

**Your son/
daughter is
going to
college... are
you ready?**

College Quick Tips



**Tips for Families of
College-Bound Students**

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Commission on Independent
Colleges and Universities

www.nycollages.org

Your student is going to college.

Your son or daughter is going to college for the first time. Congratulations! It will be an exciting time for the entire family – seeing your college student off to a new place to meet new people, learn new things, and encounter new challenges and opportunities. But it can also be a time of emotional ups and downs for everyone. Don't be surprised if feelings of happiness and pride at seeing your son's/daughter's growing independence and maturity mingle with anxiety about the departure for college and the start of something new.

The quick tips below should help make the practical preparations easier and the adjustment smoother.

Letting go

Having family members go off to college may bring up many conflicting feelings. One day they may be pushing you away and the next complaining that you're not there when you're needed. One moment you'll be bursting with pride and joy in their accomplishments and then suddenly worrying about how they will get along without your guidance. Be prepared for these mixed feelings and know that it's normal during this transition.

The summer before college

TIPS

- 💡 Other parents and families going through the high-school-to-college transition can offer useful advice and moral support. Good places to connect with them include your child's high school, your place of worship, your workplace, and community-based organizations.
- 💡 Encourage your son/daughter to speak with you about what he or she hopes to accomplish during the first year of college – academically and socially – and through involvement in campus clubs and activities.
- 💡 There will be new pressures – social, academic, cultural. Make sure they know that you are always available to talk.
- 💡 Discuss and develop a tentative budget and a plan for who will pay for what.
- 💡 If your son/daughter has any chronic health problems that might require medical attention, make sure that he or she knows how to get any necessary care at college. Prepare copies of important medical records a physician or health care provider might need to see.



Are you ready?

The empty (or emptier) nest

You are likely to find that your relationship will change as your college student becomes more independent. The balance to aim for is one where you encourage increasing independence while also offering reassurance that you will always be supportive.

TIPS

- 💡 The college's welcome and overview information will tell you what you should know about the resources that the college or university offers, such as tutoring, financial advisors, counselors, health services, career centers, and services for students with disabilities.
- 💡 If possible, travel together for move-in day at college and attend orientation events offered to family members.
- 💡 Whether your new college student is living at home or on campus, class schedules and studying, along with social activities and perhaps a job, will require them to schedule time wisely in order to be successful.

Change for the rest of the family

Family roles and relationships may change when your son/daughter goes off to college. Brothers and sisters may experience their own emotional ups and downs after the departure of a sibling. The change may be confusing for younger siblings if they are very close to the one leaving for college. Other children may resent all the attention being given to the college-bound student. What to do?

TIPS

- 💡 Involve the entire family in the preparations for the college-bound student.
- 💡 Talk with your children about the upcoming changes in the family's routines. Is a sibling hoping to move into the college student's room or use items he or she is leaving at home? Are there household tasks the college student once did that must now be done by others?



Changes

During the college years, your family will likely experience many changes. You may worry that your son/daughter has lost sight of goals set before the start of college. A change in interests or plans doesn't necessarily signal academic or personal problems, but may instead be a sign of a young person exploring the world and finding new interests.

Keeping in touch

Discuss the best times for phone calls and how often to communicate with one another before your student leaves for college, but be prepared for changes in plans as he/she adapts to campus life and a new environment. There may be times when you have no news, and other times when they suddenly make an unscheduled call needing advice or moral support.

TIPS

- 💡 Not being in constant communication may be difficult. Although you may be tempted, try not to bombard him/her with phone calls, texts, or emails asking about every detail of life on campus. Do provide constant reassurance that you will always be there when needed to listen.
- 💡 Listen carefully. When he/she does contact you, listen carefully before offering any advice. Be supportive. Sometimes all they need is time to "vent."
- 💡 Remind them to seek help if they need it from campus support staff, professors, advisors, and others at the college.



