

MAKING A COLLEGE TRANSITION PLAN

The transition from high school to college is a big one and one that can be startling and overwhelming if you are unprepared for what to expect in this transition. Managing your own time, juggling responsibilities, and caring for yourself can be a whole new experience if you've lived at home with your family and are experiencing your first time away from home. Even if you have experienced more independence, you can still struggle with the transition to life as a college student. Following this simple three step guide can help you make a plan and feel more prepared for your transition to college.



1) KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT

Being aware of how this transition to college might affect you will help prepare you for handling the transition and any related outcomes. Take advantage of any opportunity that comes your way to experience a slice of college life before your first day through “Day in the Life” style videos of college students, overnight visits, shadowing opportunities with current college students (particularly at your top choice schools), or summer bridge programs. Talk to current college students and ask about their experiences and any advice they have for adjusting to life in college. These types of experiences will help you get a feel for what it is like to live on a college campus and navigate your life as an independent college student.

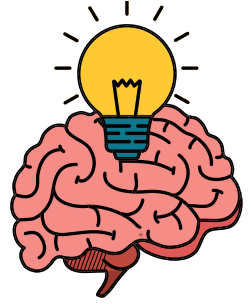


Use this chart to identify the activities and experiences you participate in that help shape your expectations of college life and what to expect as you make the transition to college.

Activity or Experience	What have I learned from this?	What new or remaining questions do I have?

2) KNOW YOURSELF

Knowing yourself can be difficult, but will always serve you well. In preparation for the transition to college, getting to know yourself better will be helpful. Ask yourself these questions to try to learn more about yourself. Respond with thoughtful, honest answers to each question. Write down your answers so you can refer to them later.



1. What are my values? How do I plan to keep these intact and make choices based on my values?

2. What am I good at? What do I want to get better at? What am I not so good at?

3. Am I an introvert or an extrovert? In other words, do I gain energy by spending some time by myself or by spending time with others?

4. How do I take care of myself? What is my plan for continuing to do this when I get to college?

5. What are my favorite things to do and how will I make time for them at college?

6. What problems (academic, social, physical, mental, emotional, other) do I have? How will I manage these problems when I'm at college?

7. What are the most productive study habits for me?

8. Do I need to study and learn new things on my own in a quiet environment or with a partner or group?

9. What new activities would I like to try at college?

10. How do I handle stress? What stress-relieving techniques work best for me? Do I need to learn more strategies for handling stress?

11. What aspects of life at college am I most worried or concerned about? What can I do to address these concerns?

12. What aspects of college life am I most excited about? How can I make sure that I fit these into my schedule?

14. What are my expectations of what college will be like? Are these realistic expectations?

15. What aspects of my life will I need to balance when I'm at college (academics, social, self-care, etc.)? What is my plan for trying to keep everything in balance?

16. What can I do once I get to college if I feel overwhelmed or am having a negative experience? Think about things you can do for yourself, things others can do for you, and the resources you will need.

3) KNOW WHERE TO GET HELP



If you get to college and find yourself struggling in any way -- academically, socially, physically or emotionally -- it is important to take action right away. For starters, never be afraid to ask questions or ask for help. The role of most professionals on campus is to make sure you are doing well and have what you need to be successful, but they won't come to you!

If you aren't sure who the right person is who can help you, ask someone who has been there longer than you. This might be a friend, or your Resident Advisor, or a professor. Find someone you trust and ask for their help. Before you arrive on campus, become familiar with the support resources and services offered by your college or university and find out more information about what services they provide and how to access those services. These resources include, but are certainly not limited to: advisors (Resident and Academic, the counseling center, the health center, and career services.

Use this chart when you research your top choice schools, or the school you plan to attend, and fill in information about their support services and how to access each one. Duplicate this chart and fill out one for each school you research.

