

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS CHECKLIST

Remember: Keep copies of everything. If you're sending applications or other important documents by mail, you might want to spend a little extra money and send them return receipt requested. This will let you know when the school received the documents. Some of the items on this list might not apply to every school. For example, few public colleges require an entrance essay; many private colleges do. You should check to make sure that people writing recommendations or sending transcripts do so by the deadline. And you shouldn't wait until the deadline to send something in — send it in early just in case something goes wrong.

Item	Deadline	Sent/Taken
<input type="checkbox"/> Admissions application	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> High school transcript	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Letters of recommendation	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entrance essay	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Admissions test		
<input type="checkbox"/> ACT	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> SAT	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fees and deposits		
<input type="checkbox"/> Application	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Enrollment	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	_____	_____

FINANCIAL AID CHECKLIST

Remember: Keep copies of everything. When you file your FAFSA online at www.fafsa.gov, be sure to print out a hard copy for your records. If you're applying for scholarships and grants administered by the school that require a separate application, you should send the application return receipt requested. And, as always, don't wait until the last minute — things can go wrong. Computers crash, and mail occasionally gets lost. If you file early and keep track of what you've been doing, you have time to fix things.

Item	Deadline	Sent
<input type="checkbox"/> FAFSA	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> School financial aid form	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Local scholarships		
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____

SENIOR CALENDAR

August/September

- Ask colleges you're interested in to send you admissions information.
- If you're applying for Early Decision, start filling out the forms to meet the college's deadline.
- If you haven't taken the ACT/SAT or if you think you can do better, register. See page 4 for dates.
- Get with your counselor to find out about the financial aid sources available to you. Use *Affording Higher Education*, a publication of KHEAA–Alabama available at www.alstudentaid.com.

October/November

- Meet with college admissions representatives at college fairs or when they visit your school.
- Attend a financial aid seminar if your school offers one. Read pages 23–24 about scams first.
- If you haven't picked a college yet, narrow your list by visiting schools and talking with students. Discuss it with your parents too.
- If you're going Early Decision, most schools want the applications submitted about now.
- If you're going through the regular admissions process, it's time to ask teachers to write recommendations and to polish your admissions essay if you have to write one.
- Check with each school's financial aid office to see what financial aid forms they require in addition to the FAFSA.

December/January

- Make sure your applications were received on time. See the previous page for admissions and financial aid checklists.
- Ask your parents to get their tax return information ready so you can submit the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1.
- If you went Early Decision and were accepted, withdraw your applications from other schools.

February/March

- Submit midyear grades if the colleges you've applied to require them.
- Send in any deposits that are required.
- If you've been accepted by more than one college but haven't heard from your first choice, contact that school about a decision before making any nonrefundable deposits to other schools.
- If you've decided which school you want to attend, notify that college of your decision. Let any other colleges that have accepted you know about your decision.

April/May

- Follow up on your financial aid package. See page 37 for information about comparing packages.
- If you're going to need student loans, compare the benefits offered by the various lenders your college uses.
- Take AP tests if you're enrolled in AP courses.
- If you're on a waiting list at a school you really want to attend, ask the director of admissions how to strengthen your application.

June

- Let your high school counselor know which college you're going to so the school can send in final grades, class rank and proof of graduation.
- Send thank-you notes to counselors, teachers and others who helped you through the process.
- Prepare a budget for the coming school year.

Instructions: If you're considering more than three schools, print out several copies of this page before proceeding. Select the schools for evaluation and write their names on the slanted lines. Answer the questions for each school. (If the answer is "yes," mark a "✓" in the column. If the answer is "no," make an "X" in the column.) What are your findings?

SCHOOL EVALUATION

		Does the school offer the educational program you want?
		If you're admitted to the school, are you also admitted into the educational program you want?
		Is the school accredited by an agency accepted by the U.S. Department of Education (e.g., Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Council on Occupational Education, Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology, National Accrediting Commission of Cosmetology Arts and Sciences, Association for Biblical Higher Education)?
		Is the school licensed or approved by the appropriate state government agency (e.g., Alabama Commission on Higher Education, Department of Postsecondary Education, Alabama State Department of Education, Alabama Board of Cosmetology, Alabama Board of Funeral Service)?
		Is the school approved for federal and state financial aid programs?
		Does the school have the resources to provide you the education you need to be successful in the work force? Look for up-to-date training devices, developmental course work and/or tutorial assistance, general education courses (e.g., English and math), educational qualifications of the faculty, and library holdings and resources related to your field of study.
		Will completion of the educational program qualify you for a job? An exam and/or apprenticeship may also be required. If a licensing examination is required for employment in your career field (e.g., nursing, cosmetology, or law), do a high percentage of the school's graduates pass the exam?
		Does the school have a job placement program? Is it free? Are a high percentage of graduates placed in jobs? Recent graduates and potential employers can help you answer these questions. A good school will give you a list of contacts.
		Does the typical starting salary for a new graduate of the school's educational program compare favorably with that of graduates from the same educational program at other schools? Does it meet with your expectation? If the school provides such data, ask to see detailed statistics substantiating the school's claim.
		Does the enrollment contract (if required) clearly indicate the complete cost of your course of study? Are all necessities (books, room and board, transportation, tools, uniforms, etc.) included in the cost? Schools must make printed cost-of-education information readily available to prospective students upon request.
		Does the enrollment contract contain language to protect you if the school closes or discontinues your program? Call the Better Business Bureau in the area to find out if the school has had problems.
		Does the school have a printed refund policy? Good schools have a reasonable refund arrangement for students who withdraw from school.
		Does the school have a low withdrawal rate? A high rate may be a warning sign.
		Will credits earned at one school be acceptable for transfer to another? If you plan to enter one school but transfer to another school, will your credits transfer?
		Does the school have a low student loan default rate? Call the U.S. Department of Education at (800) 433-3243 to check a school's default rate. A high default rate may be a warning sign.

FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE COMPARISON

Take the time to fill out this form for a comparison of all the schools you are considering. This will give you an idea of what your best value is. Sometimes the most expensive schools have scholarships that will bring them in line with others. So don't limit yourself, consider all your choices and compare.



School A	School B	School C	
Need Calculation			
			Tuition and Fees
			Books and Supplies
			Room and Board
			Transportation
			Personal Expenses
			Total Cost of Attendance (varies from school to school)
			Minus Estimated Family Contribution (remains the same)
			Financial Need
Financial Aid Package			
			Federal Pell Grant
			Other Grants
			Scholarships
			Work-Study
			Federal Perkins Loan
			Federal Stafford Loan
			Other Loans
			Total Financial Aid Package
			Unmet Need (Financial Need minus Total Financial Aid Package)