- 💡 Encourage your son/daughter to keep in touch with siblings still at home. Some may find it easier to talk to or text a brother or sister instead of a parent or guardian.
- 💡 Care packages of favorite foods (with enough to share with friends), toiletries, or personal items (books, DVDs, laundry detergent, holiday decorations, clothing, and accessories) will always be welcome reminders of home.

Did you know?

The federal government and New York State offer tax credits for qualified undergraduate postsecondary study, as well as a tax deduction for initial interest paid on qualified loans. For more information: www.hesc.ny.gov, search for "tax credits"

Homesickness

Starting college away from home is exciting as students look forward to being in a new place with new independence. Even so, don't be surprised if you learn that he/she is homesick. Homesickness is very common among first year college students who are dealing with major changes in their lives. It usually doesn't last. What to do?

TIPS

- 💡 Be understanding and sympathetic.
- 💡 Encourage them to talk to a resident advisor (RA) or college counselor about homesickness.
- 💡 Also, encourage involvement in campus life and activities which will help lead to new friendships and alleviate feelings of homesickness.
- 💡 Trouble adjusting to roommates can be one source of homesickness. Encourage your student to get in touch with the assigned roommate(s) before college begins to discuss likes and dislikes, schedules, and habits. If adjustment to roommates is not resolved, it is important for students to seek help from their resident advisor (RA), residence director (RD) or other advisor on campus for advice about how to handle the problem.

- 💡 If homesickness persists, students should seek immediate counseling. You can provide support and urge your son/daughter to try to make it for at least a semester or a full year. Most students overcome the feelings by the end of the first semester or end of freshman year.

Homecoming

When students return home from college for the first time, they may seem different from the person who left in the fall. Expect this visit (and future visits) to be a time for everyone in the family to readjust and get reacquainted.

TIPS

- 💡 College is a time for exploring and trying out new ideas. Keep your sense of humor. Expect that your son/daughter may come home with different views on various subjects.
- 💡 Try not to spring too many surprises, scheduled events, or family obligations during visits home. Communicate any family plans or changes in household routines ahead of time.
- 💡 During visits home expect your returning student to want to spend time with old friends from high school and catch up on sleep. Discuss your expectations and work out compromises, if necessary, on schedules, chores, and curfews.

Making the grades

College is different from high school. Your son's/daughter's success will depend on how well they can organize a schedule and handle responsibilities, which ideally means mastering skills such as time management and study skills, well before heading off to college. There may be programs offered at your high school or through community organizations.

Whether attending a 2-year or 4-year college, the time spent in college is an investment in and preparation for the future.

Academic advisement

Although unpacking and getting to know a new community and making new friends is extremely important, it is equally important to stay on top of academic work from day one. An important person for a student to get to know is his or her academic advisor. The academic advisor will be the person who can answer questions about program planning and scheduling and staying on track to meet degree requirements. Many students are not sure what they will major in when they get to college; some think they are sure when they arrive, but decide to change after a semester or two. Don't be too concerned if your son/daughter seems undecided about what to study or switches from one major to another. College is about finding out what one does best and discovering new areas of interest. It is very important that students keep on top of their academic progress and understand the consequences that adding or dropping courses or changing majors may have on their financial aid. Some programs have strict academic progress criteria and required timing for satisfactory completion of credits in a degree program.



Academic challenges

Encourage reaching out to ask professors for assistance with any academic problems *as early as possible*. Professors have time open for students every week (office hours) for students to meet with them about coursework. Nearly all colleges have tutoring services and writing centers. *Help is available if needed*. A college's many learning, health, and counseling support services are available to assist students.



College costs

College costs include tuition and fees, room, board, books and supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. Students and families will receive their bill from the college for tuition and fees and room and board (if applicable) soon after acceptance and before the semester begins. The suggestions below to help manage and perhaps reduce costs were put together by students and parents who have already “been there”.

