

College admissions for home-schooled students

Early preparation is the key to helping home-schooled students succeed in the college admissions process. The information below can help home-schooled students and parents 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 ACTs and/or SATs

Senior Year

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

College admissions and the acceptance of home schooling

Home-schooling 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 home-schooled student is a good candidate for admission. Admissions requirements generally include an essay, test scores, and an official high school transcript; however, home-schooled students may be required to provide additional support materials.

The 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. Home school parents 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.

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, loans, etc. The chances of securing financial aid are greater when you apply early. To learn more about how to pay for college,

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please visit ECMC's "Paying for College" resource guide available online at www.ecmc.org/students/documents/paying-for-college-english.pdf. You may also want to research special scholarships and grants for home-schooled students.

Try starting your search with home-schooling 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 home-school 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.

Taking standardized tests

While some institutions do not require standardized test scores for admissions, this may not apply equally to home-school students. Home-school 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.

Letters of recommendation

Because of their unique education experience, home-schooled students may need to identify adults other than parents 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 the student a good candidate for college admissions.

Pursuing college admissions from a home-schooling background can be challenging—but 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 home-school 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 home-schooled students.

College Board: www.collegeboard.com
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.