

STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER WORKBOOK

FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS



Welcome to our workbook!

Applying to college can feel overwhelming. This workbook is intended to help any student navigate the college and scholarship application process and keep track of their progress. Additional information can be found on our [Student Resource Center](#). Below are a few notes to review before you begin using this workbook:

- This collection of resources is for high school juniors and seniors. On page 4, you can “Find Your Path” to identify the best approach to the activities in this workbook, depending on where you are in the process.
- In this workbook, you’ll find resources to help students navigate applying to two QuestBridge programs:
 - **College Prep Scholars Program**: a program which equips high-achieving high school juniors from low-income backgrounds with the knowledge, confidence, and resources to apply to top colleges.
 - **National College Match**: a college and scholarship application process for high-achieving seniors from low-income backgrounds, where seniors can apply for free to *the nation’s best colleges* and be considered for early admission and a full four-year scholarship with no loans and no parental contribution.
- Many of these resources can be applied to any college or scholarship application process. If you are not eligible to apply to QuestBridge programs or have decided that QuestBridge programs are not the best fit for you, these resources may still be valuable for you.
- Applying to college and scholarships provides students a valuable opportunity to reflect on their life experiences and develop academic and career goals based on those experiences. The exercises in this workbook are meant to encourage self-reflection.
- **When opening a link, right-click on the text and select “open in new tab,” so that you do not leave the workbook before you are ready. Be sure to save the PDF frequently to avoid losing any work.**

Student Resource Center Workbook

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FIND YOUR PATH

Are you overwhelmed by the college application process? This workbook is a resource for high school juniors and seniors. Use this pathway below to determine where you should start:

I AM A...

JUNIOR

RISING SENIOR

SENIOR

11th Grade Checklist, [pg. 6](#)

Summer Before 12th Grade Checklist, [pg. 7](#)
Presenting Yourself Professionally, [pg. 9](#)
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12th Grade Checklist, [pg. 8](#)

Are you applying to the
College Prep Scholars
Program?

YES

NO

Summer Before Senior Year Checklist, [pg. 7](#)
Presenting Yourself Professionally, [pg. 9](#)
College Fit and Goals Reflection, [pg. 12](#)
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Are you applying to the
National College Match?

YES

NO

12th Grade Checklist, [pg. 8](#)
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PREPARING FOR COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

There are college preparation tasks to consider throughout your junior and senior year. We've compiled these tasks into checklists that you can save, print, and use to stay on track. Additionally, we created a worksheet to help you prepare for the ways you'll engage with college admissions staff while applying to college.

- Junior Checklist
- Summer Before Senior Year Checklist
- Senior Checklist
- Presenting Yourself Professionally Worksheet

View [additional checklists](#) for other high school grades.

Preparing for College Admissions 11th Grade Checklist

11th grade is an important time in preparing for college admissions. Your classes become more challenging, standardized tests feel more significant, and more people around you may start thinking or talking about college. You can do it! Keep yourself organized and on track by using our checklist.

AT SCHOOL

Schedule a meeting with your counselor in the beginning of the school year. Evaluate your past two years and plan for what is ahead. Discuss your progress and potential future plans.	
Take the most rigorous classes available that you can manage. Remember, these will be the most recent grades available to colleges. Visit our Coursework FAQs if you have questions such as: - <i>What should I do if I am struggling to balance my other responsibilities with school?</i> - <i>What if it's not possible to take advanced/honors/AP classes because of scheduling conflicts or school policies?</i>	
Continue to participate in meaningful extracurricular activities. Apply or run for leadership roles. Colleges like to see that your involvement and responsibility have been steady or even increasing over the years.	
Develop strong relationships with your core subject teachers. You will need recommendations for both your College Prep Scholars Program and National College Match applications.	

STANDARDIZED TESTING

See if the colleges you are interested in have requirements or recommendations .	
Take the SAT or ACT as early as you are prepared to take it. If you want to apply early to college in the fall of your senior year, leave time to retake the test.	
Register early for fee waivers. Some colleges determine eligibility for application fee waivers based on if you were granted waivers for your standardized tests.	

COLLEGE PREP SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Draft responses to the writing section of the College Prep Scholars Program application and begin considering college essay topics.	
Apply to the QuestBridge College Prep Scholars Program in the winter. If you are selected, take full advantage of the awards and/or resources offered.	

COLLEGE RESEARCH

Discover different college campuses! Visit local colleges in person or go online to use free virtual tours. Find out what's a good fit for you.	
Sign up online for college mailing lists to receive information and alert admissions offices of your interest. Attend online information sessions and webinars .	
Think about your academic and career interests and research to determine which colleges offer programs in these areas.	

DID YOU KNOW?

Your College Prep Scholars Program application carries over to your [National College Match](#) application. You can edit your application, but it will help to have a head start!

The [majority of College Prep Scholars are selected](#) as National College Match Finalists.

THE STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER

Visit our [website](#) for information dedicated to equipping high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds, including [checklists](#) for each grade, essay writing tips, and a sample standardized testing calendar.

Preparing for College Admissions

The Summer Before 12th Grade

How are you spending the summer before your senior year? In addition to [activities](#) like working, volunteering, or taking classes, summer is the perfect opportunity to research colleges and prepare for the admissions process. Set a goal number of hours per week dedicated to set yourself up for success. Use the checklist below to help organize your efforts.

GENERAL PREPARATION

Determine your favorite places to study and concentrate, like your home, local library, or a cafe.	
Seek a community that can support you, such as family members, teachers, friends and peers, older students who have applied to college, mentors from jobs or extracurriculars, or online communities.	
Self-reflect and create a list of three academic and/or career areas you are interested in.	
Have an open mind toward colleges you are unfamiliar with and consider opportunities that seem beyond reach. Top colleges can be more affordable for students from low-income backgrounds than public or community colleges.	