Tuition

When the bill comes from the college, read the accompanying material carefully. If paying the bill in a lump sum is a hardship, consider contacting the Financial Aid, Bursar’s Office or Office of Student Accounts to ask if the college offers a monthly tuition payment plan. Always know what aid has been awarded (for example, loans, work-study) and what the criteria are to keep it. Some grants and scholarships require students take a certain number of courses and achieve a specified grade point average. Some education loans require the borrower to begin repayment immediately while other loans may be deferred until the student graduates.

Also, students must apply for financial aid every year to be considered for it. If you have questions about financial aid, contact the college’s financial aid office.



Meal plans

Colleges often offer a variety of meal plans. Many also have health food bars, salad bars, kosher, gluten-free, or vegan food, and many other food options. If your son/daughter will be living on campus, there may be savings if you carefully consider the choice of meal plan. If he/she always eats three substantial meals a day, then the full meal plan option might be the best choice. If a quick bite on the run is the usual morning routine, check into the possibility of renting or buying a refrigerator for quick snacks or light meals.

Of course, encourage your student to eat right and get enough sleep – always good advice.

Books and supplies

Students will need to purchase many textbooks for their classes. Check to see if the college offers rental or used book programs. Suggest that your student comparison-shop online for books or look for e-textbooks that might save both money and trees. Before classes begin, save money on supplies by buying at a local discount store.

College costs



Transportation and getting around

Planning trips home to take advantage of discount fares, reservations and schedules that permit lower round trip costs will save some money. Some colleges have a rider/ride-needed board for carpooling.

Some colleges restrict or prohibit cars for first-year students since available campus parking is often scarce and first-year students have enough challenges without the added responsibility of a car. However, if your son/daughter has a car and wishes, or needs to bring it to campus, gas, insurance and on-campus parking or registration fees will be added costs. A gasoline credit card or membership in an automobile club in case of an emergency (towing, keys locked in the car) will make a good gift.

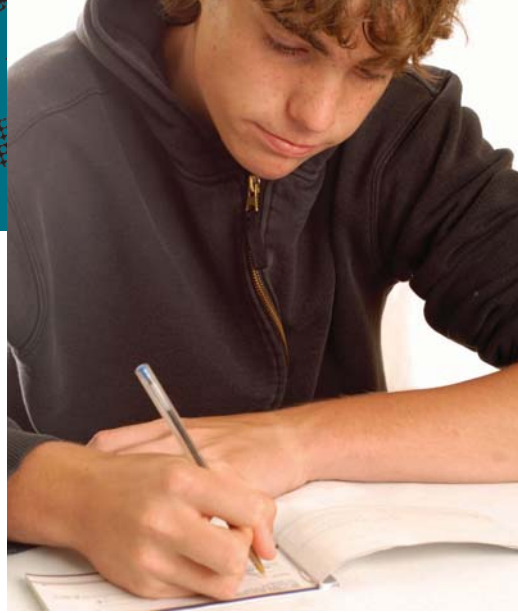
What should a student bring to college?

Before helping to organize and pack everything your son/daughter could conceivably need, think hard about what might be better left at home. The college will likely supply a list of items that are allowable in the residence halls. Encourage your student to contact his or her roommate(s) to find out what they're bringing in order to avoid duplication.

Necessities of life

Laundry ~ Your student will have to wash clothes at some point. If he/she doesn't know how to run the washing machine and dryer, a lesson before moving to campus will be helpful.





Phone ~ Be sure there is an understanding about the costs of any calling/texting plan in order to avoid big overage charges when limits are exceeded.

Personal expenses ~ Personal expenses can run the gamut from toothpaste to concert tickets. This is where a student's budget can be strained, so if budgets are tight, this may be a topic to discuss together before he/she heads off to college.

Budgeting basics

Sitting down to talk about budgeting and reviewing finances is a good idea. Start by listing basic expenses for one month. A budget might include: a monthly payment plan for college costs (if selected); costs for phone (calling and text plans, apps), transportation (public transportation, car payment, gas, insurance, maintenance, parking), entertainment (extra food, movies, athletic events, concerts, video games, downloads, magazines), and extracurricular activities (sports, hobbies, special interest clubs, recreational trips).

