

College & Career Planning Course Workbook

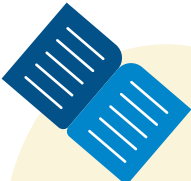


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Welcome to Your Pathfinders College & Career Planning Workbook!

This Workbook is your place to make notes and complete the “Your Turn” tasks throughout the course. Once completed, your workbook will be your personalized guide to choosing a career and applying for college.

We’ve designed this Workbook to help you keep all your notes in one place and do a lot of the preparation along the entire process.

This PDF is fillable so you can complete it digitally. Take the time to fill in your responses, don’t “do it in your head.” Physically filling out answers will help you to think about the college application process more deeply, ensuring that you are making carefully considered decisions.

We also provide space here to note any topics or questions you might have that you would like to discuss further. If you’ve signed up for 1:1 sessions with a Pathfinders Advisor*, then you can use this workbook to set your agenda for these sessions.

There are no hard and fast rules on completing the questions in this workbook. This is your workbook, so make it work for you! Go on, give it your best, your efforts here are the stepping stones on your pathway to the future.

Wishing you all success and the career of your dreams!

Aaron Greene & the Pathfinders College and Career Advisors

**The 1:1 sessions are not part of the course but are available as an added extra. Contact us if you would like to sign up and schedule a personalized session with a Pathfinders Advisor.*

Phase 1: Career Development & College Exploration

Welcome to Phase 1, where you will:

- Narrow down the career fields that interest you and identify careers in those fields
- Arrange career pathing to scout careers of interest via internships, professional visits and job shadowing
- Find your best-fit schools and create a target list of schools to apply to

Reflect on Your Interests

Estimated time: 30 minutes

In this exercise, we'll be narrowing down your interests to 2-3 of the fields discussed in the video. Reflect on the following to figure out what interests and excites you.

Name three activities that make you lose track of time.

Think about a time you felt proud of something you made or did. What was it?

What topics or activities do you find yourself talking about the most with friends or family?

If someone gave you a free ticket to a class or camp, what kind would you pick?

What school subjects or projects have you enjoyed the most so far? Why?

Look for a common thread in your answers in the reflections. Is there a theme emerging of things that excite and interest you?

Rate the five career fields according to your interest in them, with 1 being not interested at all and 5 being highly interested.

Technical

Business

Math-heavy

Creative

Tech-focused

Liberal arts

Health

Education

List the top 2-3 fields you want to look into more closely.

Add any questions that you might have about this to the meeting agenda for your free family consultation with your Pathfinders Advisor.

Explore Different Career Paths

Estimated time: Several hours, varies between individuals

Explore the 2-3 fields that you narrowed down in the previous exercise, picking all the career paths in those fields that look attractive to you. Make a list of these career paths.

Research each career path, going to the top schools for that career to find more information. List the top schools for that career while you're at it.

Career path	Schools

1. Make a shortlist of your top three to four picks for career paths, and top five to eight schools.
2. Narrow this down until you have your top two choices and the corresponding best schools for these choices.

My top picks for career path and school/schools of choice:

Career path	Schools

Explore Career Pathing Opportunities

Estimated time: 30-60 minutes

Research career pathing opportunities in your career(s) of interest. Make notes here for future reference.

Internships

Are there any paid internships in the field? You probably won't be doing something glamorous, but it would be great to pick up experience in that field, even if you're only making coffee and unjamming the printer.

Internship	Link or Contact Details

Professional Visits

If you're moving into a medical field, search to see if any hospitals near you are offering volunteerships or something similar.

Professional Visits	Link or Contact Details

Job Shadowing

Do you know someone (or does someone you know, know someone) who works in the field you want to be in, or in something adjacent to it? Pursue some job shadowing opportunities - they can be incredibly insightful.

Job Shadowing	Link or Contact Details

Make a Target List of Colleges

Estimated time: 30-60 minutes

Take your time and ensure that you leave no stone unturned with this important exercise.