COLLEGE RESEARCH

Sign up online for college mailing lists to receive information and alert admissions offices of your interest.	
Get to know college campuses! Visit local campuses, attend fly-in programs, or use free online virtual tours.	
Attend online information sessions and webinars hosted by colleges you are interested in.	
Review standardized testing requirements or recommendations and determine if you need to take the SAT and/or the ACT.	

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Register early for test dates and fee waivers, and note the different locations and times.	
Map out your test preparation and testing dates on a calendar to pace yourself and be best prepared. Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____ Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____ Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____ Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____	
Prepare for exams using study books and online resources , such as lessons and practice tests/questions.	

COLLEGE APPLICATION

Begin brainstorming your outline for application essays . Some prompts are available on college websites!	
Think about who you want to ask for recommendation letters. Visit our website for helpful criteria .	
Get ready for the National College Match application to open in late summer and research colleges to rank.	

Preparing for College Admissions 12th Grade Checklist

Now that you are nearing the end of your high school career, you may feel like you want to take it easy. However, it's important to work harder than ever and finish strong. As a high-achieving student from a low-income background, there may be more opportunities out there for you than you realize. Use our checklist as a kick-off point and guide throughout the year.

AT SCHOOL

Continue to take the most rigorous coursework you can , making sure you are taking a class in each core subject. Colleges want to know that you are dedicated to learning as much as you can!	
Have conversations with your teachers and counselor about college applications. Continue to develop strong relationships with them so you can ask for recommendations and other application materials.	
Seek involvement or leadership positions in your extracurricular activities. This demonstrates to colleges that you dive deep into your passions, and that you will find ways to be involved in your college community.	

COLLEGE APPLICATION

Use our worksheet to help you brainstorm and explore college essay topics. Ask for feedback from others.	
Read through our Detailed FAQs about mechanics, structure, and content of a successful college essay.	
Map out your preparation and testing dates on a calendar to do as well as you can on standardized tests . Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____ Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____ Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____ Test: _____ Date: _____ Fee Waived: _____	

COLLEGE RESEARCH AND FINANCIAL AID

Have an open mind toward colleges you are unfamiliar with and consider opportunities that seem beyond reach. Top colleges can be more affordable for students from low-income backgrounds than public or community colleges.	
Visit the Paying for College section of our Student Resource Center to learn about the basics of financial aid.	
Use net price calculators to estimate what your financial aid package might look like at different colleges.	

NATIONAL COLLEGE MATCH

View all dates and deadlines for the National College Match. Learn more about the process and timeline and see if this could be your path to a top college!	
View our QuestTips videos to walk through different parts of the National College Match application.	
Visit our How to Apply page for a list of application components, resources, and requirements.	

DID YOU KNOW?

Match Scholarship Recipients are granted early admission to one of QuestBridge's college partners with a [full four-year scholarship](#).

Our college partners are dedicated to meeting [100% of students' demonstrated financial need](#).

Presenting Yourself Professionally Worksheet

Throughout the admissions process, you may meet college representatives through conferences, college fairs, interviews, or other formal engagements. Read through the following tips for maintaining a professional online and in-person presence.

ONLINE PRESENCE

Any online content — whether intended for public audiences, under private settings, or within an exclusive group — can be easily distributed to the wider public. This includes admissions officers, scholarship committees, and potential employers.

When **posting on social media**, be mindful of your **tone** and possible **unintended audiences** when posting, sharing, or commenting on content related to controversial topics, personal events, illegal activity, or explicit language.

When **corresponding through email**, be polite, formal, and respectful. Use a proper subject line, appropriate greeting and closing remarks, and correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. A **professional email address** is essential for college admissions, college, and beyond.

You may have an alternative email address for personal use, but a professional email address:

- May include your name, initials, or numbers
 - Example: *john.m.doe@gmail.com, doejane2@yahoo.com*
- Does not include hobbies, nicknames, or slang
 - Example: *doglover@gmail.com, texas_girl@yahoo.com*

IN-PERSON INTERACTION

In-person interactions may feel daunting at times, but preparing in advance can help you feel more confident. Remember that college representatives want to get to know *you*, and you can maintain professional etiquette while still being your true self.

Your attire can indicate your level of respect for others and the event. It may be necessary to invest in or borrow a pair of comfortable **formal shoes** and a set of **business casual clothing**.

Practice a **firm handshake**, develop the skill of **maintaining eye contact**, brainstorm **questions to ask**, and prepare a **brief introduction** about your background and interests. You may want to prepare other materials for in-person events, such as:

- A notepad and writing utensils
- A neutral portfolio binder or bag for informational materials you receive
- Copies of your resume, recommendation letters, or work samples

SELF-REFLECTION CHECKLIST

Use the self-reflection checklist below to identify areas of success and improvement.

I would classify my email address(es) as

- ☐ Professional
☐ Personal
☐ Both

I _____ my skills in professional email correspondence

- ☐ Feel confident about
☐ Need to practice

My social media profiles are under _____ settings

- ☐ Public
☐ Private

I may want to review my _____ online:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Photos and videos	<input type="checkbox"/>	Written posts
<input type="checkbox"/>	Username	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tagged content
<input type="checkbox"/>	Names or nicknames	<input type="checkbox"/>	"Temporary" content
<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blogs or channels
<input type="checkbox"/>	Portfolio/work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

I _____ my handshake and ability to maintain eye contact:

- ☐ Feel confident about
☐ Need to practice

Evaluate your general professional preparedness by completing the checklist below:

I have...	Yes	No
Comfortable formal shoes and business casual clothing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A brief introduction of my background/interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A list of questions I am prepared to ask	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A notebook and binder or bag to take to formal meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copies of my resume and other materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



RESEARCHING COLLEGES & THE NATIONAL COLLEGE MATCH

Researching your college options can be exciting but daunting. Where do you begin? Which schools should you consider? What is important to you? Explore our activities to consider different kinds of “fit” you may not have considered before.

