



ADMISSIONS 101



ACT & SAT | COLLEGE APPLICATIONS | DEGREE OPTIONS

EXPLORE ▶ PLAN ▶ APPLY

COLLEGE IS POSSIBLE.

Thinking about college? Well, you should be! College graduates are more likely to be employed, earn more money, and find work in careers they love.

Most workforce and education leaders use the word “college” to include any type of postsecondary education, or education and training beyond high school. That means you have many options when it comes to attending college, but it also means that a high school diploma is no longer enough.

Every West Virginia student should plan to complete some type of education beyond high school. Read this guide carefully to learn how to get to college.



GET THE FULL ADMISSIONS 101 GUIDE ONLINE!

The full Admissions 101 guide has more information regarding the admissions process for West Virginia students, including tips on taking entrance exams, planning timelines for high school juniors and seniors, a breakdown of college lingo, and college fit worksheets. Check it out online at cfwv.com.



College for West Virginia (CFWV) is proud to support West Virginia's attainment goal to equip 60% of West Virginians with a certificate or degree by 2030. Find out more at wvclimb.com.

INTRODUCTION TO ADMISSIONS

TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

Public two-year colleges offer two-year associate degree programs in a wide variety of areas, as well as certificate programs that can usually be completed in six to 18 months.

Public four-year colleges offer bachelor's degree programs that usually take four years to complete. Many offer master's and doctoral degree programs.

Private, non-profit schools offer a wide variety of degrees and programs. Tuition and fees are often higher, but many are able to offer large scholarships through funds provided by their donors.

Public career and technical education centers offer training to high school students and adults seeking high school equivalency, specialized licenses, or certificates.

For-profit schools operate as businesses that often offer programs in more convenient time frames, but credits may not be recognized by other colleges, and tuition/fees are usually higher.



YOU HAVE "COLLEGE" OPTIONS!

The word "college" isn't exclusive to traditional brick-and-mortar schools. College means education or training beyond high school. That includes certificates, career/technical schools, apprenticeships, two- and four-year degrees, and the military!

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Finding the school or college that fits your needs and interests is incredibly important. It can be the difference between a positive and negative college experience — and whether or not you graduate.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

- ✓ **Programs and majors.** Does the college offer the academic program you want to pursue?
- ✓ **Academics.** Will you be attending a college that will challenge you academically?
- ✓ **Finances.** How much will you pay to attend the college?
- ✓ **Success rates.** What is the school's graduation rate? How likely are its graduates to get a job in their fields?
- ✓ **Environment.** Do you feel excited to be on campus? Do you feel safe?
- ✓ **Location.** Do you like the town and area where the school or college is located?

DISREGARD THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

- X **Your friends' choices.** Choosing a path for your future is a personal decision. Going to school with your friends might sound like fun, but their choices might not be right for you.
- X **Sports records.** Everyone likes to be part of a winning team, but unless you're a student athlete, choosing a school based on its sports record is a bad idea.
- X **Sticker price.** Before you rule out a college based on its cost, talk to a financial aid representative at the school.
- X **Residence halls.** The residence halls should be safe, clean, accessible, and reasonably comfortable. Everything beyond that is a perk.
- X **Your nerves.** Everyone gets nervous about starting college! It's a normal and healthy reaction.

ENTRANCE EXAMS

If you apply to a four-year college, the institution will probably require you to take a college entrance exam to help determine whether or not you are ready for college-level work. The most common entrance exams are the ACT and SAT. Most West Virginia colleges and universities will accept scores from either the ACT or the SAT, but you should check with the institution you plan to attend just to be sure.

Your scores on these tests can help decide what colleges you can attend, the amount of financial aid you may receive, and even which classes you can take your freshman year of college. So yeah, they're "kind of a big deal." It's important to know a little about each exam so you are prepared to do your best.

The **ACT** consists of four sections: *English, math, reading, and science*. There is also an optional writing component that we encourage you to take. Students receive five scores, one for each required section and an overall "composite" score. Scores on each section range from 1-36. The composite score represents the average of the four main sections, and the highest possible score is a 36.

The **SAT** consists of two parts: *evidence-based reading and writing and math*. Scores range from 200 to 800 for each section. Adding your scores on the reading and math sections will allow you to determine your "combined score," with 1600 being the highest possible score on the test.



SENIORS CAN USE LAST YEAR'S SAT SCORES FOR ADMISSIONS!

Last year, students took the SAT, which was the statewide summative assessment for West Virginia high school juniors. The good news is those scores can be used to meet college admissions requirements! Students may also opt to re-take the SAT or take the ACT to improve scores in their senior year.

Both the ACT and SAT require you to register to take the tests, and students must pay a testing fee. If you are unable to pay the fee, ask your school counselor about applying for a fee waiver. The earlier you register, the more money you'll save because you'll avoid late fees. To register, view current testing fees, or find test dates and locations, visit act.org for the ACT or collegeboard.org for the SAT.

