

# FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) Guide for College or Work

By Rick Hansen

## Things to Do When Planning for College

This can be an overwhelming and complicated process. There is no best way to go about this other than to be as thorough as you can be and to collect as much information as you can. Consult “Web Site Resources” to help you identify sources for research.

Deciding where to begin your research depends on how well formed your plans are. If you already know where you are going to college, then you might want to begin the application process for that institution. If you are not sure where you want to go to college, you may want to start with looking at college cultures, the kind of programs or majors they offer, and how easy it is to get in.

If you think you want to go to college, but are unsure of why or what you would do, you may want to start looking at the relation between your career plans and the programs colleges offer in your area of interest.

In short, there is no single best way to begin, but once you begin, make sure you keep careful records. It is important to keep a folder for each school you are considering.

Here is a brief list of what you should record:

1. The address of Web sites you visit and information about what you found there
2. Any information about deadlines, requirements, and passwords you need to develop in order to continue to explore a particular college (the CSU system requires you to establish a user name and password.)
3. Any information about tests you need to take or records you need to have access to
4. Information about financial aid, how to apply, and who to contact
5. Any contact information, Web addresses and phone numbers
6. A calendar that shows who you contacted and when
7. A space for writing notes, planning, and doing more research about going to college

## Things to Consider When Building Your FAQ

- The Application
  - Deadlines
  - Admission requirements
  - Grades and tests
  - Addresses
  - Contacts
  - Majors and impacted majors

- Financial Aid
  - Requirements for Cal Grant
  - Requirements for Federal Grants (FAFSA)
  - Deadlines
  - Filing options
  - Recent announcements
- Your college major
  - What can you do with the major?
  - Which colleges offer it?
  - What kind of knowledge is associated with your major?
  - What sort of things do majors read and study?
  - What kind of groups or communities are formed around the major?
- The kind of college you want to attend
  - What are the costs of attending?
  - Who is accepted?
  - What is the graduation rate?
  - Who goes to the college?
  - What kind of support is offered there?
  - What is life around the college like?

Remember that your task here is to find answers to questions that you have about attending college. The questions provided above are not comprehensive. While you are researching, you should pay attention to questions that surface as you gather more information about applying for and attending college. Finally, remember to keep records; you will need to use the information you have gathered about college not just to fill out an application, but to use in your personal statement letter.

### **Things to Do When Planning for a Career:**

Planning for a career or any job opportunity takes patience and a little imagination if you are going to explore possibilities and perhaps expand your sense of what is possible for you as a high school graduate hoping to enter the work force. One way to begin this process is by taking a look at John Holland's "Theory of Career Choice." Reading this document will help you make some larger decisions about your areas of interest and how your interests may be matched with some types of jobs, sometimes called "job families." You will find the Web address for this document in "Web Site Resources" in the section, Web Suggestions for Career-Bound Students.

Once you have considered areas of interest for yourself, it will be a good idea to start looking at specific kinds of work. Both the *Oklahoma Career Planner* and the *Oklahoma Career Information System* will provide you with access to links that provide a wealth of information about jobs.

The *California Careers* Web site will also provide you with information. If you work through its multiple Web sites, you should be able to find an abundance of information about jobs, job availability, job requirements, and life on the job you are interested in. Web addresses for these sites are also listed in "Web Site Resources."

Here is a brief list of things you need for your search:

- **A folder for keeping records:**
  - Taking in so much information calls for some organization on your part. You should have a folder to keep all information in, a place to take notes on what you discover, and a place to keep records of Web addresses, resources, and other information that may help you plan for work.
  
- **A plan**
  - Simply looking around isn't going to be very helpful if you plan to make your research effective. Here are a few suggestions about things to look for when considering the kind of career you want.
    - What kind of activity does this job require?
    - What are the common tasks?
    - What are the working conditions?
    - What skills or abilities do I need to have?
    - What do I need to know in order to do this job?
    - What kind of preparation do I need for this line of work?
    - How do people get hired?
    - What can I expect to get paid for this work?
    - What are the chances for advancement?
    - What is the outlook for this kind of work in the future?
    - What programs help prepare for this kind of work?
    - Are there any resources that can help me learn more about this line of work?

Keeping a record of what you learn about different jobs will help you make an informed decision about the line of work you want to pursue and, perhaps, will help you make a decision to continue your learning either in college or some other setting. Remember that you are doing this research not only to learn about potential careers, but also to prepare yourself for writing a letter of introduction to a future employer. What does this information help you understand about the way you need to represent yourself?