- College Fit and Goals Reflection Worksheet
- National College Match 101 & FAQs
- College Research and Rankings Sheet
- Regular Decision Research Worksheet

Learn more about [researching colleges](#).

College Fit and Goals Reflection Worksheet

To get the most out of your college admissions journey, it's important to take time to reflect. Use this worksheet to start thinking about how you can align your college search with your personal goals.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Why do I want to go to college?

What type of individual do I hope to become through my college experiences?

Who will help me make my college decision (*myself, family, peers, other influences*)?

When it comes to college, what am I most looking forward to?

When it comes to college, what am I most worried about?

What resources must I seek to best address my concerns listed above?

Three college majors that interest me:

1.
2.
3.

Three professions I am interested in:

1.
2.
3.

COLLEGE SEARCH CRITERIA

Describe the importance of the following factors in your college search. Use the examples under the criteria to guide your reflection.

Location: <i>Proximity to home, urban or suburban, climate</i> <div></div>	Size: <i>Student population, student:faculty ratio</i> <div></div>
Type of school: <i>Small liberal arts college, large university</i> <div></div>	Academics: <i>Departments, special minors, research opportunities</i> <div></div>
Financial Aid: <i>Need-based financial aid, no-loan policies</i> <div></div>	Diversity: <i>Student body demographic, offices or programs for cultural or identity-based groups</i> <div></div>
Community: <i>Volunteering, community engagement</i> <div></div>	Activities/Organizations: <i>Clubs, sports, career-building opportunities</i> <div></div>
Housing: <i>Dorms, on-campus vs. off-campus housing</i> <div></div>	Facilities: <i>Classrooms, labs, libraries, athletic centers</i> <div></div>
Study Abroad: <i>Semester-long programs, summer terms, alternative breaks</i> <div></div>	Career Development/Alumni Network: <i>Alumni mentorship opportunities, career centers and workshops</i> <div></div>
Of the above criteria, which three are most important to me? Why? <div></div>	

QUESTIONS FOR ADMISSIONS REPRESENTATIVES

What can you ask admissions officers to determine if a college might be a good fit for you?

Academics

- What type of student thrives in the learning environment at your college?
- Can you tell me about the academic programs for students interested in _____?
- What summer internships or opportunities are available to students studying _____?

Campus Life

- What are students typically involved in outside of the classroom?
- Which characteristics would describe the student body at your college?
- Does your college have resources for first-generation and/or low-income students?
- What are some notable and interesting traditions that take place on campus?

Location

- Can you tell me about the location and the activities and opportunities available nearby?
- Your college is far from home so I cannot visit. How I can get to know the campus?
- What is the relative size of your campus, and how do students get around?

National College Match Terms

Ranking Colleges? Finalist? Match?
Learn essential terms of the the National College Match:

College Partners: Top colleges in the nation that have partnered with QuestBridge and are committed to supporting high-achieving, low-income students. They are dedicated to meeting 100% of demonstrated financial need.

College Prep Scholar: A high school junior selected by QuestBridge as a strong candidate for admission to our college partners through the National College Match.

Finalist: A student selected by QuestBridge as a competitive applicant for the Match and our college partners. Finalists are eligible to be considered for early admission and a Match Scholarship to our college partners.

National College Match: A college admission and scholarship application process that helps high-achieving high school seniors from low-income backgrounds gain admission and full four-year scholarships to the nation's most selective colleges.

National College Match Scholarship: *Also referred to as the Match Scholarship.* A full four year scholarship for matched students worth over \$200,000.* Our college partners use their own funds and state and federal aid to cover the full cost of attendance, including tuition, housing and food, books and supplies, and travel. All Match Scholarships are loan-free and require no parental contribution. They may contain a student contribution in the form of work-study, summer contribution, and/or student savings.

Match: The process of ranking college partners to apply for early admission with a full four year scholarship.

QuestBridge Regular Decision: The process through which Finalists who are not matched can apply for free to any of the QuestBridge college partners. Although the Match Scholarship is not offered through QuestBridge Regular Decision, Finalists can still receive generous financial aid, if admitted. Admission decisions and financial aid packages for QuestBridge Regular Decision are released by college partners in the spring.

QuestBridge Scholar: A Finalist who attends any QuestBridge college partner through the Match, QuestBridge Regular Decision, or other admissions processes.

Ranking Colleges: The process through which students submit a list to QuestBridge of up to 15 college partners where they wish to be considered for the Match. Students rank up to 15 colleges in their preferred order of consideration.

**Some schools may require students to submit financial information each year to qualify.*

National College Match: Frequently Asked Questions

Does participation in the National College Match guarantee admission?

Applying to QuestBridge or being selected as a Finalist does not guarantee admission to any of our college partners. Therefore, we encourage all QuestBridge applicants to pursue other college admissions options in addition to the National College Match.

How can a student be matched?

Finalists' National College Match applications are sent to the college partners that the students ranked. On the basis of this application and other materials the Finalists submit directly to the schools they ranked, the college partners select who they are interested in matching with. Match Scholarship Recipients are admitted early with a full four year scholarship to the highest ranked school that also selects them. Students can only be matched to one school and are committed to attend the school they are matched to.**

If a student is matched, are they required to attend?

