

College admissions for homeschooled students

Early preparation is the key to helping homeschooled students succeed in the college admissions process. The information below can help homeschooled students and parents/legal guardians understand what they can do to best prepare.

My to-do list

Freshman year

- Start a log that tracks your courses and coursework
- Plan rigorous coursework for the next four years

Sophomore year

- Start looking at college admissions requirements to plan necessary courses
- Start visiting colleges (either in-person or online)
- Attend virtual college tours if in-person tours are not an option
- Look for SAT and ACT test dates and registration deadlines

Junior year

- Take the PSAT /NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)
- Get letters of recommendation
- Start gathering all the info that will be required for college applications
- Take the SAT and/or ACT

Senior year

- Send in college applications
- Choose your college
- The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available October 1; complete it as soon as possible

College admissions and the acceptance of homeschooling

Homeschooling a student through high school is a trend that may not yet have full reception in college admissions offices. Different institutions will have different opinions about whether a homeschooled student is a good candidate for admission. Admissions requirements generally include an essay, test scores and an official high school transcript; however, homeschooled students may be required to provide additional support materials.

High school curriculum and college success

College admissions requirements usually insist that prospective students take necessary and challenging courses in high school. Students must complete minimal levels of study in certain subjects to be considered for admission. However, most schools recognize that students who complete courses with a higher level of difficulty, regardless of the course type, are better prepared for the challenges of a college education. Homeschooling has the advantage of tremendous flexibility, which allows for a range of coursework and varying levels of difficulty.

Tracking application deadlines and test dates

High school counselors offer support and information during the college admissions process—a benefit that homeschooling lacks. Homeschool parents/legal guardians and students need to be one step ahead in researching application deadlines and test dates, which can come up quickly. Prior knowledge of these will eliminate missed opportunities. Start researching college as early as sophomore year, searching for scholarship options, admissions deadlines, testing dates, financial aid options, etc. Early college planning is essential.

Taking standardized tests

While some institutions do not require standardized test scores for admissions, this may not apply equally to homeschool students. Homeschool students may want to take standardized tests like the PSAT, ACT and SAT as early as possible. Allow more time for retaking the tests or picking up the coursework needed to improve test scores.

Check www.fairtest.org/university/ optional for a current list of test-optional colleges. This list is ever-changing. Always verify test requirements with the college's admissions counselor.

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Paying for college and financial aid

When planning a college budget, it is helpful to identify the different resources available. Tuition payments can be manageable with the proper resources. Financial aid is available in the form of grants, scholarships, work-study and loans. The chances of securing financial aid are greater when you apply early.

To learn more about how to pay for college, visit ECMC's "Paying for college" resource guide available in English at www.ecmc.org/students/documents/paying-for-college-english.pdf and in Spanish at www.ecmc.org/students/documents/paying-for-college-spanish.pdf.

You may also want to research special scholarships and grants for homeschooled students. Try starting your search with homeschooling associations in your area.

Official documentation of high school coursework

Evaluation of a student's candidacy for admission requires official high school transcripts. This document shows the coursework that the student has completed or attempted. The transcripts must include any coursework pursued outside of the homeschool curriculum, such as through a local high school or community college. Most colleges also require grade reports up through the first semester of the senior year.

Letters of recommendation

Because of their unique education experience, homeschooled students may need to identify adults other than parents/legal guardians who can write their letters of recommendation for college admissions. Brainstorm about coaches, youth leaders, mentors, etc., who would be qualified to speak about the strengths that make you a good candidate for college admissions.

Pursuing college admissions from a homeschooling background may include extra steps, but it is quite doable. Inquire with colleges of interest early in the high school years about their admissions requirements. Then plan your high school course load appropriately. Regularly check back with these schools to make sure your homeschool curriculum is still tracking with these requirements, and make adjustments as necessary.

Additional resources

Below are additional online resources to assist you in preparing for college admissions. Search the sites for "college admissions" or "entry requirements" for homeschooled students.

College Board: www.collegeboard.org
Homeschool.com: www.homeschool.com

Need more information?

The College Place is here to help you with free college-planning resources and personal advice. Visit our website at www.ecmc.org/TCP.