



COLLEGE RESEARCH WORKSHEET

WHERE TO APPLY?

A tool to help students research and identify the colleges that are a good match and fit.



**A STUDENT
RESOURCE GUIDE**

ACAC
American College Application Campaign

ACT Center for
Equity in Learning

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→ UNDERSTANDING FIT, MATCH, AND COST

Prior to submitting a college application, you need to research the various college options you have available. During your research, there are three important things to consider: **fit**, **match**, and **cost**. Use the information and resources within this document to help research and identify the colleges to which you want to apply.



DOES THE COLLEGE FIT WITH YOUR PREFERENCES?

There are several factors to consider with regard to fit such as the size of the school, the location of the school, services available on campus, and how these align with the characteristics you want in a college. Also, it is important to consider the college's graduation rates and retention rates (the number of students who return to school for their second year) when researching what a college has to offer you. Finally, does the school offer your major?

If you're not sure what you'd like to major in, there are a number of college and career planning resources your school may already be using. Ask your school counselor if they have a preferred tool. If not, Encourage is the nation's largest free college and career planning program. The Encourage app ([encourageme.com](https://www.encourageme.com)) for students is available online, iOS and Android. Explore college and scholarship matches, learn about careers, set goals, and track your progress with Encourage.



DOES THE COLLEGE MATCH WITH YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD?

For this, you'll need to understand how your high school grade point average (GPA), your college entrance exam scores (SAT and/or ACT), and the courses you've taken in high school match to the college's entrance requirements AND to the average GPAs and scores of students admitted. Keep in mind that what a school requires could be different from the averages of who they admit. You should plan to apply to at least four schools, making sure you have applications going to each of the following types of schools:

- **REACH SCHOOL** – a reach school does not mean out of reach, it just means that the school may be more selective (look at the percent of applicants admitted) and your academic record may be on the lower end of what the college typically accepts. In other words, you may be admitted to this school. We recommend at least 1-2 applications to reach schools.
- **TARGET SCHOOL** – typically, at a target school, your academic record will be similar to the “average” student admitted to this school. In other words, you are likely to be admitted. We recommend at least 2 applications to target schools.
- **LIKELY SCHOOL** – a likely school will usually have either open enrollment (meaning anyone who submits a completed application is admitted) or will be considered a “less selective” institution. Your academic record will exceed the institution's requirements and averages for students admitted. In other words, you will almost definitely be admitted. We recommend at least 1 application to a likely school.
- **LOCAL SCHOOL** – ensure that at least one of the schools on your list is local to you. If possible, this should be a school you can attend while living at or close to home in the event your circumstances require you to do so now or in the future.



WHAT ABOUT COST?

Finally, it is important for you to understand the cost of the institutions to which you would like to apply. Keep in mind that the “sticker” price of a college may be very different from the “net” price of a college after you consider the amount of aid that is typically available to students.

Check out these net price calculators to help you calculate your cost or check if the colleges you are interested in have a similar calculator.

- **U.S. Department of Education:** <https://collegecost.ed.gov/net-price>
- **College Board's Big Future:**
<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/focus-on-net-price-not-sticker-price>

→ NEXT STEPS

Use the worksheet on the next few pages to think through what type of college you would like to attend. The worksheet will also ask you to detail your academic record by providing information on the various academic indicators that many colleges consider during the application review process. If you are unsure of any of the information requested, be sure to work with your school counselor so you have the most accurate information possible.

After the worksheet, you will find a table that you can complete with information specific to the colleges you are researching. Remember, you should plan to apply to at least one to two reach, one to two target, one likely, and one local college.

Students can utilize the following national resources, your state's college website, or the website of the college(s) you are interested in learning more about to conduct your research.

- **Download the Encourage app:** <https://encourageme.com>
- **College Board's Big Future:** <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>
- **U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard:** <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>

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→ THE COLLEGE RESEARCH WORKSHEET

Use the completed tables to help you identify what colleges you would like to apply to!



IDENTIFYING YOUR FIT

Location

1) Where would your ideal college be located (check one)?

In-state Out-of-state Either

2) How important is location to you (check one)?

Very Important Important Not Important

3) Distance from hometown

less than 10 miles between 10 to 20 miles more than 20 miles

4) How important is living on or off campus to you (check one)?

Very Important... Important... Not Important... To Live On Campus

Very Important... Important... Not Important... To Commute To Campus

Type Of School

5) In what kind of setting would your ideal college be (check one)?

Rural Suburban Urban Virtual or Online

6) How important is setting to you (check one)?

Very Important Important Not Important

7) How big would your ideal college be (check one)?

Large >10,000 Medium 5,000-10,000 Small < 5,000

8) How important is college size to you (check one)?

Very Important Important Not Important

Support Services

9) What services would be available on your ideal campus (check all that apply)?

- Tutoring Minority Student Services Academic Support Services
 Career Counseling Employment Services Disability Services

What other things are important to you through your ideal college?

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- What do you want to major in? _____
- Is the campus co-ed or single gender ?
- Does the campus have the diversity I want? Yes No
- Do the majority of students live on-campus or are they commuters ?

Use the space below to identify any other characteristics your ideal college would have.

ACAC recommends you utilize one of the college research websites mentioned on page 4 or chat with your school counselor for additional resources.



MATCH - YOUR ACADEMIC RECORD

Academics

If you don't know some of this information, check with your school counselor!

My grade point average is: _____	My SAT Total score is: _____
My ACT Composite score is: _____	

By graduation, how many years of the following classes will you have taken?

- English Math Social Studies
 World Languages Lab Sciences Visual or Performing Arts
 Electives



COLLEGE MATCH AND FIT TABLE

Instructions: Use one of the college research resources outlined on page 4 of this document to search for colleges that “fit” and “match”. Or, search for a specific college to which you think you would like to apply to learn more about them. For each college, complete this table to determine if the college is a good fit and match for you and whether the costs seem reasonable based on your anticipated resources.

NAME OF COLLEGE: _____

Location of college (City, State)	<input type="checkbox"/> This college is local to me
Size of college	
Number of undergraduate students	
Setting of college	
Do they offer my major?	
Percent of students that return sophomore year	
4-year or 2-year?	
Public or Private?	
Co-ed Women only? Men only?	
Students live on campus or commute?	
Diversity of campus	
Graduation Rate	
What services are available on campus that are important to me?	



COLLEGE MATCH AND FIT TABLE (continued)

How well do you think this college fits your preferences?

- Excellent Fit Good Fit Okay Fit
 Somewhat of a Fit Does Not Fit

Comparing my academic record to this college, this would be a Reach, Target, or Likely college for me (see definitions on page 3)?

- Reach Target Likely

Total estimated cost to attend	
My calculated net price	
Percent of freshmen with need who received aid	
Percent of need met	
Percent of need met through scholarships/grants	
Percent of need met through loans	

I plan to apply to this college: Yes No If Yes, Application Deadline: _____