Admission through the Match is binding, which means that if a student is admitted to that school, they are obligated to attend and must withdraw any applications to other colleges.** The binding nature is in place to benefit both parties. The student is ensured the full scholarship, and the college is ensured that the student will attend.

What happens if a student is not matched with any of the colleges they ranked?

Not being matched is not a rejection from the schools the student ranked. Students can still apply to the schools they ranked as well as additional college partners through QuestBridge Regular Decision. Some schools may also offer students who ranked them the opportunity to apply through Early Decision or Early Action after Match Day.

Can a student rank colleges through the National College Match and also apply Early Decision/Action to other colleges?

No. However, there are a few exceptions to the QuestBridge Early Application Policy, such as in-state public school admission. Please review the Early Application Policy on our website for more exceptions.

***MIT does not require students admitted through the Match to commit to attending their institution.*

National College Match 101

Use the National College Match terms and frequently asked questions on the previous pages, as well as [our website](#), to guide you as you fill out this worksheet.

An Introduction

What are three college partners I'm interested in researching further?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

To "match" means to be admitted _____ with a full _____ scholarship.

Process and Timeline

By mid-October, rank up to ____ college partners, and submit additional materials called _____ directly to the colleges ranked.

If you do not match, you can review potential _____ admission options at the colleges you ranked and apply via QuestBridge Regular Decision.

The Match Scholarship Package includes:

- 1) Tuition, _____, and _____.
- 2) _____, housing, and _____.
- 3) \$0 _____ contribution and \$0 student _____.

Ranking

You must rank colleges to participate in the _____. Ranking more colleges _____ your chances of matching.

Finalists who are matched:

- 1) Match to the school they ranked _____ that also _____ them.
- 2) Are only matched to _____ school.
- 3) Have _____ to attend the school they matched to.

Benefits of Applying

Mark off which benefits below are for the Match, QuestBridge Regular Decision, or both.

	<i>Early Admission: Ranking Colleges for the Match</i>	<i>In December: Apply for QB Regular Decision (if not matched).</i>
Full four-year scholarship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rank up to 15 colleges for early admission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Application designed to highlight unique story and background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
College partner application fees waived	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Early admission to an outstanding college	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generous financial aid packages for admitted students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Join the QuestBridge Scholars Network and Alumni Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

College Rankings Research Worksheet: Instructions

Use the instructions below to complete the worksheet on the next page.

1 Personal strategy and/or reminder as I research and rank colleges:

Jot down an overarching theme, strategy, or reminder that you have for yourself to keep you anchored during research and ranking. Examples:

- "Rank the maximum number of schools that are a good fit for me to increase my chances of being matched."
- "Research and be open to colleges I have never heard of before."
- A reminder to breathe and take your time, or an inspirational quote that has helped you along the college application process or your life.

2 Factors for my happiness and success:

Think about the things you are looking for in a college and categorize them below. Remember to reflect upon different kinds of fit. Examples:

- Academic: Available majors and minors, freedom to personalize curriculum
- Community & Social: Student body size, diversity, student interest organizations
- Geographic: Distance from home, seasons and weather, urban or suburban

Non-Negotiables	Like-To-Haves	Low Priorities
<p>Factors that absolutely mean the most to me.</p> <p>As concise as I can manage.</p> <p>Schools I rank should reflect these non-negotiables.</p>	<p>Everything I would like to have, but don't absolutely need.</p> <p>Should be most comprehensive list out of the three.</p>	<p>Factors I decide I can ignore almost completely.</p> <p>When compared to a full four-year scholarship, what's not that important?</p>

3 QuestBridge college partners that I am:

Review QuestBridge college partners and categorize them below.

Very familiar with	Relatively familiar with	Unfamiliar with
Schools I know well because of family, friends, proximity, or teachers.	Schools I recognize or have heard of and would like to do more research on.	Schools I do not easily recognize or have not heard of and should research further.

4 QuestBridge college partners that I will:

Research college partners listed in section 3 to determine whether they have your specific fit factors you listed in section 2. Through research, categorize the college partners below.

Look carefully at the schools in your "Definitely" and "Most likely" categories, and place them in a ranked order of preference. You can rank up to 12 college partners. Remember, you must be willing to attend any of these schools if you are matched!

When ready, submit the Rankings Form and Match Agreement Form.

Definitely rank	Most likely rank	Most likely not rank/Save for Regular Decision

College Rankings Research Worksheet

Don't forget to save your PDF after using editable boxes!

1 Personal strategy and/or reminder as I research and rank colleges:

--

2 Factors for my happiness and success:

Non-Negotiables	Like-To-Haves	Low Priorities

3 QuestBridge college partners that I am:

Very familiar with	Relatively familiar with	Unfamiliar with

4 QuestBridge college partners that I will:

Definitely rank	Most likely rank	Most likely not rank/Save for Regular Decision

Regular Decision Research Worksheet: Instructions

Use the instructions below to complete the worksheet on the next page.

1 Personal strategy and/or reminder as I research and apply to colleges:

Jot down an overarching strategy or reminder that you have for yourself to keep you anchored as you decide which schools to apply to. Examples:

- "Apply to QuestBridge college partners that I ranked but did not match to, and to college partners I didn't rank." (If this applies to you.)
- "Research and be open to colleges I have never heard of before."
- A reminder to breathe and take your time, or an inspirational quote that has helped you along the college application process or your life.

