

GETTING READY FOR COLLEGE – A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR TEENS

About this Guide

Getting Ready for College – A Resource Guide for Teens - is a collection of resources designed to help teens navigate their way towards a successful college experience. This guide is divided into subject areas which teens may face during the admissions process: **General Information Resources; College Entrance Exams; Volunteering; Picking a College; College Application Essays;** and **Financial Aid.** Print resources available from Miami-Dade Public Library System are also included.

You may also search the web using these search terms:

College Admissions*Student Aid*Scholarships* SAT*ACT*CLEP*Preparing for College
*Essay Writing*Volunteering*

GENERAL INFORMATION RESOURCES

The following websites provide a wealth of information on college admissions.

Student Aid on the Web

<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp>

This government website is dedicated to answering college related questions. Whether you are years away, or just days away from starting college, **Student Aid on the Web** provides useful information. Check out the “Applying for College” section for practical information on the necessary coursework you should take prior to applying, how to choose a school, and how to apply for college. Need to find scholarships? Use the “Financial Aid and Scholarship Wizard” to search for scholarships and learn how to balance loans with other funding sources.

College.gov

<http://www.college.gov/wps/portal>

This government website allows you to interact with fellow prospective college students and guides you through the college admissions process. There is information regarding why you should go to college, how to get into college, and an interface with the social networking site Facebook. Use this website to ask others about their experience and discover the benefits of a college education.

Students.gov

<http://www.students.gov/STUGOVWebApp/Public>

Students.gov is a government website that provides you with easy access to information and resources from the U.S. government. All of the information you need is in one place and is compiled from all parts of the government. Topic areas include choosing a college, career information, and volunteer opportunities. This is a great general resource website that can act as a portal to other authoritative information from a variety of different subject areas.

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

If you are going to college, you will need to take a test or two. Use these websites to prepare for those tests, so that you can score your best!

College Board

<http://www.collegeboard.com/>

The College Board publishes the SAT, PSAT, AP, and CLEP tests. Their website provides detailed information about these tests, online registration, and official practice tests.

ACT, Inc.: A Student Site for ACT Test Takers

<http://www.actstudent.org/>

In addition to the SAT, some colleges also require the ACT which is just another college entrance test. This website provides information about the test, and the ability to make an ACT student account to keep track of your scores. There is also a student blog to help you communicate with your fellow ACT takers, test preparation information, and online registration.

Learning Express Library – Online Testing Database

www.mdpls.org – “Databases and More” – “LearningExpress Library”

Access this free resource using your Miami-Dade Public Library System library card. Once you create an individual login and password, which will be used to track your testing progress, you will have access to many online testing resources. Most colleges and universities require either an SAT or ACT score, and you can take practice tests for those exams through **LearningExpress Library** as many times as you want. If some of your subject areas are not at the level you need them to be, you can take individual skills tests. Once accepted to your college or university, you may be able to “test out” of basic course requirements, and practice tests for the CLEP, CUNY, THEA and TOEFL are also available. Get a jump start with the PSAT & NMSQT. The **LearningExpress Library** has tests and skills improvement for you as well. Just go to the “College Preparation” section of LearningExpress Library to get prepared for college.

VOLUNTEERING

In order to graduate from a Miami-Dade County high school, students must have a certain number of volunteer/community service hours. Many colleges also require volunteer or community service hours. Choosing the right place to volunteer can be the start of a rewarding and life-long commitment to helping others in your community. Regardless of your motivation, these websites will help you find a place to volunteer.

Volunteer Match: Where Volunteering Begins

<http://www.volunteermatch.org>

Volunteer Match is a not-for-profit organization that matches volunteers with volunteer sites. This website offers several search functions so that you can find the right place to volunteer.

American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org/en/volunteer>

American Red Cross is an emergency response organization. This website allows you to search for volunteer opportunities with the American Red Cross.

PICKING A COLLEGE

Not sure where you want to go to college? Use these websites as a starting place to get you to think about what you want out of your college experience, so that you can find the college that best suits your educational pursuits, recreational hobbies, and financial circumstances.

U.S. News and World Report Best College Rankings

<http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges>

U.S. News and World Report is a magazine that compiles statistical and opinion-surveyed data regarding colleges and universities worldwide. This website is the portal to the vast array of

information collected in order to rank colleges. Ranking categories are defined. You can personalize searches based on location, cost, campus setting, campus life, and other items in the “advance search” area. These rankings will show you what elements go into picking the right college for you. Use this website to start creating a list of colleges you want to apply to. This is the free version; an upgraded version can be purchased for a nominal fee.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Career Information for Kids

<http://www.bls.gov/k12/index.htm>

The Bureau of Labor Statistics is part of the United States Department of Labor and collects detailed information regarding many things, including careers. This website asks, “What are you interested in?” and then guides you through what educational requirements are associated with numerous careers. Depending on your anticipated area of study, this information can be used to select a college that specializes in the degree you need to achieve the career you want. Or, use this website to guide you to an appropriate major and courses at any liberal arts college.

COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAYS

Many colleges require that you write an admissions essay; some colleges also require subject-specific essays depending on your anticipated area of study. Use these websites to hone your writing skills.