In the space below:

1. List the colleges of interest associated with the career you've decided on.
2. Do research to ensure that you have all the colleges that you think should be there.
3. Now, start narrowing down the list. Remove colleges that are not a good fit for your GPA, or for any other reason.
4. If you have more than nine colleges, narrow it down further, looking at factors such as cost, distance, reputation in the field you're wanting to pursue, and anything else that's important to you.

Once you have 4-9 colleges, split the list according to safety or regional colleges and reach colleges.

Safety/Regional Colleges	Reach Colleges

** Question for my free family meeting with my Pathfinders Advisor:

Map Your Money

Estimated time: 10-30 minutes

An essential part of career development and college exploration is mapping your money. This ensures that you get proper value for money when choosing a career.

To map your money:

- ☐ Research the anticipated annual salaries for the careers that interest you.
- ☐ Find cost estimates of what that degree would cost you at your school or schools of interest. Most schools provide cost estimates on their websites.
- ☐ Use [our calculator](#) to map your money.

You will refer back to this after reviewing your financial aid and scholarships and you're making your final decision, so save the spreadsheet somewhere that you'll find it again later.

- ☐ I've saved the spreadsheet where I can find it again.



Congratulations! You've successfully completed Phase 1!

Before you move on, please make sure that you've completed the following tasks:

- ☐ Reflect on Your Interests
- ☐ Explore Different Career Paths
- ☐ Explore Career Pathing Opportunities
- ☐ Make a Target List of Colleges
- ☐ Map Your Money

Phase 2: Test Prep Strategy

Welcome to Phase 2, where you will:

- Weigh the impact test scores have on your college application and scholarships
- Choose a college admission test best suited for your personal goals
- Create a test preparation timeline to optimize your results

Create Your Test Prep Plan

Estimated time: 30-60 minutes

For this task, we want to help you plan for success.

Select your **goal date** to write the test:

Identify your **goal score**:

To determine your goal score, consider your chosen career and the schools that offer the program you intend to study. Your goal score should align with the students admitted the previous year for your top schools. You can use Naviance or Schoolinks (if your high school has either) or find out through [US News & World Report](#).

Now create your own personal **test prep plan**.

Freshman year:

Sophomore year:

Junior year:

Senior year:

** Question for my next meeting with my Pathfinders Advisor:



Congratulations! You've successfully completed Phase 2.

Before you move on, please make sure that you've completed the following task:

☐ Create Your Test Prep Plan

Phase 3: Preparing for College Application

Welcome to Phase 3, where you will:

- Differentiate and choose between Early Action, Early Decision, & Regular Decision applications
- Craft an exceptional essay
- Request letters of recommendation
- Create a college resume to support your application

Choose Your Application Type

Estimated time: 20-30 minutes



College Application Types

Early Decision

- Binding agreement
- Nov 1st deadline
- Use for first choice school
- Pro: • Better chance of getting in
- Cons: • Withdraw other applications
 - Loss of financial leverage

Early Action

- Non-binding
- November 1st deadline
- Preferred application type
- Pros: • Open admissions
 - Flexibility
 - Early feedback on admission and financial aid
 - Financial leverage

Regular Decision

- Non-binding
- Late December/early January
- Pro: • More time to prepare your application
- Cons: • Less time to make a decision
 - Fewer responses



On the following page, make notes on which application type you think would be most appropriate for the colleges that you want to apply to, noting the reason behind your choice.

Name of College	Application Type	Motivation

** Questions or discussion points about college application types for my upcoming
Pathfinders 1:1

Draft a Standout College Application Essay

Estimated time: 30-60 minutes



Three Secrets for a Standout Essay



- 1 Choose a prompt with **personal appeal**.
- 2 Brainstorm your thoughts & structure the essay, **then let it rest for a week or two**.
- 3 Proof, polish and refine the final essay. **Read it out loud to yourself**.

Step 1: Select a Personal Prompt

Read through your year's essay prompts. Find them [here](#).

Which one immediately stirs ideas, reminds you of an incident, or evokes emotion?

