

12TH GRADE TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER ALL ABOUT FAFSA / ALL ABOUT WASFA

Prepare to apply for the FAFSA or WASFA so you are ready when the applications open on October 1.

OCTOBER PARTS OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION

Each college application will have different requirements. Figure out what you need to prepare your application.

NOVEMBER HOW TO APPLY

Determine what steps you need to complete for your college applications.

DECEMBER SCHOLARSHIPS

Research and apply for scholarships NOW.

JANUARY ACCESSING THE COLLEGE BOUND SCHOLARSHIP

So, you have College Bound: Learn how the College Bound Scholarship will help you pay for college.

FEBRUARY UNDERSTANDING FINANCIAL AID AWARD LETTERS

Understand your financial aid award letter and determine your next steps.

MARCH MAKING YOUR DECISION

Now that you've received your admission letters, determine which college is the best choice for YOU!

APRIL TRANSITIONING TO COLLEGE

Make sure you've completed everything you need to enroll in the college you've selected.

MAY WHAT TO EXPECT YOUR FIRST TERM / COLLEGE RESOURCES YOU NEED TO USE

College is very different from high school. Map out different college resources that will help you have a successful first year.

Need help with our terms? See the [glossary](#) on our websites:

4 PAYING FOR COLLEGE: ALL ABOUT FAFSA

WHAT IS THE FAFSA? The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the first step to apply for **financial aid**. **Completing the FAFSA is free and gives you access to the largest source of financial aid** to pay for vocational, technical, 2-year and 4-year colleges. Based on the info you provide, each college will calculate your financial aid **award**.

WHEN SHOULD I APPLY?

As early as **October 1 of your senior year**.

Make sure you **know the financial aid priority deadlines** for the colleges you are interested in.

You need to **submit the FAFSA every year** while in college.

WHAT INFO DO I NEED TO PROVIDE?

Basic info, such as legal name, birthdate, etc.

Parent and student **tax/income information**

Your **list of colleges**

DO I NEED A FSA ID? (FEDERAL STUDENT AID ID)

An FSA ID gives you access to your FAFSA info and serves as your legal signature. You AND one parent (biological or adoptive) will need to create an FSA ID (username and password). Be sure you and your parent use separate email addresses. If your parent is undocumented they should not create an FSA ID. They will instead print, sign and mail a signature page.

What information do I need to create an FSA ID? Basic info, such as social security number (SSN), legal name, birthdate, contact info, etc.

An FSA ID gives you access to your FAFSA info and

* DON'T FORGET:

Be sure to write down the answers to your challenge questions in the application and store them in a safe location with your FSA ID.

HOW DO I COMPLETE IT?

1. Create a Federal Student Aid Identification (FSA ID) at fsaid.ed.gov
2. Use your FSA ID to log in and complete the FAFSA at fafsa.gov
3. Check for an email confirming you have successfully submitted the FAFSA.

MAY: GRADE 11
SEPT: GRADE 12

4 PAYING FOR COLLEGE: ALL ABOUT WASFA

WHAT IS THE WASFA?

The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is the first step to apply for **financial aid** for some *undocumented students* who live in Washington state. Completing the WASFA is free and gives eligible students access to **state financial aid** to pay for vocational, technical, 2-year and 4-year colleges in Washington. Students granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (**DACA**) status should complete the WASFA. **If you are a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident, check out the "All About FAFSA" handout and do not complete the WASFA.**

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Eligibility is based on **immigration status**. Students must meet individual program and residency requirements. For specifics, use the eligibility questionnaire at readysetgrad.org/wasfaelig

HOW DO I COMPLETE IT?

1. Go to readysetgrad.org/wasfa and click on "Start a New WASFA."
2. Complete the eligibility questionnaire.
3. Create an account and save your login and password.
4. Complete and submit your application.

What is the parent signature on the WASFA? You will need to send an email invitation to one parent (biological or adoptive) to electronically sign your WASFA. Be sure you and your parent use separate email addresses.

- * **Don't Forget:** Your parent's electronic signature is needed to complete your application.
- * **Your parent must electronically sign within 72 hours of being invited.**

WHEN SHOULD I DO IT?

File as early as **October 1 of your senior year.**

Make sure you **know the financial aid priority deadlines** at the colleges you are interested in. (Often the WASFA deadline is not listed, but it is the same as the FAFSA deadline.)

