

Quick Guide: Starting Your College Search: There are thousands of colleges to choose from, but which should go on your college list? Use these steps to begin your college search.

Talk to Your Family

Open up a discussion. Talk to your family about your interests and goals. Ask them about their experience with college, if any, and find out what kind of support they can give you. If there are money concerns, it's best to know now.

Make a Wish List

What do you want in a college? Make a list that includes everything from possible majors to location to extracurricular activities. Even if it doesn't seem important, get it down — this exercise will help you get a better idea of what you're looking for.

Get Advice

Talk to a college counselor or your principal about starting your college search. Then talk to people who have been to college — kids from your high school, teachers and relatives — about what college is really like and how they found theirs.

Read Your Mail

Your mailbox and in-box might already be filled with college brochures and emails. If so, browse through them; you may find colleges you haven't thought of. If you aren't getting college mail yet, visit college websites and sign up for information.

Go to College Fairs

You can get a lot of information about different colleges in one place at a college fair. You'll meet college representatives who can talk to you and answer questions about their colleges, and you can sign up for college mailing lists. Check out the [College Fair Checklist](#).

Explore Online

A visit to a college's website can give you an idea of what student life and classes are like. You can take [virtual campus tours](#), check out classes and even contact admission officers and current students with questions.

Visit a Campus

Get a taste of college life by visiting a nearby college. You can explore the campus, talk to college students and get a better sense of what you do and don't want in a college. You'll also start to see how college is different from high school. Learn more about [campus visits](#).

Put It All Together

Use all of the information you've gathered to make a list of the colleges you're interested in. Don't limit yourself. You can use this list to get a better idea of what's important to you in a college and where you want to go.