

# College Counseling Checklist: 50 Smart Questions to Ask

Use this checklist to prepare for your next meeting with your high school guidance counselor.

Highlight the questions that matter most to you, and bring it along as you plan your path to college.

## College Planning

What types of colleges should I consider based on my interests and goals?

Can you help me start a college list?

What's the difference between liberal arts, public, and private colleges?

What schools near me offer strong programs in my intended major?

Do any schools near me offer ROTC programs?

Are there any college fairs or tours I should attend?

When should I start visiting campuses?

How can I research colleges beyond rankings?

How can I show demonstrated interest to colleges?

How can I use a four-year plan to guide my college prep?

## Academics & Testing

What courses should I take to stay on track for college?

Should I take AP, IB, or dual-enrollment classes?

What's the minimum GPA I need for my target schools?

What elective classes would strengthen my transcript?

Should I take the SAT, ACT, or both?

What are test-optional policies and how do they work?

How do colleges view pass/fail grades?

How can I improve my study skills and time management?

What tutoring or academic support resources are available?

Can you help me decide if I need to retake a test?

## Applications & Essays

- When should I start my college applications?
- How many schools should I apply to?
- What's the difference between early action, early decision, and regular decision?
- Who should I ask for letters of recommendation?
- Can you review my personal statement or college essays?
- What makes a strong college application?
- How do I submit transcripts and test scores?
- Can I get application fee waivers?
- What deadlines should I be aware of this semester?
- Where can I learn more about building an activities résumé?

## **Financial Aid & Scholarships**

- What's the FAFSA and when should I complete it?
- What is the CSS Profile, and who requires it?
- How do I apply for need-based vs. merit-based aid?
- Where can I find trustworthy scholarship websites?
- Do I need to apply separately for college scholarships?
- What local scholarships are available in our area?
- How do work-study programs work?
- What is a merit scholarship and how do I qualify?
- Will my family's income disqualify me from aid?
- What do financial aid award letters actually mean?

## **Mental Health & Wellness**

- How can I manage stress during the college process?
- What mental health resources are available at school?
- How do I balance school, extracurriculars, and personal time?
- How can I stay motivated if I feel burned out?

- Are there colleges with strong student support programs?
- What if I want to take a gap year?
- Can I get accommodations if I need them in college?
- How can I prepare for the emotional side of college life?
- What if I'm feeling overwhelmed right now?
- Do colleges care about mental health when reviewing applications?