You need to **submit the WASFA** every year while in college.

WHAT INFO DO I NEED?

Basic information, such as legal name, birthdate, etc.

Parent and student **tax/income info**

Your **list of colleges** (Washington state colleges only)

Your **DACA number** if you have one

Is my family's information protected?

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) and colleges that access your application only use your information to determine eligibility for state financial aid. Campuses are not permitted to use the information for other purposes or share the data with other parties.

If you have questions about the WASFA, contact the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) at 1-888-535-0747, option 2 or email wasfa@wsac.wa.gov

MAY: GRADE 11
SEPT: GRADE 12

5 APPLYING FOR COLLEGE: PARTS OF A COLLEGE APPLICATION

All colleges have an **application**. Typically, you can submit a vocational, technical, 2-year or 4-year college/university application online and sometimes in person, or by mail.

WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY TO MOST COLLEGES?

Your **official transcripts** from **high school** and college if you have earned college credit

Your **test scores** from the **SAT or ACT**

WHAT ADDITIONAL STEPS MIGHT I NEED TO COMPLETE A 4-YEAR COLLEGE APPLICATION?

Personal Statement – a way for the college to get to know you and why you are interested in the school

Short Answer Responses – additional questions that may focus on specific concepts, such as diversity, culture and examples of persistence/overcoming adversities.

Activity Log/Resume – a list of **extracurricular activities** that can include clubs, sports, jobs and anything you do outside of school.

Letter of Recommendation – a letter from a teacher, counselor, coach, etc. that can speak to your qualities, characteristics and capabilities.

GOOD TO KNOW:

Some programs like **apprenticeships**, vocational and technical certifications have a unique application process. Check out **lni.wa.gov** for more information on apprenticeships or visit **sbctc.edu** for vocational and technical training programs.

ANYTHING ELSE?

You may need to pay a fee in order to submit a college application.

However, you may be eligible to receive a **fee waiver**:

- If you are a College Bound Scholarship student
- If you receive free and reduced price lunch
- If you participate in programs like TRiO, Upward Bound, or GEAR UP
- If you are a youth in foster care
- If you took the SAT or ACT with a fee waiver
- Contact your high school counselor, college admissions office, National Association for College Admission Counseling, or The College Board to inquire about fee waivers.

MAR: GRADE 11
OCT: GRADE 12

* DON'T FORGET:

You could be competing against MANY other applicants. Make sure your answers are a clear and true representation of who you are and how you have prepared yourself!

5 APPLYING FOR COLLEGE: HOW TO APPLY

TIPS FOR APPLYING:

Complete and submit at least three college **applications** in the fall.

Apply for financial aid by completing the **FAFSA** or **WASFA** as early as October 1 to ensure you have options to pay for college.

Use a professional email address with your name. Check your email often, as you will receive important, time-sensitive messages.

Talk to your counselor if you are unable to pay application fees. You may be eligible for **college application fee waivers**.

Keep track of deadlines using a spreadsheet or to-do list.

Proofread, review and revise college essays. Have at least one other person (mentor, counselor, teacher, etc.) look over your finalized application.

Check the status of your college and financial aid apps to make sure they have been received. You typically can do this via the **online college portal**, email or phone.

Be sure to **save all parts of your college application**; you may be able to reuse them for other college or scholarship applications.

After you submit your **application**, you should receive a **confirmation message**. If you do not, contact the college admissions office to find out the status of your application.

4-YEAR COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS:

Submit your FAFSA or WASFA.

Read admission requirements for each specific school.

Create an account for your online application.

Request **letters of recommendation**. Receive a **confirmation email** that your

Request **official transcripts**.

Send SAT or ACT scores.

Write and edit your **personal statement** essay and other **short answer responses**.

Complete and submit your college application.

Receive a **confirmation email** that your application was successfully submitted.

WHAT IS THE COMMON APPLICATION?

The common application, or common app, is a college admissions **application that is used by over 700 colleges in the U.S.**, including many private colleges in Washington. Once the common app is completed, it can be sent to any number of participating colleges. The common app is used exclusively for eligible 4-year colleges and universities. To start the common application, visit **commonapp.org**.

