is for school-based aid.

Endowment: A school's invested assets, which it uses to fund merit- and need-based aid. The larger the endowment, the more money a school has to meet student needs. Private schools generally have larger endowments than public schools.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): The total amount the federal government expects you and your family to pay toward your college expenses each year. This number results from the financial information you provide in your FAFSA. Your EFC is reported on your Student Aid Report (SAR).

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid): How a student applies for federal aid and many other financial aid programs. All students applying for financial aid must complete this form. Apply online at www.fafsa.gov.

Federal Work-Study: A federal student aid program that provides part-time employment while you are enrolled in school to help pay your education expenses.

Fee Waiver: Allows students on free or reduced lunch to submit college applications and register for the SAT or ACT without a fee. See your counselor.

Financial Aid Package: The total amount of financial aid (federal and nonfederal) a student is offered by a college. The school's financial aid staff combines various forms of aid into a “package” to help meet a student’s education costs. May include grants, scholarships, loans, or work-study.

Grant: Financial aid, usually need-based, that does not need to be repaid. Free money.

HOPE Scholarship: A merit-based award available to Georgia residents who have demonstrated academic achievement. Recipients must graduate from high school with a minimum 3.0 GPA and must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative postsecondary GPA to remain eligible. The scholarship provides tuition assistance to students pursuing an undergraduate degree at a HOPE Scholarship-eligible college or university in Georgia.

HOPE Grant: An award available to Georgia residents who are pursuing a certificate or diploma, usually at a two-year school. Recipients must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative postsecondary GPA to remain eligible. The grant provides tuition assistance to students enrolled at a HOPE Grant-eligible college or university in Georgia.

Loan: Loans can be provided either by the government or by private institutions. Government loans generally have more favorable terms than private loans. All loans must be repaid. Government loans can be either subsidized (meaning the government helps pay the interest) or non-subsidized.

Merit Aid: Financial assistance awarded by the college based on a student’s academic and/or personal achievements. This is a grant or scholarship and does not need to be repaid.

Need-based Aid: Financial assistance awarded by the college based on a family and/or student’s ability to meet the costs of education. May include a combination of grants, loans, and work-study.

Net Price Calculator: A tool that allows students to estimate the “net price” of attending a particular college or university. The net price is the “sticker” price (full cost) of attending, minus any grants and scholarships for which students may be eligible. Sticker price includes direct charges (tuition and fees, room and board) and indirect costs (books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses). Most schools prominently display their NPC. To use the NPC, have your most recent student and parent tax returns, earnings statements (W2 forms, recent paycheck stubs), and student’s academic information (GPA, test scores).

Pell Grant: A federal government grant for undergraduate students with financial need. It does NOT have to be repaid. For the 2021-22 award year, the maximum award will be \$6,495.

Student Aid Report (SAR): Summarizes the data from your FAFSA and indicates your EFC. Colleges use this to determine your financial aid package.

Work-Study: The federal Work-Study program provides funds for part-time employment to help needy students finance the costs of postsecondary education. Students who don't receive federal Work-Study funds can still, of course, get a job on campus.

Zell Miller Scholarship: A merit-based award available to Georgia residents, similar to the HOPE Scholarship, but with more stringent academic requirements and greater tuition assistance. A Zell Miller Scholarship recipient must graduate from high school with a minimum 3.7 GPA and a minimum SAT or ACT score. Recipients receive full-tuition assistance while pursuing an undergraduate degree at a Zell Miller Scholarship-eligible college or university in Georgia.

Zell Miller Grant: A merit-based program available to Georgia residents pursuing a certificate or diploma, usually at a two-year school. A Zell Miller Grant recipient must maintain a minimum 3.5 cumulative postsecondary GPA to remain eligible. Recipients receive full-standard tuition assistance while enrolled at a Zell Miller Grant-eligible school in Georgia.