# Web Site Resources

## Web Suggestions for College-Bound Students

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### General

- The college checklist for academic and financial preparation
  - <http://studentaid.ed.gov/prepare-for-college/checklists>

### Financial Aid Information

- College financial aid terms: US News and World Report> The Scholarship Coach
  - <http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/the-scholarship-coach/2012/07/19/12-college-financial-aid-terms-defined>
- Cal Grants
  - <http://www.calgrants.org>
- Federal Grants (FAFSA)
  - <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>

### Applying to California colleges:

- CaliforniaColleges.edu—information on all California colleges
  - <http://californiacolleges.edu>
- University of California
  - <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions>
- California State University
  - <http://www.csumentor.edu>
  - <http://www.csusuccess.org>
- California Community Colleges
  - <http://www.cccapply.org>

### Choosing a College and Information about College Life

- The Choice, NY Times, Education- student and professional blogs
  - <http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com>
- US News and World Report-advice of all kinds
  - <http://www.usnews.com/education>
- College Insight—good site for thinking about costs
  - <http://college-insight.org/#spotlight/go>
- College Board-facts about schools
  - <http://www.collegeboard.org/>
- Unigo—information from students about college life
  - <http://www.unigo.com/>

## Advice about Choosing a Major

- College Majors 101
  - <http://www.collegemajors101.com>

## Web Site Resources

### Web Suggestions for Career-Bound Students

#### The Career Key—Holland’s Interest Chart.

- Good source for linking your interests to particular fields of work
  - [http://www.careerkey.org/asp/your\\_personality/hollands\\_theory\\_of\\_career\\_choice.html](http://www.careerkey.org/asp/your_personality/hollands_theory_of_career_choice.html)

#### Oklahoma Career Planner

- Does not provide local information, but a very good resource for looking at careers by industry, occupation, or military.
- Best link indexes occupations and provides information about work conditions, physical demands, wages, opportunities and much more.
  - <http://www.okcareerplanner.com/index.php?id=3>

#### Occupations Index in the Oklahoma Career Information System

- This is a good site to check into the requirements for many different jobs.
  - Go to: [http://okcistest.intocareers.org/index\\_cluster.aspx?FileID=Occ](http://okcistest.intocareers.org/index_cluster.aspx?FileID=Occ)
    - Then choose a cluster
    - Choose a specific occupation
    - Read overview and then in the left hand column
    - Select any of the other links for more information

#### California Careers Info

- This is the home page for three excellent Web sites that provide everything a you will need to consider your future work plans.
  - <http://www.californiacareers.info/>

#### Career Zone:

- This site provides information on a wide range of job families (types) and specific careers within different job families. A great place to start thinking about the relation between your interests and job possibilities.
  - <http://www.cacareerzone.org/>
    1. Go to the site and register, it’s free. Remember to write down your user name and password.

2. Once inside, click on any of the links to
  - a. Assess yourself
  - b. Explore job families
  - c. Get a reality check about your plans
3. Inside “Assess yourself” you will find all kinds of information about jobs.
  - a. Click on your areas of interest
  - b. Click on “View Results”
  - c. On the next page you can reset any dollar amounts, or job families you are interested in.
  - d. Then open the list on “in job family” and select a family that interests you.
  - e. Select a line of work and open the page
  - f. There you will find information about the job, names for the job, what they do, things you need to know to do the job, wages, work prospects in California and much more.
  - g. Explore as many areas of interest as you can and take notes on information you may use in your letter of introduction to the community (Portfolio, remember?)

### **Explore Job Families:**

- This is the second link on the Career Zone home page.
  - <http://www.cacareerzone.org/clusters>
- This page allows you to explore job families. Job families are clusters or groups of jobs that seem to relate to common interests or shared work. Best here to
  1. Select a “family” (Health Care Practitioner and Technical Occupations);
  2. Skim through the jobs and examine their qualities (occupational therapist, emergency medical technician, and so on);
  3. Once inside a job, take notes on its requirements and opportunities. Do your best to see if the job description matches your own sense of what you want to do with your life after high school.

### **Get a Reality Check:**

- This link allows you to figure out how much money you will need to live the way you may be imagining yourself to live in the near—or distant—future.
  - <http://www.californiarealitycheck.com/>
- Simply work through the 1, 2, 3 directions to get a final summary and “reality check” for your plans.
- Don’t forget, once you have filled out all the information about how you want to live, check out the kind of occupations that seem to match your lifestyle choices.

### **California Jobs and Career Information**

- This site lists jobs and their salaries. It also provides links to Career Schools in California. In those links you can find information about any kind of tech or vocational school.
  - <http://www.seniorjobbank.org/database/California/California.html>