2-YR COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS:

Apply online, by mail or in person.

Submit the FAFSA or WASFA.

Take a **placement test** at the college. Some colleges also accept transcripts or other info to determine placement.

Schedule an **academic advising** appointment.

NOV: GRADE 12

4 PAYING FOR COLLEGE: SCHOLARSHIPS

WHAT ARE SCHOLARSHIPS?

Scholarships award money for education expenses based on criteria such as academics, athletics, community service or financial need. Community organizations, colleges, religious institutions and private companies are examples of scholarship providers.

Regardless of your background or immigration status, there is likely a scholarship for you.

WHERE CAN I LOOK FOR SCHOLARSHIPS?

Your high school counselor is a good place to start. Here are some places to begin your research:

TheWashBoard.org: thewashboard.org

FastWeb: fastweb.com

Big Future: bigfuture.collegeboard.org

Beyond Dreaming Scholarship List:
scholarshipjunkies.org/beyond

The colleges you are interested in or local organizations such as the Act Six, College Success Foundation and Washington State Opportunity Scholarship.

HOW DO I APPLY?

1. **Research** scholarships you are **eligible** for.
2. **Submit** your **applications**. Make sure you follow instructions carefully!
3. **Complete** the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (**FAFSA**) or Washington Application for State Financial Aid (**WASFA**).

WHAT TYPES OF SCHOLARSHIPS CAN I APPLY FOR?

Academic/Merit: Based on GPA, test scores and/or coursework

Athletic: Based on athletic performance

Creative: Based on talent in art, music, dance

Community service: Based on involvement in your school or community

Diversity: Based on race, ethnicity, family heritage, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

Need: Based on financial need

Other: Leadership, alumni, etc.

FEB: GRADE 11
DEC: GRADE 12

* DO RESEARCH

Is the scholarship renewable? If yes, learn about the renewal requirements. If it's not, think about how you are going to replace these funds the following year.

Is it portable? Can you take the scholarship with you if you **transfer** schools? Some scholarships are bound to specific colleges.

3 COLLEGE BOUND SCHOLARSHIP: ACCESSING IT

You're about to graduate and go to college. It's time to start thinking about what you need to do to get your College Bound Scholarship. There are forms to complete and deadlines to meet, and it's important that you and your family understand the process.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO:

1. Meet the College Bound Scholarship pledge requirements.
2. File the **FAFSA** or **WASFA**. You may file as early as October 1 of your senior year. Remember that each college has their own financial aid deadlines that you must follow.
3. Be admitted to and enroll in a college in Washington within one year of high school graduation.
4. Be a U.S. citizen, eligible non-citizen, or have been granted **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)** status.

WHAT WILL THE COLLEGE DO?

1. **Determine** if your income meets the eligibility guidelines.
2. **Calculate** your financial aid award.
3. **Send** you a financial aid award letter (by mail or email) indicating how much financial aid you will receive.
4. **Disburse** your **financial aid** to you, including your College Bound Scholarship, before classes begin.

*** If you don't receive your "match email"** notifying you that your College Bound application matched with your FAFSA or WASFA, call **888-535-7047 (option 1)** or email **collegebound@wsac.wa.gov**

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- College Bound will send you a **"match email"** notifying you when your FAFSA or WASFA is matched to your original College Bound application.
- College Bound will automatically identify you as a College Bound student to all of the colleges you listed on the FAFSA or WASFA.

GOOD TO KNOW:

Students would have applied to College Bound in middle school before the end of their 8th grade year and committed to meeting the College Bound Pledge in high school to receive the scholarship. College Bound combines on your award letter with other **state financial aid** to cover **tuition fees** (at public college rates), some **fees** and a small book allowance.

JAN: GRADE 11 and 12

4 PAYING FOR COLLEGE: UNDERSTANDING FINANCIAL AID AWARD LETTERS

After filing the FAFSA or WASFA, you'll receive a financial aid award letter from each college you applied to. Your **financial aid** award from each college will be different. You will not know which school will fit in your budget until you review ALL of your financial aid **award** packages.

TYPES OF STUDENT LOANS:

You can choose to fully or partially accept the different types of loans offered or decline them entirely.

Subsidized loans: The government pays the interest while you are in college. If you qualify, this is your best option.

