



COLLEGE RESEARCH WORKSHEET

WHERE TO APPLY?

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



A STUDENT RESOURCE GUIDE

ACAC
American College Application Campaign

ACT[®] Center for
Equity in Learning

Understanding match, fit, and cost is critical to researching colleges. Students should use the worksheets within this document to help them research and identify the colleges to which they want to apply.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Three Important Things to Consider 3
Reach, Match, or Safety? 4
What About Cost? 5
The College Research Worksheet 6



GETTING STARTED

3 IMPORTANT THINGS:

- ✓ FIT
- ✓ MATCH
- ✓ 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 for you to consider: **fit, match, and cost**. This worksheet will help you think through each of them.



DOES THE COLLEGE FIT WITH YOUR PREFERENCES?

There are several factors to consider in 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, visit ACT Profile (www.act.org/profile) and College Board's Big Future (www.bigfuture.org) to explore and learn more about careers and majors that align with your interests and talents.



GETTING STARTED



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** – this 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 2 applications to reach schools
- **MATCH SCHOOL** – typically, at a match 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 1-2 applications to match schools.
- **SAFETY SCHOOL** – a safety 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 safety school.



GETTING STARTED



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/netpricecenter.aspx>
- **College Board's Big Future** - <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/focus-on-net-price-not-sticker-price>

NEXT STEP ► THE WORKSHEET

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 reach, one match, and one safety 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.

- **NRCCUA's MyOptions:** <https://myoptions.org>
- **College Board's Big Future:** <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>
- **U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard:** <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>

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

THE COLLEGE RESEARCH WORKSHEET



IDENTIFYING YOUR COLLEGE 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

TYPE OF SCHOOL

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

☐ Rural

☐ Suburban

☐ Urban

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

☐ Very Important

☐ Important

☐ Not Important

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

☐ Large > 10,000

☐ Medium 5,000-10,000

☐ Small < 5,000

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

☐ Very Important

☐ Important

☐ Not Important

SUPPORT SERVICES

7) 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

Continued on next page.

THE COLLEGE RESEARCH WORKSHEET

SUPPORT SERVICES (CONT.)

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

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- What do you want to major in? _____
- Is the campus co-ed ☐ or single gender ☐? • Is the campus diverse? 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 create a free profile 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 Math score is:	
My SAT Reading score is:		My ACT Composite score is:	
My SAT Writing score is:			

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

<input type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Math	<input type="checkbox"/> Art
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies	<input type="checkbox"/> History
<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Language	<input type="checkbox"/> Electives

THE COLLEGE RESEARCH WORKSHEET



COLLEGE MATCH AND FIT TABLE

Instructions: Use one of the college research resources outlined on page 5 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)	
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?	

THE COLLEGE RESEARCH WORKSHEET



COLLEGE MATCH AND FIT TABLE (CONT.)

How well do you think this college fits your preferences?

☐ Excellent Fit

☐ Good Fit

☐ Okay Fit

☐ Somewhat of a Fit

☐ Does Not Fit

How selective is this college?

Percent of applicants admitted?

Percent of students with my GPA

Have I taken the required high school courses?

Percent of students with my SAT score

Percent of students with my ACT score

Comparing my academic record to this college, this would be a Reach, Match, or Safety college for me
(see definitions on page 4)?

☐ Reach

☐ Match

☐ Safety

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: _____