College Board: College Essay topics and Skills – Sample College Essays

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/essay-skills/>

The College Board publishes the SAT, PSAT, AP, and CLEP tests. In addition, the College Board provides this website dedicated to helping you write a successful college application essay. Follow this guide to decide on subject matter, so that your essay will reflect who you are.

Carleton College: Admissions: Essay Tips

http://apps.carleton.edu/admissions/apply/essay_tips/

Most colleges provide prospective students with information about how to write an admissions essay. These top 15 tips from Carleton College are a good example of what most colleges expect. If your colleges do not provide similar information on their websites, you can use these tips as a guideline for writing an essay. Check with your colleges for similar Tips and essay writing instructions

Writing Guides

<http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/>

This writing guide has several sections which cover various subjects. In order to apply for certain degrees and programs, some colleges require a separate essay. This site also provides general information about how to improve your writing. Because this writing guide is hosted by Colorado State University, you can be confident that the information and advice provided will assist you in drafting excellent college admissions essays.

FINANCIAL AID

Use these websites to find sources of funding for your college education. These are portals of information regarding loans and scholarships.

FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

Everyone pays to go to college, and whether you are doing so with cash, loans, or scholarships, you will have to fill out the FAFSA. This government website contains detailed instructions on documents needed and guides you through submitting your FAFSA online.

Students.gov Scholarship Search

<http://www.students.gov/STUGOVWebApp/Public?topicID=15&operation=topic>

This government website provides a scholarship search tool. Scholarships listed are those offered by government and not-for-profit agencies. Application procedures and deadlines will accompany each scholarship description. You can search this website with confidence, knowing that all the scholarships linked on from this website are valid funding sources.

PRINT RESOURCES

Through Miami-Dade Public Library System's online catalog, you can also search for college admissions resources in print material. Here are some sample print resources to get you started. Works are cited in MLA format, with name of author, title, and publication information. The call number has been added at the end so that you can find these easily on the shelf. Descriptive annotations for these titles were taken from the covers or inside flap.

Bender, Sheila. [*Perfect Phrases for College Application Essays*](#). New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 2008. Print. Call #Y 378.1616BEND.

"The most daunting part of a college application – the essay – requires students to present themselves at their very best. The trick is to communicate exactly what you want to say, with the style and panache that display each writer's individual intelligence, creatively, and competence."

[College Money Handbook](#). Lawrenceville, NJ: Peterson's, 2008. Print. Call # Y 378.3PETE.

"Research the undergraduate financial aid awarded at more than 2,100 colleges and universities – including types of aid, percentages of students applying for and receiving aid, and average aid packages."

Fiske, Edward B. and Hammond, Bruce G. [*Fiske What to do When for College: A student and Parent's Guide to Deadlines, Planning and the Last Two Years of High School*](#). Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2008. Print. Call # Y 378.161FISK.

"All of the dates and deadlines college applicants and their frazzled parents need to know are in one place – Fiske What to Do When for College 2008-2009. Written by the authors of the acclaimed Fiske Guide to Colleges, this planner will guide you through the SAT and ACT, make sure your applications are in on time, and help you save money."

[Four-Year Colleges: Nearly 2,500 Colleges in the U.S. and Canada and Abroad](#). Lawrenceville, NJ: Peterson's, 2008. Print. Call # Y 373.73PETE.

"The latest on student life, majors, tuition, athletic programs and more . . . Financial aid tips and strategies – how to get your fair share . . . The lowdown on college visits and application essays . . . At-a-glance listings of majors, entrance difficulty, and cost ranges . . . Insight into distance education."

Jager-Hyman, Joie. [*Fat Envelope Frenzy: One Year, Five Promising Students, and the Pursuit of the Ivy League Prize*](#). New York: Harper-Collins, 2008. Print. Call # Y 378.1056JAGE.

"A former Ivy League admissions officer, Joie Jager-Hyman follows five bright and eager high schoolers – students from diverse ethnic, social, and financial backgrounds – as they each put their best foot forward on the road they hope will lead them to the hallowed halls of Harvard University."

Melnik, Jan. [*One Hour College Application Essay: Write your college admission essay today*](#). Indianapolis, IN: JIST Works, 2008. Print. Call # Y 378.161MELN.

"Deadline looming? Need to write your college application essay now? Don't fret and sweat. One-Hour College Application Essay comes to the rescue. In about an hour, you can write a great essay and get on with your college search."

[Paying for College](#). Lawrenceville, NJ: Peterson's, 2008. Print. Call # Y 378.3PAYI.
"Answers to all your questions about financial aid, scholarships, tuition payment plans, and everything else you need to know."

Proctor, Pam. **[The College Hook](#)**. New York: Center Street, 2007. Print. Call #Y 378.1616PROC.
"The proven program for packaging and selling yourself to the college of your dreams!"

[Scholarships, Grants & Prizes: Millions of Awards Worth Billions of Dollars](#). Lawrenceville, NJ: Peterson's, 2009. Print. Call # Y 378.3097PETE.
"Find awards you are eligible for based on academic interests, career goals, talent, religious affiliation, ethnicity, and more. Get all the details you need, including award amounts, deadlines, and contact information. Plan your strategy to get the most money for your education."