College or University: _____

Support or Service	What services are offered?	How do students access these services?	Contact Information

Summer Bridge Opportunities

Summer bridge programs are designed to help students transition from high school to college and are typically a multi-week immersive program during the summer between the senior year of high school and the freshman year of college. The goal of these programs is to provide students with academic skills and social resources necessary to their success in college. Summer bridge programs can include “(a) an in-depth orientation to college life and resources, (b) academic advising, (c) training in skills necessary for college success (e.g., time management and study skills), and/or (d) accelerated academic coursework” (“What Works, Summer Bridge” 1).



What You Need to Know

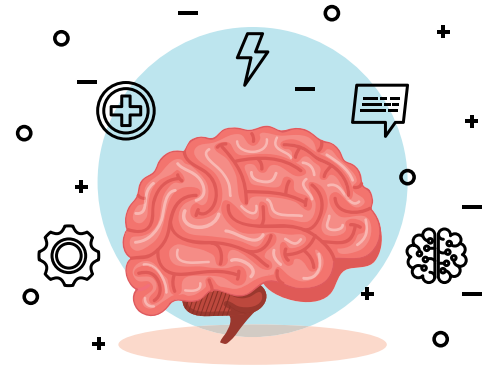
- **Summer bridge programs vary in length and design.** How a summer bridge program is designed and how long it lasts is determined by each individual college or university and, while they often have common goals, each experience will be different.
- **Historically, summer bridge programs have only been offered to specific students:** targeted minority, low-income, first-generation college students. Those students determined to be most at-risk of dropping out of college - ethnic / racial minority, low-income, first-generation, or students with diagnosed learning disabilities - have typically been offered summer bridge opportunities, however, these programs have also been used for all general education students in more recent years (“What Works, Summer Bridge” 2).
- **If there is an opportunity for a summer bridge program, take it!** Regardless of the type of student, if there is a chance to participate in this immersive program, students should take it. These programs help familiarize students with the campus, college life, and the services available to them and are extremely valuable in easing the transition to college. If students are unclear about whether or not their school offers a summer bridge program or if they are eligible, they should ask the Admissions Office.

Resources for Learning about Application Fee Waivers

- [What is a Summer Bridge Program?](#), College Parent Central
- Lists of College Bridge Programs, College Greenlight
 - [Schools A-K](#)
 - [Schools M-Z](#)
- [Summer Bridge Programs](#), What Works Clearinghouse
- [Summer Search](#)
 - A year-round program utilizing mentorship, summer leadership experiences, and post-secondary advising to empower young people who face systemic oppression.

Mental Health and the College Transition

As we've already established, the transition to college can be challenging and can cause strain on a student's mental health. The stress alone can cause a variety of issues for college students. Whether or not a student has a diagnosed mental health condition, they will need to be prepared to take care of themselves and address any issues that may arise immediately. For those students who have a diagnosed mental health condition, it is critical that they devise a plan for continuation of treatments and identify the supports they will need in place while living on campus or attending school to maintain their health.



Resources on Mental Health and the College Transition:

- [Starting the Conversations: College and Your Mental Health](#) - The Jed Foundation & National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
- [Planning Ahead for Your Mental Health Care as You Transition to College](#), The Jed Foundation
- [Transitioning to College: Parents Can Help Ease the Process](#), The Jed Foundation
- [Transition of Care Guide](#), The Jed Foundation
 - Primarily written for students with diagnosed mental health conditions and their families, this guide walks through important considerations related to the transition of mental health care from home to college.
- [Managing a Mental Health Condition in College](#), National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
- [Five Tips to Support Mental Health for College Students](#), The Mental Health Collective
- [Freshman Guide to the College Transition](#), Accredited Online Schools
- [Mental Health and the Transition to College](#), Teen Health Matters - Howard County, MD
- [Jed's Coronavirus Mental Health Resource Guide](#), The Jed Foundation
- LISTEN: [For Students with Mental Health Issues](#), Transition to College is Complicated, NPR