Preparing for the ACT and SAT

Study. Don't underestimate the importance of studying! Start studying early in your junior year. The state of West Virginia offers FREE online ACT and SAT test prep courses at cfwv.com.

Retest. According to ACT research, 57 percent of students increase their composite scores the next time they take the exam. Most colleges and scholarship programs will take your highest score.

Relax. An easy way to reduce the pressure is to start practicing early. Don't wait until the last minute to prepare for or take the tests. Taking the exams as early as possible will give you a feel for the structure of the tests, and you'll know you have time to take them again if necessary.

PLANNING TIMELINE

FOR WEST VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL **JUNIORS** AND **SENIORS**

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS

- **Begin narrowing down your college options.** Think about the degree you might want to pursue. Conduct detailed research on colleges and develop a “short list” of choices (five or six options). Visit college websites and talk to your high school counselor.
- **Study for and take the SAT or ACT.** You will be taking the SAT or ACT near the end of your junior year, and it's never too early to start studying.
- **Visit colleges.** There's no better way to get a feel for the college campus than to see it for yourself. Two or three weeks before your visit, contact the admissions office to schedule an official information session and campus tour. During the tour, take notes on what you do and do not like.

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

August

- **Sign up to receive scholarship/grant opportunities in your inbox.** Visit cfww.com to sign up to receive our monthly scholarship emails.
- **Plan to take the ACT/SAT again.** Visit the ACT and SAT websites to find exam dates and register for upcoming tests. Most colleges and scholarship programs will consider your highest score, even if it's not your most recent score. (Ask your college to be sure!) That means you probably don't have to worry if you happen to score lower when you retake the exam.

September

- **Talk to your school counselor about your college options and application fee waivers.** Let your counselor know about the colleges that you are considering and ask for any additional suggestions. Remember, most colleges charge a fee when you apply. If you're unable to pay these fees, ask your counselor how to apply for an application fee waiver.
- **Begin working on your application essays.** Some colleges will require you to write an application essay. Draft application essays early! Allow plenty of time to revise and perfect your work.
- **Create your résumé or list of activities.** Many colleges and scholarship programs want to know what you've done outside of the classroom, such as participating in sports, school clubs, organizations, and volunteer/work experiences. Check out the résumé builder at cfww.com for help.

October

- **Sign up to receive college reminders via text.** College-bound West Virginia students can sign up to receive college reminders via text by going to cfww.com. Students can also text with their college questions, and college access advisors will respond.
- **Attend a college fair.** If you haven't already, meet with representatives from colleges and ask them detailed questions about what their campus has to offer. Ask about programs and majors, the campus environment, and opportunities to get involved on campus and in the community.
- **Submit your college applications by Halloween.** Students who apply to more than one college or program are far more likely to attend college and succeed. That's because those students are more likely to

receive help from admissions offices in preparing for college — and are more likely to find the college or program that's the best fit for them. Researchers recommend that students apply to at least four colleges.

- **Submit your initial transcript.** When you apply to college, you should notify your high school counselor so that he or she can send an official transcript to the colleges to which you've applied.
- **Start working on the FAFSA.** The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the most important application to complete to find financial aid for college. Create an account at fafsa.gov and submit the form. It requires you to enter tax and income information.



READ THE FINANCIAL AID 101 GUIDE!

The Financial Aid 101 guide offers information regarding financial aid opportunities for West Virginia students, including steps for filling out the FAFSA, different sources for financial aid, and details for in-state grant and scholarship opportunities. Visit cfww.com to download it.

January — March

- **Submit financial aid applications.** Financing your education is an important part of making a final decision about which college you will attend. Submit applications for any financial aid program for which you might qualify — and be sure to submit the FAFSA! For more information on financial aid, attend a financial aid workshop in your area or visit cfww.com.
- **Visit campus.** If you haven't already, schedule official college visits for any colleges that are still on your “short list.” Once signed up, make sure to meet with an admissions officer while you're on campus, and you may want to meet with faculty, students, and financial aid representatives as well.

April

- **Consider pros and cons.** Begin narrowing down your options by making a list of the pros and cons for each college or program to which you've been admitted. Ask yourself, “Could I be happy here?” Rank your choices in order from “first choice” on down.
- **Make a decision.** Notify the admissions office of your “first choice” college of your decision to attend. Ask them what you need to do to enroll. Call the financial aid office at the college and work with them to make sure that you are able to cover the costs of attending this school. You should also find out the absolute latest date that you could enroll at your second and third choice colleges. If you change your mind about your first choice, it's important to know what options remain.
- **Read College 101.** Visit cfww.com and click on the “college student” link to download a copy. Begin following the steps outlined in the guide to enroll in college, register for housing, and prepare for life on campus.



HELP FOR ADULT LEARNERS

This Admissions 101 guide is set up for high school students. If you're an adult interested in going to college, work with an admissions counselor to complete each step as soon as possible!