Unsubsidized loans: Interest gets added to the amount you borrow as soon as you begin college.

Parent loan: A loan your parent can take on your behalf to pay for your **college expenses**. Your parent is legally tied to the loan and its repayment.

A **federal loan** has lower interest rates and better repayment options than a private loan and is determined by the FAFSA.

A **private loan** can come from banks, colleges and private organizations. Typically, they have higher interest rates and less favorable repayment options. Like unsubsidized loans, private loans gain interest as soon as you borrow the money.

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID:

Scholarships: Money awarded based on academic or other achievements to help pay for education expenses.

Grants: Form of gift aid, usually based on financial need.

Work study: On-campus or off-campus employment that allows you to earn money for **college expenses**.

Loans: Money you borrow and have to repay over time with interest.

I got my award letter, WHAT NOW?

1. Review the offer and compare it against the expenses you need to cover. Some expenses listed in your **cost of attendance** (COA) will be billed by the college (**tuition**, room and board for dorms, etc.) while others, such as books and personal expenses, are recommended estimates.

2. Inform the college of any changes and private scholarships since submitting your **FAFSA or WASFA**.

3. Accept the awards for the college you're planning to attend. Make sure you know about the deadlines for accepting your financial aid offer.

GOOD TO KNOW:

Accept grants, scholarships and work study before loans to reduce your debt after college. Avoid private loans and credit cards, if possible.



COA

- Scholarships/Grants

MONEY GAP

(work study/loans/savings)

smallest MONEY GAP =

MOST AFFORDABLE OPTION

4. Contact the financial aid office at the college if you have questions.

FEB: GRADE 12

6 ENROLLING IN COLLEGE: MAKING YOUR DECISION

You've submitted your college **applications** and now the waiting game starts. This can take anywhere from a month to several months, depending on the type of school. Colleges will likely communicate their decision through email, mail or their online portal. Don't forget to check with the college admissions department if you have questions.

I JUST RECEIVED A DECISION FROM A COLLEGE, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Accepted – You were accepted. Congratulations!

Waitlisted – You have not been accepted or denied. The college is waiting to see how many students will accept their offer to determine if they have more space.

Denied – You were not accepted. Consider exploring other college options.

Deciding what college to go to can be difficult, but finding the right school for you will help you succeed and graduate. Talk to your high school counselor about your options.

HOW DO I COMPARE COLLEGES?

Financial:

Consider how much of the cost of attendance will be covered by **grants** and **scholarships**.

Think about how you and your family will cover the money gap for your entire college education.

Academics:

Check if the academic **major** you are interested in is available at the college. Consider the types of **academic support** available (e.g. writing center, math tutoring, disability services, etc.).

Social:

Determine if the college is a good social and cultural fit for you (e.g. diversity, student groups, mentorship opportunities, etc.).

Think about what type of environment you like (close to home, big campus, rural setting, etc.).

* DON'T FORGET:

Once you have made your college decision, you must **notify the college by confirming your enrollment**.

For many 4-year colleges the deadline is May 1.

MAR: GRADE 12

GOOD TO KNOW: This is one of the biggest decisions you will make in your life. **Take time to think through** what each college has to offer. Don't be afraid to get input from family members, teachers or mentors.

ENROLLING IN COLLEGE: TRANSITIONING TO COLLEGE

You've been accepted to the college you'd like to attend, but there are still many steps to take before you start your classes.

STEPS FOR 4-YEAR COLLEGES:

1. Pay your new student/enrollment confirmation fee.

If you're unable to pay the **fee**, contact your **admissions office** and ask to defer your deposit.

2. Request an **official transcript** from your high school and any colleges where you earned credit. Send transcripts to your college as soon as final grades are posted.

STEPS FOR 2-YEAR COLLEGES:

1. **Submit** any other requested **financial aid forms** by the deadline.

2. **Complete the math and English placement steps** for your college.

HOUSING

On-campus housing may include residence halls, apartments or houses. Apply to live on campus and make sure to pay your housing deposit by the deadline. Contact the housing office with any questions.

Off-campus housing options include living at home, renting an apartment/house or living in residential fraternities and sororities.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO BEFORE I START COLLEGE?

