

# Grade 10

## Lay the Foundation



### Where Do I Want to Go to College?

Do you know the answer to that question? If not, you're not alone. **You need to do a lot of research to choose a college that would be best for you.** In 10th grade, many students have no idea what college they'd like to attend or how to choose one.

If you are thinking about going to a certain college, is it for one of these reasons?

- Someone I know attended that college.
- My friends are planning to go there.
- It's close to home.
- It's a famous college.
- It's the best college I can get into.
- It's the only college I know about.
- It doesn't cost much.

There is nothing wrong with any of these reasons, but gathering more information about the choices available to you will help you make the right decision.

### "The right college for me: What does that mean?"

Choosing a college isn't only about choosing where you're going to spend the next two to four years of your life. It's about deciding where your life is headed and what colleges or programs can best help you to reach your goals.

Part of the challenge is determining where your life is headed. Relax—you don't have to know exactly what career you want to pursue for the rest of your life right now. Many students are unsure about their career paths when they enter college, or they change their minds after new learning or life experiences. However, you should have some idea about what you like and dislike and what you want for your future.

# Where Do I Stand? A Self-evaluation

The following self-evaluation can help you. To the best of your ability, answer the questions on the left side of the chart. On the right, read how your answers can help you plan for or choose a college.

Questions for You	Thinking About College
<p>What are your favorite extracurricular activities that take place in school or are connected to school?</p> <p>What are your favorite hobbies or things to do in your free time?</p>	<p><b>Extracurricular Activities:</b> The activities you choose say a great deal about what makes you happy, and that's important to know when planning for college. (Even an ordinary activity like talking on the phone means you like to interact with people!) An activity you like can lead to a college major or a career. Or you may just want to be sure that a college offers your favorite activity so you have a fun way to relax in your free time. Part-time jobs also count as activities and can help you pay for your college education.</p>
<p>What are your favorite subjects in school? (This does not necessarily mean the subjects in which you get the best grades.) Why do you like these subjects?</p> <p>What subjects do you get the best grades in? Why do you think you do well in these subjects?</p> <p>How do you like to learn or study? Do you like to work alone or with friends? Do you like to learn independently or with the help of a teacher?</p>	<p><b>Academic Interests:</b> Thinking about what you like to learn, how you like to study, and what subjects you do well in can help you determine what college or major is best for you. A subject you like might be something you'd like to study in college. If you like a class because it involves hands-on learning, you might want to look for a college that offers that type of learning experience.</p>
<p>What kind of careers seem most interesting to you?</p> <p>Why?</p>	<p><b>Careers:</b> Talk to people in the career fields that interest you. If you don't know anyone, ask a teacher, parent, or counselor for names of people you can contact, or participate in a career fair. When you meet people in that career, ask them to describe their work and the skills and qualities needed to succeed. Ask where they attended college, what they studied, and how their college major is related to their work. Ask if there are other ways they prepared for their career and what suggestions they have to help you prepare.</p>
<p>What person or what kind of people do you most admire? Why?</p> <p>What do your friends like most about you?</p> <p>What would you consider your best qualities?</p>	<p><b>Personal Qualities:</b> If you admire a person or certain types of people, in what ways are you like them? How can you develop the qualities you admire in them? If you know the person or people, ask them how they developed their qualities and how their best qualities influence their career or life decisions.</p> <p>Ask a counselor, teacher, family member or your parent(s) about academic and career areas that are related to your best qualities. Because college is a place of learning, you might look for a college that offers you experiences to help you develop the qualities you admire, or where you can further develop your own best qualities.</p>

# Grade 10

## What Are My Options?

Now that you have thought about your interests, you should think about your options. Read below about your higher education options and think about why you might choose any of them at this time. In the boxes beside each section, write whether or not a certain option is what you want. Be careful not to sell yourself short—for example, even if no one in your family has attended a four-year college, you can still consider it.



### Technical schools, trade schools, and institutes

- These schools offer training programs for specific careers, such as medical assisting, auto mechanics, beauty, culinary arts, and others.
- In general, these are short-term programs that last three to 18 months.
- When you complete one of these training programs, you receive a certificate or diploma in the career field. You do not receive a college degree.

*Why you might consider this option: If you know the career field you want to enter, or your life circumstances would make it difficult to invest more time or money in longer-term education at this time.*

### Two-year community and junior colleges

- These colleges offer career certificates and associate's degrees. They prepare you for certain careers or to continue your education at a four-year college or university.
- In general, to apply to a two-year college, you only have to submit an application, the application fee, and proof that you have a high school diploma or G.E.D.

*Why you might consider this option: If your chosen career requires an associate's degree, or if you want more time to prepare for or improve your grades before entering a four-year college.*

### Four-year colleges and universities

- Offer a bachelor's degree and prepare students for a variety of professional careers.
- Required by most new jobs being created in the current economy and in the future.
- Provide opportunities to explore new subjects and career options, and also to develop broad learning and transferable skills, such as critical thinking, communication, research and writing.

*Why you might consider this option: If you're ready for the challenge of working hard, meeting new people, and learning new things—not just about your future career but about many other subjects as well.*

### Graduate programs

- These programs offer the highest level of preparation and education in specialized fields such as business administration, law, and medicine.
- In general, you must earn a bachelor's degree before entering a graduate program.
- Most graduate programs last two, three or four years. Doctoral and medical programs may take longer, depending on the student's field of study.

*Why you might consider this option: After you complete a bachelor's degree, you are willing to commit to the highest level of education and career preparation. The best candidates love their chosen field of study.*

# 10th Grade Check List

Check each item as you go.

- ☐ Review your 9th and 10th grade classes with your family, a teacher, and your guidance counselor to make sure you are taking all the preparatory courses required for admission to college.
- ☐ Do your best in school. If you need it, get extra help from a teacher or tutor.
- ☐ Consider getting involved in new extracurricular activities.
- ☐ Update your college file at the end of each grading period. (See page 8 for a list of what should go in the file.)
- ☐ Begin visiting nearby colleges and universities that interest you with your family and friends. Call the admission office in advance to schedule an appointment and/or college tour. Dress appropriately to make a good impression, and come with a list of questions you have about the college.
- ☐ Request catalogs from all of the colleges that interest you. Don't worry if the colleges you like best seem expensive. You may be eligible for financial aid to help you with college costs. You can request catalogs over the phone, in writing, or online.
- ☐ Start learning the specifics about different types of financial aid such as grants/scholarships, loans, and college work-study. If you apply for financial aid, these are all parts of the financial aid package that you might receive when you are accepted to college. Ask your counselor for information or call some of the places listed in the resource section of this guide.
- ☐ Take the PSAT (Preliminary SAT). Taking it in 10th grade is good practice for taking it in 11th grade. A good score in 11th grade may enable you to qualify for many scholarships.

# 10th Grade Glossary

**Major**—Called a concentration at some schools, a major is the primary subject you choose to study in college. Most (but not all) of your college courses will be related to your major.

**Financial aid package**—The total amount of financial aid you receive to help pay for college costs. It is generally a combination of grants/scholarships, loans, and part-time work-study employment.

**Public college**—An institution of higher learning operated with state funds.

**Private college**—A self-supporting institution of higher learning operated with private funds.

**PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)**—A shorter version of the SAT that should be taken to help prepare for the SAT. This exam must be taken in the 11th grade for students to qualify for some of the most prestigious scholarships.

10

