



What's Next After High School?



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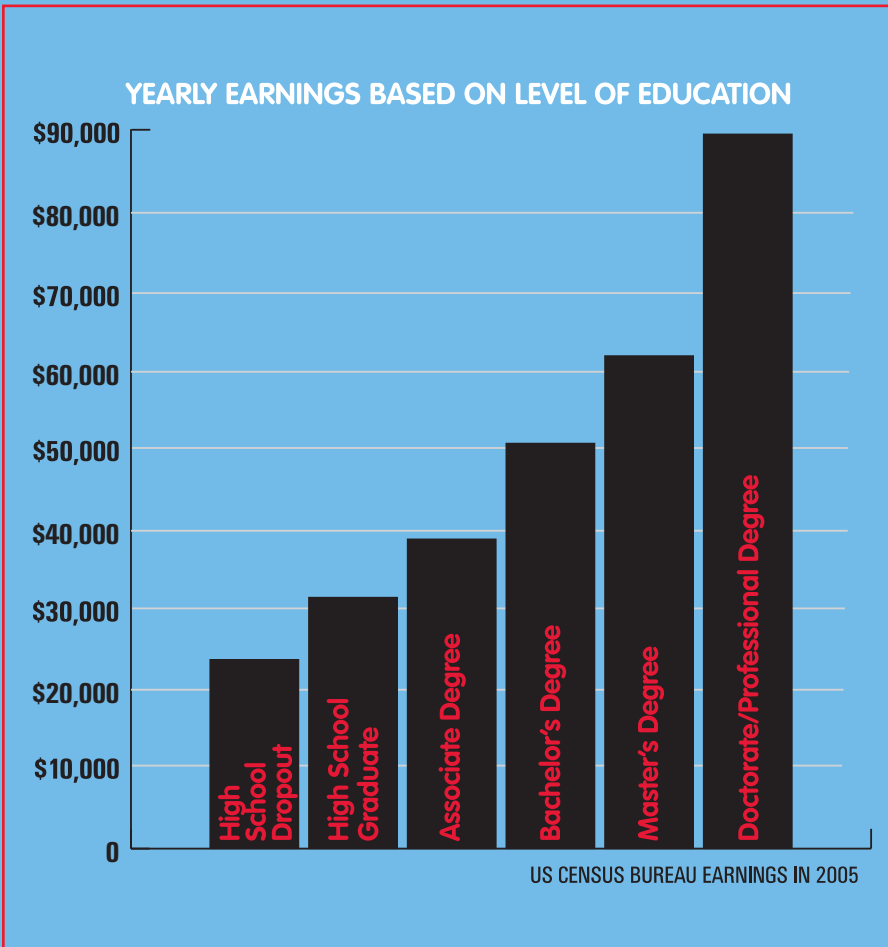
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What's Next After High School?

It's never too early to think about college.

Going to college gives you what you need to succeed. College can help you have more career choices and a better chance at a fulfilling career. College opens doors to the world. It may be hard work, but it's well worth it. Going to college helps you grow personally and intellectually, and it puts you in a position to earn more money. Check out these stats:



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How do I choose a college?

Choosing the right college for you depends on what you want to be. Nurse? Teacher? Engineer? In Maryland, we have all kinds of colleges to fit your personal goals. What if a community or four-year college is not the way you want to go? Maryland also has many private career schools to choose from. So, as you search for a college that fits you, talk to adults at your school and in the community about what they do. Research colleges and careers on the internet and at the library. Ask colleges to send you information. Don't think it's ever too early to visit a college. Just a stroll around a college campus to see what kind of campus you like can be helpful. Some people like big campuses with lots of students. Others like smaller schools.

How do I prepare for college?

Get good grades in challenging classes.

Start getting good grades now because colleges look at transcripts from all four years of high school. They don't just look at grades; they look at how challenging the courses are. So find a quiet place and make time to study. Get help if you need it. If your classes are too easy, check to see if honors courses, advanced placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes, or dual enrollment are available and how to get into them.

Take the right classes.

Colleges want to see that you have 4 English credits; 3 math credits (colleges prefer algebra I and II and geometry); 3 lab science credits in classes like biology, chemistry, and physics; 3 social studies credits; 2 years of the same foreign language; and other classes in art and health. To be on the safe side, talk to a guidance counselor. He or she can tell you just what you need.



Take the SAT.