2 Factors for my happiness and success:

Think about the things you are looking for in a college and categorize them below. Remember to reflect upon different kinds of fit. Examples:

- Academic: Available majors and minors, freedom to personalize curriculum
- Community & Social: Student body size, diversity, student interest organizations
- Geographic: Distance from home, seasons and weather, urban or suburban

Non-Negotiables	Like-To-Haves	Low Priorities
<p>Factors that absolutely mean the most to me.</p> <p>This list should be as concise as I can manage.</p> <p>Schools I list should reflect these non-negotiables.</p>	<p>Everything I would like to have, but don't absolutely need.</p> <p>This list should be the most comprehensive out of the three.</p>	<p>Factors that ultimately will not affect my decisions.</p> <p>When researching colleges, I can ignore these factors.</p>

3 My familiarity with QuestBridge college partners:

Review QuestBridge college partners and categorize them below.

Very familiar with	Relatively familiar with	Unfamiliar with
Schools I know well because of family, friends, proximity, or teachers.	Schools I recognize or have heard of, and would like to do more research on.	Schools I do not easily recognize or have not heard of, and should research further.

4 My Regular Decision categories:

Research the colleges you listed above to determine if they have your Non-Negotiables and/or Like-To-Haves. Then categorize them below to help you decide where to apply. When ready, submit the QuestBridge Regular Decision Form on your Manage page. You must also submit the Regular Decision Requirements directly to the colleges in order for your application to be considered complete.

QuestBridge College Partners: Definitely Apply	QuestBridge College Partners: Possibly Apply	Non-QuestBridge Colleges: Apply (target & likely schools)

Note that admission to our college partners is highly competitive; please keep your options open by also applying to a variety of non-QuestBridge target and likely schools. Learn about the average GPA, test scores, and general profile of admitted students. Research financial aid policies and sample packages. Take into account their separate requirements and deadlines.

Regular Decision Research Worksheet

Don't forget to save your PDF after using editable boxes!

1 Personal strategy and/or reminder as I research and apply to colleges:

--

2 Factors for my happiness and success:

Non-Negotiables	Like-To-Haves	Low Priorities

3 My familiarity with QuestBridge college partners:

Very familiar with	Relatively familiar with	Unfamiliar with

4 My Regular Decision categories:

QuestBridge College Partners: Definitely Apply	QuestBridge College Partners: Possibly Apply	Non-QuestBridge Colleges: Apply (target & likely schools)



RECOMMENDATIONS

Strong recommendations can help you stand out among a large pool of applicants. Recommendations from teachers and counselors can offer insight into your academic performance and/or personal character. The following activities can help you strategically request recommendations.

- Securing a Strong Recommendation
- Recommender Information Sheet

Learn additional strategies to get the best recommendations.

Guide: Securing a Strong Recommendation

A strong recommendation is a key component of your application. Use this resource to guide you through selecting a recommender and effectively preparing them to write you a recommendation.

WHO TO ASK

Check off whether the recommender(s) you are thinking of meet the criteria below. A strong recommender should check off most, if not all, of the boxes below.

Taught you in a core academic subject (English, History/Social Studies, Math, Science, Foreign Language)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taught you recently (in your sophomore or junior year)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taught you in a class where you did well (showed improvement, curiosity, or leadership)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can speak to your personal characteristics or strengths outside of the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of the recommender(s) I will ask:

WHEN AND HOW TO ASK

1. Method of contact I will use:
2. Date I will contact my recommender by:
3. Date I will follow up by:

ASK EARLY!

We recommend asking your recommender at least 2-3 weeks before the application deadline.

WHAT TO PREPARE

Prepare the following materials for your recommender and check off the box once you've printed out the material or included it in an online folder.

A copy of your transcript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your resume and/or a list of your activities, work, and/or achievements	<input type="checkbox"/>
A brief "thank you in advance" note	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bonus: A copy of your personal essay, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bonus: Recommender Information Sheet with context on QuestBridge and your interest in applying	<input type="checkbox"/>

HOW TO REGISTER YOUR RECOMMENDER

Write down the following information about your recommender, which you'll need to register them in the QuestBridge application. If you're unsure what to put down, ask your recommender to confirm!

1. Preferred prefix, first and last name:
2. School and department or position:
3. Preferred email (and phone number, if available):

Recommender Information Sheet

FOR THE RECOMMENDER

What is this information sheet? This is an optional resource for students who wish to provide information to their recommenders. Once a student registers their recommender, the recommender will receive an email from QuestBridge with a unique link to the recommendation form. The recommendation form must be completed online and submitted to QuestBridge by the application deadline.

Who should apply? QuestBridge looks for high school students who have excelled academically despite financial challenges. When reviewing applications, we consider the questions:

Is this student from a low-income background with little to no assets?

Does this student have the potential to thrive at one of our college partners?

APPLICANT INFORMATION *(to be filled out by the student)*

Student Name:

QuestBridge ID Number:

Why are you interested in applying to QuestBridge programs?

If friends and family were asked to describe you in 3-5 adjectives, what would they say?

How have you contributed to the learning environment in your recommender's classroom?

Which extracurricular activity has most influenced you? How long and in what ways have you been involved?

Is there additional information your recommender should know about, such as school experiences, personal difficulties, family responsibilities, or other factors in your life?

List standardized tests that you have taken (if applicable). You may also list future tests you have registered for.

Test: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____	Test: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____
Test: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____	Test: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____
Test: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____	Test: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____



ACTIVITIES

The Activities section allows admissions representatives to get to know you and how you meaningfully spend your time outside the classroom. Learn how to effectively portray your experiences and strengthen this often overlooked portion of your college application.

- Summer Goals Reflection Worksheet
- Acing your Activities Section

Learn more about the [Activities section](#).

Summer Goals Reflection Worksheet

Take some time to self-reflect and think about how you want to spend the summer before senior year.