The prompt(s) that appeal(s) to me are:

Step 2a: Brainstorm

Brainstorm all your thoughts and ideas.

Jot down absolutely everything that comes to mind. Keep a notepad around or make notes on your phone as ideas, incidents or stories pop into your head. Don't worry, you will not end up using them all—sometimes it takes 20 ideas to get to that one golden one. If you are not sure which prompt to choose, complete this step for multiple prompts.

My brain dump:

Step 2b. Structure Your Essay (650 words)

Start with a strong hook. *A sentence that slams will engage your reader.*

In the body of your essay, share your thoughts, experiences, and stories to support your topic.

Plan it here:

Conclude by summarizing and relating your experience to your envisioned future. *Keep it personal and authentic.*

- ☐ I've drafted my essay.
- ☐ I've set a reminder to edit in 1-2 weeks from today.

Step 4. Proof, Polish, and Refine

- ☐ Read through your draft after it's had a “resting” period.
- ☐ Refine it:
 - ☐ Remove bits that don't quite sit right or seem redundant.
 - ☐ Add anything important that you feel is missing.
 - ☐ Ask a friend, mentor, or parent to read your essay and make revisions based on their input.
 - ☐ Ask your college advisor to provide input.
- ☐ Read through it and edit to make the language flow as beautifully as possible.
 - ☐ Check all your verbs and ensure they are strong and compelling.
 - ☐ Evaluate each sentence. Is there something you can do to make it more concise and articulate?
 - ☐ Are there any redundant thoughts or phrases?
 - ☐ Are paragraphs connecting well? Each paragraph should lead into the next one at the end, and the start of each paragraph should connect to the previous one.
- ☐ Proofread.
 - ☐ Use grammar-checking software to iron out any grammatical or spelling mistakes.
 - ☐ Ask someone you trust to proofread it for you when you're done.
 - ☐ Read your essay out loud to ensure that it flows logically and eloquently and brings across your intended message.

My final essay:

[word count = -]

** Questions or discussion points for my upcoming Pathfinders 1:1 session:

Request Recommendations

Estimated time: 30-60 minutes



Letters of Recommendation

- Vouch for your character and achievements.
- Need 3 (2 professional, 1 personal). Ask a:
 - Ask by May of Junior Year.
 - Single application services handle the entire process through the platform.
 - Ask in-person before requesting through the platform.



A teacher you get along with (at least one for professional)



A sport/extramural coach



A manager, senior colleague or employer



Church/volunteer group leader



For this task, create a list of teachers, coaches, employers or mentors to approach, and obtain their contact details.

Name of Recommender	Contact details

How I intend to ask each recommender for a letter of recommendation:

- ☐ After speaking to the recommenders, complete the recommender sections for each school in the My Colleges tab in your Common App account.

** Questions or discussion points for my upcoming Pathfinders 1:1 session:

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Build Your Academic Resume

Estimated time: 30-60 minutes

Use this time to work on your academic resume.

All the activities that I am currently involved with:

Activities that I would like to become involved with that would add value to my college resume.

- ☐ Download and use our [College Resume Sample](#) as a template to create your own 1-page resume.

** Any questions and discussion points to add to my next Pathfinders 1:1 session:

Congratulations! You've successfully completed Phase 3.

Before you move on, please make sure that you've completed the following tasks:

- ☐ Choose Your Application Type
- ☐ Draft a Standout College Application Essay
- ☐ Request Recommendations
- ☐ Build Your Academic Resume

Phase 4: The Application Process

Welcome to Phase 4 where you will:

- Explain the value of using a single platform application like Common App
- Use Common App proficiently to create multiple college applications
- Finalize and submit your applications with confidence and expectation

Create Your Application Timeline

Estimated time: 30-60 minutes



My College Application Timeline

Junior Year		March	Prepare for standardized test
		April	Collect letters of recommendation
		May	Plan campus visits/tours
		June	Visit colleges
		July	Draft application essays
Senior Year		August	Finalize my college list
		September	Prepare my application materials
		October	Submit my application
		November	Apply for Financial Aid



** The timeline applies to applications at most US colleges, some variation may apply at selected colleges.*

Complete the table on the following page to assign specific dates to the checklist items to help you navigate the application process.

