

KIDS **2** CAREERS



YOU'VE DECIDED TO GO TO COLLEGE... NOW WHAT?!

Once you make the decision on **HOW TO LEARN AFTER HIGH SCHOOL**, there are many steps you need to take.

Below are **9 TIPS** that will help make the transition to college a little bit easier:

↑ Preparing Early

Often we aren't sure exactly what we want to do when we begin high school. In order to maximize options, students and families are encouraged to become familiar with important planning steps in middle school, so they can make informed decisions regarding elective classes, enrichment programs, extracurricular activities, and leadership experiences as early as 9th grade.

WAYS TO PREPARE:

- Enrolling in 3-4 units of world language
- Enrolling in enrichment and career exploration programs
- Exploring interests and passions through extracurricular activities
- Volunteering, working, and taking on leadership roles

2 Fit & Match

Narrowing down the search based on your interests is what we call Fit. Match looks at how your GPA, test scores, extracurricular activities and leadership experiences match the profile admissions is looking for. You want to apply to colleges where you have great **Fit and Match**.

Keep in mind, colleges also admit a certain number of students to each major and individual school within the campus - this can be an especially important consideration for competitive schools and early applications.

HELPFUL TOOLS:

- Using the [Interests, Values, & Activities](#) template, map out what is unique and important to you
- Assess your *Fit and Match*, compare colleges, prioritize your choices, and track important deadlines using the [Comparing Colleges & Tracking Deadlines](#) template



KIDS 2 CAREERS

Continued: YOU'VE DECIDED TO GO TO COLLEGE... NOW WHAT?!

3 Early Decision, Early Action, & Restrictive Early Action

If you have identified select schools that are a great [Fit and Match](#), then you can consider applying early through Early Action or Early Decision. Some schools only allow you to apply to a single school early, while others allow you to apply to more than one. There are some cases where you might find out about one early decision before another school's early decision deadline. Each school differs, so read the rules carefully for each school where you wish to apply.

EARLY APPLICATION OPTIONS:

- Early Decision (ED):** If accepted you must withdraw all other applications and commit to this school
- Early Action Restrictive (EA-R):** You can select another school, but can only apply to one school early
- Early Action (EA):** You receive an early response & can decide where you want to go by May 1

4 How to Narrow

Deciding where to go to school is a very personal decision. There are a number of factors to consider to help simplify the process so your best options rise to the top. Make a list of all the things you find important, then rank them using ACPE's [Interests, Values, and Activities](#) template. After completing this template, use ACPE's [Comparing Colleges & Tracking Deadlines](#) template to compare and prioritize your favorite campuses and track deadlines.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Major, Minor, Certificates and specializations
- Sports (not only what you play, but what you want to see)
- Clubs & Activities
- School and City Size
- Weather & Location
- Admission Requirements
- Cost & Financial Aid Options
- Deadlines
- Is it a [match](#), [reach](#), or a [safety](#)

5 Letters of Recommendation

As students move through high school, building positive relationships with educators makes it much easier for students when it comes time to request [letters of recommendation](#) senior year. When requesting letters of recommendation, students should always provide the following to recommenders:

- Email a request with appropriate links and deadlines
- Remind them of times when you learned a lot or excelled in their class or on a project
- Remind them of your GPA, career aspirations, extracurriculars, leadership experiences
- Remind them the letter should be **GENERIC** for multiple schools and financial aid applications
- Remind them you might need to send separate links later, for additional deadlines
- Send them your updated resume (hopefully you have an updated version in AKCIS)
- Thank them in advance and sign with a formal signature, including your first, last name, phone, email
- Thank them AGAIN after receiving acceptance letters/scholarship awards and making your decision



Continued: YOU'VE DECIDED TO GO TO COLLEGE... NOW WHAT?!

6 Essay Tips

Writing essays can feel daunting, and it's always a great idea to start early! This also allows time for reflection, review by an educator who knows you, and review by a friend or family member who can confirm if the written voice really sounds like you. Starting early also allows time to research activities, academic programs, professors, and research opportunities in preparation for the **WHY THIS SCHOOL** essay.

ESSAY TIPS:

- Schools usually require 0-5 essays for the application process
- The **personal statement** (or essay) should really reflect who you are
- See if you can include ALL 5 senses in your writing - this can really bring an essay to life
- Review sample essays from accepted students
- Remember, one essay may be modified and used for multiple applications
- The **Common App** (commonapp.org) allows students to use a single system to apply to many different colleges

7 Testing Options

Although many colleges have moved to Test Optional, the **Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS)** does require the **FAFSA** and **SAT, ACT**, or **WorkKeys Assessments** (for career & technical training only) in order to qualify.

TESTING TIPS:

- Taking the **PSAT 8-9 & PSAT10** in high school helps students get familiar with the SAT
- Junior year is the year to take the **PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT)**
- If you miss the October PSAT/NMSQT Junior year, taking the SAT before April 1 Senior year will count
- Take the SAT in summer before Senior year & 1-2 times Senior year if you want to improve your score
- There is a fee to take the SAT, however you may be eligible for a waiver; check with your counselor
- Some schools require your best score, some require ALL scores, some are test optional; confirm with your schools
- There may be a cost associated with sending your test score reports to each school. Research your options for waivers and/or deadlines to request score reports.



KIDS 2 CAREERS

Continued: YOU'VE DECIDED TO GO TO COLLEGE... NOW WHAT?!

8 FAFSA, Financial Aid, & Funding Your Education

Paying for college can feel overwhelming - from figuring out costs, to finding the funds and making payments. There are many important steps you will need to take and being informed early will help!

TIPS:

- Visit ACPE for assistance in completing the **FAFSA** in December/January.
- Most students will need loans, even with scholarships and grants
- Most students will qualify for **federal loans** (subsidized and unsubsidized)
- ACPE offers **low-cost education loans for Alaskans** to use both in-state and out-of-state
- Loan applications should be submitted 1-2 months before tuition payments are due
- Taxes filed Sophomore year will be used when filing the FAFSA Senior Year
- Taxes filed Junior year will be used when filing the FAFSA in Year 1 of postsecondary education
- Taxes filed Senior year will be used when filing the FAFSA in Year 2 of postsecondary education

9 Paying Fees, Registering for Classes & Moving In

Once you receive your acceptance letter, you will have more work to do before settling into college. Please remember that once you turn 18, your college and medical providers cannot share any personal information about you with your family without your permission. Some students find it helpful to have assistance during this time of transition and sign forms granting permission to share information with family. Your school will have different forms available for you to sign if you choose to let your family access your education related information.

STAYING INFORMED:

- Monitor your portal and campus email regularly for important messages
- Record all new deadlines on your digital calendar and consider sharing with your family
- If you will live in dorms, you may be able to create a profile and search for a like-minded roommate
- Freshmen could be required to live on campus; Sometimes Freshmen can't bring cars to campus

REGISTERING FOR CLASSES:

- Meet with your college advisor in advance of selecting courses
- Remember many courses will have pre-requisite courses you must take first
- Classes fill up fast, so have a few schedule options available at registration time

- Take classes when they are available; You might not get the perfect time you hoped for
- When registering for classes, be patient if the system crashes and try again until you get in

SHARING PERSONAL INFORMATION WITH FAMILIES:

- Consider asking admissions what forms allow family access to information
- FERPA consent forms allow family to discuss your academic matters with school
- HIPPA consent forms allow medical issues to be discussed with family
- You can decide whether or not to give your family access to a Parent Portal or other information
- You might need to fill out a form granting access so your family could help pay a bill