<i>What skills do I wish to learn and develop?</i>	<i>What am I passionate about?</i>	<i>What academic interests do I want to explore?</i>

Which option(s) could help me address my answers to the questions above?

Work/internship:

Career shadowing:

Volunteering:

Summer classes:

Research:

Traveling/Other:

Select the top three activities you wish to pursue, then fill out the chart below to make your plans more tangible.

Activity	<i>What are my goals? How can this strengthen my college application?</i>	<i>How much time am I able to commit? (Be specific.)</i>	<i>What steps must I take in order to successfully pursue this activity? Are there any materials I need to obtain and submit? (Examples: application, recommendation, resume, interview, fees)</i>	<i>Due dates (If none, set goal dates.)</i>
1.				
2.				
3.				

Acing Your Activities Section

Follow the steps on this page to determine what activities to include, where to include them, and how to best describe what you do.

1 Brainstorm

List everything that takes up your time outside of class and your homework.

Tip: Try thinking about what you do each day, Monday through Sunday, and approximately how much time you spend on each activity.

	Activity	Time Spent
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thur		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

2 Categorize

Now separate out these activities into the sections you'll find on the QuestBridge application.

Note: You don't need to have something in every single category if it doesn't apply.

Paid Work

Examples: Part-time job, paid internships, other jobs (babysitting, tutoring, yard work, etc.)

Home or Family Responsibilities

Examples: Caring for younger siblings, translating documents, helping with a family business (unpaid)

Extracurricular and Other Activities

Examples: Athletics, clubs, volunteering, hobbies

College Preparation

Examples: Community-based organizations, college access programs, test prep courses

3 Refine

For some sections, you will have a limit of the number of activities you can enter. Determine which of the activities you've listed are most important to you or offer additional insight not gleaned elsewhere in your application.

Consider these questions:

- Which activities am I most passionate about? Which spark joy?
- Are there any activities where I can highlight my leadership or growth?
- Do any of these activities relate to a potential field of study or career?
- Have I mentioned any of these extracurricular activities in other parts of my application already?

Maybe an activity doesn't add much to your application, or you can mention it in your Honors, Distinctions, and Awards section. Once you've determined which activities you want to prioritize, move to Step 4.

4 Define

When writing your activity description, ensure you clearly articulate what you do and what the activity means to you. Be specific and offer insight into how you've grown through the activity or how it relates to your interests and values.

Use the chart on the next page as a guide.

Acing Your Activities Section Worksheet

Use the guiding questions in the following chart to select which activities to prioritize and what to include in your description of each one.

Activity	What did I do? (Action verbs/Specifics)	How did I learn/grow? (Skills/Lessons)	What changes or impact did I make?	How is this important to me?
Ex: Yearbook Club	Managed team of 50 students, led weekly meetings and assignments.	Gained leadership and time management skills; learned to delegate and keep team on track.	Introduced new design templates, features for 20+ student clubs that will carry to future editions.	Reflects interest in design and storytelling and professional journalism aspirations.



WRITING ESSAYS

The college admissions essay isn't just a place to demonstrate your writing skills, it's also the place where the reader should learn more about what makes you uniquely you. It is the part of the application that you have complete control over, so make the most of it!

- College Essay Brainstorming Worksheet
- Sample Email to Essay Reviewer
- Essay Review Checklist

Review additional information on [writing essays](#).

College Essay Brainstorming Worksheet

Use the instructions on this page to thoughtfully fill out the columns on the next page.

1 Brainstorm

Take your general ideas and hone in on what makes your story unique. Begin with a broad topic, identify a specific circumstance, then elaborate by jotting down unique points related to that circumstance.

Broad Topic: An overarching theme that immediately pops into your mind when thinking about the writing prompt. It should be a general jumping point for more specific points you want to make. Example:

Broad Topic

Family

Circumstance: The specific situation that made or makes the broad topic more influential to you. It's okay if the circumstance is something that many other students may identify with. Example:

Circumstance

Single parent household

Unique Points: Parts of your circumstance that make your story uniquely your own. While the broad topic and circumstance can be relatable to anyone, your unique points should set your story apart from others' with details that are specific to you. Examples:

Unique Points

- Grew to be very independent; mom worked long, irregular hours
- Had to cook for myself and my siblings with a limited budget of \$20
- Discovered the use of spices to add flavor to simple ingredients

Repeat this process two more times. Take a step back, carefully examine the three columns, and try to select one as the topic of your essay.

2 Outline

Review or add to the unique points of the topic and circumstance you want to write about. Find a common thread in order to outline the paragraphs of your essay.

Common Thread: An idea, topic, or theme that is carried consistently throughout your essay. It does not have to be explicit; you do not have to explain how every paragraph relates to the common thread. However, it should be prevalent enough to ensure that the pieces of your essay are united. Example:

My essay's common thread: Resourcefulness

Paragraph I:

- Eldest of four siblings
- Single mom working long, irregular hours
- Family struggling financially

Paragraph II:

- Responsibility to buy food for siblings with \$20
- Felt determined and resourceful
- Wanted to get creative

Paragraph III:

- Perfected the art of budgeting for meals
- Became very resourceful and strategic
- Loved using different spices and ingredients
- Soon able to make entire meals under budget

In the example above, the student's resourcefulness is the common thread of the essay. Paragraph I sets the backdrop for the student to be resourceful; Paragraph II presents the opportunity; Paragraph III details when and how the student demonstrated resourcefulness.

3 Draft

After outlining your paragraphs, begin the drafting process. Here are some tips to keep in mind in order to craft a strong essay.