Next, figure out where the money will come from for the expenses. Scholarships and grants? Savings? Loans? An on-campus job? From you or other relatives? Discuss where any cuts in spending might be made.

Managing money and paying bills

Once you've established a budget together, consider how expenses will be managed. Opening a savings/checking account at a bank or credit union convenient to the college may make it

easier to cash checks, and using a checking account is also a good way to keep track of money.

Research and compare the different types of accounts offered at banks, credit unions or other lending institutions. Some require a minimum balance in order to have free checking, others charge a fee per check; still others offer interest on the checking account. Also compare bank and ATM fees. Discuss the option of having a debit or credit card, and if so, make clear the responsibilities of using those types of cards.

Other tips

- 💡 Encourage your son/daughter to inform you right away of any financial shortfalls or challenges, however minor. Small errors are easier to remedy than larger ones.
- 💡 Find out if your insurance policy will cover any loss of or damage to your student's belongings if he/she will be living on campus. Remind them about ways to guard against theft.
- 💡 Make sure there is a clear understanding of the difference between "needs" and "wants."

Continuing the college conversation

Another student off to college

With the experience of sending your first student off to college you may have fewer surprises when the second makes this transition. But a second (or third) child's college experience may not resemble that of your first child. Everyone is different, and the choice of college majors, interests, and emotional reactions may also be completely different.

Delaying college

You don't have to be a new high school graduate to attend college. College is possible in any number of ways – from full-time to part-time, to one course at a time.

Tips for those who delay starting college immediately after high school:

- ▶ It's never too late to attend college. Some colleges have special programs for adult students who may have particular scheduling needs. At some colleges, students may enroll in the fall or in the spring.
- ▶ It is possible to attend part-time and earn a degree over a longer period of time.
- ▶ You can try college out first – take a course in something you're really interested in to get your bearings.
- ▶ Find out if the college offers college credit for certain kinds of life experience and what the requirements are to be awarded such credit.





For all of those possibilities, find out about financial aid. The college's financial aid office is a good place to start. Make sure to ask which forms you need to complete and when you need to submit them. In general, there is more aid for full-time study than for students who attend part time, but always inquire about aid for adult students. Ask if there are any scholarships for which you might be eligible. Watch the deadlines for all your applications for financial aid and admission. Missed deadlines may mean missed opportunities!



To learn more about financial aid and about New York State's 100+ private, not-for-profit colleges and universities, visit www.nycolleges.org, or write for free copies of *Your College Search* and *Affording College* at the following address:



Outreach Programs

17 Elk Street, PO Box 7289

Albany, NY 12224-0289

Visit: www.nycolleges.org

Email: outreach@cicu.org

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Manhattan College
Manhattan School of Music
Manhattanville College
Maria College
Marist College
Marymount Manhattan College
Medaille College
Memorial School of Nursing
Mercy College
Metropolitan College of New York
Molloy College
Montefiore School of Nursing
Mount Saint Mary College
Nazareth College
The New School
New York Chiropractic College
New York College of Podiatric Medicine
New York Institute of Technology
New York School of Interior Design
New York University
Niagara University
Nyack College
Pace University
Paul Smith's College
Phillips Beth Israel School of Nursing
Pratt Institute
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Roberts Wesleyan College
Rochester Institute of Technology
The Rockefeller University
The Sage Colleges
Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing
Sarah Lawrence College
Siena College
Skidmore College
St. Bonaventure University
St. Elizabeth College of Nursing
St. Francis College
St. John Fisher College
St. John's University
St. Joseph's College
St. Joseph's College of Nursing at St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center
St. Lawrence University
St. Thomas Aquinas College
Syracuse University
Teachers College, Columbia University
Touro College
Trocaire College
Union College
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University of Rochester
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Webb Institute
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