College Application Checklist		
College Application Step	Date	Completed
Select a standardized test. ACT or SAT? You only need to do one.		
Take a practice exam to help you know if you are ready.		
Approach teachers and mentors for letters of recommendation.		
Plan campus visits to the colleges that you are considering.		
Write your college application essays, concentrating on the personal statement and college-specific requirements.		
Finalize your list of colleges to apply for.		
Make a list of application requirements and deadlines for these colleges.		
Register on a central application platform/portal.		
Craft your supplemental essays.		
Complete your application, including college-specific prompts and requirements.		
Investigate your options and apply for financial aid (Such as FAFSA or CSS Profile).		
Submit your application. (Early Action, Early Decision or Regular Decision applications*)		
Ensure your school sends final transcripts to your chosen college.		

** Questions or discussion points for my upcoming Pathfinders 1:1:

Register on Common App

Estimated time: 10-20 minutes

Now that you know what Common App is and how to use it, create your account.

- ☐ Go to the [Common App page](#) to create your account.

My Common App Login Details (for your personal record):

** Questions/Discussion points about Common App for my upcoming Pathfinders 1:1 session:

Congratulations! You've successfully completed Phase 4.

Before you move on, please make sure that you've completed the following tasks:

- ☐ Create Your Application Timeline
- ☐ Register on Common App
- ☐ Finalize and Submit Your Application

Phase 5: Scholarships & Financial Aid

Welcome to Phase 5 where you will:

- Complete your FAFSA and CSS profile
- Know where to find and apply for scholarships
- Decide on the school and financial aid option that is the best fit for you and your family

Identify Funding

Estimated time: 30 minutes

Explore what scholarships are available for you to apply to.

List some of the categories that you think might qualify you for a scholarship.

Consider your race, religion, family, disabilities, and interests.

Conduct a search using a reputable online source such as [Scholly Scholarships](#) or [Petersons Online](#). Bookmark any scholarships that catch your attention.

Potential Scholarship	Link

Make an appointment with your guidance counselor to discuss whether there are any local scholarships that you could apply for.



Congratulations! You’ve successfully completed Phase 5.

Before you move on, please make sure that you’ve completed the following tasks:

- ☐ Identify Funding

Phase 6: Award Letter Review & Decision

Welcome to Phase 6 where you will:

- Compare financial aid award letters
- Appeal for more financial aid
- Make the final college decision

Calculate Your Gap & Appeal

Estimated time: 30-60 minutes

Calculate the Gap

For each school:

- ☐ Calculate the total value of their offering
- ☐ Then calculate the total tuition fees along with all your relevant expenses to attend this school
- ☐ Use our [College Financial Aid Calculator](#) to do this easily
- ☐ Finally, along with your parents, discuss what part of the difference between the financial aid and the tuition fees you are able to cover. Then calculate the “gap”, the sum that remains outstanding.

Appeal

- ☐ Contact the admissions department of the schools and discuss the possibility of further financial aid.

** Any questions and discussion points to add to my next Pathfinders 1:1 session:

Map Your Money, Again

Estimated time: 30 minutes

Does your final decision provide you with the best value for money and make sense when you “map” the money? Before making your final decision, revisit your calculations from the “Map Your Money” spreadsheet in Phase 1.

- ☐ Fill out the calculator with the more accurate figures you have now for:
 - Tuition costs
 - Financial aid

Should you need to download the calculator again, you can find it here: [Map Your Money Calculator](#)

Congratulations! You’ve successfully completed Phase 6.

Before you move on, please make sure that you’ve completed the following tasks:

- ☐ Calculate Your Gap & Appeal
- ☐ Map Your Money, Again



Congratulations!
You've successfully completed your Pathfinders College & Career Planning Workbook.