

# The Catholic Homeschooler's Get-Ready for College Checklist



Getting into college is a daunting prospect for most homeschoolers. You finally got the hang of homeschooling. Now you have to be a guidance counselor! Don't worry. The fact is, according to a report on Business Insider<sup>1</sup>, most colleges actively recruit homeschoolers – yes, even the big name ones.

Parents and students: use this checklist so you don't miss a thing!

## Before You Apply



- Pray. This decision influences the rest of your life.
- Design your high school program.
  - Include standard college prep courses: 4 years of English, 3 years of math, 3 years of science, 3 years of social studies.
  - Include any prerequisites for desired area of study.
  - Include AP courses if applicable. These look good on a transcript, as long as the grade is good, and enable a student to test out of certain college classes or obtain better financial aid.
  - Complete as many high school courses as possible before senior year so there is room in the schedule for college planning. You will need lots of time!
- Prepare for the SAT or other college entrance test. Many schools have base scores which means they won't even consider an applicant whose scores are lower. Kaplan.com offers practice books and courses. Taking the PSAT is helpful. A student can also practice by taking standardized tests during the years leading up to college.
- Get a life! Do community service; get a part time job; participate in extracurricular activities. Recruiters love well-rounded, active, engaged students.
- Prepare transcripts. You can generate your own transcript using an online template, however, this may not be necessary. Many colleges require homeschoolers to use a template they provide.
- Investigate colleges. Look for schools that form the intellect, will, and heart. Avoid schools that will actively undo all your years of hard work homeschooling. If the student must attend such a school to get a certain type of training, look for a Newman Center on campus and consider commuting or off-campus housing.
- Visit! Reading a glossy brochure or browsing online is only the beginning. You need to see the campus, sit in on classes, stay in the dorm, talk to the students, and meet the teachers. Colleges usually designate a weekend for visiting but you may get a more accurate view of the college if you visit on a regular school day.
- Mark dates. Once you know where you will be applying, get a calendar and mark all the deadlines – application, letters of recommendation, scholarship application, physical, deposits, etc. - to keep from missing any.



## When You Apply

- Apply as early as possible. Rate of acceptance is usually higher and financial aid better for those who get there first. Understand the difference between “early decision” and “early action.” The first means that if you are accepted, you are locked in. The second provides an advantage while keeping options open. To check your desired college’s acceptance rate (the percentage of applicants who are accepted) go to Cappex.com and search under your prospective college’s name.
- Do the essays. If your desired college is highly selective (low acceptance rate), you will need to write a killer application essay. If it has a high acceptance rate, you should obviously write a decent essay but the real focus of your energy should be on writing a killer scholarship essay. Contact me at [susielloyd.com](http://susielloyd.com) if you need help with this. I have a proven track record of helping students (not just my own) improve their scholarship essays and earn money!
- Get letters of recommendation. These can come from a co-op teacher, a music teacher, a coach, an employer, a member of the clergy, etc. Make it easy for people by providing them with all the contact information – links usually but if you still use snail mail, fill out and stamp the envelope for them. Some colleges will ask the homeschooling parent to write a letter of recommendation. I can help you with this as well.
- Email the admissions office to make sure they received everything you sent and you haven’t missed anything. This may not be necessary. Many colleges will call you first!
- Keep a file for each school that accepts you so you can compare deals.





## After You Apply

- Send thank you notes to everyone who wrote letters of recommendation and to all of the colleges that accept you, even the ones you plan to turn down. It is the right thing to do. Plus you never know if you will change your mind in a year or two.
- Apply for financial aid if applicable. You don't have to wait to be accepted to start working on financial aid. Do your taxes as soon as possible then fill out your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Fastweb.com is a good resource for private scholarships. When accepted, you can compare financial aid packages from the colleges themselves. Consider that some high end colleges may look out of reach but they are often well endowed and can offer considerable aid. Consider how much debt you can reasonably take on and pay back after college is past, considering the earning potential in the degree. Get a part time job, apply for work study, research grants, private loans, and subsidized and unsubsidized loans. I do not recommend the Direct PLUS loan because the parents are the ones going into debt.
- Get a physical and any required vaccinations.
- Send in deposits to avoid late fees or losing your spot.
- Study! Even after acceptance, the college will want a final high school transcript. Hang in there!
- Thank God for the opportunity to learn together and to prepare to make this important step together!

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