Show, Don't Tell: Be very descriptive. Add concrete and/or interesting details to bring your story to life for your reader. Think about the five senses. Example:

There is something therapeutic about the smell of spices sautéing in a pan of caramelizing onions, and there is nothing more relaxing after a long day at school than standing over the stove gently coaxing these ingredients. In 30 minutes and for only \$20, I would have a delicious dinner prepared for my family. And there was always enough leftover for when my mother returned from her 12-hour shift at the hospital.

Focus On Yourself: Make sure you are ultimately telling your story, not the story of something or someone else in your essay. Example:

Watching my mother work long, hard hours just to put a roof over our heads has inspired my strong work ethic. Her example has motivated me to put my full heart into the classroom, and at home to take care of my siblings.

Negative vs. Positive: It's okay to talk about negative life circumstances, but it's best to focus on how you overcame them, what you learned, and how you grew from these experiences. Example:

As the eldest of five, I have to play a parental role at home. I get home from a long day of classes and clubs and head straight to the kitchen to prepare dinner. While this is stressful at times, my situation has taught me the importance of hard work, and the strong bond of family.

College Essay Brainstorming Worksheet

Writing a college essay can seem daunting at first, but it doesn't have to be. By taking the time to brainstorm, outline, and draft, you can craft a strong college essay that stands out. To get started, use the instructions on the previous page to thoughtfully fill out the columns below.

Essay Prompt:
Factors and/or challenges that have influenced you

Broad Topic	Broad Topic	Broad Topic
Circumstance	Circumstance	Circumstance
Unique Points	Unique Points	Unique Points

Template: Essay Feedback Request

Ask teachers, mentors, family, or friends for feedback on your essay. Reach out well in advance of any deadlines, and give them at least two weeks to provide feedback. Ask them in person if you can, but if you cannot, send them an email. If they agree to take a look, you can send them a message with your essay. Feel free to reference this sample message.

Date

Dear _____,

Thank you again for agreeing to give feedback on my college essay. I've attached my current draft of the essay to this email. You're welcome to leave electronic comments on the document, or print it out and write notes. For your reference, I've put the essay prompt at the beginning of my essay.

As I mentioned when we spoke, I would appreciate receiving your feedback by _____ so that I have time to revise the essay by the application deadline of _____.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any other information.

Thank you,

Your Name

Essay Review Checklist

Use the three categories of feedback below to evaluate and polish your Personal Essay.

Check off each box as you review the corresponding piece of advice in your own essay, and take note of what you could review or edit to incorporate that advice.

1 Mechanics

A large part of presenting your best essay comes down to small technical pieces. Proofread with the following items in mind to polish your essay.

Check Your Grammar: Proofread for small or consistent grammatical errors. When possible, have others read your essay for overlooked errors.

☐

Vary Sentence Length: Avoid run-on sentences and sentence fragments. Additionally, use a combination of longer and shorter sentences to make your essay sound more sophisticated.

☐

Review Word Choice: Make sure the words you choose are used correctly, and avoid common cliché phrases or metaphors. Avoid overly complex vocabulary; instead, use natural words in your authentic voice.

☐

Edits to make in my essay:

2 Structure

Strong essays flow well and follow a theme. You can improve structure by incorporating these tips.

Use Paragraph Breaks: Break your essay into multiple paragraphs to make reading easier and segment ideas.

☐

Include Transitions: Include sentences or phrases at the beginning of new paragraphs and ideas that tie your thoughts together and ease your essay from one topic to another.

☐

Avoid Tangents: Keep ideas relevant to the theme and to the point. Try to focus on 1-2 key ideas with a few supporting examples.

☐

Bring Your Essay Full-Circle: Wrap up toward the end to connect ideas touched upon throughout your essay all together.

☐

Edits to make in my essay:

3 Content

Make sure your essay includes these key elements that make for a compelling story.

Find a Common Thread: Focus on an idea, topic, or theme to carry consistently throughout your essay.

☐

Include Unique Points: Include parts of your circumstances that make your story uniquely your own.

☐

Focus On Yourself: Make sure to tell your own story and motivations, not the story of something or someone else.

☐

Include Descriptive Detail: Add concrete and/or interesting details to bring your story to life for your reader.

☐

Use a Positive Lens: If including challenges or negative circumstances, focus on how you overcame these, what you learned, and how you grew from these experiences.

☐

Edits to make in my essay:



FINANCIAL AID

Understanding the basics of financial aid can help you take ownership of your education. The following resources provide an overview of the financial aid process.

- Financial Aid Information
- Financial Aid Glossary

We recommend that you seek additional information by reading more on our [website](#) and carefully exploring colleges' financial aid office websites.

Financial Aid Form Information

1 FAFSA Free Application for Federal Student Aid

Purpose

[FAFSA](#) determines eligibility for federal² financial aid like grants, work-study, and loans.

Account

[Create a FAFSAID](#) username and password. Use this account every year to file the FAFSA.

Fee

The FAFSA is a free application.

Your Checklist *(some may not apply)*

- ✓ Social Security number
- ✓ Alien Registration Number
- ✓ Federal income tax returns and W-2s
- ✓ Bank statements
- ✓ Records of investments, untaxed income, or other income earned

1 [Click here](#) for information regarding eligibility for non-citizens.

2 State governments may also use your FAFSA to determine eligibility for state-funded aid; check state-specific deadlines.

2 CSS PROFILE College Scholarship Service Profile

Purpose

[CSS Profile](#) determines eligibility for private college financial aid, grants, and scholarships.

Account

If you don't have an existing College Board account for standardized tests, [create](#) one.

Fee

\$25 application fee, including one college.
\$16 for each additional college.

