

Before You Apply to College ...

1. Learn to read English at an **advanced** high school level. College is NOT the place to learn English.

- You may be admitted to college with a low reading score, but you'll be taking classes for NO CREDIT. Why pay **hundreds (or thousands!) of dollars** for non-credit courses, when you can learn English for free at local community based organizations or at an Adult Basic Education center in your local school district.

Even if you receive financial aid, it will probably be **loans**. You'll have to pay all of that money back, plus a lot of interest. So you'll still be paying hundreds or thousands of dollars for classes that don't count toward your degree.

Also, there are LIMITS to how much financial aid you can receive. This is especially true of **grants**, which are the best form of financial aid (grants are free money from the government). Don't waste your financial aid on non-credit courses.

- College will be very hard for you if you have a low reading score. Every class requires extensive reading, and college textbooks are difficult to understand. The homework for one week might be several chapters of reading from a textbook, plus research on the internet.

2. Learn **algebra**. It's best to have a math score at level 11 or 12 (which means learning geometry and some trigonometry, in addition to algebra).

- Your career may require advanced math. Some colleges require you to take an advanced math course. You'll need to pass a **test** to get into advanced math courses.

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- Basic math courses are usually **non-credit**, because topics like division and fractions are not considered college-level work. Again, why pay **hundreds of dollars** for basic math, when you can learn it for free at local community based organizations or at an Adult Basic Education center in your local school district?

3. Learn how to write an **essay** with an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Your writing should be easy to understand, with only a few grammar errors.

- Every college class you take will require writing. You'll write many **papers**, some of them several pages long. In science classes, for example, you'll write lab reports and research papers.

- Most colleges require you to pass a writing course before you can take more advanced courses in your major. (The writing course is a **prerequisite** for other courses.) You may also be required to pass a writing test. You should be prepared to take and pass a writing course (and/or test) in your first year of college.

- The teachers at your local community based organizations or at an Adult Basic Education center in your local school district can give you writing topics, help you develop college writing skills, and correct your papers.

4. Learn how to use **computers**. This includes typing, saving and printing documents; using e-mail; and searching the internet.

- All of your college papers should be **typed**. Instructors expect this, and they may not accept handwritten papers.

- Your college will send information to your **e-mail** account. You should check your e-mail almost every day.

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- In some courses, you'll be required to read documents on a **website** and put some of your own writing on the website for your classmates to read.
 - Many assignments require you to **search** the internet using Google or other search engines. You may also be asked to use **indexes**, which are databases of information that you can search.
 - The teachers at your local community based organizations or at an Adult Basic Education center in your local school district may be able to help you learn how to use computers.
5. Be prepared to show proof of your high school diploma or GED. This may be necessary for financial aid as well as for admission to college.
- If you don't have a high school diploma or GED (or if you don't have the papers to show that you went to high school), you may still be able to attend college. But colleges may require you to score at a college level on a test.

Do Your Research!

- First, research some **careers** that might interest you. Find out what kind of education and training is necessary in those careers. Look at www.bls.gov/oco/, a government website that gives information about many different careers. Talk to other people about their jobs. Look online and in newspapers, and pay attention to the "qualifications" (required skills, training or education) listed for jobs.

Some jobs require a college degree. For other jobs, it's better to have a training certificate.

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- Research colleges before you decide where to apply. Look at different types of schools, such as
 - **Community** Colleges and **Technical** Colleges
 - **Universities**.
- Consider **work training programs** as an alternative to college. College takes between two and four years, but work training programs usually last only a few weeks or months. One example is the Certified Nursing Assistant program.
- Begin your research by looking at the colleges' or programs' **websites** and gathering all the information you can. Find out, for example, how many weeks/months/years you would be in school, what the college or program costs, and what kind of financial aid is available. Keep track of all this information in a notebook, so you will remember and be able to compare different schools.
- Continue your research by making appointments with **advisors** at different colleges or programs to get more information. Bring a list of questions to ask. Be sure to ask about the cost, the admissions requirements, how long you would be in school, which classes you would need to take, and what kinds of jobs people get after graduating.
- Research online at the Education Opportunity Center <<http://www.mntrio.org/new/programs-EOC.html>> which provides support to first generation college students.

Schools have different **requirements** for getting in (admissions), for entering a certain major or program of study (such as biology or phlebotomy), and for completing the major or program. Even if you are admitted to a college, you may not be able to enter the biology program unless you have taken some math and science classes.

If you're interested in a college or program, ask the advisor if you can visit a class or two. Sitting in class will give you an idea of what the school is really like.

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If you know people who are currently attending college or a training program, ask them about their experience—but remember that your situation may be very different from theirs.