

Tip Sheet: How to Build a College List

THE GOAL

To build a smart list of college options – and land at the right one at the right price. [Road2College is here to guide you.](#)

1. Set Your Budget

Start figuring out [what you can afford](#). If your family is helping you pay for college, talk with them about the amount they have in mind. You might all do this in conjunction with Step 2.

2. Explore College Costs and Financial Aid

Research tuition, room and board, fees, and other costs – known collectively as the [cost of attendance \(COA\)](#). Also, explore the idea of [net price calculators](#), which account for ways you can defray the COA with grants and merit scholarships that you don't have to pay back. Think twice about taking on heavy college loans, which you will have to pay back.

3. Reflect on What Kind of College You Want

Think about what really matters to you. Academic reputation? Location? Honors program? Extracurriculars? Internships? Campus culture? Big or small school? Knowing what you value most will help you find colleges that are the best fit. You may change your thinking as you go through the process.

4. Reflect on Your Goals

Where do you see yourself in a few years? If you have a specific major or career path in mind, look for colleges that offer strong programs in those areas.

5. Understand Admission Requirements and Selectivity

Each college has its admission requirements, so make sure you know what's needed — GPA, standardized test scores, essays, and recommendations. It's also wise to have a balanced college list that includes [reach, target, and safety schools](#), ensuring you have options when decisions come out.

6. NOW, Explore College Options and Start Your College List

With the knowledge gained in Steps 1-5, you can start building your college list. Do online research to explore colleges that might fit you. You also can turn to Road2College. We offer [R2C Insights](#), a powerful college comparison tool that provides a wealth of information. We also offer [1-1 coaching to help you build your list](#).

7. Visit Campuses (or Take Virtual Tours)

Visiting campuses can give you a real sense of the environment and whether it feels right for you. If you can't visit in person, many schools offer virtual tours that allow you to explore the campus and facilities from home.

8. Seek Advice from Counselors and Mentors

Don't hesitate to talk to your counselor, teachers, or other mentors about your college list. [Road2College provides this service](#) with experienced counselors who can guide you, suggest schools you might not have considered, and help ensure your list is well-rounded.

9. Prioritize and Narrow Down Your List

After you've done your research, start narrowing down your list. Aim for a balanced list of 8-12 schools, including a mix of reach, target, and safety options. This will help you focus your efforts and manage the application process more effectively.

10. Stay Open to New Possibilities

As you continue researching, keep an open mind. You might discover a college that wasn't on your radar initially but turns out to be a perfect fit. Flexibility can lead to exciting new opportunities.

11. Apply! Need help? Road2College also offers [Common App coaching](#).

FURTHER READING	How Many Colleges Should You Apply To? Use This Method
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