Although it's not the only thing they consider, colleges look at your scores to see if you will be able to tackle college courses. You should first take the SAT in the spring of your junior year. You can also take a practice test, the PSAT (Preliminary SAT), during your sophomore and/or junior year. For more information about the SAT and PSAT check out www.collegeboard.com.

How do I get money for college?

Talk to your guidance counselor and contact the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Its Web site,

www.MDgo4it.org, has information about all kinds of financial aid. The most important tool for getting financial aid is filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You need this form to receive State or federal aid. It can be downloaded at www.fafsa.ed.gov.



What should I do now?

9th Grade

- Start to consider your goals and what kind of education you'll need to reach them.
- Enroll in challenging courses. Get help when you need it.
- Develop good study habits. Ask your teachers or counselors for hints how to do this.
- Take advantage of school programs such as tutoring, writing centers, and summer enrichment programs that can help you do your best.
- Talk to adults in your school and community about their college experiences.
- Get involved in school life. Participate in extracurricular activities.

10th Grade

- Enroll in challenging courses, especially those courses colleges consider for admission. Plan ahead: make sure you will have completed algebra II and geometry by the end of 11th grade.

11th Grade

- Enroll in an SAT prep course if offered.
- Talk to your guidance counselor about colleges you might like to attend. He or she may have information available to help you develop a plan to get there.
- Research schools at the library and on the internet.
- Investigate financial aid opportunities: scholarships, grants, and loans.
- Take the PSAT in the fall for more practice.
- Take the SAT in the spring.
- Collect all the information you can from those colleges you are interested in. Attend college open houses if possible or visit colleges in your area. Begin to rank the colleges you think you'd like to attend.
- Start to put together your resume. Organize the information that is likely to be requested on college applications.
- Check out the college application process. This summer, start working on any essays you might need to write (it is never too early to start).

- Continue to do your best in your classes. Enroll in AP courses in your best subjects if they are available.
- Search for various scholarship programs.
- Learn about the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).
- Choose courses for your senior year that are challenging and that showcase your academic abilities.
- Look for summer internships that will provide you with the opportunity to explore your interests and gain experience.

12th Grade

- In the fall, complete college applications for at least 4 to 6 schools you would like to attend. Request letters of recommendation from your teachers as the applications require. Let your school counselor know when you are submitting these so he or she can submit transcripts and letters of recommendation.
- In the fall, retake the SAT if you think you can improve your scores from last year.
- Get organized! Set up your own system of tracking deadlines for making decisions, finishing tasks, and mailing out appropriate materials such as test registrations, college applications, financial aid forms, etc.
- Check with your guidance counselor to find out when college representatives are visiting your school. Meet these representatives to get more information about schools that interest you.
- Check with colleges you apply to about their financial aid application deadlines.
- Visit the top schools on your list. Attend their scheduled "open house" days so you can take advantage of the activities they've scheduled to introduce you to the school.
- After January 1st, encourage your parents to complete the FAFSA. Submit it before March 1st.
- Seek out and submit scholarship and grant applications from the federal government, state agencies, private foundations, and individual institutions.
- As you begin to receive letters from colleges, organize them. Make your final decision.
- Enjoy your last year of high school!

Need more help?

Start preparing NOW. Start thinking about your goals and dreams. What do you want to achieve, and what do you need to achieve? Use your resources. High school guidance counselors, college admission officers, librarians, and the internet all can provide you with more information. Here are some interesting books and websites to check out about colleges and getting money for college:

The Kids College Almanac: A First Look At College by Barbara C. Greenfield and Robert A. Weinstein.

The U.S. Department of Education offers numerous publications and Web sites to help you: <http://www.ed.gov>

www.CollegelsPossible.org is a Web site for parents and students with links to more sources of information.

The College Board provides information about the SAT plus lots of other general information free to parents, students, and colleges:

www.collegeboard.com

The Maryland State Department of Education's Web site,

www.marylandpublicschools.org, offers information geared to parents, students, and teachers.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission offers information about colleges and universities and financial aid: www.MDgo4it.org

The Maryland Business Roundtable for Education has a great Web site for teens, www.BeWhatIWantToBe.com, that lets them explore exciting careers and what it takes to qualify for them.

FAFSA on the Web: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. This form can be completed online or a paper application can be obtained by calling the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4FED-AID.

For general information on federal student aid go to <http://studentaid.ed.gov>

FastWeb lists thousands of private scholarships: www.fastweb.com

www.finaid.org is a comprehensive site for financial aid information.