Fee Waivers

You may receive a [waiver](#) if you are a first-year college applicant whose parents live in the U.S., and you:

- ✓ Received an SAT fee waiver, or
- ✓ Have an income of \$45,000 or under for a family with 4 members, or
- ✓ Are an orphan or ward of the court.

Resources

Watch an overview tutorial [video](#) and visit the [Getting Started](#) page for more resources.

Noncustodial Parent Information

Some colleges may require the CSS Profile from both parents. [Click here](#) for more information.

3 COLLEGE-SPECIFIC MATERIALS Requirements vary by school

Do Your Research

Each [college partner's](#) page on the QuestBridge website has an Application Requirements tab. Carefully review the information for each college to understand what you need to submit, and how you can submit them (e.g., email, fax, portal).

Stay on Track

Use the Tracking Tool and Checklists on the [Manage page](#) of your National College Match application. These resources will help you keep all your materials organized.

Manage Your Portals

If you are applying to multiple schools, continue to review college application portals. Keep your usernames and passwords consistent, safe, and readily available for easy access.

Ask Questions

Financial aid offices want to help you, so take initiative and contact our college partners directly with questions related to submitting required materials, interpreting writing prompts, affording fees, or understanding financial aid policies.

Stay Connected

Check your email and mail regularly. QuestBridge and college partners will continue to send you important information, such as tips, upcoming deadlines, and alerts regarding missing materials.

HELPFUL TIP

Admissions offices want to know information about your financial circumstances. Be sure to thoroughly explain anything that you feel will affect your family's ability to contribute toward your education.

We don't have insurance for my sister's chronic kidney condition. My parents pay \$8,000 out of pocket every year.

My dad has been in and out of work, so child support is inconsistent. Last year we didn't receive support for 6 months.

My parents lost their small business three years ago, and my mom decided to go back to school. Since then it's been difficult for my parents. The \$12,000 Other income is money we borrowed from my uncle to help pay for rent and tuition.

Financial Aid Glossary

Check out important terms you should know about financial aid for attending college.

Books and Supplies: A college student must purchase or rent the books required for classes along with notebooks and other materials. Books and supplies usually total several hundred dollars per term, but the amount will vary depending on the student's classes.

Cost of Attendance (COA): The total cost of attending a college for one year, including tuition, housing and food, travel, personal expenses, etc. This is sometimes referred to as the "sticker price" of a school.

CSS Profile: An additional financial aid application used by some colleges to award their own financial aid funds. Students must make sure to submit this form every year that they need aid.

Demonstrated Need: The difference between the cost of attendance and the expected family contribution for each college. This amount often varies from one school to another as each college calculates aid in their own way. Some colleges commit to meeting 100% of demonstrated need through financial aid.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC): A term used by many institutions to refer to the amount that a student and the student's family is expected to contribute to the cost of college based on their income, assets, and household situation.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA): A free application form students submit to apply for federal financial aid. It is required for all eligible students seeking federal student grants, work-study programs, and loans and may also qualify students for state-sponsored financial aid. Students must make sure to submit this form every year that they need aid.

Grants: Gift money from the federal government, state government, a community organization, and/or a college that the student does not need to pay back. This money is usually paid directly to the college without passing through the student's hands. See also "Scholarship."

Net Price Calculator: An online tool provided by colleges to allow potential students to estimate the net price of attendance, which is the difference between the full cost of attendance and any grants and scholarships. Each school's Net Price Calculator will likely give slightly different results.

Outside Scholarship: Money from an outside organization that does not need to be repaid. Each college has a different policy on how outside scholarships impact a student's financial aid package.

Parental Contribution: The amount that a student's parent(s) and/or guardian(s) are expected to pay directly to a college. This amount is calculated using the information in the FAFSA, CSS Profile, and other required financial forms.

Parent Loan: Money that is borrowed in the parents' name to pay for their child's college. Parent loans need to be paid back with interest. The main parent loan is the federal PLUS loan.

Pell Grant: Government grant for low-income students, which ranges from \$1 to over \$7,395 depending on financial need. Eligibility is based on the FAFSA.

Personal Expenses: Any personal expenses that the student will incur, such as purchasing winter clothing, toiletries, or spending money on entertainment. Some school-related fees (for labs, music lessons, etc. may also be expected to come out of the student's personal expense budget.

Housing and Food: Previously referred to as room and board, costs associated with living and dining while enrolled in school. These costs often vary depending on what living arrangement and what meal plan a student selects, as well as whether they live on or off campus.

Scholarship: Gift money for college that does not need to be repaid. It can be offered by the college itself, or outside organizations. See also "Grants."

Student Aid Index (SAI): An eligibility index number that a college's or career school's financial aid office uses to determine how much federal student aid the student would receive if the student attended the school.

Student Loan: Money that a student borrows to pay for school. Student loans must be repaid with interest. Student loans are offered by the federal government, private lenders, and, in some cases, the school directly.

Student Savings Contribution: The amount a college expects a student to contribute to college costs from their savings and investments. A student savings contribution is typically a percentage of a student's total savings and investments.

Summer Work Contribution: The amount of money a student is expected to earn during the summer to be used for college expenses for the upcoming year. The summer work contribution is often used to pay for travel costs to campus or to pay for personal expenses during the academic year. A student can start earning this money in advance.

Travel: Costs associated with transportation to and from college at the beginning and end of the school year and for winter break. Costs for additional travel are not included in this calculation.

Tuition: Cost of educational instruction at a college.

Work-Study: A program where a student can work on campus or sometimes in the local community. A student is typically expected to work 5–10 hours per week and must apply for and secure their own job, although many campuses have specific jobs that are only available through work-study. Work-study income is often expected to be put toward the cost of books and supplies, travel, or personal expenses.



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