- Confirm your acceptance** by submitting your enrollment verification and deposit by May 1 or your college's deadline.
- Accept your financial aid** award.
- Schedule your advising and orientation appointments.**
- Apply for housing** if you are choosing to live on **campus**.
- Submit your immunization records.** Access these records from your doctor or school district.
- If you are eligible, **sign up for student support programs** (i.e. TRIO, EOP, CAMP) that will help with **academic advising**, tutoring, financial aid, etc.
- Register for classes.**

GOOD TO KNOW:

If you're at a 2-year community or technical college and plan to transfer to a 4-year college in the future, talk to your adviser about which courses to take. **Not all 2-year courses will transfer to specific 4-year colleges.**

WHAT IS ORIENTATION?

Most colleges require new students to attend an orientation, where you learn about **campus** resources, register for classes and meet your peers. Some college orientations are in person and others are online. Attend an in-person orientation if you can! You may also be invited to attend a summer transition program focused on preparing you for your first quarter.

APR: GRADE 12

6 ENROLLING IN COLLEGE: WHAT TO EXPECT YOUR FIRST TERM

College is different than high school in many ways. It's important to know what to expect, so you can be successful.

WHAT SHOULD I DO FIRST?

Find food, housing, transportation, medical facilities, mental health and fitness resources on campus.

Learn where you can receive academic support and form study groups.

Get to know your classmates. Classes may be small (30 people) or large (500 people) depending on your college. You will meet a lot of new people through your classes, events and clubs; you can connect with them and be part of a new community.

* **For every hour you spend in class, you should spend at least two hours on assignments.**

GOOD TO KNOW:

Never be afraid to ask for help – when in doubt, reach out!

College can be some of the best times of your life, but it can also be extremely difficult. Remember why you wanted to go to college. This will help you stay motivated to finish your **degree**.

GOT ANY BUDGET TIPS?

Books and materials are expensive. **Buy or rent used books** to save money; electronic versions may also be available.

Cut down on unnecessary daily expenses (eating out, morning coffee, on-campus parking, etc.).

Create a **quarterly or semester** budget and stick to it!

HOW DO I MAKE THE MOST OF MY TIME?

* Some classes meet daily and some meet once a week. They may start as early as 8 a.m. and as late as 8 p.m. **Create a class schedule that works for you.** Classes may be in different buildings across the campus. Give yourself plenty of time to get to them.

* Seek help from friends, tutors or campus resources or **professors** during **office hours**.

* In college you have **much more freedom** in your schedule, and no one is going to tell you where you need to be or when. You will have to juggle classes, social activities, friends, finances and maybe even a new living situation or job. **Manage your time by balancing your homework and personal interests.**

MAY: GRADE 12

6 ENROLLING IN COLLEGE: COLLEGE RESOURCES YOU NEED TO USE

Colleges offer many resources to help you be successful. They are all included in your **tuition** and **fees**, so use them!

WHERE CAN I GO FOR ACADEMIC SUPPORT?

Academic advising: Helps you understand the college's academic systems, choose and apply to a **major** and access **campus** resources.

Libraries: Offer a variety of learning spaces where you can get help with research and collaborate with others.

Tutoring centers: Offer help on subjects like writing and math from your peers.

Office hours: Times when your **professors** are available to answer any questions you have about class.

WHERE CAN I GET PERSONALIZED SUPPORT?

Career center: Offers you career counseling and help in developing a resume, writing a cover letter and preparing for a job interview.

Diversity/multicultural center: A space primarily for students of color and other communities to receive social and emotional support and feel safe to express their ideas and experiences.

Counseling services: Provides you confidential counseling and mental health support.

Disability resources: Provides reasonable academic accommodations for eligible students.

Information technology (IT): Provides different technology services and is a first stop for most campus-technology-related requests.

Veteran services: Serves as a liaison to the Department of Veterans Affairs and helps veterans transition out of the military and into academic life.

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT?

Financial aid office: Helps you understand your **financial aid** award and provides information on additional funding resources and helps you search and apply for **scholarships**.

WHERE CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Student union: Provides meeting spaces, events, study groups and a comfortable environment where you can connect with the college community.

Student life: Offers a variety of on-campus job opportunities.

Study abroad office: Provides meaningful global travel experiences for college credit.

Recreation center and programs: Many colleges have gyms, sports fields, group fitness classes or club sports.

MAY: GRADE 12